

# California Catholic Conference – a history

## Part 1 – The years before

February 12, 2013

“Episcopal conferences were not instituted for the pastoral government of a nation, nor to substitute (for) the diocesan bishops as a kind of superior or parallel government....”

- Vatican working paper, *Apostolos Suos*, 1988

How did the California bishops promote the Christian vision in public life before the setting up of the bureaucracy known as the California Catholic Conference of Bishops? The conference, sometimes called the CCC, was established in 1971 or 1972, depending on the source. But Catholic bishops had been active politically in the state for some time.



McIntyre

Three political battles in the 1950s and 1960s help tell the story.

**1. Taxation of Catholic schools, 1953-1958** Since 1879, when the California constitution was revised, religious schools were not exempt from paying taxes. In the case of the Los Angeles archdiocese, which was the fastest-growing see in the U.S. after 1948, Archbishop James Francis McIntyre saw the tax burden tripling. In March, 1951 under McIntyre’s influence, 57 of the 80 members of the California Assembly co-authored a bill exempting from taxation private non-profit elementary and high schools including those operated by

religious organizations. It passed both houses. According to McIntyre’s biography by Monsignor Francis Weber, the archbishop “personally or through an agent contacted every single legislator.” Governor Earl Warren signed the bill on May 3, 1951.



McGucken

A group called the California Taxpayers Alliance succeeded in forcing a referendum (requiring a vote of the people on a law passed by the legislature and signed by the governor) on the school tax exemption bill for the ballot of November, 1952. The alliance was soon joined by the Scottish Rite Masons and the National Educational Association. The referendum was called Proposition 3.

According to Weber, “McIntyre left nothing to chance. Though he deputized Auxiliary Bishop McGucken to look after day-to-day activities, he personally put in place an organizational structure that eventually touched the lives of Californians as nothing had before.... The archbishop himself contacted dozens of pivotal persons. After finding their phone numbers, he would call and ask for an appointment. He was only turned down once and that by a person who refused to believe that it was the archbishop on the phone....”



Flyers distributed by  
Catholic schools

“A Speakers’ Bureau was set up by the Archdiocesan Union of Holy Name Societies; a series of outdoor billboards was placed at strategic places, and mailings were sent to hundreds of thousands of homes.... Against the advice of every one of his counselors, McIntyre called Judge William Hery, the admitted ‘boss’ of the Scottish Rite Masons in Los Angeles and asked for a meeting. He asked Hery ‘if he had any suggestions in the way of keeping the referendum from becoming a religious issue....”

The vote in November was close – 2,441,005 Yes votes on Proposition 3 (in fa-



North

vor of keeping the tax exemption for religious schools) to 2,363,528 No votes.

Catholic school opponents did not give up. After court challenges to the tax exemption did not work, a group called Californians for Public Schools filed an initiative, which went on the ballot in November, 1958. Cardinal McIntyre and his allies went to work again. Monsignor William North, who was put in charge of archdiocesan efforts, issued a 76-page speakers manual. McIntyre sent a personal letter and fact sheet to thousands of people and a series of letters to local priests to keep them aware of the campaign. Proposition 16, as the measure against religious school tax exemption was called, went down 2-1.

**2. The Fair Housing Act, 1964.** Proposition 14 was a California state proposition to nullify the Rumford Fair Housing Act, which provided that landlords could not deny housing because of ethnicity, sex, marital status, physical handicap or familial status. Nine of California's 14 total number of bishops, including Cardinal McIntyre of Los Angeles, made no commitment on Proposition 14; five bishops openly urged a No vote, including the ordinaries of San Francisco, Oakland, Stockton, Sacramento, and Santa Rosa. Proposition 14 passed by a margin of almost two to one.

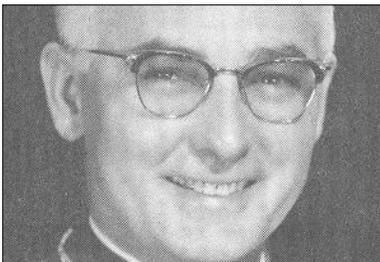
According to Monsignor Weber, "when asked whether it was hypocritical for the Church to bring political pressure to protect the right to life while refusing to take a stand on such issues as the Rumford Fair Housing Act, the cardinal had his secretary point out 'the vast difference between the taking of an innocent life and the sagacity of a political action of undetermined principle.'"



Beilenson

**3. The Therapeutic Abortion Act, 1967.** State Senator Anthony Beilenson introduced the Therapeutic Abortion Act in 1967 to allow abortions in cases of rape, incest or when a doctor deemed the birth was likely to impair the physical or mental health of the mother or when there was "substantial risk" that the child would be deformed.

According to Lou Cannon's *Governor Reagan: His Rise to Power*, the Catholic Church worked hard against the bill. Cannon quoted the *San Francisco Examiner*: "Most of the incoming mail at the capitol was inspired by Catholic priests who asked, from their pulpits, that their parishioners write to legislators urging defeat of the bill. In many cases pre-printed envelopes and other aids were provided." Cannon cited state senator George Danielson, a Los Angeles Democrat, who "announced he was reluctantly voting against the abortion bill. 'I just can't go against 5,000 votes from my district.'"



Bell

When the bill was heard before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Bishop Alden Bell of Sacramento said it sanctioned legalized murder. "The unborn child, however brief its existence, is clearly identified by science even in embryonic form as belonging to the human family....It has the right to live."

Governor Reagan himself was conflicted. He spoke with Cardinal McIntyre at a weekend meeting in Los Angeles arranged by his old campaign firm, Spencer-Roberts, who had been hired by the Catholic Church to lobby against the bill.

He asked his longtime adviser and Cabinet secretary Bill Clark — a devout Catholic who had contemplated the priesthood — for counsel. "Bill, I've got to know more — theologically, philosophically, medically."



Spencer

After the bill passed the Senate, the Catholic Church's lobbyist, William Burke, conferred with Stu Spencer and Reagan aide Phil Battaglia, and Reagan discovered new loopholes. But Reagan finally capitulated to Republican pro-abortion pressure and signed the bill.

According to Lou Cannon, "In his heart Reagan agreed with Cardinal McIntyre, not Dr. Davis (Nancy Reagan's pro-abortion father) and he really wanted to veto the Therapeutic Abortion Act. Instead he subordinated his personal feelings to the commitment he had made to Republican legislators to sign the bill....Reagan [told me] he would never have signed the bill if he had been more experienced as governor."



Reagan and Clark

According to the Cardinal McIntyre biographer Monsignor Weber, the cardinal did not sit still during the time leading up to Reagan's decision. McIntyre wrote letters to the clergy, wrote articles in the *Tidings* (the archdiocesan paper), sponsored the establishment of a Right-to-Life League, urged a letter-writing campaign, contacted George Hearst to get support of the *L.A. Herald-Examiner* after the *L.A. Times* endorsed the abortion bill, contacted individual members of the legislature, and enlisted larger Catholic organizations to lobby the governor.

McIntyre wrote the legislators that "no man has the right to legislate the taking of life, and particularly of the innocent and unborn...[such an action] resembles the action of Herod and the Holy Innocents in the Sacred Scriptures."

## Part 2 – The gay agenda, euthanasia, abortion

February 19, 2013



Cummins

Bishop John Cummins was the first executive director of the California Catholic Conference — from 1971 (or 1972, depending on the source) to 1977. In 1974 he was named as auxiliary bishop of Sacramento and continued as executive director of the conference until 1977, when he was named bishop of Oakland.

Bishop Cummins was instrumental in passing two pieces of legislation in the mid-1970s that affected the moral life of California and eventually the nation.

The first was AB 489, known as the Consenting Adult Sex Bill. After the election in 1974 of Jerry Brown to succeed Ronald Reagan as governor of California, Assemblyman Willie Brown (D-San Francisco) knew he at last had a chance of getting a governor to sign legislation that would do away with what one state senator's memoirs called "old-fashioned laws that criminalized behavior between consenting adults." Assemblyman Brown knew AB 489 would be a priority for his gay San Francisco constituents. The vote taken in 1975 was not close in the Assembly (where it was adopted with votes to spare), but passed in the state Senate only because the lieutenant governor broke a 20-20 tie.



Willie Brown

What was the Catholic conference's role? Fourteen years later, Bishop Cummins told of the part he played in the Consenting Adults battle. On June 5, 1999, Cummins was meeting with a group organized by Father Jim Schexnayder at Our Lady of Lourdes parish in the Oakland diocese. Bishop Cummins, say eyewitnesses at the meeting, explained to the group how he and the CCC worked behind the scenes to pass AB 489.

According to Wikipedia, the Consenting Adult Sex Bill, which went into effect in January 1976, “made gay bathhouses and the sex that took place within them legal for the first time.” In 1984, because of the AIDS epidemic associated with the bathhouses, the San Francisco Health Department tried to close the baths but was unsuccessful.

“This could be the greatest victory of the movement,” said one gay activist quoted by the Gay News Alliance.

The second piece of legislation in which the bishops played an important role — and particularly Bishop Cummins as head of the CCC — involved euthanasia.

The euthanasia movement in the U.S. grew from roots established in the 1930s. Dr. Eugene Kennedy, who led the Euthanasia Society of America, advocated putting to death “the utterly unfit” among young retarded children; he was honored by the University of Heidelberg, Germany, in the summer of 1936. Even though the movement had attracted celebrities like Somerset Maugham, Margaret Sanger, and Robert Frost, the number of Society members remained at about the 500 mark for decades.

In 1967, a major breakthrough occurred. At a meeting of the Euthanasia Society, a document was proposed called the “Living Will.” In a subsequent law journal article, a proponent described the Living Will as “*limited in its initial creation* to adult patients who are capable of exercising their will.” (Emphasis added.)



Keene

Commentaries on the Living Will saw it as protective of patients’ rights and innocuous. Others saw a red flag. The Catholic Church and pro-life groups stood steadfast against such legislation. But read what happened with Living Will legislation in California from an article by Rita Marker in the *Human Life Review* (1987):

“Euthanasia opponents, present to testify on Tuesday, August 17, 1976 (the final day of debate on the measure) were stunned when Assemblyman Barry Keene, author of the legislation, announced he had received a letter from the California Catholic Conference stating a change in its position. Until then, the California Catholic Conference had opposed the bill. Notification of the change from opposition to neutrality was given in a letter from Bishop John S. Cummins, then-executive director of the Catholic Conference, to Assemblyman Keene, in which Cummins wrote:



Dickie

“The California Catholic Conference is modifying its position on AB 3060 from OPPOSITION to WATCH, and we will not offer any opposition next Tuesday.

“We cannot commit ourselves to supporting the bill. Too many of our people still have problems about judicial definitions and the effectiveness of legislation in this whole matter.

“On my own behalf, I wish to express appreciation for your sensitivity of the questions we had. I realize too, the diversity of concern with which you had to deal. Your care and seriousness have very much appreciated and have been very significant factors in the removal of opposition on the part of our people.

“Thank you for the consideration. I hope we shall be in similar contact on future issues. I hope too, that we shall be able to help with your difficult and important endeavors.’

“The Catholic Conference withdrawal of opposition effectively opened the door for the measure’s passage – the bill passed the California State Assembly on the day the Cummins letter was read aloud by Keene.



Levada

“Commenting later on the legislation, Bishop Cummins said he found ‘nothing objectionable with the bill as written,’ although he admitted he did ‘not know what the ramifications of such a bill would be.’

“...Removal of Catholic Conference opposition in California led to more favorable consideration of Living Will legislation in other states as well and, within a year, seven additional states (Nevada, Oregon, North Carolina, Texas, Arkansas, New Mexico, and Idaho) had enacted ‘right-to-die’ laws.

“The Cummins letter, used during the close debate on Oregon’s Living Will legislation, was instrumental in passage of that state’s Living Will law in early 1977.”



Wood

Bishop Cummins became bishop of Oakland in 1977, where he served until 2003. He was succeeded as the Catholic Conference executive director by Monsignor John Dickie from the San Diego diocese, who held the position until 1982. Monsignor William Levada, who had just finished a stint at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, took over the leadership of the conference in 1982, until March of 1983, when he was appointed auxiliary bishop in the Los Angeles archdiocese.

From 1984 until 1991, Father William Wood, S.J., was the executive director of the California Catholic Conference. Father Wood had grown up and been ordained in the Los Angeles area, but he had taught at the University of San Francisco and became rector of Bellarmine, a Jesuit college prep school in San Jose. Father Wood founded the Santa Clara Valley Coalition Against Hunger, which over time evolved into the Second Harvest Food Bank. He participated in the California Food Policy Project, funded by the California Council for the Humanities in Public Policy.



Hart

In 1987 the following letter from a laywoman, Joan Patton, appeared in the San Diego diocesan paper: “For anyone who stayed up half the night to watch Ted Kopel’s recent special on AIDS, it should be apparent why the pro-family, pro-life workers in the Catholic Church in California have problems getting supportive legislation out of Sacramento. When the subject of morality came up, Ted turned to Fr. Bill Wood, Executive Director of the California Catholic Conference for a comment. Rather than taking this opportunity to state the Church’s teaching on sodomy, promiscuity, and perversion, he made a political statement against military spending and aid to the Contras, and encouraged support for the Bishops’ Pastoral on the

Economy. What an embarrassment to the laity. When he did finally mention chastity, it was almost as an afterthought and the damage was already done.”



Killea

At approximately the same time, in September, 1987, state Senator Gary Hart (D-Santa Barbara) got a bill through the legislature (SB 136) mandating every child in grades 7-12 attend a state-run program on AIDS education. As with most AIDS education programs of the time, this curriculum was to emphasize condom use and safe sex. Father Wood, on behalf of the California bishops, endorsed the Hart bill. Governor George Deukmejian vetoed the bill, but it eventually passed as SB 2840, which was modified to allow individual school districts to choose their own AIDS curriculum.

Sasha Alyson is the largest independent publisher of gay and lesbian books, including children’s books that depict

families with homosexual parents. Alyson also started a weekly gay paper in Boston and Alyson Adventures, which offered outdoor and adventure travel for gay people. In 1988 he edited *You Can Do Something About AIDS*, in which Father Wood wrote the chapter “What Can Clergy Do About AIDS?” A sample from the chapter: “High among my priorities is working for legislation that will effectively do something about AIDS....”



Maher

On December 5, 1988 there was a special election to fill an Assembly seat in San Diego. Lucy Killea, a San Diego city councilwoman, a Catholic, and the Democrat in a Democratic-leaning district, ran TV and newspaper ads proclaiming herself “pro-choice.” Bishop Leo Maher of San Diego wrote Killea a letter in late November telling her she could not receive Communion because her proclamations put her “in complete contradiction to the moral teachings of the Catholic Church.”

Killea went on to win the election. Sometime between the election and Maher’s resignation as bishop (he turned 75 the following July), Father Wood planned to bring up the propriety of Maher’s decision at a California Catholic Conference meeting. Maher confided in a friend that he thought only one or two other bishops would support him. But he was incensed that Wood would make the move as executive director. “It’s not going to happen,” Maher told the friend. “Number one, only bishops have the right to put measures on the agenda; number two, and besides what I did was the right thing to do.”



Petersen

Monsignor E. James Petersen succeeded Father Wood as executive director in 1991 and served until 1997. He had gotten to know Cardinal Roger Mahony, as they both served as priests in the diocese of Fresno. Together they owned a house in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

### Part 3 - a layman takes over

February 26, 2013



Hunthausen

In 1976, Raymond Hunthausen, Seattle’s archbishop, formally instituted the Washington State Catholic Conference. Hunthausen was investigated by the Vatican in 1983 over doctrinal issues and was relieved of some of his duties as archbishop a few years later. In 1987 — the same year the Vatican dispatched a coadjutor bishop to the archdiocese as a consequence of that controversy — Hunthausen named Edward (Ned) Dolejsi as executive director of the conference.

Dolejsi took over as head of the Washington bishops’ conference at a time of great turmoil in the archdiocese. Just a year earlier, Hunthausen had been stripped of some of his authority, which was turned over to Donald Wuerl, named auxiliary bishop for the archdiocese by Pope John Paul II in January 1986. The Vatican’s concerns, summed up in a 1985 letter from then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger to Hunthausen, included apparent departures from Church teaching regarding divorced Catholics, homosexuality, the liturgy, formation of seminarians and the role of women in the Church. In 1987, Bishop Thomas J. Murphy was appointed coadjutor of the archdiocese, and became archbishop in 1991, when Hunthausen retired at the age of 70.

Dolejsi served the bishops in Washington state for nine years until he resigned to become executive director of the California Catholic Conference in 1997.

Dolejsi was born in Seattle, attended Seattle University (Jesuit), and graduated with a major in English from

Iona College (Christian Brothers) in New Rochelle, New York. When he was 21 he went to Iran as a Peace Corps volunteer, where he met Susan Hozack, also in the Peace Corps; Dolejsi and Hozack married in May, 1969 in Iran. When they returned to Seattle, they had three sons, one of whom later became a priest and serves in the Seattle archdiocese today.



Dolejsi

In 1989, after an apparently amicable divorce, Dolejsi married Colleen Branagan, who at the time had three sons. Branagan was director of personnel for the Seattle archdiocese, and later served in a similar capacity for the Stockton diocese. In 2006 she took over as director of the Life Center in Sacramento. “The ‘seamless garment’ image has always been a wonderful metaphor for me,” said Branagan when she took the Life Center job, recalling the approach of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin.

According to a 2012 biographical sketch, Dolejsi was a high school teacher and director of religious education in the Seattle archdiocese. A 1991 edition of *Caritas*, which lists Dolejsi on the board of directors of the Sisters of Providence, states that he directed programs for Archbishop Hunthausen, including Faith and Community Development. He co-founded CHANNEL, a leadership program for young adults, which was a subject of discussion in Michael Rose’s *Goodbye Good Men*.



Branagan

In 1997, an article titled “One of Hunthausen’s Boys,” written by Lesley Payne, was published in the *San Francisco Faith*. Here are some excerpts from that article:

Andrea Vangor, executive director of Washington Together Against Pornography, spoke about Dolejsi’s actions in Seattle.

“We ran a bill to protect minors from pornography,” says Vangor. “We ran it as an initiative. Bishop Wuerl... endorsed it. I spoke with Ned, who was the head lobbyist for the Washington bishops, to get their endorsement. We sent him the bill and all the analyses we had obtained. He told me they would endorse it, but then he released this half-baked statement on it, more negative than positive. He hinted that it might be unconstitutional, but he apparently did not read our constitutional law analyses and did no research of his own on it. He carried the water for some ugly people.”

A Catholic pro-life activist in Washington state believes Dolejsi was “just doing his job,” following instructions from the Washington bishops and their staffs.

“He is down there [in California] because there is a Hunthausen/Roger Mahony connection. This is one of Hunthausen’s boys. Archbishop Murphy has cancer [Murphy has since died]. We expect that our next bishop will be more like recent appointments – a strong conservative. This guy would have been out of a job soon. So they found him this job in California.”

The pro-lifer notes that the Washington Catholic Conference is aligned with the Washington Association of Churches, a strongly pro-choice organization. “They never wanted to offend the other churches by doing anything pro-life,” she complains. She says that the WCC took an officially “neutral” position toward a bill that would allow terminally ill patients to be killed by withholding food and water. “But statements made by Sister Sharon Park [WCC lobbyist] at the legislature were then anything but neutral,” she says.

“Sister Park is a liberal nun...,” says the pro-life activist. “The women are running the place. Back in the 1970s, Park was outspokenly pro-choice. Later, she toned that down, but not enough. There has never been any muscle com-



Bishop George

ing from the Catholic Church on life issues in Washington. For example, we're just now setting up a Right to Life Committee in this archdiocese, with the first meeting in September. Pro-life legislators – evangelical Christians – tell me, 'I can't understand why your church isn't doing more on pro-life [issues].'"

"Bishop George [now Archbishop of Chicago] had run-ins with Ned when he was bishop of Yakima," she notes. "George was able to stop the WCC from endorsing certain things, such as the Death with Dignity bill."

A Seattle chancery insider recalls his misgivings about CHANNEL, a lay organization co-founded by Dolejsi.

"This was about the time Hunthausen came in. They were the diocesan Peace Corps. They were going to feed the poor and all that Catholic Action stuff. We never could figure out if they did anything besides collect money." The source notes that, in the early 1980s, the archdiocese of Seattle leased its closed seminary building to the state. He recalls his embarrassment when giving state employees a tour of the seminary building, then occupied by CHANNEL. "They took the tabernacle off the altar and put a rug and a circle of cushions in the chapel. In the sacristy, all the chalices and vestments were in a huge pile in the middle of the floor."

## Part 4 – blurred vision

March 5, 2013 22

*The following chronology, covering more than a decade, comes from sources including California Catholic Daily and the newspapers that preceded Cal Catholic – San Francisco Faith, Los Angeles Mission, and San Diego News Notes.*



Cruz Bustamante and Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California president Katherine Kneer gleefully celebrate the defeat of Prop 73 (parental notification initiative) in November 2005.

January 4, 1999

In November of 1998, pro-abortion Democrat Cruz Bustamante was elected as lieutenant governor of California. He had campaigned as "pro-choice" and his website proclaimed this message. He was to be inaugurated on January 4, 1999.

At 8 on the morning of January 4, Bustamante was to be honored at a "Celebration of Mass on the occasion of the Inauguration of Cruz Bustamante as Lieutenant Governor of the State of California" at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Sacramento. The printed program acknowledged that the celebration was hosted by the California Latino Legislative Caucus (primarily pro-abortion Democrats), and other sponsors.

This Mass was set up by the California Catholic Conference, and Ned Dolejsi was prominently present at the Mass and his predecessor as CCC director, Msgr. E. James Petersen of the Fresno diocese, concelebrated the Mass.



Hayden

April 27, 1999

California Senate Bill 118, introduced by Senator Tom Hayden in December of 1998, provided for family care and medical leave for certain family groupings, including "domestic partners." An April 27, 1999 CCC letter signed by Ned Dolejsi urged passage of SB 118, stating that it was unfortunate that the bill

was politicized in this way, but that they did find it possible to support SB 118. The bill passed.

August 31, 2000

The CCC, under the leadership of Ned Dolejsi, put forth as the major issues of concern to the Catholic Church “issues involving religious freedom, assistance for those in need, immigrant rights, the use of the death penalty and educational reform and equity.” No mention of life or marriage and family issues.

January, 2003

The *Journal of Church and State* published an article in January of 2003, entitled “Religion at the statehouse: the California Catholic Conference.” The CCC is described as having a staff of ten, which “address a wide range of issues from opposing the death penalty and protecting the homeless to having Cesar Chavez Day proclaimed a yearly state event.

“A public theology that has been developing in the United States in the last thirty years drives the efforts of the California Catholic Conference ... this theology derives from 110 years of worldwide Catholic social teaching. This public theology resembles contemporary Latin American social theology. In concert with the Catholic Church’s ‘option for the poor’, Catholic public theology in the U.S. attempts to defend the weak and the vulnerable....”

“...the CCC holds something of a hegemonic position among Catholic voices in the state public sphere....”

“A central mark of the conference is that it is reactive, not proactive. The conference portrays itself as a partner in the legislative enterprise.... The executive committee of bishops and especially the full-time conference staff center their activities around the legislative calendar, with the agenda of issues established by state legislators.”

November 24, 2004

On Tuesday, November 24, 2004 the *Sacramento Bee* ran a story that there would be a service at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in January when Governor Gray Davis was to be sworn in for a second term as governor of California. The reporter who broke the story said he had been in touch with a “Father Ned Dolejsi.” A secretary in the office of Bishop William Weigand stated that there had been a mistake, that the bishop’s office had nothing to do with the invitation, but to call the pastor, Father Vincent Brady, or Ned Dolejsi at the CCC. Father Brady referred people to Dolejsi. Dolejsi stated that the Davis people had contacted him the week before Thanksgiving and that he had given assurances to the Davis committee that the CCC would work with them.



Davis

July 20, 2005

On July 20, 2005 the CCC hosted “Catholic Prayer and Reflection,” included pro-abortion Democrat Assemblyman Juan Vargas.

December 4, 2006

On December 4, 2006 a Mass was held in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament arranged by Ned Dolejsi to celebrate the inauguration of a group of newly elected and re-elected members of the California Legislature known as the Hispanic Legislative Caucus. Every one of these individuals was pro-abortion.



Vargas

January 29, 2008

Plans to bring together a career politician with a 16-year record of support for abortion and one of California’s most influential Catholics at a Sacramento di-



Bowen

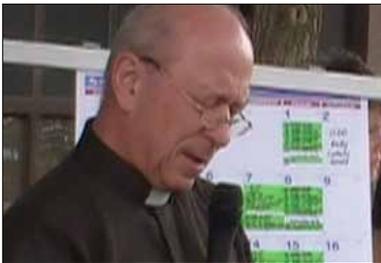
ocesan high school's "Speakers Series" were abruptly cancelled after pro-lifers expressed outrage over the event.

St. Francis Catholic High School, an all-girls school that is part of the diocese of Sacramento's educational system, had planned an event on Tuesday, Jan. 22, in which California Secretary of State Debra Bowen, a longtime backer of abortion and homosexual rights, would join Ned Dolejsi, executive director of the California Catholic Conference, for a presentation entitled "California Catholics: Legislation, Elections and Social Justice."

Had the event been held, it would have occurred on the 35th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Roe vs. Wade* legalizing abortion in all 50 states...

...on the night of the 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. scheduled presentation featuring Bowen and Dolejsi, a note was posted on the door of the school theater announcing the event had been cancelled.

*California Catholic Daily* learned that as soon as a Dec. 7 memo went out from St. Francis director of communications Ingrid Niles asking for parishes across the Diocese of Sacramento to include an announcement for the event in parish bulletins, some pastors and their parishioners began to question the appropriateness of inviting someone like Bowen to a Catholic high school, and, what's worse, in the company of the top aide to California's bishops.



Father Lee

Copies of several letters and emails to the school have been provided to *California Catholic Daily*. In one such letter, Fr. Patrick Lee wrote, "I read with shock the news that Secretary of State Debra Bowen has been invited to speak at St. Francis High School on January 22nd of this year. As members of the Catholic Christian community, you must know how unacceptable it is to host notorious promoters of abortion, euthanasia and homosexual marriage..."

April 21, 2008

Tomorrow, April 22, is Catholic Lobby Day in Sacramento, a day during which legislators can expect citizen lobbyists summoned to the state capital by the California Catholic Conference to press them on issues important to California's bishops. But abortion somehow didn't make it onto the Catholic Conference's list of legislative priorities — which is where longtime pro-life Catholic activist Wynette Sills comes in.

Sills, who calls herself "just a simple layperson," says she is determined to lobby legislators to defend the sanctity of life for unborn children, whether it's on the bishops' agenda or not — and she says she wants other Catholics to join her.



Wynette Sills

After meeting personally with California Conference executive director Ned Dolejsi last week, Sills said she realized they were not on the same page. "A lot of lay Catholics in the Sacramento area wanted to include the sanctity of life of the unborn in the participant's package," she said. "They've (the Catholic Conference) already established their priority bills for Tuesday and it didn't include that topic, because there isn't currently any legislation to defend the dignity of life of the unborn. Since the CCC agenda includes the topic of the

budget, we were hoping, under that umbrella, to include a request of our legislators to eliminate abortion funding from our state budget. Isn't it time to have conscientious objection to using our tax dollars for such an atrocious service as abortion?"

Ironically, Catholic Lobby Day falls on the same day as Planned Parenthood Lobby Day (See “Food stamps vs. abortion,” *California Catholic Daily*, April 11, 2008). The lobbying items identified by the Catholic Conference for this year’s effort include:

AB 2747, which deals with palliative care and hospices.

AB 2262, which would extend the period for parents to surrender unwanted newborn babies from 72 hours to one week.

AB 2844, the Food Stamp Simplification Act.

and SB 1555, which would provide better services for geriatric prisoners.

Although Sills commends the Catholic Conference for its support of these bills, she has one reservation: “They are all noble, humanitarian causes. But they are Democratic bills, and there is a Democratic majority. Those bills will likely pass with or without the CCC’s lobbying. But we’re neglecting the fundamental right to life. If we’re not addressing that issue as Catholics, then all of these other social justice issues are inconsequential.”

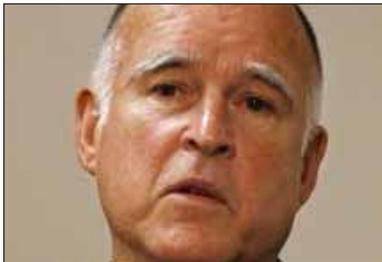


From 2009 Lobby Day  
announcement

April 6, 2009

The California Catholic Conference has announced its agenda for the 11th Annual Catholic Lobby Day on April 28 at the state capitol in Sacramento. As in years past, the published agenda makes no mention of abortion or other life issues like euthanasia or embryonic stem cell research.

Planned Parenthood of California is planning to hold its annual “California Capitol Day” this year a week before the Catholic event, on April 22. Unlike the California Catholic Conference, the Planned Parenthood lobbyists are focused on a single issue: “Join hundreds of other Planned Parenthood supporters as we gather in Sacramento to support reproductive health care access for women and families in California!”



Brown

January 3, 2011

On Monday, January 3, 2011 Jerry Brown, one of the most extreme pro-abortion politicians in history, was to be inaugurated as governor. *The Capitol Morning Report*, an insider political organ in Sacramento, contained the following item: “Interfaith Council of Sacramento and others sponsor prayer service for Gov.-elect Jerry Brown, other statewide elected officials and members of legislature. 9 a.m., Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, 1017 11th St.”

An advertising flyer produced for this Cathedral of the Blessed Sacramento “prayer service” occasion noted that it was sponsored by the Interfaith Council of Sacramento, the Diocese of Sacramento, and the California Catholic Conference.

Governor-elect Jerry Brown did not show up at the cathedral, where Ned Dolejsi and Stockton Bishop Stephen Blaire were waiting for him.

Bishop Blaire, providing the opening remarks, mentioned the various faiths represented in the Sanctuary. The highest level elected person attending was the new pro-abortion Democratic California Attorney General, Kamala Harris, who just a few hours later in her own inaugural speech promised to fight for the rights of “gays” and lesbians.

March 28, 2011

In a letter to Sacramento Bishop Jaime Soto, diocesan chancellor Kathy Conner, Ned Dolejsi, executive director of



Ferial Aoun speaks at 2010 Catholic Lobby Day on rising tuition costs and cuts in fire department money.

the California Catholic Conference, and several other diocesan and Catholic Conference leaders, pro-lifer Wynette Sills expressed “serious disappointment” after seeing a recent item from the Catholic Legislative Network’s newsletter regarding the March 24 Catholic Youth Advocacy Day in Sacramento.

“More than 150 Catholic high school students and their teachers came from around California to Sacramento this week to participate in the inaugural Catholic Youth Advocacy Day,” said the March 25 issue of the Catholic Legislative Network newsletter. “Faculty and students of Archbishop Mitty High School in the Diocese of San Jose, along with the Catholic Conference, planned the agenda for this one day event. Keynote speaker, Tony Cortese, from the Sacramento Newman Center, told the students about how we some-

times live in a funny, crazy world but if we get ourselves involved and engaged, we can make a difference.”

“The morning program consisted of workshops with students presenting materials and videos on the four issues on which they advocated: AB 6-Food Stamps, AB 130 & 131-Dream Act, AB 90-Human Trafficking and SB 9-Juvenile LWOP (Life Without Parole),” said the newsletter. “The afternoon was spent at the Capitol visiting legislators’ offices and discussing issues with lawmakers or their staff.”

“While Food Stamps, the Dream Act, Human Trafficking and Life Without Parole are noble concerns, the Sanctity of Life is a foundational and non-negotiable priority of our Catholic faith,” wrote Sills. “Our Catholic Youth could be our most effective advocates for their brothers and sisters in the womb.”

“When I have expressed this concern to the California Catholic Conference over the years, the response is typically, ‘there are no anti-abortion measures pending within the state legislature and we only address current legislation,’” Sills’ letter continued. “If the Catholic Church, particularly our Youth and those who are specifically responsible for representing our Church at the Capitol, remains silent on abortion, this void of pending legislation to protect the Least of His will only continue year after year after year, as millions die, even paid for with our tax dollars here in California. During this budget crisis, abortion funding should be a headline priority every day at the Capitol. Yet, most of our Catholic state legislators are notoriously pro-abortion.”

“Our collective silence is complicit in the loss of innocent human life,” Sills said in her letter. “If our children are not allowed to be born, access to Food Stamps and the opportunity to receive tuition assistance to attend college become irrelevant. We are concerned about Life Without Parole for Juvenile Delinquents, but we are silent on the innocent children subjected to the brutal, violent, inhumane, unjust Death Penalty of abortion.”

July 5, 2011

From the Catholic Legislative Network (project of the California Catholic Conference):

“In a somber late-night session during an uncharacteristic summer downpour, the California legislature passed another budget. Frustration, borne of an inability by either side to work together, resulted in a package that satisfied no one. Governor Brown signed it Thursday [July 30] – only the sixth on-time budget in the last 25 years.”

In a statement released to the media, Ned Dolejsi, executive director of the California Catholic Conference said: “Many people — including the governor — worked very hard to find common ground and create a budget that reflects the needs of California families as well as current economic reality but in the end, all that we really have is another expedient budget that promises a lot of pain to a lot of people without doing much to fix California’s long-term fiscal problems.”

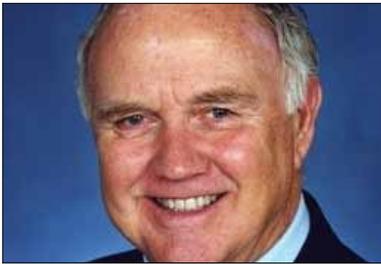
## Part 5 – lay-run initiatives

March 19, 2013 79 Comments

*Editor's Note: Part 4 of this series chronicled the honoring of pro-abortion and pro-homosexualist politicians by the California Catholic Conference and the softening of pro-life and pro-family messages to public officials. This week's story tells what happens when the bishops' conference is confronted with lay men and women who try to enlist the Church's help in changing public policy.*

*Full disclosure: the president of the non-profit California Catholic Daily, Jim Holman, was one of the pro-life donors and volunteers who worked on the five attempts to pass parental notification initiatives.*

In 1987 the California legislature passed a law requiring parental consent for an abortion to be performed on a minor. Governor George Deukmejian, a Republican, signed it into law. But it was never enforced. After lengthy court battles, the law was overturned by the California Supreme Court in 1997.



Campbell

In the fall of 2001, Assemblyman Bill Campbell from Orange County led an effort to put a state initiative on the 2002 ballot requiring parental notification for a minor's abortion. The California Catholic Conference assisted Campbell with the effort. David Pollard, associate director for public policy for the conference, coordinated signature gathering at the parishes.

The Los Angeles archdiocese was a gaping hole in those parish efforts – reports showed no petitions were circulated in LA. By January 2002 it was obvious that the effort had fallen far short of the total signatures required. (Pollard was fired by his boss Ned Dolejsi in February 2003, allegedly because of cutbacks caused by the pedophilia crisis.)

Throughout 2003 California pro-life leaders talked among themselves about re-starting the effort of putting parental notification on the ballot. At least three major donors were recruited to help fund the paid signature segment. (In California, the high number of signatures required means that it is virtually impossible to gather enough signatures only from volunteers.)



Collett

Unfortunately the donor charged with vetting the initiative language made a crucial error – his legal advisors had cobbled together language for a constitutional amendment but included text from the consent law that made the amendment null and void. The nation's constitutional expert on parental notification, Teresa Collett, warned against going forward. The donor tried to mollify other pro-lifers, saying that “the courts would sort it out.”

The California Catholic Conference joined the effort with the disputed text and urged signature gathering at the parishes throughout early 2004. Philanthropist Howard Ahmanson Jr. provided the \$150,000 that was spent on paid signatures. Very few petitions were circulated at parishes, and the effort failed.



Short

With the help of Teresa Collett and Catherine Short of California's Life Legal Defense Foundation, a constitutional amendment was filed with the secretary of state in mid-2004 and signatures were gathered in late 2004 and early 2005.

But the California Catholic Conference was cool to the effort. On February 12, 2005, Carol Hogan, Dolejsi's assistant at the CCC, issued a memo regarding the Parental Notification Initiative. “...due to the abnormally high number of

initiatives seeking to qualify for November, which makes the cost of paid signature-gathering prohibitive, and the anticipated high hurdle of an expensive public education campaign to pass the PNI into law, the Conference had decided to refrain at this time from issuing a public letter of support,” Hogan wrote in the memo.



Hogan

On January 10, 2005, Hogan wrote to Robert Sassone, author in 1997 of *Handbook on Population*. “Unless they [parental notification initiative sponsors] have \$20 million to get it passed – it will fail at the ballot – and set back the cause a decade,” wrote Hogan. “I don’t think they have \$20 million. It is not enough to get the signatures. Planned Parenthood et al will spend \$50 million to defeat it – and if they can cast it as a curb on abortion rights they (PP) will win.”

With no cooperation from the Catholic Conference, private donors and volunteers were still able to get the required number of signatures for the special election called by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger for November 2005. In spite of being outspent 5 to 1, parental notification, known as Proposition 73, got 47.2% Yes votes to 52.8% No votes. As it turned out, all of the eight initiatives in the special election went down to defeat. Prop 73 had the least financial support, but got the highest number of Yes votes.

Pro-life donors and volunteers made another effort in 2006. Led by the Catholic Conference, bishops strongly discouraged signature gathering at the parishes. Heavily outspent by opponents, Prop 85, as the 2006 proposition was labeled, received 45.8% Yes votes to 54.2% No votes.



Garcia

A 2008 effort to put parental notification on the ballot ran into even stiffer resistance from the Catholic Conference.

In a February 2008 memo to pastors and others, Monterey Bishop Richard Garcia noted that the “CCC is not endorsing the gathering signatures for Sarah’s Law.” (Sarah’s Law, or Proposition 4, was the 2008 parental notification initiative.)



Vadakin

On March 10, 2008, Monsignor Royale Vadakin, the LA archdiocese’s vicar general, sent out a memo to all pastors saying: “the Conference (CCC-Ned Dolejsi) does not have the human or financial resources to actively participate in the ballot qualification effort. Thus, it is the policy of the bishops to formally endorse initiatives only after they are qualified for the ballot. Consistent with that policy, our archdiocese is not organizing signature gathering campaigns.”

According to an April 24 article published in the *San Francisco Faith*, Dolejsi made this policy explicit: “Until an initiative qualifies, said Dolejsi, “it is an idea of an individual or a group of individuals,” not “officially part of the public debate.”

When an initiative, following qualification, becomes part of that debate, the conference must consider its “moral significance.” But there are “other important assessments,” such as an initiative’s “political viability,” said Dolejsi.

Some initiative proposals are “good causes and have organized appropriately to be successful,” said Dolejsi. “Unfortunately, some others may be under funded, poorly organized and/or politically untenable.”

When “an issue is publicly before the people or the legislature for public debate, the bishops’ conference assumes the responsibility to offer guidance directly to Catholics about the moral importance of the issue and to present the Church’s wisdom,” said Dolejsi. “The bishops have consistently done this on every significant proposal in the last decade.”



Archbishop Gomez

Undaunted, donors and volunteers got the signatures needed to put parental notification on the November 2008 ballot. Though outspent by Planned Parenthood and its allies 15 to 1, Proposition 4, as the measure was called that year, came the closest ever to winning — 48% Yes votes to 53% No.

After this near-win (and because of the victory of the Prop 8 protect marriage initiative on the same ballot), pro-lifers approached the newly appointed archbishop of Los Angeles, Jose Gomez, in August, 2010.

Archbishop Gomez, in a series of meetings in 2010 and early 2011, agreed to support parental notification and encourage signature gathering at the parishes – inside and outside the churches. At one meeting on March 25, 2011, he told pro-lifers, “I will get the other bishops on board.” As the meetings progressed throughout 2011, however, Archbishop Gomez seemed to adopt the earlier language of Dolejsi and the California Conference, saying the

bishops would need to be assured that there was financial support, a wide coalition, and a professional campaign consultant hired before he and other bishops would help out.



Power Point page on Planned Parenthood before changes.

One noteworthy incident occurred in one of the final meetings of 2011. Archbishop Gomez asked the lay people pushing the parental notification initiative to produce a Power Point presentation, which he could use at an upcoming bishops meeting in November 2011. The pro-lifers used the existing research, hired professional artists and Power Point experts, and sent a polished Power Point presentation to the archbishop and to Dolejsi.



Power Point page, after edited by CCC staff

After the bishops met, Dolejsi shared a version of the Power Point presentation he had edited for the bishops. The strong arguments in favor of the proposed initiative had been weakened, and the case *against* going forward strengthened. In fact, the page showing a “vulnerable” Planned Parenthood had been changed to show Planned Parenthood with assets of *close to a trillion dollars*, the amount of a small nation’s assets.

In August 2010, a parental notification initiative passed in Alaska with open-hearted and explicit help from Anchorage Archbishop Roger Schwiertz. A portion of the PowerPoint presentation prepared by backers of the California initiative told the story of this 2010 success. But it was deleted from the version the Catholic Conference showed at the November bishops’ meeting.



Archbishop Schwiertz

In late January 2012, two months after the five-month window for collecting signatures had opened, there was an announcement by the Catholic Conference that they would be supporting the ACLU-backed Death Penalty and the lay-sponsored Parental Notification initiatives. Several bishops issued letters to the faithful in their dioceses encouraging signature collection in parishes.

But the bishops’ encouragement was stymied by those who were supposed to work for them. In February 2012, Dolejsi worked with California Conference



Sweeney

attorney James Sweeney to develop “Do” and “Don’t Do” rules for gathering signatures. Pastors were warned that they might be criminally prosecuted for any election law violations associated with signature gathering. Volunteers were warned not to pass out petitions to parishioners and by no means was any parish employee to be involved in gathering signatures. It was also strongly recommended that parishes spend no money on the effort, and, if they did, meticulous records had to be kept.

By the deadline in May 2012, it was clear that the bishops’ support had been so weakened by California Catholic Conference staff that it meant little in the end. The number of volunteer signatures gathered (200,000 out of the 1.2 million necessary) with support from the California bishops was the same as the number of volunteer signatures gathered in 2008 with open opposition from the bishops.

Just as important, as early as November 2011, potential donors to the parental notification initiative began to express misgivings, saying they got the feeling that the promised support from the bishops was not forthcoming. Donations dried up.

## Part 6 - other states

March 26, 2013 18 Comments

According to Form 990 filed with the IRS, the 2011 expenses for the California Catholic Conference were more than \$1.4 million. These expenses included a \$144,216 salary for the executive director, Ned Doejsi, \$88,065 legal expenses, \$28,274 travel expenses, \$90,000 lobbying expenses, and \$125,527 for the Catholic Legislative Network.

Are the California bishops getting their money’s worth? What do the bishops in other states get from their bureaucracies?



Ron Johnson

1. **In Arizona**, a May 15, 2012 legislative wrap-up by the Arizona Catholic Conference is typical of executive director Ron Johnson’s work with pro-life and pro-family allies in the state:

“The Arizona Catholic Conference is appreciative that Gov. Jan Brewer has signed into law an important measure we initiated (HB 2625) pertaining to religious liberty. While there were many distortions from our opponents about this bill, HB 2625 simply exempts religious employers from being coerced by the government to pay for abortifacients and contraceptives in their insurance plans if doing so violates their faith.

“With the passage of HB 2625, Arizonans will now be better able to assert their rights by suing the federal government over the HHS contraceptive mandate, and if it is overturned, religious freedom in Arizona will be much better protected.

“The ACC is most grateful to Representative Debbie Lesko for sponsoring HB 2625 and her unwavering support in the face of the tremendous national attention garnered by the bill.

“In addition to HB 2625, a number of very substantial religious liberty and pro-life bills were also passed into law this session, including conscience protections for various professionals (SB 1365); a ban on abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy (HB 2036); and a prohibition on any taxpayer funding passing through the state to abortion providers (HB 2800).

“Similarly, the ACC initiated another very important bill (SB 1009) that became law and is aimed at keeping abortion providers out of public and charter schools. Under SB 1009, any discussion of abortion during class time must present childbirth and adoption as the preferred options. The ACC is particularly thankful for the great efforts Senator Nancy Barto made in sponsoring this bill.”

Johnson’s post about the 2008 Arizona victory of an initiative to protect marriage shows how serious the commitment of Arizona’s bishops was.

**2. The Catholic Conference of Illinois** joined this year with other pro-family groups in promoting a protect marriage rally at the state capitol in Springfield. (This in spite of opposition to marriage by the governor and heavy anti-marriage majorities in both houses of the state legislature.) The following is from a January 17, 2013 message from the conference:

“The Illinois Family Institute is sponsoring a Lobby Day to Preserve Marriage on Wed., Feb. 20, 2013, at the state Capitol in Springfield. Show up at the Capitol rotunda at 10:30 a.m., and look for a table sponsored by IFI in a hallway off the rotunda, where you can pick up information on lobbying your lawmakers.”



Governor Quinn

A good example of how forthright a Catholic conference can be when dealing with politicians is a letter written by the Illinois conference to Governor Patrick Quinn in November, 2011:

“We hope that you can make time in your schedule so that we might speak together about several topics, the first being your personal approval of laws permitting the killing of unborn children. Many of the citizens of Illinois recognize the biological fact that abortion kills an unborn child. Consequently, many find themselves disturbed about laws that fail to defend any human

being before birth. The Catholic Church has taught for two thousand years that abortion is, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, ‘a heinous crime.’”

Or even better the sharp criticism by the Illinois conference in that same month of the governor’s awarding of a Pro-Choice Leadership Award:

“We deeply regret the governor’s decision to present this award, which so closely associates him with a political action group whose purpose is contrary to the common good,” the six bishops said in a Nov. 2 statement released by the Catholic Conference of Illinois.

“With this action, Governor Quinn has gone beyond a political alignment with those supporting the legal right to kill children in their mothers’ wombs, to rewarding those deemed most successful in this terrible work.”



Ronda Storms

**3. The Florida Catholic Conference** honors state pro-life legislators on its homepage. Among the recent awardees are Defensor Vitae, Defenders of Life state senator Ronda Storms, state representative Dennis Baxley (2012) Defensor Parentum, Defender of Parents, state senator Joe Negron and Defensor Vitae, Defender of Life representative Kelli Stargel (2011).

**4. Michigan’s Catholic conference** makes it clear what its legislative priorities are for the 2013-2014 legislative session:

From a February 4 press release: “Policies that protect the ability for faith based organizations to serve the general public in that organization’s faith tradition should be recognized by state law Michigan Catholic Conference stated

today in announcing its advocacy priorities for the 2013-14 legislative session. In addition to protecting constitutional religious liberty rights for faith based entities, especially in health care and child placement, Michigan Catholic Conference will also continue to support legislation that excludes abortion coverage in health care plans and any federal/state health care exchange created through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA).”

5. **Even in liberal New York**, the Catholic conference is staunch in its opposition to the pro-abortion agenda.

From the conference website:

#### MEMORANDUM OF OPPOSITION

Re: The Abortion Expansion Bill

“In relation to revising existing provisions of law regarding abortions”

The above-referenced legislation may come before you as a stand-alone bill (such as S.438, Stewart-Cousins) or may be re-packaged into a multi-point “women’s agenda” as advocated by Governor Andrew Cuomo in his 2013 State of the State message. We strongly urge you to oppose this abortion expansion plan, in whatever form it may take. It is unnecessary, extreme and dangerous. For the reasons outlined below, the New York State Catholic Conference strongly **opposes** this legislation and urges that it be defeated.



Kathleen Gallagher

This legislation... does not simply “update” New York law or codify *Roe vs. Wade*. It would usher in extreme and sweeping changes to abortion policy in New York State. [More](#)

Or read the fervent Respect Life blog on the New York conference website written by Kathleen Gallagher.

From a December 2012 posting:



Anderson

“The post-election suggestion by some in the Republican Party that the GOP pro-life plank be dropped from the platform is more than misguided... it’s just plain wrong. All pro-life politicians, whether Republican or Democrat, need to stay the course; to continue to walk the pro-life walk. Their votes are critical to changing policies and saving lives.”

**Editor’s note:** Material on other state conferences is easy to find. Anyone can Google another state conference of bishops and find bishops who are more engaged in pro-life and pro-family issues than the California conference.

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Johnston

California state senator Joel Anderson, a solid pro-life leader and a leader in fighting abortion funding, has served a pivotal role in the state assembly and now in the state senate. Anderson, a faithful, practicing Catholic, will not allow California Catholic Conference staff in his office because of the conference’s indifference and even hostility to pro-life and family issues and leaders.

Brian Johnston has been the director of the California ProLife Council for more than twenty-five years. The California ProLife Council is the state arm of National Right to Life with offices in Sacramento. Johnston is an

international expert on end-of-life issues and the author of *Death as a Salesman*. Johnston has clashed with Ned Dolejsi repeatedly on the issues of nutrition and hydration of comatose patients at the end of life. Johnston says the current staff of the California Catholic Conference should be fired.