

Branches on the Vine

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CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC CONFERENCE LAYS OUT PLAN AHEAD OF 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

With the Connecticut Legislature getting underway for the new session, Chris Healy, executive director of the Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference, is preparing for several challenges that include protecting the sanctity of life, the right to freely practice religious faith amid growing antisemitism, school choice options and social justice issues.

The session officially started Jan. 8 and ends June 4. In the coming weeks, the Conference is anticipating some lawmakers may submit bills that threaten the Catholic faith.



Chris Healy speaks at the 2024 March for Life

"We must prepare for proposals that further abortion practices, that legalize assisted suicide, further harass pregnancy care centers and assault the religious directives Catholic hospitals operate under," Healy says. "The proponents of these initiatives are supported by national organizations that are not reflective of Connecticut voters."

The Conference is the public policy and advocacy office of the Catholic bishops in Connecticut which supports or opposes legislation. Its mission is to work with elected officials at the state and federal levels to influence public policy and stand with other faith groups to promote and ensure a better life for all.

At the top of the Conference's agenda is the issue of biological males participating in girls' sports and laws regarding transgender surgeries of children.

The Conference advocates Title IX protection of young women the right "to participate in the same scholastic sports as males by prohibiting discrimination based on sex in education programs and activities," Healy says.

In recent years, the definition was expanded to include transgender males. "This created an unfair reality that bolstered men competing in women's sports at all competitive levels with the full protection of the federal government," he says.

Another issue of concern, he adds, is school choice which would give parents "the freedom to guide their children's future while allowing public funds to follow the child."

"We will be trying to get something on the books in Connecticut that will allow for people to support school choice financially and get some kind of tax benefit, which will allow more kids to go not only to Catholic schools, but any other school that fits their needs," Healy says. "We need to help them pursue their dreams, especially if they're in a failing school district or they're restricted by their zip code from getting a decent education."

Religious freedom, which is guaranteed under the Constitution, has faced growing challenges in recent months with acts of antisemitism on college campuses and in the public arena, the executive director says, adding the Conference will work to bring greater public awareness to the problem.

The beginning of a legislative session usually brings a new Connecticut General Assembly based on changes of elected legislators in the 2024 election, Healy says. "There's always the unknown, but we know what we have to do. We have to get Catholics and others who share our views engaged so their voices are heard. If we organize and do that and follow God's blessing, we'll be fine."

In the past, the Conference has partnered with other faith groups to support issues of faith.

"They share our values on these issues and they appreciate the fact that the Catholic Church has asked them for their help and that we help them as well when we can," Healy says. "They helped us in opposing assisted suicide, and hopefully we can do that again this year on other issues."

Healy urges people to get involved with their local elected state legislators to oppose any proposals that come before the Legislature that threaten Catholic teachings. For more information about the Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference, visit etcatholicpac.org.

Story by Joe Pisani



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, February 1 and 8 at 1:00 PM

A Caregiver's Well-Being: Two-session Retreat of Learning, Prayer, and Reflection for Those Caring for a Loved One with Dementia · Franciscan Life Center, 271 Finch Avenue, Meriden

A Caregiver's Well-Being retreat is a two-session, 6 hour retreat offered on consecutive Saturday afternoons (3 hours each day). The retreat provides an opportunity for learning and connection among caregivers in a peaceful, Christ-centered environment. The day includes presentations and personal sharing by experienced caregivers and health professionals, prayer, individual reflection and group discussion. Presentation topics include: Understanding types and symptoms of dementia, managing caregiving stress, discovering deeper meaning in caregiving relationships, deepening our relationship to God in the midst of suffering, identifying resources for caregiver support and growth.

For more information and to register:
203-237-8084 or visit flcenter.org.

Friday, February 21 at 5:00 PM

Archbishop's Annual Appeal Beer Tasting and Cocktail Reception · Aqua Turf Club, Plantsville
Enjoy a casual setting with Archbishop Coyne while sampling local beers served with hot and cold hors d'oeuvres. This year's vendors include: Watson Farmhouse Brewery, Litchfield Distillery, Connecticut Valley Brewing Company, East Rock Brewing Company, The Wine Cellar, Santopietro Brewing Company, and New England Brewing Company.

21+ · Please RSVP at aohforms.com/beertasting



2025 Jubilee: The Holy Year

Florence, Assisi & Rome, October 26 to November 6, 2025 (12 Days)
Book Before April 30, 2025 and Save \$250 per Person!

The Office of Radio & Television and WJMJ Radio invite you to Save the Date to join Father John Gatzak on a special pilgrimage tour to Italy in celebration of Jubilee 2025: The Holy Year of the Roman Catholic Church. Visit our Pilgrimages page on ortv.org for more information and a complete itinerary.

The Jubilee is a special year of grace, in which the Catholic Church offers the faithful the possibility of asking for a plenary indulgence, that is, the remission of sins for themselves or for deceased relatives. A Jubilee usually lasts a year and a few days: it begins just before the Christian Christmas and ends the Epiphany of the following year.

For more events, please visit:
archdioceseofhartford.org/events

To submit an event for consideration, please email: communications@aohct.org

2024 Archbishop's Annual Appeal

