



*Hello All:*

The October newsletter begins with an invitation. The second annual Catholics at the Capitol will be held on March 3, 2010, and every Catholic school in the state should be represented. A promotional flyer, including a tentative agenda and short description, can be found on our web site:

*[www.catholicconferenceofillinois.org](http://www.catholicconferenceofillinois.org).*

Don't panic! Students will not be involved this year. Although last year's event was very successful and the presence of so many students made a huge positive impression, we are aware of the kind of time and sacrifice that type of commitment requires. This year is adults only.

We do ask that every Catholic school try to send a small contingent of parents, parishioners, staff, school board members or even the pastor to the Catholics at the Capitol lobby day. It is vitally important: no one else will be there to talk about education issues to your state representative and senator. **If you want to see the Textbook Loan Program restored, the School Safety Block Grant increased, the Parent Transportation Program back on line, and the Education Expense Tax Credit increased, please identify and send a contingent from your school to help lobby lawmakers.**

In the meantime, our effort to restore money to these programs continues. Since the last newsletter, the Catholic Conference of Illinois (CCI) and the Illinois Coalition of Nonpublic Schools (ICNS) have testified in support of these programs at the September ISBE Board Meeting and at all five budget hearings held to date. CCI's testimony can be found on our web site and our Facebook page. We will continue this focused pursuit to convince policymakers of the critical importance of these programs, and a coalition of public schools, other nonpublic schools, and textbook publishers continues to grow.

Your school, parents and parishioners will be asked to get engaged further in the spring, but I hope you will take time now to prepare to answer the call. For now, please ensure the following actions are taken:

- **Ensure your school has appointed a Legislative Action Person (LAP) on my email list and ready to distribute information and action alerts to parents and parishioners.**
- **Communicate to your state Representative and Senator the importance of these programs; even invite him or her to your school to watch the children learning and show them education materials purchased by the Textbook Loan program.**
- **Identify a contingent of school supporters to attend the 2nd Catholics at the Capitol in Springfield on March 3, 2010.**

## Legislative Update

Although restoring the budget cuts from last year will be a top priority of CCI's legislative agenda, we also want to continue to look forward and work to make existing programs better and Catholic schools more accessible. In this vein, we have taken up two issues:

**Corporate/Individual Tax Credit for Scholarships** – In addition to the work CCI has done and will continue to do to expand the tuition tax credit, we have also begun exploring possible legislative initiatives to provide tax credit backed scholarships to children from low and middle income families. We have drafted legislation and begun the process of editing/revision, as well as planning for how to publicize and promote the effort.

**A New Model for Federal Title and IDEA Funding Distribution** – Working with Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) program, CCI has begun exploring the possibility of establishing an alternative model for determining and distributing federal grant dollars for services entitled to Catholic schools and their students. The Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) initial response has been to include the issue, via Senate Bill 1882, in their newly formed Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force. I will keep you updated on our progress.

### ADDITIONAL LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

The following are either legislative initiatives that will be on-going next year or serve as reminders of important issues:

**Senate Bill 138 & House Bill 643 (Expanding the Tuition Tax Credit from \$500 to \$1000)** – Due to the state's budget situation, we have been unable to push these bills forward in the committee process. However, we have continued to add co-sponsors – 13 members in the House and 9 members in the Senate – and we use these bills as topics of conversation with the leadership in the General Assembly and with the Governor's office. As mentioned, language expanding the Tuition Tax Credit from \$500 to \$1000 was included in legislation, House Bill 174, increasing personal income tax and expanding Illinois' sales tax. CCI remains committed to ensuring Catholic school families are represented in any new tax bill.

**House Bill 3982 (Transportation of Students)** – This legislation eliminates the use of 11-15 passenger vans for interscholastic or other school sponsored non-curriculum related activities by July 1, 2010. The new law will bring Illinois schools into compliance with federal standards for transporting students by eliminating vans that have been deemed unsafe by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Non-curriculum related activities do not include transportation from home to school and from school to home or a trip directly related to regular credit-earning curriculum. As of July 1, 2010, students grade 12 and below will be required to be transported in a school bus, multifunction school-activity bus (MFSAB), or First Division Vehicle (vehicles designed by the manufacturer to transport 10 or fewer persons) for these events.

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Federal Stimulus Package)** – If your school receives Title I, Title II or IDEA services from the local school district, it is imperative you communicate that your students are entitled to equitable participation in services funded by that federal money. It will take meaningful consultation with the local school district, but be sure your students receive their lawfully entitled services.

## Administrative Update

**Important Dates** – Most likely, your school has already submitted the following documents and data, but just in case, I wanted to include the deadlines for each. In most cases, a school principal can check ISBE's IWAS system to check the status of these reports.

- 1) **Nonpublic School Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report: 12/31/09**
- 2) **Student Health Data – Immunization: 11/16/09 (system opened 10/16/09)**
- 3) **Student Health Data – Vision: 6/30/10 (system opened 10/16/09)**

\* Please remember children must receive physical examinations prior to entering Illinois schools for the first time, prior to the date of entering kindergarten or first grade, prior to entering sixth grade, and prior to entering ninth grade. The immunization requirements, K-12, can be found here: [http://www.isbe.net/research/pdfs/immunization\\_requirements.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/research/pdfs/immunization_requirements.pdf)

**State Recognition** – We continue to work with ISBE to draft administrative rules for the governing of the nonpublic school recognition program. These rules will take the place of the current Policies and Guidelines Manual controlling state recognition operations. The rulemaking will provide some badly-needed stability to the program by raising its profile, providing another source of necessity and requiring ISBE to perform the function not only in statute but also in administrative law. Through consultation and meeting, the draft rules have moved through the first period of public comment. We are largely pleased with the result but will continue our work on this until the process is complete.

**Alternative Certification** – CCI remains engaged in the proposed revision of administrative rules governing the process for individuals seeking their teacher certification through alternative methods (outside colleges of education). Their first draft required these folks to do their student teaching only in public schools, so they could ensure each candidate was teaching with other certified teachers. CCI has worked with other interested parties to revise the proposed rules so as to include Catholic schools – since we require either certification or being on the path to certification as a condition of employment. ISBE is scheduled to meet in late October to take up this question, and we will continue our advocacy.

**Illinois Coalition of Nonpublic Schools (ICNS)** – ICNS has committed to working side-by-side with CCI to restore funding to the Textbook Loan, ADA Block Grant, and Parent Transportation Reimbursement Programs. Representatives from ICNS have already testified at ISBE budget hearings and have made a real commitment to be represented in Springfield during the spring session to do everything possible to help restore these funds. I again ask that your school consider joining ICNS if not already a member. A membership form can be found on their web site – *www.icns.net* – and the cost is only \$50 a year.

**Facebook Page for Catholic School Advocacy** – Always hoping to improve our system and methods of communication, and eager to invite more into new technologies, I have begun a Facebook page for Catholic School Advocacy in Illinois. Facebook users simply need to look up the page at *http://www.facebook.com/pages/Springfield-IL/CCI-Catholic-School-Advocacy-in-Illinois/124415842483?created* or do a search on Facebook of Catholic School Advocacy. Being a fan of the page will allow you to receive real time updates and action alerts, links to pertinent articles and videos and access to the monthly newsletter.

I hope you like the more concise October newsletter. It is always difficult to balance all the information I would like to get out versus what becomes clutter distracting people as busy and dedicated as yourselves. Hopefully, that balance has been struck this month, but, as always, if you have any questions or concerns please email or call me. I pray that God will continue to bless your efforts on behalf of the Church.

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