

Good News



- an update on public policy and legislative developments from a Catholic perspective.

Jan. 2010
Vol. 29 No. 1

Dear Catholic Citizen,

When venturing into new territories most people take a road map or use a GPS device. Each year the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) develops a road map to guide its public policy efforts. Below find the MCC's 2010 Public Policy Agenda, which has been developed by the MCC Public Policy Committee.

This agenda does not list all of our concerns but only those most likely to be actively considered in the Missouri General Assembly or in Congress this year. We welcome your comments about our 2010 agenda and we invite your help in moving these various concerns forward in the public policy arena. When Catholic citizens work together, great things can happen to advance the common good of our state.

2010 Public Policy Agenda

In faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) seeks to engage all Missourians in creating a culture of life and compassion through the enactment of public policies that promote the common good. Speaking together as the MCC, the Missouri Catholic bishops consider current issues through a two thousand year tradition of Catholic moral teaching.

This public policy agenda does not represent all of the positions and concerns of the MCC, but only those likely to be addressed in Congress or in the 2010 Missouri General Assembly.

1. Defend the sanctity and dignity of human life through legislation to expand Missouri's informed consent law prior to abortion, funding for Alternatives to Abortion and a moratorium on the death penalty.
2. Protect the right of health care providers [individuals and institutions] to follow their convictions in not providing abortion, sterilizations, distribution of contraceptives or other unethical procedures.
3. Promote a state budget that upholds the common good through the following principles:
 - Respects the sanctity and dignity of human life
 - Protects the most vulnerable
 - Calls for common sacrifice from all agencies of government
 - Requires good stewardship of government resources and tax revenues
 - Encourages economic security for both businesses and workers
4. Ensure that all Missourians have access to affordable health care through government-private partnerships that promote personal responsibility while ensuring medical care is available to the most vulnerable.

Priorities

Respecting the Sanctity of Human Life

Strengthen Missouri's current informed consent law. Missouri's current informed consent law is inadequate and fails to protect women from misleading promotions by the abortion industry.

Ensure adequate funding for Alternatives to Abortion. This program provides assistance such as emergency housing, food, clothing, employment, health care, counseling and adoption services to women in crisis pregnancies.

Prevent taxpayer funding of human cloning or unethical life science experiments. Abortion, embryonic stem cell experiments, human cloning and similar procedures attack the sanctity and dignity of human life. These procedures offend the moral sensibilities of Missourians and should not be subsidized with taxpayer dollars or insurance premiums.

Enact a moratorium on the death penalty. As part of the process of forming a consensus against the death penalty, the MCC supports a halt on executions while the fairness of the death penalty system is examined.

Ensuring Fair Taxation and a State Budget that Upholds the Common Good

The Missouri State budget should uphold the common good through the following principles:

- Respect the sanctity and dignity of human life.
- Protect the most vulnerable.
- Call for common sacrifice from all agencies of government.
- Require good stewardship of government resources and tax

revenues.

- Encourage economic security for both businesses and workers.

Missouri taxes should be just and adhere to the following principles:

- All citizens have the duty/right to contribute to the common good in proportion to their ability and means. One usual way is the payment of taxes to support government.
- Government has the duty to collect sufficient revenue to promote the common good and to deliver the services that are best rendered through government.
- The burden of taxes should be in proportion to the citizens' ability to pay.
- For government to tax in excess of the requirement of the common good or to waste tax revenue is unjust since this unfairly deprives the citizen of his property and the produce of his labor without a corresponding common benefit.
- The taxation and appropriation process should allow government the necessary flexibility for responsible fiscal management adaptable to changing circumstances and priorities.

Meeting Basic Human Needs

Ensure access to affordable healthcare. Missouri should consider all funding options (public and private) to expand health care coverage to uninsured and underinsured people. Government programs such as Medicaid and other forms of public assistance should not include coverage for abortion, contraceptives and other unethical practices.

Prohibit predatory lending practices. Current law permits lending practices that prey on economically disadvantaged individuals in need of credit. MCC supports further regulation of lenders to ensure

consumer protection as well as the development of effective financing alternatives for the poor.

Access to affordable housing. Laws and policies regarding lending and foreclosure practices should be evaluated in light of the current increase in home foreclosures. Adequate funding should be provided for assistance for the homeless and the development of low income housing for the poor.

Strengthening the Family

Federal and state laws should protect marriage as being between a man and a woman. As instituted by God and evident in the Natural Law, marriage is a union between a man and a woman and should be upheld through federal and state laws. Congress should submit a proposed constitutional amendment protecting marriage to the states for ratification.

Adoption should be promoted and made more accessible. Missouri should promote adoption awareness, adoption counseling, tax credits for adoptive parents and adoption subsidies to encourage families to adopt children from the state's foster care system.

Tax credits should be available for parents who stay at home to care for their preschool children. While the MCC supports adequate funding of daycare services for working parents, state policy should also support parents who choose to stay at home and care for their children.

Welfare services for children and the elderly should be adequately funded. Reimbursement rates for Catholic Charity agencies and other organizations under contract with the state of Missouri to provide services to children and the elderly should reflect the actual cost of providing care.

Welcoming the Immigrant and Refugee

Comprehensive federal immigration reform should protect the dignity of persons regardless of legal status while recognizing national sovereignty.

The U.S. Bishops state:

“Without condoning undocumented migration, the Church supports the human rights of all people and offers them pastoral care, education, and social services, no matter what the circumstances of entry into this country, and it works for the respect of the human dignity of all – especially those who find themselves in desperate circumstances. We recognize that nations have the right to control their borders. We also recognize and strongly assert that all human persons, created as they are in the image of God, possess a fundamental dignity that gives rise to a more compelling claim to the conditions worthy of human life. Accordingly, the Church also advocates legalization opportunities for the maximum number of undocumented persons, particularly those who have built equities and otherwise contributed to their communities.”

(“Welcoming the Stranger Among Us” A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, Nov. 2000)

The MCC supports comprehensive immigration reform that includes: a temporary worker program with appropriate worker protections, reduced waiting times for family reunification, recognition of due process rights, and establishment of a path to legal citizenship for undocumented persons.

Investing in a Quality Education for All

Parents have a fundamental right to select schools (public, private, religious, or home) that meet the

needs of their children. Government should provide sufficient financial assistance (tax deductions, credits, scholarships) so that parents can exercise their fundamental right to select schooling that meets the needs of their children and is in accord with their convictions.

Federal and state education programs should be equitably available to all children. Laws should not discriminate between public, private or home school students in the provisions of educational services.

Reconciling Offenders, Victims and the Community

Funding for public defenders should be expanded. Additional funding should be provided to Missouri’s public defender system to address heavy caseloads and low salaries that lead to miscarriages of justice.

Correctional policies should facilitate the successful return of the offender to society. The MCC supports alternative sentencing options such as drug courts, the Missouri re-entry program and probation and parole policies that enhance public safety. The lifetime food stamp ban for drug offenders should be repealed.

Assistance for crime victims should be provided. The MCC supports Missouri’s efforts to meet the needs of crime victims and their families.

Sustaining Rural and Farm Communities

Sustainable family farms and rural communities should be promoted. State and federal public policies should ensure stable rural communities, support family-based agriculture, promote land stewardship and protect the safety

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Women and the Abortion Industry: Hasty Decisions, Lifelong Regrets



The abortion industry markets itself as a champion of women’s rights, but the manner in which their clinics “process”

women for abortions is deeply suspect by any measure of standard medical practice.

A primary abortion provider is Planned Parenthood. The organization’s abortion clinic in St. Louis, Reproductive Health Services, performs most of the abortions in Missouri, and it is a high volume operation.

In its most recent report, covering the fiscal year of July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007, St. Louis Planned Parenthood reports performing 6,396 abortions. Most of these abortions, 5,500, were surgical abortions.

By any measure, that is a lot of surgical abortions for one clinic to perform in a single year. Averaged out, it means that Planned Parenthood’s St. Louis clinic is performing 105 surgical abortions a week. Put another way, this clinic is completing 21 surgical abortions per day, or 2.6 surgical abortions per hour in an eight hour day.

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of the domestic food supply. The impact of federal farm subsidies on the economic viability of family farms should be evaluated.

Public policy should support initiatives that develop local food systems. Locally grown and marketed food can benefit local economies, farmers and provide fresh, healthy food to consumers. State and federal agricultural policy should stimulate the development of local agricultural production and markets.

Agricultural operations that pose potential risk to local communities and environments should be regulated to protect the public health and safety. Certain agricultural operations may pose health and safety risks to neighbors and local communities.

Government regulation should protect the public while ensuring the economic viability of farm operations. The human rights of migrant farm workers should be protected.

Respecting God's Creation

Public Policy should promote good stewardship and protection of natural resources.

In his Message for World Day of Peace 2010, Pope Benedict XVI states, "Natural resources should be used in such a way that immediate benefits do not have a negative impact on living creatures, human and not, present and future; that the protection of private property does not conflict with the universal destination of goods; that human activity does not compromise

the fruitfulness of the earth, for the benefit of people now and in the future."

Public policy addressing environmental concerns should not disproportionately affect the poor. The poor are the most affected by environmental degradation, but are least able to do anything about it. The poor should be protected from undue economic burdens caused by the implementation of environmental policies.

Care for the earth should include care for all of God's people. The livability of the earth depends upon not only good stewardship of natural resources, but also compassionate solidarity with all the people of the earth and respect for the sanctity and dignity of all human life from conception until natural death.