

Lobbyists

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from a lobbyist, Haehl added.

The key to influencing a legislator is do your homework beforehand, Davitt noted. Even though a legislator may have already made up his or her mind on an issue, a well-informed lobbyist can move the politician's position closer to that of the lobbyist, he said.

On Jan. 17, Kathy Gallagher, the conference's associate director, captivated several pro-life lobbyists during a 40-minute learning session that reflected Davitt's views on effective lobbying. Gallagher urged pro-lifers to lobby for a law requiring parental consent for a minor's abortion by

stressing, among other things, the liberal nature of U.S. abortion laws compared with those of other western democracies.

No democracy allows abortion to be as unregulated as does the United States, Gallagher told the lobbyists. She used a chart comparing European countries' regulation of abortion with this nation's to make her case that it is perfectly reasonable for state legislatures to regulate abortion.

Gallagher also told her audience to use recent surveys showing that the majority of Americans support parental-consent laws. The conference rarely uses such a tactic with legislators, Davitt acknowledged.

"The only time we use numbers is when we're confident of the numbers," he said. Davitt added that the only reason the conference urged using survey numbers on the

parental consent issue was to refute potential counter-arguments by legislators who might cite polls showing that the majority of Americans support legalized abortion.

Haehl likewise uses polls infrequently when lobbying on an issue. "When statistical evidence is very expensive to come by," he said.

Davitt also noted that sometimes the Catholic bishops take stands that are unpopular, citing the death penalty as one such issue on which the church and its flock are often at odds. He claimed that 80 percent of the state's population supports the death penalty, a legal remedy the bishops have consistently condemned.

Haehl's visit to Perry's office illustrated the importance of supporting legislators

who oppose the death penalty. Haehl's team thanked the senator for his support of the conference's anti-death penalty stance over the years, and Perry responded with a smile. "I can feel the pain of people attacking me on that vote," the senator said, acknowledging the emotions that brutal murders can arouse in the public.

Perry, then, knows a bit about the way Catholic lobbyists must sometimes feel — as if no one supports their consistent life ethic, which crosses both liberal and conservative lines.

As Dubel observed: "I think the legislature finds us challenging. I think they find us tireless in coming back year after year," she said. "We have a deep commitment to life."

Clusters

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1970s elicited many of the same misunderstandings and emotions that have accompanied Monroe County Catholic school restructuring.

"What I know," Sister Carroll observed, "is (that) right now, because of what happened 20 years ago, we have a stable system."

Because schools have already consolidated in Elmira, Corning, Auburn and Geneva, and because most of the region's other Catholic schools are relatively distant from one another, further consolidation would be difficult, Gough noted. "You can't consolidate schools (in this area) the way you can in Rochester," he said.

Financial and personnel limitations will also affect planning for the 11-county re-

gion, Sister Binsack said. Some parishes will face such limitations by pooling resources and personnel. As with school consolidation, however, the region enjoys the advantage of several working models of inter-parish cooperation to build upon.

Gough acknowledged that, having watched conflicts erupt over Monroe County's Catholic school reorganization, cluster commission members aren't counting out the possibility that their planning could produce controversy.

"When you have a commission, when you have decisions to be made, you have to vote on things that may not be popular," he said. "You're never going to have a situation when everybody is going to be happy."

In addition to Gough, Father Kreckel and Sister Carroll, the commission members are: Michael Bracy of Bath, and Larry Stevens of Elmira, both of whom are at-

large representatives; Michael Stapleton of Seneca Falls and Sister Patricia Flass, SSJ, of King Ferry, both representing the Finger Lakes; Genesee Valley representatives Simone Deni of Caledonia and Nancy Goodrich of Wayland; and Thomas Curran of Elmira, and Robert Pochily of

Ithaca, both representing the Southern Tier.

Staff for the commission will be Sister Binsack; Brother Brian Walsh, CFC, diocesan superintendent of schools; and Maribeth Mancini, diocesan director of religious education.

Plan

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that would make up the junior high's student body, Pickett said.

If the junior high did not pass such a test a year and a half from now, the commission would have to review whether St. Monica's would lose its seventh and eighth grades, Pickett said, noting that he was speaking personally, not for the commission as a whole.

Forbes said she didn't want her children

attending "an all-black school," but said the plan only vaguely touches upon the establishment of a "multi-cultural curriculum" at a regional junior high. "At this point, I feel as a parent that I'm going to go on blind faith," she said.

Pickett acknowledged the vagueness of the commission's definition of "multi-cultural curriculum."

"That's the \$64,000 question," he said, noting that his definition would require the school to ensure that its students' cultural identities were valued in a demonstrable way.

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