



Catholics at the Capitol

Reclaiming the Common Good
in the Year of Faith



SUMMARY OF MESSAGE TO LEGISLATORS

2013 BIENNIAL BUDGET BILL

(2013 Assembly Bill 40)

While the Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) does not take a position on the budget as a whole, we do urge individuals to assess budgets in light of their impact on the common good, the extent to which they exercise a preferential option for the poor, and the degree to which they foster solidarity among the citizens of our state. This year, the WCC is asking you to focus your message to the Legislature on four budget-related issues. Please refer to the relevant Issue Briefs for additional information on each of these budget proposals.

Approve provisions fostering greater parental choice in education.

- Public policies should affirm the vital role parents play in their children's education by giving them the ability to choose where and how their children are educated.
- The proposed budget initiatives are a step towards putting all families, and the educational institutions that serve them, on an equal footing.
- Wisconsin's choice in education proposals foster schools that are accredited, accountable, and supplied with the resources necessary to meet the needs of all students.

Maintain existing coverage for Medicaid recipients and expand coverage for those of limited means.

- Expand Medicaid in a manner that preserves state dollars, including, if necessary, through accepting federal funds.
- Provide for expansion and increased funding of Family Care, the state's community-based, long-term care program.
- Approve increased funding for mental health services and for the establishment of an Office of Children's Mental Health.

Remove the provision that exempts rent-to-own agreements from the Wisconsin Consumer Act.

- Rent-to-own transactions are predatory and constitute usury.
- Public policies should not encourage businesses that depend on ignorance and indebtedness.
- Low-income families and individuals – those least able to afford financial missteps – are those most likely to lose money and go into debt.

Increase budget funding for Treatment Alternatives and Diversions (TAD) programs.

- Spending \$75 million to fully fund the TAD program is fiscally responsible since it will save the state money by utilizing community-based treatment programs rather than more costly prisons.
- Expanding TAD will make our state safer and stronger by reducing crime and recidivism, strengthening families, increasing job readiness, and reducing poverty.
- TAD treatment programs are far more effective than incarceration in holding offenders accountable and helping them overcome their addictions.

10 COMMANDMENTS FOR VISITING YOUR LEGISLATORS

The best way to express an opinion to any public official is a personal visit. Here are some helpful tips to use when visiting a legislator's office:

1. If you want to discuss a particular piece of legislation, be prepared to discuss it when you attend the appointment. Know the topic and the bill number if possible.
2. Be on time for the appointment, but be patient if your legislator encounters unexpected delays because of official business.
3. Don't be upset if you are asked to meet with a staff aide. This is quite common because legislators are often unexpectedly delayed in legislative meetings or on the floor of the Legislature.
4. Above all, know your facts and your position, be as specific as possible.
5. Be brief and concise, 3-5 minutes is best, but cover all points that concern you.
6. When possible, use personal examples. Talk about your own experiences and how the issue affects you.
7. Give your legislator a chance to talk. Respect the legislator's knowledge of the issue and respond to any questions s/he may ask.
8. Don't threaten or be sarcastic! Even if a legislator can't vote for your side of the current issue, s/he may be helpful to you on another occasion.
9. Before you leave, thank your legislator for his/her time.
10. Remember to follow up with the legislative office after your visit and to thank your legislator.