



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

**For Immediate Release  
January 11, 2008**

### **BILLS TO ERASE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS GO TOO FAR**

On January 16, 2008, the Wisconsin Senate Committee on Judiciary, Housing, and Corrections will hold a public hearing on Senate Bill 356. This bill would repeal the statute of limitations for child abuse claims and open a three-year window during which any abuse claim, no matter how old, could be brought to court. A second hearing on an identical Assembly Bill, AB 651 is scheduled in Madison on January 24<sup>th</sup>.

Executive Director for the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, John Huebscher, stated the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, and several other religious and nonprofit entities, are in opposition to this legislation. Huebscher explained that this legislation is flawed for several reasons.

“Statutes of limitations exist for good reason in our justice system. They secure the swift and accurate administration of justice by forcing the relevant parties to collect evidence and obtain testimony while both are still fresh and uncorrupted by time or influence. This proposal sweeps that aside.”

Huebscher noted this legislation has an unfair impact on private versus public entities. “Current law caps liability for school districts and other municipal bodies at \$50,000 per person,” said Huebscher. “And Wisconsin statute bars individuals from collecting punitive damages from government entities. This means that a private employer, such as a daycare, could end up paying huge damages, while a public school or other public entity would not be held equally accountable.” He noted this law would hurt parishioners and those currently served by nonprofit groups who were in no way responsible for mistakes made in dealing with child abusers decades ago.

“Four years ago, the legislature altered the statutes of limitations, allowing child victims more time to bring suits against their abusers and other culpable parties. Before, a victim had only up to three years after their eighteenth birthday to bring a claim,” said Huebscher. “Now civil actions can be brought against alleged child abusers until the victim turns 35 years of age. The Wisconsin Catholic Conference fully supported that proposal.”

Huebscher continued, “When the legislature considered this issue four years ago, then-Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager advised legislators that a proposal to revive claims after a statute of limitations has expired was constitutionally flawed. That advice is as valid today as it was then.”

- Over -

“The Catholic Church remains committed to assisting victims of abuse through the healing process, including access to a course of justice that will allow them to repair and rebuild their lives. To this end, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee has reached settlements with over 160 sexual abuse survivors whose claims were time barred and could not be resolved in court.”

-30-

Contact: John A. Huebscher at 608-257-0004.

131 W. Wilson St., Suite 1105  
Madison, WI 53703  
608/257-0004  
[www.wisconsinatholic.org](http://www.wisconsinatholic.org)