



PRIORITIES FOR THE 83RD TEXAS LEGISLATURE

The Texas Catholic Conference 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. We believe that every human being is created in God's image and, without exception, possesses dignity and value. Our public policy positions are rooted in Catholic social and moral teaching and serve to: uphold the sanctity of life; lift up the poor and vulnerable; and help promote the common good.

Protecting Human Life

Because we are made in the image of God, there is an inherent value of human life from which all of our social obligations and rights flow. It is the consistent teaching of the Catholic Church that human life is intrinsically valuable and should be protected from conception to natural death. Our foundational principle to protect the life and dignity of all human persons calls us to work to end abortion, prevent euthanasia, stop destruction of human embryos, and oppose cloning.

- Support state funding to abortion alternative providers.
- Oppose all public funding to abortion providers, including funding for contraceptive purposes.
- Oppose any legislation that would allow or fund embryonic stem cell research.
- Support a ban on all forms of human cloning, while recognizing the life of all human embryos by opposing legislation that would allow cloned embryos to be destroyed.
- Support efforts to restrict judicial bypass in parental consent law.
- Support the protection and improvement of air, land, and water quality in Texas.

Justice for Immigrants

Catholics derive our special concern for the immigrant from the many biblical accounts of immigration. The Catholic Church supports reform of our immigration system 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 legalization.
- Oppose local and state entities enforcing federal immigration laws.
- Oppose efforts to reduce access to education and healthcare for immigrants.
- Support improvements to conditions at immigration detention facilities.
- Oppose federal and state funding for a fence along the Texas-Mexico border.
- Oppose efforts that make acquiring Texas drivers' licenses and identification documents more difficult for immigrants.

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For more information visit www.TXcatholic.org or call (512) 339-9882.***

Criminal Justice

Our task as a society should be to restore a sense of civility and responsibility to everyday life, and to promote crime prevention and genuine rehabilitation. The common good is undermined by criminal behavior that threatens the lives and dignity of others and by policies that give up on those who have broken the law. We support fiscal and moral reform in our state's criminal justice system with an emphasis on ending the death penalty and supporting successful rehabilitation and reintegration of those re-entering society.

- Oppose the use of the death penalty in Texas.
- Support a ban on executions of people who were mentally disabled at the time of the offense.
- Support the chaplain corps within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), including ensuring access to inmates by all chaplains.
- Support efforts to improve access to medical care for the incarcerated in Texas.
- Support efforts to assist in the transition of ex-offenders into society, including the opt-out ban on drug felons receiving SNAP and student loans.

Health and Human Services

Along with food, clothing and shelter, health care is a necessary means for the proper development of life. Justice demands that medical and behavioral health care be easily available for all. Under no circumstance should the availability of health care threaten life itself or place restrictions on the right to exercise one's conscience. Because human beings are sacred, we must ensure that all persons have a safe place to live, enough nutritious food to eat, and adequate income to support themselves. Particular care must be offered to those who have special needs because of age, addiction, physical or mental disability.

- Support improvements and modernizations of the Medicaid and CHIP eligibility system.
- Support improvements to Texas' critical public health safety net and infrastructure.
- Support the elimination of all system barriers that delay access to newborn or prenatal care.
- Support access to basic and preventative health care for low income uninsured women and children, including access to breast and cancer screenings.
- Support efforts to increase access to mental health care.
- Support efforts to reform the current Advance Directives statute to expand the family notification period while maintaining the ethical standards of care and protecting providers' consciences.
- Support funding for adult stem cell research and for the expansion of the Texas Cord Blood Bank.
- Support care and dignity for persons who are aging or who live with disabilities.

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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.

- Support efforts to promote the permanency of marriage for the good of the community.
- Support efforts to ensure access to marriage for undocumented immigrants.
- Support abstinence-only education in Texas schools.
- Support a school choice program of tax credits to ensure equal educational choices for low-income families.
- Support efforts to ensure students who attend Texas public schools have access to in-state college tuition and access to financial aid.
- Support increased access to public and private pre-kindergarten programs.
- Support access to quality, affordable before and after school care for public and private schools.

The Poor and Vulnerable

For 2000 years, the Catholic Church has manifested a special concern for the poor and the vulnerable. The Church is a provider and supporter of services that help those among us most in need of assistance. In these 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 solving the budget problems of our state, including seeking revenue to adequately fund needed public services and prepare Texas for the future.

- Support efforts to increase access to affordable housing.
- Support the creation of 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, access to safety training and professional development, fair compensation, and a safety net for workers and their families.
- Support policies to alleviate food insecurity and hunger, including expansion of access to summer nutrition and school breakfast programs and increased access to healthy foods and good nutrition.
- Support efforts to end human trafficking and provide care for victims.
- Support legislation that protects all Texans' right to safe, affordable water essential for life.
- Support legislation that ensures reliable, affordable power for vulnerable Texans.

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About the Texas Catholic Conference

The Texas Catholic Conference (TCC) is the official public policy voice of the **15 Roman Catholic Bishops of Texas** and **Texas' 7 million Catholics**. The public policy issues addressed by the TCC are grounded in Catholic moral and social teachings. TCC communicates the Church's concerns to Texas policymakers and closely collaborates with diocesan and parish leadership in your local district to identify and respond to community needs and concerns, and to inform Texas Catholics about the issues and decisions made in Austin and Washington D.C.

The Catholic Call to Faithful Citizenship

All Catholics are called to witness their faith through engagement in the public square. Formed by Catholic moral and social teachings, faithful Catholic citizens follow God's call to protect life, serve the poor and vulnerable, uphold the dignity of the individual, and preserve our religious liberty. The Texas Catholic Conference provides educational resources, trainings, newsletters, action alerts, and other resources to help Catholics develop an informed conscience and engage in advocacy for the most vulnerable. For more information on Faithful Citizenship, visit www.txcatholic.org/faithful-citizenship.

Resources

Texas Catholic Conference Web Site

www.txcatholic.org

Policy Pages and Issue Resources

In-depth policy one-pagers and resources on the TCC legislative agenda

www.txcatholic.org/public-policy

Find Your Diocese

www.txcatholic.org/bishops

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)

Association of the United States Catholic Bishops

www.usccb.org

Contact Us

Jeffery Patterson, Executive Director

jefferypatterson@txcatholic.org, 512-961-7767

Jennifer Carr Allmon, Associate Director

Jennifer@txcatholic.org, 512-961-7762

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