WCC 2013 Public Policy Positions

As the new legislative session begins, the WCC is sharing its 2013 Public Policy Positions document with Catholics around the state, legislators, and other policy makers.

The document is organized around the major themes of Catholic social teaching. Each section begins with a short statement affirming a principle of Catholic social teaching and shares the WCC’s stance on a number of related policy issues.

An edited version of the document follows. For a complete version, visit www.wisconsincatholic.org.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person. Every human person is created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, each person’s life and dignity must be respected from conception to natural death.

- Oppose abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, and the death penalty.
- Oppose cloning and stem cell research that destroys human embryos.
- Support alternatives to abortion for women facing unplanned pregnancies.
- Support efforts to halt domestic violence and assist victims.
- Support the aging, those with disabilities, and those who are chronically or terminally ill.

Family, Community, and Participation. The human person is not only sacred, but social. Marriage and family should be supported and strengthened, not undermined. Every person has a right to participate in social, economic, and political life.

- Encourage and strengthen marriage between one man and one woman.
- Respect and promote family unity in taxation, employment, and welfare policies.
- Protect children from abuse and neglect.
- Support parental choice in education.
- Support strong public education.
- Promote adoption and foster care.
- Require parental consent for medical treatments, including artificial contraception.
- Promote responsible sexuality.
- Assist all those affected by armed conflict.
- Support family farms.

Rights and Responsibilities.
Every person has a fundamental right to life. Each person also has a right to the conditions for living a decent life - faith and family, food and shelter, education and

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Director’s Corner
John Huebscher, Executive Director

As we do at the beginning of every legislative session, the Wisconsin Catholic Conference shares its Public Policy Positions for the upcoming two years (see page 1). These positions represent the official stance of our state’s Roman Catholic bishops. They are not, however, developed in isolation.

The positions themselves are grounded and organized around the principles of Catholic social teaching that provide the foundation for the statement on Political Responsibility approved by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. These themes provide the title for each of the sections in the WCC document.

Further, the positions within each section of the document reflect the studied insights of Catholics across Wisconsin who serve the Church in many ways.

The document is fashioned in consultation with many whose expertise and experience are formed in the day-to-day activities of their ministries. The positions expressed in the WCC document are framed based on the perspective of diocesan leaders in the offices of Catholic schools, Catholic Charities agencies, Family Ministry, Respect Life, Social Concerns, Catholic health care, and other church leaders.

Lay Catholics and parish priests who serve on our WCC Policy Advisory Group also review the draft and weigh in with their suggestions. The end result is that the document the bishops review, discuss, and approve at their fall Board meeting is the fruit of sound advice and counsel from many devoted people.

Of course, every legislative session presents unforeseen developments and surprises. As a result, no document of this sort can anticipate every piece of legislation that will emerge in the coming two years. But the WCC’s Public Policy Positions for 2013-14 provide a very sound basis for approaching and engaging the public policy debates that will occur over the ensuing two years.

WCC Backs 11x15 Prison Reform

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference is supporting a statewide campaign to reduce the state’s prison population by providing community-based substance abuse and mental health treatment for non-violent alcohol and drug offenders.

Organized by WISDOM, which represents about 125 congregations from 15 different religious denominations around the state, the “11x15 For Safer, Healthier Communities” campaign aims to expand the state’s Treatment Alternatives and Diversions (TAD) program, which currently authorizes annual state grants to six counties for the establishment and operation of community-based treatment programs.

The 11x15 campaign seeks to reduce Wisconsin’s prison population by half – to 11,000 inmates – by 2015. The number 11,000 was chosen because it would bring the state’s per capita incarceration rate in line with neighboring Minnesota, which has comparable crime rates and demographics. In addition, in 1995, Wisconsin’s prison population was around 11,000. Today it stands at about 22,000. In 1990, the Department of Corrections had a budget of $200 million. Today the budget is $1.3 billion.

Wisconsin has a far higher incarceration rate than neighboring Minnesota, which relies more heavily on community-based treatment for individuals with underlying mental health and addiction issues. Wisconsin also incarcerates African-Americans at a disproportionate rate. In 2007, Wisconsin had the highest incarceration rate of Black youth in the nation.

The increases in Wisconsin’s prison population are attributable to many factors: the war on drugs, poverty, unemployment, educational failure, family disintegration, and racial bias. But there are also institutional reasons for Wisconsin’s high rate of incarceration: truth-in-sentencing, lengthy community supervision, and the high number of revocations.

Interested readers can contact Barbara Sella (Barbara@wiscincatholic.org) for more information. Catholics at the Capitol on April 10 will include a breakout session on the 11x15 campaign.
What to Expect in 2013-14 Session

The 101st Wisconsin Legislature was sworn in on January 7. The Senate is controlled by 18 Republicans, while the Democrats have 15 votes. The Assembly is also controlled by 60 Republicans; the Democrats number 39.

The first order of business of the new legislative session will be passing the biennial budget. Governor Walker will submit his budget to the Legislature in February. He has stated that his budget priorities will be job creation, workforce training, tax cuts, education reform (expanding parental choice vouchers and linking state aid for public education to student performance), and transportation infrastructure.

The Governor’s budget will be sent to the Joint Finance Committee of the Legislature, which will hold public hearings, make its own changes, and then pass their version of the budget. Sometime in late spring, the proposed budget will be sent to either the Senate or the Assembly, which will make its own changes, pass it, and then send it to the other house for deliberation and passage. By early to mid-summer, the amended budget will be sent back to the Governor for any vetoes and his final signature. By a two-thirds vote, the Legislature can override the Governor’s vetoes.

Governor Walker has also stated publicly that he supports bills to promote mining and venture capital, but that he does not support ending same-day voter registration, permitting “right-to-work”, hindering immigrants, and changing the Government Accountability Board at this time.

2013-14 Floor Session Schedule

Legislative committees will conduct public hearings throughout the next two years of the legislative session. However, the vital activities of debating and voting on bills takes place during the “floor periods” of each legislative session. These floor periods are established by Joint Resolution on the first day of each two year session. The Legislature has identified the following dates as its floor periods for the 2013-14 session.

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WCC will report regularly on legislative developments in the Capitol Reports and via regular “Capitol Update” emails. If you wish to receive these updates please contact the WCC at office@wisconsincatholic.org.

LEGISLATIVE LEADERS

State Senate
Majority Leader: Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau)
Minority Leader: Chris Larson (D-Milwaukee)

Chairs of Key Committees
Joint Finance: Alberta Darling (R-River Hills)
Education: Luther Olsen (R-Ripon)
Health: Leah Vukmir (R-Wauwatosa)
Judiciary: Glenn Grothman (R-West Bend)

Assembly
Speaker: Robin Vos (R-Burlington)
Minority Leader: Peter Barca (D-Kenosha)

Chairs of Key Committees
Joint Finance: John Nygren (R-Marinette)
Education: Steve Kestell (R-Elkhart Lake)
Health: Erik Severson (R-Star Prairie)
Judiciary: Jim Ott (R-Mequon)
2013 Policy Positions, from page 1

employment, health care, and housing.

- Support equitable taxation and sound fiscal policies.
- Protect religious freedom and conscience.
- Support healthy lifestyles.
- Support crime victims and restorative justice for offenders.
- Support law enforcement personnel and all who help preserve public safety.

Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. The Church calls on all of us to embrace a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, to embody it in our lives, and to work to have it shape public policies and priorities.

- Make affordable health care available to all.
- Eliminate hunger.
- Support safe and affordable housing.
- Prohibit predatory lending.
- Return 17-year-olds to the juvenile justice system.

Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s act of creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, the basic rights of workers, owners, and others must be respected.

- Support living wages for workers and their families.
- Protect workers’ rights.
- Remove barriers to employment.
- Foster employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Solidarity. We are all one human family and we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they may be.

- Uphold human rights of immigrants and refugees.
- Participate justly in the global economy.

Care for God’s Creation. The world that God created has been entrusted to us. We show our respect for the Creator by our care for creation.

- Promote sustainable farming.
- Support clean land, air, and water.
- Encourage conservation and sustainable energy.
Catholics at the Capitol
Reclaiming the Common Good in the Year of Faith
Wednesday, April 10, 2013
8:15am - 4:00pm
Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center
Madison, Wisconsin

Sponsored by the Wisconsin Catholic Conference
in cooperation with Catholic Charities, Diocesan Offices of Social Concerns and Respect Life, the Catholic Health Association of Wisconsin, the Diocesan Councils of Catholic Women—Province of Milwaukee, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Region 9, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Councils.

GENERAL INFORMATION

WHO SHOULD ATTEND: All those interested in learning more about Catholic social teaching and how to advocate effectively.

COST: $37/person for advance registration
$12/students (secondary, full-time post-secondary)
$47/person same-day registration
Includes continental breakfast and lunch

ADVANCE REGISTRATION DEADLINE: April 1, 2013

REFUND POLICY: Refunds will be available to those cancelling registration prior to April 3, 2013. Cancellations received after this date are not eligible for a registration fee refund, including those due to inclement weather.

CONFIRMATION OF REGISTRATION: Once your registration is received, a confirmation will be sent to you, including a map, parking information, and instructions for those who wish to coordinate meetings with their legislators. Attendees are encouraged to set up appointments with legislators in advance of the day. Please contact the WCC for more assistance, or visit www.wisconsincatholic.org for more information and updates on the day’s events.

PARKING: The Monona Terrace Parking Ramp is open to the public and costs $.75 per half hour with a $12.00 a day maximum until 5pm (payment by cash, Visa, or MasterCard). Entrances to the ramp are located on W. Wilson St., just south of Carroll St., or off John Nolen Dr. Disabled parking stalls are available on the top ramp and in front of the Level Three entrance.

TRANSPORTATION: The Capitol Building is located two blocks from the Monona Terrace. Those who need assistance traveling to the Capitol should request accommodation in advance (see reverse).

Certain dioceses are arranging for transportation. Please contact your diocesan office for social concerns or justice for more information. If you are traveling from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, please indicate if you have registered, or will register, for the Badger Coach bus (see reverse).

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS:
Please make arrangements for accommodations directly with the hotel. No rooms are on reserve.

- Hilton Madison Monona Terrace (connected to site)
  www.hiltonmadison.com, 1-800-445-8667
- Best Western Inn on the Park (2 blocks from site)
  www.innonthepark.net, 1-800-279-8811
- Madison Concourse Hotel (6 blocks from site)
  http://concoursehotel.com, 1-800-356-8293

Keynote address by The Most Reverend Peter F. Christensen
Bishop of Superior, Wisconsin

www.wisconsincatholic.org
Catholics at the Capitol
Reclaiming the Common Good in the Year of Faith
Wednesday, April 10, 2013
Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center, Madison
8:15am - 4:00pm

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

8:15am  Registration with Continental Breakfast
9:15am  Opening Prayer Service
9:45am  Introduction and Keynote Address
11:00am Breakout Sessions A

A1. Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching: Review the principles that are the basis for
the Church’s public policy advocacy.
A2. Our First, Most Cherished Liberty: Examine Catholic teaching on religious liberty
and discuss challenges to the exercise of religious liberty in Wisconsin and nationwide.
A3. Prison Reform in Wisconsin: Learn about criminal justice reform and the 11x15
initiative to significantly reduce the number of incarcerated in Wisconsin.
A4. The Church’s Teaching on Life-Sustaining Treatment: Review Catholic teaching
regarding chronic or end-of-life care and the provision of life-sustaining treatments.
A5. Environmental Stewardship: Explore the concerns and benefits of mining in
Wisconsin and discuss those in the context of the Church’s teaching on stewardship.
A6. Marriage and Society: Review Church teaching on marriage and family and learn
about the state of both in Wisconsin.
A7. Peace and Nonviolence in the Holy Land: Explore Church teaching on the role of the
state, focusing on developments in and around the Holy Land.

12:00pm  Luncheon
1:10pm  Breakout Sessions B

B1. Solidarity and Subsidiarity: Review Church teaching on the responsibility of all for
all. Discuss how both church and state can help meet basic needs and protect rights.
B2. Our First, Most Cherished Liberty: See above.
B3. Prison Reform in Wisconsin: See above.
B4. The Dignity of Life: Discuss human life and dignity as a matter of social justice and
learn about advocating for a renewed culture of life.
B5. Health Care for the Poor, Vulnerable, and Aging: Examine current issues for those
most in need of access to quality, affordable health care in Wisconsin.
quality employment and learn how to sponsor a job search event.
B7. Parental Choice in Education: Learn about parental choice options in Wisconsin and
discuss efforts to expand and revise private parental choice programs.

2:25pm  General Session: Panel Discussion
3:30pm  Leave for Capitol Visits

Registration deadline: April 1, 2013

Please make check payable to: Wisconsin Catholic Conference, 131 W. Wilson St., Suite 1105, Madison, WI, 53703
NAME: __________________________ DIOCESE: __________________________
ADDRESS: __________________________
(Street) __________________________ (City) __________________________ (Zip) ____________
PHONE: __________________________ EMAIL: __________________________

BREAKOUT SESSION PREFERENCE: Session A _____ (please select from 1-7)
Session B _____ (please select from 1-7)

☐ I have registered for the Milwaukee Badger Coach at 414-758-2285/shinek@archmil.org.
Please identify special needs:
☐ I have a special accommodation request. Please contact me.
☐ I have dietary restrictions. (Some requirements may incur an additional fee.)
Please describe: __________________________

ADVANCE REGISTRATION FEES
Registration deadline: April 1, 2013
Individual ☐ $37
Student (full-time) ☐ $12
Only cash or check accepted.
TOTAL Enclosed $ _______