



Grading Methodology – AFA 2018 Survey

The 2018 AFA candidate survey groups questions into five separate “issue clusters”:

- Marriage & family
- Sanctity of life
- Education policy
- Religious liberty
- Judicial reform

Candidate responses are evaluated within each issue cluster, and then a score of 0 to 5 points is assigned based on the responses to questions within each cluster, as follows:

Marriage & family	0—5 points
Sanctity of life	0—5 points
Education	0—5 points
Religious liberty	0—5 points
Judicial reform	0—5 points

Maximum possible points: 25 points

Not every question within each cluster carries equal weight. In addition, AFA’s grading methodology assigns preeminent importance to the “Sanctity of life” issue cluster. **In order for a candidate to achieve even a minimum passing grade (C or better), that candidate must score a 4 or 5 on the “sanctity of life” issues cluster, thus demonstrating a commitment to be “functionally pro-life” as an elected official.**

Assuming that a candidate meets the minimum requirements on the “sanctity of life” issues cluster, the cumulative grade for the entire survey is based on the following scale:

A grade =	23—25 points
B grade =	20—22 points
C grade =	18—19 points
D grade =	15—17 points
F grade =	14 points or less

Below are important details on AFA’s methodology for assigning scores (0 to 5) for each issue cluster:

- The score is not a simple algorithm, because not all questions within each cluster carry equal weight. Thus, a candidate might still receive a relatively high score even if they deviate from AFA’s positions on one of more issues, based on the moral gravity of the questions. For example, a candidate’s position on casino gambling is a significant matter—but would not be weighted the same as the candidate’s position on supporting Alaska’s constitutional provision that defines marriage as the union of one man and one woman.
- Many candidates supplement their answers with written comments. These comments are given serious consideration in assigning scores.
- A response of “undecided” is evaluated differently than a response in opposition to AFA’s position – especially when a candidate provides written comments explaining their position in more detail.
- Responses are also evaluated in context of other public information that is known about a candidate. For example, if an incumbent legislator has voted on an issue in a way that directly contradicts their response on the survey, AFA reserves the right to inform its constituents about this discrepancy and to adjust a candidate’s score accordingly. Likewise, if an incumbent legislator has a long voting record that is consistent with their survey responses, this can positively affect their score for an issue cluster.

Special notes on each issue cluster follow:

Marriage & family

The questions on the appropriate response to the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision and the protection of privacy in intimate facilities are given special priority in assigning scores for this cluster.

Sanctity of life

There are more questions in this cluster than any other, reflecting the crucial importance of this policy area for Alaska Family Action. Our objective is to identify those candidates who are “functionally pro-life,” scoring at least a 4 on this cluster. This means a candidate who is likely to cast a pro-life vote on most issues that we can reasonably foresee coming before the Alaska Legislature in the next 5 to 10 years. It does NOT mean that a candidate would necessarily agree with what your church or denomination teaches on abortion. It does NOT necessarily mean that a candidate is 100 percent consistent in the application of his or her professed beliefs. You are encouraged to review each candidate’s responses, draw your own conclusions, and share your own beliefs with candidates.

Alaska’s current law on abortion is unimaginably extreme: an unborn child may be killed for any reason, and last year the state government paid for just over HALF of all the abortions that were committed in Alaska. It is literally true that state government subsidizes the “choice for death.” We seek to elect candidates who demonstrate a serious commitment to reversing this situation, even if they may not align with our views 100 percent of the time.

Education policy

The question regarding a state constitutional amendment to facilitate school choice is assigned special weight in this issue cluster, due to the preeminent importance of supporting the right of parents to direct the education of their children.

Religious liberty

Special weight is assigned to candidate responses to questions concerning “SOGI” laws – adding “sexual orientation and gender identity” to non-discrimination codes, due to the grave threat such laws pose to religious freedom.

Judicial reform

Reasonable people can disagree about the best way to structure the judicial branch of government. However, the cultural devastation caused by the radical decisions of unelected, activist judges provides ample evidence that the system is broken. As a general policy goal, Alaska Family Action supports measures to make the judicial branch of government more accountable, and to strengthen the ability of the legislative and executive branches of government to counteract abuses of power within the judicial branch.

The questions in this issue cluster are largely designed to measure whether candidates share the same sense that something is broken in our judicial system, and whether they are open-minded about serious reforms. AFA has not expressed a preference on certain questions presented in this cluster, such as having elections for judges, or following a model similar to the federal judicial appointment system. Our purpose in asking these questions is to measure more broadly whether a candidate thinks that profound change is required, or whether the candidate is satisfied with the status quo.