

TITLE: Civic Education For Greater Voter Participation

SPONSOR: Dawn Morais Webster

BE IT RESOLVED, that this 54th annual meeting of the Convention of the Diocese of Hawai'i urges the leaders of all congregations of this Diocese to initiate programs of voter education for parishioners to cultivate a better understanding of civic engagement as an expression of Christian faith, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this 54th annual meeting of the Convention of the Diocese of Hawai'i affirms that as citizens, each individual Episcopalian has a responsibility to bear witness in the public square by exercising the right to vote and engaging in civic affairs for the common good.

RATIONALE/EXPLANATION. This resolution is proposed because, in spite of numerous calls by clergy from the pulpit reminding people to vote, the 2022 Primary saw more than 500,000 ballots unreturned.

Voter participation was less than 40% despite the ease and convenience of Vote by Mail. The level of participation by voters of faith is unknown.

The vital importance of voting in the Primary to usher in new people willing to serve does not appear to have been felt as an urgent matter of faith practice. Participation in the upcoming November General Election needs to be more robust and people of faith can help make it so through their example and their conversations with their neighbors.

As Christians, the preferential option for the poor, while acknowledged in sermons and Church teaching, falls short of being internalized and understood as an urgent call to each of us to put that option into practice by exercising our civic duty as citizens. We can do this through the ballot box thereby giving new leaders a chance to emerge, and putting on notice elected officials who have failed to represent the public good that the citizens of Hawai'i expect more of them in these perilous times. Civic engagement as an exercise of Christian duty also encompasses lending voice to the needs of the most vulnerable through testimony, letters to the editor and OpEds and participation in public events that highlight those needs.

The very real threat to democracy in this country, the escalating violence and racism, the assault on truth, and the unfolding stories of corruption and failures of stewardship in public institutions that we are subjected to every day in Hawaii make the need for civic education more urgent than ever. The Gospels are rich with examples of how faith calls us to service in the parables, teachings, and life of Jesus.