



## 2014 Legislative Priority Issues

### Poverty Reduction Themes Bulletin Insert Suggestions

We want to encourage parishioners to think about and take action with and on behalf of people who are poor who will be impacted by the budget and policy decisions that state legislators make. A fundamental moral measure of any economy is how the poor and vulnerable are faring. Society has a moral obligation, including governmental action where necessary, to ensure opportunity, meet basic human needs, and pursue justice in economic life. All people have a right to life and to secure the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, safe environment, and economic security. We can make sure that our legislators' decisions benefit everyone, including families, workers and the most vulnerable people among us. All of economic life should recognize the fact that we all are God's children and members of one human family, and we are called to exercise a clear priority for "the least among us."

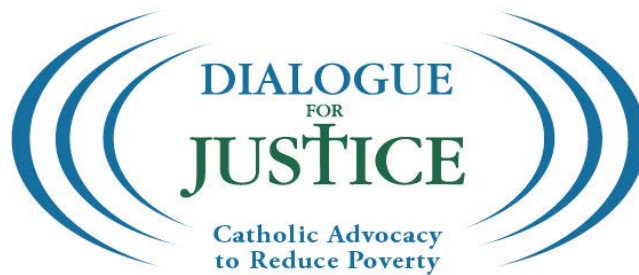
This Legislative Session will determine the state's supplemental budget for needed programs and services used by poor and vulnerable people in our communities. This is why it is important for parishioners to know about the Dialogue for Justice Priority Legislative Issues. In addition to homilies, Bulletin Inserts can provide more details to parishioners about the Dialogue for Justice Priority Legislative Issues. The information below is provided for parishes and organizations to use during the state legislative session (which is scheduled to end March 13, 2014) and throughout the year.

The Bulletin Inserts are listed below the Legislative Priority. We invite you to feature a Bulletin Insert to add to homilies about a Legislative Priority, or to use them sequentially.

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If today's Gospel reading is about Jesus' ministry among poor and vulnerable people, you can use a Bulletin Insert about one of the basic necessities of life and a Dialogue for Justice Legislative Priority Issue listed below in **Bold** along with the points below.

- The poor and vulnerable in our midst need access to the basic necessities of life.
- They are the hardest hit when economic times are tough and in the lingering recession.
- Ten million working families and 46 million Americans including 16 million children live in poverty.
- If your parish has an outreach ministry or your organization serves poor and vulnerable people mention how the need has increased with the economic recession and how the parish ministry/ organization has responded.



## **2014 Legislative Priority Issues - Poverty Reduction Themes Bulletin Inserts**

### **Economic Justice - Housing and Essential Needs & Medical Care Services:**

- Housing and Essential Needs Support Program (HEN) and Medical Care Services (MCS) are state funded and provide a safety net to people in housing who are at risk of losing their housing, or to people who are moving into housing from being homeless. Rent and utility assistance is paid directly to landlords and utility companies. *Housing and Essential Needs Support Program coverage should be extended in the 2014 Legislative Session to Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Treatment and Support Act recipients who are in recovery.*
- The Housing and Essential Needs Support Program (HEN) provides housing, utility and essential needs (hygiene items and bus passes) assistance to people who are receiving Medical Care Services (MCS). MCS is a state funded health care program that services low-income, disabled adults who do not qualify for Medicaid. *Housing and Essential Needs Support Program coverage should be extended in the 2014 Legislative Session to Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Treatment and Support Act recipients who are in recovery.*

### **Economic Justice - Temporary Assistance to Needy Families:**

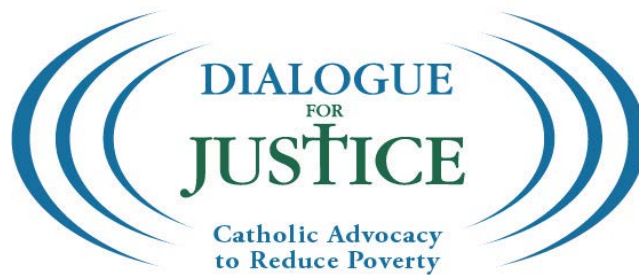
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) is an important part of our state's safety net for housing, food, items for children's care and services. There are 56,000 families with 108,785 children who are TANF recipients in Washington State. The average family has 1.7 children. The average amount of time families are on TANF is 28.8 months, with 49% of families on TANF less than a year and never needing the benefit again. Only 5% of families stay on TANF for 5 years or longer. *Restore the 15% TANF grant cut, provide access to services for TANF families, and support no reduction in the 5 year time limit.*
- To be eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), a family must have resources no greater than \$1,000.00. The benefits are based on family size and income. Prior to February 2011, a family of three with no income received \$562.00 a month; since that date they only receive \$478.00, a drop of 15%. *Restore the 15% TANF grant cut, provide access to services for TANF families, and support no reduction in the 5 year time limit.*
- Legal immigrants continue to face a five-year waiting period before they can apply for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The Catholic community has long advocated the availability of basic necessities to all those in need, regardless of their race, creed, ethnic origin or nationality. *Restore the 15% TANF grant cut, provide access to services for TANF families, and support no reduction in the 5 year time limit.*



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### Healthcare – Implementation of the Affordable Care Act:

- In Washington State, it is estimated that well over half a million people do not have health insurance, and these numbers are rising. The federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) enables all U.S. citizens to have access to health care coverage, protect consumers, reduce costs, and improve the quality and efficiency of the health care system. Implementation of the major reforms will occur January 1, 2014. *Funding to provide outreach services to assist in enrolling the uninsured should be increased in the 2014 Legislative Session.*
- There will be several changes on January 1, 2014 with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA): no one can be denied health insurance if they are sick; all health plans will cover essential health benefits; individuals may keep the insurance plan they have or purchase one through the Health Benefit Exchange; most people must have health insurance or be subject to fines; there is funding available to help pay for coverage for those meeting income eligibility; and states have the option to expand Medicaid coverage. *Funding to provide outreach services to assist in enrolling the uninsured should be increased in the 2014 Legislative Session.*
- The “Washington Healthplanfinder” is our state’s Health Benefit Exchange that provides an easy and accessible online place to compare and enroll in high quality plans, and to access important cost-savings information. Enrollment begins October 1, 2013, and coverage begins January 1, 2014. *Funding to provide outreach services to assist in enrolling the uninsured should be increased in the 2014 Legislative Session.*
- The Affordable Care Act (ACA) ensures that all health plans offer a comprehensive package of benefits known as “essential health benefits.” These must include items and services in ten difference categories: ambulatory patient services, emergency services, hospitalization, maternity and newborn care, mental health and substance abuse services including behavioral health treatment, prescription drugs, rehabilitative and habilitative services and devices, laboratory services, preventive wellness services and chronic disease management, and pediatric services including oral and vision care. *Funding to provide outreach services to assist in enrolling the uninsured should be increased in the 2014 Legislative Session.*
- The Affordable Care Act (ACA) includes federal funding to expand Medicaid to 133% of the federal poverty level. In the 2013 Legislative Session, the Washington State Legislature chose to expand Medicaid coverage. The state will continue to receive a 50% match for those currently in the program, and will receive a 100% match for the newly eligible population from 2014 through 2016. After 2016, the federal match will be gradually reduced. *Funding to provide outreach services to assist in enrolling the uninsured should be increased in the 2014 Legislative Session.*



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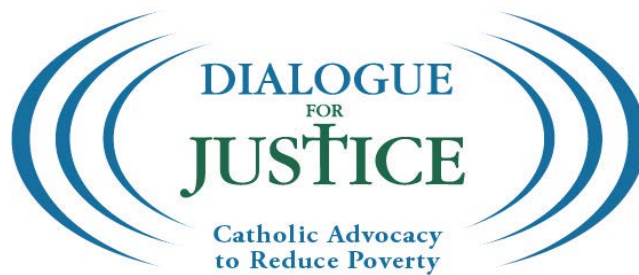
### Immigrants – Comprehensive Immigration Reform:

- Washington State is part of a national trend in immigration and is classified by researchers as one of the “new growth states.” From 1990-2007, the number of persons born outside of the U.S. residing in Washington increased by 147%. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Washington has approximately 854,239 residents born outside of the U.S. or about 12.7% of the state’s population. Washington’s immigrants are extremely diverse, coming from Latin America (31.5%) and Asia (39.6%). Approximately 230,000 undocumented immigrants were living in Washington State in 2010. *Funding for needed programs and services to immigrants and refugees should be maintained in the 2014 Legislative Session.*
- In their 2011 Immigration Myths & Facts, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce compiled these facts:
  - Immigrants do not typically compete for jobs with native-born workers and immigrants create jobs as entrepreneurs, workers and tax payers;
  - Undocumented immigrants pay billions of dollars in taxes each year, often for benefits they will never receive;
  - Undocumented immigrants are not eligible for federal public benefit programs, and legal immigrants face stringent eligibility restrictions;
  - Today’s immigrants are buying homes and becoming U.S. citizens with integration and upward mobility most apparent among the children of immigrants;
  - Immigration does not cause crime rates to rise and immigrants have lower incarceration rates than native-born Americans.

*Legislation eliminating racial profiling in the criminal justice system should be enacted in the 2014 Legislative Session.*

- The Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Washington, is a privately run facility and has become the fourth largest federal immigration detention center in the United States since it was built in 2003. Approximately, 83,000 detainees, mostly undocumented immigrants with minor or no criminal records have been held at the Center, with almost 52,000 sent back to their country of origin. *Access to identification cards and drivers’ licenses should be preserved in the 2014 Legislative Session.*
- The U.S. Senate passed the Border Security, Economic Competitiveness, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013 which now is before the House. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops with the Bishops of Washington State have stated that comprehensive immigration reform legislation must be improved in the following areas:
  1. The path to citizenship should be made more affordable and accessible for undocumented immigrants and this families;
  2. Family unity should be enhanced in the legal immigration system;
  3. A viable and robust program for low-skilled workers to enter and work legally should be included, with appropriate worker protections;
  4. Due process protections, including alternatives to detention, should be restored to the system; and
  5. The root causes of migration should be addressed.

*The state Dream Act should become public policy in the 2014 Legislative Session.*



## 2013 Legislative Priority Issues - Poverty Reduction Themes Bulletin Inserts

### Housing Trust Fund - African American Community Dedicated Funding:

- The Housing Trust Fund (HTF) was created in 1986 in recognition of the need to provide resources for the development of low-income housing. The HTF is an integral part of nearly all affordable housing developments in the state and leverages funding from a broad spectrum of governmental and private sources, multiplying the effects of each state funding dollar by more than four to one. This has resulted in over \$3 billion in private and public sector support. The HTF is the foundation of more than 32,000 affordable and supportive housing units, including farm worker housing. *Supplemental funding for the Housing Trust Fund in the capital budget should be allocated in the 2014 Legislative Session.*
- The state Housing Trust Fund provides resources for the development of low-income housing. Dedicated funding of Housing Trust Fund resources to the African American community would allow this community to develop, own and manage low-income housing. Centering state policy on this community will foster well-being to combat poverty through effective and sustainable community economic development. *Supplemental funding for the Housing Trust Fund in the capital budget should be allocated in the 2014 Legislative Session with dedicated funding for housing development in the African American community.*