

# Fake Catholic newspapers in election ploy

written by OSV News |

A number of U.S. Catholic dioceses and their bishops have issued statements disavowing fake Catholic newspapers that have resurfaced in swing states ahead of the presidential election to target Catholic voters on key issues.

The publications, which were initially produced ahead of the 2020 presidential election, highlight the rise of what communications scholars call “pink slime” journalism — while running afoul of both canon law on the use of the name “Catholic” and U.S. tax code banning churches from engaging in partisan politics.

In an Oct. 20 article, ProPublica, an investigative journalism nonprofit, noted the resurgence of the *Catholic Tribune* in several states, including Michigan, Nevada, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Those states are among the crucial swing states in the 2024 election.

The publication, issued in direct print mailers and available online, features a traditional-looking newspaper format, minus a masthead listing the publisher, editors and writers.

The digital version of the *Catholic Tribune* — which like its printed counterpart, is tailored for each state — appears to draw on diocesan and parish directories and press releases for its content, much of which is outdated. An apparently national site, [AmericanCatholicTribune.com](http://AmericanCatholicTribune.com), features more current material from other Catholic news outlets.

Yet interspersed with news of clerical appointments and Mass intentions are articles — overwhelmingly without bylines or original reporting — that urge readers to take action at the polls on issues such as abortion and religious liberty.

Catholic voters are a key demographic in the swing states, and nationally, they are often more evenly divided than other Christian voters.

Several bishops and dioceses have slammed the *Catholic Tribune* for deceptively claiming to represent the Church’s interests, among them the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, the Archdiocese of Detroit and the Diocese of Reno, Nev.

“This publication is not endorsed by, nor is it affiliated with, the Archdiocese of Detroit,” said the statement, noting that the archdiocese had not shared any mailing information with the publication.