



Constitutional Amendment Voter Guide

November 2026 Election

The [Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin \(LOPPW\)](#) represents the coordinated public policy witness of the [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America \(ELCA\)](#) and engages Lutherans in advocacy for policies that promote peace, justice, and care for all of God's creation. As Lutherans, we believe that God calls us to serve our neighbors and provides mercy, hope, and joy through Jesus Christ.

Wisconsin voters will consider three Constitutional Amendments on their ballots this fall. Below are explanations, recommendations, and context from LOPPW, made within the framework of the principles, values, and commitments of the ELCA's social statements and social messages.

"Position" Explanation:

- Strong Support or Strong Oppose = ELCA social teaching addresses this issue directly
- Support or Oppose = ELCA social teaching address this issue generally
- Neutral = The amendment relates to 2+ social teaching documents in a contrary or contradictory way
- No Position = ELCA lacks social teaching upon which to decide

Amendment 1: Freedom to Gather in Places of Worship During an Emergency

Position: Oppose

What is the question on the ballot?

"Shall section 18 of article I of the constitution, which deals with religious liberty, be amended to prohibit the state or a political subdivision of the state from ordering the closure of, or forbidding gatherings in, places of worship in response to a state of emergency, including a public health emergency?"

A "yes" vote would add the underlined language below to [Section 18 of Article I in the Wisconsin Constitution](#):

"The right of every person to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of conscience shall never be infringed; nor shall any person be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship, or to maintain any ministry, without consent; nor shall any control of, or interference with, the rights of conscience be permitted, or any preference be given by law to any religious establishments or modes of worship; nor shall any money be drawn from the treasury for the benefit of religious societies, or religious or theological seminaries; nor shall the state or a political subdivision of the state order the closure of or forbid gatherings in places of worship in response to a state of emergency at the national, state, or local level, including an emergency related to public health.

A "no" vote would maintain the version of Section 18 of Article I without the underlined language.

What would the amendment do?

This amendment would exempt places of worship from state and local government orders that forbid in-person gatherings when a state of emergency is declared, meaning that places of worship

could remain open in times when the government considers doing so to pose a threat to public health or safety.

What does ELCA social teaching say?

ELCA social teaching emphasizes that God intends humans to work for the “common good” and says that the government is serving God’s purposes of justice and good order when it cares for the most vulnerable in society (*Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All*, p. 13-14 and p. 35).

The ELCA teaches that the government should not challenge a religious organization’s internal governance or religious decisions (*Faith and Civic Life*, p. 47). However, the ELCA emphasizes that religious interests must be balanced with public interests, including protection of others’ civil rights (*Faith and Civic Life*, p. 49).

We are responsible for the neighbor and should always act out of love, as exemplified by the life of Jesus Christ. That includes “giving of ourselves for the sake of others’ well-being, doing no harm, [and] promoting the well being of the neighbor” (*Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor*, p. 21). The church considers health to be a shared endeavor and teaches that caring for the health of others “expresses both love for our neighbor and responsibility for a just society (*Caring for Health*, p. 1). The church “holds that the free exercise of religion is not an absolute right and does not give faithful individuals or religious organizations license to harm” (*Faith and Civic Life*, p. 45-46).

Amendment 2: Government Entity Discrimination Prohibited

Position: Oppose

What is the question on the ballot?

“Shall section 27 of article I of the constitution be created to prohibit governmental entities in the state from discriminating against, or granting preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, public education, public contracting, or public administration?”

A “yes” vote would add a new section to [Article I in the Wisconsin Constitution](#) with the underlined language below (plus some supplementary text, which can be found [here](#)):

“...A governmental entity may not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, public education, public contracting, or public administration...”

A “no” vote would maintain the existing version of the constitution without adding a new section containing the underlined language above.

What would the amendment do?

The amendment would make it illegal for any state or municipal governmental entity to provide preferential treatment to individuals or groups, including those who historically have been discriminated against.

Wisconsin law already prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, sex, color, ancestry, and national origin (see [Wisconsin Statute 111.31](#)). The proposed constitutional amendment would prohibit public entities from using equity and inclusion programs such as affirmative action to help remedy the injustices and serious harm that longstanding discrimination has caused for many people and communities in our society, including Native American and Black communities.

What does ELCA social teaching say?

The ELCA's social teaching emphasizes that "any use of power, whether in law, policy, or action" should extend God's power for all people and groups. This is "especially important with respect to those who have been denied power historically or marginalized by social systems." (*Faith & Civic Life*, p. 35). When considering proposed laws, one important question is: "Does it effectively rectify failures of the past, especially failures to include the marginalized?" (*Faith & Civic Life*, p. 43)

According to the ELCA's social teaching, "racism—a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice—is sin, a violation of God's intention for humanity. The resulting racial, ethnic, or cultural barriers deny the truth that all people are God's creatures and, therefore, persons of dignity. Racism fractures and fragments both church and society" (*Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*, p. 4). "When we rebuild walls of hostility and live behind them—blaming others for the problem and looking to them for solutions—we ignore the role we ourselves play in the problem and also in the solution. When we confront racism and move toward fairness and justice in society, all of us benefit" (*Freed in Christ*, p. 4)

As the ELCA teaches, "the Church must cry out for justice, and thereby resist the cynicism fueled by visions that failed and dreams that died. The Church must insist on justice, and thereby refuse to blame victimized people for their situations. The Church must insist on justice, and thereby assure participation of all people." (*Freed in Christ*, p. 5)

Amendment 3: Partial Veto

Position: No Position

What is the question on the ballot?

"Shall section 10 (1) (c) of article V of the constitution be amended to prohibit the governor, in exercising his or her partial veto authority, from creating or increasing or authorizing the creation or increase of any tax or fee?"

A "yes" vote would add the underlined language below to [Section 10\(1\)\(c\) of Article V in the Wisconsin Constitution](#):

"In approving an appropriation bill in part, the governor may not create a new word by rejecting individual letters in the words of the enrolled bill, and may not create a new sentence by combining parts of 2 or more sentences of the enrolled bill, and may not create or increase or authorize the creation or increase of any tax or fee."

A "no" vote would maintain the current version of Section 10(1)(c) without the underlined language.

What would the amendment do?

The Wisconsin governor has the power to take one of three actions with an appropriations bill: sign the entire bill, veto the entire bill, or veto portions within the bill and sign the remainder (often called a “partial veto”). Section 10(1)(c) of the constitution prohibits the governor from creating a new word by rejecting individual letters in the words of a bill and from creating a new sentence by combining parts of two or more sentences. This constitutional amendment would add an additional restriction to the partial veto power by prohibiting the governor from creating, increasing, or authorizing the creation or increase of any tax or fee through veto power.

What does ELCA social teaching say?

The ELCA’s social teaching does not address the issues raised by this proposed constitutional amendment in a significant way.

References & Further Reading

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)	www.elca.org/	
Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin (LOPPW)	loppw.org/	
<i>Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All</i>	resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/civic-life-and-faith/	
<i>Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor</i>	www.elca.org/publications/2003-health-care-theological-discernment-social-statements	
<i>Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture</i>	www.elca.org/publications/1993-race-ethnicity-and-culture-theological-discernment-social-statements	
Wisconsin State Constitution	docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/constitution/wi	
Wisconsin Statute 111.31 (Wisconsin Fair Employment Law)	docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/111/II/31	
Wisconsin Statutes 323.10 and 323.11 (Powers & Duties Related to Emergency Management)	docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/323/II/10	
Wisconsin Statute 252.02 (Communicable Diseases/Powers & Duties of Department)	docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/252/02	
MyVoteWI.gov: What’s on My Ballot?	myvote.wi.gov/en-us/Whats-On-My-Ballot	