

Prelate opposes Philadelphia condom plan

PHILADELPHIA (CNS) — Archbishop Anthony J. Bevilacqua of Philadelphia has condemned as "ineffective and immoral" a proposal before the local public school board to distribute condoms to high school students.

In an April 10 statement, the archbishop said he also opposed "the introduction of an aggressive curriculum which will reinterpret our understanding of major aspects of sexuality in an immoral way."

Condom distribution and curriculum revisions are among some 40 policy options proposed by the Philadelphia Board of Education's task force on adolescent sexuality and the role of schools in the prevention of pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection. The board was to hold several hearings during April on the task force's recommendations before scheduling a vote.

Archbishop Bevilacqua called on Catholics, those of other faiths and "all people of good will" to urge the school board to "recognize that chastity and marriage are the best means and only truly effective means available to protect our young people from" the HIV infection that causes AIDS.

"To assert, on no evidence, that mere condom use will in the long run effectively isolate people from AIDS infection is to risk becoming party to the spread of AIDS by encouraging unbridled sexual activity among our young," he said.

In addition, he said, for educators to tell young people to use condoms sends "the mixed and confusing signal that ideally they should act responsibly but in all probability they will not" and "implies that students at the practical level are incapable of doing better."

Archbishop Bevilacqua's statement was similar to a stand taken by New York Catholic leaders in February when the City Board of Education was to vote on a proposal to distribute condoms to public high school students on request. The plan was approved on a 4-3 vote.

The archbishop said he was speaking on behalf of "the many Catholic parents sending their children to public schools in Philadelphia and, under my rights guaranteed by the Constitution, as a citizen deeply concerned about the health and well-being of our entire community."

He said he could "sympathize deeply" with the position of the school board,

which he said was "under pressure to call into question many of our traditional values."

"Now, however, is not the time to capitulate or surrender our heritage," he said. "Now is the time for all of us to state as clearly and calmly as we can our great concern and grave reservations regarding this proposed program."

School board spokesman William Thompson said the board welcomed Ar-

chbishop Bevilacqua's comments but he noted that Richard McCarron, Philadelphia archdiocesan superintendent of schools, had declined an invitation to join the task force.

Archdiocesan spokesman Jay Devine said McCarron turned down the invitation because it was extended in September, the same month that he was named to head the archdiocesan schools, and he did not feel he would have the time to participate.

State conference gets new chief

ALBANY — Cardinal John J. O'Connor recently announced the appointment of John M. Kerry as executive director of the New York State Catholic Conference — the public policy arm of the state's Catholic bishops.

Kerry will assume the post on July 1. He replaces J. Alan Davitt, who is retiring after 12 years as executive director and nearly 25 years of service with the New York State Catholic Conference.

In announcing the appointment, Cardinal O'Connor praised Davitt for his efforts as executive director. The cardinal added that he was grateful that Davitt will continue in a consultative capacity.

Cardinal O'Connor noted that he and his fellow bishops were pleased with the selection of Kerry.

"John Kerry has had a long and distinguished career in public service and has a proven commitment to the values that the New York State Catholic Conference seeks to advance — the promotion of social and economic justice, peace and protection of human life, and concern for the elderly, the unborn, the poor and the disadvantaged."

Kerry served five years in the Maine State Senate (1980-82, 1985-88) and two years in that state's House of Representatives (1976-78). In addition, Kerry has served as a member of the governor's cabinet and as director of Maine's Office of Energy Resources (1983-86).

He was director of legislative research for the Diocese of Portland, Maine, from 1971-75. Kerry has also had a successful

business career, initiating several private businesses, including a real estate development concern and a restaurant.

Davitt, who was appointed executive director in November, 1979, will continue to serve in a consultative capacity with the conference, working on a variety of internal projects. Prior to being named the conference's executive director, Davitt was executive secretary of its Catholic School Superintendent's Council, a post he held from 1967-79.

He began his career with the church in 1954, serving 13 years as assistant superintendent for secondary education with the Buffalo diocese.



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YES VOTE — Striking industrial workers at a rally in Lenin Square in Minsk voted April 11 to restate demands for the resignation of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and his government.

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