



Virginia bishops praise decision, thank legislators whose votes will save lives.

Late last evening, the state Senate cast a landmark **20-19** vote in favor of a budget amendment to dramatically limit state abortion funding. Earlier in the afternoon, the House also agreed to the amendment by a **64-30** vote. Proposed by Governor McDonnell, the amendment ensures that no abortions will be paid for by state taxpayers except as required by federal law or state statute. With the approval by both chambers, the Governor's proposal is now part of the budget that will govern state spending for the next two fiscal years. Its effect is to eliminate the vast majority of Virginia's publicly subsidized abortions (that is, those done under a general health rationale which has never received General Assembly approval). Over the last four years, these state-funded, health-related abortions have been performed at an alarming rate of one every three days. With the Governor's amendment now securely fastened to the budget, many unborn lives can be saved, and state taxpayers who oppose financing life-ending practices have a greater measure of conscience protection.

Expressing gratitude for the outcome, Virginia Catholic Conference Director Jeff Caruso said, "The Virginia bishops wish to thank all legislators, in both chambers and in both parties, who took a strong stand yesterday, in support of life and of state residents who oppose being forced to pay for other people's abortions. Our Commonwealth is a better place as a result of Governor McDonnell's proposal of the amendment and the General Assembly's adoption of it. We also thank our pro-life advocacy partners - both organizations and individuals - with whom we collaborated closely in the days leading up to this

historic vote."

Data gathered from the Virginia Catholic Conference network showed an unprecedented level of responses to the Conference's alert on this proposal, and Conference staff repeatedly heard that legislators were receiving plenty of emails from their pro-life constituents. People who responded to the alert, and parishes who promoted it in conjunction with Masses last weekend, are certainly to be commended and assured of the critical difference their efforts made. And to continue making improvements in state policy, more network members are needed! Please encourage your family members, fellow parishioners, friends, and co-workers to visit the Conference's website (www.vacatholic.org) and use the sign-up feature to enroll in the advocacy network.

Together, we can thank God for this outcome and build for more like it in the future.