

# Know the Positions of the Candidates for GOVERNOR

*“Human dignity is respected and the common good is fostered only if human rights are protected and basic responsibilities are met. Every human being has a right to life, the fundamental right that makes all other rights possible, and a right to access those things required for human decency – food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing, freedom of religion and family life.”*

~ Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, No. 49, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2015

In keeping with its mission, the Virginia Catholic Conference aims to educate and inform Catholics about a wide range of issues. The information listed here was compiled as of Aug. 31, 2017, from policies, public statements, official and campaign websites and other resources to help voters inform their consciences before heading to the voting booth. The issues do not represent a complete list of issues that may be of importance to Catholics. The Conference neither supports nor opposes any candidate for public office. The underlined text below indicates a hyperlink to the source. Go to [www.vacatholic.org](http://www.vacatholic.org) to view these links.



**Edward W. “Ed” Gillespie**  
**Republican**

## Abortion:

During a GOP primary [debate](#), Gillespie stated, “I believe that life begins at conception and ends at natural death. ... The central role of government is the protection of innocent human life. ... I would, for example, sign a bill that bans abortion after an unborn child is pain capable, the 20-week bill. ... I would veto any effort to provide taxpayer funding for abortion in the commonwealth of Virginia.”

## Death Penalty:

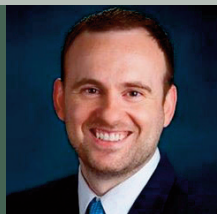
During the Virginia Bar Association gubernatorial [debate](#), Gillespie stated, “I do support the death penalty in cases where we’ve had heinous crimes. And it is something that I would weigh very carefully and mental health would be a factor in a decision as to whether or not to grant clemency in that case.”

## Educational Choice:

On his [website](#), Gillespie states support for expanding the Education Improvement Scholarships Tax Credits (EISTC) program: “In Virginia, our (EISTC) program actually saves the state money – but it only raises enough funding to help 3,500 students. But with one of the lowest tax credits in the nation, businesses and benefactors are investing in other states rather than here. We need to strengthen Virginia’s EISTC program to incentivize more investment in Virginia’s children, including early childhood education.”

## Environmental Responsibility:

During the Virginia Bar Association gubernatorial [debate](#), Gillespie stated, “We need to protect the Chesapeake Bay.” Gillespie released a [six-point plan](#) for adapting to sea-level rise. In a 2014 senatorial [debate](#) with Mark Warner, Gillespie said, “Norfolk is dealing with rising sea levels but people can debate what contributes to that or not.” He went on to say he does not support the Clean Power Plan.



**Clifford D. Hyra**  
**Libertarian**

## Abortion:

According to a [Washington Post profile](#), Hyra “supports abortion rights.” “In general, on abortion issues I would defer to the legislature. So the exception to that would be if there’s something that I feel is unconstitutional,” he said, according to a [Virginia Public Radio story](#).

## Death Penalty:

Hyra [tweeted](#) in response to the Virginia Bar Association debate between Gillespie and Northam: “End the death penalty. Cost is \$1M+ for each conviction, error rate is at least 4%.”

## Educational Choice:

On education, Hyra’s [website](#) states his support for introducing “more **competition** and **choice** by expanding Virginia’s charter school program, modeling it on the New York state program that shows much success, especially in the African American community.”

## Environmental Responsibility:

Of Virginia’s two proposed pipelines, Hyra states on his campaign [website](#): “I would ensure that the environmental review is conducted fairly and thoroughly, according to the law.”



**Ralph S. Northam**  
**Democrat**

## Abortion:

Northam’s [website](#) states, “Ralph has never wavered on choice and he never will. That’s why Ralph received a joint endorsement from both NARAL Pro-Choice America and NARAL Pro-Choice Virginia and carries a 100% rating with NARAL and Planned Parenthood.”

## Death Penalty:

At the Virginia Bar Association gubernatorial [debate](#), Northam said, “I do not agree with the death penalty. I support life in prison without parole.”

## Educational Choice:

During the 2012 General Assembly session, Northam [voted](#) against [SB 131](#). That legislation established the Education Improvement Scholarships Tax Credits (EISTC) program, which provides a 65% state tax credit for donations that fund scholarships for income-eligible students to attend nonpublic K-12 schools.

## Environmental Responsibility:

Northam’s environmental plan on his [website](#) includes support for “fighting climate change and sea-level rise by ensuring Virginia meets the standards put forth in the Clean Power Plan, increasing resiliency in Hampton Roads, and opposing drilling off Virginia’s coast.” It also proposes the continuation of Chesapeake Bay clean-up.



## Edward W. “Ed” Gillespie Republican

### Freedom of Religion:

According to a [Washington Post interview](#), Gillespie said, “I believe that we can guard against discrimination and at the same time protect religious freedoms. You know one of the things I think we have to be very careful about and guard against, for example, is for ... religiously affiliated institutions, whether they be charities or health care providers or educational institutions, they should not be stripped of their tax-exempt status or accreditation because they are adhering to the tenets and teaching the tenets of their faith.”

### Immigration:

On immigration law enforcement, Gillespie states on his [website](#): “We must be able to work closely with Immigration and Customs Enforcement and with the Department of Homeland Security, and allowing for the establishment of sanctuary cities and issuing drivers licenses to illegal immigrants would make Virginians less safe.” During the Virginia Bar Association gubernatorial [debate](#), Gillespie said on the topic of in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants who were brought to this country as children, “We have scarce tax dollars and we have a hard enough time getting people who are here legally and who are citizens of the commonwealth of Virginia access to affordable college educations.”

### Marriage:

According to a 2014 [Washington Times interview](#), Gillespie said, “I believe marriage is between one man and one woman and I believe that people who don’t share that view or share my faith, that doesn’t make them anti-Catholic or religious bigots. And I think people who do share my view, that doesn’t make us anti-gay either.” According to a 2017 [Washington Post interview](#), Gillespie said, “As governor you enforce the laws and the Supreme Court has made clear that gay marriage is the law and I will enforce our laws. ... I don’t seek to change it.”

### Poverty:

According to the [Washington Post](#), Gillespie said, “We also have to create more opportunities and more jobs, and help people lift themselves out of poverty.” According to [PolitiFact](#), he opposes raising the minimum wage. In his 2006 book [Winning Right](#), he said he applauded a “commitment to the idea of greater cooperation between government and church-based charities” to address poverty issues.

## Clifford D. Hyra Libertarian

### Freedom of Religion:

No statements on Hyra’s position on freedom of religion were found. The [website](#) of the Libertarian Party of Virginia states, “Libertarians are committed to restoring and protecting civil liberties. We will protect freedom of religion, speech, press, and assembly.”

### Immigration:

Hyra has used Twitter to highlight immigrants’ contribution to Virginia, [tweeting](#) in response to the Virginia Bar Association debate between Gillespie and Northam: “Immigrants are a HUGE contribution to VA economy. I know many of my clients are immigrants who came here for the American dream.”

### Marriage:

No statements on Hyra’s position on marriage were found. The Libertarian Party of Virginia states on its [website](#), “As long (sic) the government is in the marriage business the law should not favor one group over another. Consenting adults should be free to choose their own sexual practices, personal relationships and marry whomever they want regardless of sexual identity, preference, gender.”

### Poverty:

Hyra’s [platform](#) emphasizes the importance of “education in growing Virginia’s economy, reducing inequality and promoting growth across all of the Commonwealth.”

## Ralph S. Northam Democrat

### Freedom of Religion:

In a Facebook [post](#) regarding a vote on [SB 1324](#) during the 2017 General Assembly session, Northam stated, “The Senate’s ‘religious freedom’ ban is state-sanctioned discrimination against LGBT Virginians. It’s immoral, and it will hurt our economy.” SB 1324 sought to prohibit state government discrimination against clergy or religious organizations for following the teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman. During the 2012 General Assembly session, Northam voted against [SB 349](#) in a Senate floor [vote](#). That legislation, which became law, provides that no private child-placement agency shall be required to participate in any placement of a child for foster care or adoption when the proposed placement would violate the agency’s written religious or moral convictions or policies.

### Immigration:

At the Virginia Bar Association gubernatorial [debate](#), Northam said, “I do believe in locking up violent criminals, no matter what their status is. I also believe in allowing our local law enforcement agents to do their job and not interfere with what (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) is doing. ... Children that have grown up and gone to our schools in Virginia, I do believe should have access to our universities and colleges and have access to in-state tuition.”

### Marriage:

In a Northam campaign [TV ad](#), a same-sex couple states, “He did one of the readings at our wedding. He supported marriage equality before it was popular to do so.” During his 2013 campaign for lieutenant governor, newspaper [accounts](#) cite Northam’s opposition to Virginia’s constitutional amendment that marriage is between one man and one woman: “He would support a repeal of the 2006 amendment banning same-sex marriage in Virginia.”

### Poverty:

According to his [website](#), Northam wants to build the economy, especially in the poorer rural areas by “building a skilled workforce, encouraging entrepreneurship and startups and leveraging and growing our infrastructure.” He supports raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, according to the [Washington Post](#). According to a May 2017 interview with [The American Prospect](#), he said Virginia should expand Medicaid for working Virginians who have no health care.

