

**ARIZONA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE  
2005 LEGISLATIVE SESSION  
FINAL UPDATE**

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**Big Wins for ACC's Legislative Agenda**

On Friday, May 13th, the Arizona Legislature adjourned sine die at 1:25 a.m. after spending 123 days in session.

A record 1,443 bills, memorials, and resolutions were introduced during what amounted to a very busy and often contentious session. While 392 bills were passed by the Legislature, the Governor, meanwhile, set another record by vetoing 58 of these measures.

For its own part, the Arizona Catholic Conference (ACC) had enormous success during the 2005 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 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 involved the rights of conscience for healthcare providers (e.g., pharmacists, Catholic hospitals, 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 1480 and HB 2250) were both being defeated, the ACC also initiated legislation to expand civil rights protections in this regard (HB 2541).

Amazingly, HB 2541 was passed by both the House and the Senate on its first attempt, despite much opposition. Although this bill was ultimately vetoed, the progress that was made raised substantial public awareness on this important issue and galvanized supporters.

With respect to other life issues supported by the ACC, bills to prohibit state funding of human cloning research (HB 2221), as well as a “fetal homicide” bill (SB 1052), both were passed and signed into law. Similarly, a \$1 million appropriation for abstinence-only funding was successfully restored in this year's state budget.

The ACC was also instrumental in introducing and getting an informational hearing for a bill (SB 1423) that would abolish the death penalty for all juveniles. Fortunately, less than two weeks after this hearing, the U.S. Supreme Court essentially made this matter moot by ruling the death penalty for juveniles to be unconstitutional.

It should also be noted that legislation legalizing physician-assisted suicide was once again introduced this year (HB 2311 and HB 2313). With the assistance of legislative leadership, however, neither of these problematic bills received a hearing.

### **Families and Children**

Protecting families and children was another primary focus for the ACC this session. In this respect, the ACC worked with other allies to successfully pass a memorial (HCM 2005) encouraging Congress to approve a federal constitutional amendment defining marriage as an institution exclusively involving one man and one woman.

A major victory for parents and children was also obtained with the successful elimination of existing marriage penalties in the tuition tax credit program (SB 1529). Millions of new dollars are now expected to be generated for Catholic school students as the maximum tuition tax credit allowed for married couples increases from its current \$625 to \$825 in 2005 and to \$1,000 in 2006.

Legislation to expand tuition tax credits to corporations and provide an additional \$5 million for low-income students switching to parochial or private schools (SB 1527) was also approved by the legislature, but subsequently vetoed. Despite this disappointing action, there remains a possibility that corporate tuition tax credits may still be approved and signed in an upcoming special session.

In a different manner, another family friendly bill (HB 2246) supported by the ACC would have benefited many children who are now permanently denied TANF (i.e., welfare) benefits solely because they were born after their mothers were receiving these benefits. HB 2246 was approved overwhelmingly by the House, but did not receive a timely hearing in the Senate. The momentum gained this session, however, will hopefully result in successful passage next year.

### **Immigration**

Immigration continued to be one of the most hotly contested issues of the legislative session. While the ACC opposed many of these bills, it successfully supported a measure that was signed into law (SB 1372) enabling better prosecution of those engaged in the illegal trafficking of human beings for the purposes of forced labor.

Among the anti-undocumented immigrant bills that the ACC opposed, was a proposal to have local police enforce federal immigration laws (SB 1306). Because the unintended consequences of SB 1306 would have resulted in many serious crimes being unreported, this bill was opposed by the ACC and various police organizations before being vetoed.

Similarly, bills that would have required state and local governments to exclusively use English for official actions (SB 1167) and prohibited the use of the matricula consular card by these entities for identification purposes (SB 1511) were opposed by the ACC and ultimately vetoed.

Also vetoed was a measure (HB 2030) opposed by the ACC that would have denied in-state college tuition to undocumented immigrants, including Arizona high school graduates that moved here with their parents at a very young age.

### **Vulnerable Populations**

Some of the most vulnerable populations in our state include disabled people that are either in shelters or very close to becoming homeless. A significant element of the state's budget, therefore, was the preservation of \$4.2 million in General Assistance funding that will serve as a bridge in helping these people while they apply for federal disability benefits.

Additionally, it is anticipated that many social service organizations, including Catholic charities, will now have an opportunity to expand their programs through increased revenues generated from the elimination of the marriage penalty on the working poor tax credit (SB 1529). The current \$200 maximum credit for married couples donating to these agencies will immediately increase to \$300 in 2005, ultimately reaching \$ 400 per couple in 2006.

Finally, it should be noted that an effort to curb the use of methamphetamine (SB 1473) was passed into law this session. As amended, this law requires cold remedies containing ingredients that are used to create methamphetamine to now be sold over the counter and limited to 9 grams per transaction.

### **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](http://www.azcatholicconference.org) so that we may continue to grow the influence of the Church on these matters.