



For Immediate Release

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A Voice for 800,000 Catholics

North Carolina's two Catholic Bishops have created a statewide organization to give Catholics a stronger voice in matters of public policy. They are also asking candidates for political office to respond to a survey.

Michael F. Burbidge, Bishop of Raleigh and Peter J. Jugis, Bishop of Charlotte established Catholic Voice NC and the website WWW.CatholicVoiceNC.org to provide nonpartisan information on legislative matters that intersect with Catholic teaching, values, and morality and to give Catholics a way to voice their opinions directly to state legislators.

North Carolina is home to an estimated 800,000 Catholics who worship in the 187 Catholic Churches and Missions in the states two dioceses.

Catholic Voice NC will track the progress of legislation for which Scripture and the teaching of the Catholic Church offers a framework for understanding. Four areas will be initially followed:

- Respect Life
- Embryonic Stem Cell Research
- Immigration
- Euthanasia

Catholics who join the organization will be notified by the bishops when one of these issues is presented for a vote. Catholic Voice NC members will be invited to contact their legislators.

When asked why it is important for Catholics to participate in public policy and the legislative process, Bishop Jugis stated, "Catholics have always presented a consistent

moral framework for assessing issues. It is quite natural for us to encourage dialogue with legislators.”

Bishop Burbidge concurred in stating, “Catholics bring a lot of experience to the political dialogue. We have worked for centuries in education, health care and social services to serve the public and to make our society better

Monsignor Michael Clay of the Diocese of Raleigh has been appointed by the two bishops to the position of Liaison and Lobbyist for Catholic Voice NC.

The initial effort of Catholic Voice NC will be a survey that will be sent to all candidates for legislative and federal office. The Catholic Voice NC survey will ask candidates to declare their positions on a variety of issues that are related to the teaching of the Catholic Church. Issues include; the death penalty, abortion, stem cell research, immigration, the defense of marriage and sex education.

Candidates will be asked to respond to the survey during the month of July. The results will be published online at www.CatholicVoiceNC.org, the websites of the two dioceses, the monthly magazine of the Diocese of Raleigh, *NC Catholics* and the weekly newspaper of the Diocese of Charlotte, *The Catholic News & Herald*. Circulation for the two publications is 332,000. Survey results will be published in late September.

The Diocese of Raleigh was established in 1924 and included all of North Carolina. In 1972, because of population growth, the Diocese of Charlotte was created. It is made up of 46 counties in the western part of the state. The Diocese of Raleigh is comprised of the 54 counties in eastern North Carolina.

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