



DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON · DIOCESE OF RICHMOND
Representing the Virginia Catholic Bishops in Public Policy Matters

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Virginia Catholic Conference Sets Legislative Agenda, Catholic Advocacy Day

The Virginia Catholic Conference, which is focusing its state advocacy efforts on issues involving life, justice and the family when the 2011 General Assembly convenes January 12, is inviting Catholics to join it on Richmond's Capitol Hill to lobby for the common good.

The Catholic Conference, which represents the Catholic bishops of the dioceses of Arlington and Richmond in public policy matters, set Thursday, Jan. 27, 2011, as Catholic Advocacy Day, when Catholics and Conference Advocacy Network members from throughout the Commonwealth are invited to pray, learn more about issues, and visit their legislators' offices to advocate on these issues.

The Conference, established in 2005 by Arlington Bishop Paul S. Loverde and Richmond Bishop Francis X. DiLorenzo, will continue to focus its advocacy efforts on issues involving respect for life, social and economic justice, preservation of marriage and parental choice in education. The Conference has posted its agenda for the session on the organization website at www.vacatholic.org.

Catholic Advocacy Day provides Conference network members with a significant opportunity to practice faithful citizenship as well as ensure their legislators represent them on issues that have an impact on the common good, said Virginia Catholic Conference Executive Director Jeffrey Caruso.

“Engaging in faithful citizenship is part and parcel to exercising our baptismal responsibility,” Caruso said. “Bringing issues to the public square --- on behalf of the common good --- is part of practicing one's faith.”

And, that input by interested citizens makes a difference to government officials.

“Constituent input is a key factor legislators consider when making decisions. They weigh it very heavily, and it makes a big difference in the outcome,” Caruso said.

Catholic Advocacy Day is a Virginia tradition that pre-dates the Virginia Catholic Conference, but the Conference has hosted the day and watched its numbers grow every year since its inception. Last year the event attracted about 250 participants, Caruso said.

The day begins with sign in and coffee at 8:30 AM, and includes prayer, and remarks by both bishops. Executive director Caruso and Christopher Ramos, the Conference’s associate director, will explain legislative bills toward which the Conference is directing its efforts. Participants will then caucus with other Catholics from their state senate district to discuss how they will present their concerns to their legislators. Following visits to the legislators’ offices, the day will conclude at 1:30 PM.

The VCC will set up constituent-legislator appointments for those who register for Advocacy Day before Jan. 13. Catholic Advocacy Day registration is available on the Conference website at www.vacatholic.org. A \$10 fee covers materials and lunch.

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