

Being the Voice Crying out in the Desert: Review of advocacy efforts in 2013 legislative session

Advocating for government policies to protect the poor, the vulnerable and God's creation is not for the faint of heart or easily discouraged. Our U.S. Catholic Bishops have taught us that "**participation in political life is a moral obligation**", but they never said it'd be easy. During this year's New York State legislative session, Catholics from the Rochester Diocese and from around the state worked hard to advocate with elected officials on many issues. Below is a summary of some of the results. Some of these efforts turned out the way we wanted, and some didn't. We did not, and will not, give up. Our duty is not to tally up the number of bills we passed; our duty is to promote the Common Good and to keep announcing Christ's reign.

*"God does not
ask us to be
successful,
God asks us to
be faithful."*

*~ Blessed
Mother
Teresa
of Calcutta*

Children and Families in Poverty:

In February, parishes across the Rochester diocese took part in Public Policy Weekend, gathering **8,650 signatures** on petitions urging New York State officials to invest \$300 million in **subsidies for high-quality child care** for low-income working families. These subsidies help keep parents earning paychecks to avoid sliding more deeply into poverty and help keep kids safe and developing to their full potential. According to analysis by our friends at The Children's Agenda in Rochester, "Our advocacy for child care subsidies in the New York State budget paid off: despite a very challenging State budget situation, we made substantial progress toward our goal of a \$300 million increase, which would have brought the state back to 2010 subsidy funding levels. The Governor's proposal allocated \$215 million in state general funds for subsidies and the Legislature added \$9 million new state funds on top of that. Because of a shift in other funding streams for child care, this results in a net gain of \$3 million over last year for subsidies!"

Unborn Children and Women:

The **Women's Equality Act** included protections for victims of sexual harassment, domestic violence and human trafficking along with provisions to insure pay equity for women. Sadly it also included measures that could have allowed abortions through the ninth month of pregnancy and allowed abortions to be performed by people who are not physicians. Catholics rallied in Albany, spent hours contacting state legislators and prayed hard to defeat these abortion expansion efforts. The campaign went down to the wire of the legislative session. The bill was passed by the Assembly but in the end the State Senate did not bring the Women's Equality Act or the separate abortion expansion provisions to the floor for a vote. **This was a hard-fought, hard-won victory for unborn children!** Tragically, however, because some politicians chose to couple abortion expansion with the positive aspects of the bill, they missed the opportunity to support women who are suffering terrible human rights abuses. The NYS Catholic Conference will remain vigilant because the State Senate could consider the abortion expansion measures later this year.

Farmworkers:

The tens of thousands of farmworkers who harvest crops and tend farm animals in New York each year are still waiting for equal labor rights; as has happened several years, the Assembly passed but the State Senate did not vote on the **Farmworker Fair Labor Practices Act**, which would have granted farmworkers rights to overtime pay, a guaranteed day of rest per week and collective bargaining protections.

Catholic Schools:

Catholic and other private schools are mandated by the State to track attendance and provide other services for students and are promised reimbursement for those services. However, in some years, the funds actually received have been only a portion of the amount promised and the monies have been very slow in coming. After roughly 40,000 emails on this issue sent to elected officials via the Catholic Action Network, the 2013-2014 state budget includes a nearly \$14 million increase in funding for mandated services reimbursement. This funding will help to keep our Catholic schools financially viable as they bring quality education to children and youth.

“Join with thousands of others to work for justice in society and promote the values important to our faith. Through the New York State Catholic Conference’s **Catholic Action Network**, you can stay informed about important issues and strengthen the Catholic voice.” Sign up at <https://ssl.capwiz.com/nyscatholicconference/mlm/signup/>

Do you work with families?

Are you a catechist? coach? RCIA or sacramental prep team member?

*Join us for the **Households of Faith Catechetical Congress on the Family** on **August 2 & 3** for workshops and keynotes on a range of topics -including parenting, scripture, prayer, evangelization, care for God's creation and peacemaking - designed to help you in your outreach. Register at <http://homelinks.dor.org/summer>*

2013 CATECHETICAL CONGRESS ON FAMILY



HOUSEHOLDS of Faith *Rooted and Grounded in Love*

Friday & Saturday August 2-3 Hosted at The Aquinas Institute • 1127 Dewey Ave., Rochester NY 14613

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: Fr. Michael White & Tom Corcoran authors of *Rebuilt: The Story of a Catholic Parish* and Dr. Jo Ann Paradise, National Consultant for Our Sunday Visitor Publishing.

Workshop Presenters include: Dr. Sue Grenough, Dr. Timothy F. Hogan, Susan Vogt, Dr. Greg Dobie Moser, Michael Theisen

DID YOU KNOW You can register for individual workshops or keynote each day, attending only the ones of interest to you?

July 9 - July 29: \$15 per workshop/keynote • **Registration at the door:** \$20 per workshop/keynote

Pre-order lunch \$8: salad bar, assorted wraps, fruit, drink, chips; **Pre-order dinner \$10:** bbq chicken, tossed salad, baked beans, potato salad, fruit, relish tray. Vegetarian options available.

To register, and for workshop descriptions and presenter bios, go to homelinks.dor.org/summer

2013 Congress is presented by the Diocese of Rochester Dept. of Evangelization & Catechesis.

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