



**ARIZONA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE  
2010 LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP**

By Ron Johnson  
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**Immigration Legislation Creates Huge Controversy**

On Thursday, April 29<sup>th</sup> the Arizona Legislature adjourned sine die after spending 109 days in session. While much of the legislative session again focused on addressing Arizona's growing budget problems, by the end, immigration became the most publicized and controversial issue of the year.

Despite being able to defeat similar bills aimed at undocumented immigrants each of the past two years, it became clear from the beginning that this year was going to be different. Recognizing this fact early on, the Bishops of the Arizona Catholic Conference released two statements (one with several other religious leaders) expressing their concerns about this legislation (SB 1070) and the negative consequences it could have on our state.

The ACC worked diligently on this bill with other interested parties to successfully mitigate some of the many problematic areas of SB 1070 so that people providing humanitarian aid or transportation to church are not caught up in this new law. Additionally, we were glad that HB 2162 later succeeded in bringing greater assurances to crime victims and witnesses who otherwise might have been afraid to come forward out of a fear that they would be arrested or deported.

Nonetheless, SB 1070 still raises many concerns, including the fact that it mandates local police to enforce federal immigration law to the fullest extent possible. Many people are worried that less attention may be focused on more serious crimes because of this mandate. The law's creation of a new state crime for those unlawfully in the country under federal law also is fraught with potential problems.

Finally, irrespective of whether or not it is accurate, the message that is being portrayed around the world with respect to SB 1070 is certainly a negative one relating to Arizona. For many, the only good that may come out of all this attention would be if it finally gets the federal government to take care of our immigration and border concerns without any further delay.

**Major Pro-Life Victories**

The ACC had several major pro-life victories this year. Perhaps the most significant of these victories came with an amendment that was initiated by the ACC to have Arizona become the first state in the nation to have its health insurance exchange, that is now being mandated by the new federal health care law, opt out of abortion coverage.

In crafting this amendment, the ACC worked with the Bioethics Defense Fund and Center of Arizona Policy on the language. Ultimately, the amendment was added onto legislation (SB 1305) clarifying that cities cannot use taxpayer funding to provide abortion coverage in the insurance plans provided to their employees.

The ACC is especially grateful to Representative Nancy Barto and Senator Linda Gray for being legislative champions of this effort and to Governor Jan Brewer for signing this bill into law.

Other significant pro-life bills that were passed and signed into law include ones that will, among other things, ban embryonic stem cell research (SB 1307) and provide informed consent to women "donating" human eggs (SB 1306). Additionally, SB 1304 will now provide improved data relating to abortion reporting.

Finally, it should be noted that all of the problematic bills relating to assisted suicide (SB 1298) and rights of conscience (HB 2737) were also defeated.

### **Big Wins for School Choice**

This year was another big year for school choice. Despite a number of bills and amendments proposing to suspend, repeal, or sunset the tuition tax credits, none of them were able to move forward. Meanwhile, three very good school choice bills were able to become law.

At the top of this list is a bill (SB 1274) that will now extend the deadline to claim a tuition tax credit from December 31<sup>st</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup> of the following year. Given our struggling economy, many people are unsure of what taxable liability they may have until they start preparing their taxes. SB 1274 will help raise money from many of these people so that school tuition organizations can continue to enable children to attend the school that best fits their needs.

In addition to SB 1274, positive legislation promoting increased transparency and accountability for the individual (HB 2664) and corporate (HB 2663) tuition tax credits also has been signed into law. An additional bonus with HB 2664 is the fact that it includes a modest increase in the maximum amount that people can claim with the individual tuition tax credit, which will now annually increase with the rate of inflation.

Senators Al Melvin and John Huppenthal championed these bills in the Senate, while Representatives Rick Murphy and Debbie Lesko were great sponsors of this legislation in the House.

### **Conclusion**

The ACC is grateful to all of the people and groups it has worked with over the course of this session to make our efforts successful. In particular, a special acknowledgment is due to Representatives Adam Driggs and Andy Tobin for their assistance on so many of the issues mentioned above.

Finally, the ACC is especially indebted to all of the people who supported our efforts through prayers and e-mails this session. We look forward to working with you again on the public policy issues of greatest importance to the Catholic Church.

As always, your assistance in encouraging people you know to sign up for free e-mail updates at [www.azcatholicconference.org](http://www.azcatholicconference.org) will help us to continue to grow the influence of the Catholic Church on these matters.

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*Please feel free to forward this message and encourage the people you know to sign up for these free updates at [www.azcatholicconference.org](http://www.azcatholicconference.org) so that we can continue to expand our influence on matters of importance to the Catholic Church*