The ‘Catholic’ issues, the November elections

By Michael C. Culhane
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Every election season, many concerned voters ask the Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference (CCPAC) where various candidates stand on numerous issues. Although federal law prohibits CCPAC from telling people whom to vote for, it is allowed to share information about where candidates stand.

This year, we at the CCPAC asked the candidates for state office to share their thoughts about several critical issues. The positions of those candidates who were brave enough to take a stand are listed in the table at right. If a candidate you are looking for is not listed, we encourage you to contact him or her for the information.

Below are several issues of importance to the Catholic population of Connecticut:

The State Economy/Taxes

It is projected that the state will soon be facing a $3.4 billion deficit in fiscal year 2010-11, followed by a $3.7 billion deficit for the 2011-12 fiscal year. This means that in two years, the state will have to deal with a projected deficit of over $7 billion. Some elected officials would prefer to address this fiscal crisis by increasing state taxes and fees; while others believe it should be addressed through sizable cuts in state spending.

Educational/School Choice

Concerns about an educational achievement gap and racial segregation between school districts have existed in Connecticut for years and continue today, despite high levels of state spending. One way to address these issues is to provide low- and middle-income parents with the opportunity to send their children to the school of their choice. The CCPAC supports two proposals that would accomplish these objectives: (1) allow state tax credits to corporations that donate to specific scholarship programs; or (2) provide direct municipal property tax credits to parents.

Teen Health

Connecticut is one of the few remaining states that allow a minor girl younger than 18 years old to receive an abortion without the consent of a parent or guardian, although current state law requires such consent for a minor to get a tattoo, visit a tanning salon or take an aspirin at school. The lack of a statute regarding abortion fails to address this life-changing situation, which may be the result of a statutory rape or sexual assault that could be covered up and go unreported. The lack of such a statute also prevents parents from being involved in a decision in this critical time of their child’s life.

Physician-assisted suicide

An effort is under way to legalize physician-assisted suicide for terminally ill patients in our state. This issue, although appearing compassionate on its surface, raises many practical and ethical concerns. One primary concern is that such a law may lead to the manipulation of our older, sick or disabled citizens to prematurely end their lives. Oregon and Washington are currently the only two states in the nation that allow assisted suicide. The Catholic Church strongly opposes what has been titled “Death with Dignity” in previously proposed legislation.

Death Penalty

Efforts to repeal the death penalty in Connecticut have been ongoing for years. Many people view the death penalty as a deterrent to crime and just punishment for the criminal. Others view it as an immoral act that fails to deter crime; they would prefer to replace it with life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, which is a position supported by the Church.

As a final note, the CCPAC holds that regardless of where individual candidates stand on these issues, it strongly encourages all citizens of Connecticut to make every effort to know where the candidates stand, and to be sure to cast your vote on November 2nd, 2010.

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