



2019 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 2019 Virginia General Assembly session, which begins on January 9.

Please join us in our advocacy by visiting www.vacatholic.org, where you can:

- Join our email network
- Like us on Facebook
- Follow us on Twitter
- Register for *Virginia Vespers* on Feb. 12.

Respect Life

- **Abortion:** Defend existing pro-life laws; support adding protections for unborn children to state constitution; oppose ERA, which does not include necessary abortion-neutral language.
- **Assisted suicide:** Oppose legislation that would legalize assisted suicide.
- **Death penalty:** Ban death sentences for people with severe mental illnesses when they committed their crimes; support legislation to repeal Virginia’s execution drug secrecy law.
- **Gun safety:** Preserve, and where possible strengthen, all current restrictions against guns in places of worship and on school property; support requiring background checks; support legislation establishing temporary risk warrants to remove firearms from persons who pose substantial risks of injury to themselves or others.

Religious Liberty

- Protect religious liberty and freedom of conscience to uphold beliefs on marriage and human sexuality.
- Oppose legislation seeking to require health plans to cover abortion-inducing drugs, contraceptives, sterilizations and other morally objectionable procedures.

- Oppose defining birth control as anything the FDA considers a contraceptive.

Families & Children

- Preserve state provisions affirming marriage as the union of a man and a woman.
- Preserve freedom of conscience for health-care providers and families that choose to engage in sexual orientation change efforts.
- Oppose loosening current restrictions on changing how one's sex is listed on a birth certificate.
- Oppose making laws gender neutral in cases where doing so would be a substantive change (e.g., assisted conception and parenting).
- Oppose allowing "second parent adoption" by a person other than the spouse of a birth parent or the spouse of a parent by adoption.
- Support parental rights in Family Life Education.
- Support adding clergy to state list of mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect, with exemptions for clergy-penitent communications.

Parental Choice in Education

- Expand the Education Improvement Scholarships Tax Credits (EISTC) program to include pre-K students.
- Oppose any attempts to repeal or weaken the EISTC program.

Poverty & Economic Justice

- Support making Virginia's earned-income credit refundable for the lowest-income working families.
- TANF advocacy: Increase safety-net assistance; lift lifetime ban for drug-possession convictions; fund postsecondary education scholarships to break cycle of poverty.
- Support increasing minimum wage.
- Improve protections against predatory lending.

Immigrants & Refugees

- Oppose enforcement-only legislation, and support legislation to build trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement and to encourage crime victims and witnesses in those communities to come forward.
- Support legislation to expand immigrants' access to driving privileges.
- Support legislation to codify in-state tuition eligibility for students granted federal DACA status.

Care for Creation

- Support the Virginia Alternative Energy and Coastal Protection Act to improve coastal protections, energy efficiency and southwest Virginia workforce development.

Budget

- Attain Hyde Amendment restrictions against state abortion funding.
- Oppose funding for “long acting reversible contraceptives.”
- Increase auxiliary grant rates for assisted-living care for low-income aged, blind and disabled individuals.