

# Branches on the Vine

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

JUNE 20 - 26, 2026

## Catholic Public Policy Office Celebrates Legislative Wins

- Story by Jim Tierney

The Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference had a successful 2026 legislative session, helping defeat efforts to expand abortion rights, weaken protections for Catholic hospitals and schools, and restrict vacation Bible schools.

"Like all advocacy groups, the conference depends greatly on those who respond to our action alerts and contact their elected representatives and submit testimony," says Deacon David Reynolds, the Conference's associate director of public policy. "Thanks to the hard work of faithful citizens who did their part, we were able to protect our religious freedom and respect for life."

Below is a summary of proposals opposed by the Conference, the voice of the Catholic Church on issues, during the Connecticut Legislative Session that adjourned May 6.

**Senate Bill 295, Abortion/Gender Identity Shield Law.** The Conference opposed a bill expanding legal protections for abortion and transgender-related telehealth providers across state lines, arguing it would hinder other states' ability to enforce their laws; the bill died on the Senate calendar.

"Many states and European nations are changing regulations for minors with gender dysphoria based on new studies," Reynolds explains. "Connecticut should not protect doctors treating patients in other states through telemedicine where that approach is banned."

**House Bill 5516, Religious Freedom – Catholic Hospitals.** The Conference opposed this bill, arguing it would limit Catholic hospitals' ability to enforce their

religious healthcare directives. The bill died on the House calendar.

"If someone was to read this proposed legislation the attack on Catholic hospitals would not be self-evident," Reynolds says. "However, once the testimony is given at the public hearing the target becomes very clear. The advocates want doctors within Catholic hospitals to provide support for abortions and gender-affirming care, without any disciplinary actions taken against them."

**House Bill 5309, Parental Notification for a Minor's Abortion.** The bill would have required parents to be notified when a minor seeks an abortion, though it did not require parental consent. The bill received its first public hearing on the issue in Connecticut but died in committee without a vote.

"Connecticut has a mixed public policy on minors," Reynolds explains. "Parts of our laws hold that a minor is not mature enough mentally to decide about getting a tattoo or taking an aspirin at school without a parent's permission. However, when it comes to obtaining an abortion, they are mature enough to make a decision to have one without any parental involvement."

**House Bill 5044 (Vaccine Bill) Protect Religious Freedom Restoration Act.** The Conference opposed HB 5044's removal

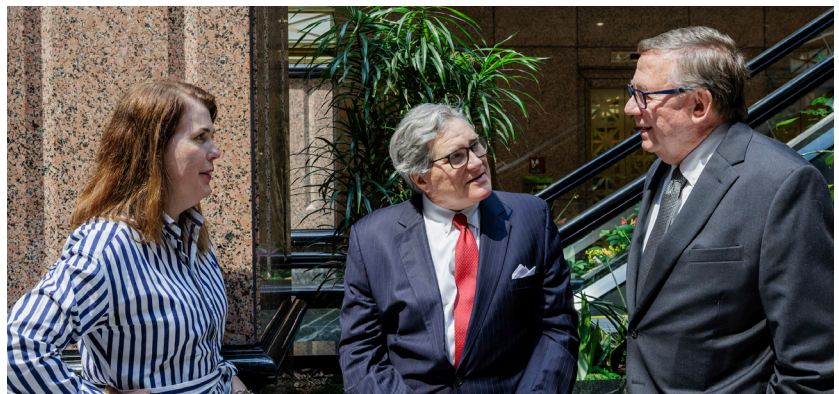
of certain vaccination laws from Connecticut's Religious Freedom Restoration Act, arguing that it weakens religious liberty protections and sets a troubling precedent. The bill was ultimately passed and was signed into law.

*"Although the Church has no formal objections to vaccinations, eroding a law that is meant to give citizens a right to protect their religious beliefs is a major concern," Reynolds explains. "The Conference views this as an erosion of religious liberty in our state and an opening of the door to future limitations on our first freedom."*

**Senate Bill 137 Vacation Bible School Reclassification.** The Conference opposed a provision that would have subjected vacation Bible schools to day camp regulations and fees, arguing it would burden churches. The language was later removed from the bill.

"The original language in this bill would have been devastating to all Catholic and non-Catholic vacation Bible schools in our state," Reynolds says. "We are very fortunate that we were able to get the language removed."

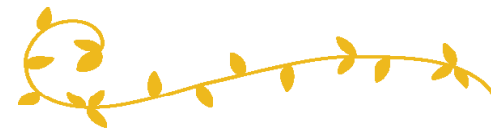
*To stay informed of Connecticut Catholic Conference issues, call 860.524.7882 or visit [action.ctcatholicpac.org](http://action.ctcatholicpac.org) or [ctcatholic.org](http://ctcatholic.org).*



Pictured outside the Legislative Office Building are representatives from the Connecticut Catholic Conference, from left: Anne LaMonica, associate director for education; Christopher Healy, executive director; and Deacon David Reynolds, associate director for public policy. PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH



# Upcoming Events



JUNE 4 - AUGUST 27 @ 6 - 8PM  
**SUMMER ALPHA YOUNG  
ADULT GROUP**  
St. Margaret Mary Church,  
Rectory Basement, South Windsor

Welcome to all people ages 18 to 39 years old. Join us for food, friendship, faith, and fun, every Thursday throughout the summer! Every week we share pizza, watch faith-based videos, and participate in small group discussions. If you have any questions, text 860-816-6149. Our welcoming group would love to have you join us!



JUNE 23 @ 9AM - 3PM  
**ARTISTS WITH THE SPIRIT,  
DAYS ON THE LAKE**  
Sacred Heart on the Lake Retreat  
Center, Higganum

We offer a quiet, spiritual, and naturally inspiring atmosphere to paint, write, sketch, or craft. Because the retreat center is situated right on the water, it provides the perfect backdrop for the day. Please bring your lunch and art supplies. Coffee, tea and other hot and cold drinks will be provided. Sr. Lany Jo will be available for any help or guidance wanted. A Free Will Offering is asked for this day. Registration is absolutely necessary at [sacredheartonthelake.org](http://sacredheartonthelake.org) or call at 203-606-9102.



AUGUST 6 - 8 @ 5PM - 10PM  
**HOLY ROSARY'S ANNUAL  
ITALIAN FESTIVAL**  
Our Lady of the Valley Parish,  
Holy Rosary Church, Ansonia

Our Annual Italian Festival offers wonderful Italian food, featuring our handmade meatballs, lasagna, pasta e fagioli, porchetta, fried calamari, fried dough and more! Don't forget to grab some Italian pastries for dessert! Enjoy live music, dancing, raffles, and fun for the kids. Bring your family and friends and your appetite!



JUNE 26 @ 7PM \$15  
**URUGUAY VS. SPAIN WATCH PARTY  
YOUNG CATHOLIC PROFESSIONALS**  
Thomas Hooker Brewery, Bloomfield

Join us for a fun night of soccer, fellowship, great food, and community as we watch Uruguay take on Spain during THE international Soccer Tournament of the Summer. Your ticket includes pizza, wings, and pretzels, and the evening will feature a halftime raffle and match prediction game with prizes.

Scan QR code to RSVP.



JULY 9 - 11 @ 5PM - 9PM  
**SUMMER FOOD FESTIVAL**  
Our Lady Queen of the Apostles  
Parish, St. Mary Church, Derby

Our Summer Food Festival brings our parish and our community together for a joyful celebration held right in our church parking lot. Featuring delicious food tents, special evenings with live music, family-friendly games for children, and the excitement of announcing our annual raffle winners, the festival is a highlight of the summer season! Visit us on Facebook @StMarysChurchDerbyCt or on our website [www.OLQAderby.org](http://www.OLQAderby.org).



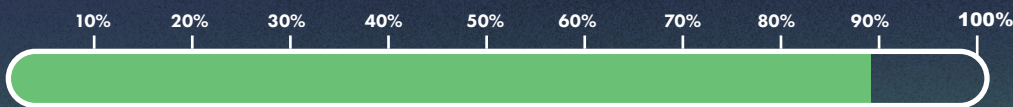
JULY 9 - 11  
**ST. ANTHONY CHURCH  
CARNIVAL**  
St. Anthony Church, Prospect

The St. Anthony Church Carnival brings three exciting nights of food, games, and community spirit from July 9–11. Admission and parking are completely free, with food service featuring daily classics alongside unique nightly Polish, Italian, and Mexican cuisines.

Thursday, July 9th: 6PM - 10PM  
Friday, July 10th: 6PM - 10PM  
Saturday, July 11th: 3PM - 10PM

## 2026 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

Scan the QR code to learn how you can make a lasting impact!



Total Goal: \$10M 89.50% as of 6/9/26

\$8,950,284.69 in pledges from 24,624 generous donors

\*This figure does not include bequests given to  
the Archbishop's Annual Appeal



**WE ARE  
ONE**

[www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal](http://www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal)