

## Forming Public Policy, How Can I Be Involved?

The legislature is in session. Elected officials from across the state have converged on Helena to do the people's work. While here they will approve a two-year budget to fund government services, schools, social programs, and corrections. They will also deal with a multitude of issues ranging from minor tweaking of current law to a possible massive overhaul of the states property tax appraisal system. Some of the issues are trivial. Some are of grave importance and will affect our families and us for years to come, and these decisions will occur at a breathtaking pace.

The Montana Catholic Conference will be there to help shape policies that affect our families, and respect the life and dignity of all human persons. The following are a few of the issues we will be supporting this session.

A priority for us is the recent court ruling that declares physician assisted suicide constitutional in Montana. Our fight will be two fold. We will be working on the appeal to the Montana Supreme Court, and we will be working in the legislature to defeat a bill to implement the law.

Another priority is our continuing effort to abolish the death penalty and replace it with life without the possibility of parole. The Lord did not cast people away because they were sinners. He called sinners to Him because they were the ones who needed Him the most. Life is life. God is the final arbiter of that life. We cannot promote a culture of life when we continue to support killing in our death chambers.

We will promote commonsense legislation to insure that parents or legal authorities are consulted before an abortion is performed on a child. Montana is one of a minority of states that does not have such a law to protect our children.

We will work to enhance opportunities of adoption for the child, the adoptive parents, and the birth parents.

We will propose a plan to allow tuition tax credits for tuition to Montana accredited schools which will greatly benefit our Catholic school system.

We will work to implement a law which will allow medical personnel to decline participation in providing contraception, abortion, assisted suicide and other procedures that conflict with their faith.

And we will work to offset the burden of high energy costs for those who are elderly or disabled and others who will struggle with heating costs this winter.

We will work the hallways and provide as much information as possible to our legislators so they can make good decisions. The next part is up to you. Your voice is critical to passing good public policy. Please sign up for our email alert by logging on to our website at [montanacc.org](http://montanacc.org), or email us at [mccadmin@bresnan.net](mailto:mccadmin@bresnan.net). We will update you

weekly on important issues and provide you with contact information for the decision makers. Also please consider attending our Catholic Day at the Legislature on Feb 5<sup>th</sup>.

Forming public policy is difficult, and it should be. The issues are complex, and they are contentious, especially when we deal with life, money, or marriage. Let us pray that during this session all who are involved in forming public policy will be guided by the common good. Let us pray for the health and safety of our legislators and their families, and let us thank them often for the sacrifices they make for this great state and the people who live here.