

# LEGISLATIVE HOT LINE



**1-800-869-6525 Ext 6690**

**Sponsored by the Five Catholic Commissions and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development of the Secretariat for Catholic Charities Health and Human Services Diocese of Cleveland**

March 3, 2006

**DARFUR: Rally to Stop Genocide:** The Sudanese government's genocidal campaign in Darfur has claimed over 400,000 lives and driven two million people from their homes. It is time to act and we need your help! President Bush recently pledged to push for additional UN and NATO help to protect the people of Darfur. We applaud his leadership, but the work is far from done. This rally will be a chance to urge the President to take the necessary steps to end the genocide and build a lasting peace for the people of Darfur.

In Washington, DC on April 30, 2006 thousands of people from across the country will join "SAVE DARFUR: Rally to Stop Genocide". Postcards are available through the Commissions. Help collect signed postcard for the Million Voices for Darfur campaign and think about joining us on buses to Washington on April 30. Call (800)869-6525 Ext.6690 and leave your name and phone number to be contacted. Check the website [www.savedarfur.org/rally](http://www.savedarfur.org/rally) for more information Also you can voice your concern by sending an electronic postcard as part of the Electric Postcard Campaign by visiting [www.millionvoicesfordarfur.org](http://www.millionvoicesfordarfur.org).

**Predatory Lending Practices:** Ohio leads the nation in home foreclosure filings. Due to the work of advocates from around the state, Ohio may soon have significant legislation that regulates brokers and appraisers. Passage of such a bill would be historic and provide consumer protection and relief to all Ohioans.

Predatory lending is the unscrupulous practice that targets seniors, low income individuals and minorities with high pressure marketing tactics, high interest rates, unfair loan terms, and complicated exorbitant fees that are not clearly explained. Over the past several years, there has been increasing advocacy among community and parish groups in the Diocese, as well as, throughout the state to address this onerous practice that strips thousands out of the equity of their homes. Although low income African American and Hispanic persons are at a high risk of predatory lending, the practice is also entrapping persons in suburban communities.

Despite heavy opposition by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, Sub S.B. 185 passed the Ohio Senate on February 22, 2006 by a 29-4 vote. The bill now goes to the Ohio House. Housing advocates maintain that two provisions in the bill pertaining to awarding of actual damages to consumers and the fiduciary responsibility of the lender are essential to a strong consumer protection bill.

Action: This is a crucial issue for Ohioans. Contact your House Member and urge him/her to support the strongest, predatory lending bill possible. Urge them not to

resist efforts to water down Sub. S.B. 185. For more information, visit COHHIO's web site at [www.cohhio.org](http://www.cohhio.org). Write your member of the Ohio House of Representatives at 77 S. Broad St., Columbus, Ohio 43266-0603.

**Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington, joins national Ecumenical Effort Calling for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, March 1, 2006:**

The U.S. Senate is poised to consider legislation which could change how our country responds to the newcomer, to the downtrodden, and to the oppressed who come to our shores seeking a better life. Immigration is not a simple issue... we believe that immigration is not just a theoretical policy issue, but ultimately a humanitarian issue that impacts the basic dignity and life of the person, created in the image and likeness of God. It is because of its impact on basic human dignity and human life that we believe immigration is, first and foremost, a moral issue.

All sides in the debate agree on one thing: our nation's immigration policy is flawed and needs to be repaired. It is a matter of human justice.

Every day, we in the Catholic Church see the human consequences of this flawed system. Our parishes, agencies, hospitals, and pastoral ministries are called upon daily to respond to the many needs of new immigrants, hard-working people who have fled their homeland in despair and fear.

Changing the status quo is an issue of moral gravity. Our nation must create an immigration response that is humane, while also serving our nation's economic and national security needs. Any legislation must include:

- policy directions which address the root causes of migration, such as economic development, so that migrants can remain in their home countries to support themselves and their families;
- reform of our legal immigration system, including the adoption of an earned legalization program for undocumented workers and their families; a temporary worker program with appropriate protections for both U.S. and foreign workers; and reform of the family preference system, so families can be reunited in a timely fashion;
- restoration of due process protections for immigrants to allow them to have "their day in court," consistent with American values.

These elements are best embodied in S. 1033/H.R. 2330, the *Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005*. **As the Senate Judiciary Committee and the full U.S. Senate begin consideration of a Senate bill, we ask that principles embodied in the *Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act* receive strong consideration and support.** We also ask that the Agricultural Jobs, Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act legislation, which helps our nation's farm workers, and the DREAM Act, which assists undocumented students who came to our nation through no fault of their own, and the Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act are included in any final legislative package.

**Only a comprehensive approach to immigration reform will effectively address our nation's immigration crisis. This is why the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) strongly opposes H.R. 4437, the Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Act of 2005, an enforcement-only bill which was passed by the House of Representatives in December.**

**Action:** CALL THE CAPITAL SWITCHBOARD AT 202-224-3121 or email to: Senator [voinovich@voinovich.senate.gov](mailto:voinovich@voinovich.senate.gov); Senator [dewine@dewine.senate.gov](mailto:dewine@dewine.senate.gov), or write to: Senate House Building, Washington, DC 20510; House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515 to register your position on these important issues.

## ***EVENTS***

Lenten Series on the Holy Land: **Holy Land Lenten Lecture Series The Church: A Sign of Hope in the Holy Land, March 25 - April 2, 2006, an opportunity for churches, schools, colleges, religious communities to learn more about the search for peace in the Holy Land.** In cooperation with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) the Diocesan Council on Global Solidarity is bringing together several outstanding speakers and is making them available to groups in Northeast Ohio. Available for presentations are individuals and groups that have witnessed and can give testimony to the current situation in the Holy Land. To schedule a speaker for your parish, school or organization contact Deacon Rocky Ortiz, Diocesan CRS Director and liaison to the Diocesan Council on Global Solidarity, at (440) 245-5043 [jrortiz@clevelandcatholiccharities.org](mailto:jrortiz@clevelandcatholiccharities.org)

17<sup>th</sup> Annual **Peace and Justice Dinner**, sponsored by the Catholic Action Commission Lorain County will be held on **March 25, 2006** at St Joseph Parish Hall, 200 Joseph Drive in Amherst. Hospitality begins at 6:00pm, dinner at 7:00pm. John Carr, Secretary Department of Social Policy and World Development, US Conference of Catholic Bishops will be the guest speaker. **Call 440-244-6037 for more information.**

Information on our "**Sowers of Justice: Leadership for the Common Good**" series, sponsored by our Diocesan Education and Training Center for Social Justice is available on our web site: [www.catholic-action.org](http://www.catholic-action.org) or by **calling 330-535-2787**. **This is a 5 part series intended to develop and strengthen social justice leadership skills among parishioners and those interested in social action.**

***FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THESE EVENTS, RESOURCES, OR ANY LEGISLATIVE ISSUES, PLEASE CALL THE DIOCESAN SOCIAL ACTION OFFICE AT 216-281-3851, or visit our web page at [www.catholic-action.org](http://www.catholic-action.org). Thank you.***