

# LEGISLATIVE HOT LINE



1-800-869-6525 Ext 6690

Sponsored by the Five Catholic Commissions and Catholic Campaign for Human Development of the Secretariat for Catholic Charities Health and Human Services

May 6, 2009

*“As Catholics we must come together with a common conviction that we can no longer tolerate the moral scandal of poverty in our land and so much hunger and deprivation in our world. As believers, we can debate how best to overcome these realities, but we must be united in our determination to do so. Our faith teaches us that poor people are not issues or problems but sisters and brothers in God’s one human family”*  
*A Place at the Table USCCB 2002*

## **STATE BUDGET HB 1 – ACT NOW TO PRIORITIZE THE NEEDS OF THE POOR & VULNERABLE**

**BACKGROUND:** The House passed their version of the State Budget (Sub HB1) on April 29<sup>th</sup>. Included in that Budget was the use of Rainy Day funds to support funding levels for a variety of programs.

The State now finds itself deeper in debt as it addresses the mandate to end the year balanced. Current deficit is \$600-900M. They will most likely look to that same Rainy Day Fund to address the deficit.

**As a result, the Senate may be forced to consider cuts in the just passed House version of the Budget bill. It is more important than ever to contact your State Senator and request the following in order to retain appropriate funding levels for programs that serve the poorest and most vulnerable, and to urge their support on still needed provisions as outlined by the Catholic Conference of Ohio.**

### **1. SUPPORT BASIC HUMAN NEEDS AND ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR SAFETY NET PROGRAMS**

***Provide adequate funding for hunger, housing, and protective services programs.***

- ~~The House funded foodbanks with \$12 M per year...**An additional \$5M is needed**
- ~~House funded county Job and Family Services with \$50M each year in TANF funds that are to be converted to Title XX funds to provide protective services and help for the working poor...**An additional \$12M is needed.**

### **2. SUPPORT FAIR, AFFORDABLE, AND ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE**

***Address hospitals and charitable nursing home concerns regarding reimbursement and franchise and bed fees; provide parental health coverage for the poor; simplify eligibility paper work.***

- ~~House revamped the hospital assessment fee and restored \$284M...**an additional \$127 M is needed** to ensure hospitals get back 100% of their fee assessment
- ~~We **support** the House passed provisions that **address the shortfall in Medicaid payments** to charitable nursing homes
- ~~We **support** House passed provision that requests a **federal waiver exempting charitable nursing homes**, not receiving Medicaid from increases in bed tax...we **do not support expanding** this provision to for profit nursing homes
- ~~House **did not pass** measures to increase Parental Health Care Coverage for working parents to 100% of poverty level...we will **continue to urge support** for this needed health care coverage for **working poor parents**
- ~~We **support** the House passed provision to **simplify the Medicaid enrollment** process.

### **3. SUPPORT FAIR TREATMENT OF CHARTERED NON PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS/TEACHERS**

***Maintain full access to all allocated funds; fully restore funding to the Administrative Cost Reimbursement and Auxiliary Services line items (511 & 532); continued support for the EdChoice, Cleveland Scholarship, and Autism Scholarship programs.***

- ~~We support the House passed provisions that allow **full access to funds** in the Administrative Cost Reimbursement Program (education line item 532)...however, the House **did not increase** the Administrative Cost Reimbursement. **An additional \$1.8M each year is needed to restore the 2008 budget cuts**
- ~~House increased funding for Auxiliary Services Program by \$1M each year...**an additional \$2.9M each year is needed to restore 2008 budget cuts.**

~~We support adding to Sub HB1 provisions that will include chartered nonpublic students in distance learning programs and that ensure support for beginning teachers who work in chartered nonpublic schools.

#### 4. SUPPORT ELDER CARE

**Support the PASSPORT and Assisted Living programs; restore full funding for the National Senior Services Corp Program (506).**

~~House passed several provisions that will help eliminate waiting lists and expand PASSPORT and Assisted Living Programs... **We support additional funding for home and community based elder care programs.**

~~House did not restore reduced funding for National Senior Services Corps program... **an additional \$67,000 per year is needed.** (*Many of our Catholic social service agencies provide programming thru this funding.*)

#### 5. SUPPORT LIFE, ABSTINENCE EDUCATION AND CORD BLOOD RESEARCH

**Promote adult stem cell and blood cord funding; reapply for abstinence-based programs.**

~~We **oppose using state funds** for any abortion related services

~~We **support adding a provision that directs the Ohio Dept of Health to reapply** to federal government for \$500,000 in funding for Abstinence-Only Programs

~~We support House passed provision providing \$100,000 per year for the Katz Cord Blood Foundation... we **support additional funding in the Ohio Biomedical Job Stimulus Program** for adult stem cells and umbilical cord blood donation networks and research programs.

**ACTION: Call or email your State Senator. Using the updated information above, urge him/her to prioritize the needs of the poor and most vulnerable in Sub HB 1 – the State Budget. Our recent efforts resulted in additional funding in the House passed version to provide help for the needy, as well as provisions that benefited our schools and hospitals.**

**We must continue the pressure and contact our State Senators! Final budget will need to be approved by July 1, 2009. ACT NOW.....OHIO SENATE**

**Statehouse, Columbus, OH 43215-4276  
(800) 282-0253**

**For information on contacting your Senator link to: <http://www.legislature.state.oh.us>**

#### **CARDINAL RIGALI URGES SUPPORT FOR PREGNANT WOMEN SUPPORT ACT (HR 2035)**

**BACKGROUND:** Cardinal Rigali, chair of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), wrote to all U.S. Representatives urging them to co-sponsor the Pregnant Women Support Act re-introduced in the House on April 22, 2009. Among other provisions, the PWSA will ensure that pregnant women are not denied coverage by insurance companies; establish a toll-free number for resources during pregnancy and after birth; provide life-affirming pregnancy services and parenting education in maternity group homes and other centers; provide new mothers with free home visits by registered nurses; and codify the current regulation allowing states to provide State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) coverage to unborn children and their mothers. It will also encourage adoption by expanding adoption tax credit and adoption assistance programs.

"The Pregnant Women Support Act reaches out to women with a helping hand when they are most vulnerable, and most engaged in making a decision about life or death for their unborn children," Cardinal Rigali said.

"There are some statements that almost everyone can endorse. First, the fact that over a million abortions take place every year in this country is a tragedy, and we should at least take steps to reduce abortions," said Cardinal Rigali. "Second, no woman should ever have to undergo an abortion because she feels she has no other choice or because alternatives were unavailable or not made known to her. An abortion performed under such social and

economic duress meets no one's standard for 'freedom of choice,'" the Cardinal continued. "In the meantime, pregnant women need our assistance now so that abortion is not promoted to them as their only choice... "

**ACTION: Call or e-mail your Congressional Representative and urge him/her to co-sponsor this important piece of legislation, the Pregnant Women Support Act (HR 2035).**

**As of this writing, Rep. Marcy Kaptur (9<sup>th</sup> Congressional District) has already signed on as a co-sponsor. Call or send an e-mail to thank her for her support.**

#### **UPCOMING EXECUTION – CLEMENCY URGED**

**BACKGROUND:** Lorain County native, **Daniel Wilson**, is scheduled for execution Wednesday, June 3, 2009. In March of 1992, Mr. Wilson was convicted and sentenced to death for the May 4, 1991 murder of Carol Lutz.

Several factors in Mr. Wilson's case history merit executive clemency, principally that the trial court's explanation of the case's sole death sentence specification to the trial jury was ruled to be constitutionally erroneous and invalid by the United States Sixth District Court of Appeals. The erroneous trial court instruction allowed the jury to consider the death sentence while being improperly instructed how to consider and weigh the evidence in mitigation when considering the death penalty specification. Wilson is the only person on Ohio's Death Row that has not had a jury weigh a valid death sentence specification.

Other mitigating factors include Daniel's remarkably abusive childhood, his expression of deep regret for and acceptance of responsibility for the pain he caused, and his successful efforts to become a "positive and productive" member of the Ohio prison population as demonstrated by his serving as legal typist and librarian in the death row library as well as a GED tutor.

**ACTION: CALL OR E MAIL Governor Strickland's office. Urge him to grant clemency and commute Daniel Wilson's sentence to life imprisonment, especially in light of the circumstances of his trial. This governor has shown his willingness to grant clemency in recent cases. ACT NOW! Phone: 614 466 3555  
E mail: <http://governor.ohio.gov/Assistance/ContacttheGovernor/tabid/150/Default.aspx>**

#### **CATHOLIC CLIMATE COVENANT BRINGS TOGETHER CALLS FOR ACTION**

The Catholic community is launching an unprecedented initiative, the *Catholic Climate Covenant*, to bring together in new ways religious obligations to care for creation and care for "the least of these" as a distinctive Catholic contribution to the climate change debate. Leading national Catholic organizations are calling on Catholic individuals and families, parishes and schools, religious communities, colleges and hospitals and other Catholic organizations to take a unique *St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor*.

The effort responds to and builds upon the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI, the U.S. Catholic Bishops, and many Catholic religious communities who believe that our response to climate change must be guided by the exercise of prudence, the pursuit of the common good and a priority for the poor

Pressing the issue of responsibility for the impacts of climate change, the Campaign asks the haunting and provocative question "Who is Under Your Carbon Footprint?" in mailings to every parish in the nation, posters, and print ads in Catholic publications and in major newspapers across the country. In taking *the St Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor*, Catholics promise to:

- PRAY and reflect on the duty to care for God's creation and the poor and vulnerable;
- LEARN about and educate others on both the reality of climate change and its moral dimensions;
- ASSESS their participation—as individuals and organizations—in contributing to climate change (i.e. consumption and conservation);
- ACT to change their choices and behaviors contributing to climate change and;
- ADVOCATE Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact the poor and vulnerable.

Bishop Skylstad of Spokane, former president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and honorary chair of the Catholic Climate Covenant explained "*This is not just one more environmental message or one more plea to serve those in need but an urgent call and a different message: how does our Catholic community and our nation care for those most affected by impacts and remedies of climate change and reduce harmful behaviors impacting God's gift of creation?*"

Before Easter, the *Catholic Coalition on Climate Change* sent resource packets (in English and Spanish), including the St. Francis Pledge, to all of the 17,000 Catholic parishes and 6,300 Catholic elementary schools in the nation. The Campaign and Pledge are also being promoted by a wide range of other Catholic organizations to reach deeply into every part of Catholic life.

**ACTION:** You can go to this website <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/> to take the “St Francis Pledge” and to learn more about this important faith initiative.

## EVENTS AND RESOURCES

Contact your Congressional representatives by FAX letter, e-mail, or phone.  
Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at: 202.224.3121; or call Members’ local offices.  
Full contact info can be found on Members of Congress’s web sites, at: [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

For contact information on your Ohio Legislators, go to:  
<http://www.ohiocathconf.org/L/legisbydiocese.htm>  
<http://www.legislature.state.oh.us>

Call the White House comment line at 202-456-1111 or send an e-mail to  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/CONTACT/>

*For more information on the above, please call the Diocesan Social Action Office at 216-939-3851 or 888-620-5280. You can also visit our web page at [www.catholic-action.org](http://www.catholic-action.org) for more information. Thank you.*