

VIEWPOINT

Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference

A Footprint of Faith: The Catholic Church in Pennsylvania

Catholics have been living and worshipping in Pennsylvania since William Penn launched his "Holy Experiment" here in the 18th century. Every small town and large city bears the influence of Catholic culture. Cathedral spires are historic landmarks, Catholic hospitals have cared for generations of families, and each community reflects the culture of the millions of Catholic immigrants who came to America seeking a better life.

Today in Pennsylvania there are **1,200 parishes** serving more than **3.3 million Catholics**. Pennsylvania Catholics make up **26%** of the state's population. The Church in Pennsylvania provides **52,000 jobs**.

But the real legacy of the Church is in how Catholics live out the Gospel in their own communities.

Charitable Outreach

In 1797, the first formal Catholic charitable institution in Pennsylvania was an orphanage and trade school in Philadelphia. More than 200 years later, the Catholic Church continues to minister to people in need.

Catholic Charities agencies are still serving children, although today foster care and adoption services are the norm. Catholic Charities also helps families and individuals with behavioral health, family counseling, and addiction programs. The agencies help refugees and immigrants settle here in the United States.

Catholic Charities agencies provide direct aid to the poor with food pantries and soup kitchens, housing and utilities assistance, and help with clothing and other basic needs.

In 2010, more than **360,000** individuals received services from a Catholic Charities agency in Pennsylvania, and many of them benefit from more than one service.

Education

Catholic schools are another rich part of Pennsylvania's history. The first parochial school in the United States, St. Mary's, opened in Philadelphia in 1782. The school is still helping students reach their potential.

Today, Pennsylvania's approximately **540** Catholic schools are teaching more than **150,000 students**. Catholic schools provide **jobs for over 10,000** teachers and other professional staff. Most Catholic high schools rightly boast graduation rates at or near 100% for non-transferring

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Students from St. Martin de Porres School in Philadelphia gathered canned goods for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Community Food Program. *Photo credit: Nutritional Development Services, Archdiocese of Philadelphia, www.ndsarch.org*



What is the PCC?

The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference is the public affairs arm of Pennsylvania's Catholic bishops and the Catholic dioceses of Pennsylvania. There are 10 Catholic dioceses in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Eight are Latin Rite dioceses, fully contained within the Commonwealth. Two are Byzantine Rite dioceses with Apostolic Sees in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

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students, as well as SAT scores above the state and national averages. Of those graduates, over 90% go on to attend either a two- or four-year institute of higher learning.

Catholic parochial and diocesan schools educate students by establishing high goals and standards as well as strong motivation and effective discipline, all within a nurturing atmosphere. Catholic schools aim to develop each student as a "whole person" – academically, of course, but also spiritually, physically and emotionally.

In two centuries, Pennsylvania's Catholic schools have educated countless leaders, entrepreneurs, inventors, and even a saint or two.

Both Catholic and non-Catholic students attend parochial and diocesan schools, but the thousands of Catholic students who attend Pennsylvania public schools are also well-formed in our rich faith. They learn and grow in their Catholic identity through parish ministries. In all, approximately **440,000 students** receive Catholic instruction every year.

Health Care

Catholic hospitals are another fixture on the Pennsylvania landscape. Generations of Catholics, often women and men in religious orders, came to the Pennsylvania with a mission to care for the sick, the aged and the dying.

In 2010, Catholic health care served more than **3.3 million** people in Pennsylvania.

There are Catholic hospitals, long-term care facilities, multi-facility health systems, special providers or other related entities in every community. The Catholic health care system provides healing and comfort through many programs and facilities, ranging from large, state-of-the-art hospitals and emergency rooms to small neighborhood personal-care homes and mobile clinics.

Catholic providers are an integral part of our health care system. They operate with a fundamental commitment to the sanctity and dignity of human life and demonstrate a special concern for the poor and most vulnerable members of society. Often Catholic facilities are the provider of last resort for those who are very poor and very sick.

Forward in Faith

As we consider this strong and vibrant Catholic presence in Pennsylvania, it is easy to feel proud, but we should not feel content. As those of you familiar with the work of the PCC know, threats to religious liberty, the dignity of the human person and other issues of importance to Catholics have become frequent. We also have opportunities to make advancements that would benefit Catholic health care and education, would strengthen our service to the poor and would better enable us to live out our Gospel values. Complacency would not have been tolerated by those who laid this solid foundation over the past 200-plus years, and it should not be tolerated today. And so, as we look to the public policy issues that will face us in 2012, let us be inspired by knowing that our family of faith extends across our entire state and reaches our brothers and sisters in every walk of life.

Legislative Review

The PCC **supports** the following legislation:

Education Department

Senate Bill 1/
House Bill 1678/
House Bill 1708/
Others

School Choice - Senate Bill 1 or what could be another legislative vehicle is a top priority for the PCC. The proposal will increase the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program and create Opportunity Scholarships, or vouchers, for the poorest students in the worst performing schools. PCC has been waging a full scale grassroots advocacy campaign to generate support for school choice.

SCHOOL CHOICE ALERT

School choice advocates were disappointed that a reform package that includes school vouchers and an increase to the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) scholarship program was not passed before the legislature adjourned for the Christmas break. It is not too late to send a message to your state legislators urging them to pass school choice in 2012. Log on to the Catholic Advocacy Network at www.pacatholic.org to send one today.

House Bill 1378/
Senate Bill 1154

Special Education Services - These bills would enhance the level of support to special education students in nonpublic schools.

Senate Bill 1134

Regulation of Religious Child Care Programs - This bill would place the regulation of religious child care and early childhood development facilities in the Department of Education rather than the Department of Public Welfare. It would also remove the asserted authority of the state to demand that religious teaching ministries obtain a state license before they are allowed to exist.

Social Concerns Department

House Bill 1254

Prohibited use of Public Assistance Funds - This bill would ban the use of an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card to purchase tobacco products, firearms or ammunition, and bans the use of EBT cards at casinos.

Senate Bill 732

Abortion Clinic Regulations Bill SIGNED INTO LAW - The new law addresses concerns that stemmed from the tragic deaths of one woman and seven infants that occurred in the Philadelphia abortion clinic of Dr. Kermit Gosnell where a woman died and seven newborn babies were killed by infanticide. Conditions in the clinic were so filthy and unsafe that investigators called it a "house of horrors." The measure holds abortion facilities to the same fire and safety standards, personnel and equipment requirements, and quality assurance procedures as other freestanding ambulatory surgical facilities.

Pennsylvania Catholic Health Association

House Bill 1583

Protective equipment for motorcycle riders - This legislation would repeal the "no helmet" law that was passed in 2006. It would require drivers and passengers of motorcycles to wear protective headgear.

Senate Bill 1099

Minimum Wage Law - This bill concerns overtime compensation for employees in health care facilities like hospitals and long-term care facilities. If an employee works more than eight hours in any one workday and in excess of 80 hours in 14 days, the employee would be compensated at no less that 1 1/2 times the regular rate.



The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference advocates many different issues - Catholic education, religious liberty, life & dignity of the human person, marriage & family, social justice, health care, and faith & politics. To receive action alerts on active issues, join the Pennsylvania Catholic Advocacy Network at www.pacatholic.org/advocacy

Join the Public Policy Conversation Online



The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC) can be found on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pacatholic and on Twitter at www.twitter.com/pacatholic. Concerned citizens can log on and “like” or “follow” the PCC to stay informed about public policy issues affecting Pennsylvania’s Catholics.



You can receive notification when something new is posted to the PCC Institute for Public Policy website at www.pacatholic.org by using the RSS Feed feature. Or get in on the debate through the Pennsylvania Catholic Advocacy Network. By taking action you will be enrolled to receive the latest action alerts on the legislative issues that matter to you most. Sign up today at www.pacatholic.org/advocacy.



There is an important conversation and exchange of information happening online about all issues, including those that relate to the Catholic Church and her teaching and morals. Be a part of it.

Join us. Be heard. Make a difference.



Viewpoint is published by the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, the public affairs agency of Pennsylvania’s Catholic bishops. For more information, contact Amy B. Hill, APR, editor, at (717) 238-9613 or e-mail at abhill@pacatholic.org. Visit our website at www.pacatholic.org.

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