2026 CATHOLIC VOTER GUIDE · NEW YORK · LETTERS FROM LEO

Governor

Incumbent Kathy Hochul (D) seeks a second full term. Rated Solid Democratic by Cook Political Report (Oct 2026); Siena's final October poll showed Hochul ahead by 14 points.



Bruce Blakeman

REPUBLICAN · CHALLENGER

Nassau County Executive since 2022; also on the Conservative Party line.



Kathy Hochul

DEMOCRAT · INCUMBENT

Governor since 2021; former lieutenant governor and U.S. Representative. Also on the Working Families Party line.

Where the candidates stand on the issues Pope Leo XIV has raised, in their own words and votes. Bracketed numbers link to sources. We do not rate, score, or endorse candidates.

WAR & PEACE

POPE LEO XIV *Leo invited citizens of every country involved in the war with Iran to contact their leaders and members of Congress "to work for peace and to reject war and violence."* Remarks at Castel Gandolfo, Apr. 7, 2026 (Vatican News via The Good Newsroom)

BRUCE BLAKEMAN

Praised the June 2025 U.S. strikes on Iran as "a victory for all peace-loving people"; says he has "always stood by" Israel and opposes the BDS movement.

[1] News 12: Blakeman on Iran strikes
[2] Jewish Link: Blakeman interview

KATHY HOCHUL

Has tied higher gas prices to the war with Iran and said the war "heated up the passions" behind hate against Jews and Muslims in New York.

[1] Fox 5: Hochul–Blakeman debate
[2] JNS: Hochul on the Iran war

AI & THE DIGNITY OF WORK

POPE LEO XIV *"No one can be reduced to productivity, to cognitive performance, or to mere data."* Magnifica Humanitas presentation, May 25, 2026

BRUCE BLAKEMAN

Predicts "unprecedented support from union workers" for Republicans and pledged to rehire correction officers Hochul fired after their strike; endorsed by the state correction officers' union.

[1] City & State: Blakeman on unions
[2] Finger Lakes 1: NYSCOPBA endorses Blakeman

KATHY HOCHUL

Signed the RAISE Act (2025), requiring developers of advanced AI models to adopt risk-assessment plans and report safety incidents within 72 hours; endorsed by unions including 32BJ SEIU, DC 37 and CSEA.

[1] Axios: Hochul signs AI safety bill
[2] City & State: Blakeman on unions

THE POOR & THE SAFETY NET

POPE LEO XIV *The preferential choice for the poor is "a source of extraordinary renewal both for the Church and for society."* Dilexi Te, Oct. 4, 2025

BRUCE BLAKEMAN

Pledges to audit Medicaid, accusing the Hochul administration of administrative fraud, and to cut state income taxes and utility bills.

[1] La Nación: Blakeman on Medicaid
[2] Blakeman campaign site

KATHY HOCHUL

Her 2026 budget plan increased the state's Medicaid share to offset federal cuts enacted in 2025 and proposed $1.2 billion more for child-care vouchers plus expanded pre-K.

[1] WAMC: Hochul budget proposal

ELECTIONS & CIVIC LIFE

POPE LEO XIV *Authentic democracy, "far from being a mere procedure," "recognizes the dignity of every person and calls each citizen to participate responsibly in the pursuit of the common good."* Message to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Apr. 9, 2026

BRUCE BLAKEMAN

No public position found.

KATHY HOCHUL

Signed the Early Mail Voter Act (2023), letting all registered voters vote early by mail and allowing same-day registration on the first day of early voting.

[1] amNY: Hochul signs early mail voting

LIFE OF THE UNBORN

POPE LEO XIV *Abortion "cuts short a growing life and refuses to welcome the gift of life."* Address to the Diplomatic Corps, Jan. 9, 2026

BRUCE BLAKEMAN

Describes himself as a pro-choice Republican — "I'm pro-choice," he said in the October debate — and calls New York's abortion law "well-settled"; says he respects the pro-life position and would have "no litmus test."

[1] Fox 5: Hochul–Blakeman debate
[2] Washington Examiner: Blakeman's abortion stance
[3] City & State: Conservative Party convention

KATHY HOCHUL

Signed a 2025 law letting abortion-pill prescribers keep their names off labels, strengthening New York's shield law; said "Reproductive freedom will always be protected in the State of New York."

[1] CNY Central: Hochul signs prescriber protection

THE DEATH PENALTY

POPE LEO XIV *Someone who opposes abortion but favors the death penalty "is not really pro-life."* AP via PBS NewsHour, Sept. 30, 2025

BRUCE BLAKEMAN

No public position found.

KATHY HOCHUL

No public position found.

IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES

POPE LEO XIV *"Defending human life also includes welcoming, protecting and assisting immigrants."* Letter on the 250th Anniversary of the United States, June 25, 2026

BRUCE BLAKEMAN

Touts Nassau County's agreement with ICE to detain immigrants with criminal records and says "I don't want to put any shackles on ICE"; backs a guest worker program and legal status for some undocumented immigrants.

[1] Spectrum News: immigration and the governor's race
[2] Fox 5: Hochul–Blakeman debate
[3] Washington Examiner: Blakeman's crossover appeal

KATHY HOCHUL

Proposed barring ICE from schools, hospitals and houses of worship without a judicial warrant and letting people sue federal agents in state court; said "We will not allow masked federal ICE agents" to storm such sites.

[1] Spectrum News: immigration and the governor's race

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY & EDUCATION

POPE LEO XIV *Religious freedom is "the right of every person to worship according to conscience."* Letter on the 250th Anniversary of the United States, June 25, 2026

BRUCE BLAKEMAN

Signed Nassau County's Religious Safety Act creating buffer zones around houses of worship and says a proposed 25-foot state buffer is "too close."

[1] Jewish Link: Blakeman interview
[2] Forward: Hochul and school choice

KATHY HOCHUL

Announced New York will opt into the federal Education Freedom Tax Credit, which aids nonpublic-school families, while reviewing it for "poison pills"; her office cites helping families afford nonpublic education.

[1] Forward: Hochul and school choice

CARE FOR CREATION

POPE LEO XIV *“We cannot love God, whom we cannot see, while despising his creatures.”* AP, Oct. 1, 2025

BRUCE BLAKEMAN

Calls Hochul’s climate policy a “green energy scam”; would stop Long Island offshore wind, reverse clean-energy mandates and allow Southern Tier fracking, saying “Drill, baby drill.”

[1] New York Post via AOL: Blakeman on energy
[2] City & State: Conservative Party convention

KATHY HOCHUL

Pushed 2026 budget changes to the 2019 climate law, replacing the 40%-by-2030 emissions mandate with a 2040 target pursued “to the maximum extent feasible,” arguing the mandates would raise costs for residents.

[1] WAMC: climate law rollback

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