The 2015-16 legislative session ended with 392 acts signed into law. The following summarizes proposals of interest to the WCC.

**Dignity of Human Life.** The WCC supported several pro-life bills that became law. Act 56 prohibits the abortion of an unborn child considered capable of experiencing pain, except to save the life of the mother. Act 345 permits an employee to take unpaid leave for the purpose of serving as a bone marrow or organ donor. Act 5 mandates the creation and distribution of posters that list the national human trafficking resource center hotline.

The WCC supported a failed bill to prohibit the sale and use of abortion-derived fetal body parts and opposed a failed bill that would have permitted assisted suicide.

**Children and Families.** The WCC supported Act 367, which defines child sex trafficking as child abuse. The WCC also supported two failed measures. The first would have extended investigations of individuals suspected of child trafficking. The second would have required employers to provide reasonable break time and a private space for a breast-feeding employee to express breast milk.

The WCC took no position on Act 35, which extends certain privileges, responsibilities, and immunities that currently apply to schools in the use of epinephrine auto-injectors to an entity that operates as a business or activity, including but not limited to camps, universities, day care facilities, sports leagues, amusement parks, restaurants, and places of employment.

**Education.** The WCC took no position on several bills affecting student health and safety. Act 46 requires the operator or manager of a school lunchroom that participates in the national lunch program to hold a certificate of food protection practices. Act 390 expands certain lifesaving skills instruction, beginning in the 2017-18 school year, to each school that operates any grade from 7 to 12. Students in these grades must receive automated external defibrillator instruction and any health education course must include cardiopulmonary and cardiocerebral resuscitation.

No position was also taken on several bills enacted affecting Wisconsin educational choice programs. Act 289 alters certain administrative requirements for the Special Needs Scholarship Program. Act 212 makes changes to the formulas used for calculating school report cards, alters procedures for independent
**Director’s Corner**  
**Kim Wadas, Executive Director**

The recent election – only the second election where Wisconsin voters were required to provide valid photo identification – was a reminder of how important identification has become in our society. One need only try to purchase certain decongestants at the pharmacy to learn the value of having a photo ID. Identification is increasingly a necessity for leading a healthy, dignified, and productive life.

Catholic teaching affirms the principle of family, community, and participation, which recognizes that our society benefits when every person is fully engaged and working for the common good. However, without valid identification it is extremely difficult to be a fully functioning member of our society. Identification is used to gain employment, move safely within a community, purchase goods and services, and confirm identity.

By focusing on a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, the Catholic Church also makes certain that any action or public policy is first measured in terms of how it affects those living with fiscal or physical challenges. While a free Wisconsin photo ID is available to vote, too many of those living in poverty who need an ID for non-voting purposes are unable to obtain one. Those under 18, on extended supervision, probation, or parole for a felony, and others who cannot access the ballot are all prevented from accessing a no-cost form of identification. As with the voting ID, individuals must complete forms, supply documentation (that may require fees to obtain), and visit a Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) customer service center, but unlike those seeking a voter ID, they must also pay fees – $28 for an ID and $35 for a drivers’ license. For those who lack ability or funds, this process can be overwhelming. Yet, these same individuals are often the ones most in need of identification – to obtain public services, to access public transit, to enter educational institutions, and to operate within their community.

As Catholics, we are called to ensure that above all else, our policies best serve those affected by age, disability, ill health, poverty, addiction, etc. We must affirm respect for the dignity of the human person by ensuring that the most vulnerable can confirm their identity and participate fully in community life.

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**Wisconsin Women Religious Combat Human Trafficking**

The Wisconsin Region of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR-Region 9) recently distributed a new parish-based toolkit to every parish in Wisconsin to raise awareness about a modern-day form of slavery. Tragically, Milwaukee is a national hub for human traffickers, particularly sex traffickers. Other parts of Wisconsin serve as a human trafficking route between Chicago and the Twin Cities.

The toolkit, which is endorsed by Wisconsin’s bishops, is intended for use in adult faith formation, pro-life/social concerns groups, and interfaith dialogues. Materials can be adapted for educating teens.

The toolkit includes:
- A resource sheet of Wisconsin anti-human trafficking speakers, advocacy groups, websites, and social media sites.
- Cards with the national anti-trafficking hotline, 1-888-373-7888.
- Two DVDs that focus on sex trafficking.
- Wisconsin-based infographics about sex trafficking and labor trafficking.
- A PowerPoint presentation on human trafficking in Wisconsin.
- A facilitator’s guide.

In their letter of support, Wisconsin’s bishops praised the work of the LCWR in raising awareness about this issue: “Catholic women religious around the world have been among the most active in the fight against human trafficking. They have rescued, housed, healed, educated, and found good employment for thousands of victims. They have tirelessly lobbied governments and businesses for stricter laws and stronger protections. We are deeply grateful to the sisters of our state for making this rich collection of resources available at no cost to every parish in Wisconsin.”

financial audits of schools participating in the state's three parental choice programs, and allows for civics exam requirements to be individualized for students with special needs. Act 338 requires that if a school for which the State must issue an accountability report maintains a website, the school must post a prominent link to its most recent accountability report on the website within 30 days after the report is released.

The WCC took no position on Act 359, which expands loan forgiveness to recipients who are employed full-time in rural school districts as public and private school teachers in high-demand teacher shortage fields. Nor did it take a position on Act 23, which establishes rules for allowing off-duty and former law enforcement officers to enter school grounds with fire arms.

The WCC supported a failed bill which would have expanded when a pupil’s parent or guardian may opt a student out of certain statewide examinations.

**Health Care.** The WCC supported Act 151, which requires the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to apply for federal Title X family planning services funds. If awarded, the DHS would be prohibited from awarding Title X funds to nonprofit entities that provide abortion services or have an affiliate that provides abortion services. Planned Parenthood, the current grant recipient, receives $3.5 million annually from this program. (Planned Parenthood may continue to apply directly to the federal government for the funds.)

The WCC took no position on two bills that were signed into law. Act 152 requires that nonprofit entities that provide abortion services or have an affiliate that provides abortion services and receive Title X funds use the actual acquisition cost for a 340B program drug, together with the standard dispensing fee, as the basis for any Medical Assistance (MA or Medicaid) reimbursement. Act 215 permits a Long Term Care District (LTCD) with a contract to operate as a Managed Care Organization (MCO) to create a state-recognized nonstock, nonprofit corporation or a service insurance corporation, which may assume the MCO contract.

**Social Concerns.** The WCC testified for information on Act 1, which creates a state right to work law.

The WCC testified for information on Act 374, which regulates and limits the use of photo identification cards issued by local units of government. It also testified for information on a failed bill that would have fined so-called “sanctuary cities,” which prevent police from asking those facing criminal charges about their immigration status.

**Criminal Justice.** The WCC supported a failed bill to increase the amount of compensation given to innocent individuals who are wrongfully imprisoned by the State of Wisconsin.

**Tax and Institutional.** Several bills were enacted regarding cemetery administration. The WCC testified for information on what became Act 237, which maintains some of the current regulatory exemptions for cemeteries operated by nonprofit religious institutions and broadens the definition of applicable religious associations. However, religious cemeteries must have a policy addressing the inheritance of cemetery lots in which human remains are buried or be subject to new statutory provisions. All cemeteries will also have to adhere to new record-keeping requirements. The WCC took no position on Act 95, which provides an exemption for religious associations, allowing columbaria (enclosed niches for cremated remains) on religiously-owned land that contains a place of worship.

The WCC took no position on several bills that affect charitable organizations. Act 364 expands the sales tax exemption for occasional sales made by nonprofit organizations. Act 6 expands the approved activities permitted for raffles. Act 163 modifies many of the limits related to registration and other reporting requirements for charitable organizations, fundraisers, and professional employer organizations.
New Resource Consolidates Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic social teaching (CST) is one of the Church’s greatest treasures. Though rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, CST derives its distinctive nature from Jesus, who called on all his followers to serve the hungry and the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked and visit the ill and the incarcerated (Matthew 25). Over the centuries, this teaching has been deepened and broadened to encompass much of the social activity of humanity, especially as it relates to the most vulnerable.

In the U.S., Catholic social teaching has usually been organized around seven principles—right to life and dignity of the human person; call to family, community, and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor and vulnerable; dignity of work and rights of workers; solidarity; and care for God’s creation. These seven principles have formed the basis of the Faithful Citizenship series that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has disseminated every four years.

Recent papal writings, however, have distilled the principles to four—dignity of the human person, common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. Following suit, the USCCB last year reorganized its national statement, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States, to reflect this ordering. As a result, the Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) is reviewing and revising its Faithful Citizenship materials, with the revised publications available for use in parishes later this summer. At that time, the materials will also be available through the link “Faithful Citizenship Resources” at www.wisconsincatholic.org.