



Thank you for reading the Catholic Conference of Ohio's electronic newsletter : E-FOCUS, February 2008

Election 2008



Ohio's Election Primary is Tuesday March 4, 2008. In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) has developed materials for parish use based upon their statement "[Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call To Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States](#)". The USCCB's website, [Faithful Citizenship](#), contains Bulletin Inserts, Diocesan and Parish Planning Suggestions, Lesson Plans, Prayer and Homily Resources and Background Links.

The Catholic Conference of Ohio has also developed election related materials for parish use. These complement the materials being promoted at the national level. We encourage parish duplication and distribution.

[Voting Questions 2008](#)

[Catholic Social Teaching in the Public Square: Seven Key Themes.](#)

[Catholic Conference of Ohio Background Information of Faith and Politics](#)

[Catholic Conference of Ohio Background Information on 2008 Candidates and Election Issues](#)

Ohio Legislative Updates



It is anticipated that the Ohio General Assembly will hold legislative sessions through May 2008 and then break until after the November 2008 elections. During election years, legislators tend to shy away from passing legislation perceived to be controversial. However, controversial legislation is sometimes passed based upon perceived partisan or political advantages. Heightened citizen advocacy is necessary to help assure that responsible legislation is passed in an election year.

The Catholic Conference is pursuing increased awareness and citizen advocacy in the following areas.

Abortion Restrictions.

Please contact your Ohio House Representative and Senator. Ask them to support HB 314 allowing the opportunity to view ultrasound results prior to an abortion, and to support HB 280 requiring the posting of a "non coercion" sign in all abortion clinics. [[More](#)]

[Catholic Conference of Ohio Background Information on Ending Abortion: Protecting Unborn Children and their Parents](#)

Pay Day Lending Practices

There are several legislative bills pending in the Ohio General Assembly that address varying aspects of payday lending reform. Please communicate to your state elected officials your support for meaningful reform of payday lending practices. Such reform should include a reasonable rate cap, installment payments, consumer protections, support for alternative lending programs, and financial awareness education programs. [\[More\]](#)

[Catholic Conference of Ohio Background Information on Payday Lending Practices](#)

EdChoice Update

This year, Ohio's *Educational Choice (EdChoice) Scholarship Program* is helping over 4,000 students attend Catholic schools. An EdChoice Scholarship pays the school's tuition or \$4,375 for an elementary school student (\$5,150 for a high school student), whichever is less. Students who receive EdChoice scholarships come from public schools that have been in Academic Watch or Academic Emergency – the lowest categories on the state's school rating system – for two of the last three school years. Once a student receives an EdChoice scholarship, he or she can renew the scholarship, through grade 12. [\[More\]](#)

[EdChoice website at the Ohio Department of Education](#)

Adoption Reform

Sub HB 7, introduced by Representative Tom Brinkman, has had several hearings in the Ohio House regarding adoption reform. Among the more controversial provisions in this legislation is the retroactive opening of birth records. Sub HB 7 would allow any adult adoptee, adoptive parent, or lineal descendant to access the contents of the adoptee's adoption file regardless of whether the adoption file was previously closed under the law or by action of a birth parent.

The diocesan adoption directors struggled with the proposed open record provisions in this bill. There was a strong acknowledgement and affirmation that, in most cases, providing adopted adults access to their original birth certificate is not only good practice, but also the right thing for which to strive. The struggle was over the competing rights of the birth parents and retroactively opening the records. [\[More\]](#)

[Legislative Summary of Sub HB 7](#)

Ohio Immigration Enforcement Legislation

The Catholic Conference of Ohio is concerned over the need and scope of Ohio legislative proposals (SB 260 and HB 308) that address ways the state can better enforce federal immigration laws. We believe many of the federal immigration laws are unjust and unnecessarily restrictive. Comprehensive reform is needed. Since the federal government is currently implementing enhanced enforcement measures throughout the country, Ohio should show judicious restraint in pursuing additional state enforcement legislation. [\[More\]](#)

[Catholic Conference of Ohio Prayer & Reflection Resource on Immigration Reform](#)

[Catholic Conference of Ohio Background Information on Immigration Reform](#)

Counseling Assistance Fund: Deadline for Filing Claims Approaching

The Counseling Assistance Fund, established by Ohio's Catholic Bishops in 2006, supports counseling or similar mental health services for adults who were sexually abused as minors by representatives of the Catholic Church in Ohio. This fund operates through a process independent of the Church. A person may file a claim regardless of how long ago the act of abuse occurred. However, all claims must be filed by May 15, 2008. Further information regarding the Counseling Assistance Fund, including instructions and forms for making a claim, is available online at: www.counselingassistancefund.org.

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