



PUBLIC POLICY GUIDE

ISSUED TO THE FAITHFUL

BY THE

LOUISIANA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

A CALL TO POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Catholic tradition affirms that responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. The leaders of the Catholic Church have the right and duty to share the Catholic Church's teachings and to educate Catholics on moral dimensions of public life, so they may form their consciences in light of their faith. Additional guidance is available in the USCCB publication *Faithful Citizenship* at www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The family is the primary, indispensable and essential unit of our society. We encourage policies that strengthen family stability and uphold the traditional definition of marriage.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The state budget expresses the voice of the legislature for the safety, education and health of the people. We urge an equitable structure of taxation and public services, and care for those who struggle to survive in a difficult economic climate. Also, the underprivileged should not be adversely affected by regulatory policies in a disproportionate manner.

EDUCATION

As the primary educators of their children parents have the right to choose their children's education. Adequate funding for public education is essential. We also believe that parents of children who attend state-approved private or parochial schools deserve their fair share of education funding. Private education renders a very public service. The current state scholarship program is a beginning which we strongly support.

HEALTH CARE

Health care should be available to all. We support an equitable expansion of health delivery services so that everyone may access affordable health insurance and care, or if necessary, be served by Medicaid.

HUMAN LIFE

The protection of human life from conception until natural death is paramount. All persons have an inherent right to life and a right to live with dignity. We strongly support laws that protect the life of unborn children and services that assist pregnant women. We believe that cloning, embryonic stem cell research, surrogacy and assisted suicide are contrary to nature and morality. We must be vigilant to the evil of human trafficking among us and seek to care for the victims in ways that are restorative, rehabilitative, and life-giving. Finally, we acknowledge that violence of any kind causes great suffering. Therefore, we advocate for peace within our communities and state at large.

IMMIGRATION

All God's people deserve respect and civility. We support immigration reform that is consistent with each person's innate human dignity as well as reform that will keep the family unit intact. Preservation, as opposed to separation, of the family unit should be sought at all times as conversations focusing on immigration reform are had at the highest levels

RACISM

We are all brothers and sisters, equally made in the image of and likeness of God. Racism is a moral issue that manifests itself institutionally and systemically. A deep individual conversion of heart, which effectively compels change and reform in our institutions and society, is what is most needed. We must confront racism's root causes and the injustice that it produces. The love of God that binds us together should overflow into our relationships with all people.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The rights of faith-filled individuals and faith-based institutions should be recognized and respected without coercive government intrusion or regulations that violate the rights of conscience regardless of religious affiliations.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

We recognize the need for incarcerating individuals who inflict harm on society. We encourage adequate legal representation to the accused, and we advocate for a restorative approach to prisoner rehabilitation. Consistent with our moral ethic for human life we must reject use of the death penalty.

The Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops is an agency of the Roman Catholic Bishops of the state which has as its foundation the beliefs of the Catholic Church. It serves to coordinate education of the people through joint pastoral statements; to promote collaboration in shared projects among Catholic dioceses and other institutions; and to communicate and interact with local, parish, state and federal bodies.

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