



Washington State Catholic Conference

The Public Policy Voice of the Bishops of Washington State

WSCC Newsletter for Catholic Schools

Summer 2025

As the public policy voice of the five bishops of Washington state, the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) advocates for policies that serve the common good and recognize the dignity of every human person. Our advocacy is guided by Catholic Social Teaching, and supporting Catholic schools and education is a key goal of our mission.

Education Choice – State and Federal Efforts

Choice in education bills were introduced on the state and federal levels.

STATE: In the state legislature, **HB 1140**: Establishing empowerED scholarships using educational savings accounts received a public hearing in the House. You can watch the hearing [here](#). Rep. Couture's proposal would have provided parents with state funds in an educational savings account to assist with tuition, uniforms, books, computers, or a host of other costs associated with education, whether in public, private, or home schools. The bill noted that not all families can afford private education, but kids may find success in private schools.



The bill received a public hearing in the House. 38 people signed in to testify: 18 FOR the bill, 17 Against. Six people were given time to testify. Meanwhile, 2,638 people signed in PRO on the bill while 1,745 signed in CON. The cons claimed the bill supported religion, sent money to unaccountable schools and took money from public education. On the pro side, supporters explained that the bill would give money to parents to make educational choices for their kids, just like existing state educational savings account programs do, that private schools are accredited and accountable and that the program provides ample incentives for foundations and other private donors to feed the fund without taking any money from public education.

Despite the strong support, committee members did not schedule the bill for a vote to move it to the House for full debate.

FEDERAL: The Educational Choice for Children Act was introduced by Rep. Adrian Smith from Nebraska. It created a fund with a \$10 billion annual cap that individuals and corporations could contribute to for a tax credit equal to their contribution. Students in families living up to 300% of the

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regional median income would be eligible for the funds. The bill included strong protections for religious liberty and parental autonomy.

Provisions of the bill were included in the House budget reconciliation package, with some important changes. First, the fund would be capped at \$5 billion and only authorized for four years rather than the 10 years in the bill. This short authorization period means a child could have a scholarship for four years of schooling and then lose the funding before they have completed their education. The bill also excluded corporate givers, stifling the ability to meet even the \$5 billion cap.

Negotiations around these provisions are ongoing, along with the rest of the House budget reconciliation bill. [Sign up](#) for the WSCC Catholic Advocacy Bulletin to be informed about advocacy opportunities as the discussion moves to the Senate.

Register for the next installments in our webinar series

**WSCC** Washington State Catholic Conference
Life. Justice. Peace.

WEBINAR

THE PEOPLE OF GOD: A HEART FOR THE POOR AMONG US



THURSDAY **NOON**
JUNE 12, 2025 **1:00 PM**

What do we understand about the current realities of poverty, especially as it relates to hunger and healthcare? Together, we will explore lived experiences of our brothers and sisters struggling with poverty, as well as our responses as Church to those challenges, not as statistics, but as beloved Children of God.

GUEST SPEAKER
SCOTT COOPER
VICE PRESIDENT, MISSION, CATHOLIC CHARITIES EASTERN WASHINGTON

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**WSCC** Washington State Catholic Conference
Life. Justice. Peace.

WEBINAR

NO CHOICE, NO VOICE



THURSDAY **NOON**
JUL 17, 2025 **1:00 PM**

How do we stand up for and with those forced into lives of slavery? Join us as we get a clearer vision of the issue and learn more about the four areas of advocacy in the fight against human trafficking. The more you know, the stronger and more compelling your voice and actions to help bring about positive change and save lives.

GUEST SPEAKER
KAT DOYLE
DIRECTOR OF JUSTICE AND PEACE MINISTRIES, ARCHDIOCESE OF ATLANTA

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Registration is free but required. Register for [June 12](#). Register for [July 17](#). To see the full list of upcoming webinars, click [HERE](#).

Seal of Confession

As you may have heard in news reports, the Catholic bishops of Washington asked a federal court to block a new state law that forces priests to choose between breaking the sacred seal of confession or facing jail time before it takes effect on July 27. The law at issue in Etienne v. Ferguson requires clergy to report abuse if shared within the sacred confines of the confessional. WilmerHale and co-counsel Becket and First Liberty Institute represent Archbishop Paul Etienne, Bishop Thomas Daly, and Bishop Joseph Tyson who filed an initial lawsuit in federal court last week.

As part of its commitment to Safe Environment, the Catholic Church already requires priests to report abuse and neglect to law enforcement and other state authorities. The only exception would be if the information is learned during the sacrament of confession. The new law singles out this specific privilege for clergy but allows protections to remain in place for lawyers. You can read more [HERE](#).

WSCC Staff

We invite you to contact us at any time.

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