

The Texas Catholic Conference is the association of the 15 Roman Catholic Bishops in Texas. A major function of the Conference is to be the public policy arm the bishops of Texas, before the Texas Legislature, the Texas delegation in Congress, and state agencies. The public policy issues addressed by the Conference include institutional concerns of the Catholic Church and issues related to Catholic social teachings. Because we are made in the image of God, there is an inherent value of human life from which all of our social obligations and rights flow. The following list highlights some of the priorities of the Texas Bishops prior to the 80<sup>th</sup> Legislative session. The Bishops and staff of the Conference will continue to monitor and respond to any matters before the Texas Legislature.

**1. Life Issues:** Our foundational principle to protect the life and dignity of all human persons calls us to work to end abortion, euthanasia, destruction of human embryos, cloning and assisted suicide.

- Abolish abortion in Texas.
- Support Partial Birth Abortion Ban.
- Support “Trigger Ban” legislation that would abolish abortions in Texas should Roe v. Wade be overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court.
- Support efforts to strengthen parental consent law.
- Support efforts to strengthen Woman’s Right to Know law.
- Support “Choose Life” license plate legislation.
- Support funding to abortion alternative providers.
- Limit funding to abortion providers.
- Ban on payment for ova donation.
- Recognize humanity of in vitro human embryos.
- Oppose any legislation that would allow or fund embryonic stem cell research.
- Support ban on all human cloning.

**2. Immigration:** We recognize the contributions of immigrants to our society by supporting their access to healthcare and education for the benefit of all of the community.

- Support comprehensive immigration reform.
- Make Texas driver’s licenses available to all residents to ensure public safety throughout the state.
- Oppose attempts to reduce access to healthcare and education for immigrants.
- Oppose a fence along the Texas-Mexico border.

**3. Health & Human Services:** We show God’s special concern for the poor and vulnerable by supporting foster care services and programs that make health care more affordable and accessible while providing incentives for morally appropriate health research.

- Increase funding for Child Protective Services, including increased funding for foster care service delivery. Continue to monitor the state’s child welfare system, including provider oversight issues.
- Support efforts to increase access to affordable housing.
- Support efforts to cut the number of uninsured Texas children in half by enrolling every eligible child in CHIP & Medicaid with 12 months of continuous eligibility.
- Support adequate reimbursement for CHIP & Medicaid providers.

- Increase access to mental health care, including services for the homeless.
- Support the release of trauma funds.
- Support efforts to reform the current Advanced Directives statute.
- Support a pharmacist conscience clause bill so that pharmacists are not required to sell morning after pills to minors.
- Support the expansion of the Cord Blood Bank.
- Promote funding for adult stem cell research.
- Support legislation to protect and improve air, land, and water quality.

**4. Education:** We recognize parents as the primary educators of their children through supporting parental choice in education.

- Expansion of school breakfast program to include state subsidies for universal free breakfast program offered by the USDA.
- Support a School Choice experimental program in selected school districts.
- Support legislation to enable the state to loan textbooks to children enrolled in non-public schools.
- Support tax credits or tax deductions for educational expenses.
- Support adequate funding for Equal Educational Opportunity and the Tuition Equalization Program (TEG).

**5. Criminal Justice Reform:** We support fiscal and moral reform in our state’s criminal justice system with an emphasis on ending the death penalty and supporting successful rehabilitation and reintegration for those re-entering society.

- Abolish the use of the death penalty in Texas.
- Support a moratorium on the death penalty in Texas.
- Oppose passage of “Jessica’s Law.”
- Support legislation that prevents the mentally retarded from being executed.
- Increase funding and support for the chaplain corps within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), including ensuring access to inmates by all chaplains.
- Increase probation funding for the TDCJ, including increased funding for training of corrections officers.
- Provide an equitable pay scale for correctional officers.
- Support full implementation & funding for the Indigent Defense Act of 2001.
- Support opt-out of ban on drug felons receiving food stamps in order to facilitate reintegration.

***Approved by The Roman Catholic Bishops of Texas:***

*Archbishop Jose H. Gomez, San Antonio; Archbishop Daniel N. DiNardo, Galveston-Houston; Bishop Gregory Aymond, Austin; Bishop Edmond Carmody, Corpus Christi; Bishop Alvaro Corrada del Rio, S.J., Tyler; Bishop David E. Fellhauer, Victoria; Bishop Charles V. Grahmann, Dallas; Bishop Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D., Beaumont; Bishop Armando X. Ochoa, El Paso; Bishop Raymundo Peña, Brownsville; Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, O.M.I., San Angelo; Bishop Placido Rodriguez, Lubbock; Bishop James A. Tamayo, Laredo; Bishop Kevin W. Vann, Fort Worth; and Bishop John W. Yanta, Amarillo.*

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