



Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops

THE PUBLIC POLICY VOICE OF THE CHURCH



Agenda for the 85th Texas Legislative Session

Protecting Human Life

All our social obligations and rights flow from the inherent value of human life, which is made in the image of God. The Catholic Church teaches that human life is intrinsically valuable and should be protected from conception to natural death; including through efforts to end abortion, prevent euthanasia, stop the destruction of human embryos, and oppose cloning.

- Support state funding to abortion alternative providers.
- Support ban on research using fetal tissue acquired from abortion.
- Oppose all public funding to abortion providers, including funds for contraceptives.
- Support the protection and improvement of air, land, and water quality in Texas.
- Support efforts to reform the statute governing end-of-life care to involve patients, families and physicians in protecting life and dignity, while preserving ethical standards of care.
- Support programs to encourage adoption and to assist families with parenting support.

Children and Families

The Church supports legislation that promotes strong, stable and healthy families. The Catholic Church recognizes parents as the primary educators of their children and supports the freedom of parents to choose a school for their children with a safe, productive learning environment, and rejects the notion that a parent's address and income level should determine a child's educational or child care opportunities.

- Promote the permanency of marriage between one man and one woman.
- Support abstinence-only education in Texas schools.
- Support conscience protection legislation to ensure that charities have the religious liberty protection to fulfill their mission without violating deeply held religious beliefs related to the life and dignity of the human person and traditional family structures.
- Support school choice tax credit scholarships to provide educational choices for families.
- Support Texas public school students' receipt of in-state college tuition and financial aid.
- Support foster care system improvements, especially related to children aging out of foster care.
- Support increased recruitment, formation, and support for foster care families.
- Support quality, affordable before- and after-school care for public and private students.



Health and Human Services

Health care is essential for the proper development of life. Justice demands that medical and behavioral health care be easily available for all. Particular care must be offered to those who have special needs because of age, addiction, physical or mental disability.

- Support improvements to Texas' critical public health safety net, especially expanding opportunities for acquiring health insurance, including expanding Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program.
- Support access to basic and preventative health care for low income uninsured women, as well as prenatal and pediatric care for children.
- Support care for persons who are aging, live with disabilities, or need mental health services.

Justice for Immigrants

Catholics derive our special concern for the immigrant from the many biblical accounts of immigration. The Catholic Church supports immigration reform that is merciful, charitable, and compassionate to those

here simply working for a better life, while also recognizing the legitimate responsibility of the federal government to maintain control of our nation's borders.

- Support comprehensive immigration reform including a pathway to citizenship.
- Oppose efforts to compel local and state agencies to enforce federal immigration laws.
- Oppose efforts to reduce access to education and healthcare for immigrants.



- Oppose efforts that hinder immigrants' ability to get Texas drivers' licenses and IDs or birth certificates for immigrants' citizen children.
- Support care for unaccompanied minors and reunite families separated by migration.
- Support alternatives to family detention of migrants and refugees.
- Support continued state and federal cooperation with refugee resettlement.

Protecting The Poor and Vulnerable

The Catholic Church has always served the poor and the vulnerable by providing services and advocating for the public good. In difficult economic times, those unable to help themselves are in particular need of society's compassion. We call on state leaders to craft a balanced approach to addressing the social and economic needs, including adequately funding essential public services.

- Support access to safe and affordable housing, water, and power for low-income Texans.
- Support regulatory standards for payday and auto-title lending to curb usurious lending practices and prevent a cycle of consumer debt.
- Support safe and dignified working conditions, adequate training, and fair compensation for workers.
- Support policies to alleviate food insecurity and hunger, including expanded access to summer nutrition programs, school breakfast projects, and nutritional awareness.
- Support efforts to end human trafficking and provide care for victims.

Criminal Justice

Ours should be a just and compassionate society committed to ensuring the safety and protection of our communities while encouraging the merciful forgiveness and rehabilitation of criminal offenders. We support reform to the state's criminal justice system that ends the death penalty, provides for the compassionate treatment of prisoners, and encourages rehabilitation and forgiveness for those re-entering society.

- Oppose the use of the death penalty in Texas.

- Support efforts to improve access to medical care for the incarcerated in Texas.
- Support reintegrating parolees into society.
- Support efforts to improve the training and supervision of correctional officers in dealing with incarcerated offenders.
- Support revision of capital jury sentencing instructions to prevent concealment of jurors' individual capacity to impose a sentence less than death.

About the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops

The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops advocates on behalf of the Roman Catholic Bishops of Texas for policies and programs that support the life and dignity of every human person from conception through natural death.

This *Legislative Agenda* is the result of a rigorous process of reflection and consultation. Under the guidance of the Texas Bishops, TCCB staff conducts policy assessments—with the input of diocesan departments, ministries, and agencies—to assess public policy needs and opportunities across the state. The Bishops extensively review and discuss the proposals before setting the legislative priorities for the upcoming session. Because of that, our public policy positions are based in Catholic social and moral teaching to uphold the sanctity of life, help the poor and vulnerable, and promote the common good.

About the Texas Catholic Network

The **Texas Catholic Network** is a grassroots program that enables the more than 7 million Catholics from across Texas to communicate effectively with each other and the members of the Texas Legislature. This work is carried out through **Texas Catholic Network "Archangels"** Program, a network of volunteers who help inform parishioners about the legislative agenda and encourage them to communicate with lawmakers about legislation that supports our faith and Catholic social teaching.

As a member of the Texas Catholic Network, you can:

- Act as a source of information and promote participation in the grassroots network to congregations in their parishes.
- Activate, coordinate, and monitor the grassroots responses to Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops action alerts.
- Voice the Texas Catholic Bishops' concerns and positions on public issues and legislation to local state legislative offices.
- Attend public education and informational meetings on the Texas Catholic Conference's behalf.

To join the Texas Catholic Network, or for more information, visit www.TXcatholic.org.

Contact Us

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