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## Religion: Does It Have a Place in Politics?

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## Religion: Does It Have a Place in Politics?

### Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Despite tragedy, natural disasters, and loss, there is still an undying component of faith left in the arms of the souls that walk the earth. Though many hold the belief that no God or religion exists because an immense amount of horrible things happen in the world, these people still have faith in something – enough to have faith in nothing. For those who do hold strong beliefs through times of tragedy, their beliefs are firm that they will be grounded no matter the pain or loss that surrounds them. Because we were given free will, the choices we make are influenced by how we view faith and the world. Our lens of faith, and how actively we see through it, controls how we react to the variety of situations in which we find ourselves."

# Religion: Does It Have a Place in Politics?

By: Amanda Vitale and Juliet Janicik



Despite tragedy, natural disasters, and loss, there is still an undying component of faith left in the arms of the souls that walk the earth. Though many hold the belief that no God or religion exists because an immense amount of horrible things happen in the world, these people still have faith in something – enough to have faith in nothing. For those who do hold strong beliefs through times of tragedy, their beliefs are firm that they will be grounded no matter the pain or loss that surrounds them. Because we were given free will, the choices we make are influenced by how we view faith and the world. Our lens of faith, and how actively we see through it, controls how we react to the variety of situations in which we find ourselves.

The upcoming presidential debate offers many different issues that individuals in the country could be faced with during the President's upcoming term. Many of these issues have an impact on the religious community as well as many voters as they decide who will run their country and therefore make decisions about these issues. However, it is not very easy to keep religious views in check while determining which the better candidate for the presidency. Many people have strict religious views and project them into the political stratosphere, but that is not necessarily a fair judgment. For these individuals, they may find their struggle when it actually comes time to choose the presidential candidate that they are going to vote for who will run their country for the next four years.

Sometimes individuals find themselves in a situation where one presidential candidate is the overall better candidate and has a lot more to offer the country than the contender. Who should they vote for in the situations that the overall better candidate also has an opposing religious view from them? Say that an individual is dead set against abortion because of religious beliefs, but the candidate that is better qualified to run the country thinks that abortion is acceptable, and will never pass any form of legislation against it. Should that individual vote for the other, less qualified candidate, solely because that candidate aims to ban abortion and that agrees with the individual's religious view? Or, should the individual vote for the more qualified individual and ignore their opposing religious views? This can be a very hard decision to make. Some may feel that if they vote for the more qualified opponent that disagrees with their religious views, that they are turning their back on their religion, in turn, sinning. However, if they are voting for a candidate just because their religious views agree, perhaps they are turning their back on their country. Should this individual vote for the candidate that will be best for their personal religion, or the candidate that will be best for their country?

In situations like the one above, there are many things that must be taken into consideration. For example, despite candidates' repeated opposing views on different issues, sometimes their views are only to please the party, state, or country they are running for. The voters reciprocate this action in that they are influenced by the religious views that the candidates represent. One candidate may specifically believe in anti-abortion acts in conjunction with healthcare laws but politically makes a case for pro-choice, pro-conception, and pro-planned parenthood cases. Though the candidate may publically flip flop, he or she may be doing what is best suited for the country. The public's view of religion must also shed the same light. When this sort of thing happens, it makes it difficult for voters to determine exactly where the candidate stands on certain issues, and what way they will sway if they are actually elected. This could prove to be virtually impossible to figure out.

Another question that needs to be taken into consideration here is whether or not it is necessary to elect an individual who agrees with your exact religious views. We will use abortion as an example here again. If an individual has a religious belief that opposes abortion, they may want abortion to be illegal. However, how necessary is it for abortion to be illegal in that situation? Even if it remains legal, that does not

mean that everyone needs to **use** their right to choose, it just means that everyone **has** the right to choose. So, if an individual does not believe in abortion for religious beliefs, they can decide not to exercise their right to choose. However, if they feel as though abortion should be illegal because of their religious views, how do they explain to someone else that what they believe is alright and a right to all individuals should be made illegal? As long as a law does not make a belief in a religious view illegal, is changing it necessary for that religion?

In conclusion, a person with a particular religious viewpoint may feel particularly strong about an issue in their personal life and may want to vote for that candidate with the same opinion, but may realize that the candidate is not suited for the job, or that the issue does not pertain to all of the “melting-pot” population. Though the constituents mean well and mean to represent their party in a positive way, the views may not be conducive to the country as a whole. The voters must realize that their religious view cannot influence their entire decision if they want the best candidate that will be a representative for the country. Whatever the religious view may be, the constituent cannot represent one religion or religious view solely, because not all Americans have the same values or religious beliefs. Ultimately, the decision of whether or not to religion has a place in politics, is left up to each individual to decide. But, thinking back to the idea of the separation of church and state, it may be best to keep this idea in mind when going to the polls to elect the next leader of one’s country. Voting for the interest of the whole country and all individuals, will in the end lead to a better outcome than voting for the interest of only oneself.



*Amanda*



*Juliet*