

**Knoxville DCCW Legislative Commission Report, Patty Johnson, Chair**

**Board Meeting, January 6, 2019**

**“Among our tasks as witnesses to the love of Christ is that of giving a voice to the cry of the poor.” Pope Francis**

**You have spoken out and there is some good news of approved legislation by Congress.**

**First Step Act:** Signed into law in late December was the First Step Act geared toward helping to integrate prisoners into society after they serve their sentence. The new law is called a great step in the correction of justice. It will improve the access of faith based and non-profit organizations to the prisons. The law will provide education and training programs to allow prisoners to better themselves. It will reunite them with their families earlier and to have the skills necessary to contribute to their communities. The USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development and Catholic Charities USA have welcomed the passage of the First Step Act praising congress by releasing a full statement of response which can be read on the USCCB web site. (usccb.org)

**Catholic Mobilizing Network:** A truly monumental milestone in the life of CMN’s work to end capital punishment was brought about in early August when Pope Francis made a historic revision to the Catechism, which declared the death penalty “inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.” A dynamic online toolkit, “Pathways to Restoration” can be utilized by visiting [catholicmobilizing.org/pathways](http://catholicmobilizing.org/pathways). The toolkit offers a starting point in the journey to becoming agents of restoration with resources for learning and discerning next steps and tools for action. In early Spring, Liturgical Press will publish “Harm, Healing and Human Dignity”, a restorative justice faith formation guide from CMN geared toward parishes, individuals and small groups. Through CMN’s Mercy in Action Project, supporters have signed more than 21,000 letters and petitions resulting in 16 stays of execution and 3 sentence commutations.

**Farm Bill:** US Congress overwhelmingly approved a 5-year Farm Bill that protected SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and it is expected that the President will sign it into law. The Farm Bill addresses agriculture, nutrition, forest and conservation policy. It removes stricter work requirements for people receiving food benefits, school lunches, and has dropped eligibility changes that could have cut benefits to millions. The Bill extends a very necessary forest management program. It provides farmers and ranchers much needed certainty and predictability.

**Patients’ Rights Council:** Assisted-suicide activists are stepping up their efforts to transform the crime of assisted suicide into a medical treatment in every state in the country. We need to do all we can to prevent them from being successful. To make a difference in fighting the doctor-prescribed suicide, speak with people at work, at school, at church, on social media and

engage them in discussion. The PRC can help you increase your ability to effectively communicate by offering you a “Words that Work” training seminar in your area. Seminar participants will be led through the arguments of the doctor-prescribed suicide movement and will become familiar with persuasive approaches to communicate effective opposition to it. If you would like more information about how you can schedule one of these seminars, please call Patients’ Rights Council at 800-958-5678 or 740-282-3810. When calling ask for a free copy of their “Everyday Survival Tips” which contains information on knowing your rights about signing documents in a health care setting, understanding the necessity of a carefully written durable power of attorney for health care and determining where your doctor stands on doctor-prescribed suicide.

**USCCB Action Center:** Go to this site to view USCCB current action alerts and to sign up for future action alerts so that you can contact your elected representatives regarding upcoming legislation. For Action Alerts from USCCB.org related to migration and refugee issues visit USCCB Justice for Immigrants campaign.

**Respect Life:** Join USCCB’s “9 Days for Life” from January 14<sup>th</sup> -22<sup>nd</sup> by going to [usccb.org/9days](http://usccb.org/9days). You may subscribe by e-mail on the web site or by text by texting 9 DAYS to 55000. You will receive each day a different intention accompanied by simple prayers, a short reflection suggested actions and related information.

Be a part of the Pro-Life activities on the anniversary of Roe vs Wade in your area during the month of January by prayer, fasting and action.

**A Pro-Life Prayer:** God of all goodness, you have entrusted us with the gift of life. Help us to appreciate that gift from the first moments of conception to the last breaths of old age. Send your strength to all those who defend the unborn, the weak, and the dying against attempts to cut short their lives. May your Holy Spirit touch the hearts of those who are tempted to choose the way of death rather than life. Grant that your people may always be a sign of your love in the world. Amen (Creative communications for the Parish)

**Prayers are answered:** Remember always to pray for elected officials and those affected by their work.

**Patty Johnson, Chair KDCCW Legislative Commission**