2026 CATHOLIC VOTER GUIDE · OREGON · LETTERS FROM LEO

U.S. Senate

Jeff Merkley is seeking a fourth term. Rated Solid D by Cook Political Report.



Jeff Merkley

DEMOCRAT · INCUMBENT

U.S. senator since 2009 and former speaker of the Oregon House.



David Brock Smith

REPUBLICAN · CHALLENGER

State senator from Port Orford; former state representative and county commissioner.

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)

JEFF MERKLEY

Says the U.S. should not "dribble away" its wealth "in foreign wars and foreign military bases," citing the Iran war's cost to the debt.

[1] OPB: Merkley profile

VOTING RECORD

Yes Iran war powers resolution (H.Con.Res. 86), June 2026
Yes Iran war powers resolution (H.Con.Res. 89), Sept. 2026
Yes Russia sanctions bill (H.R. 5334), Aug. 2026

DAVID BROCK SMITH

Supports the Iran campaign — "we need to finish what we started" — while saying "Congress needs to play a pivotal role" in military action.

[1] KATU: Know Your Candidates — David Brock Smith

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

JEFF MERKLEY

Backs "the rights of workers to lift themselves up by forming unions and negotiating strong wages and benefits."

[1] Merkley campaign: Issues

DAVID BROCK SMITH

Calls AI leadership a national security issue; says "data centers should have to pay for their own infrastructure" and backs local siting input.

[1] KATU: Know Your Candidates — David Brock Smith

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

JEFF MERKLEY

Supports "Medicare for All" and barring drug companies from charging Americans more than other wealthy nations; says Republicans "slash health care for millions."

[1] Merkley campaign: Issues
[2] OnTheIssues: Jeff Merkley

VOTING RECORD

No One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1), July 2025 — tax cuts with Medicaid and SNAP changes

DAVID BROCK SMITH

Defends the 2025 Republican law's safety-net changes as reducing fraud and encouraging work: "too many people" depend on those programs.

[1] OPB: Merkley profile

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

JEFF MERKLEY

Would "reinstate and strengthen the Voting Rights Act," end gerrymandering and move to direct presidential elections; calls Trump's actions authoritarian strategies to "unravel a democracy."

[1] Merkley campaign: Issues
[2] OPB: Merkley profile

VOTING RECORD

No Objection to counting Arizona's 2020 electoral votes, Jan. 6, 2021 — a Yes vote supported the objection (failed, 6–93)

No Objection to counting Pennsylvania's 2020 electoral votes, Jan. 7, 2021 — a Yes vote supported the objection (failed, 7–92)

Yes For the People Act (S. 2093), June 2021 — vote to begin debate (failed, 50–50; 60 needed)

No SAVE America Act (S. 1383), Mar. 2026 — motion to take up the bill requiring proof of citizenship to register and photo ID to vote (passed, 51–48)

No Photo ID amendment to the SAVE America Act, Mar. 2026 — vote to end debate on requiring photo ID to vote (failed, 53–47; 60 needed)

DAVID BROCK SMITH

Supports voter ID and audits of vote-by-mail; sponsored a 2026 state bill to end Oregon's vote-by-mail system.

[1] KATU: Know Your Candidates — David Brock Smith
[2] OnTheIssues: David Brock Smith

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

JEFF MERKLEY

Has long supported access to "safe, legal abortion without restrictions."

[1] OnTheIssues: Jeff Merkley

VOTING RECORD

No Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act (S. 6), Jan. 2025 — vote to advance the bill (failed, 52–47; 60 needed)

DAVID BROCK SMITH

No public position found.

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

JEFF MERKLEY

Has stated opposition to the death penalty.

[1] OnTheIssues: Jeff Merkley

DAVID BROCK SMITH

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

JEFF MERKLEY

Has protested family separation at the border and called deploying troops to American cities "a provocation."

[1] OnTheIssues: Jeff Merkley

VOTING RECORD

No Laken Riley Act (S. 5), Jan. 2025 — requires detention of undocumented immigrants charged with theft and certain crimes

No Secure America Act (S. 2), June 2026 — reconciliation funding for ICE and Customs and Border Protection

DAVID BROCK SMITH

Opposes Oregon's sanctuary-state law; voted against a 2026 state law barring masked ICE agents.

[1] OnTheIssues: David Brock Smith

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

JEFF MERKLEY

No campaign statement found. See voting record below.

VOTING RECORD

No One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1), July 2025 — created a federal tax credit for donations to K–12 scholarship organizations

DAVID BROCK SMITH

No public position found.

CARE FOR CREATION

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

JEFF MERKLEY

Supports a Green New Deal and says "we must invest in a shift to 100% clean and renewable energy sources."

[1] Merkley campaign: Issues

VOTING RECORD

No Resolution overturning EPA approval of California vehicle-emission rules (H.J.Res. 87), May 2025

DAVID BROCK SMITH

Opposes the state Climate Protection Program's decarbonization plans and has opposed proposed offshore wind projects.

[1] KATU: Know Your Candidates — David Brock Smith
[2] OnTheIssues: David Brock Smith

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