



# Community, Justice & Outreach

May 2008

Church of the Immaculate Conception, Columbia Heights, MN

*In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. This obligation is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, "it is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person. . . . As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life" (nos. 1913-1915).*

*United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Forming Conscience for Faithful Citizenship, No. 13*

## OSJ 2008 Legislative Briefings

### Health Care

A major social concern on the legislative agenda this year is health care. The 441,000 Minnesotans without insurance, of which 68,000 are children, fail to get adequate access and often turn to the emergency room for health care. Those with health insurance see costs skyrocketing with higher premiums and other out-of-pocket expenses.

Please see *OSJ 2008* on page 2

### Faithful Citizenship

The 2008 elections will soon be upon us. Unfortunately, politics in our country often can be a contest of powerful interests, partisan attacks and media hype.

The Church calls for a different kind of political engagement: one shaped by the moral convictions of well-formed consciences and focused on the dignity of every human being, the pursuit of the common good, and the protection of the weak and the vulnerable. The Catholic call to faithful citizenship affirms the importance of political participation and insists that public service is a worthy vocation. As Catholics, we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group. When necessary, our participation should help transform the party to which we belong; we should not let the party transform us in such a way that we neglect or deny fundamental moral truths. We are called to bring together our principles and our political choices, our values and our votes, to help build a better world.

The following prayer can help guide your decisions in the election year.

*Gracious and loving God, let your Spirit be with us (me) today. Hear our (my) prayers, and increase in us (me) the will to follow your Son Jesus. Help us (me) to draw on the resources of our (my) faith as we (I) use the opportunities of our democracy to shape a society more respectful of the life, dignity, and rights of the human person, especially the poor and vulnerable. We (I) ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.*



*We strongly urge all parishioners to register, to become informed on key issues, and to vote. The Church does not support or oppose any candidate, but seeks to focus attention on the moral and human dimensions of issues. We do not authorize the distribution of partisan political materials on parish property.*

The Health Care Access Fund (HCAF) is the primary funding source for MinnesotaCare and is used to pay for programs that improve the quality of health care services and increase access to health coverage for the uninsured. During the last several years, hundreds of millions of dollars have been taken from HCAF and used to reduce the state General Fund deficit.

The Minnesota Legislature's 2008 session closed on May 19 and a pledge was made not to use surplus money from the Health Care Access Fund to pay for anything other than health care. In the end, this legislation will allow approximately 12,000 uninsured Minnesotans to sign up for health coverage. This is a step in the right direction but it barely makes a dent in the growing health care access problem.

While the Governor's decision to protect the integrity of the Health Care Access Fund is good news, he has also suggested \$125 million in cuts to General Assistance Medical Care (extremely poor childless adults) and Medical Assistance (low-income adults and children) that would have a devastating impact on the lives of Minnesotans.

Hospitals are another group that will be hurt from the last-minute budget compromises. In a separate Health and Human Services budget bill, Medicaid payments to hospitals were cut more than 3-percent next year, with additional cuts in subsequent years.

"Lawmakers may have had a goal of saving money on health care, but their actions will likely raise the costs of care at hospitals", says Bruce Rueben, president of the Minnesota Hospital Association.

"So that means there are unmet costs which have to be met. And that means those costs will have to be born by those who can pay for health care services."

Health care reform bills have passed through both the Senate and House (SF 3099 and HF 3391) to expand access to MinnesotaCare and invest in preventative care. The legislation is in conference committee at this time. Funding for these programs would come from the same HCAF funds the Governor had recommended to use for the budget shortfall.

### ***Action Opportunity:***

With this being an election year we have the opportunity to let the legislature and governor know that health care is a top priority issue and that bolder action needs to be taken to reduce the health care crisis.

Call House and Senate Leadership & Governor Pawlenty and ask them not to balance the budget through cuts to health care programs for low-income Minnesotans. (See phone numbers at the end of this update).

Governor Tim Pawlenty: 651-296-3391  
Senator Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller: 651-291-7809  
Senate Minority Leader David Senjem: 651-296-3903  
Speaker of the House Margaret Anderson Kelliher: 651-296-0171  
House Minority Leader Marty Seifert: 651-296-5374.

## American Idle ~ IC Parish Takes Action!

What's more cringe-worthy than the sound of Ryan Seacrest's voice?

The sound of an idling car. It may seem like idling uses less gas than turning your car off and on again, but it usually doesn't, and the pollution idling causes is a lot less entertaining than betting on which *Idol* winner is going to get dropped by their record label next.

### The Benefits

- **Less air (and ear) pollution.** An idling car creates twice the emissions of a car in motion.
- **Saving money.** Idling 15 min per weekday can cost you up to \$100 in wasted gas over the course of a year.
- **Saving oil.** American drivers use more than 2 billion gallons of fuel each year while idling.

*Turn your car off if you're going to stay put for more than a minute.  
BTW: Driving warms up your car way faster than idling.*

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*“Mission: Taught by the example of Jesus, the Blessed Mother, the saints and our church community, the Immaculate Conception Community, Justice and Outreach Commission recognizes that as a people we are very blessed, and that by sharing our blessings, we work, in a most fundamental way, for peace and justice in the world.”*

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## Bread for the World

More than 854 million people in the world go hungry.

In developing countries nearly 16 million children die every year from preventable and treatable causes. Sixty percent of these deaths are from hunger and malnutrition.

In the United States, 11.7 million children live in households where people have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet. That means one in ten households in the U.S. are living with hunger or are at risk of hunger.

**But we CAN end hunger.**

We have the means. The financial costs to end hunger are relatively slight. The United Nations Development Program estimates that the basic health and nutrition needs of the world's poorest people could be met for an additional \$13 billion a year. Animal lovers in the United States and Europe spend more than that on pet food each year.

What makes the difference between millions of hungry people and a world where all are fed?

**Only a change in priorities. Only the will to end hunger.**

Want to learn more? Bread for the World Institute collects facts on [domestic](#) and [global](#) hunger. It also generates answers to [frequently asked questions](#) about hunger. Or you can learn about what [issues](#) Bread for the World members are working on right now to bring an end to hunger in the U.S. and around the world.