



Good News: Newly Signed Bills

The legislative session ended on April 25, and Governor Jay Inslee was given 20 subsequent days to sign bills into law. Bills in this section were recently signed into law and are listed by date signed.



Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act

On May 17 [Senate Bill 5141](#) (SB 5141), the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act, was signed into law by Governor Inslee. Low-income and communities of color are disproportionately affected by environmental burdens. The HEAL Act addresses this by implementing recommendations of the [Environmental Justice Task Force](#). Among its provisions, the HEAL Act defines environmental justice and requires some state agencies to complete environmental justice assessments, using a racial justice lens. The HEAL Act also incorporates tribal consultation, directs funding with environmental benefits towards communities highly impacted by pollution or climate change, and establishes the Environmental Justice Council. In accordance with the call of Pope Francis to care for God's creation in *Laudato Si'*, the WSSC supports the HEAL Act.

Clean Fuels Bill

On May 17 [House Bill 1091](#) (HB 1091), the Clean Fuels Bill, was signed into law by Governor Inslee. The Clean Fuels Bill reduces the carbon intensity of transportation fuel to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. An amendment was passed stipulating that the clean fuels program will begin only after the state Legislature passes a transportation package. At the same time, HB 1091 stipulates that the clean fuels program must start no later than January 1, 2023. In accordance with the call of Pope Francis to care for God's creation in *Laudato Si'*, the WSSC supports HB 1091.

Juneteenth

On May 13 [House Bill 1016](#) (HB 1016), which will make Juneteenth a holiday, was signed into law by Governor Inslee. Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, the effective date of the Emancipation Proclamation, when Galveston, Texas learned the Civil War ended, and enslaved people were freed. Juneteenth commemorates the abolition of slavery and recognizes the contributions of Black/African Americans. Forty-six states recognize Juneteenth as a holiday or day of observance. As part of the bishops' racial justice legislative priority, the WSCC supports HB 1016.

Farmworker Housing

On May 11 Governor Inslee signed [Senate Bill 5396](#) (SB 5396) into law. SB 5396 encourages the building and maintenance of farmworker housing by expanding tax exemptions to include housing in which at least 50% of housing units are used as farmworker housing. Tax exemptions are also broadened to include seasonal farmworker housing and housing occupied by households with at least one member who is a farmworker. In line with the bishops' housing and immigration legislative priorities, the WSCC supports SB 5396.

Extensions to Economic Assistance Programs

On May 10 Governor Inslee signed [Senate Bill 5214](#) (SB 5214), which provides extensions to economic assistance programs, into law. As the economic impacts of COVID-19 have affected low-income families and individuals disproportionately, SB 5214 creates benefit extensions for recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). TANF provides temporary cash assistance, subsidized childcare, and work programs for families. Under SB 5214 TANF recipients may apply for hardship extensions during months that the state unemployment rate is at or above 7%. In line with the bishops' economic justice legislative priority, the WSCC supports SB 5214.

Bill That Helps Trafficking and Domestic Violence Survivors Signed Into Law

On May 10 Governor Inslee signed [Senate Bill 5180](#) (SB 5180) into law. SB 5180 assists victims of sex trafficking, prostitution, commercial sexual abuse, or domestic violence by establishing a process to vacate, or cancel, convictions related to their victimization. This bill will help survivors rebuild their lives by clearing them of convictions that may hurt their chances to gain employment or benefits. Related to the bishops' legislative priority to respect life and the dignity of all human persons, the WSCC supports SB 5180.

Just Cause Eviction

On May 10 [House Bill 1236](#) (HB 1236), which addresses just cause for evictions, was signed by Governor Inslee. Under current law, landlords can evict tenants with just 20 days notice, even if the tenant has never violated lease terms nor paid rent late. Landlords are not required to provide any reason for such "no cause" terminations, which allows discrimination and retaliation to go unchecked. BIPOC households are disproportionately impacted, with Black women experiencing the highest eviction rates. HB 1236 protects tenants by penalizing the inclusion of unlawful provisions in lease agreements and limiting reasons for eviction, refusal to renew a tenancy, and termination of tenancy. In accordance with the bishops' housing and economic justice priorities, the WSCC supports HB 1236.

Pathways from Prison to Postsecondary Education

On May 10 Governor Inslee signed [House Bill 1044](#) (HB 1044), which provides pathways from prison to postsecondary education. HB 1044 permits the Department of Corrections (DOC) to

implement postsecondary education certificate and degree programs at state correctional institutions. It also establishes processes for identifying, assessing and accommodating incarcerated persons with learning disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, and cognitive impairments. Related to the bishops' restorative justice priority, the WSCC supports HB 1044.

Working Families Tax Exemption

On May 4 Governor Inslee signed [House Bill 1297](#) (HB 1297), the Working Families Tax Exemption, into law. Also commonly known as the Working Families Tax Credit or the Recovery Rebate, HB 1297 will assist low-income, working individuals and families, including tax-paying immigrants. The HB 1297 tax credit addresses Washington's regressive tax system, which causes low-income Washingtonians to pay six times more in taxes as a percentage of their household income in comparison to wealthier residents. The Working Families Tax Credit would reach 500,000 households, including one in four children; have an outsized impact on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities; and would provide a base credit of \$500 to \$900. In accordance with the bishops' priorities of the state budget, economic justice, and racial justice, the WSCC supports HB 1297.

Recap: Other WSCC-Supported Bills

Bills Passed During the Legislative Session

As a recap, bills in this section are supported by the WSCC and passed into law prior to the end of the legislative session on April 25.

Postpartum Maternal Health Coverage

On April 16 Governor Inslee signed [Senate Bill 5068](#) (SB 5068) into law. SB 5068 expands postpartum maternal coverage from **60 days to one year** for recipients of Apple Health. Apple Health provides health coverage for eligible families, children, low-income adults, and certain disabled individuals. Throughout Washington State and the US, maternal mortality rates are much higher than other developed countries, with stark ethnic disparities. Related to our health care and racial justice legislative priorities, the WSCC supports SB 5068.

Civil Legal Aid Funds for Undocumented Immigrants

On April 16 Governor Inslee signed [House Bill 1072](#) (HB 1072) into law. HB 1072 gives undocumented immigrants access to civil legal aid funds. These funds can be used for legal matters such as domestic relations and family law, elder abuse, disability rights, and health care. In accordance with the bishops' legislative priorities to help low-income individuals, including immigrants, the WSCC supports HB 1072.

Copays for Student Reduced-Price Lunches Eliminated

On April 16 Governor Inslee signed [House Bill 1342](#) (HB 1342) into law. HB 1342 eliminates lunch copays for students who qualify for reduced-price lunches under the National School Lunch Program. This program provides nutritionally balanced meals to qualifying low-income children at public schools and nonprofit private schools, including Catholic schools. Related to the bishops' legislative priorities of economic justice and supporting families and children, the WSCC supports HB 1342.

Prohibition of Private, For-Profit Detention Facilities

On April 14 Governor Inslee signed [House Bill 1090](#) (HB 1090) into law. HB 1090 prohibits state and local governments from using private, for-profit detention centers, which are outside

the purview of public oversight and accountability. Profiteering should not be associated with the detention system. Related to the bishops' restorative justice and immigration legislative priorities, the WSCC supports HB 1090.

Voter Rights Restoration

On April 7 Governor Inslee signed [House Bill 1078](#) (HB 1078) into law. HB 1078 will automatically restore voter eligibility to individuals convicted of a felony offense who are not serving a sentence of total confinement under the authority of the Department of Corrections. Currently, convicted persons must undergo a two-step process to regain voting eligibility. The new law's effective date is January 1, 2022. In accordance with the Washington bishops' restorative justice legislative priority, the WSCC supports HB 1078.

HB 1151, Which Bolsters Economic Recovery, Signed Into Law

On March 31 Governor Inslee signed [House Bill 1151](#) (HB 1151) into law. This new law will bolster economic recovery by providing assistance to families in need. HB 1151 also requires the Department of Social and Health Services to update standards of need for cash assistance programs. Current standards are based on a 1991 study of living costs and do not accurately capture current need. Updating standards will have multiplying effects in getting assistance to more qualifying families and individuals. HB 1151 also permits Consolidated Emergency Assistance to be provided more than once in a 12-month period when directed by the governor and provides a one-time cash benefit and transitional food assistance. In accordance with the bishops' economic justice priority, the WSCC supports HB 1151.

Private Schools Emergency Waiver

On March 2 the governor signed [House Bill 1131](#) (HB 1131) into law. HB 1131 provides a waiver for private schools to maintain their approval status when they are unable to meet minimum school days or instructional hours due to a significant disruption resulting from an emergency situation. This bill is favorable to Catholic schools and allows them to be in good status with the state as schools contend with the challenges of the pandemic. Related to the bishops' Catholic Schools legislative priority, the WSCC supports HB 1131.

Additional State Legislative Updates

Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) Program Funding Increased

The Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) program provides essential needs, such as rent and utility assistance, to individuals who are experiencing homelessness or are at substantial risk of homelessness. Funding for this program is determined by the operating budget. For fiscal year 2022, \$62.7 million has been designated for HEN, and \$65.3 million has been designated for fiscal year 2023. These numbers reflect the highest amount originally proposed by the House budget and are an increase from the previous biennial budget. Additionally, \$2.6 million in federal funding has been designated for HEN. A pilot program assisting HEN recipients transitioning to Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a federal program designed to help aged, blind, or disabled individuals who have little or no income, will also be continued. Thank you to Catholic Advocacy Day participants who urged their legislators to fund HEN to the highest possible level.

Housing Trust Fund

The Housing Trust Fund (HTF) enables organizations such as Catholic Charities to build affordable housing. \$175 million has been appropriated for the HTF in the capital budget. This

is the same amount that was designated in the previous biennial budget. Thank you to Catholic Advocacy day participants who urged their legislators to fund the HTF to the highest possible level.

Assisted Suicide Bill Fails

Your voice made an impact. The Senate failed to vote on [House Bill 1141](#) (HB 1141), the expansion of assisted suicide prior to the April 11 deadline to pass bills out of both chambers. The bill is now dead for this session, but it is expected to return for the 2022 legislative session. Thank you to Catholic advocates for sending out nearly 1,500 messages to your legislators to vote against this bill. In 2008 Washington voters approved Initiative 1000, the Physician-Assisted Death Initiative, but only after being assured that certain “safeguards” would be in place. HB 1141 loosens safeguards, increasing access to physician-assisted suicide and accelerating the process. The bill broadens the definition of a “qualified medical provider” who can make a diagnosis and prescribe lethal medication. HB 1141 also loosens the definition of those who can provide counseling; in lieu of a psychiatrist or psychologist, a social worker, mental health counselor, or psychiatric advanced nurse practitioner may determine if a patient is suffering from a psychiatric or psychological disorder or depression causing impaired judgement. Additionally, this bill shortens the minimum amount of time from 15 days to just 72 hours that a patient is required to wait between making a request and receiving a prescription to terminate his or her life. The 72 hour wait time may even be waived if the “qualified medical provider” deems that a patient has less than 72 hours to live. HB 1141 also permits assisted suicide prescriptions to be delivered via the mail. Bishop Mueggenborg of the Archdiocese of Seattle and Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) Executive Director, Mario Villanueva, testified against HB 1141 on January 18. View their [testimony](#) at 1:29:02. In accordance with the bishops’ legislative priority to respect life, the WSCC opposed HB 1141.

WSCC Legislative Priorities

Each year the bishops of Washington establish state legislative priorities based on the teachings of the Catholic Church. Details of these 11 priorities may be found on our [website](#). These priorities are reflected in the WSCC’s positions on the bills above.

Save the Date



Virtual Cornerstone Catholic Conference: October 30

The bishops of Washington State invite you to attend the virtual [Cornerstone Catholic Conference](#) on October 30. Fr. Robert Spitzer and Gloria Purvis will present their keynote addresses in English, and the Washington bishops will be hosting a panel. Fr. Agustino Torres and Brenda Noriega will present their keynote addresses in Spanish. Pedro Rubalcava and Martín Valverde are featured musicians. Attendees may also choose two workshops to attend, and a selection of workshops will be presented in Spanish. There is no charge for this virtual conference, although donations are welcome. Registration will open soon on our [website](#).

From the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)

USCCB Respect Life Petition to Congress

Congress is considering legislation that would allow taxpayer money to be used for elective abortions. Click [here](#) to learn more and sign the USCCB petition stating your opposition to the use of taxpayer funds for abortions.

USCCB Welcome Revised Refugee Admissions Cap

Earlier this month the USCCB released a [statement](#) welcoming an increase to the number of refugees permitted into the US. There are 26 million refugees worldwide, and 47 million people are displaced internally. The Biden Administration will now permit 62,500 refugees to be resettled in the US. This is an increase over the historically lowest cap of 15,000 during the previous administration. The new cap is a stepping stone toward the goal of 125,000 refugee admissions. Over the past 40 years the average admissions goal has been 95,000 refugees.



MAY 4, 2021

"As a nation of immigrants, we have a moral obligation to help our brothers and sisters around the world who are in need. The updated refugee admissions cap is a step in the right direction to help those who need it most."

Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville
Chairman, Committee on Migration



Pregnancy and Parenting Support (PREPARES)

An initiative of the bishops of Washington state, [PREPARES](#) is a statewide Catholic program that offers local, sustainable support to mothers, fathers, and families in need as they nurture their children through pregnancy and early childhood. Thank you to those who recently contributed to the first annual PREPARES campaign. Additional campaign information may be found [here](#).

Important Dates

May	Foster Care Awareness Month
May 22	National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea
May 25	Laudato Si' Week concludes
June 22	Religious Freedom Week Begins
October 30	Virtual Cornerstone Catholic Conference

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