



## PROTECTING HUMAN LIFE

### INTRODUCTION

As Catholics, we believe that every human being has intrinsic value, and that the foundation of all of our individual actions and collective laws must be the protection of the human person – from conception to natural death. This is why we have a consistent moral vision that calls us not only to oppose all direct threats to human life, but also to support all things that allow human beings to flourish as free and responsible persons. As Pope Francis warns us, we have to recognize that:

Men and women risk being reduced to mere cogs in a machine that treats them as items of consumption to be exploited, with the result that – as is so tragically apparent – whenever a human life no longer proves useful for that machine, it is discarded with few qualms, as in the case of the sick, of the terminally ill, the elderly who are abandoned and uncared for, and children who are killed in the womb. (*Address to European Parliament*, November 25, 2014)

### WCC POSITIONS

In view of what is likely to be considered this session, the WCC will oppose assisted suicide and support three proposals to protect human life at its earliest stages. This list is not exhaustive and the WCC will engage other proposals related to human life should they be introduced.

**Protecting Pain Capable Unborn Children.** The WCC supports the protection of all human life, from conception to natural death. While this view is not shared universally, there is a growing recognition that unborn children at or after 20 weeks post-fertilization are capable of experiencing pain and that to abort these children by the method of Dilation and Extraction is simply inhumane. The WCC, therefore, supports legislation to prevent abortions on children at or after 20 weeks gestation. Wisconsin’s Department of Health Services (DHS) reports that induced abortions after 20 weeks count for about one to two percent of all abortions in the state. In 2013, the most recent year for which DHS has statistics, there were 89 of these abortions.

**Choose Life License Plates.** The WCC supports legislation allowing Wisconsin residents to obtain special license plates with the words “Choose Life.” The proceeds from the sale of these plates would support the state’s pregnancy care centers. Wisconsin already has a “Celebrate Children” license plate, which raises money for early childhood development; a “Donate Life” plate, which promotes life-saving organ donation; and a Wisconsin Women’s Health Foundation plate, which promotes education and community-based health programs for women and children. The “Choose Life” plate would likewise help women and children in our state by making more resources available to them.

**State Adoption Tax Credit.** The WCC supports encouraging more families to adopt children, whether domestically or internationally. Since 1996, Wisconsin has allowed a *deduction* for up to \$5,000 in adoption expenses per child. The WCC recommends that this deduction be replaced by a state adoption tax *credit* (similar to the federal adoption credit), so that parents can reduce their state

taxes by a more significant amount. If the credit were made refundable, that would benefit families of more modest incomes, who might otherwise not have sufficient financial resources to adopt.

**Physician-Assisted Suicide.** Senate Bill 28 (Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison) and companion Assembly Bill 67 (Rep. Sody Pope, D-Cross Plains) would permit mentally competent adults diagnosed with a terminal illness to request medications from their doctors for the purpose of ending their lives. The WCC opposes these bills and any legislation to legalize assisted suicide and euthanasia. Doctors should be healers, not killers, and no doctors should be under pressure to cooperate in the taking of human life. If medical professionals are allowed to help patients commit suicide, soon this will spread to killing people who never asked to die, as is happening currently in Belgium where assisted suicide is legal and where, for example, euthanasia nurses have admitted that they practice involuntary euthanasia. Disability rights advocates are especially concerned that additional pressure will be placed on those with disabilities to end their lives and that freedom to end one's life will quickly turn into a duty to end one's life.

Human freedom and personal choice are not absolute values or rights. Society limits individual action when one person's unfettered choice leads to the degradation or destruction of his or her life, or that of others. We can never eliminate all suffering without eliminating the sufferer, but with modern medical techniques we can control most pain in the terminally ill. What is needed is better palliative care and better medical care, counseling, and spiritual care to relieve the suffering of those afflicted with depression or mental illness.

#### **ACTION REQUESTED**

Please contact your legislators and urge them to:

1. Support the protection of pain-capable unborn children.
2. Support "Choose Life" license plates.
3. Support a state adoption tax credit.
4. Oppose SB 28 and AB 67, which would legalize physician-assisted suicide.

*For more information, please contact Barbara Sella at 608/257-0004.*

To contact your State Senator or Representative, visit the Wisconsin State Legislature website at <http://legis.wisconsin.gov> and click on "Find My Legislators," or call the State Legislative Hotline, 1-800-362-9472.