

DIOCESAN NEWS

Bomb scare cuts short Catholic lobbyists' visits

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

A bomb scare cut short meetings between more than 1,000 Catholics and their state legislators in Albany on March 11.

At about 1:40 p.m., a man called police and said there was a bomb in the Legislative Office Building, according to Lisa Coldwell, spokeswoman for the Office of General Services, which manages the building.

About 1,000 workers, and 2,000 visitors — including the Catholic lobbyists — were evacuated from the building at 2:15 p.m., she said. Authorities found no bomb in the building, and it was reopened at 3:45 p.m., Coldwell said. An investigation of the incident continues.

Despite the bomb scare, Catholic lobbyists from throughout New York State — including 30 from the Diocese of Rochester — said they were able to deliver the church's point of view to legislators on such issues as banning partial-birth abortions, promoting religious civil rights and reforming welfare.

The lobbyists also promoted the church's opposition to physician-assisted suicide, and its support for public assistance to non-public schools through tuition vouchers and tax credits for non-public school parents.

An annual event sponsored by the New York State Catholic Conference, "Public Policy Forum Day" gathered representatives of agencies, ministries, and parishes, along with Catholic activists of all stripes, to promote the Catholic position on various issues to legislators.

"It obviously highlighted the Catholic

agenda and Catholic concerns in the legislative body," Father Brian C. Cool said of the lobbying effort. "It introduced us, who are on the receiving end of public policy, to those who make it."

Father Cool, parochial vicar at St. Mary's Church in Canandaigua, was named chairman of the 22-member Diocesan Public Policy Committee this month, replacing Father Michael J. Bausch, pastor of Church of the Good Shepherd in Henrietta. Father Bausch, who has chaired the committee since its inception in 1993, will remain a member of the committee.

This year's forum came on the heels of a 40-19 vote by the Republican-controlled New York State Senate to ban certain abortions. The night before the March 11 forum, the Senate passed a bill banning partial-birth abortions performed between the 20th and 40th weeks of pregnancy. Thirty-nine senators voted last year on a similar bill to ban the procedure, but the bill did not make it to the assembly floor.

"People were buoyed by the fact that the Senate did something, and did something by a larger margin than last year," said Kathleen Gallagher, associate director of the New York State Catholic Conference, in a phone interview with the *Catholic Courier*.

She added that there are actually fewer pro-life senators in the Senate this year than last year, but she pointed out that the partial-birth abortion ban nonetheless picked up one more vote. She credited a new political climate for increasing support for the ban. That climate, she said, was created by Ron Fitzsimmons, executive director of the National Coalition of Abortion Providers. Fitzsimmons recently admitted he lied

about partial-birth abortions in 1995 when he said they were performed rarely and only in cases where the mother's health was threatened or because of severe fetal abnormalities. Fitzsimmons now says the majority of partial-birth abortions are actually performed on healthy women with healthy babies, and that as many as 5,000 a year are performed.

In the wake of Fitzsimmons' confession, even pro-choice politicians have begun to express reservations about partial-birth abortions, Gallagher noted. However, Gallagher stressed that the partial-birth abortion ban bill has little hope of making it to the floor of the Democrat-controlled state Assembly.

The Catholic lobbyists also promoted a proposed civil-rights amendment to the state constitution that would protect people who oppose abortion or physician-assisted suicide from discrimination in the workplace, Gallagher said. She noted that current civil-rights law only specifically protects health-care workers from such discrimination, but the proposed amendment would encompass all workers at public and private social service agencies, hospitals, firms, corporations and associations. Gallagher

added that the conference is still looking for a legislator to sponsor the amendment.

Welfare reform was another topic for discussion with legislators, according to Father Cool and Gallagher. Since the federal government last year changed the way it funds welfare, the state must come up with a new welfare system by June to use monies given it by the federal government in a block grant, Gallagher noted.

Judy Taylor, communication manager for Diocesan Catholic Charities, said diocesan parishes were to receive an information packet from her office the week of March 24 outlining the church's stance on welfare reform in New York, and actions parishes can take. The packet includes the following suggestions:

- Parishes should devote one weekend between Easter and Pentecost to make welfare reform the focus of homilies, liturgies, bulletins and handout materials.

- Parishes should invite speakers from Catholic Charities to talk about welfare reform from the point of view of social service providers.

- Parishes should canvass their members to find out how they may be affected by welfare reform.

'Courier' seeks couples celebrating milestone anniversaries

The *Catholic Courier* is looking for couples celebrating milestone anniversaries in 1997.

Couples who will be marking 25, 50, 60, 65, 70, 75, etc. years of marriage in 1997 will be listed in a special Milestones supplement April 17, along with priests and women religious celebrating jubilees this year.

In addition, the *Courier* would like to highlight the couple married longest in the diocese.

If you or a couple you know will be

marking a milestone anniversary this year, or might be in the running for the longest married couple, send the following information to the *Courier*:

Full names of both husband and wife;

Date of wedding;

Church and city where married.

Also include a telephone number in case any questions arise.

Deadline for inclusion in the list of couples is April 3.

Send all information to: *Catholic Courier*, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

Obituary

Sister Mary Magdalena Urlacher

Sister Mary Magdalena Urlacher, MM, a Rochester native and a missionary to the Far East, died Jan. 25, 1997, of congestive heart failure in Maryknoll, N.Y. She was 90.

Sister Magdalena was born Catherine Urlacher, and attended Nazareth Academy in Rochester. She entered the Maryknoll Sisters in October 1927.

Sister Mary Magdalena was assigned to China in 1935 by her order. She served as a catechist, nurse and home visitor before she was expelled from China in 1951.

Sister Mary Magdalena then went to Pusan, South Korea, for 18 months and worked in a Maryknoll hospital. She then went to Hong Kong where she worked as a community infirmarian for one year before going to the order's novitiate in Valley Park, Mo., where she also served as an infirmarian.

In 1955, she began a 23-year stay in Taiwan, where she taught catechetics and

worked in a health clinic. From 1974 to 1978, she served as a secretary for the Chinese Bishops' Conference.

She also served as a superior of her order in the 1930s and the 1960s, and returned to stay in the United States in 1978.

Sister Magdalena is survived by two sisters-in-law, Mildred (George) Urlacher and Marie (John) Urlacher, both of Rochester, and a niece, Doris (Richard) De Hay of Rochester.

A funeral Mass was celebrated Jan. 30 at the Maryknoll Sisters Center. Interment took place in the Maryknoll Sisters Cemetery.

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Matthew Scott/Staff photographer.

What's the buzz

Robert Edelman, principal of St. John the Evangelist School, Rochester, received a military style haircut on Mar. 17 in front of the entire school. The haircut followed a challenge Edelman made to his students to meet or beat the goal of raising 199 lbs. of pennies (his weight). The students collected more than 600 lbs. — nearly \$800 — that was donated to the Eddie Meath Penny Fund.



Bus Trips to Toronto...

All trips include bus, event ticket and dinner in Toronto.
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