

Catholic Citizenship News Archive 2015

Catholic Citizenship News is the e-mail newsletter from the Diocese of Manchester Office of Public Policy. To learn more about CCN or to subscribe visit www.catholicnh.org/ccn.

Registration Now Open for Catholic Day at the State House

Feb 23, 2015



Catholic Day at the State House Registration Now Open

March 18, 2015

8:00 am Registration at Holiday Inn, 172 North Main Street, Concord

8:45 am – 2:00 pm Program

Join Bishop Peter A. Libasci and Catholics throughout the Granite State to learn how you can make a difference in our state by advocating for justice and the common good.

- Opening Prayer led by Bishop Peter A. Libasci
- Legislative Briefing from Robert E. Dunn, Jr., Lobbyist for the Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester

- Opportunities to visit the State House and to attend Issue Presentations on pressing topics facing concerned Catholics and legislators
- Lunch address by Hon. Donna Sytek, Former Speaker of the House of Representatives

[CLICK HERE](#) to download our flyer with more information.

This event is free, but registration is required.

Register online today at catholicday2015.eventbrite.com

or call Kimberly Low at (603) 663-0131.

Additional information is available at catholicnh.org/CatholicDay

ACTION ALERT: Two Bills Scheduled for Votes Next Week - Your Help is Needed on Assisted Suicide Study and Contraception Notice



Feb 27, 2015

Your help is needed on two bills scheduled for votes next week. Learn more about the issues below and contact your legislators today. Your voice can have an impact on these two bills.

Contraception Notice on Employment Applications

Under SB 42, employers providing health insurance coverage through a self-funded health plan that do not provide coverage for all contraceptive drugs and devices or their generic equivalents approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration must provide a “prominently displayed” notice of their coverage to applicants for employment on a written employment application or separate notice form with the application. The notice must specify which contraceptive drugs and devices are not included in the insurance coverage. SB 42’s stated intent is to require employers to specify the details of contraceptive coverage to prospective employees, but based upon the text of the bill and testimony at the hearing, this measure clearly targets employers with religious objections to providing contraceptive coverage.

We are not aware of any other New Hampshire or federal law requiring private employers to include a notice of anything on employment applications. But if SB 42 becomes law, when individuals apply for jobs with Catholic parishes, schools, or institutions in New Hampshire, their first introduction to our ministries will be a “prominently displayed” notice that the diocesan insurance plan does not cover contraception or abortifacients.

As a State, we have been reluctant to place restrictions on employers requiring these types of burdens – additional paperwork or particular forms at the time of hire. It is troubling that SB 42 would create this first mandate that is clearly aimed at employers that decline to offer coverage that includes abortion or other life-denying drugs or devices that violate their moral and religious convictions.

The Senate Commerce Committee voted 4-1 to recommend the Senate pass SB 42, and the full Senate is scheduled to vote on the bill on Thursday, March 5. Contact your senator today to oppose SB 42. [CLICK HERE to find the contact information for your senator.](#)



Bill to Study Doctor-Prescribed Suicide

HB 151 has been introduced to study “end of life decisions” including “aid in dying laws.” A very similar bill passed the House last year but was defeated in the Senate. In 2013, a similar bill to study “death with dignity” passed the House and Senate but was vetoed by Governor Hassan. The House also had the opportunity to vote on three other bills related to assisted suicide last year, including a bill to legalize doctor-prescribed suicide, but all three were defeated by wide margins. The House, Senate, and Governor have made it clear there is no interest in legalizing or studying this issue.

Some have argued this bill merely studies physician-assisted suicide, and there is no harm in studying an issue. Passing this bill would send the message that suicide has a place in our society, however, and suicide is a terrible tragedy we should work to prevent. The House Judiciary Committee voted 9-7 to recommend the House pass HB 151, and the full House is scheduled to vote on the bill on Wednesday, March 4. [Read our testimony](#) and contact your representatives to oppose HB 151. [CLICK HERE to find the contact information for your representatives.](#)



Catholic Day at the State House

Join Bishop Peter A. Libasci and Catholics from around the Granite State for Catholic Day at the State House in Concord on March 18. The program will include a legislative briefing on the 2015 session; opportunities to visit the State House; issue presentations on pressing topics; and a lunch address by Hon. Donna Sytek, former speaker of the New Hampshire House of Representatives. This event is free and will include lunch, but registration is required and capacity is limited. Click here www.catholicnh.org/CatholicDay to learn more and register today.

New Hampshire Legislature in Session

Apr 23, 2015

The New Hampshire Legislature recently marked what is known as “Crossover” – the deadline by which the House and Senate must complete all hearings and votes. Bills that have passed the House have been sent to the Senate, and bills that have passed the Senate have been sent to the House.

We have been testifying at the State House and want to provide you with a summary of the legislation we have been following as well as notes on how you can take action. Click on the subjects below to read about the bills we have been tracking under each of these topics.

[Abortion](#)

[Anti-Sharia](#)

[Assisted Suicide](#) - Action Needed by April 30th

[Budget](#)

[Contraception Notice Requirements](#)

[Education Tax Credit](#)

[Fetal Homicide](#)

[Labor](#)

[Landlord-Tenant](#)

[Taxing Nonprofits](#)

[Thank Your Elected Officials](#)

[How to Contact Your Elected Officials](#)

Abortion

Buffer Zone: HB 403 seeks to repeal the New Hampshire abortion clinic buffer zone law consistent with the ruling of the United States Supreme Court. [Read our testimony](#) for more information.

Many of you will recall that last year, the Legislature passed a bill creating a buffer zone around abortion clinics. The Governor signed this bill into law, and this buffer zone allows only certain individuals to be present within a designated area around abortion clinics. While an employee of an abortion clinic is allowed to be present for the purpose of escorting individuals, an individual who wishes to speak with a woman to offer an alternative to abortion is silenced. New Hampshire modeled its buffer zone law after a similar statute in Massachusetts. After the New Hampshire bill was signed by the Governor, the United States Supreme Court unanimously struck down the Massachusetts law as unconstitutional in the case of *McCullen v. Coakley*. And within weeks of the United States Supreme Court decision, the federal court in New Hampshire ruled that the New Hampshire buffer zone law “is materially indistinguishable from the Massachusetts statute the Supreme Court invalidated in *McCullen v. Coakley*.” HB 403 seeks to repeal the New Hampshire abortion clinic buffer zone law consistent with the ruling of the United States Supreme Court. The House Judiciary Committee heard compelling testimony on HB 403 from a number of people who seek to offer women an alternative to abortion in a peaceful and nonconfrontational manner. The Senate Judiciary Committee is expected to vote on the bill in the very near future and will make a recommendation to the full Senate. Contact the members of the [Judiciary Committee](#) and your own senator to urge them to vote OUGHT TO PASS on HB 403.

Abortion Statistics: Currently, New Hampshire is one of only three states in the country that does not collect statistics about abortions. HB 629 was introduced to require the Department of Health and Human Services to publish an annual report based on an aggregate summary of the information obtained about abortions performed in New Hampshire. The bill specifically includes safeguards to maintain the privacy of individual information. Members of the House Health, Human Services & Elderly Affairs Committee made an effort after the conclusion of last session to study this issue, and members of both parties worked to agree on language that would collect this data and protect individual information. Both the Division of Vital Records and Department of Health and Human Services appeared at the hearing on HB 629 in support of this bill. [Read our testimony](#) for more information. Unfortunately, this bill was retained in the committee again to further refine its terms. Proponents of the effort to retain the bill in committee have said they truly intend to undertake further work on this bill, so we will continue to monitor HB 629.

Anti-Sharia

HB 461 was introduced to protect citizens from the application of foreign laws when the application will result in the violation of certain rights set forth in the United States or New Hampshire Constitution. This law is unnecessary as New Hampshire courts already are compelled to uphold the protections of the state and federal constitutions. Unfortunately, the true intent behind this bill was revealed when it was first introduced and its initial title was “prohibiting the use or application of Sharia laws in state courts or public schools.” Over the past several years, these so-called “Anti-Sharia” bills have been introduced in other states seeking to restrict or prohibit, in varying degrees, state courts’ use of Sharia law (the body of Islamic law).

The proponents of HB 461 brought forward this measure to address growing concern about the actions of a very small percentage of those who practice the Muslim faith. And we agree the increase in intolerance and violence raise legitimate concerns. But in the United States, we have existing protections already in place so that our courts are compelled to uphold the protections of the state and federal constitutions. And if we already have adequate protection in place, passing HB 461 could be viewed as discriminatory by the vast majority of Muslims who practice a peaceful religion.

Although the intent of HB 461 was to ban Sharia law in state courts, it was written broadly to ban the application of any foreign law. Due to this broad language, the law would apply not only to Sharia law but also to the application of Jewish law known as Halakhah. And like other religious organizations, the Roman Catholic Church has a set of ecclesiastical laws, the Code of Canon Law, that sets forth, among other things, certain rights, obligations, governance, and judicial processes of the Church. As the Code of Canon Law was promulgated by the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Rome, Italy, it could be argued the Code of Canon Law is a foreign law that cannot be applied in the courts of New Hampshire, thus allowing the courts to decide matters involving religious policy and doctrine.

The House Judiciary Committee voted 12-1 to recommend the full House defeat HB 461. The House tabled HB 461, and it will not be submitted for further consideration during this session.

Assisted Suicide

HB 151 has been introduced to study “end-of-life decisions” including “aid in dying laws.” Another similar bill passed the House last year but was defeated in the Senate. A similar bill to study “death with dignity” passed the House and Senate in 2013 but was vetoed by Governor Hassan. The House also had the opportunity to vote on three other bills related to assisted suicide last year, including a bill to legalize doctor-prescribed suicide, but defeated all three by wide margins. The House, Senate, and Governor have made clear there is no interest in legalizing or studying this issue.

Some have argued this bill merely studies physician-assisted suicide, and there is no harm in studying an issue. Instead of making the point that suicide is a terrible tragedy we should work to prevent, passing this bill would send the message that suicide actually has a place in our society. **The House passed HB 151, and the Senate is scheduled to vote on this bill on April 30.** [Read our testimony](#) and contact your senator to oppose HB 151.

Budget

In January, [Bishop Libasci issued an op-ed](#) calling on Governor Hassan and legislators to start – not end – the budget process with the needs of the most vulnerable in New Hampshire. A budget proposal approved by the House is now under review in the Senate, and the budget will dominate the rest of the session. We are monitoring the budget process closely, and we are especially focusing on proposed cuts in a number of desperately critical areas including nursing homes, mental health services, and homeless shelters.

Contraception Notice Requirements

SB 42 proposed that employers providing health insurance coverage through self-funded health plans that do not provide coverage for all contraceptive drugs and devices or their generic equivalents approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration would be required to provide a “prominently displayed” notice of their coverage to applicants for employment on a written employment application or a separate notice form with the application. The notice must specify which contraceptive drugs and devices are not included in the insurance coverage. SB 42’s stated intent is to require employers to specify the details of contraceptive coverage to prospective employees, but based upon the text of the bill and testimony at the hearing, this measure clearly targets employers with religious objections to providing contraceptive coverage.

We are not aware of any other New Hampshire or federal law requiring private employers to include a notice of anything on employment applications. But under the terms of SB 42, when individuals apply for jobs with Catholic parishes, schools, or institutions in New Hampshire, their first introduction to our ministries would be a “prominently displayed” notice that the diocesan insurance plan does not cover contraception or abortifacients.

As a State, we have been reluctant to place restrictions on employers requiring these types of burdens – additional paperwork or particular forms at the time of hire. It is troubling SB 42 was introduced to create this first mandate that clearly was aimed at employers that decline to offer coverage that includes abortion or other life-denying drugs or devices that violate their moral and religious convictions.

The Senate Commerce Committee voted 4-1 to recommend the Senate pass SB 42. The full Senate reached a 12-12 tie on this measure and then voted to table the bill. No further action will be taken on SB 42 during this session. [Read our testimony](#) and [please thank the senators who opposed SB 42](#), especially if your own senator is listed.

Education Tax Credit

In 2012, a new education tax credit program became law in New Hampshire, allowing low- and middle-income students to receive an average scholarship of \$2,500 per year if they choose to attend a nonpublic school or under other circumstances. Businesses fund the scholarships and in return, they receive an 85% tax credit on either the business profits tax and/or the business enterprise tax.

In its initial years, the education tax credit program has faced several hurdles. A lawsuit was filed at the time the program became effective, challenging the program as unconstitutional. Last year, the New Hampshire Supreme Court dismissed the case based upon the standing of the individuals who brought suit. In January of this year when businesses finally could start making donations under the education tax credit program without the shadow of litigation, SB 204 was introduced to repeal the program.

The education tax credit program is not a public vs. private school issue. Parents should have the opportunity to determine the school that best meets the needs of their children, whether that school is public or nonpublic. School choice empowers families to find the best educational environment for each student.

While some claim the education tax credit program will have a negative impact on local school district budgets, the expected loss in state aid to local school districts is capped to be small, and the reduced state per-pupil aid will be much less than the cost to educate a student in the public school. And while some students may choose to leave a public school district to attend a nonpublic school, the district only will lose the state funding that would have been received for those students and not the local property tax to be paid by the parents, leaving the district with the majority of the funding for a student no longer in the district's school system.

Thanks to vocal advocacy by families of students attending and interested in attending nonpublic schools, the Senate defeated SB 204 by a vote of 14-10. [Please thank the senators who opposed SB 204.](#)

Fetal Homicide

In 2009, the New Hampshire Supreme Court heard the Lamy case, a criminal case concerning an intoxicated driver who struck a car driven by a woman who was pregnant. The child was delivered prematurely and died two weeks later as a result of the injuries sustained in the collision. The Court overturned the conviction of the driver for causing the death of the child because current New Hampshire law does not support a conviction for the child's death. In the Lamy decision, Justice James Duggan wrote, "Should the legislature find this result in this case as unfortunate as we do, it should follow the lead of many other states and revisit the homicide statutes as they pertain to the fetus." HB 560 and SB 40 have been introduced to include unborn children in the current homicide laws. The House is expected to vote on SB 40 in the very near future, so contact your representatives to support SB 40. In addition, the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) is expected to vote on HB 560 soon and will make a recommendation to the full Senate. Contact the members of the Committee and your senator to support HB 560.

Labor

Upholding the dignity of work and the rights of workers is one of the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching. Since Pope Leo XIII issued *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, every Pope has reinforced the teachings of the Church on the dignity of work and rights of workers.

With these teachings in mind, the Diocese opposed two so-called "right-to-work" bills this session for several reasons, including that they would unnecessarily restrict the freedom of unions and employers to

bargain over substantive issues. The vote on SB 107 in the Senate resulted in a tie, and then the bill was tabled. No further action will be taken on SB 107 during this session. HB 658 passed the House, and the Senate is scheduled to vote on the bill on April 30. You can [read our testimony on HB 658](#), then please contact your senator to oppose HB 658.

Landlord-Tenant

Under current New Hampshire law, landlords may charge one month's rent plus a security deposit of up to one month's rent. HB 269 proposed to allow landlords also to collect last month's rent, increasing the upfront costs to access a rental home, and creating barriers for many families to find rental housing. This significant obstacle would have increased the number of New Hampshire families experiencing homelessness at a time when our communities are not sufficiently addressing the needs of the current families who are homeless. We were pleased that the House defeated HB 269 by a vote of 187-167.

Taxing Nonprofits

HB 569 proposed to subject certain nonprofit organizations to the state business enterprise tax. It is estimated Catholic Charities would pay a tax of more than \$200,000 under the HB 569 proposal. The Catholic Church is the largest non-governmental provider of charitable services in New Hampshire, and the continuing ability to provide these services would suffer if HB 569 becomes law. Catholic Charities operates the New Hampshire Food Bank, immigration and refugee services, St. Charles Children's Home, and adoption programs. Catholic Charities also maintains ten local offices from Berlin and Littleton to Nashua and Salem and from Keene to Rochester. These offices offer Parish and Community Services with an emphasis on reducing poverty, aid for the vulnerable and marginalized, fostering awareness, and systemic change. And Catholic Charities is not alone. HB 569 would impact other nonprofit organizations providing critical care to New Hampshire citizens in need. Passing this bill will decrease the level of service New Hampshire nonprofits are able to provide, thereby increasing the financial pressure on local welfare departments as well as state agencies. HB 569 has been retained in committee and while no further action will be taken on this bill this session, it is expected the committee will study HB 569. Watch Catholic Citizenship News for future alerts if HB 569 is recommended for further action.

Thank Your Elected Officials

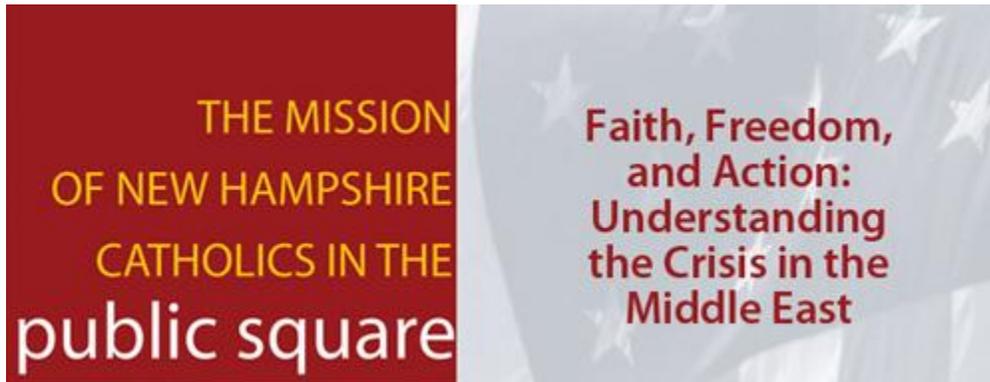
In New Hampshire, state legislators are paid \$200 per two-year session. They rarely are thanked for the countless hours they dedicate to public service, let alone for their votes on bills requiring difficult decisions. [CLICK HERE](#) for the link to search the voting records for your elected officials on bills with a roll call vote.

How to Contact Your Elected Officials

[CLICK HERE](#) to find the contact information for your elected officials or call (603) 271-3661.

7th Annual Catholics in the Public Square to Address Crisis in the Middle East

Sep 21, 2015



Register Today – Space Filling Quickly

The stories of thousands of families fleeing religious persecution in the Middle East have deeply affected us. Their stories compel us but also leave us overwhelmed at times and very often wondering what we can do to help.

On November 21 from 9:00 a.m. to Noon, the Diocese of Manchester will host the 7th annual Catholics in the Public Square event at the New Hampshire Institute of Politics at Saint Anselm College to address the growing crisis in the Middle East. Dr. Thomas Farr, a leading authority on international religious freedom, will be the keynote speaker. Dr. Farr will review the religious persecution in the Middle East and discuss the implications for religious freedom in the region and worldwide. Rev. Andrew Nelson will share why Catholics should be concerned about religious persecution, and attendees will receive an update from Catholic Relief Services on efforts to work with refugees of religious persecution and what can be done to advocate for change.

This event is free of charge, but advance registration is required. Please join us to learn about the crisis and find out what you can do to make a difference in the lives of those who are suffering.

CLICK HERE to register online or contact Kimberly Low at klow@rcbm.org or 603-663-0131

Download Flyer (pdf)

Tell Your Members of Congress and Governor Hassan to Welcome Syrian Refugees

Nov 20, 2015



Background

Unfortunately, in response to the shock of the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, a number of elected officials, including governors and members of Congress, have called for the United States to deny entry to those seeking refuge from religious persecution and brutal violence in Syria. Most of these officials, including New Hampshire Governor Hassan, express concern about the screening process used to vet refugees for resettlement. However, before refugees are admitted within our borders, the United States has, for years, conducted a rigorous screening process that includes multiple interviews and multiple security checks over the course of 18-24 months. Denying entry to Syrian refugees could drastically impact the lives of innocent men, women, and children, who are seeking safety from the terrible genocide in their homeland. It is critical that public officials hear from their constituents, including Catholics, that we as a country must continue its life-saving tradition to welcome refugees from Syria and other violent areas of the world after a thorough screening process.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read Bishop Libasci's Statement on the Syrian Refugee Crisis.

[CLICK HERE](#) to meet the people everyone's talking about: Syrian Refugee Stories from Catholic Relief Services

How to Take Action

Please contact your elected officials in Congress and Governor Hassan to tell them that the United States should welcome Syrian refugees who have completed the screening process and that you oppose efforts to reject Syrian refugees.

Call your United States Representative and Senators at 1-866-961-4293

Contact Governor Hassan at (603) 271-2121

Talking Points

Below are some helpful points you may want to include when contacting your elected officials, but it is far more effective to share your story and why your community wants to welcome Syrian refugees.

- The United States government handpicks the refugees who resettle here, and refugees are the most thoroughly vetted people to come to the United States.
 - All refugees resettled in the United States undergo rigorous security screenings by the Department of Homeland Security, FBI, Department of Defense, and multiple intelligence agencies, including biometric checks, forensic testing, medical screenings, and in-person interviews. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information about the vetting process.
 - It is the responsibility of Catholic Christians and all people of good will to welcome those who travel here fleeing persecution in other countries, including refugees seeking asylum from Syria.
 - Catholic Charities New Hampshire is not involved in bringing Syrian refugees to the United States, but provides assistance to new arrivals including immigration counseling and legal representation. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.
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