WSCC 2009 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2009-2011 BIENNIAL BUDGET

PRINCIPLES

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Mt 25:35-40) We are called to witness the love of God through compassionate care of all God's children and to work prophetically, as Jesus did in his time, to build a more just and equitable society." Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

Recognizing that the State's budget is a moral statement, WSCC's advocacy efforts prioritize attending to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable persons in our society. We seek budget choices, both in revenue decisions and expenditure decisions that focus on the common good.

The 2009 Legislature and the Governor must enact a balanced budget for the next two state fiscal years. Washington's fiscal situation has been negatively affected both by the national and state economic downturn. Despite a healthy reserve fund, the legislature still will face a sizeable deficit in the general fund in the 2009 legislative session. The latest revenue forecast and the predictions from the economists at the Office of Financial Management place the deficit at about $5.1 billion. The 2007-2009 Washington State's biennial budget is $33.6 billion. The deficit is a revenue problem, based on the combination of a long-term structural problem and a weak economy.

The deficit's impact on human services could be severe. More than 50% of general fund state appropriations are dedicated to education. Human services make up approximately 35% of the budget. The majority of those funds are spent on health care and corrections. The potential for cuts in human services is significant, especially for immigrants and state funded social programs.

The capital budget will also be negatively impacted by the reduced revenue forecasts because it is dependent on the sale of bonds. The Constitution limits the amount of debt the state can incur. Annual debt service payments cannot exceed nine percent of the average general state revenues in the preceding three years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Retaining programs that provide services for the most vulnerable persons
- Maintaining programs for immigrants
- Collaborating with policy leaders to improve efficiencies in the provision of services
- Changing the structure of the state's revenue system to improve stability