

# **Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise and Catholic Charities of Idaho Public Policy Summary 2011**

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Guided by the moral principles of our church's social teaching, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise and Catholic Charities of Idaho believe every policy and political platform should be measured by how it impacts the human person; whether it enhances or diminishes human life, dignity, and human rights; and how it advances the common good. Because of this, we seek to call forth and engage people in transforming social structures that perpetuate injustice and poverty, which in turn, threaten family life and community wellbeing.



*“In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political process is a moral obligation. Every believer is called to faithful citizenship, to become an informed, active, and responsible participant in the political process.” (Faithful Citizenship: Civic Responsibility for a New Millennium, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, p. 9)*



*“Beyond the responsibilities of every Catholic, the Church as an institution also has a role in the political order. This includes educating its members about Catholic social teaching, highlighting the moral dimensions of public policy, participating in debate on matters affecting the common good, and witnessing to the Gospel through the many services and ministries provided by the Catholic community. ... The leaders of the Church have the right and duty to share the Church's teaching and to educate Catholics on the moral dimensions of public life, so that they may form their consciences in light of their faith.” (Faithful Citizenship: Civic Responsibility for a New Millennium, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, p. 12)*



## CCI Poverty Campaign Issues

## Positions

<h3>HOUSING</h3>	<p><b><u>About the Issue:</u></b> The recent economic downturn has led to rapidly increasing unemployment rates. Many families are experiencing financial difficulties and are being forced to foreclose on their homes, default on loans, and find alternative housing. The housing crisis is affecting families across the economic spectrum, but escalating housing expenses are especially troublesome for low-income families who must cut already tight budgets and make difficult choices between the purchase of adequate healthcare, food, and housing. Too often, the sacrifice made is a direct threat to the family's health and livelihood.</p> <p><b><u>Catholic Position:</u></b> The Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person and the value of the family directly relates to safe, decent and affordable housing. Every individual and every family has a right to necessary life resources including adequate shelter. It is the responsibility of society to ensure that the right each citizen has to safe, decent and affordable housing is preserved and defended at every level on the housing continuum from homeless shelters to inexpensive housing development.</p>
<h3>S1146 – Public Housing Protection Act</h3>	<p><b><u>Summary:</u></b> <i>Opposed;</i> The purpose of this legislation to give a public housing provider the tools to evict a tenant for cause when the tenant, guest or family member violates the public housing provider's requirement to maintain the public housing premises in a decent, safe and sanitary condition. Under this legislation, any tenant may be evicted who is a health and safety risk to other tenants residing in the immediate vicinity, commits a crime or knowingly provides the public housing owner with false information as described in the legislation.</p> <p><b><u>Outcome:</u></b> <i>Did not pass;</i> <b>CCI submitted testimony.</b> Bill held in Senate Commerce and Human Resources Committee</p>
<h3>H0581 – Mobile Home Park Landlord Tenant Act</h3>	<p><b><u>Summary:</u></b> <i>Opposed/Asked for amendment;</i> The purpose of this legislation is to expand landlord rights. We opposed this legislation because it did not include enough of the residents' input. To reach a compromise, we suggested sending this bill to the amending order to expand the amount of time a person has to vacate after failing to pay rent from 20 days to 45 days.</p> <p><b><u>Outcome:</u></b> <i>Amended,</i> <b>CCI presented testimony asking for an amendment.</b> Bill Passed unanimously in the House committee. Passed on a 3-5 vote in Senate committee, and sent to the amending order to increase time to vacate from 20 to 30 days.</p>

<h2>HUNGER</h2>	<p><b><u>About the Issue:</u></b> Our society has the resources to provide food to every citizen, yet one in six people in Idaho are food insecure or hungry. Faced with low wages and rising housing, utility, and healthcare costs, low-income families are being forced to cut meals or buy food that does not meet the recommended daily intake of nutrition in order to get by; the recent economic downturn is only aggravating this trend. Children suffer the effects of hunger in Idaho in larger proportions than adults, rendering them susceptible to a host of health, psychological, and social risks. Programs such as the National School Lunch Program and the Picnic in the Park Program are helping to provide nutritious meals to kids, but too many children still go to bed hungry every night.</p> <p><b><u>Catholic Position:</u></b> The Church’s teaching on the dignity of the human person and the value of the family directly relates to the commitment to ensure that every individual experiences nutritional and food security. We have a responsibility to make certain that the rights of every individual are preserved and defended, and one of the most basic human rights is the right to adequate food and water. Children and seniors are particularly at risk of being hungry, and we are called to protect their basic needs.</p>
<p>Increase the Food Stamp Asset Test from \$2,000 to \$5,000 Rule Change</p>	<p><b><u>Summary:</u></b> <i>Supported;</i> In 2008, Governor Otter temporarily suspended the asset test to help families who were victims of the economic downturn. The asset test was suspended again from 2009-2010. This temporary rule was set to expire at the end of the 2011 legislative session, making the asset test levels return to \$2,000 and \$3,000. Raising the asset test to \$5,000 would help families who would otherwise need to choose between assets and food.</p> <p><b><u>Outcome:</u></b> <i>Passed;</i> <b>CCI presented testimony.</b> Bill unanimously passed House and Senate Health &amp; Welfare Committees</p>
<p>Staggered Issuance of Food Stamp Benefits</p>	<p><b><u>Summary:</u></b> <i>Opposed;</i> This proposal required DHW to stagger issuance of Food Stamp benefits over the course of a number of days, stating that grocers were strained from too many people shopping on the first of the month. CCI opposed the first draft of this bill because it had been written without consulting stakeholders. CCI provided testimony voicing concern about the impact on food banks, food stamp recipients, and the cost to the DHW. The first draft of the bill was pulled and a new version with language that allowed for benefits to be staggered at the discretion of the DHW director after conducting stakeholder meetings. CCI did not oppose this version of the bill</p> <p><b><u>Outcome:</u></b> <i>Pulled for the session;</i> <b>CCI presented testimony.</b> The most recent draft of the bill combined staggered issuance with new language that required food stamp recipients to show identification when using benefits (see below for more info). Several groups opposed the identification requirement and the bill was pulled by Rep. Moyle to be worked on over the summer.</p>
<p>Identification for using Food Stamp benefits</p>	<p><b><u>Summary:</u></b> <i>Opposed,</i> This piece of legislation, meant to deter fraud, required Food Stamp recipients to show identification each time they used their FS benefit EBT card. This would cause barriers to access for households where children qualify for benefits and parents do not, homebound people who rely on a caregiver to use benefits to purchase their food, and others. The bill also violated</p>

	<p>federal FS code, which bars retailers from singling out FS recipients in any way.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> <i>Pulled by sponsor. CCI presented testimony.</i> This bill underwent several rewrites. Subsequent rewrites included language that would protect some vulnerable populations, but would have cost the DHW a large amount of taxpayer money. The bill was combined with the staggered issuance of food stamps, but was eventually pulled from the house floor.</p>
<b>HEALTHCARE</b>	<p><b>About the Issue:</b> The current healthcare system in the United States has multiple systemic problems including rising costs of care, limited accessibility to care, lack of adequate insurance coverage, and a growing population of those who are uninsured. As the economy continues to worsen and unemployment rates continue to rise, more families are finding themselves without healthcare. The cost of quality healthcare coverage has increased at an alarming pace over the last decade, and working families have experienced higher deductibles, higher co-payments, and higher costs of services not covered in their insurance plan. While being uninsured creates a burden on the person who lacks health insurance, it also impacts the service delivery system and the community of insured individuals who often pay higher premiums to offset the cost of those who cannot afford to pay for treatment.</p> <p><b>Catholic Position:</b> The belief in the transcendent dignity of every human person is the driving factor that promotes the protection of basic human rights, including the right to equitable and affordable healthcare. Church teachings emphasize the significance of protecting the life and well-being of every person, and special attention must be given to the health needs of the poor and marginalized. We have a moral duty to ensure that all members of our community have access to quality healthcare.</p>
Cuts to Medicaid	<p><b>Summary:</b> <i>Opposed</i> Due to the severe budget shortfall severe cuts to Medicaid, the program that offers health care to low income children and families, elderly, the developmentally disabled and mentally ill, were proposed. The cuts included \$34 million dollars in state general funds and when the federal match is added to that the total cut was close to \$100 million. While no Medicaid programs were completely eliminated services to adults with developmental disabilities and mental health issues will be negatively impacted.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> <i>Cuts to Medicaid passed.</i> CCI Board Chair Msgr. Andy Schumacher testified in JFAC on direct impacts. CCI Board member Kevin Jones turned in written testimony to oppose cuts with an impact story as well.</p>
<b>ECONOMIC SECURITY</b>	<p><b>About the Issue:</b> The recent economic downturn has led to rapidly increasing unemployment and underemployment rates. More families are facing financial difficulties with many turning to the state for financial assistance through government programs such as Unemployment and Food Stamps (now entitled the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). Foreclosure and bankruptcy rates are at extreme highs, and families are struggling to pay for necessities, often having to make difficult choices between adequate healthcare, nutritious food, and paying bills. Workers are being</p>

	<p>forced to take pay cuts, accept jobs that do not pay a living wage (meaning a wage that sustains a decent standard of living without government assistance), and thus give up their economic security.</p> <p><b>Catholic Position:</b> Families are essential units in our society. Poverty threatens not only the dignity of life and the ability to meet basic human needs, but family well-being as well. The economic security of families must be promoted and strengthened, and every individual should be granted the opportunity to adequately provide for themselves and for their family. Church teachings emphasize our responsibility to protect the rights to work for a just wage under safe conditions in addition to preserving and defending the basic human rights of every individual and family.</p>
<p>Increase sales tax and remove grocery taxes.</p>	<p><b>Summary:</b> <i>Support.</i> Attempt to get the House Tax and Revenue Committee to talk about generating revenue in a balanced approach to balancing the budget. CCI and the diocese wanted to get a revenue proposal printed and be assigned a bill number to go to committee. CCI we sent out a legislative email alert to temporarily increase the Idaho Sales tax by \$0.01 (from 6 cents to 7 cents) to provide additional revenues to the general fund while sales tax would be removed from groceries.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> <i>Proposal died</i>-there was not enough support in committee to be heard so. We were successful in getting the committee chair to know people support generating revenue.</p>
<p><b>HB 129</b> – Daycare licensing</p>	<p><b>Summary:</b> <i>Opposed/asked for amendment,</i> We opposed HB 129 because the ratios proposed place the health and safety of children at risk. Working with partners from Idaho Voices for Children, Idaho AEYC, and local Montessori schools, we drafted a letter to the committee proposing amendments that could be made to the bill. IVC will testify on behalf of all partner agencies, including CCI.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> <i>Sent to amending order,</i> <b>CCI contributed to testimony presented by Idaho Voices for Children,</b> bill was sent to the amending order in the Senate Committee</p>

**JUSTICE FOR IMMIGRANTS**

**About the Issue:** Our current immigration system is broken and ineffective. The economic and political motivations that compel immigrants to risk unauthorized entry into America are varied, but family reunification, a need to work, and a desire to provide monetary support for family are often the driving factors for immigrants entering the U.S. Almost two-thirds of all undocumented families have children who are U.S. citizens by birth. When parents or other family members are unexpectedly taken away, children are left to suffer not only from trauma but from the loss of their support system and economic security as well. Understanding the need for reform, we seek to reduce the number of disrupted lives and communities in Idaho by supporting just and fair comprehensive immigration policies that address the needs of newcomers as well as the security and economic health of our nation.

**Catholic Position:** Immigration, while a political issue, is a fundamental moral issue which impacts human life and dignity. The Church’s teaching on the dignity of the human person and the value of life directly relates to the commitment that every individual’s basic human rights are met, regardless of citizenship status. Citizenship does not grant basic human rights, personhood does. We have a responsibility to protect, support, and encourage the family unit for the basic well-being of the entire society, and we seek to promote family stability and end immigration enforcement practices that violate the dignity of the human person, separate families, and lead to exploitations and abuse.

Birth Certificate to Receive Public Benefits

**Summary:** *Oppose.* Proposal would require parents to submit a birth certificate for each dependent child that they claim in order to receive public benefits. The intent of this bill was said to be to reduce fraud. However, it would have caused barriers to access for population like refugees or immigrants who may be unable to obtain a birth certificate.

**Outcome:** *Opposed.* After opposition several allies and concerns raised by Health and Welfare, the bill was pulled. It was later reintroduced with language that stated that the department “may” ask for a birth certificate. New language also included an exemption for refugees. The change in language removed the barriers to vulnerable populations, so CCI did not oppose the final bill, which passed both houses.

<p><b>Diocesan Special Issues</b></p>	<p><b><u>Catholic Position:</u></b> “Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all principles of social teaching.” Every person is created in the image of God, thus every person is precious, regardless of age, sex, race, gender, religion, or economic status. All social laws, practices and institutions must protect, not undermine, human life and human dignity. Human dignity is the starting point for moral decision-making by the way we ask what/how our actions and decision are doing for and to people. The sacredness and respect of the dignity of life covers a broad area of issues, from conception to death. Each legislative issue is looked at by the way it harms or supports the sacredness of life.</p>
<p><b>H0635</b> – Pregnant Prisoners Restraint</p>	<p><b><u>Summary:</u></b> <i>Supported;</i> This legislation would prohibit the use of restraints on pregnant female prisoners during labor except under certain conditions. The intent of the legislation would be to protect the State of Idaho by implementing a policy which conforms to a recent Supreme Court decision stating that the use of restraints on pregnant female prisoners during labor is considered cruel and unusual punishment.</p> <p><b><u>Outcome:</u></b> <i>Unanimously passed the house committee. Members representing the Diocese presented testimony.</i></p>
<p><b>S1166</b>-Fetal Pain</p>	<p><b><u>Summary:</u></b> <i>Supported;</i> It is the purpose of the State to assert a compelling state interest in protecting the lives of unborn children from the stage at which substantial medical evidence indicates that they are capable of feeling pain, and the bill protects such unborn children by prohibiting abortion after 20 weeks post-fertilization, except when the mother has a condition which so complicates her medical condition as to necessitate the abortion of her pregnancy to avert her death or to avert serious risk of substantial and irreversible physical impairment of a major bodily function, not including psychological or emotional conditions or it is necessary to preserve the life of an unborn child.</p>
	<p><b><u>Outcome:</u></b> <i>Unanimously passed the house committee. Members representing the Diocese presented testimony.</i></p>