

LAOH NATIONAL CONVENTION
POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT
JUNE 18, 2022

During the 2020-2022 term, the LAOH National Political Education Committee developed position statements on several social justice concerns. The LAOH delegates to the Political Education Committee discussed and voted to recommend the following positions for adoption by the LAOH:

DISABILITY RIGHTS

The LAOH takes the following position on Disability Rights Issues:

- Disabled persons are not “other” and should not be marginalized in society. Persons with disabilities must have the same opportunities to contribute to society as non-disabled persons. All laws and policies that affect disabled persons must have input from the disabled community.
- All parishes should implement and follow the USCCB Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities. All parishes should be welcoming, safe, and inclusive spaces, for persons with disabilities.
- LAOH members are encouraged to work within their parishes in outreach to disabled persons and families with persons with disabilities, to ensure accessibility to Mass, the sacraments and to all parish activities. Persons with disabilities and/or their representatives should be included in discussions about parish activities and events, especially in discussions about accessibility.
- The LAOH should recruit and welcome members with physical and intellectual disabilities and make accommodation for their participation in all meetings and events.
- Providing healthcare, and residential, employment and educational opportunities to persons with disabilities should be a priority for the Catholic Church and Local, State, and Federal Governments.
- LAOH members are encouraged to ensure Local, State, and Federal elected officials know that they support legislation that promotes access to healthcare, housing, and employment for persons with disabilities, including legislation that helps the caregiving economy.
- Persons with disabilities must be free from abuse and neglect in their living, school, and work environments. Caregivers and others who provide services and care for persons with disabilities should receive the best training possible and should be recognized, in terms of salary and respect, for the critical work they do in caring for the most vulnerable.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The LAOH National Political Education Committee takes the following position on

Environmental **Justice** Issues:

- All people have the right to breathe clean air and have ready access to clean water.
- Environmental injustice is a sin against humanity and all God's creations.
- Environmental justice is a social justice concern that continues to need to be addressed by Catholic social justice policies, U.S. Government Policies and individual actions. The LAOH supports the efforts of the Catholic Church to work with Local, State and Federal Governments, as well as local community groups to address environmental injustice.
- Communities most affected by proposed environmental practices and policies must be included, at every level (Local, State and Federal), in discussions and development of those policies and practices.
- Plans in the U.S. to transition to cleaner energy sources should at every level (i.e., Local, State and Federal) acknowledge the potential financial effects on communities that have relied on the fossil fuel industry and include plans to aid those communities in the transition.
- The effect of climate change today greatly affects future generations of US citizens. The LAOH supports U.S.'s efforts to join global efforts to reduce the negative effects of climate change.
- LAOH members are encouraged to consider individual actions that can reduce the amount of air, land, and water pollution. Individuals can make a difference in their parishes and schools by participating in discussions of ways their communities can end polluting practices. Individuals can let their elected officials know they support legislation that brings justice to communities suffering from environmental pollution and legislation that will lead to a cleaner environment for future generations.

GUN SAFETY

The LAOH takes the following position on Gun Control Issues:

- Making guns safer is a Pro-life issue.
- The LAOH supports the following gun control measures outlined by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops:
 - “A total ban on assault weapons, which the USCCB supported when the ban passed in 1994 and when Congress failed to renew it in 2004.
 - Measures that control the sale and use of firearms, such as universal background checks for all gun purchases;
 - Limitations on civilian access to high-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines;
 - A federal law to criminalize gun trafficking;
 - Improved access to and increased resources for mental health care and earlier interventions;
 - Regulations and limitations on the purchasing of handguns;
 - Measures that make guns safer, such as locks that prevent children and anyone other than the owner from using the gun without permission and supervision; and
 - An honest assessment of the toll of violent images and experiences which inundate people, particularly our youth.”²
- LAOH members are encouraged to contact their elected officials, local, state, and federal, to support gun control policies and legislative measures that uphold the safety and wellbeing of all persons in our communities.

RACISM

The LAOH takes the following position on Racism:

- It is our Christian duty to uphold the humanity of all human beings and to not make judgements on who is acceptable and who is not.
- As Irish American women, it is important to take a stand against violence inflicted on people regardless of their personal origin. The struggles of our ancestors and our brethren who currently fight for equality in Ireland make clear that we must strive for a more inclusive world.
- As Gerry Adams states in his statement on the anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement: ‘All of us have a responsibility to make a stand against such injustice and intolerance in whatever form it takes. Society must reflect and include the entirety of its people, not some of them.’⁴
- We must decry racism and discrimination in all forms in order to truly practice our motto of Friendship, Unity, and Christian Charity. We must take this stand and do the hard work of combating racism in order to have a more just, equitable, and peaceful society.

Maternal and Child Healthcare

The LAOH takes the following position on Maternal-Child Healthcare Issues:

- Providing maternal and child healthcare equitably and without discrimination is a moral and ethical concern that must be addressed by federal, state, and local policies, Catholic social justice policies, and individual actions.
- As an organization that supports all stages of life, the LAOH should actively support the Catholic Church's work with local, state, and federal governments, as well as local community groups to address poverty and inequities essential for healthcare for women and children.
- To prevent maternal and infant mortality, it is essential to provide appropriate healthcare equitably and without racial or ethnic bias to women and children, especially during pre-conception and formative periods. Doing so promotes the healthy physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development necessary for the framework of healthy families, communities, societies and the world.
- Researchers, healthcare practitioners, policy makers, women and parents should collaborate on the development of evidence-based policies and practices to improve maternal and child health to reduce morbidity and mortality nationally and internationally. Researchers, healthcare practitioners, policy makers, women and parents should collaborate on the development of evidence-based policies and practices to improve maternal and child health to reduce morbidity and mortality nationally and internationally.
- As an organization and as individual members, LAOH members should understand Catholic social teaching and the principle of subsidiarity to better apply the tenets when designing equitable and non-discriminatory public health policy related to women and children.
- All LAOH members should promote an understanding of and work to break down the antecedents of maternal and child healthcare inequities in their own communities, at Local, State, and Federal levels, especially those related to poverty, structural and interpersonal racism, and ethnic discrimination.
- LAOH members should donate to charities and community organizations that provide maternal and child healthcare and other necessities of life to those most vulnerable in society and to those negatively impacted by natural and other disasters in the US and abroad.

MIGRATION/IMMIGRATION

The LAOH's position on the issue of immigration is in alignment with that of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB):

- Immigration is an extremely complex phenomenon, and many Catholic citizens feel helpless to confront, much less affect, the high-level legislative processes of border control, immigrant detention, family separations, and deportations.
- The LAOH membership also experiences and responds to contemporary immigration in a variety of ways.
- The LAOH Political Education Committee takes the position that our forest of family trees has roots in a variety of geographic locations and socioeconomic circumstances, welcoming as well as repellant. The point is that we are all here now as fellow travelers. Without money or marketable skills, many of our ancestors arrived here – America, their Promised Land! – on sheer guts and prayers. So, the next time a LAOH Sister encounters someone with a different shade of skin or an accent, please do not assume or immediately judge. Wonder, perhaps, “What’s *your* immigration story?” Offer a smile, say a prayer, love your neighbor as yourself, and vote in alignment with Christ’s and the CCC immigration precepts.

The Committee voted on the following:

To recommend that all levels, Divisions, Counties and States, have a political education appointee.

The Committee will suggest ways that members can act as “social justice messengers” in our communities, particularly

To be informed about LAOH position statements, as well as open to and active in engagement with other people on social justice issues to include:

To become involved in service projects,

To use social media such as change.org. to advocate

Participate in marches

Write letters to elected officials, as an individual, not as a representative of the LAOH and

To take advantage of the webinars and other materials the PEC has on the web to help educate themselves and others

To allow future PEC webinars and additional educational materials to include experts from groups and organizations regardless of religious affiliation (e.g., academia, government, etc), however the content presented cannot violate the tenets of our Catholic faith.

The Committee voted to move these items forward to the general delegation.

In a general discussion without a vote, the Committee agreed to include language on the Boyfriend Loop-hole in the background document and Climate Change was suggested as a future position statement.

Respectfully Submitted
July 20, 2022

Lori Forbes

Lori Forbes, Secretary

Gail Dapolito

Gail Dapolito, Chair

Delegates to the Political Education Committee:

CO	Sheila	Thunboe	NC	Colleen	Stark
CT	Marggie	Laurie	NC	Bernadette	Brady
DC	Teresa	Gorman	NJ	Bernadette	Sullivan
DC	Gail	Dapolito	NY	Mary	Sieder
DE	Kathi Twohig	Hamelin	NY	Kathryn	Keane
FL	Louise	Sullivan	NY	JoAnn	Gundersen
FL	Debbie	Demars-Clark	NY	Becci	Enders
GA	Ann	Fisher	NY	Suzanne	Gorman Messina
GA	Estelle	Duncan	NY	Shelly	Valek
IN	Paula	Saul	OH	Mary	Higgins
IN	Ann	Bagwell	PA	Sr. Kathleen	Smith
KY	Molly	Dobson	PA	Mary Ann	Raymer
MD	Kelly	Parks	TX	Connie	Buscha
MD	Sharon	Strobel	VA	Annie	McEntee
MD	Kathleen	Norris	VA	Lori	Forbes
MO	Sandy	Merrell	VA	Ellen Marie	Hess