

Knoxville Diocesan Council of Catholic Women Legislative Commission Report.
April, 2020 Patty Johnson Chair.

We are experiencing very different times now as the COVID-19 virus pandemic is looming before all of us. We have been asked to “Shelter at Home” for several weeks now as an effort to slow the spread of this deadly virus and yet many must carry on with their work and responsibilities. Our Legislators are among those working for us to find ways to protect us and to ease the burden of this economic shutdown.

I have received many emails from my Senators, Representatives, and Governor telling of these efforts and have responded as best possible. I urge you to stay in contact with your Legislators to stay knowledgeable of these efforts and also to pray for them and for all of those who are in such desperate need during this time whether from illness, loss of work, difficulties at home, or in grave financial need.

Our Federal Government has just issued 8 million dollars in stimulus checks to help relieve some of the financial burden that people are dealing with now. Applications are being taken for the Paycheck Protection Program which can help small businesses with less than 500 employees cover 8 weeks of payroll costs, most mortgage interest, rent and utilities.

Economic Advisors to the President are saying “There is a general recognition that we need something big to get some juice back into the economy. The stimulus checks are just the beginning.”

Please use the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops web site as a resource for Legislative Issues. (usccb.org). There is a new Pastoral Aid on Civil Dialogue available, “Civilize It – Dignity Beyond the Debate” which can be found in the library of Faithful Citizenship materials on the USCCB website.

The Chairmen of the US Bishops Commission on Domestic Justice and Human Development, Pro Life Activities and Doctrine urge all people to always uphold Human Dignity in response to COVID-19.

In the midst of this global pandemic that knows no borders nor color of skin, now is the time to come together --U.S. born citizens, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees--to work through this challenging time. When one person is at greater risk of COVID-19, we are all at greater risk.

From the Franciscan Action Network this message comes; “It is imperative that Members of Congress and the administration hear from constituents and people of faith

on including all people in all COVID-19 recovery plans to keep families and communities together in this crisis.”

The Tennessee Catholic Public Policy Commission advocates for Social Reform and participates in the Tennessee Legislative Process. Their staff have prepared Position Papers on issues of concern to the Church and to the State of Tennessee. Go to their web site (tnccp.org) to learn how they are communicating with policy makers about how our Catholic Social Teachings are a part of Faithful Citizenship. When we collaborate with public policy leaders, we can make an impact on issues that concern us such as Homelessness, Human Life, Services for the Disabled, Health Care, Children’s Services, Immigration Reform, Education and Environment. Surely, your local CCW groups would be interested in the Position Papers on some of these issues. You can bring them the Catholic truth by utilizing this information. The three Tennessee Bishops and appointed members in each Diocese serve on the Tennessee Catholic Public Policy Commission.

I am including one action alert in this report. Urge Congress to **support S 2394 and HR 2529** as these two bills would extend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) as a vital step towards nuclear disarmament and towards avoiding a nuclear arms race.

Catholic teaching deems nuclear weapons to be weapons of mass destruction, indiscriminate in the harm they do, and thus should be banned. The Church has long promoted nuclear disarmament. Pope Francis, in his visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 2019, reaffirmed: *“With deep conviction, I wish once more to declare that the use of atomic energy for purposes of war is today, more than ever, a crime not only against the dignity of human beings but against any possible future for our common home.”*

There are many other Action Alerts on the various web sites that I have mentioned before that call for our action as responsible citizens. It is my hope that your interest in Legislative issues does not end with this report, but that you will act and spread the word to others to respond to the issues and that you will pray for our Country and for our Legislators.

Peace, Good Will and Good Health be with you all. Patty Johnson

