

Project Life and Liberty

To Preserve our Most Basic Rights

Postcard Campaign

February 9-10, 2013



Instructions

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The U.S. Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities and the U.S. Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Religious Liberty, with the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment, are co-sponsoring the "Project Life and Liberty" postcard campaign. The target day for this event is the weekend of February 9-10, 2013, though your diocese or parish may set a different weekend.

WHY THE "PROJECT LIFE AND LIBERTY" POSTCARD CAMPAIGN IS NEEDED

Forty years ago on January 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court in its *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* decisions legalized abortion on demand. Today the threats to human life, born and unborn, not only continue but have expanded to include attacks on our religious freedom.

The need for concerned citizens to speak out is greater than ever. As the new Congress commences, our federal elected officials should be urged to support and strengthen existing laws against government funding and promotion of abortion, and to improve protection for religious freedom. *Government must not force Americans to violate their religious and moral beliefs on respect for life when they provide health care or sponsor or purchase health coverage.*

The postcard signing event gives parishioners, as individuals and as a community, an opportunity to give a timely and effective public witness to respect for life and religious freedom.

Program Materials

Three program materials are available:

- Postcard strips with three postcards, two for your U.S. Senators and one for your U.S. Representative.
- Attached to the postcard strip is a Response Card that allows people to join church e-mail networks to receive follow-up e-mails on federal and state efforts to protect life and religious liberty.
- An educational flier with a short explanatory text on the need for respect for life and religious freedom and a brief list of actions the individual person can take in conjunction with the postcard campaign.

Prayer Pledge

Each day until the postcard project is conducted, please say a prayer for God's blessing on your efforts and for God's assistance in establishing public policies that respect the dignity of the human person. Thank you!

PLAN AHEAD

Get Your Parish Excited About the Postcard Project

The following instructions are designed to help the Parish Pro-Life Committee conduct an effective postcard project.

Meet with your pastor and obtain permission to conduct the project

- Arrange a meeting with your pastor as soon as possible.
- Explain what the program involves and its importance.
- Ask your pastor for permission to implement the program. Be sure the discussion concludes with an exact understanding between you and your pastor about what you are permitted to do.
- If the diocese has not already done so, set a date for the event. The nationally suggested weekend is February 9-10, 2013.
- Ask your pastor to ensure that on the Sunday of the postcard event, parishioners are instructed about signing the postcards. This task can be carried out by the pastor, the celebrant at each Mass, or by a layperson the pastor designates. Please see “Talking Points” in Program Aids.
- Ask for permission to arrange a series of bulletin announcements the weekend before the postcard event, as well as on the weekend of the event itself (see Program Aids).
- After your meeting, send a note thanking your pastor for his time and support. At the conclusion of the project, send the pastor a report on its success.

If your pastor has any questions you cannot answer, please refer those questions to your Diocesan Pro-Life Director.

Other Steps to Increase Effectiveness

- Design a simple poster with key information about the event. Place posters in prominent locations such as the church building, school or parish hall, or rectory.
- Mobilize different parish groups to work on this project.

COORDINATING THE POSTCARD EVENT

The following straightforward guidelines will help ensure a successful postcard project in your parish.

- Do not separate the postcard strips prior to distribution. Give them to parishioners as a set.
- Parishioners should sign the three postcards and include their return address on each to ensure that, as a constituent, they will receive a response.
- The names of the Representative and Senators need to be filled in on the front of the postcards. Have the names of the Senators and likely Representatives displayed at the signing tables. Be prepared afterwards to fill in the names left blank. See Effective Follow-Up instructions.

Methods of Distribution

Distribute the postcards at each Mass on the postcard signing weekend. There are two basic methods for doing so.

1. *Method One—In the Pews*

The postcards can be distributed while the celebrant or designated lay person is addressing the congregation about the project. See “Talking Points” below.

In addition, place a few inexpensive pens (not pencils) in each pew.

- Ask parishioners to fill out the information requested on the postcard strips. The cards should be completed while at church. If parishioners take the cards home, they may lose them or, despite their best intentions, forget to sign them.
- This project costs money. Ask each adult parishioner to donate \$1.00. Explain that the money will be used to buy stamps and defray other costs associated with the project.
- Ushers should collect the signed postcard strips. Donations can be collected at the same time.
- Even though postcards are distributed and collected during Mass, make sure that there is a collection basket at every church exit for postcards and contributions not collected during Mass. One or more tables can be set up for this purpose. Educational materials also can be made available at these locations.

2. *Method Two—After Mass*

If postcards are not filled out during Mass, you can conduct a successful event by setting up tables where people can gather after Mass.

The celebrant or designated lay leader should announce that today the parish is participating in a postcard signing event sponsored by the U.S. bishops and explain the reason for this project. See “Talking Points” below.

Parishioners should be encouraged to sign postcards at the tables or other designated places after Mass. Again, if parishioners take the cards home, they may lose them or forget to sign them.

- At the end of each Mass, your postcard signing tables should be staffed with volunteers ready to encourage and assist parishioners.

You must be prepared to accommodate large numbers of people in a short time. Be sure you have a sufficient number of tables.

Set up your tables in well-trafficked areas.

- You may want to hang a banner at your tables, “Sign Postcards,” “Respect Life and Religious Freedom,” or similar wording.
- Place baskets or containers on the tables for donations.
- In addition to having postcards at the tables, place postcards and pens on clipboards and circulate them among people waiting in line and among those socializing after Mass. This is a particularly good activity for youth volunteers; they can easily approach the parents of their friends and other members of the parish.
- Have several large boxes where people can drop the cards off before leaving church property. Identify the boxes clearly. Make them physically accessible.

The less effort people must make to find you, to stand in line, or to figure out what to do next, the more successful your postcard project will be!

Recommendation: Assign someone to take photos of the signing event. These can be used to report on this parish event, e.g., as part of a photo essay in the diocesan Catholic paper or to place on the parish web site.

EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-UP

After ushers or volunteers have collected the postcards and taken them to a central location, the Parish Pro-Life Coordinator must accomplish a few small tasks to successfully complete the project:

- Check to be sure the names of the appropriate Representative and Senators have been filled in. If necessary, please fill in these names for the parishioners. A rubber stamp can be prepared and used.

If necessary, the signer’s street address and/or ZIP code can be used online to determine a person’s Representative. See “Contact Your Congressperson” at: www.nchla.org/contcong.asp. Or see “Find Your Representative” at: www.house.gov.

- Detach the Response Card (card four) and place it in a separate stack for later processing. This is explained immediately below.
- Count the number of postcards and enter that number on the Reporting Form found in the back of this booklet.
- Affix a 33-cent stamp to the upper right corner on the front of each postcard.

- Mail the postcards at your local post office. *Mailing the postcards in a bulk container is not recommended.* People sign the cards as individuals. Bulk mailings downplay the personal dimension of the communication. Sometimes boxes of postcards “get lost” in busy congressional offices. When the postcards are mailed individually and directly to Members, it is more likely that people will receive a response.

NOTE: If you choose to hand deliver the postcards to a Representative’s or Senator’s office, please be sure that this occurs in a public setting: Official representatives from the parish and/or the diocese should formally present the postcards. Carefully explain to the staff the message of the card, and be prepared to dialogue with staff members. Be polite and cheerful. Thank the staff for receiving the cards. Express the desire that the constituents who signed the cards receive a personal response from the Member. Advise local newspapers, especially the Catholic paper, that the presentation is taking place. Bring your own camera to the event. Use the photos when reporting back to the parish or parishes, e.g., place a photo on the parish bulletin board. Include photos in any reports in newsletters, mailings, and the like.

- Process Response Cards:

- 1) Make sure State and Diocese are entered correctly.
- 2) Place the Response Cards in a sturdy mailing container. A Jiffy Bag or similar receptacle is best and is available at any office supply store and at most post offices.
- 3) Mail the Response Cards to:

NCHLA
1500 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 24
Washington, DC 20005

Do not send the three postcards for your Senators and Representative to NCHLA. These postcards should be sent *directly* to Congress. In your mailing back to NCHLA, include *only* the Response Card.

- Complete the Parish Reporting Form and mail it to your Diocesan Pro-Life Office. This information will assist the diocesan office in evaluating the effectiveness of the project.
- Thank all who helped you. Acknowledge the efforts of volunteers by sending a short but gracious thank-you note, or perhaps call them on the phone to express your gratitude. Remember to thank all the priests who assisted in the project. Your report on the project’s success can be included in your thank-you note to the pastor.
- Place a note in the parish bulletin thanking parishioners who signed postcards. Include a short report on the success of the project—the number of postcards sent, success stories, and the like.

Thank You for Your Help

Following the steps outlined in this manual will result in the widest possible mobilization of parishioners signing postcards, and make a significant difference in promoting the dignity of human life. Thank you for your help on “Project Life and Liberty” and for all you do in support of life!

PROGRAM AIDS

Materials Online

Copies of the postcards, the educational flier, and these instructions can be downloaded online at: nchla.org. Materials are available in PDF format.

Talking Points

The following suggested text can be used by the celebrant or designated lay leader to announce that the parish is participating in the “Project Life and Liberty” postcard campaign and to explain why. According to instructions above, adapt these talking points for signing the postcards in the pews or for signing after Mass.

English

Today parishioners have an opportunity to sign and send postcards to their U.S. Representative and two U.S. Senators. The message on the cards urges our federal elected officials to support and strengthen existing laws against government funding and promotion of abortion and to reject attacks on our religious freedom. *Government must not force Americans to violate their religious and moral beliefs on respect for life when they provide health care or sponsor or purchase health coverage.*

If each of us takes just a few moments to sign the postcards, together we can send an important message to our nation’s Capitol on respecting life and religious freedom. Please complete the cards before leaving church today. A small donation of \$1.00 will help pay for postage and program materials.

Please feel free to add a short personal note on each postcard to increase the effectiveness of your message.

Thank you for making your voice heard on these important matters.

Español

Hoy los fieles tienen una oportunidad de firmar y enviar tarjetas a sus Representantes y a sus dos Senadores de EE. UU. El mensaje de las tarjetas insta a los funcionarios federales electos a apoyar y fortalecer las leyes existentes en contra de la financiación y promoción por parte del gobierno del aborto y a rechazar los ataques a nuestra libertad religiosa. *Los gobernantes no deben obligar a los estadounidenses a violar sus creencias religiosas y morales pertinentes al respeto a la vida cuando prestan atención médica o patrocinan o adquieren seguros para la salud.*

Si cada uno de nosotros se toma apenas unos momentos para firmar las postales, juntos podemos enviar un mensaje importante al Capitolio de nuestra nación sobre el respeto a la vida y la libertad religiosa. Complete las tarjetas antes de salir de la iglesia hoy. Una donación pequeña de \$1.00 ayudará a pagar el franqueo y los materiales del programa.

Si lo desea, agregue una breve nota personal a cada tarjeta para aumentar la eficacia de su mensaje.

Gracias por hacer escuchar su voz sobre estas cuestiones importantes

Sample Bulletin Announcements

Ideally, bulletin announcements should be placed in the parish bulletin on the weekend leading up to the postcard event, and on the weekend of the event itself.

English

1. One Week Before

Postcard Signing Day! Next week our parish will join Catholics across the country in sending a message to Congress: Please respect life and religious freedom. You will have the opportunity to sign postcards to your U.S. Representative and two U.S. Senators. Please plan to participate in this important event!

2. Weekend of the Event

Sign “Project Life and Liberty” Postcards! Today our parish, along with thousands of other parishes across the nation, will sign postcards urging Congress to respect life and religious freedom. Let your voice be heard! Send a message to our two Senators and our Representative. Thanks for participating!

Español

1. Una semana antes

¡Día para firmar las tarjetas! La semana próxima nuestra parroquia se unirá católicos en todo el país para enviar un mensaje al Congreso: Respete la vida y la libertad religiosa. Usted tendrá la oportunidad de firmar tarjetas para enviar a su Representante de EE. UU. y dos Senadores de EE. UU. ¡Planifique participar en este evento importante!

2. Fin de semana para la campaña

¡Firme las tarjetas “Proyecto vida y libertad”! Hoy nuestra parroquia, junto con miles de otras parroquias de toda la nación, firmará tarjetas para instar al Congreso a respetar la vida y la libertad religiosa. ¡Haga escuchar su voz! Envíe un mensaje a nuestros dos senadores y a nuestro representante. ¡Gracias por participar!

PARISH REPORTING FORM

Project Life and Liberty
Postcard Campaign

Instructions to Parish Coordinator:

As soon as postcard signing is completed in your parish, please fill out this “Parish Reporting Form.” Either photocopy or cut the form from this booklet, and return it to your Diocesan Pro-Life Office. Your prompt response will assist in evaluating this important project.

Your Name _____
Your Parish/Organization _____
Address _____
City/State/ZIP _____
Phone _____ Email _____

1. How many postcards were sent from the parish to your Representative and two Senators?

NAME	## OF POSTCARDS
Representative _____	_____
Senator _____	_____
Senator _____	_____
Total postcards sent:	_____

2. Use the reverse side of this form to share any comments you may have about the “Project Life and Liberty” postcard campaign. Please include any photos of your event that you would like to share.
3. Please mail this form to your Diocesan Pro-Life Office. Thank you!



National Committee for a Human Life Amendment

1500 Massachusetts Avenue, NW Suite 24 Washington, D.C. 20005
(202)393-0703 FAX (202)347-1383 • nchla.org • EndRoe.org

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