

World & Nation

Reagan nears end of term with touchy agenda

Washington (NC) — With the clock ticking away on the last year of his administration, President Reagan promised in his January 25 State of the Union address that "we're not finished yet" with Congress.

His 1988 Legislative and Administrative Message suggests that the White House isn't finished with controversy, either.

Like the State of the Union address it accompanies, the legislative message outlines presidential policy goals. However, delivered in writing, the 39-page, single-spaced document defines Reagan's agenda more specifically than the State of the Union speech does.

The legislative message once again shows areas of clear agreement and sharp disagreement with such social-justice advocacy groups as the U.S. Catholic Conference, public policy agency of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Network, a social-justice lobby founded by nuns.

Like Network and the USCC, Reagan is pushing Senate ratification of the intermediate-range nuclear forces — INF — treaty, which would abolish some categories of U.S. and Soviet short-range missiles.

Reagan told Congress that the treaty "is the first agreement ever to reduce and not simply limit the build-up of nuclear weaponry" in the superpower arsenals.

Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis, USCC president, has termed the treaty "an important step toward these goals of deep cuts and progressive disarmament" sought by the bishops. Network has said the INF "advances the mutual interests" of both sides.

Likewise, the bishops concur with Reagan in opposing abortion and in backing educational vouchers, which parents of non-public

school students could use to help fund children's educations at schools of their choice.

Although Reagan praised vouchers, he proposed to leave it up to the states — not the federal government — to adopt them. Earlier White House ideas, such as tuition tax credits, involved legislation at the national level.

"A voucher system at the state level would empower parents," said Reagan. He pledged to ask the federal Department of Education to draft model legislation "and make it available to the 50 states so that they can implement programs that promote choice in education."

Reiterating another old stance, Reagan's legislative message reminded the lawmakers that "I am committed to reducing the number of abortions in this country and reaffirming life's sacred position in our nation."

He told Congress to "pass expeditiously my human life bill," which would permanently ban government funding of any abortion not necessary to save a woman's life. The bill also contains several other anti-abortion provisions. "In addition," he wrote, "the Congress should pass the human life amendment," various versions of which would outlaw abortion.

On the other hand, Reagan urged revival of the federal death penalty, something the bishops have rejected.

In a December 31 letter, Father J. Bryan Hehir, then USCC secretary for social development and world peace, objected to moves to restore capital punishment for federal crimes and told Congress that "the Catholic bishops oppose the use of the death penalty because of our belief in the sacred-

ness of human life."

On economics and family life, too, there are significant differences between positions of some Catholic groups and the White House.

The bishops, for example, favor an increase in the federal minimum wage, back legislation to provide advance notification when a factory is shut, and support legislation to give several weeks' employment leave to parents of newly adopted or newborn children.

Reagan opposes all three as "threats to our continued job growth."

Although he supports adoption, Reagan told Congress that such measures as the parental-leave bill, "while well-intentioned," include employment costs that "would reduce job opportunities."

Despite their agreement over the INF treaty, the White House and Catholic social-justice groups differ on numerous other defense issues. Among the latter are production of chemical weapons, which the White House favors and Network and the USCC oppose, and aid to the contra rebels fighting the Marxist Nicaraguan government.

On January 27, Reagan asked Congress to provide the contras with an additional \$36.6 million in aid. Under his plan, some \$3.6 million would go to ammunition and air-defense missiles, while \$32.6 million would be for such items as food, clothing, medicine, and transportation for the supplies.

In Reagan's view, "the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance (the contras) is the best insurance policy for keeping the peace process on track and producing a democratic outcome in Nicaragua."

Capsules

Pope defines bars to marriage

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II has told the Church's top marriage tribunal to be wary of overemphasizing "slight" psychological problems when it considers expert assessments of the mental state of couples seeking annulments. A "slight or moderate psychopathology" or mental disorder, does not necessarily hinder a person's ability to make responsible and free decisions, the pope said in a January 25 talk to the Roman Rota.

Senate passes civil rights bill

Washington (NC) — The Senate, considering a major civil rights bill January 28, approved a controversial "abortion-neutral" amendment long sought by Catholic Church and pro-life officials. After approving the amendment, offered by Sen. John C. Danforth, R-Mo., the Senate approved the bill, called the Civil Rights Restoration Act.

The act would overturn a 1984 Supreme Court ruling stipulating that only specific programs receiving federal funds, not an entire institution, can face financial penalties for violations of civil rights laws. The Danforth amendment states that the act would not "require or prohibit any person or public or private entity to provide or pay for any benefit or service, including use of facilities, related to abortion."

S. African investors targeted

New York (NC) — Church groups in the corporate-responsibility movement will make a concerted effort at 1988 stockholder meetings to stop American corporations from doing business in or with South Africa.

Past resolutions asking for adherence to the Sullivan Principles of equal treatment of blacks have been replaced by resolutions calling for withdrawal from South Africa and an end of sales to South Africa, particularly to its government and military.

The Rev. Leon Sullivan, who set forth the principles in 1977, said last year that his approach had failed to end apartheid and that companies should now break all commercial ties with South Africa.

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