



# Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops

THE PUBLIC POLICY VOICE OF THE CHURCH

## Sine Die Report on Priority Bills in the 85<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session

This legislative session was marked by discord, but our priority bills fared better than average. While the legislative process is designed for bills to fail, a remarkably small percentage of bills (12 percent) passed this session -- the lowest percentage since 1891. However, 56 percent of our priority bills passed and only one bill (SB 4) we opposed passed. This results from the direct involvement of Texas Catholics and bishops, and the TCCB's legislative relationships. This report summarizes the impact of the Catholic church on Texas politics during the 85<sup>th</sup> Legislature.

### Pro-Life

- ✔ **Win: HB 35 / SB 258.** We supported this bill to require the burial of the victims of abortion and remove the option of disposing victims in a landfill or grinding and flushing them into the sewer. It was included in SB 8, a large pro-life bill, which passed both the Senate and House.
- ✔ **Win: HB 3771.** We supported this bill to provide a uniform definition of abortion in state law so treatment for ectopic pregnancies is not included in the legal definition of abortion. It was included in SB 8, a large pro-life bill, which passed both the Senate and House.
- ✔ **Win: SB 8 / HB 200.** We supported this bill to ban partial-birth abortion in state law and ban the research or sale of victims of abortion. At final passage, it included HB 35 / SB 258 and HB 3771 and measures to ban dismemberment abortions. Both the Senate and House passed this bill.
- ✔ **Win: HB 2858 / SB 1377.** We supported this bill to increase punishment for coerced abortions in the course of human trafficking, and require human trafficking hotline signs be posted in abortion facilities. This bill was included in HB 2552, and passed both the House and Senate.
- ✘ **Loss: SB 25 / HB 434.** We supported this bill which prohibited wrongful birth lawsuits against doctors, through which people can allege they would have had an abortion if they had known the unborn child was disabled. The Senate passed this bill; the House did not.
- ✘ **Loss: HB 2962 / SB 1602.** We supported this bill requiring accurate reporting for abortion complications to provide critical information for future policymaking. Both the House and the Senate passed this bill, but it died on a technicality during the final days of session.

### Children and Families

- ✔ **Win: HB 4.** We supported this bill to increase funding for kinship foster care. Both the House and Senate passed this bill, and the Governor signed it.
- ✔ **Win: HB 5.** We supported this bill to establish the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) as its own agency. The House and Senate passed this bill, and the Governor signed it.
- ✔ **Win: SB 11 / HB 6.** We supported this bill to establish community-based foster care, which will allow for local organizations and faith-based groups to take a more active role in recruiting foster families and providing temporary homes for foster children. Both the Senate and House passed this bill, and the Governor signed it.

- ✔ **Win: HB 3859 / SB 892.** We supported this bill to protect religious liberty for faith-based organizations who provide direct services to foster children. Both the Senate and the House passed this bill.
- ✘ **Loss: SB 542 / HB 1184.** We supported this bill to establish parental choice for low-income public-school students through a tax credit scholarship. Neither the Senate nor the House passed this bill.
- ✘ **Loss: HB 21.** As written and passed by the House, this bill reformed school finance; as amended and passed by the Senate, it also established parental choice through an ESA for special needs students. We supported the bill as amended but the House and Senate could not come to agreement on the final content of the bill, and it died.

### Health and Human Services

- ✔ **Win: HB 10.** We supported this bill to establish greater access to mental healthcare and substance abuse treatment. Both the House and the Senate passed the bill.
- ✔ **Win: HB 13.** We supported this bill to establish a grant to match donations to mental health programs. Both the House and the Senate passed this bill.

### Immigration

- ✘ **Loss: SB 4.** We opposed this bill to increase cooperation between federal ICE agents and local police. SB 4 requires police honor ICE detainer requests for arrested persons, and it allows police to work with ICE to enforce immigration law. Both the House and Senate passed this bill, and the Governor signed it.
- ✘ **Loss: SB 1054.** We supported this bill to increase punishment for undocumented migrants committing violent crimes in a way that maintained targeted enforcement of immigration law. Neither the House nor the Senate passed this bill.
- ✔ **Win: SB 1018 / HB 2225.** We opposed this bill to waive state licensing requirements for migrant family detention centers, which would have allowed them to increase the number of detainees. The Senate passed this bill, but the House did not.

### Poor and Vulnerable

- ✔ **Win: HB 2008.** We supported this bill to ensure the state has the ability to enforce the federal military lending act of 2006 so members of the military are not targeted by payday lenders. Both the House and the Senate passed this bill.
- ✔ **Win: Floor Amendments.** We opposed several amendments proposed on the House floor, which could have been quickly attached to bills at the last minute, and would have voided the 42 payday ordinances we have worked so hard to establish. We stopped these through timely advocacy.
- ✘ **Loss: HB 1134.** We supported this bill to establish regulations upon predatory payday lending throughout Texas. Neither the House, nor the Senate passed this bill.
- ✔ **Win: HB 31.** We opposed this bill to speed up an individual property owner's timeframe to obtain a groundwater permit because it also impeded a local community's control over groundwater exports. The House passed this bill, but the Senate did not.

- ✔ **Win: SB 1628.** We opposed this bill to repeal the hearing process for environmental quality permits because it limited public participation in environmental decisions. Neither the House nor the Senate passed this bill.

### **Criminal Justice**

- ✔ **Win: HB 2552.** We supported this bill to combat the establishment of massage parlors, which front for prostitution and human trafficking. This bill was also amended with pro-life bill HB 2858. Both the House and Senate passed this bill.
- ✘ **Loss: HB 3054 / SB 1616.** We supported this bill to allow a judge to give more accurate instructions to sentencing juries. Neither the House nor the Senate passed this bill.
- ✘ **Loss: SB 1859.** We supported this bill to establish a human-trafficking team in the Department of Public Safety. Neither the Senate nor the House passed this bill.
- ✘ **Loss: HB 147 / HB 316.** We supported these bills to repeal the law of parties for capital offenses. Neither the House nor the Senate passed these bills.