



DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON · DIOCESE OF RICHMOND  
Representing the Virginia Catholic Bishops in Public Policy Matters

## 2018 Legislative Agenda

The Virginia Catholic Conference – the public policy agency of the Commonwealth’s Catholic bishops and their two dioceses – will pursue the initiatives described below during the 2018 Virginia General Assembly session, which begins on January 10. The Conference’s agenda was formulated in consultation with its Education and Respect Life, Health and Social Concerns policy committees, and was approved on November 7, 2017, by its Management Committee. [**NOTE:** *Other items may be added to the Conference’s agenda as legislation is filed and reviewed.*]

Please join us in our advocacy by visiting [www.vacatholic.org](http://www.vacatholic.org), where you can:

- Join our email advocacy network
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### ***Respect Life:***

- Diverting public funds away from the abortion industry and toward community health centers that provide primary care.
- Banning state funding of all abortions not required by federal law.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Under the Medicaid Program, the federal government funds abortions when the life of the eligible woman is at risk and in cases of rape and incest. States are permitted, but not required, to spend their own funds (with no federal match) for abortions that fall outside these three categories. Conference advocacy seeks to prohibit government funding of abortion to the greatest extent possible.

- Preserving pro-life gains made in prior years, especially informed consent requirements, health and safety standards for abortion facilities, and restrictions against abortion coverage in the health exchange operating in Virginia.
- Supporting the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act.<sup>2</sup>
- Requiring abortion facilities to post notice of the human trafficking hotline.
- Opposing attempts to legalize physician-assisted suicide.
- Opposing proposals to expand the death penalty.
- Making those with severe mental illness ineligible for the death penalty.
- Requiring background checks for all firearm transfers.
- Supporting creation of an Extreme Risk Protection Order or Risk-Warrant policy to temporarily suspend access to firearms for at-risk individuals during periods of crisis.
- Banning attachments to firearms that automatically “bump” the trigger and enable a shooter to fire rounds more rapidly.

***Family Life/Freedom of Conscience/Institutional Concerns:***

- Protecting the ability of religious institutions to make personnel, housing, benefits and other decisions that reflect their beliefs (e.g., regarding the sanctity of life and marriage).
- Preserving freedom of conscience for health-care providers and families that choose to engage in sexual orientation change counseling.
- Preserving the vital assistance to communities provided by the historic rehabilitation tax credit and the Neighborhood Assistance Program.
- Opposing legislation to include within the state’s definition of birth control anything deemed by the FDA to be a “contraceptive method.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This bill, if enacted, would add to Virginia law constitutionally permitted protections for unborn children from the stage at which substantial medical evidence indicates they are capable of feeling pain.

<sup>3</sup> The FDA’s list of currently approved “contraceptives” includes abortifacients and sterilization procedures, and the legislation is thought by some to be a backdoor attempt to dilute Virginia’s current conscience protections for those who decline involvement in abortion.

- Supporting creation of the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program to facilitate child placements with relatives and ensure permanency for children for whom adoption or return home are not appropriate.
- Affirming marriage as the union of a man and a woman.
- Opposing legislation to require local school boards to implement the Standards of Learning for the family life education program developed by the state Board of Education.
- Supporting the creation of an adoption tax credit.

### ***Migration:***

- Supporting the allowance of driving privileges to residents of the Commonwealth regardless of their immigration status.
- Opposing efforts to force local law enforcement to sacrifice their own resources and level of trust within communities in order to do the federal government's job in enforcing immigration laws.
- Stopping efforts to block refugee resettlement within the Commonwealth.
- Upholding Virginia students' ability to receive in-state tuition regardless of immigration status.

### ***Education:***

- Enhancing the Education Improvement Scholarships Tax Credits program.
- Supporting the creation of a statewide virtual school.
- Prohibiting the expansion of allowed weapons on school property.
- Supporting the addition of a vaccine to prevent meningitis to Virginia's existing vaccination policy for school students.

### ***Economic Concerns & Consumer Protections:***

- Making the Earned Income Credit refundable, allowing low-income taxpayers to be partially refunded their state EIC when it exceeds their state income tax liability.

- Regulating out-of-state Internet lenders the way brick-and-mortar institutions are already regulated.
- Requiring Virginia's payday and car-title lending industries to abide by the same 36-percent interest rate cap as other small-loan lenders.
- Raising Virginia's minimum wage to one that is livable for Virginia families.
- Opposing cuts to the safety net that provides shelter, food, and other basic necessities as a last resort to Virginia residents.
- Advocating for a tax credit for food donations by restaurants to nonprofit food banks.
- Supporting proposals to increase state contributions to the Housing Trust Fund, and identifying other sources of consistent support for the program.
- Providing state-subsidized rental assistance to working families whose wages do not enable them to afford adequate housing.
- Implementing a cost-of-living adjustment for payments to low-income families under the TANF program.
- Opposing the diversion of TANF funding toward non-TANF purposes.
- Supporting a Back to School Supplies and Clothing Allowance for TANF-eligible, school-aged children.

***Health:***

- Supporting efforts to expand access to health insurance coverage to people up to 133% of the Federal Poverty Level.<sup>4</sup>
- Supporting state funding for the Health Wagon, a nonprofit providing mobile primary-care services to the medically underserved in southwest Virginia.
- Supporting measures to connect victims of human trafficking to appropriate services and treatment.
- Opposing the promotion of LARCs.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This means that an individual makes \$16,040 or less a year.

- Supporting state funding to increase access to opioid addiction treatment programs and emergency overdose reversal kits.
- Allowing people who are primary caretakers for a disabled or ill individual to vote absentee.
- Reducing the waiting list for community-based services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Supporting the allowance of overtime pay for consumer-directed caregivers who help people with disabilities live independently.
- Protecting Medicaid reimbursement rates.

### ***Criminal Justice:***

- Restoring the right of individuals convicted of felonies to vote and be civilly engaged.
- Requiring telephone systems in state correctional facilities to charge the lowest possible rates.
- Increasing the minimum threshold for the crime of grand larceny from \$200 to \$500 or \$1,000.

### ***Environment:***

- Advocating for passage of the Coastal Protection Act.

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<sup>5</sup> Since 2015, the Conference has opposed the creation of a pilot program proposing to use TANF funds to promote long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) among the poor.