

**ARIZONA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
2006 LEGISLATIVE SESSION
FINAL UPDATE**

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Enormous Success for ACC's Legislative Agenda

On Thursday, June 22nd, the Arizona Legislature adjourned sine die at 12:12 a.m. after spending 164 days in session.

A record 1,587 bills, memorials, and resolutions were introduced during what amounted to the fifth longest session in Arizona history. While 438 bills were passed by the Legislature, the Governor vetoed 43 of these measures, setting an all-time record for vetoes.

For its own part, the Arizona Catholic Conference (ACC) had enormous success during the 2006 legislative session on a wide variety of the most important public policy matters that were considered. Of particular note, the ACC was able to defeat virtually all of the bills it opposed, as well as pass many of the most important bills that were supported.

Sanctity of Life

One of the most significant life issues this session remained the rights of conscience for healthcare providers (e.g., pharmacists, doctors, and nurses) that are being pressured to participate in the taking of innocent human life through abortion or the provision of abortifacients such as "emergency contraception."

During the recently concluded session, the ACC was able to defeat legislation that would have statutorily mandated healthcare providers to either provide, or immediately refer, for "emergency contraception" (i.e., the morning after pill). While these bills (SB 1518 and HB 2414) were both being defeated, the ACC also was successful in working to make sure that legislation to legalize assisted suicide (HB 2313 and HB 2314) did not even receive a hearing.

With respect to life issues supported by the ACC, several bills were successfully passed into law that will greatly protect human life. Among these bills are measures that will accomplish the following: 1) make it easier for baby safe havens at churches to use volunteers (SB 1427); 2) provide \$500,000 in new funding for crisis pregnancy centers (HB 2863); 3) establish a statewide public defender's office to provide quality legal representation to those facing the death penalty (SB 1376); and 4) create an appropriation to promote the donation of umbilical cord blood for ethical stem cell research (HB 2286).

The ACC also supported six pro-life bills that were vetoed by Governor Janet Napolitano, including measures to require a parent's notarized signature before an abortion (HB 2776) and a codification of procedures that a minor must follow prior to obtaining a judicial bypass for an abortion (HB 2666). The other disappointing pro-life vetoes included measures that would have prevented cities from offering abortion services in their employee health plans (SB 1325); provided informed consent for human egg donors (SB 1097); disallowed the sale of human eggs for cloning purposes (HB 2142); and required that pregnant women receive information about fetal pain before a late-term abortion (HB 2254).

Families and Children

A historic victory for parents and children was accomplished with the passage of several educational choice measures that will benefit thousands of disadvantaged students. These bills include the creation of a corporate tuition tax credit (SB 1499) and its expansion from \$5 million to \$10 million later in the session with an annual 20 percent increase in subsequent years (SB 1404).

The first voucher bills in Arizona were also remarkably signed into law this session. These bills will provide \$2.5 million each for disabled (HB 2676) and foster (SB 1164) children to attend the school that best fits their needs.

Another measure to assist school children was successful when state funding for abstinence-only education was increased from \$1 million to \$1.5 million (HB 2863). Unfortunately, however, relatively straightforward bills that would have allowed payroll deductions for tuition tax credits (SB 1151) and provided for better implementation of the corporate tuition tax credit (SB 1071) were vetoed.

In a different manner, the ACC also worked on legislation that would have benefited children by creating a preference for married couples in public adoptions (HB 2696); and partially eliminated the cap on welfare benefits to any newborn children born after their mothers began receiving welfare benefits (HB 2320). Both bills were approved by the House but stalled in the Senate.

Immigration

Immigration continued to be one of the most hotly contested issues of the legislative session with several dozen of these measures being introduced.

Among the immigration laws that the ACC opposed was a new proposal to make all undocumented immigrants living in Arizona a criminal (SB 1157). Governor Napolitano vetoed this legislation as well as another bill (HB 2577) that, among other things, would have denied in-state college tuition to undocumented immigrants; prohibited cities from using matricula consular cards as a form of identification; mandated local police to enforce federal immigration laws; and created another trespass crime for undocumented immigrants.

While the worst of the immigration bills were thwarted, the Legislature did send to the ballot a proposed constitutional amendment to make English the Official Language (HCR 2036) and a measure to further deny public benefits to undocumented immigrants (SCR 1031). Of these measures, SCR 1031 remains the most problematic as it will prevent many non-citizen children who grew up in Arizona and graduated from our schools from receiving in-state college tuition and having a chance to better their lives.

Vulnerable Populations

The destruction of human lives through addictions to methamphetamine is a large and growing problem in our society. The problems with methamphetamine addictions require solutions that will provide treatment, prevention, and increased law enforcement. Accordingly, the ACC supported HB 2554, which is a comprehensive effort to curb methamphetamine usage through an approximately \$8 million appropriation to be spread throughout Arizona.

Regarding social service programs, the ACC also worked to introduce efforts that would have expanded donations to these organizations by simplifying the charitable organization/ working

poor tax credit. While these proposals (HB 2560, SB 1544, and SB 1151) did not become law, they gained much momentum in their first year and will return next session.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Arizona Catholic Conference had a tremendously successful year on the most significant bills of interest to the Catholic community in Arizona. As preparations begin for next year's regular session, the ACC will continue to remain vigilant in both promoting and defending these issues in the public policy arena.

We are especially grateful to all of the many people who took the time to make calls, e-mails, or pray, when requested to take such actions. As always, please encourage anybody you know to sign up to receive free e-mail updates at www.azcatholicconference.org so that we may continue to grow the influence of the Church on these matters.