WSCC END OF SESSION REPORT
2009

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

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

The 2009 legislative session was dominated by the $9 billion carry-forward budget shortfall. The economic recession resulted in significant decreases in revenue collections, including a $4 billion drop between December, 2008 and the March, 2009 revenue forecast. The state is required to have a balanced budget. To accomplish this in the 2009-2011 biennial budget, legislators chose to use $3 billion in federal stimulus funds, to shift $1.5 billion from other funds into the general operating budget, and to make $4.5 billion in budget cuts. They left $822 million in reserves. The session ended in the early morning of April 27.

This session, the WSCC worked to save critical programs for the poor and vulnerable in our state by promoting efficiencies in the provision of services and being strong advocates for those who are most likely to be harmed by the economic downturn and the service cuts in the state's budget.

WSCC BUDGET PRIORITIES

General Assistance Unemployable (GAU):

- GAU is a state-funded program that provides small cash grants and medical coverage to low-income persons who are disabled and unable to work due to a physical or mental disability. The Governor proposed eliminating the GAU program to help address the deficit in her biennial budget. Elimination would have a detrimental effect on the men and women who rely on GAU and would have created higher costs in other areas of the budget. WSCC with other advocates were successful in saving the program.

  However, GAU did suffer a $65 million reduction – $40 million from medical coverage and $25 million from grant appropriations. Eligibility requirements and the $339 monthly grant will remain the same. The drug and alcohol treatment program will continue. Five more counties will start the GAU managed care program, which includes mental health services. Savings will be achieved by reducing length of time on the program through increased facilitation of SSI applications, collaboration with worker training programs, and more frequent eligibility evaluations.

Volunteer Chore Services:

CCS administers the Volunteer Chore Services (VCS) contract, which serves 35 of the state's 39 counties. VCS allows clients to live safely and independently in their homes through a program that matches them with professionally trained volunteers who assist them with chores of everyday living. WSCC and VCS staff were instrumental in retaining the VCS program with funding stable at the 2007-2009 biennium level of $3.7 million.

The Basic Health Plan (BHP):

BHP subsidizes insurance coverage primarily for working families with low and moderate incomes whose employers do not provide health care coverage. BHP funding was reduced by 43%, a savings of $273 million. It is estimated that at least 40,000 people will be eliminated from the BHP program by January, 2010.

OTHER BUDGET ITEMS

Economic Support Services:

- The state qualifies for over $99 million in federal TANF contingency funds; these federal funds will allow a decrease in state funding.
- $2.5 million is provided to augment increased state costs related to $311 million in added food stamp benefits as a result of the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).
- Funding for refugee employment services is reduced by $3 million.

Health Care:

- $40.5 million is cut from the medical assistance program through a policy change to emphasize the use of generic drugs.
- The reimbursement rate for pediatric providers in state medical assistance programs is reduced, resulting in a $17.8 million savings in state funds.
- $7.3 million is cut from the state's dental program.
- $1 million is removed from the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program.
- Funding for Maternity Support Services is reduced by 20% ($17 million) and the department is directed to prioritize funding for women with high-risk pregnancies.

Child Welfare:

- $1.8 million is appropriated for transitional housing assistance or partial payments for rental assistance under the independent youth housing program.
- Approximately $3 million is cut from the adoption programs at DSHS. The savings will come from expediting adoptions for 600 children who are eligible for adoption, and eliminating five-year adoption support reviews.
- $7.5 million in state dollars and over $12 million in federal dollars are cut from the Behavioral Rehabilitative Services program.
- $4 million is captured in state general funds by reducing the length of stay in foster care.
- DSHS will achieve a 5% decrease in FY 2010 and a 10% decrease in FY 2011. $6.4 million is saved as the department reduces rates for child welfare services and child protective services. These reductions exclude family foster home payments and adoption support payments.
- $428,000 is provided to DSHS for sex abuse recognition training.

Housing:

- $5 million is appropriated for the operation, repair, and staffing of shelters in the homeless family shelter program.
- $10.5 million of federal stimulus funding is provided for low income weatherization training and technical assistance.
- $49 million for grants for low income weatherization is provided in the capital budget. $8.5 million is provided for rental assistance (THOR).

Legal Defense:
- Civil legal defense programs serving low income families were reduced by 4%.
- $80,000 was appropriated to the Office of Civil Legal Aid to provide telephonic legal advice and assistance to persons 60 years of age or older regardless of income level.

Drug and Alcohol Treatment Programs:
- A $2.5 million cut is achieved by reducing the number of chemical dependency specialists located in regional offices.
- More than $12 million is eliminated from drug and alcohol treatment programs, reducing low-income adult outpatient, residential, and detoxification services statewide.

Mental Health Services:
- State-only funding is provided for mental health services to clients ineligible for Medicaid. Funding for these services, which exceed $130 million annually, is reduced by 7.4%, resulting in a savings of $23 million. $10 million in state funds are saved by reducing the Medicaid funding rates to provide community mental health services by 3.2%.

Long Term Care Programs:
- The budget has eliminated state funding for the Senior Companion and the Foster Grandparent programs, both of which will continue to receive federal funding.

Criminal Justice:
- $29 million is saved in the Department of Corrections budget by policy changes to the community supervision laws. $10 million is removed from the offender re-entry program.

Early Learning/Child Care:
- A 50% reduction to home visitation services for new mothers results in savings of $1.75 million, and puts up to 1,600 families with at-risk children at a greater disadvantage when they start school.
- Severe cuts to the Child Care Resource and Referral Network mean parents will have less support locating safe, quality early learning programs.
- The budget includes $1.5 million for the career and wage ladder program (funds continuing education and other support) that will be matched by the federal government and $1 million for QRIS (Quality Rating and Improvement System).

REVENUE

"…decisions about what programs are funded and how necessary revenues are generated raise some fundamental moral questions. Who is responsible for the most vulnerable members of society? What is the role of government in ensuring the common good, and what is the role of individuals and charitable organizations? What constitutes a fair and equitable distribution of income and wealth?"

Seeking the Common Good: A Reflection on Washington State's Tax System, WSCC, 2003

There were several bills introduced and discussions held on increasing revenue for the 2009-2011 biennium, as budget writers were preparing to make deep cuts in schools, health care, and other human services. The proposals would need voter approval to offset hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts. Opponents of increasing revenues argued the budget crisis was an opportunity to pare government down and develop new approaches to providing state services. Polling of state voters indicated lukewarm support for increasing taxes, even for hospitals, nursing homes and other health services. As a result, no legislation passed to increase taxes. Ideas floated included:
- Enacting a state income tax (**SJR 8205**).
- Enacting a state income tax on high earners (**SB 6147**).
- Adding a sales tax to candy and gum – revenues generated would have been used to support children's health care, dental care, and immunization programs (**SB 6189**).

- Increasing the state's sales tax by 0.3% – proceeds from the tax increase would have been used for health care programs (**HB 2337).**
- Providing $3 billion from the sale of state bonds to public schools and colleges to make capital construction improvements related to safety and health (**HB 2334**).

CAPITAL BUDGET

ESHB 1216:

- The 2009-11 Capital Budget authorized $3 billion in new capital projects, of which $1.8 billion are financed with new state general obligation bonds. Several dedicated state accounts were transferred into the operating budget, providing an additional $800 million to the General Fund. The capacity in the budget was impacted by the shifts in funds to the operating budget and the decreases in revenue the state has been experiencing as a result of the economic downturn.
- Funding was provided for competitive grant programs that assist nonprofit organizations in developing facilities for the arts, youth recreation, community services, and historic preservation.
- Much to our disappointment, the Spokane Catholic Charities' Family Services Center was not funded in the Building Communities Fund. The Blessed Sacrament Food and Emergency Facilities Renovation Project received a $200,000 appropriation in the Local and Community Projects section of the Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) capital budget.

Housing Trust Fund (HTF):

- HTF funds help local housing providers, including the three diocesan housing authorities, to develop much needed affordable housing. These funds are used for all types of low-income housing, including temporary, transitional, specialty, and affordable permanent housing. The HTF is part of the Capital Budget, and was signed by the Governor.

  The HTF was reduced by 50% from $200 million to $100 million in the 2009-2011 biennium. Within this funding level, Farm Worker Housing was funded at $7 million with $1 million set aside for development or preservation of migrant and seasonal farm workers housing on private farms. In addition, $5 million was set-aside for building low-income housing units in under-served communities, called communities of concern. CCS and WSCC were instrumental in obtaining this funding.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

PRINCIPLES: *Parents—the first and most important educators—have a fundamental right to choose the education best suited to the needs of their children, including public, private, and religious schools. Government, through such means as tax credits and publicly funded scholarships, should help provide resources for parents, especially those of modest means, to exercise this basic right without discrimination. Students in all educational settings should have opportunities for moral and character formation.* Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Mandating child abuse prevention programs for all students
- Funding for WASL testing at private schools
- Changing the background check process to provide access to law enforcement reports
- Monitoring policy proposals relating to early learning programs

Schools were the primary policy focus of the 2009 Legislature, as a major reform bill was considered to place in statute the recommendations of the Basic Education Finance Task Force. Some provisions will have an impact on Catholic schools. Several bills on unfunded mandates in schools were introduced. **Initiative 732**, which provides cost-of-living increases for teachers, was suspended for the biennium,

saving $353 million. At the same time, employee health benefits will increase by 3% each year of the biennium, to $745 per employee per month in year one, and $768 in year two.

Child Abuse Prevention:

- **SSB 5935** would have required public schools to incorporate child abuse prevention programs into the existing curricula. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) would consult with professionals in the field of child abuse to establish the prevention programs, which must be research-based, age appropriate and effective. School districts must include in their audits a report on the implementation of this requirement at each school, and OSPI would have to submit the compilation of those reports to the Legislature. Implementation of these activities was to occur using only federal funding provided through the U.S. Department of Education for school safety and prevention programs. The bill was not adopted by the 2009 Legislature, and will be back for consideration in the 2010 session.

Background checks:

- Currently, school districts require new applicants who will have regularly scheduled unsupervised access to children to obtain a background record check through the Washington State Patrol (WSP) using fingerprints. Private schools also have the ability to obtain fingerprint record checks. There is an incremental fee schedule for record checks for classified and non-classified school employees. Under this fee schedule, private school employees, contractors, classified employees, and certification applicants are charged one fee ($60.25) while school district and educational service district employees are charged another fee ($50.25). **HB 1852** eliminates the requirement that the WSP charge only incremental fees for fingerprint-based background checks for school district and educational service district employees. All schools will pay the same fee. The Governor has signed **HB 1852**.

- **SB 5936** was a WSCC initiative to tighten up a loophole currently existing in the state's background check system. If a third party, such as a consumer reporting agency, is providing background checks of employees or volunteers who will or may have unsupervised access to children, individuals with developmental disabilities , or vulnerable adults, reports older than seven years are not accessible. **SB 5936** would have closed that loophole and allowed that background information to be reported to the hiring organization. The bill did not pass in the 2009 session.

School Environmental Health and Safety:

- **SB 5779 and HB 2070** relate to the Board of Health's recent draft environmental health and safety rules that impact both public and private schools. These rules had not been reviewed since 1971, and after a five year process, an extensive set of health and safety rules were proposed. The rules were found to be very expensive to implement. **SSB 5779** had a hearing and would have required the Board of Health to present the rules and a final cost estimate to the Legislature, prior to implementation of any rules pertaining to school facilities. The bill would have expired January 1, 2015. WSCC supported the bills because of the cost of implementing the rules. Unfortunately, no bill was adopted this session.

Education Reform:

- **ESHB 2261** is the vehicle for the major education reform measure passed by the Legislature. The bill is considered the first step to address the pressing issue of redefining basic education, which has not been re-written for 30 years. The Washington State Constitution imposes the paramount duty of the State to amply fund basic education. Therefore, any additions to the basic education definition obligate the Legislature to fund them. **ESHB 2261** includes in the definition of basic education to be phased in beginning in 2011-12:
  - minimum instructional hours of 1,080
  - instruction for 24 credits for high school graduation
  - opportunity for students to earn a meaningful high school diploma

- full-day kindergarten
- a new transportation formula

the bill does not provide funding or a revenue plan to fully fund the new definition.

ESHB 2261 also establishes four workgroups: a) to continue development of policies and formulas, b) to prepare an implementation schedule to phase-in increased program requirements and funding, and c) to propose options for an enhanced salary allocation model and a revised local funding system for levies and levy equalization. Another group, K–12 Data Governance, will determine what data are necessary to determine if districts are using their funding to improve student learning before new funding is appropriated. The State Board of Education will continue its work on an accountability system, and a Quality Education Council will provide oversight. The new system for basic education is to be phased-in and fully implemented by 2018.

The bill added to the basic education definition early learning for at-risk children, which the Governor vetoed. In addition the bill created a safety net for highly capable students which the Governor also vetoed.

Early Learning:

- Catholic Charities and many Catholic schools provide early learning or before and after school programs for the families they serve. S**HB 1943,** signed by the Governor, concerns the workforce in those programs. The bill directs the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and its partners to develop a system of preparation and continuing professional development for the early learning and school-age program staff. Final recommendations to the Legislature are due by December 2010.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

PRINCIPLES

Policies on taxes, work, divorce, immigration, and welfare should help families stay together and should reward responsibility and sacrifice for children….Children are to be valued, protected, and nurtured. As a Church, we affirm our commitment to the protection and well-being of children in our own institutions and in all of society. Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Prevention programs, wrap-around programs, and child welfare system improvements
- Kinship program improvement
- Initiatives to address racial disproportionality in child welfare
- Increased support for foster parents
- Respite opportunities for foster parents
- Increased child welfare vendor rates for agencies that contract with the state
- Lengthening eligibility of families receiving subsidies for child care
- Early intervention for at-risk children through programs such as home visitation or early identification
- Representation programs for children in dependency cases, improvements to family courts, and expanding the Parent Representation Project

Efforts for the 2009 session were focused on retaining effective services in the child welfare system and minimizing the negative impacts of budget decisions. Priorities included programs that worked to place children in kinship placements, programs that minimize the instability in the lives of children, and working across government systems to put in place appropriate services that promote the well-being of the children and youth involved in state programs.

Child Welfare:

- Catholic charities work in collaboration with the State to provide child welfare and adoption services. A major reform bill passed by the Legislature is designed to improve child welfare outcomes through

performance-based contracts. **2SHB 2106** directs the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to convert all existing contracts for child welfare services into performance-based contracts by January 1, 2011. In addition, a design committee will be established to select two pilot sites and to develop performance measures and criteria for contracting out services. Savings will be reinvested into evidence-based prevention and intervention services to prevent the need for or reduce the duration of foster care placements. The Attorney General's office shall provide legal services to providers for matters in children's dependency and termination of parental rights cases. The Governor vetoed three sections: the intent section, a section in conflict with existing law on disclosure of unfounded allegations, and a section requiring curriculum and training in forensic techniques for CPS workers. She did not veto the critical sections of the bill.

Guardian ad litem:

- **SSB 5285** requires a court to attempt to match a child with special needs with a guardian ad litem (GAL) who has specific training or education related to the child's individual needs. Background check information was expanded in the bill. Signed by the Governor, the bill will require GALs, including court appointed special advocates, who are appointed in dependency, family court, and probate matters to report suspected child abuse or neglect to DSHS.

Kinship:

- Signed by the Governor, the law will now require DSHS to factor in the time, attachment and affection a child has for the caregivers in determining which previous placement is best when a child is returning to out-of-home care. **SSB 5431** provided that change and required that placement of a child with a relative or another suitable person be the preferred option when a child must be placed in out-of-home care in a dependency matter. The goal is to avoid placing the child with complete strangers and to provide a stable placement that is in the best interest of the child.

- In a dependency case, **ESSB 5811** requires the courts to determine whether placement with a relative or other suitable person is in the child's best interests. The bill also requires DSHS to provide youth in care a listing of its responsibilities toward youth while in foster care. The Office of Family and Children Ombudsman is authorized to investigate allegations of retaliation against foster parents and provide findings to DSHS. Information must be provided to prospective adoptive parents regarding the limits of the adoption support program. The bill has been signed by the Governor.

Foster care:

- **ESHB 1782** modifies the Notification of Dependency (foster care) to inform the parents that both need to be consistently involved in services from the start, even if one wants the other to have custody, or risk permanent loss of parental rights. It also adds absences for extended periods of time as a factor the court can consider at a Termination of Parental Rights hearing, if the parent had reasonable opportunity for contact and was properly notified, and there were no mitigating circumstances. The court is required to consider the bonding a child has in their current placement.

- **SSB 5510** requires that parents of children in dependency hearings be notified of the importance of engaging in services, complying with court orders, and maintaining contact with the child. Both bills were signed by the Governor.

Early Learning:

- **SHB 1329**, regarding collective bargaining for child care center directors and staff, was not adopted. The bill would have created a bargaining unit for negotiating with the state around subsidy and reimbursement issues and potentially other areas related to the provision of early learning and care programs.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

PRINCIPLES

We are called to promote the well-being of all, and to protect the lives and dignity of all, especially the weak, the vulnerable, the voiceless. While society may reject some people because they are in prison, we work to enhance their dignity, improve their lives, and meet their needs.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Restoration of voting rights for released offenders
- Reformation of the three-strikes law
- Adequate resources for indigent defense
- Effective alternatives to incarceration for those with a drug/alcohol abuse or mental illness diagnosis
- Enhancement of transition and re-entry programs
- Increasing public awareness of human trafficking

Catholic Social Teachings guide us to work toward a criminal justice system that calls for responsibility, rehabilitation, and restoration. The challenge has been to overcome the fear of policy makers, who do not want to be perceived as "soft on crime". The current trends toward longer prison sentences are costly to the state, and have required the building of additional prisons. Justice requires support for victims, fair approaches to accountability and rehabilitation, and reintegration of offenders.

Voting Rights Restoration:

- Currently, more than 160,000 residents cannot vote because of prior convictions. **HB 1517**, supported by the WSCC and passed by the Legislature, automatically but provisionally restores the right to vote to everyone who is no longer "under the authority of the Department of Corrections" (i.e., incarcerated, in work release, on probation or parole). The bill, which has been signed by the Governor, also stipulates that the regained right to vote may be revoked if one willfully fails to pay LFOs (legal financial obligations) three times within a 12-month period.

Three-Strikes Law:

- **SB 5292**, known as the "3-Strikes Reform" removes second-degree robbery from the three strikes list. Approximately 75% of the convictions under the 3-strikes law are for crimes in the mid to low range of the state's criminal seriousness scale. The 3-strikes conviction population is approximately 45% African American; the state's population is less than 4% African American. The bill supported by the WSCC, died in the Senate Rules Committee. Advocates plan to build on this year's progress in trying to pass the 3-strikes law during the 2010 legislative session.

LFO Fees:

- When a person is convicted of a crime, the court may order the payment of legal financial obligations (LFOs) as part of the offender's sentence. Legal financial obligations may include restitution, costs, fines, and other assessments required by law. LFOs are already under a mandated 12% interest charge. By statute, county clerks are authorized to assess a monthly or annual fee for the actual cost of collecting all unpaid LFOs. The Legislature passed and the Governor signed **ESB 5013** which allows the fee to be increased to an annual fee of up to $100.

Human Trafficking:

- Human trafficking is the third largest and fastest growing crime worldwide. Between 600,000 and 800,000 persons, including children, are harbored and transported for purposes of slavery or forced bondage, often of a manual labor or sexual nature.
- Supported by the WSCC, passed by the Legislature, and signed by the Governor, **2SSB 5850** requires that foreign workers who have been referred to or hired by a Washington employer be given written

disclosure (in their native language) of their employment and contractual rights under state law by their hiring agency and by their employer. It also requires that the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy supply the regulatory bodies that regulate physicians, psychologists, mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, and social workers with information on methods of recognizing victims of human trafficking.

Because of the budget deficit, there was no increase in funding for indigent defense, effective alternatives to incarceration for those with a drug/alcohol abuse or mental illness diagnosis, or enhancement of transition and re-entry programs.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

PRINCIPLES *Human dignity is respected and the common good is fostered only if human rights are protected and basic responsibilities are met. Every human being has a right to life, the fundamental right that makes all other rights possible, and a right to access to those things required for human decency—food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing, freedom of religion and family life.*

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Increasing grants and access to services for TANF and GAU recipients
- Addressing the disproportionate impact poverty has on families of color
- Expanding anti-hunger programs
- Eliminating predatory lending practices
- Establishing living wage policies

37.3 million people, including 13.3 million children, continue to live in poverty in our country. In Washington State 11.4% of people live below the federal poverty line. Reducing poverty is a priority. However, as the nation reels from the impact of the economic downturn, those most vulnerable in Washington continue a daily struggle to meet their basic needs. Persons who rely on public support such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or General Assistance-Unemployable (GAU) find themselves watching costs rise and grant levels remaining stagnant. Grants in the TANF or GAU programs have not been increased in over ten years. There are more families seeking shelter, lining up at local food banks, and requesting assistance to meet other needs, like clothing, medicine, health care and utilities. Poverty disproportionally affects families of color in our country.

WorkFirst Exemption:

- **SSB 5286** was introduced to clarify the WorkFirst (welfare) law adopted two years ago that provides an exemption for parents with an infant under the age of 12 months from participating in specific programs. Despite the 2007 law, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) was sanctioning (reducing funding) families for not participating in these programs. The bill stated that DSHS must notify the parent of the availability of mental health, drug or alcohol treatment, domestic violence services, parenting education, or skills training, and encourage the parent to participate in the treatment/services if indicated. It further clarified that DSHS may not reduce the WorkFirst grant of a family with an infant 12 months or younger due to sanctions.

  WSCC supported **SSB 5286**, it was passed by the Legislature, but vetoed by the Governor. WSCC has strongly opposed sanctions, especially during this formative time in a parent/child's life.

Hunger:

- Currently the “Meals for Kids” program provides funding to school districts to support operating costs of school breakfast programs, and to provide grants to school districts to offset the costs of starting and maintaining summer feeding programs. The funding has helped eliminate the reduced-price co-payment for breakfast and partially eliminate the co-payment for lunch. Hunger programs

such as the Emergency Food Assistance Program and the school meal programs provide needed access to food for struggling families. **SHB 1416** and **SSB 5361** would have eliminated the school breakfast co-pay for all students qualifying for reduced price meals, and eliminated the lunch co-pay in any school that enrolls students K through 6. Because of the cost of implementing the bills, they both died.

PayDay Loans:

- The WSCC has been advocating for fairer payday lending laws since 2005. Supported by the WSCC, **ESHB 1709** passed near the end of the 2009 legislative session and has been signed by the Governor. The bill limits borrowers to no more than eight loans in a one-year period. Enforcement of the loan limit will be aided by the creation and implementation of a real-time statewide payday lending database. Other protections include a loan amount limit of $700 or 30% of the borrower's monthly gross income, whichever is lower, at any given time, from any and all lenders. The bill also requires lenders to offer an installment payment plan of 90 or 180 days, depending on loan amount, to borrowers that inform the lender that they are unable to make a timely payment. Lenders are prohibited for two years from lending to borrowers who are in an active repayment plan.

Living Wage:

- A living wage is a just compensation that is sufficient to provide food, clothing, shelter, healthcare and education for workers and their families. Currently, the state contracts with private providers approximately half of its work. However, not all contracts require a living wage. WSCC testified in favor of **HB 1716**, which would have required that state contractors pay employees a living wage rate ($9.70 per hour with health benefits, $11.55 per hour without) for work done under public contracts entered into by the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) or the Department of Ecology. The bill had a hearing in committee, but died in the Ways and Means Committee.

ENVIRONMENT

PRINCIPLES

"*We support policies that protect the land, water, and the air we share. Reasonable and effective initiatives are required for energy conservation and the development of alternate, renewable, and clean-energy resources.*" Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2003

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Providing incentives to reduce carbon emissions
- Creating incentives for energy efficient construction
- Developing, promoting and using renewable energy resources

The goods of the earth are a gift from God, and are for the benefit of everyone. Catholic teaching holds that we are stewards of creation, a stewardship that calls us to preserve our forests, maintain clean water sources, preserve species in the wild and maintain their natural habitats. Care of the earth requires each of us to thoughtfully engage in behaviors that minimize negative impacts on the environment around us.

Energy Efficiency:

- The efforts to continue progress on environmental initiatives were impacted by the state's budget crisis. **ESSB 5854,** which was signed by the Governor, implements recommendations from the Climate Action Team. The bill seeks to lower energy costs for buildings by strengthening energy codes for new buildings and assessing energy performance through benchmarking. This bill requires the Washington State Building Council to adopt a state energy code that requires homes and buildings constructed from 2013 to 2031 to incrementally more towards a 70% reduction in energy use by 2031. CTED must develop a strategic plan for enhancing energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in homes, buildings, districts and neighborhoods. Qualifying utilities must start to

maintain energy consumption data for all nonresidential and qualifying public agency buildings to which they provide service.

Cap and Invest:

- **2SHB 1819** and **E2SSB 5735** were companion bills relating to greenhouse gas emissions. The goals of the bills included reducing global warming by requiring those who pollute to pay for permits and to reduce their emissions over time. The state would then invest the new revenue in efforts to create jobs in energy efficiency and renewable energy efforts, as well as providing assistance to working families struggling with high energy costs. **2SHB 1819** as passed by the House deferred immediate plans to implement "cap-and-trade" on a regional basis, but gave the Department of Energy specific authority to continue involvement in the Western Climate Initiative. The bills were not approved by the Legislature.

Energy Efficiency:

- In the United States, buildings account for 40 percent of total energy consumption and 70 percent of electricity consumption. **E2SSB 5649** authorizes the Washington State University (WSU) Extension Energy Program to implement grants for pilot programs providing community-wide energy efficiency upgrades. The Washington State Housing Finance Commission may issue revenue bonds to finance loans for energy efficiency and renewable energy improvement projects. CTED must encourage housing proposals that: (1) use environmentally sustainable technologies, designs, and practices; (2) achieve the greatest possible monetary and energy savings over the longest period of time; (3) identify and correct, to the extent practical, health and safety problems for residents; and (4) create family-wage jobs that may lead to careers in the construction trades or in the energy efficiency sectors. CTED must also maximize available federal Low-income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding for weatherization projects, to the extent practicable and allowable under federal rules and regulations.

HEALTH CARE

PRINCIPLES

Health care is more than a commodity; it is a basic human right, an essential safeguard of human life and dignity. We believe our people's healthcare should not depend on where they work, how much their parents earn, or where they live. Our constant teaching that each human life must be protected and human dignity promoted leads us to insist that all people have a right to healthcare.

Framework for Comprehensive Healthcare Reform, USCCB, 1993

Affordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right. With an estimated 47 million Americans lacking health care coverage, it is also an urgent national priority.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Providing access to health care for all
- Implementing the "Cover All Kids" law, including outreach and education
- Improving the state's vaccination rates
- Maintaining local public health programs
- Providing health care services for refugees and immigrants
- Improving access to mental health services

More than 45 million Americans lack any form of health insurance and many more will be added to the uninsured ranks as the economic crisis continues to increase the number of unemployed. The state's budget crisis has resulted in more state residents being unable to access care and the safety net being shredded. The Legislature made significant cuts in the healthcare programs and reduced reimbursement rates to providers.

Community Healthcare Collaborative Grant Program:

- **SSB 5360** establishes this program that is designed to increase access to health care and improve the quality of care to uninsured and underinsured persons. The grants will be awarded to eligible community-based organizations. The program will also provide for the coordination of volunteer medical services. **SSB 5360** passed the Legislature and was signed by the Governor.

Washington Health Partnership Plan:

- An advisory group is created by **2SSB 5945** to monitor state health reform efforts, including Medicaid waivers, efforts to consolidate state purchasing of health care, reforms in the private health insurance market to provide more affordable health insurance options, and progress of health care reform at the federal level. Signed by the Governor, the bill directs DSHS to submit federal waiver requests to expand and revise the medical assistance program to cover adults below 200% of the federal poverty level in an Apple Health Program for Adults.

Health care for kids:

- The "Cover All Kids Act" set a 2010 deadline for the state to ensure that all eligible kids had access to health insurance. The act also established a January 1, 2009 date to expand coverage for all kids living in a household below 300% of the federal poverty level. Prior to the 2009 session, declining state revenue forced the Governor to suspend this date. However, in the new year, federal reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) enabled the Governor to lift that suspension and allow the expansion to occur. The Governor signed **ESHB 2128** requiring DSHS to improve outreach and to increase enrollment in the Apple Health for Kids Program.

Children's Mental Health:

- In **2SHB 1373** the Legislature reauthorized access to appropriate and effective mental services for children. The bill makes several changes to the children's mental health system including directing DSHS, in consultation with the evidence based practice institute, to revise the regional support network access to care standards for children, particularly for those children under five. The bill was signed by the Governor.

HOUSING

PRINCIPLES

The lack of safe, affordable housing requires a renewed commitment to increase the supply of quality housing and to preserve, maintain, and improve existing housing through public/private partnerships, especially with religious groups and community organizations. The USCCB continues to oppose unjust housing discrimination and to support measures to meet the credit needs of low-income and minority communities.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

Many families cannot find or afford decent housing, or must spend so much of their income for shelter that they forego other necessities, such as food and medicine.... [The Catholic bishops] support housing policies which seek to preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing and help families pay for it.

Putting Children and Families First, USCCB, 1999

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Maintaining funding for the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) at the $200 million level
- Targeting investments within the HTF to address the issues of communities of color
- Redirecting the state's housing efforts toward reducing poverty
- Increases to the Transitional Housing, Operating and Rent **(**THOR) and Washington Family Fund (WFF) programs in recognition of the growing numbers of families and individuals in need of housing and supports due to the economic downturn
- Increasing support of Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

The economic downturn has had a detrimental effect on the ability of people to afford and maintain their housing. For low-income people, competition grows for limited affordable housing. The Legislature made some cuts in housing programs, but not as deeply as originally anticipated.

Transitional Housing:

- The THOR program for homeless families and individuals demonstrates that short-term rental vouchers combined with support services can provide a quick exit from homelessness or prevent homelessness altogether. The funding for THOR, made a permanent program in the law during the 2008 session, was reduced from $10 million to $8.5 million in the budget signed by the Governor.

Document Recording Fee:

- **HB 2331**, which passed the Legislature without any amendments, increases the local real estate document recording fee from the current $10 to $30. The proceeds are devoted to ending homelessness. 60% of the revenues will be kept at the county level for homeless programs, and 40% would be used to maintain existing funding for programs, such as THOR, Emergency Shelter Assistance Program (ESAP), and Independent Youth Housing. The bill was signed by the Governor.

Emergency Shelter Assistance Program (ESAP):

- ESAP was fully funded in the budget signed by the Governor at current levels. This will allow the 200 agencies across the state that operate through ESAP to continue to offer assistance to families and individuals at risk for homelessness by providing up to 90 days of shelter, rental assistance, first and last month's rent, or many other vital survival services.

Foster Care to 21:

- Foster Care to 21 and the Independent Youth Housing Program help prevent homelessness among young adults. Both important programs were funded in the budget. The Foster Care to 21 program even received a small increase to serve more young adults.

Offender Re-Entry Housing Pilot:

- **SSB 5219** would have established a focus group on homelessness to examine the need to provide housing for individuals at risk of becoming homeless. The at-risk group would include those with mental illness, those with criminal backgrounds, and those who may have alcohol and/or drug dependency problems. The bill did not pass, but legislators indicated a desire to do the work during the legislative interim.

Tenant Relocation Act:

- **SHB 1663** expands relocation assistance and notice of closure to tenants of residential motels being closed for health and safety reasons. It ensures that people living in residential motels have an option other than homelessness when their motel is shuttered by the state or city for health and safety violations. The bill passed the Legislature and was signed by the Governor.

Rental Vouchers to Allow Release from State Institutions:

- In 2008 1,258 offenders were held by the Department of Corrections (DOC) passed their release date due to a variety of reasons, including lack of living arrangements. **SSB 5525** will allow the DOC to provide rental vouchers to an offender for a period up to three months, if rental assistance will enable the offender to have an approved release plan. A rental voucher must be provided in conjunction with other transitional support programming or services such as substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, sex offender treatment, educational programming, or employment programming. The bill has been signed by the Governor.

Housing of Homeless Persons on Property Owned by a Church:

- **ESHB 1956** would have authorized churches to host temporary encampments for homeless persons on property owned or controlled by a church. It also would have prohibited local municipalities from passing legislation unreasonably interfering with a Church's hosting of a "tent city", including requiring a church to obtain liability insurance related to providing services to homeless persons. **ESHB 1956** passed the House, but died in the Senate Rules committee.

LIFE ISSUES

PRINCIPLES

Human life is sacred. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Direct attacks on innocent persons are never morally acceptable, at any stage or in any condition… Actions that are intrinsically evil are so deeply flawed that they are always opposed to the authentic good of persons. They must always be rejected and opposed and must never be supported or condoned…Our calling is to a comprehensive commitment to the life and dignity of every human being from conception to natural death. Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Abolishing the death penalty
- Enacting conscience clauses that honor religious freedom
- Requiring parental notification for all medical procedures performed on minors
- Ensuring safeguards that protect human life

WSCC OPPOSES:

- Using embryonic stem cells in research
- Legalizing physician assisted suicide

The on-going challenge in the current legislative environment is asking policy makers to step away from a political decision and to encourage a thoughtful decision based on respect for human life.

Newborn Transfer Locations:

- Under existing law, a parent who transfers a newborn child to a qualified person at the emergency room of a hospital or at a fire station is not guilty of a crime. **SSB 5318**, supported by WSCC, passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor, expands the law to allow transfer of a newborn to a qualified person at a medical clinic. The bill also requires posting of signs at transfer locations to alert people that the transfer may occur and how to obtain additional information.

Death Penalty:

- Since the legalization of the death penalty in 1976, thirty people have been sentenced to death and four have been executed in Washington State. Across the country, serious issues have been raised about the innocence of people convicted of a capital offense, about the fairness of trials and the adequacy of counsel, and about the racial disproportionality of convictions. **SB 5476** would have abolished the death penalty in Washington State. The bill received a hearing in a Senate committee, where WSCC testified in favor of abolition. There were insufficient votes to move the bill out of committee, but WSCC learned that certain members opposed might be willing to support a bill next session that would exempt first time offenders from receiving death sentences.

Abstinence Education:

- State agencies are authorized to apply for sexual health education funding for medically and scientifically accurate programs as defined by the Healthy Youth Act, including programs on abstinence and prevention of unintended pregnancies. One of Planned Parenthood's priorities for the session, **SB 5629** deletes the requirement that the Department of Health (DOH) apply for federal abstinence only grants. The bill also eliminates the DOH's current mandate to "reduce the rate of

illegitimate births and abortions" and replaces it with, "reduce the rate of unintended pregnancies." WSCC testified against the bill, but it was passed by the Legislature and was signed by the Governor.

Assisted Suicide:

- No legislation was introduced because for any bill to pass it would require a supermajority vote of the House and Senate. In this legislative session the primary focus was on the budget which did not allow enough time for a major discussion of this issue.

LONG TERM CARE

PRINCIPLES

There must be a growing conviction that a fully human civilization shows respect and love for the Elderly, so that despite their diminishing strength they feel a vital part of society. ....In addition to the obvious psychological need of the elderly themselves, the most natural place to spend one's old age continues to be the environment in which one feels most "at home", among family members, acquaintances and friends, where one can still make oneself useful. Pope John Paul II, 1999

The preferential option for the poor and vulnerable includes all who are marginalized in our nation and beyond—unborn children, persons with disabilities, the elderly and terminally ill, and victims of injustice and oppression. Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Maintaining home care programs, including home care services, senior nutrition programs, and Volunteer Chore Services
- Funding for agencies that partner with the state
- Funding efforts to expand service to assist underserved people

As the "baby boom" generation ages, the need for an array of services and increased access to long term care services grows. The state provides a variety of services for those in need with funding assistance from the federal government. The economic crisis has a negative impact on these services, too. There is need for family, neighbors, parishes and others to help those who need assistance.

Home Care Services:

- Catholic Community Services Long-Term Care leadership has been instrumental in efforts to creatively develop effective and efficient changes in home care services. **SHB 2361** moves family home care providers from supervision by agencies to the individual provider (IP) program, saving the state an estimated $18-20 million. WSCC with CCS helped to obtain passage of **SHB 2361**, which the Governor signed.

Office of Public Guardianship (OPG):

- Public guardianship is provided for incapacitated low-income individuals who have no other qualified person available or willing to help them. Currently the OPG is authorized to train only individuals who contract with them to provide public guardian services. **SB 5699** was signed into law this session to allow OPG to train others who are likely to provide public guardianship services in the future. WSCC supported **SB 5699**.

Long-term Care Workers:

- In 2007, legislation was enacted to address training opportunities for long-term care workers. The training opportunities included a peer mentoring system. Long-term care workers must be offered on-the-job training or peer mentorship for at least one hour per week in the first 90 days of work. The mentor must be a long-term care worker who has completed 12 hours of mentor training and is mentoring no more than 10 other workers. This peer mentoring requirement applies to long-term care

workers who begin work on or after January 1, 2010. **HB 2359** changes the date to July 1, 2011 to save state budget funds in the amount of $3.4 million.

Background Checks:

- In 2008, **I-1029** requiring background checks, training and certification for long term care workers in Washington State passed overwhelmingly. **SB 6180**, passed by the Legislature delays the implementation dates, and clarifies the I-1029 fingerprint-based background check requirement for workers hired after January 1, 2012.

OTHER ISSUES

Expansion of Rights for Domestic Partners:

- **E2SSB 5688** grants to same-sex couples all rights to which married spouses are entitled, excepting anything conflicting with federal law. The WSCC testified against **E2SSB 5688**, which passed the Legislature, and has asked Governor Gregoire to veto the bill. Opponents of the measure informed the Secretary of State's office that a referendum would be filed. Those opposed to **E2SSB 5688** have filed Referendum 71 and have until July 25 to gather over 120,000 voter signatures. If successful, the referendum would be placed on the November 3rd ballot.

"Worker Privacy Act":

- **SHB 1528** and **SSB 5446** would have prohibited an employer from requiring an employee to attend a meeting, or listen to, respond to, or participate in any communication relating to political or religious matters. The top priority for the labor community, **SHB 1528** and **SSB 5446** also would have prohibited employers from taking an adverse employment action against an employee because the employee challenges a violation or a perceived violation of the prohibition. It would have established a civil action as a remedy for violations and required employers to post notification of an employee's rights under the statute. Both of these bills failed.

Corporation Sole:

- Among other business entities changes, **HB 1592** requires existing corporations sole registered with the Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS) to file an annual report with a $10 filing fee. The OSOS is required to notify each corporation sole of the requirement to renew annually. A corporation sole that fails to file an annual report may be administratively dissolved or have its certificate of authority revoked by the OSOS. The Governor signed the bill.