

The 2008 legislative session, which the New York Times recently described as "perhaps the strangest period in Albany's history," has come to a close... for now. Both the Senate and Assembly leadership may call the members back at any time.

Thank you for responding to our calls for action throughout the year. This year, more than 68,500 messages were sent to legislators and the Governor through the Catholic Advocacy Network! And those messages were heard. Here are some highlights of the 2008 Legislative Session.

### **Education Funding**

Messages urging the Legislature to maintain 100% reimbursement for the mandated services provided by religious and independent schools flooded the Capitol. The Senate Republican Majority agreed with our position and brought our legislation to the floor, where the full Senate passed it unanimously. In passing the bill, the Senate maintains its commitment to all children, regardless of where they attend school. Unfortunately, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver would not allow the bill to be voted on in the Assembly. By providing a record increase in funding to public schools and cutting the level of reimbursement to independent and religious schools, this inaction could be interpreted as a lack of concern for the children enrolled in religious and independent schools and the sacrifices made by their parents. We must continue the fight to ensure that our schools receive the reimbursement to which they are entitled.

### **Abortion**

Our opposition to former Gov. Eliot Spitzer's extreme abortion bill, the "Reproductive Health and Privacy Protection Act" or RHAPP, was heard loud and clear, and stopped the bill from advancing in either house. A "petition to discharge" the bill from its Senate Committee was rejected, and the measure was not even introduced in the Assembly. Although he has signaled support for the measure, it remains to be seen what priority Gov. David Paterson will give to this bill in 2009 - we must remain vigilant and continue to let our representatives know how radical and coercive this bill is in compelling support for abortion.

### **Health and Human Services**

Our victories in the 2008-2009 State Budget included:

- expanded funding for "Child Health Plus," the health insurance program for low and middle income children;
- a streamlined enrollment process for all public health insurance programs;
- a drug discount program for non-elderly adults;
- more than \$300 million to address the affordable housing shortage;
- cost of living adjustments for most human service providers; and
- funding for services to victims of human trafficking.

### **Criminal Justice**

The first bill signed into law this calendar year was the "SHU Bill." This law will remove inmates with serious mental illness from solitary confinement in "special housing units" and place them in newly established mental health residential treatment units that more appropriately address their needs. The effort to provide humane treatment to mentally ill inmates in state correctional facilities has long been advocated by the New York State Catholic Conference.

### **Support for Traditional Marriage**

Several thousand Network members contacted Gov. Paterson to make known their opposition to his executive directive ordering state agencies to recognize out-of-state and foreign homosexual "marriages" as valid marriages in New York State. Mr. Paterson has not yielded in this position and we continue to urge you to contact him [here](#) if you have not done so already. Please urge your friends and family members to do the same.

### **Thank You**

Thank you once again for all of your advocacy efforts over the past year. Please share the good news of the Catholic Advocacy Network with a friend or two and let them know how simple it is to communicate

with elected officials. Please pray for all government representatives, and for the upcoming elections, which will determine so much about the future of our state and nation. If you are not registered to vote, you may do so by clicking [here](#). For excellent reflections on the awesome responsibility of voting and advocacy, we urge you to read "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" by the United States Bishops, available [here](#).

Our best wishes for a peaceful and relaxing summer.