

# **CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS FOR THE RESPECT LIFE ADVISORY BOARD OF THE DIOCESE OF JOLIET**

## **I. General Description**

In November, 1975, the U.S. Catholic bishops approved and issued a document entitled the Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities. The purpose of this document was to activate the Church, its people, and its institutions, through education, pastoral care and public policy), to defend human life. Subsequently, in November 2001, the U.S. Catholic bishops reaffirmed and approved for publication the Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life to put forth a strong reaffirmation of the value of human life and its inviolability as well as an urgent need for every person to respect, protect, love and serve every human life. This pastoral plan called upon all the resources of the Church, its people, services and institutions to vigorously pursue this effort with renewed energy. As a result, in March, 2009, the Bishop of the Diocese of Joliet formed the Respect Life Advisory Board (RLAB). This advisory group coordinates activities of the pastoral plan within the diocese. The RLAB is strictly an advisory board that makes recommendations to the Bishop. Implementation of approved plans is the work of various diocesan action committees.

## **II. Mission Statement**

Following the guidelines of the Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life, the primary purpose of the RLAB is to promote, build and cultivate the culture of life within the diocese, and to provide the Bishop with a clear vision of the action the Diocese should take to best foster the protection and the respect of human life. Another purpose of the RLAB is to advise the Bishop on the concrete implementation of the Church's constant teaching on the sanctity of human life and the specific statement of the US Bishops pastoral plan for pro-life activities within the diocese. The RLAB will work to pursue this effort and accomplish this mission by concentrating its efforts in four main areas:

- A. Public Information and Education
- B. Pastoral Care
- C. Public Policy Program
- D. Prayer and Worship

## **III. Means to Achieve the Mission**

RLAB's mission to serve as a forum to promote respect and protection for every human life may be pursued through the following and other appropriate means:

- A. direct and coordinate the diocesan and parish pro-life information and educational program, providing appropriate resources as necessary;
- B. provide educational opportunities and time for sharing program information among members of parish pro-life committees;
- C. support local programs that counsel and assist women with problems related to pregnancy and to promote the establishment of new programs where needed;
- D. encourage and support a diocese-wide post-abortion ministry;
- E. encourage and support local programs that provide care for the dying;
- F. encourage and coordinate programs of prayer and worship that focus on the sanctity of all human life.
- G. maintain working relationships with local pro-life groups and encourage the development of local pro-life groups that encourage the development of local pro-life lobbying networks; encourage the development of pro-life programs and groups for youth;
- H. maintain a local public information program that monitors print and broadcast media's treatment of pro-life issues, and prepare appropriate responses
- I. undertake, depending on financial resources, appropriate public advertising campaigns;
- J. develop responsible and effective communications with each elected representative including getting to know them personally through one-on-one visits, telephone calls, letters and emails;
- K. maintain communications with the Catholics for Life Department of the Catholic Conference of Illinois, the Secretariat for pro-life Activities and with the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment
- L. report periodically to the diocesan bishop on the status of the implementation of the pastoral plan.

#### **IV. Organization**

##### **A. Membership**

1. The RLAB shall consist of (12-14) members.
2. Members may include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a) representatives of diocesan agencies;

- b) representatives of lay organizations;
  - c) medical, legal, public affairs and financial advisors;
  - d) representatives of local pro-life groups; and
  - e) representatives of parish pro-life/respect life committees;
3. Members are appointed exclusively by the Diocesan Bishop of Joliet and the RLAB is hereby dissolved upon his transfer or resignation.

#### B. Rights and Duties of Members

1. Members have the duty to attend the quarterly meetings.
2. Members have the right to actively participate in meetings and other activities of the RLAB, including voting for or against the various issues put to a vote. Approval for any issue put to a vote is obtained upon two-thirds votes of the participants at the quarterly RLAB meeting.
3. The resignation of any member of the RLAB, or of any Officer shall be submitted in writing to the Corresponding Secretary.

#### C. Structural Organization

1. RLAB was formed and operates under the auspices of the Diocese of Joliet.
2. RLAB meets on a quarterly basis or as determined necessary by the diocesan pro-life director. Ordinarily, the quarterly meeting will be held on a time determined at least two months in advance. The meeting will begin at 7:00 PM and will be held at the St. Charles Borromeo Pastoral Center, 402 S. Independence Blvd., Romeoville, IL 60446.
3. At the quarterly meeting the RLAB will:
  - a) Receive the report of the minutes from the previous meeting;
  - b) Receive the report of the chair of any steering committee;
  - c) Receive the report of the Director of the Diocesan Life Office;
  - d) Receive the report of any other member of the RLAB or guest as determined by the RLAB at a previous meeting.

- e) Review and consider action steps and recommendations made by any member and/or steering committee;
  - f) Decide on programs and activities of the RLAB;
  - g) Submit these proposed programs to the Diocesan Action Committee for implementation upon the approval of the Diocesan Bishop; and
  - h) Confirm the agenda for the next quarterly meeting as well as the date and time.
4. The RLAB is headed by the President of the board appointed by the Diocesan Bishop from the sitting members of the board.
- a) The President of the RLAB is selected by the Bishop and serves a term of two years.
  - b) The President of the RLAB has the following responsibilities:
    - (1) with the guidance of the RLAB members, to work towards the implementation of the goals of the RLAB;
    - (2) to call for meetings of the various steering committees (said committees are described below);
    - (3) to maintain correspondence with the Catholics for Life Committee of the Catholic Conference of Illinois, the national Episcopal conference's Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities and from the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment and to receive information and guidance from such organizations;
    - (4) to carry out the decisions made by the Bishop regarding those recommendations issued by the RLAB.
  - c) The President shall have general supervision over all the affairs of the RLAB.
  - d) The President shall also be ex-officio of all steering committees.
  - e) The President shall appoint all committees and perform such other duties as the By-Laws provide including, but not limited to, calling for a vote on any issues that the President determines requires quorum support.
5. Officers and Elections
- a) In addition to the President, the Officers of the RLAB shall consist of 4 members to be recognized as Vice President, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, and Treasurer, respectively.

- (1) Officers shall be duly nominated at the quarterly meeting in August. Election of said nominees shall take place at the same meeting and as prescribed by the By-Laws. Elected Officers shall take office effective immediately.
- (2) Their term of office shall be 2 years and they may serve for no more than two consecutive terms.

b) Vice President

- (1) The Vice President shall act in the absence of the President and assume duties performed by him.
- (2) The Vice President shall also carry out other duties and responsibilities as assigned by the President.

b) Recording Secretary

- (1) The Recording Secretary will be responsible for keeping a record of all matters discussed at the quarterly meeting.
- (2) The Recording Secretary shall report the business thus transacted at the next regularly scheduled meeting taking meeting minutes at each meeting and then distributing draft minutes to all members within 30 days of the meeting. Minutes will be distributed and reviewed at the beginning of the meeting that follows the meeting from which the minutes were taken. Additions and corrections are to be made at this time and a final approval of the minutes must be made.
- (3) The Recording Secretary will also be responsible for all books, papers and minutes associated with the quarterly meeting.

c) Corresponding Secretary

- (1) The Corresponding Secretary shall act in the absence of the Recording Secretary and assume the responsibilities of same in the Recording Secretary's absence.
- (2) The Corresponding Secretary shall be responsible for forwarding all incoming correspondence to the recording secretary for the following meeting.

d) Treasurer

- (1) The Treasurer shall work with the President and the other RLA members in determining the annual RLAB budget.

(2) The Treasurer shall also work with the President to formulate budget proposals for each fiscal year.

(3) The Treasurer shall work in conjunction with the Administrative Assistant of the Life Office regarding all accounting and record-keeping matters.

6. Steering Committees

a) The separate steering committees under the RLAB are as follows:

(1) Prayer and Liturgy;

(2) Public Information and Education;

(3) Public Policy;

(4) Post Abortion Healing and Reconciliation;

(5) Chastity;

(6) Pregnancy Services;

(7) Bio-medical and Ethical Issues; and

(8) Fundraising.

b) The various steering committees will ordinarily meet between the quarterly meetings in order to evaluate and investigate methods to foster and achieve the goals established for its particular committee and then report on its developments at the quarterly RLAB meeting.

**V. Appendix**

1. The first RLAB Constitution and By-Laws were reviewed and approved by a two-thirds vote at the RLAB meeting held on August 28, 2008, and took effect as of that date.

2. The RLAB Constitution and By-Laws shall be reviewed by the RLAB on an annual basis and revised as necessary pursuant to the provisions provided herein.

3. Amendments to the Constitution and of these By-Laws may be made as follows:

a) Proposals for amendments may be submitted by any RLAB member and must be submitted to the Corresponding Secretary in sufficient time to be circulated with the official agenda of the next quarterly meeting.

b) Approval of amendments is upon two-thirds vote of the participants at a RLAB quarterly meeting.

c) Adopted amendments will be dated, properly noted in the article amended, and attached to the original Constitution and By-Laws.

**This RLAB Constitution and accompanying By-Laws were read, heard and approved by at least two-thirds (2/3) of the members present, in accordance with Article IV. B. 2.**

**By:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_