

# CAPITOL

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# REPORT



The Newsletter of the  
Wisconsin Catholic Conference

## Bishops Approve WCC 2009 Policy Positions

The bishops have given final approval for the *WCC Public Policy Positions* that will guide the Conference and staff as they engage public policy debates in the 2009-10 legislative session. The positions reflect the seven principles of Catholic social teaching and their corresponding priorities as set forth by the U.S. bishops in their 2007 statement, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility*.

The WCC has identified a number of specific issues to each of these seven principles.

**Life and Dignity of the Human Person.** Human life is sacred from conception to natural death and the measure of every institution is whether it protects and respects all human persons. The WCC will support policies that:

- Protect all human life by opposing abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, and the death penalty
- Affirm the dignity of human life in medical and life science research
- Support women facing unplanned pregnancies with real alternatives
- Stop domestic abuse

- Support the aging, those with disabilities, the chronically ill, and the terminally ill

**Family, Community and Participation.** The human person is not only sacred, but also social. Every person has a right to participate in social, economic, and political life, and has a corresponding duty to work for the common good. The WCC will support policies that:

- Encourage and strengthen marriage
- Respect and promote family relationships
- Permit parents to select schools that are best suited to meet their child's needs
- Strengthen support for education
- Promote adoption and foster care
- Require parental consent for medical treatments
- Make children a priority
- Assist veterans, their families, and those affected by armed conflict
- Support family farms

**Rights and Responsibilities.** Each person has a right to the conditions for living a decent life—faith and family life, food and shelter,

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## Director's Corner

John Huebscher, Executive Director

For most of us the beginning of a new year is a hopeful season. In odd numbered years, January is also the beginning of a new two-year legislative cycle. Legislators, state agency leaders, advocates/lobbyists, and citizens take up anew the challenge of debating ideas and policies for our state.

This is true as well for the Wisconsin Catholic Conference. We share, as we do every two years, our legislative proposals and policy positions in the hope that they will influence for the better the course of Wisconsin's future.

As you review these positions, you will see that they are similar to those of past sessions. This similarity reflects the Church's timeless commitment to its principles and values. The similarities remind us that important challenges facing our society aren't resolved in 30-second sound bites, 26-week TV seasons, or even two-year legislative sessions. But so long as the challenges to do better remain, Catholics must embrace the opportunity to meet them.

And the WCC does so from its unique perspective.

When one reviews the WCC's policy stances, it is soon obvious the labels of "liberal" or "conservative" and "right" or "left" don't apply to a Catholic perspective on public policy. Some of our positions will be welcome to the legislature's new Democratic majority. Others will not be. Republican legislators will have similar mixed feelings as they examine the WCC's perspective on the issues.

The WCC cannot offer Democrats or Republicans its support in every debate. But we can offer a constructive approach to policy making. We can offer witness and testimony that sheds light, rather than heat, on policy deliberations.

Because we live in a flawed creation, we always need to do better. Because we are people of hope, we always think we can. So we go into 2009 hopeful that our advocacy will bear fruit.

## Key Floor Periods for 2009-10 Legislative Session

While legislative committees meet regularly throughout a legislative session, periods of vital activity occur during the "floor periods" when one or both houses are in session to vote on legislation. The major floor periods over the next two years are as follows:

### 2009

February 3-10

February 24-March 5

March 24-26

April 21-30

May 19-21

June 9-30 (or passage of the budget)

September 15-24

October 20-November 5

### 2010

January 19-28

February 16-March 4

April 13-22.

## Catholics at the Capitol

On Tuesday, March 31, 2009, Catholics from around the state will meet at the Monona Terrace Convention Center in Madison for *Catholics at the Capitol 2009*. Sponsored by the WCC, in cooperation with numerous Catholic organizations, this biennial event is a day of education, advocacy, and fellowship.

The theme for this year's event is "Hope in Action" and will feature breakout sessions on a variety of issues, including unemployment assistance, abortion, environmental justice, bioethics, payday lending, health care reform, and more. Bishop Paul J. Swain of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, will be providing the keynote address and speak on engaging in faithful citizenship.

Please join the WCC in celebrating its fortieth anniversary by attending this unique event. Deadline for registrations is Thursday, March 12, 2009, and the registration fee is \$33 for adults and \$10 for students. For more information, see the enclosed insert.

## Bishops Approve 2009 Policy Positions, *from page 1*

education and employment, health care and housing. We also have a duty to secure and respect these rights not only for ourselves, but also for others, and to fulfill our responsibilities to our families, to each other, and to the larger society. To this end, the WCC will support policies that:

- Provide an equitable tax system for the common good
- Protect religious freedom and conscience protection
- Encourage healthy lifestyles
- Reform the criminal justice system
- Protect law enforcement personnel and all who help preserve public safety

**Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.** Scripture teaches that God has a special concern for the poor and vulnerable. Jesus, who identified himself with “the least of these,” came to preach “good news to the poor, liberty to captives...and to set the downtrodden free.” In promoting the common good, we have a special duty to ensure that public policy continually addresses the needs of the poor and marginalized. Consequently, the WCC will support policies that:

- Make affordable health insurance available to all
- Eliminate hunger
- Increase funding for safe and affordable housing
- Prohibit predatory lending practices
- Ban employment discrimination against ex-offenders
- Reform the juvenile justice system

**Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers.** The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s act of creation. The WCC will support policies that:

- Provide living wages
- Foster employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

**Solidarity.** We are one human family. We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they may be. As Pope John Paul II wrote, “We are all really responsible for all.” The WCC will support policies that:

- Give undocumented immigrant children the opportunity to pursue affordable higher education
- Uphold human rights of immigrants and refugees

**Care for God’s Creation.** The world that God created has been entrusted to us. Our stewardship of the earth is a form of participation in God’s act of creating and sustaining the world. The WCC will support policies that:

- Encourage sustainable agriculture
- Assure clean land, air, and water
- Encourage conservation and sustainable energy

WCC Executive Director John Huebscher noted that these issues are not the only ones the WCC will engage in the coming legislative session.

“Every legislative session has its surprises. We expect that other bills and debates will surface that touch upon these principles and the values they uphold,” he noted. “When that happens, we will always refer back to these principles as points of reference for any position the Conference takes.”

“These seven principles have stood the test of time. We urge all Wisconsin’s citizens and lawmakers to make them the foundation of our public policies in order to better serve the common good.”

**CAPITOL REPORT** is published quarterly by the WCC to inform Catholics and policy decision makers of the WCC’s position on state and federal legislation and other WCC activities. Subscriptions are \$5 per calendar year.

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## Bishops Urge Opposition to “Freedom of Choice Act”

The U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops will be launching a postcard campaign in late January and early February to protest any attempt to pass into law the “Freedom of Choice Act” (FOCA). If FOCA were to be signed into law, it would not merely codify *Roe v. Wade*, it would make abortion a “fundamental right.” Moreover, it would negate all the reasonable limits that states have put in place since 1973.

Laws mandating regulations on abortion clinics, waiting periods, parental notification, informed consent, born-alive infant protection would all be nullified.

Current restrictions prohibiting the federal funding of abortions would be void, as would bans on partial birth abortions, and conscience protections for health care workers who do not want to take part in abortions. “If FOCA were to pass,” Associate Director Barbara Sella noted, “tax payer dollars would flow freely to abortion clinics and states would be powerless to deter abortions in any manner.”

Each diocese will provide parishes with the postcards that Catholics can send to their members of Congress.

## Bishops Urge Opposition to “Freedom of Choice Act”

President-elect Obama is said to be reviewing the following three federal policies, with a view to reversing them. Readers are asked to write to the President-elect, urging him not change these policies:

**Mexico City Policy.** This policy prohibits non-governmental organizations that receive U.S. federal funding from performing or actively promoting abortion as a method of family planning in other countries. The only exceptions are for abortions in the case of rape, incest, or life-threatening conditions.

**Embryonic Stem Cell Research.** In 2001, President Bush issued a policy that federal funds would only be given to scientific research that used existing embry-

onic stem cell lines, where the original embryo was created for reproductive purposes only, and was donated with consent and without financial gain.

**Conscience Rights Protection.** This past December, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a new administrative rule banning discrimination or coercion against employees of agencies receiving federal HHS funds who object in conscience to performing certain medical procedures.

For additional information on FOCA and these three issues, go to the USCCB's Pro-Life Activities website: <http://www.usccb.org/prolife> and search under Issues, or contact Barbara Sella at the WCC.

# Catholics *at the* Capitol

## Hope in Action

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

9:15am - 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, Wisconsin Council of Catholic Women, the Diocesan Councils of Catholic Women—Province of Milwaukee, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Region 9 (Wisconsin), and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul—Milwaukee Archdiocesan Council

### GENERAL INFORMATION

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

**COST:** \$33/person

\$10/students (high school, university)

Includes continental breakfast and lunch

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE:** March 12, 2009  
(see registration form on reverse side).

**REFUND POLICY:** Refunds will be available to those canceling registration prior to March 25, 2009. Cancellations received after this date are not eligible for a registration fee refund, including those due to inclement weather.

**CONFIRMATION OF REGISTRATION:**

Once we have received your registration, we will forward a confirmation to you, including a map and parking information, an updated agenda, and contact information for those coordinating meetings with legislators. This same information will be available on the web:

<http://www.wisconsincatholic.org>

**PARKING:** The Monona Terrace Parking Ramp is open to the public and costs \$1.10 per hour (\$.55 per half hour) with a \$12.00 a day maximum.

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:** Some dioceses are arranging for transportation. Please contact your diocesan office for Social Concerns or Justice and Peace for more information.

The Capitol is located two blocks from the Monona Terrace. Please indicate any special transportation needs on the registration form under "special needs."

**HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS:**

Downtown locations:

- *Hilton Madison Monona Terrace* (connected to Monona Terrace) 1-800-HILTONS
- *Best Western Inn on the Park* (2 blocks from Monona Terrace) 1-800-279-8811
- *Madison Concourse Hotel* (6 blocks from Monona Terrace) 1-800-356-8293

Please make arrangements for your accommodations directly with the hotel. We have *not* reserved a block of rooms.

Keynote address by *The Most Reverend Paul J. Swain*

Bishop of Sioux Falls, South Dakota

[www.wisconsincatholic.org](http://www.wisconsincatholic.org)

# Catholics at the Capitol

## Hope in Action

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center, Madison

9:15am - 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. **Promoting the Socially Conscious Parish:** Learn how to advance social concerns within your parish and increase parish involvement in public policy development.
  - A3. **Nurturing Life:** Discuss public policy efforts regarding abortion and learn about alternatives to abortion.
  - A4. **A Call for Health Care Reform:** Review the Church's principles for health care reform and learn about efforts to expand access to health care.
  - A5. **Lending Limits:** Assess how payday lending and other credit programs affect borrowers. Learn how vulnerable populations access lending assistance.
  - A6. **Walking through the Revolving Door:** Examine the obstacles offenders, advocates, and others face in the current corrections system.
  - A7. **Loving Our Neighbors:** Discuss Catholic teaching on immigration and learn how developing immigration policies will affect immigrants and their families.
- 12:00pm Luncheon
- 1:10pm Breakout Sessions B
- B1. **Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching:** See A1. above.
  - B2. **Living in a Brave New Scientific World:** Examine the ethical, moral, and legal implications of emerging medical research and procedures.
  - B3. **Advocating for Families:** Learn about programs that aid families in need and examine initiatives designed to bolster families in a time of economic downturn.
  - B4. **A Matter of Conscience:** Examine laws affecting the expression of conscience and track policy efforts to delineate conscience rights.
  - B5. **St. Vincent de Paul Society presents "Voices of the Poor"**
  - B6. **Building a Bridge to Employment:** Learn how Wisconsin's workforce is faring and examine public and private efforts to help the unemployed.
  - B7. **Environmental Justice for All:** Discuss how properly structured public policies can address the needs of those most impacted by environmental degradation.
- 2:25pm General Session: Panel Discussion
- 3:30pm Leave for Capitol visits

**Registration deadline: March 12, 2009**

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 identify special needs:

- Do you need a conference coordinator to contact you regarding disability access needs?  Yes
- Dietary restrictions?  Yes (some requirements may incur an additional fee)  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

#### REGISTRATION FEES

Individual	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$33
Student	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$10
<b>TOTAL Enclosed</b>	<b>\$</b>	_____