

## **ARIZONA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE 2007 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

By Ron Johnson  
*Arizona Catholic Conference*

The Arizona Catholic Conference (ACC) is the public policy voice of the Dioceses of Tucson, Phoenix, and Gallup, and represents the Church on legislative matters. Our core beliefs involve respect for all human life from conception until natural death. While some issues are always more important than others, our priorities reflect the most significant issues of our time and are based on this central theme of Catholic teaching.

The following outline provides a survey of the issues contained in the ACC's 2007 Legislative Agenda. Each section contains a brief quotation of relevant Catholic teaching and then lists several concrete legislative proposals pertinent to each subject area. It should be noted that this outline is not meant to provide a comprehensive listing of bills that may arise during the session, but it is a good reflection of the ACC's legislative priorities.

### **LIFE ISSUES**

*"In the case of an intrinsically unjust law, such as a law permitting abortion or euthanasia, it is therefore never licit to obey it, or to take part in a propaganda campaign in favor of such a law, or vote for it." (John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, #73)*

There can be no more important legislative efforts than those aimed at protecting innocent human life. Similarly, all laws and policies should support the civil rights of people with religious convictions who refuse to cooperate in such evil actions.

- Support "rights of conscience" for all health care institutions and workers from any participation in morally objectionable activities (abortion, contraception, emergency contraception, assisted suicide, euthanasia, and sterilization) that are intrinsically evil
- Support state funding for adult stem cell research
- Preserve state funding for crisis pregnancy centers
- Oppose efforts to mandate the provision of "emergency contraception" (i.e., morning after pills)
- Oppose the legalization of physician assisted suicide
- Provide better legal representation of death row inmates

### **DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE**

*"If it is true that all Catholics are obliged to oppose the legal recognition of homosexual unions, Catholic politicians are obliged to do so in a particular way, in keeping with their responsibility as politicians." (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Considerations Regarding Proposals To Give Legal Recognition To Unions Between*

### *Homosexual Persons, #10)*

The nature of marriage as a lifelong union between a man and a woman has predated all laws and even organized religion. Marriage is the foundation of the family and the family is the basic unit of society. Consequently, there is a significant public policy interest in defending the traditional definition of marriage and its special place in society.

- Support abstinence until marriage funding
- Oppose efforts to create marriage counterfeits (e.g., civil unions)
- Eliminate existing marriage penalties in state law

## **HEALTH, WELFARE AND EDUCATION**

*“[T]he public authorities must do everything possible to ensure that families have all those aids – economic, social, educational, political and cultural assistance – that they need in order to face all their responsibilities in a human way.” (John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, #45)*

The Catholic Church places great value on the family as well as the fundamental rights of parents in decisions impacting the education of their children. Additionally, the Church has well established teaching emphasizing a “preferential option for the poor.” The ACC’s 2007 Legislative Agenda addresses these issues, which are often interwoven with each other, especially in light of the large numbers of families living in poverty.

- Streamline the existing income tax credit to charitable organizations serving the working poor.
- Support and preserve school choice measures, including tuition tax credits and vouchers
- Support the removal of “kid cap” provisions currently prohibiting children conceived while the family is on TANF (welfare) from receiving benefits
- Preserve General Assistance funding for very low income people awaiting approval of Social Security Disability benefits
- Expand the definition of eligible children under the Kiscare Program to include unborn children

## **IMMIGRATION**

*“Attention must be called to the rights of migrants and their families and to respect for their human dignity, even in cases of non-legal immigration.” (John Paul II, Ecclesia in America, #65)*

Today’s undocumented immigrants largely come to our country for reasons of economic despair and family unification. Their remarkable faith and piety can be a great asset to our society. Our country clearly has the right to protect its borders, but we must not forget to provide undocumented immigrants with the basic inalienable rights to which all people are entitled while working for meaningful immigration reform at the federal level.

- Support comprehensive immigration reform, including a guest worker program

- Oppose proposals mandating that local governments cannot accept matricula consular cards as a form of identification
- Maintain trust in local law enforcement so that undocumented immigrants feel safe to report crimes without fear of their own deportation and leave the enforcement of immigration laws to federal officers