2026 CATHOLIC VOTER GUIDE · TENNESSEE · LETTERS FROM LEO

U.S. House, District 7

Incumbent Matt Van Epps (R), elected in a December 2025 special election, seeks a full term. District lines redrawn for 2026.



Darden Copeland

DEMOCRAT · CHALLENGER

Founder and CEO of a Nashville public affairs firm.



Matt Van Epps

REPUBLICAN · INCUMBENT

U.S. Representative since December 2025; Army veteran and former Tennessee general services 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)

DARDEN COPELAND

No public position found.

MATT VAN EPPS

No campaign statement found. See voting record below.

VOTING RECORD

Iran war powers resolutions, Mar.–Sept. 2026 (six House votes): **No** Mar., Apr., May, June, July, Sept.

No Ukraine Support Act (H.R. 2913), June 2026 — authorizes support for Ukraine

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

DARDEN COPELAND

No public position found.

MATT VAN EPPS

No campaign statement found. See voting record below.

VOTING RECORD

No Protect America's Workforce Act (H.R. 2550), Dec. 2025 — nullifies the executive order ending union bargaining for many federal workers

No Faster Labor Contracts Act (H.R. 5408), June 2026 — sets deadlines for reaching first union contracts

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

DARDEN COPELAND

Criticizes the 2025 reconciliation law ("Big Beautiful Bill") for "making healthcare LESS affordable" and adding more than $4 trillion in debt.

[1] Ballotpedia: Darden Copeland

MATT VAN EPPS

No campaign statement found. See voting record below.

VOTING RECORD

No Breaking the Gridlock Act (H.R. 1834), Jan. 2026 — extends enhanced ACA premium tax credits through 2028

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

DARDEN COPELAND

No public position found.

MATT VAN EPPS

No campaign statement found. See voting record below.

VOTING RECORD

Yes SAVE America Act (House amendment to S. 1383), Feb. 2026 — requires documentary proof of citizenship to register and photo ID to vote in federal elections

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

DARDEN COPELAND

No public position found.

MATT VAN EPPS

No campaign statement found. See voting record below.

VOTING RECORD

Yes Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Women and Families Act (H.R. 6945), Jan. 2026 — lets states use TANF funds for pregnancy centers

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

DARDEN COPELAND

No public position found.

MATT VAN EPPS

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

DARDEN COPELAND

No public position found.

MATT VAN EPPS

No campaign statement found. See voting record below.

VOTING RECORD

Yes Secure America Act (S. 2), June 2026 — reconciliation funding for ICE and Customs and Border Protection

No Haiti TPS bill (H.R. 1689), Apr. 2026 — requires temporary protected status for Haitians

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

DARDEN COPELAND

No public position found.

MATT VAN EPPS

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

DARDEN COPELAND

No public position found.

MATT VAN EPPS

No campaign statement found. See voting record below.

VOTING RECORD

Yes Homeowner Energy Freedom Act (H.R. 4758), Feb. 2026 — repeals home-electrification rebates from the 2022 climate law

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