

Reforming Welfare By Valuing Families

A Statement From The Roman Catholic Bishops Of Wisconsin



September 1995

Welfare Reform And The Catholic Tradition Of Social Justice

Wisconsin is poised to make fundamental changes in the programs and policies that govern assistance to the poor and needy in our State. As pastors and teachers of our religious community, we bishops are convinced that policies toward the poor serve as a point of intersection between public and private morality, ethics, virtues and our Catholic way of life. As citizens of this State we also feel we have a right and duty to present our perspective on these thorny issues.

We are especially concerned about how poverty touches the lives of children and negatively affects the stability of essential structures in our society, especially the family. At the same time, our experience equips us to offer judgments about which welfare reform strategies are most likely to help the poor, children, and the family in our society.

We speak from a long and rich tradition of assessing the social justice of public policies and their effects on all, but especially on the poor. As an institution, we are one of the largest providers of social services to families and individuals in the State. For over 150 years we have offered these services to all people of Wisconsin regardless of religion. We operate 42 social service offices, 36 hospitals, and 428 schools. Countless parish activities also maintain that commitment to the less fortunate.

Our approach to welfare reform is based on Catholic Social teaching and is grounded in three themes:

1. Welfare reform must respect human dignity by discerning individual differences among people.
2. Welfare reform must address both the rights and the responsibilities of individuals and institutions.
3. Welfare reform must reach beyond programs of public assistance and be courageous enough to face up to the need for supportive values in our current American culture.

These themes are based on welfare reform principles that were adopted by the Wisconsin Catholic Conference in February of 1993. These themes are also the foundation for the more specific policy priorities developed by Wisconsin Catholic Conference and diocesan staff, which are included with this document.

We are as concerned as others about the dependency

that can be created by welfare but do not believe it is solved by changing the agency upon whom the poor are dependent. We are concerned about the need to have those most closely associated with the problem seek the solutions (subsidiarity). We are also concerned about illegitimate births and the erosion of the family structures in our society.

We want to stand with those who reflect seriously and humbly on these questions and to contribute to the debate without seeking easy scapegoats nor ephemeral solutions that are aimed only at reducing the sums involved but do not work toward lasting cures.

Some may argue that our approach is not realistic in light of the current political climate. However, as religious teachers we are free to address these sensitive issues in a way that may challenge or run counter to popular perceptions.

Respect for Human Life and Human Differences

As people of Faith, we believe that each person is sacred because each is created in the image and likeness of God. We do not believe that the life of one person is more precious than that of another. We believe that all are created equal before God, regardless of their social and economic status.

Therefore, we respect the differences among individuals. Each person is unique. To develop his or her uniqueness everyone has a right to participate in society and in its goods. No one can be a priori excluded. When all do not have the opportunity to participate fully in society, it is the same as saying that their contribution is not worthwhile and therefore rejected.

Many of the flaws in the current welfare system and some of the attempts to reform it, stem from the fact that too many of its features display a one-size-fits-all approach to helping those in need. This must not be true of a reformed welfare system.

We are especially concerned about how poverty touches the lives of children and negatively affects...the family.

The poor may be anonymous to those of us who are comfortable, but every poor person has his or her own special dignity and personhood. It is not appropriate to generalize about the poor, to "homogenize" them, and to assume that welfare is a concern only for minorities in urban settings. Poverty is a serious problem in both urban and rural areas. While the majority of the State's AFDC

population lives in urban settings, fully twelve of our rural counties in the State have child poverty rates greater than 20 percent. Welfare reform must respond to these differing social needs. We will not bring an end to this poverty unless we first recognize that it exists among us.

Any changes in welfare policy must be assessed in light of their impact on Wisconsin's abortion rate. Policies that may lead to increases in abortion should not be implemented.

Welfare reform must look at individual situations and provide services and supports appropriate to the needs of each person and family. Where the current welfare system sees the poor as a homogeneous class, a discerning system must see the face of each poor person, be that person an adult, a child, an urban or a rural dweller. One size does not fit all.

We must not forget as well the number of those who are mentally handicapped, who could not hold a steady job, and who roam our streets to be systematically exploited. Psychological handicaps are as painful and as debilitating as others.

In this regard, a discerning welfare system would also distinguish between those who will need help for a short time and those who need long-term support. Such a system will include different approaches for those who will leave welfare after a short time and more imaginative strategies for those at risk of long-term dependency. One size does not fit all.

A discerning welfare system will not stigmatize the poor. On the contrary, it will affirm and challenge them. A discerning system will reject reforms that force the poor to wear visible badges of their poverty while embracing those that call forth their potential.

Affirming Rights and Encouraging Responsibilities

God created us human beings to live in community and to develop life-giving relationships. Personal rights flow directly from being a human person who is meant to live in a society. But these personal rights are accompanied by the responsibilities we have toward others as well as ourselves. We are stewards of our personal lives and the gifts God has given us, but also of creation and its integrity, and of the goods of society. The rights we claim for ourselves and others, especially for the poor, are mirrored in the responsibilities we must fulfill toward family, neighbor, and the whole community.

Accordingly, welfare programs must be ordered to helping people realize their potential, not because society owes them a living but because every person must satisfy basic needs in order to fulfill their personal and social obligations. Public policies must enable the poor to meet these needs without compromising their personal responsibility and capacity for growth and participation in society.

Remunerative work, so that a person can take care of obligations to self and others, is a necessary component of any welfare reform. Work is both a means of personal fulfillment and the means of providing for families and other social responsibilities.

The community is responsible for providing opportunities for the development of personal gifts and aptitudes without which the community may be denied the benefits of what the individual has to offer. At the same time, the individual is obligated to make good use of the opportunities offered so he or she may use these gifts to the fullest.

Work must advance dignity and empower people to care for their families. Reform should offer welfare recipients a covenant that is a relationship of mutual respect, a covenant that blends a promise of meaningful empowerment with an insistence on cooperation and responsibility. The duty and responsibility of those in the business community is to see that they give their talents to the creation of sufficient jobs that will permit people to live with dignity and take care of their family and societal obligations. Public assistance in such a context is always a means to the end of achieving and maintaining independence and self-sufficiency for the individual and the family.

Welfare reform proposals should always be evaluated in terms of their impact on children and their families. No policy that increases the number or percentage of children in poverty can be called successful.

However, the goals of a reformed welfare system includes more than just food in the mouth and shelter overhead. Justice involves fidelity to relationships as well. The relationships between individual and family, between families and community, between employer and employee, between secular and religious institutions all impose mutual obligations. Welfare reform must further policies that foster these relationships and remove obstacles that inhibit them.

The challenge of welfare reform is to balance the

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demands of the post-industrial society in which we live with the need to establish and nurture intact and healthy families. It is critical that a reformed welfare system resist a mindset that focuses on the "welfare mother" in favor of one that thinks in terms of both parents. While there are cases where an abusive or dysfunctional parent is best left out of the situation, our welfare system should presume that a two-parent approach is the preferred option, with exceptions provided where appropriate.

At times, a poverty of resources exists which cannot be alleviated with mere cash grants. The policy of providing cash assistance, with little or no other involvement in the lives of poor families, has made it easier for both the individual and the community to ignore or lose sight of the responsibility each has to the other.

The individual forgets the duty to assume control of his or her life and to plan a way through the financial crisis that triggered the need to rely on welfare in the first place. The community may rationalize that its willingness to provide a monthly grant replaces its duty to reform economic structures and conditions so that the poor may more fully participate in economic and civic affairs.

Thus, calls for affirming personal responsibility must not become a signal to abandon the poor. Nor must the desire to foster responsibility rationalize decisions by the community to deny or withdraw its support from the needy when social and economic conditions prevent a poor person or family from being self-sufficient.

Welfare reform must also include a reassessment of current relationships between the religious and the secular in American society. At a time when many call for the "reinvention" of government, it is imperative that welfare reform also allow for new collaboration between government and those other institutions in society through which families and individuals meet their needs, nurture their talents, and realize their potential. This requires an openness to new structures and arrangements that respond to the needs of families and children in the 21st century.

For full participation of the poor in society today and into the future, America's social welfare system must also encompass employment opportunities and training programs, health care, family services, poverty reduction policies and other programs and policies intended to

address the needs of those who are socially, culturally, and economically marginalized. These must all be addressed if welfare reform is to become a reality.

Just as we do the poor a disservice by treating them as mere victims, we also do them an injustice by suggesting that they or the welfare system must operate on principles or values different from the rest of society. This leads us directly to the third of our main themes, that of the cultural implications behind welfare reform.

Welfare Reform and Societal Values

The Christian sees virtue and good decision-making as a habit or way of life that is reinforced by the values and behavior of the entire community. Similarly, a community that is disordered in its values and priorities will find itself unable to foster the virtues that are the foundations of wise decisions and responsible behavior. Accordingly, both economic and cultural responses to welfare reform must be linked to broader social concerns and other areas of human activity.

We can say, therefore, that welfare reform must be holistic and look at the values of the whole of society. A compelling reason for this holistic approach is that all of us suffer when persistent, pervasive poverty exists, because it weakens our culture and makes society more violent. We see this more dramatically in other nations where the gap between the poor and rich is even more pronounced than in the United States. In such places, the poor have formed a separate culture with its own laws and mores, a culture of violence where the values and virtues we hold dear have been replaced by the survival of the fittest. These situations have arisen because the poor have been marginalized from all phases of the nation's life. This is already happening in our inner cities. These trends must be halted and reversed.

AFDC in its current form is not responsible for many of the social pathologies that afflict our society. Eliminating AFDC will not cure social ills if we are not willing to address the norms by which all people and institutions function in our society and the values held by poor and non-poor alike. The welfare system and those who are trapped by it do not make the rules in our society. The poor cannot be expected to have one attitude toward family responsibilities and fidelity in marriage if the rich do not follow the same moral principles. Any welfare reform that expects one set of mores for the poor and

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another for the rest of society is doomed to fail. In order to be just, welfare reform must make sure that all of the complex relationships in our modern society are marked by fidelity and mutual responsibility.

Moreover, the Churches must preach the same value systems and the same morality to the poor and rich alike. Our society must uphold these same values equally for all.

As a society, we can no longer shrink from our common duty to address the social costs of children born to unmarried parents. This trend affects all of us. It reflects a general decline in the values of commitment and fidelity to relationships throughout society. Nor is the trend confined to the poor. Indeed, the greatest increase in births to unmarried parents is found among the middle class and better educated.

Welfare reform should include policies that affirm and support commitment and marriage for parents of poor children. Such support is preferable to punitive approaches which, though motivated by a well-intentioned desire to discourage illegitimacy, have the effect of denying assistance to poor women and children.

While there are good reasons for policies to encourage two-parent families, many single parents nurture and raise responsible children into healthy adulthood. These parents and their children deserve support and affirmation. Policies that encourage two-parent families must never stigmatize single parents or increase the burdens on them.

For these reasons, one cannot condemn the poor for having children out of wedlock if the celebrities of our nation, because they are wealthy, can do so with impunity. The poor do not glamorize uncommitted sex in the mass media of our popular culture and underwrite it with advertising dollars. The poor did not lobby the legislatures for no-fault divorce in the 1970's.

Nor are the poor responsible for the behavior of other institutions whose policies and practices impact on their lives. The poor do not make the decisions to raise interest rates when declining unemployment fuels fears of inflation. The poor cannot be blamed for a bad educational system, one that does not provide them with the skills they will need for integrating into modern society. Yet they must cope with the consequences of so many of these social and governmental decisions.

In this same context, welfare reform cannot take place without recognizing the reality of racial prejudice in our nation's past and its persistent influence today. This sorry aspect of our national character continues to have implications for poverty, employment, education, family structures, and other issues that affect welfare reform.

It is unfair and unhelpful to assert that those who endorse strict approaches to welfare reform are racist. But some critiques of the current welfare system and welfare recipients ignore the impact of racial discrimination on our society. Although most people on AFDC are white, critics are too quick to cite the social problems of people in the inner city of Milwaukee as typical of a "welfare culture" without conceding that so much else about their lives is atypical. Unless welfare reform candidly deals with our overall treatment of racial minorities, it will fail.

Many other aspects of our culture must be faced for valid welfare reform: the quality of our education and its effectiveness in stimulating incentives and societal involvement; the reduction of substance abuse, especially the use of drugs, in the whole of our culture and not just among the poor; job opportunities and access to meaningful work; honesty and fairness in the workplace; and so on.

Catholic social teaching has long affirmed that government can be a positive influence in the life of the community. Government can and must intervene to correct an imbalance when certain private interests dominate the community to the detriment of the common good.

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Catholic social teaching also teaches respect for legitimate authority in society and does not become partisan to those theories that seek to denigrate authority. One cannot have a weak and maligned authority in some areas of social life, such as the financial and business, and expect those same authorities to be strong and respected in the areas of law-enforcement, cultural mores, and education.

Catholic tradition in social issues teaches that subsidiarity is the best way of treating social problems, including welfare reform. That principle implies that those closest to the problem should have priority in solving it and that government should not do what private groups or individuals can better do themselves. But it also implies that those in authority who are more removed support these endeavors for the good of the

whole of society and do not abandon their efforts and responsibility. In this sense, Catholic social teaching reinforces the tendency in the nation to seek solutions at the local level without, however, excusing higher authorities from their supportive responsibilities.

In the context of welfare policy, State and Federal governments have the financial resources to provide basic assistance to individuals and agencies created to meet their needs. Further, government can and should establish benefit levels so that a family's access to basic needs is not a reflection of where they live.

Any reform that does not strengthen family life and obligations works against itself.

However, government should not insist on being the provider of every service or program for needy families. Rather, through direct cash assistance to individuals and grants to organizations, government can encourage and enable families to find help from local organizations and institutions of their choice. This would include religious and other non-profit organizations. Welfare reform should facilitate such choices, not obstruct them.

Although Churches want to continue to do works of charity, they do not believe that they can nor should provide all the needed services to the poor without assistance from federal and state resources. We gain nothing as a society if we merely move the poor from one category to another.

Improving the lives of the poor to conform to the demands of the Gospel will be of greater benefit to our State and will be valued more by history than a mere reduction in the AFDC caseload.

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Conclusion

Whatever reforms we undertake in welfare, we know that to be effective they must encourage those who are not now making it to become independent and thus regain their sense of dignity and worth. Punitive measures will not do this. We also know that we must give to those who are not able to find jobs the skills they will need to do so. Our help should not hinder them in their search for meaningful work. We must be especially concerned about the children of our society and the most vulnerable.

We also urge all to keep in mind the values of relationships in society that must be sustained and fostered, particularly that of the family. Any reform that does not strengthen family life and obligations works against itself.

We know as well that there is a larger picture which involves the American culture at the end of this century. Improving the lot of the poor, those on welfare and those who are working, is indeed a noble task, but it cannot be done without looking at the fabric of our whole society and reinforcing the virtues and values that are needed to maintain not only individual rights but also the common good. Welfare reform that is purely pragmatic, based only on reducing costs, and that is conceived in isolation from the needed values of our whole society will not be fruitful. †

Diocese of Green Bay

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Part II

WCC Welfare Reform Policy Proposals -- In Brief

Note: These specific policy suggestions were developed by staff of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference and leaders of Catholic agencies such as Catholic Social Services, Catholic education, family ministries, the Campaign for Human Development, social concerns and pro-life ministries. They are consistent with the themes and values of the WCC's principles for welfare reform and the Bishops pastoral statement. While the Bishops do not offer them as a formal proposal or blueprint for welfare reform, they refer policy makers to them as the kind of proposals that will produce a just and effective welfare system.

The rationale and research upon which these suggestions are based is detailed in a separate appendix, WCC Welfare Reform Policy Priorities -- In Detail, which is available from the Wisconsin Catholic Conference by request.

Priority #1

Welfare Reform Must Reduce Poverty, Especially Among Children

1. All welfare reform policies must be evaluated in light of their impact on the poor. No policy that increases the number or percentage of Wisconsin residents who live in poverty can be called successful.

2. The resources allocated to welfare reform must be adequate to meet the goals of reform. Funding levels

must remain sensitive to the size of the needy population and must be altered to reflect the increased demand in times of economic recession.

3. Within families, the needs of children must have a special priority and policies must never deny children basic benefits because of the behavior of their parents.

Priority #2

Welfare Reform Requires A Culture That Values Families, Marriage and Legitimacy

1. Work must be structured and compensated for in a way that respects the worker as a parent and the needs of the worker's family. Work for all families and work requirements for AFDC families should be structured to assure that one parent is home with pre-school children, if that is the parents' preference.

2. From the time of initial application for AFDC, both parents should be expected to participate in programs to assure: financial support of the child, case management for independence from AFDC, and programs to assist them in becoming responsible parents.

3. The requirement that one parent have a recent work history in order for the family to be eligible for AFDC is a disincentive to marriage and should be eliminated.

4. Policies that call for parents to work or participate in job training or education must consider the needs of families. Work requirements should be sensitive to the age and needs of the children in the family. Specifically:

a) No single parent should be required to work while the child is under the age of two, preferably three;

b) A single parent should not be required to work more than half time if the child is between the ages of 3 and 6;

c) Full time employment may be required when the child reaches the age of 6 if adequate child care is available;

d) Programs for parents, with children through high school age, should be structured to allow them to be home in the hours after school on a regular basis.

5. "Family caps" are an unjust response to poor children who did not choose their parents and may lead to an increase in abortions.

6. Welfare reform efforts to decrease teen pregnancy must recognize that education in human sexuality for

adolescents and other children must always respect the wishes of parents, have a strong moral values component, emphasize abstinence, and involve churches and/or other institutions that have the confidence of families.

7. Any changes in welfare policy must be assessed in light of their impact on Wisconsin's abortion rate and policies that may lead to increases in abortion should not be implemented.

8. The policy of maintaining a list of the names and addresses of AFDC recipients available for public inspection should be ended. This practice is demeaning to poor people, an affront to human dignity and jeopardizes the safety of women seeking refuge from an

abusive relationship.

9. Policies that require the mother of a dependent child to identify the father should allow for a good cause exception where the mother and children are at risk of abuse.

10. Welfare reform must include policies that provide adequate funding for temporary shelters for women and children who are fleeing from an abusive home environment.

11. Child support orders should be given more teeth by permitting authorities to place "in trust" the professional licenses and garnish the income of parents who violate child support orders.

Priority #3 Welfare Reform Must Utilize The Social Capital Of Communities And Neighborhoods

1. Government policies should encourage and foster community based responses that utilize "mediating" structures in efforts to assist families and neighborhoods. Past attitudes about separation of church and state must be reassessed to enable greater collaboration between government and religious organizations.

2. Neighborhood schools, be they public or nonpublic,

should be nurtured as vital sources of social capital and the parental choice program in Milwaukee should be expanded to include sectarian schools.

3. First time parents, especially single parents, should be offered access to neighborhood group or congregant living arrangements that can help them develop parenting skills and avoid social isolation.

Priority #4 Welfare Reform Requires An Economy That Values Work

1. The minimum wage should be increased to the level needed to meet the basic needs of a single adult. If employers cannot hire people at such a wage, publicly funded wage subsidies should be provided.

2. The combined value of wages, wage subsidies, tax incentives, and where necessary, government cash assistance, should provide sufficient income to provide for a family of that size.

3. Current policies concerning structural unemployment and the uneven distribution of unemployment in society make the concept of "time limited benefits" unjust. Such limits should not be imposed.

4. In lieu of a work requirement, first time parents

should be given a strong incentive to be involved in child care, parenting programs, or other services. These would be provided in a congregant, localized, setting. The goal would be three-fold: to alleviate the isolation of the single; first-time parent; to provide a supportive setting in which first time parents learn parenting skills; and, to help parents find support as they look toward the time when they will re-enter the job market.

5. As welfare reform proposals are developed, the standard of need should be reviewed and revised upward to reflect more accurately the cost of providing for families. In addition, this standard should be adjusted annually to reflect the change in average family income in Wisconsin.

Priority #5 Welfare Reform Should Encourage The Working Poor

1. Child care subsidies, based on a sliding scale adjusted for income, should be available for families below 175 percent of poverty.
2. Any comprehensive welfare reform must include at least a timetable toward attaining the goal of universal health coverage for all. As a first step, coverage should be extended to all children.
3. Employees should be made more aware of the

Earned Income Tax Credit and the credit should be distributed on a monthly basis rather than in an annual lump sum.

4. Welfare reform should include policies that increase the amount of equity value in automobiles to at least \$4,500, as well as increase the amount that an AFDC recipient may accumulate in an education and employability account to \$12,500 or some other reasonable amount.

Priority #6 Welfare Reform Must Discern Differences Among Individuals and Families and Avoid "One Size Fits All" Approaches

1. At the time of application, the individual should be assessed to identify risk factors for long term dependency. These would include discerning whether an applicant for AFDC:

- lacks a high school diploma;
- lacks a formal or recent work history;
- lacks English proficiency;
- is illiterate;
- is physically or mentally disabled;
- is unmarried and a parent, or is about to become a parent while being a minor.

2. Applicants who exhibit none of these risk factors will

require less intensive intervention. Given lack of staff and resources, it may be appropriate to allow the current system to operate with little change for such people.

3. Applicants who exhibit one or more of these risk factors should be offered case management services and be required to participate in a variety of programs appropriate to his or her needs.

4. To the greatest extent possible, the system must recognize different needs of short-term and long-term recipients.

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WCC Welfare Reform Principles

Adopted by the WCC Board
February 1994

1. Eliminating poverty should be the target of comprehensive welfare reform. Poor families did not cause a recession and cuts in poverty programs will not end it. Real welfare reform seeks to help people leave poverty behind, not just leave the welfare rolls.

2. Welfare reform should help welfare recipients find meaningful employment and achieve self-sufficiency. Too often, a poor family moving from welfare to work loses health coverage, child care and income support essential for their family's well-being.

3. Welfare reform should include education and employment training programs that lead to jobs. Welfare reform policies should reflect a stronger commitment to education and they should be oriented toward empowering the poor to become self-sufficient.

4. Welfare reform should include strong child support enforcement. Child support reform is not only necessary for the protection of children but also for their families, who benefit as a whole.

5. Welfare reform should affirm and reward strong intact families, personal responsibility, sexual restraint and basic morality for people of all economic means. Welfare policies should not discourage the formation of families, nor should they distort the balance between a person's role as a parent versus that of his or her role

as an employee. Policies to discourage casual sex, out of wedlock births, and formation of single parent families should not be directed solely at the poor.

6. Welfare reform should provide real incentives and supports for poor families to stay together, continue their education, and find employment. We oppose penalties that deny children basic benefits because of the behavior of their parents. Policies and programs at all levels should support the strength and stability of families, especially those adversely affected by the economy.

7. Welfare reform should support other legislative efforts to assist families in moving from welfare to work such as reform of state unemployment compensation; increases in the minimum wage; reduction or elimination of penalties on step-parents and married families. Continued health care coverage, child care and other income supports can be helpful in this regard.

8. Pluralism. Any welfare reform policies that hope to encourage current or potential AFDC recipients to assume greater personal responsibility for their lives should also permit them a greater range of choices of institutions and programs, including those which are operated by religiously affiliated providers.

THE CATHOLIC PRESENCE IN WISCONSIN

There are 1.5 million Catholics in five dioceses. The Catholic presence in Wisconsin includes:

- * 984 Catholic parishes, missions and chapels;
- * 2,107 priests and deacons;
- * 4,651 religious sisters and brothers;
- * Catholic Social Services/Charities agencies that spend more than \$30 million annually to provide food, clothing, shelter, day care, eldercare, and family and personal counseling to nearly 60,000 people of all races and religions;
- * 400 Catholic elementary and high schools annually enrolling more than 80,000 students;
- * Five Catholic newspapers with a combined weekly circulation of more than 114,000;
- * Officiating at 13,000 marriage ceremonies, or about 1/3 of all marriages, performed in Wisconsin every year;
- * 9 Catholic colleges and universities enrolling 30,000 students of all ages, races and religions;
- * 36 Catholic hospitals;
- * Chaplains ministering to men and women inmates at nine State prisons and numerous county jails;
- * 23 retreat centers;
- * 4 summer day camps for boy and girls.

THE WCC'S HISTORY AND MISSION

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) was founded in 1969 by the Bishops of Wisconsin. The Conference seeks to fulfill the vision of Vatican Council II, which called upon the Church to be more involved in the world.

With the message of the Gospel and the social teachings of the Church as its foundation, the WCC offers a specifically Catholic contribution to state and federal public policy debates. The Conference also offers a statewide response to issues common to its five dioceses. It achieves this in several ways:

- **Serves** as an advocate on matters related to the interests and values of the Church;
- **Provides** decision makers with studied positions on social and moral issues;
- **Offers a forum** for diocesan personnel to meet, exchange information, deliberate and recommend policies or actions;
- **Formulates and publishes** opinions and positions on legislation and public policy.

STRUCTURE

The Bishops of Wisconsin comprise the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference. The Board meets three times a year to review issues and set the WCC's legislative agenda.

JOINING THE WORK OF THE WCC

You can participate in the work of the Conference by subscribing to the **Capitol Report**, which is published every other month, six times a year and is supplemented by Action Alerts on pressing issues. Subscriptions begin in January and expire the following December. A one-year subscription is \$5, regardless of when you subscribe. To subscribe, mail a \$5 check, **please do not send cash**, to:

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