

Bush proposals called too little and off target

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — President Bush was criticized for not going far enough in his proposals for health care reform, tax credits for children and funding for Head Start by spokesmen for the Catholic Health Association and Children's Defense Fund.

John E. Curley Jr., president and chief executive officer of the Catholic Health Association, said Bush "seems content with the status quo by continuing to rely on the use of the marketplace to improve the system."

In his Jan. 28 State of the Union address, Bush proposed a health insurance tax credit of up to \$3,750 for low-income families and said he would announce later a plan to reform the health insurance market.

"The president should not consider reforming the system by simply tinkering with reimbursement and changing the flow of money," said Curley.

Sharon Daly, director of government and community affairs for the Children's Defense Fund, a lobbying group, said a tax credit is little consolation for families that are unable to



AP/Wide World Photos
President George Bush appears in the House Chamber Jan. 28 to deliver his annual State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress. Vice President Dan Quayle sits in the background.

come up with the cash to pay for health insurance.

Bush's emphasis on a market-driven health program ignores the fact that 25 percent of every dollar spent on commercial health insurance goes to advertising and paperwork costs that do not exist in the government's Medicare program for senior citizens, Daly said. Administrative costs for Medicare average about 3-4 percent, she said.

"Competition in the health insurance industry increases costs," she added.

Curley, whose organization represents more than 1,200 Catholic health care providers, said Bush's contentment with relying on the marketplace to improve the health-care system is flawed.

"History indicates there is no reason to expect the marketplace to work in the future. Incentives to address costs, access and quality of care in the current system are inappropriate and counterproductive to both the users and providers of health care," Curley said.

Daly gave Bush credit for proposing the largest increase ever in funding for Head Start, but said the \$600 million

he wants for the early childhood education program still would accommodate only 34 percent of the eligible children.

The Children's Defense Fund estimates full funding of Head Start — making the program available to all eligible children for a full day and allowing for intervention work with families and increased salaries for teachers — would cost \$6 billion. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., has proposed a \$1 billion increase.

Bush's proposed \$500 increase in tax deductions for each child in a family came in for strong criticism. Daly noted that as proposed the deduction would translate to only a \$75 savings for middle-income families that fall into the 15 percent tax bracket but a \$155 savings for wealthier households in the 31 percent tax bracket.

"If he had proposed a refundable tax credit, every child would be worth the same amount," she said. But as an increase in deductions, some households, such as those where wage-earners are out of work and receive unemployment benefits for six months or more, would see no benefit, she said.

Vatican

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truth" or making "sense of one's own life." Moral goodness is thus reduced to subjective human intentions or a "blind faith in human spontaneity."

• **Homosexuality.** The Vatican faulted Father Guindon for defending the so-called "sexual fecundity" of homosexuals, while claiming not to pass judgment on the morality of the erotic or genital acts they may perform.

"Not only is there no recognition of any objective disorder in the homosexual condition," it said, but homosexual behavior is presented by the author as the "only sane choice" for one who is homosexual. It noted that the book calls sexual abstinence "unachievable for healthy homosexual persons" and ridicules therapy for

those who want to change from a homosexual to a heterosexual orientation.

The Vatican also criticized Father Guindon for his "purported discovery of edifying examples of lesbians and male homosexuals" in the Bible.

• **Marriage and pre-marital sex.** The Vatican said that "contrary to church doctrine, the author asserts the irrelevance of the public celebration of the marital covenant and of the canonical form of marriage between Catholics." The book also seems to accept the possibility of "marriage by phases" and cohabitation, it said. The obvious meaning of the text indicates an approval of sex outside marriage, it said.

The Vatican note challenged Father Guindon to publicly explain his 1990 claim that he sought to be faithful to church teaching on sexual morality.

Claude Lester named to council

WASHINGTON — Eleven new members have been named to the U.S. bishops' National Advisory Council, a 63-member body that reviews and offers recommendations on matters before the U.S. bishops.

The council, which advises the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the U.S. Catholic Conference, is made up of bishops, diocesan priests, permanent deacons, lay people, and men and women religious.

New regional representatives, elected to four-year terms, are Harold J. Bayerl, Columbia, S.C.; John Berninger, Portage, Mich.; David L. Coleman, Honolulu; Veronica A. Demurat, Wilmington, Del.; Frances X. Hogan, Everett, Mass.; Dr. Phyllis Lauinger, Tulsa, Okla.; Mary W. Rhadigan,

Brighton, Mich.; Jessie Shields, Red Bluff, Calif.; Leslie Waguespack, Bolton, Mass.; and Thomas St. Clair White, a deacon from San Antonio.

Joining the council as an at-large representative is Deacon Claude Lester of Canandaigua, who serves St. Bridget's/St. Joseph's Parishes in East Bloomfield.

Diocesan priests, deacons and lay people are elected by their peers in the 13 NCCB-USCC regions. Men religious are selected by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, and women religious are chosen by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

The council meets twice annually for three days. It reports to the NCCB Administrative Committee and the USCC Administrative Board.

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