

INITIATIVE 1033 Election: November 3, 2009

“Our faith calls us to measure this economy, not by what it produces but also by how it touches human life and whether it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person.”

Economic Justice for All, 1986
The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Q: What is Initiative 1033?

A: Initiative measure No. 1033 would limit growth of certain state, county and city taxes to annual inflation and population growth, not including voter-approved revenue increases. Revenue collected above the limit would be used to reduce property tax levies. A “yes” vote would enact the measure into law, and a “no” vote would defeat the initiative.

Q: Why are the bishops taking a position on Initiative 1033?

A: It is our duty as faithful citizens to seek the well-being of each individual in order to promote the common good. The complicated task of determining the appropriate level of government services has been exacerbated by the current economic realities confronting our state and our country. As pastoral leaders, we bishops are concerned about any debate on tax policy and public spending, especially as it affects children, the poor and the most vulnerable members of society. We believe that any discussion of tax policies and government spending have clear moral dimensions, and the impact on essential services such as education, health care and the economic security of individual citizens must be part of the deliberation.

Q: What should I consider when making a decision about Initiative 1033?

A: Some will see the reduction of property taxes proposed by I-1033 as a great benefit for those struggling in these difficult economic times. Others fear that the loss of tax revenues will cause further cuts in funding for public safety, public health and services for homeless and vulnerable people.

According to the principle of the common good, we must always balance individual rights and the common good. We believe that the good of each person is connected to the good of others. In addition, the principle of distributive justice holds that as long as some citizens lack the basic necessities of life, a condition of inequality in the distribution of resources exists. These are principles we can apply as we vote.

Q: What is the bishops’ position on Initiative 1033?

A: The bishops of Washington State oppose Initiative 1033. We recognize that many people find state and local taxes burdensome. Tax policy and government funding, however, must take into consideration the needs of those who rely on adequate public support for education, health care and other essential services. Initiative 1033 would establish an arbitrary formula for limiting taxes and spending without regard to the needs of others, and therefore, for us it does not meet the test of distributive justice.

The bishops of Washington State urge all Catholics to vote after informing their conscience on this issue through prayer, Scripture reading and study.