

Albany update

These next three weeks are critical for several bills before the State Legislature in Albany. Every year in March the bishops of New York along with thousands of faithful Catholics journey to Albany to meet with our elected representatives and to present our concerns about pending legislation that affect not just the Church but even more importantly the families and communities whose interests are an integral part of what we call "the common good." The New York bishops have a Public Policy Committee, composed of experts in various fields, which meets regularly under the aegis of Bishop Howard Hubbard of Albany. They regularly review pending bills to help us all prioritize the issues that the Assembly and the Senate will be considering during this year's session.

Many of these are perennial. There is always the question of funding for services mandated by the state to be carried out in Catholic schools. Every year, along with our Jewish friends, we have to argue that if the state mandates we do these things, then the state should cover the costs at least of the items they mandate. At the same time, we do not give up and will not give up on our annual insistence that parents who wish to send their children to religious schools should receive tax credits. This is an argument based on simple justice. Eventually I believe we will prevail but we have to continue to make our case until some year the legislators and the public will be convinced of the inherent injustice of a state that ignores the real needs of religious schools that are successful at a cost far less than the cost of public education.

There are three other concerns that deserve our consideration.

1. Yes to Lopez; No to Markey. Currently in the Assembly there is a stand off between the Markey Bill and the Lopez Bill on statute of limitations



FAITH AND NEW WORKS

BISHOP WILLIAM MURPHY

regarding the horrific societal problem of child and minor sex abuse. The bishops along with many others oppose the Markey Bill as inherently unfair and discriminatory. Ms. Markey insists on a "windows" provision that is aimed, I am convinced, at the Catholic Church. Such an assault on normal legal protections is dangerous and aimed at the Church, the one and only institution in our society which has faced up to the tragedy of sex abuse and done something to correct itself. In addition the Markey bill leaves the majority of sex abuse victims without equal protection under the law. By contrast the Lopez bill extends the statute of limitations, does not have a windows provision and provides all victims with an even field of recourse against perpetrators. The New York bishops want a bill that can be signed into law. We urge one and all to oppose Markey and support Lopez. Our diocesan Web site (www.drvc.org) provides you with more information.

2. No to Duane bill on same sex unions. Senator Duane and the governor are proponents of a bill that would make same sex relationships "marriage" in New York State. This attempt to legislate something that is self contradictory should be opposed on the grounds that this is claiming as a civil right something that cannot stand because it contradicts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Civil rights must not and cannot run counter to human rights. And the right to marriage is a right, based on human nature and the teleology of the human body, that restricts marriage to a man and a woman. For that reason alone we cannot and should not label as "marriage" any other kind of private

relationships in which the state has no business and no interest. In addition we Catholics are committed to the virtue of chastity. How can we countenance the state legislating as a good a law that would legalize a commitment to immoral actions? The New York bishops just issued a statement on this (see page 23) which also can be found on the diocesan Web site.

3. Yes to the Schimel bill to micro-stamp handguns. Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel of Great Neck is passionately committed to the safety of our neighborhoods and the protection of young people. I have learned from law enforcement officers here on Long Island as well as from visiting some of our parishes that handguns are too available on our streets. Street crimes involving handguns kill kids and change the face of some of our communities. Ms. Schimel proposes a bill that would require semiautomatic handguns and semiautomatic handguns only to have a microstamped code in them. This code would be imprinted on the shell cartridges and could be used to hunt down criminals and others who endanger our communities. This has no effect on legitimate hunting and places no further burden or restriction on the possession and use of firearms, such as hunting rifles, by sports enthusiasts and others. I am urging the Long Island members of the State Senate to vote in favor of this bill which has already passed the Assembly. If you agree, please join me in supporting this bill and so informing your own state senator.

There are many other pieces of legislation before the legislators in Albany. We should always be appreciative of their work whether we agree with their stances on a particular bill or not. These men and women are public servants, and all are committed to the good of our state and our communities. They represent us in the task we all share to build up New York and make our communities true homes of safety,

security, freedom, justice and peace for one and all. Whatever our positions may be, we are all one in thanking them for their service to the state and the common good.

BISHOP MURPHY'S CALENDAR

WED., JUNE 3

Cabinet Meeting, 8:30 a.m.; Catholic Charities Annual Meeting of Corporate Members, 10 a.m.

THURS., JUNE 4

Meeting with Vicars, 10 a.m.; Confirmation, St. Anne, Brentwood, 2:30 p.m.; McGann-Mercy Diocesan High School Graduation, Riverhead, 7 p.m.

SAT., JUNE 6

Holy Trinity Diocesan High School Graduation, Hofstra University, 10 a.m.; St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School Graduation, Tilles Center, 2 p.m.

SUN., JUNE 7

Monthly Mass & Liturgy, St. Agnes Cathedral, 11 a.m.; Diocesan Pastoral Council Meeting, noon

MON., JUNE 8

Catholic University of America Committee Meetings, Washington, D.C.

TUES., JUNE 9

Catholic University of America Board Meetings, Washington, D.C.; Path to Peace Gala Award Dinner, United Nations, NYC

WED., JUNE 10

Cabinet Meeting, all day; Evening Prayer & Dinner for Candidates to be Ordained to Priesthood, 5 p.m.

THURS., JUNE 11

Finance Council Meeting, 7:30 a.m.; Faith & New Works Taping, Telecare, Uniondale, 2 p.m.

SAT., JUNE 13

Ordination of Priests, St. Agnes Cathedral, 11 a.m.; Mass & Celebration, Msgr. Thomas Colgan 60th Anniversary of Ordination to Priesthood, St. Philip Neri Church, Northport, 5 p.m.

Bishop to Senate: *Health care is a basic human right*

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also "a critical component of the Catholic Church's ministry."

As such, he said, abortion and other "procedures or technologies that attack or undermine the sanctity and dignity

of life" should not be included "as part of a national health care benefit." He added that "no health care reform plan should compel us or others to pay for or participate in the destruction of human life."

Bishop Murphy offered eight principles that could serve as

a framework for health care reform: respect for life, priority concern for the poor, access for all, comprehensive benefits, pluralism, quality, cost controls and equitable financing.

He said pluralism would be measured by "whether (the reform plan) allows and encour-

ages the involvement of the public and private sectors, including the voluntary, religious and nonprofit sectors, in the delivery of care and services" and "whether it ensures respect for religious and ethical values in the delivery of health care, for patients and for individual and

institutional providers."

"The moral measure of any health care reform proposal is whether it offers affordable and accessible health care to all, beginning with those most in need. This can be a matter of life or death, of dignity or deprivation," he said.