Washington State Catholic Conference

# ENVIRONMENT

## Briefing Paper
## Catholic Advocacy Day, 2009

*Care for the earth and for the environment is a moral issue. Protecting the land, water, and air we share is a religious duty of stewardship and reflects our responsibility to born and unborn children, who are most vulnerable to environmental assault. Effective initiatives are required for energy conservation and the development of alternate, renewable, and clean-energy resources.* Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB 2007

**ENERGY EFFICIENCY:** Energy use in buildings is a major contributor to carbon emissions. More than 30% of Washington's greenhouse gas emissions come from energy use in buildings. Making homes, businesses and public institutions more energy efficient will save money, create jobs, decrease pollution, and speed economic recovery. Enhanced home weatherization would reduce energy bills, which disproportionately impact low-income households.

HB 1747 and SB 5854 promote efficient low-energy use building codes; require disclosure of buildings' energy use to prospective buyers; make public buildings models of energy efficiency; finance energy saving upgrades to existing buildings; and reduce utility bills for low-income households. To accomplish these goals, the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) shall develop and implement a strategic plan for enhancing energy efficiency in and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from homes, buildings, districts, and neighborhoods. CTED must also complete and release the strategic plan to the legislature and the council by December 31, 2010. New state energy codes must be adopted to require that new buildings and homes be built to achieve certain reductions in energy use, ranging from a 40% reduction by 2013 to a 70% reduction by 2031.

In addition, the bills state that a county, city, town or district may provide grants for conservation improvements to existing structures owned or occupied by individuals qualifying as poor or infirm. HB 1747 and SB 5854 also allow sustainable residential weatherization using funds administered by CTED to preserve a dwelling unit occupied by a low-income household for activities and materials that result in energy and resource conservation and energy efficiency improvements.

**ACTION:** Please ask your Representatives to support HB 1747 and your Senator to support SB 5854 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while ensuring that low-income people are not adversely affected.

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