



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS *Candidate Questionnaire Project*

2018 U.S. CONGRESSIONAL QUESTIONS BACKGROUND

Do you support or oppose...

ABORTION CONSCIENCE PROTECTION: Passing the Conscience Protection Act to further protect health care providers from being forced to participate in abortions?

The Conscience Protection Act of 2018 ([H.R. 644](#) and [S. 301](#)) would make permanent the protections of the Hyde/Weldon conscience amendment, which forbids the Federal Government, and any State or local government receiving federal health care funds from discriminating against those who decline to take part in abortion or abortion coverage. The Weldon Amendment (76 Fed. Reg. 9968, 9974 (Feb. 23, 2011)) has been approved by Congress every year since 2004 as a part of annual appropriations law.

This Act would also ensure that victims of discrimination under that policy have a cause of action to protect their rights in court.

ASSISTED SUICIDE PREVENTION: Expressing the sense of Congress that assisted suicide puts everyone, especially the most vulnerable, at risk of deadly harm and undermines the integrity of the health care system?

In the 2017-18 Congress, Rep. Brad Wenstrup (OH) introduced a U.S. House Concurrent Resolution ([H. Con. Res. 80](#)) to express that the Federal Government should ensure that every person facing the end of their life has access to the best quality and comprehensive medical care, including palliative, in-home, or hospice care, tailored to their needs and that the Federal Government should not adopt or endorse policies or practices that support, encourage, or facilitate suicide or assisted suicide, whether by physicians or others.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE: Maintaining funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which provides low-cost, comprehensive health coverage for children of lower-income working families?

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, which provides matching funds to states to provide low-cost health coverage to children in families that earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to buy private insurance.

In 2016, approximately 375,000 children in Florida were covered by the state's CHIP program, known as KidCare. Enrollees in KidCare are required to pay monthly premiums of \$15 to \$20.

Earlier this year, President Trump signed legislation that reauthorized CHIP for six years and Congress passed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 ([H.R. 1892](#)), which reauthorized CHIP for an additional four years, extending CHIP through 2027. However, in May 2018, the administration proposed a \$15 billion "rescissions" package to reduce further spending, which was approved by the House in June. Nearly half of that "rescissions" package, \$7 billion, is taken from unspent CHIP funds.

ENVIRONMENT: Establishing a national Climate Solutions Commission to develop policies that are economically viable, protect the environment and mitigate the effects of climate change?

The Climate Solutions Commission Act ([H.R. 2326](#)), introduced in May 2017, would establish a commission with 10 members – five appointed by Republicans and five appointed by Democrats – to undertake a comprehensive review of economically viable public and private actions or policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The commission would make recommendations to the President, Congress and the states, and use as its goals for emissions reductions the estimated rates of reduction that reflect the latest scientific findings of what is needed to avoid serious health and environmental consequences.

FREEDOM TO SERVE: Protecting child welfare providers from being discriminated against by federal or state government entities due to the provider's religious beliefs or moral convictions?

The Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act currently pending in Congress prohibits the federal government, and any state or local government that receives federal funding for any program that provides child welfare services under part B (Child and Family Services) or part E (Foster Care and Adoption Assistance) of title IV of the Social Security Act (SSAct), from discriminating or taking an adverse action against a child welfare service provider that declines to provide, facilitate, or refer for a child welfare service that conflicts with the provider's sincerely held religious beliefs or moral convictions. On April 4, 2017 the Senate bill ([S. 811](#)) was introduced by Sen. Michael Enzi Lee (WY) and the House bill ([H.R. 1881](#)) by Rep. Mike Kelly (PA).

GUN CONTROL: Restricting access to firearms by requiring universal background checks and bans of high capacity magazines and bump stocks?

Violence in society will not be solved by a single piece of legislation, and many factors contribute to it. Significant damage can be caused when weapons too easily find their way into the hands of those who use them to harm others. While respecting Second Amendment rights, universal background checks help to limit and control access to firearms to those who might be prone to harm others. High capacity magazines and bump stocks make weapons more lethal and more like automatic weapons.

In 2018, Florida enacted a law that bans bump stocks, prohibits a person under 21 years of age from purchasing a firearm, and imposes a three-day waiting period for the purchase of all firearms.

IMMIGRATION: Achieving reforms that offer a path to citizenship for the undocumented who live in the U.S. and do not have a criminal record, expand family reunification and worker visas, secure our borders, and establish humane enforcement practices?

Immigration policy reform proposals have included:

Earned citizenship: an earned citizenship program would allow foreign nationals who are living in the U.S. and do not have a criminal record the opportunity to adjust their immigration status. Such a program would create an eventual path to citizenship, requiring applicants to complete and pass background checks, pay a fine, and establish eligibility for resident status to participate in the program. Such a program should not be characterized as "amnesty".

Visa expansion: the expansion of family reunification visas will reduce current backlogs in family categories of persons who have been waiting for numerous years to enter the U.S. and reunite with their families with proper documentation. A temporary worker program allows safe, legal entry and job portability for migrant workers while meeting the nation's economic demand for immigrant labor.

Secure borders and humane enforcement: targeted, proportional, and humane efforts to intercept unauthorized migrants who attempt to enter the U.S.

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE: Expanding funding for U.S. international humanitarian and development assistance, which currently represents 0.6% of the federal budget?

Poverty-focused international development represents just over one-half percent (0.6%) of the federal budget. Sustainable development and humanitarian programs seek long-term solutions in under-developed and poor countries.

*Examples of priority accounts and proposed funding levels can be found at:
http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/upload/CRS-USCCB_FY19_Approps_Chart.pdf*

MENTAL HEALTH: Increasing resources for the early identification and treatment of emotional and psychological disorders and addiction?

Many states continue to implement changes to mental health and law enforcement public policy to respond to the growing substance abuse crisis in our communities. Enhanced federal support for increased mental health services can supplement the response from state governments. Federal resources would be directed to assist mental health providers to deliver more recovery services as well as to provide resources to community partners, such as churches and schools, to assist with early identification of mental health issues.

The House passed the Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT) for Patients and Communities Act ([H.R. 6](#)) in late June 2018. The bill did not contain specific funding for mental health. However, there was funding to combat the opioid crisis in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 ([H.R. 1625](#)) passed in March 2018. Of the over \$3 billion dedicated to fighting opioids, \$1.4 billion will go to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), including \$1 billion for a new State Opioid Response Grant program and a \$160 million increase in the Mental Health Block Grant.

PARENTAL EMPOWERMENT: Creating education savings accounts for students in military and Native American families to use for nonpublic school tuition?

An education savings account (ESA) program would follow the principle that “the money follows the child” by allowing more taxpaying parents to select the education setting deemed suitable for their children

At present, more than 50% of military families live in states that offer no school choice scholarships. Moreover, 35% of service members have considered abandoning military service altogether due to the limited educational options seen for their schoolchildren, according to a recent survey by Military Times. Under the ESA Program, the U.S. Secretary of Education would establish special accounts on behalf of a military family (if so chosen by the family) to pay for applicable education expenses, including nonpublic school tuition.

An ESA for Native Americans families would increase access to a high quality education for this at-risk minority population. According to some national estimates, the high school graduation rate for Native Americans is as low as 50%.