



Arizona Catholic Conference

Diocese of Gallup • Diocese of Phoenix • Diocese of Tucson

Ronald M. Johnson, Jr.
Executive Director

ARIZONA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE BISHOPS' STATEMENT ON 2011 LEGISLATIVE CONCERNS February 22, 2011

As Bishops of the Arizona Catholic Conference (ACC), our thoughts and prayers are with all of our elected leaders during these difficult times. It is not easy to be a public servant, and this responsibility is much more difficult when tough decisions need to be made on important public policy matters impacting people throughout the State of Arizona.

While there are certainly a number of challenges to be faced in this year's legislative session, we believe that these are times that call for leaders to come forward and demonstrate selfless service.

We are most grateful for all of the tremendous leadership and legislative accomplishments that have been achieved in recent years with respect to the protection of unborn human life, religious freedom, marriage, and school choice laws. We look forward to continuing advancement in each of these areas.

This year, in fulfilling our responsibility to address the moral dimensions of public policy, we are strongly advocating for several bills for the protection of unborn human life, including bills that would require a woman to be offered a chance to view an ultrasound of her unborn child before an abortion (HB 2416 and SB 1246) and bills aimed at eliminating all government-created funding for organizations performing abortions (HB 2384 and SB 1265).

We also are advocates for efforts related to marriage, including legislation (SB 1188) that would create a mere preference for married couples in matters of adoption.

We want to help families by expanding opportunities for parents to be able to send their children to the school that best fits their needs, and therefore are endorsing legislative enhancements to both the individual and corporate tuition (scholarship) tax credit programs (HB 2581 and SB 1312) to achieve this goal.

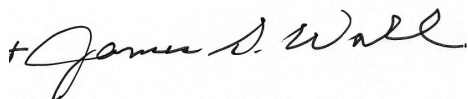
While there has been significant positive development on the vital issues mentioned above, we have been and continue to be very concerned about legislation related to immigration and, in general, about the tone of dialogue and discourse about immigration. We are acutely aware that there are no easy answers to the enormous immigration problems facing our country, but it is imperative that the human dignity of all be respected as our nation addresses these problems.

Of immediate concern to us is legislation that would require hospitals to check the citizenship of all their patients (SB 1405) and that would require elementary school students to provide proof of their legal status (SB 1611). Additionally, other bills (SB 1308 and SB 1309) propose to eliminate birthright citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

We strongly believe that these bills, if enacted, would only create more problems for innocent and vulnerable populations in Arizona while creating a distraction from meaningful immigration reform. After all, it is only through substantive immigration reform at the federal level that these problems can be adequately addressed.

Finally, we express our concern about our State's budget crisis – one of the worst in our nation. Eliminating the huge deficit requires our elected officials to make difficult choices. As they face these choices, it is important for our elected officials to be vigilant on behalf of the common good and to never forget those who are the most vulnerable and who often do not have a voice during the budget process.

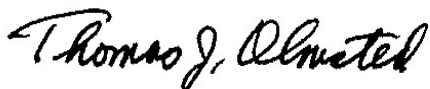
The job of an elected official is one that requires great sacrifice and the ability to set aside one's own needs to focus on those of the community at large and those in most need. We fervently pray for our leaders during these challenging times, for their families and staff, and for all who are impacted by their important decisions.



Most Rev. James S. Wall
Bishop of Gallup



Most Rev. Gerald F. Kicanas
Bishop of Tucson



Most Rev. Thomas J. Olmsted
Bishop of Phoenix



Most Rev. Eduardo A. Nevarés
Auxiliary Bishop of Phoenix