

## PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Bishop Matthew H. Clark appoints the Public Policy Committee to assist him in determining the public policy priorities for the Diocese and to develop an implementation plan.

### Chairperson:

Rev. Brian Cool

Catholic Newman Community at U.R.

### Committee Members:

John Boroski	Transfiguration Parish, Pittsford
Nita Brown	African Educator/Blessed Sacrament
Anne Casey	Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Greece
Lourdes DeChateauvieux	Diocesan Translator
James Dollard	St. Columba's, Caledonia
Deacon Larry Feasel	Criminal Justice
Linda Finlay	St. Catherine's, Ithaca
Carl Hatch	Catholic Family Center
Doug Mandelaro	Diocesan Communications Director
Carol May	St. Mary of the Lake Parish, Ontario
Edward Nowak	Criminal Justice
Gerry Oftedahl	Adult Stem Cell Initiative, Inc.
Nancy Richardson	St. Michael Parish, Penn Yan
Holly Rockwell	Blessed Sacrament, Rochester
Peggy Ruscio	St. Januarius Parish, Naples
Scott Rutan	St. Patrick Parish, Victor
Mary Monroe Smith	St. Mary Parish, Elmira
Phyllis Tierney, SSJ	Sisters of St. Joseph
Bernie Tomasso	Holy Family, Auburn

### Catholic Charities Staff

Jack Balinsky	Diocesan Director
Jann K. Armantrout	Diocesan Life Issues Coordinator
Kathleen Dubel	Catholic Charities, Southern Tier
Brigit Hurley	Catholic Family Center, CC Livingston
Sr. Janet Korn, RSM	Social Justice Awareness
Marvin Mich	Catholic Family Center
Ruth Putnam Marchetti	CC Finger Lakes, CC Wayne

We continue to work on these priorities from past years. Contact your local

Catholic Charities for more information:

- Global Climate Change
- Children at Risk
- Farmworker Fair Labor Practices Act
- Justice for Immigrants
- Affordable Housing
- Peacebuilding
- Death Penalty

### We made a difference!

Thanks to the parishes and schools who participated in February 2008 *Diocesan Public Policy Sunday* – calling on our New York State leaders to respond to **global climate change** by investing in energy efficiency/conservation; research on renewable sources of energy; and helping poor and low income New Yorkers pay for energy costs. The NYS Assembly has passed legislation to accomplish this (A.7365 & 66). We need to encourage the NYS Senate to do likewise (S.5347 & 5371).

Approximately fifteen parishes in the Diocese of Rochester have already created a *Care for God's Creation* committee to help their parish communities continue to respond to the moral challenge of global climate change and other environmental justice concerns.

For additional information or for assistance, contact your regional justice and peace staff:

#### Chemung/Schuylers/Tioga

Kathy Dubel 607-734-9784 ext. 135

#### Wayne/Ontario/Seneca/Yates/Cayuga

Ruth Putnam Marchetti 585-328-3228 ext. 1366

#### Monroe County

Marvin Mich 585-262-7021

#### Monroe and Livingston County

Brigit Hurley 585-262-7099

#### Steuben County

Deacon Daniel Williams 607-776-8085 ext. 217

#### Tompkins County

Edie Reagan 607-272-5062 ext. 12



ROMAN CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

## 2009 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Since one out of every seven people in the United States lacks basic health insurance coverage, I would be surprised if anyone reading this doesn't have some family member or friend who is struggling to cover healthcare costs. So it may not surprise you to know that most of the uninsured are either employed or live in a family where one or more of the adults is employed. Sky rocketing healthcare costs have induced increasingly more corporations to drastically cut health insurance benefits. In light of this crisis the Diocesan Public Policy Committee has chosen **Access to Healthcare** as this year's Diocesan Advocacy Issue.

In addition, two other timely issues have been raised as education goals. Three short years ago **Ethical Stem Cell Research** was our advocacy issue as we tried to influence the allocation of state funds towards promising research that did not involve the destruction of human life. I am increasingly concerned about the direction New York State is taking in allocating these funds and I ask that you take some time to understand this grave ethical issue. Another human life issue concerns the successful transitioning of people who have been incarcerated back into the community. **Prodigal Sons and Daughters: Easing the Transition from Incarceration to Home and Community** requires us to move beyond our comfort zones to think in very practical ways about how we can heal our communities as record numbers of people spend portions of their lives behind bars. Being a faithful citizen requires an ongoing commitment to the common good of our communities.

Your Brother in Christ,

† Matthew H. Clark

Roman Catholic  
Diocese of Rochester

Public Policy Committee

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585-328-3210 or 800-388-7177

<http://www.dor.charities.htm>

# Education Priorities

## SUPPORT FOR ETHICAL STEM CELL RESEARCH

During the gubernatorial campaign of 2006, NYS voters were promised a bond act that would have allowed them to vote in support of or opposition to stem cell research that requires the destruction of nascent human lives. Over 14,000 parishioners from the Diocese of Rochester signed a petition encouraging the governmental leaders in New York State to foster development of the ethical stem cell research that is already providing treatment to patients and that does not involve the destruction of human life.

The voters, however, were subsequently denied an opportunity to voice their wishes, when in 2007, the Empire State Stem Cell Board was created in a budget agreement. \$600 million dollars of NYS taxpayer funds are currently dedicated for stem cell research including research involving the destruction of human embryos; human cloning for research and the creation of human/animal hybrid embryos.

The Catholic Church teaches that human life is a gift from God; that we are created in the image and likeness of God; that there is special dignity conferred on each human being by God and that each of us is called to treat every human life with respect. The deliberate destruction of human lives for the use by others can never be justified.

Ethical stem cell research using cells from consenting donors; the by-products of childbirth and that can be created from tissue cells has already begun to provide medicine and cures for some of humanity's most devastating illnesses and injuries. The Catholic church supports this research and encourages expanded investment in this promising medicine. If state funds are misdirected, all new Yorkers suffer.

To learn how to influence the government processes that will determine how the \$600 million will be spent and to learn about the science and ethics of stem cell research, please contact Jann Armantrout, Diocesan Life Issues Coordinator, at 585.328.3210 or Armantrout@dor.org

## Prodigal Sons and Daughters Easing the Transition from Incarceration to Home and Community

“This son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.”

Luke 15: 24

The numbers are staggering: one out of every 134 Americans is currently imprisoned. Adding on those who are on probation or parole changes the figures to one out of every 32 adults. All but those convicted of the most heinous crimes will eventually return to their communities. In New York State approximately 23,000 men and women are released from prisons every year. Nearly 40 percent return to jail in the first year after their release, 65 percent within three years.

The good news is that those numbers can change, if ex-offenders enter a community where they receive assistance, respect, and a fair shot at obtaining housing and employment. A 2007 state-funded survey in collaboration with Harvard University found substantially lower rates of recidivism, higher rates of employment and higher earnings among ex-offenders who receive support after their release, as compared to those who received no such support.

Some of the more important assistance came in the form of drug and alcohol counseling, job training, housing and a GED program. As the Monroe County Re-Entry Task Force warns “Ignoring the plight of former offenders puts our community at serious risk of continued violence, criminal activity, an increased tax burden, and irreparable damage to children, families and neighborhoods.”

Will our Catholic faith communities be prepared to welcome and assist the increasing number of ex-offenders?

During the year, the Public Policy Committee will provide information on ways individuals, parishes and counties can help.

# DIOCESAN-WIDE ~ PARISH-BASED ADVOCACY PUBLIC POLICY WEEKEND ~ FEBRUARY 7/8, 2009 ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Envisioning a health care system that continues the healing ministry of Jesus Christ, that respects the dignity of every person, and that promotes the nation's well-being, the Public Policy Committee recommends that the following values, developed by the Catholic Health Association, be incorporated into the health care system of the United States as it is modified and developed:

- Available and accessible to all with special concern for the poor and vulnerable
- Health and prevention oriented with the goal of enhancing the health status of communities
- Sufficiently and fairly financed
- Transparent and consensus driven in allocation of resources and organized for cost effective care and administration
- Patient centered and designed to meet health needs at all stages of life from conception to natural death
- Safe, effective and designed to deliver the greatest possible quality

Health care is fundamental to a healthy, flourishing society — it is not a product or commodity. When people have unmet health needs, it is difficult for them to fully function as members of their families, their workplaces or their schools, which then affects the broader community and economy. A crisis is looming in health care with evidence that the system is no longer working for too many people.

Double-digit annual premium increases for private health insurance and health insurance paid for by employees and employers, paired with increased deductibles and out of pocket costs means that working families may need to choose less comprehensive health care insurance and/or limit the amount of health care services they access, regardless of health care needs.

The costs of government sponsored health care programs such as Medicaid and Medicare consume an ever-greater share of local, state and federal revenues. Taxpayers frequently misunderstand the benefits and costs of these programs or other government initiated programs such as Health Savings Accounts.

Access to any health care is ever more difficult for the estimated 47 million uninsured citizens of the United States, a majority of the undocumented residents of the United States, and the numerous families and individuals who are underinsured.

Health care access and health care insurance are anticipated to be a major part of domestic public policy initiatives in 2009. Issues including who will fund and administer any health care insurance programs; who will be covered by government programs, including the S-CHIP program due to be reauthorized in March 2009; and what coverage will be provided or excluded from health care coverage. These issues may all be included in the governmental decision making process.

The crisis in health care must be resolved if we are to have healthy and stable families, economies and communities.

## Timeline/Resources for Parish Action:

- Resource Packet (distribute August 2008 for use Fall 2008)
- Resource Packet (distribute November 2008 for January-February, 2009 parish use)