



ADVOCATING IN WASHINGTON — Republican Sen. Michael Crapo met with three leaders from the Diocese of Boise during the Social Ministry Gathering in Washington last month. From left are Santiago Robles, assistant

director of MultiCultural Ministries; Christine Smith, Parish and Community Partnership coordinator for Catholic Charities of Idaho; and Chancellor Marcie Wilske. (ICR photo courtesy of Catholic Charities of Idaho)

Local leaders lobby congressmen

WASHINGTON — Catholic leaders from Idaho gathered with others from around the country last month to urge members of Congress to put the poor and vulnerable first particularly during this economic crisis.

They went to Capitol Hill as part of the annual Catholic Social Ministry Gathering to advocate for concrete policies that protect human life and dignity and pursue justice and peace worldwide.

Participants spent several days participating in issue briefings and strategy sessions before being sent off to urge their members of Congress to take action on four domestic and international areas: health care that protects the lives and human dignity; putting the poor first in climate change legislation; increasing and reforming international assistance; and promoting freedom of travel to Cuba. The Idaho delegation met with Sens. James E. Risch and Michael Crapo and Reps. Walter Minnick and Michael Simpson to

discuss these issues.

They also discussed important life issues, such as maintaining conscience clauses for health care providers and staying away from including mandating abortion and other services contrary to Catholic teaching in health care reform legislation.

Legislative Update

The Gathering, held Feb. 22-25, drew more than 550 participants.

"We really felt like we were putting our faith into action and making a difference," said Christine Smith, Parish and Community Partnership coordinator for Catholic Charities of Idaho.