

Issuing Driver's Licenses for Ohio Immigrant Workers Campaign to Promote Public Safety, Responsive Identification Documents, and Social Justice

The Catholic Conference of Ohio's Department on social Concerns has joined a statewide campaign to improve Ohio's policies regarding the issuance of driver's licenses. This growing campaign includes our Church's Diocesan Directors for Hispanic Ministry and leaders from many immigrant groups including the "Immigrant Worker Project" (the Ohio Bishops, diocesan Rural Life and Hispanic offices and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development are founding and active members in this statewide organization).

Currently many immigrant workers, particularly Latino workers, are unable to obtain an Ohio drivers license. This is primarily due to restrictions limiting the types of identification documents allowed to be used. Most immigrant workers have been recruited by Ohio businesses to work in Ohio. Many are undocumented and do not have a valid Social Security card. While responding to current Homeland Security concerns, other states have found ways to safely and fairly allow foreign identification documents to be used in obtaining driver's licenses.

Campaign to improve Ohio's Driver license program

The goal of this campaign is to allow immigrant residents to obtain a driving permit, license or identification card in their real names with real documents from their countries of origin. Another goal is to improve cultural awareness and fair treatment by Ohio Deputy of Registrar offices at the community level.

What are the problems to be addressed?

1) Immigrant residents are unable to obtain driver's licenses legally. In order to obtain one, some workers purchase breeder documents that are false. In some cases immigrants residents have essentially bribed registrar offices through "contractistas" (persons hired by the employer to serve as an intermediary to the workers) in order to obtain a license.

2) Many immigrant residents drive without a license, without knowing Ohio's driving regulations, proper training, and without insurance. This is a major public safety issue.

"Immigrant workers, regardless of their status, are vital participants in our economy. Yet their dignity and rights are often abused and their important contributions to our society ignored. Our nation must treat immigrants fairly and with dignity, and honor their important contributions to our society"...

We believe each person has opportunities to reach out in welcome to immigrant workers. Consider the following questions:

- Are we as a society, as church, as employers, as consumers treating immigrants with dignity and justice?
- Do my own attitudes toward immigrants reflect God's love and concern for all persons?
- How am I involved in reaching out to new immigrants in support of their pastoral and material needs?
- What am I willing to do on behalf of the justice needs of immigrants?

"God's Welcoming Presence"
Catholic Bishops of Ohio, 2001

STATE BUDGET QUANDARY: LESS REVENUE, MORE NEED

Catholic Conference calls for prioritization of the most vulnerable

The Ohio General Assembly continues deliberations on H.B. 95, the biennial budget bill. The Ohio House passed their version in April. The Senate is expected to pass their version in early June at "conference committee" comprised of members of both the House and Senate, in consultation, with the Governor will attempt to reach a compromise before June 30, 2003.

Major tensions remain over how much new revenue will be needed. Various tax proposals have surfaced including: temporarily raising the sales tax by a penny; broadening the existing tax base to selective services currently not taxed; increasing "sin" taxes on alcohol and cigarettes; allowing VLTs - video lottery terminals (slot machines) at Ohio race tracks; reducing the number of tax brackets; and changing to a "flat tax".

There also remains great debate over which programs to fund and for how much.

The state government has reduced spending by nearly \$2 billion over the past three fiscal years - including the 2.5 percent proposed cuts for 2003. The cuts have hit health and human service agencies hard and they have cost Ohio millions in federal matching funds. For example, the Department of Job and Family services uses 95 cents of every state dollar to match federal funds and the Department of Aging uses 89 cents of every state dollar. If the state dollars aren't spent on these programs then Ohio does not receive the full amount of available federal dollars. This leads into a double cut of health and human service programs for the state.

What's Still at Stake for health, Human Services, and Education?

H.B. 95, as passed by the House, continues to negatively impact many social service programs.

- Over 180 older adults a month will be denied access to PASSPORT because funding is \$30 million short of meeting current demand.
- Over 50,000 parents with incomes below 100% of poverty will lose Medicaid health care coverage due to elimination of the parental healthcare program.
- Over 20,000 children will lose their subsidized childcare slots and 4,000 fewer children will be served through the state Head Start program due to reductions in eligibility criteria and program reorganization.

- 3,000 fewer children and adults will be provided with mental health services due to cuts in mental health funding.
- 3,800 children and adults will lose their disability assistance through program "caps" and funding cuts.
- Thousands of older adults will lose access to home-delivered meals and other community based programs because of inadequate funding for the senior services block grant.
- Over 100,000 Ohio college students will face steep tuition increases because of \$311 million in cuts in higher education funding.
- Ohio primary and secondary school funding will be cut by \$316 million continuing to hinder local districts ability to pass operating levies.

Cuts Restored by Ohio House

- The House passed version of H.B. 95 restored funding for 14,000,000 meals provided by Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Banks
- Restored funding for 800,000 adults who would have lost access to dental, vision and podiatry services.
- Restored legal mandate and funding for thousands of older adults who are the victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation every year.
- Restored funding for abstinence education and enhanced funding opportunities for women's health programs that do not refer or counsel for abortion.

The cuts restored by the House could still be at risk in the Senate. Contact your legislators and tell them the cuts must be stopped! Ask them to create a fair, diversified tax package to ensure adequate funding for these services.

Funding Support for Catholic School Parents Proportional

The House version increased the Auxiliary Services and Administrative Cost Reimbursement by 2.8% for parents of chartered nonpublic schools. This is proportionate to the increases proposed in the Basic School Foundation program for public schools.

The Catholic Conference of Ohio advocates for continued proportional support throughout the remaining budget deliberations.

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3) Immigrant residents are often targeted by police for arrest. They face fines, impoundment of vehicles and may destroy their eligibility to qualify as legal residents because of law violations.

4) Immigrant residents are often targeted by the Deputy Registrars for investigation. Documents are often assumed to be false for Hispanic applicants.

What are possible solutions?

1) Allow applicants to obtain a statement or affidavit indicating that they are not eligible to receive a Social Security number. Submission of this paper would negate the need to provide a Social Security number, allowing immigrants to apply in their real names with documents from their country of origin.

2) Allow the existing primary and secondary document list, where appropriate, to originate from other countries as well as the United States. Such items might include, birth certificates, driver's licenses, military I.D. from other countries.

3) Increase the list of acceptable Primary and Secondary Documents used for identification. Primary documents might include IDs issued by matricular consulars and foreign embassies. Secondary documents might include fax documents and documents kept by businesses or churches.

4) Provide materials and training for Deputy Registrar staff:

- to increase compliance with antidiscrimination requirements of Ohio law
- to become more familiar with new primary documents

5) Create standards for translation of foreign documents. Ohio should require that translations be from certified translators and then notarized.

For more information on this campaign contact:

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Immigrant Worker Project

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Lack of Documents Does not Diminish the Dignity of Immigrant Workers

Mexican Bishop, Renato Ascencio Leon, in a recent message entitled "I go in search of work and I meet death!" Laments the recent death of the 14 Mexicans and Central Americans who died in an overcrowded trunk trailer seeking work in the United States. Over the past 7 years 1,951 Mexicans have lost their lives seeking work in the United States.

"When will we learn, and how many more migrants will have to die, before our conscience is stirred and we value human life and force our governments to implement migratory policies in keeping with our rank of children of God?" The bishop continued.

"The dignity of an illegal immigrant does not diminish because he lacks certain documents. Whether or not they have them, our migrant brothers and sisters are worthy because they only seek an opportunity to work."

"Our faith should impel us to conquer this daily challenge to transform egoism into generosity, fear into openness, rejection into solidarity, and individualism into fraternity and commitment, translated in concrete and tangible acts in favor of our migrant brothers and sisters," Bishop Renato Ascencio Leon concluded.

(Article adapted from ZENIT.org)

Slot Machines at Racetracks, Harmless or Harmful?

In the Catechism #2413 reads:

“Games of chance (card games, etc.) or wagers are not in themselves contrary to justice. They become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his needs and those of others. The passion for gambling risks becoming an enslavement. Unfair wagers and cheating at games constitute grave matter, unless the damage inflicted is so slight that the one who suffers it cannot reasonably consider it significant.”

The Ohio house of Representatives (House) passed House Bill 95 (the Budget Bill) on April 9, 2003; the bill included a temporary increase in the sales tax to six percent (6%) from five percent (5%) plus any local sales taxes, for two years from July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2005. But to avoid the label of tax-and-spend legislators, they included a provision to require that voters choose between the sales tax increase and video slot machines at Ohio's racetracks the second year of the biennium. The vote will occur at the November 2003 election. The proposed ballot is worded so that if you vote “No” regarding slot machines, you are voting to keep them.

The Ohio Council of Churches has taken a strong stance against the expansion of gambling in Ohio. Tom Smith, legislative director for the Council, writes in his legislative brief entitled “Are Slot Machines at Racetracks Prying Open Ohio's Door to Casinos” the following “Those legislators addicted to gambling dollars point to projections that 2,500 slot machines at every racetrack could generate \$500 million for education. But the penny sales tax increase generates \$1.2 billion. Where is the other \$700 million needed to balance the budget? It's also important for voters to know that this proposal gives the seven racetrack owners each over \$25 million per year plus another \$7 million to raise purses for their races... If that's not enough, the Lottery Commission will have to purchase the slot machines and pay to maintain them out of the states 51% share...”

...Ohio voters are smart enough to realize that the legislature merely substitutes lottery dollars for those they already had planned to allocate to schools. There are no new dollars to eliminate the need for local property tax increases. The same thing will

happen with slot machine revenue unless it's earmarked for something new, like the Hope College Scholarship being pushed by Senate Democrats.

The Ohio Scholars Program would provide a full scholarship to eligible high-school students who enroll in Ohio's colleges and universities. High-school students with a grade-point average at or above the 95th percentile of their class would qualify for the scholarship.

“The average Joe says what's wrong with enjoying a little harmless entertainment with your discretionary income? Studies indicate that nearly 50% of all slot-machine revenue is wagered by problem gamblers and low-income individuals. This has a devastating impact on the families of those gambling far more than discretionary income. Video slot machines have been labeled the “crack cocaine” of gambling by the National Gambling Impact Study Commission. Slot machines are deemed very addictive and have become the choice of many problem senior gamblers.”

“A gambling impact committee appointed by Taft and the G.A. itself determined in its report that slot machines at racetracks could generate more problems than profits for Ohio's economy. They said social costs of problem gambling, such as divorce, bankruptcy, lost job productivity and attempted suicides, could negate any benefits of slot machine revenues.”

A *Columbus Dispatch* editorial entitled “Risky Business”, dated April 20, 2003 illustrates the dangerous road that Ohio is taking by approving video slot machines. We could become a Class 3 gambling state. If that happens, a federally recognized Native American tribe that acquires land in Ohio could apply to open a casino on their land and not be subject to local or Ohio laws. They would have to pay little more than a token to the state. Once they are established, they would drive down the revenues from the lottery and the racetracks. Planning for the first such casino is already underway in Botkins (Shelby county), just off I-75 in western Ohio. The plan is to build a \$550 million complex with hotels, restaurants and a vast gambling hall.”

Ohio Budget Proposing to Replace “Family Planning” Funds with “Women’s Health” Funds

The Ohio Right to Life Society was successful in the Ohio House version of the budget bill (HB 95) in changing and expanding the way funds are awarded for family planning and women’s health services. It provides a higher funding priority for programs that do not counsel or refer for abortion (with their own monies, ie. Planned Parenthood).

Concerns have been raised by the Ohio Department of Health which may eliminate this change in the Ohio Senate.

HB 95 changes the current \$1.7 million Ohio Department of Health “family planning” set-aside from line item 440-416 into a “women’s health” set-aside and to replace the current preference for federal Title X family planning grantees with a preference for grant requests by local health departments. The new language also provides that a grant applicant need not provide all of the Title X family planning services.

Currently all of the funds under the family planning set-aside go to federal Title X family planning grantees. Title X grantees are required to be willing to counsel and refer for abortions. The House-passed language would permit competition for grants by groups that did not meet all Title X requirements (such as referring for abortions or providing contraceptives to teens).

The new “women’s health” set-aside language will:

- Permit competition by some organizations that are not willing to be involved with some of the current program’s more controversial aspects;
- Open the program to groups that are able to fully comply with the state policy of not promoting abortion counseling or referrals;
- Reduce the controversy surrounding the program by focusing on services provided by non-ideological, noncontroversial local health departments;
- Provide a more effective use of public funds by focusing the grants on local health departments that have a greater need for the funding in order to continue or expand services than many current private grantees; and

- Increase the total number of women receiving the services.

Legislative Directories Available

A copy of the “Legislative Directory” for the 125 General Assembly is available free of charge from the Catholic Conference of Ohio. It will help you identify and contact your elected officials.

You can also access legislative information on the internet at www.legislature.state.oh.us

Call or write: Catholic conference of Ohio, 9 E. Long Street, Columbus, OH 43215, 614-224-7147.

The Ohio Journey will be a 17 day tour of an amazing group of murder victim family members who oppose capital punishment, death row families, innocent persons freed from death row and other supporters who will travel across the state of Ohio to share their incredible messages of love, forgiveness and healing.

Through public speaking events, rallies, marches, concerts, tree plantings, media interviews, and other activities, the Journey of Hope will touch thousands of people. We believe that the Journey of hope's inspirational message of compassion and healing will open the hearts and minds of the citizens of Ohio to have a greater respect for the dignity of human life and lead this state toward abolition of the death penalty!

Tentative Schedule

September 26	Cincinnati Area
September 30	Dayton Area
October 2	Toledo Area
October 4	Cleveland Area
October 7	Akron, Youngstown Area
October 9	Columbus Area
October 9	Statewide Clergy Conference on Death Penalty, Trinity Lutheran Seminary
October 11	Statewide rally at the Statehouse

For more information contact Jim Tobin, Catholic Conference of Ohio at 614-224-7147 or check the website: www.journeyofhope.org
