

# OPERATION MORNING STAR PROGRAM

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## OPERATION *Morning Star*

### MISSION STATEMENT

*The empowerment of Catholic womanhood to develop a Catholic Policy Agenda to reach out and speak out in the legislative arena for the advancement of human rights and human dignity for all mankind, in accordance with the principles of justice and peace.*

# LEGISLATION

## INTRODUCTION

Our obligation is to become better informed on public issues, addressing the morals and human dimension while supporting church teachings on human life, human rights, justice and peace. This is the purpose of Operation Morning Star, to focus on the public issues which will have an impact on quality of life and family values.

The Catholic Daughters of the Americas DOES NOT SUPPORT, ENDORSE, OR OPPOSE POLITICAL CANDIDATES OR ANY POLITICAL PARTY.

### I. OPERATION MORNING STAR

It is the program of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas dedicated to Our Lady under her title, Morning Star, to encourage Catholic women to speak out in the legislative arena.

Operation Morning Star is an issue-oriented program. Our involvement is focused on legislative bills under consideration for passage into laws. It is very difficult to change a law after it has become a law. Therefore, our Catholic influence needs to be projected to the legislators before the laws are enacted.

#### A. GOALS

1. To inform and educate CDA members on legislative issues affecting our Catholic values.
2. To work together with the Catholic Conference in each diocese in order to better support the Bishops' Agenda.
3. To advise the membership to PUSH for legislative action that will improve the quality of life, focusing on life, family, education, housing, and health care issues.
4. To develop legislative committees to be formed on the state and local court levels in order to:
  - a. Develop a consensus on legislative priorities
  - b. Enable research to be done on the issues.

- c. Network with other community leaders on particular issues affecting family values and quality of life issues.
- d. Install in each court a legislative communication network to enable immediate response to legislative alerts.
- e. Enlist the support of the pastors/parish councils on the local court level in projecting our Catholic voice on issues to be heard by legislators.

## B. SUGGESTIONS

1. Make a habit to visit your state and federal representatives and let them know just who you are and what issues you are interested in.
2. Speak out. Be sure you know your subject. Gather the facts at hand, weigh their importance and form a firm conclusion. Do research, read your newspapers and magazines, listen to radio and TV, etc.
3. In matters of legislation, you can make yourself heard with a telephone call, a personal visit, a letter or an e-mail. Letters and e-mails should be short and specific, including bill title and number when possible. Confine your letters to one subject, use a firm but courteous tone when contacting legislators over the phone.
4. It is important that legislators receive letters thanking them or criticizing them for specific votes on the floor or votes taken in committee. This method is a confirmation that you are tracking their votes.

## C. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Sponsor voter registration drives.
2. Organize prayer services for the unborn.
3. Invite elected legislators to local Court meetings to discuss their position on issues.
4. Educate other members by making Operation Morning Star's Legislative Handbook available to all members.

## B. PATRIOTISM

As Catholic Daughters and as citizens, we have the obligation and the power to actively support patriotism. Individuals can fly the flag, take part in civic events

or march in a parade. Promoting patriotism can be accomplished in many different ways, such as:

A. Education

1. Teach members to recite Pledge of Allegiance properly by omitting the pause between “one nation under God.”
2. Promotion of proper flag etiquette.

B. Public ceremonies

1. Sponsor a PEACE MASS on July 4.
2. Sponsor a PATRIOTIC MASS on November 11.

## **OPERATION MORNING STAR**

### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

*“The empowerment of Catholic womanhood to develop a Catholic Policy Agenda to reach out and speak out in the legislative arena for the advancement of human rights and human dignity for all, in accordance with the principles of justice and peace.”*

Operation Morning Star is the Catholic Daughters of the Americas Legislative Program. This program is dedicated to Our Blessed Mother and is focused on the legislative issues which have an impact on our quality of life and family values. Our involvement is focused on legislative bills under consideration for passage into laws. This program does not endorse, support, or oppose political candidates or any political party.

The purpose of this manual is to provide answers to legislative chairmen on both the State and Local Court levels. The Catholic Daughters of the Americas has the potential to be a very positive force for addressing the Church’s teachings on human life, human rights, justice and peace. Also, the success of this program provides a greater visibility for the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, solid support for the Bishops Legislative Agenda and an excellent tool for recruiting new members. Keep in mind that Operation Morning Star consists of a national organization of Catholic women who band together on State and Local Court levels in order to act on their faith and become effective in the public arena.

### **501(c)(3) ORGANIZATION**

Catholic Daughters of the Americas is classified as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). With this designation, we are tax-exempt. To retain this designation, there are specific IRS guidelines which we must follow. “We” is every Local and State court – anything and everything done in the name of Catholic Daughters of the Americas.

As IRS guidelines can be altered from time to time, it is impossible to list all guidelines in this manual. The National Legislative Committee does periodically publish specific guidelines pertaining to political activity. It is recommended that State and Local Court regents and legislative chairs retain these guidelines in their file and that these files are transferred to subsequent regents and legislative chairs.

Catholic Daughters of the Americas is an issue-oriented organization.

As previously stated, CDA does not support or oppose a political candidate or a political party. In the name of Catholic Daughters, no Local/State court officer or another court member may verbally or by written word issue a statement for a specific candidate or party. In the name of Catholic Daughters, no one may promote a program, a website, or any other type of communication which promotes a specific party or candidate -- even without naming the party or candidate -- as information available can be partisan without naming a candidate or party.

All Catholic Daughters are urged to study the teachings of the Catholic Church and not rely on statements and materials from outside groups and individuals.

## **CONTACTING LEGISLATORS AS CONSTITUENTS**

For several years after the Operation Morning Star program was begun in 1989, there was an “open door” with the White House and its staff, and with legislators in Washington. Catholic Daughters of the Americas Legislative Counsel and members of the Executive Committee could meet with a U.S. Senator or Congressman almost upon a moment’s notice; thus, a member contacting her legislator on an issue could state she was a member of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas and the legislator would know our organization.

The “open door” policy started changing in the 1990’s, resulting in the need for members contacting legislators in Washington, D.C. to **do so as constituents** and not as members of Catholic Daughters. As constituents, legislators are aware that these individuals vote and their message should be heard.

## **LEGISLATIVE ISSUES AND POLICIES**

To protect members of Catholic Daughters as well as our national organization, in 2003 it was necessary to establish certain policies as the Internet and e-mail became more prevalent.

**Whatever information is relayed to the outside world under the name of Catholic Daughters – no matter who issues it – affects the total organization.**

### **Establishment of Issues**

The National Legislative Committee will establish the issues on which the organization will put forth its effort. There may be instances when the Executive Committee will be consulted prior to

moving ahead on a specific issue. If there is a new issue in which a State Court feels Catholic Daughters should become involved, the State Regent should send full details to the National Legislative Committee.

#### **National Issues**

1. If an issue arises at the state or local level that would be of concern nationally but no communication has been received from the National Legislative Committee, the State or Territorial Court Regent or Legislative Chair (with her Regent's approval) should contact the CDA National Legislative Committee to determine if the Committee has taken a position.
2. This contact with the National Legislative Committee should be made before a state or local court takes any action – an issue could be, but is not limited to, any life issue or national health reform. A state's position should not conflict with the National Committee's position.
3. If a State or Territorial Court Legislative Chair wishes to write an article (excluding State Court newsletters) or some type of communication on an issue that is of a national nature, it needs to be cleared with the National Legislative Committee before released. There are many avenues available from which to obtain information, and some of these avenues contain incorrect data which should not be disseminated.

#### **Strictly State Issues**

1. On strictly state issues, it is permissible for the State or Territorial Court Legislative Chair to issue an alert or disseminate information to local/territorial court members, upon approval of the State or Territorial Court Regent. A copy should be sent to the National Legislative Committee, together with a copy of the "source" leading to the communication.
2. There is one exception with State Issues, and it is shown under "State Non-Affiliated Organizations."

#### **Non-Affiliated Organizations**

1. There are voluminous organizations on the Internet and elsewhere, circulating information on a variety of issues, some issues on which Catholic Daughters may or may not have taken a position. These organizations are "non-affiliated" – they are not a part of our organization. Some could be very well known and respected organizations (example: American Life League, American Family Association – to name just two). Some could be non-profit organizations with a 501(c)(3) or other 501(c) designation – it doesn't matter.
2. If a State or Territorial Court Legislative Chair comes across information published by a non-affiliated organization she feels would be beneficial to distribute to members, and the State or Territorial Court Regent has approved, the Legislative Chair must submit to the National Legislative Committee for approval (a) the specific information/article and (b) full details on the organization.

3. It is possible that a non-affiliated organization has requested legislative help on a specific State Senate or House bill. If such is the case and the State/Territorial Court Regent agrees to submit it to the National Legislative Committee for advice, the State/Territorial Court Legislative Chair must (a) study the bill, (b) submit a copy of it with (c) an analysis done by the Legislative Chair or someone on the State Board. It is important that the state submitting the request thoroughly understands the situation and knows what the bill contains.
4. The reason for these policies is that a non-affiliated organization could use the name of CDA as an endorsement, which may be undesirable or could affect CDA's tax-exempt status.

#### **State Non-Affiliated Organizations**

1. A State Court may receive a communication from a Catholic or other religious non-affiliated organization (example: The Knights of Columbus, State or Diocesan Catholic Conference, Focus on the Family, or similar organizations) requesting the State Court to join in with them to testify on a particular bill before the legislature or join in a legal proceeding.
2. **It is crucial that before any action** is taken, the State Court must supply a copy of the communication to the National Legislative Committee. Participation could involve substantial expense (lawyer's fee; travel expense for a credible individual knowledgeable on the issue and knowledgeable with legal proceedings; etc.). This expense must be determined prior to any response. It is possible the National Legislative Committee may require approval at the National Executive level.

#### **PROCEDURE FOR ISSUANCE OF NATIONAL ALERTS**

- National Legislative Committee issues an alert via e-mail.
- Forwards it to the State/Territorial Court Regents and Legislative Chairs, with copy to the National Board, National Clergy Consultant and National Chaplain.
- Request is made that if only one of these leaders (Regents or Legislative Chairs) has e-mail, that the other leader be informed.
  
- National Legislative Committee receives their information from an office within the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) or from another source which has been approved by the Executive Committee.
- Alerts are not issued based on information from a non-affiliated organization, even if an alert has previously been issued by CDA on the same specific issue.
  
- State Legislative Chair, upon the approval of the State Regent, immediately forwards the alert to Local Court Regents and Legislative Chairs with the request that members be informed and appropriate action be taken as spelled out in the National alert.
- State Officers, State Chaplain, and National Representative should be included in the State Legislative Chair's alert.



- Local Court Legislative Chair should then immediately forward the alert to court members and to the Local Court Chaplain. The method used for forwarding the alert may be e-mail, U.S. mail (if time allows) or via telephone. E-mail is the most accurate and fastest method of communicating.
- Territorial Court Legislative Chair, upon the approval of Territorial Court Regent, immediately forwards the alert to court members, Court Chaplain, and National Representative. The method used for forwarding the alert may be e-mail, U.S. mail (if time permits) or via telephone. Again, e-mail is the most accurate and fastest method of communicating.
- It is possible that within a state other specific instructions for forwarding the alert may work well. It is important that the information be relayed immediately to all members for action.

### **STATE REGENT**

#### **The interest and enthusiasm of each State Regent is vital to the success of Operation Morning Star.**

1. The State Regent appoints a State Legislative Chair – someone who will do the job. It is possible this individual may not have political experience, may not know any politicians or be familiar with the legislative process. If she has any of these attributes, so much the better. However, the main qualification is a willingness to keep informed on the various bills of interest to CDA, her ability to work with people and to communicate with them, and to represent the Catholic Daughters when it is necessary to discuss proposed legislation with legislators.
2. It is advantageous for the State Legislative Chair to have e-mail. If no e-mail, then a fax number should be available.
3. State Regent makes every effort to keep the State Legislative Chair informed and provides/approves a means for the State Chair to keep local courts informed on legislative issues.
4. State Regent contacts the Bishop(s) in the state to acquaint him/them with the Operation Morning Star program and the role the Catholic Daughters plays to support the Bishops' Legislative Agenda. If this contact has been made by a previous State Regent, then a follow-up contact should be made with the Bishop advising him of the current State Regent's name, address, phone, and e-mail address.
5. It may be helpful for the State Regent to contact the State/Diocesan Catholic Conference Director apprising them of CDA's Operation Morning Star program, and giving them the name and address of the State Legislative Chair. If done, the Bishop should receive a copy of this communication.

6. The State Regent advises the National Office and the National Legislative Committee whenever there is a new State Legislative Chair.
7. State Regent encourages every Local Court Regent to appoint a Court Legislative Chair.

### **STATE LEGISLATIVE CHAIR**

1. If the State Regent has contacted the State/Diocesan Catholic Conference, the State Legislative Chair follows-up with the Conference Director and requests that she be put on the e-mail list to receive their legislative alerts.
2. The State Legislative Chair establishes a working relationship with the Local Court Legislative Chairs. This relationship will encourage the grassroots participation in legislation.
3. The State Legislative Chair needs to ensure that the State has in place a legislative communication network (e-mail, phone, etc.) and a clear understanding of how the network will be implemented when an “Alert” needs to be conveyed to the membership. When this State legislative communication network is in place, the State Chair should advise the State Regent.
4. All alerts received from the National Legislative Committee should be immediately forwarded to the Local Court Regents and Legislative Chairs for action by their members. On this alert, she should include all State Officers, State Chaplain and National Representative.
5. When letter writing is required on a particular issue, it would be beneficial to develop a sample letter to be used by Local Court Members.
6. It is important to keep in mind that this legislative program is a grassroots advocacy. There will be instances when an “Alert” needs to be initiated at the State level. When might this occur?

It might occur when working together with the Diocesan/State Catholic Conference and issues that are of concern to the Bishop(s) in your state and to your membership are before the State Legislature for passage into law.

This will require generating an “Alert” from the State level. This should be done with the State Regent’s approval. A copy of the alert should be sent to the National Legislative Committee together with a copy of the “source” leading to the alert.

7. Records should be kept on actions initiated. For the future, this will help to identify an issue already approved by the State Regent.

## **LOCAL COURT REGENT**

1. Because this program is a grassroots advocacy, it is important that each Local Court Regent appoints a Local Court Legislative Chair.
2. The Regent is an integral component in the success of a Court's Legislative Chair's efforts. Vital to the success of the program are a Regent's choice of a Legislative Chair, the Regent's encouragement, and distributing national and state legislative information/materials to the Chair in a timely manner.
3. The Regent can also assist the Chair with getting materials to hand out at Court meetings or to explain materials, especially if they arrive close to court meetings.
4. The organization of the Court's Legislative communication network with the Court Legislative Chair is very important.
5. When there is a new Local Court Legislative Chair, the Regent should notify the State Regent and the State Legislative Chair.

## **LOCAL COURT LEGISLATIVE CHAIR**

1. The Local Court Legislative Chair is responsible for the effectiveness of getting local court members involved in the legislative process. By the Chair's efforts, the membership will become better informed citizens and will become involved in supporting a better quality of life and family values.
2. It may be beneficial to set up a Legislative Committee within a Court as well as a legislative communication network (e-mail, phone, etc.) which can be used when "Alerts" are received from the State Legislative Chair and need to be acted upon within a very short period of time. There isn't always time to write the Court a letter to convey the message, and the communication network is the most expedient means for the membership to become informed on the issue and to ACT.
3. Include the Local Court Chaplain on the distribution of all "Alerts." The Chaplain should be aware of all legislative action being taken by court members.
4. The Court Legislative Chair and her committee need to monitor community issues and these issues need to be discussed at the Court's meetings. There could be occasions when a letter writing or postcard campaign will need to be implemented, requesting a particular outcome from elected State legislators.
5. The procedure varies among states, but the Court Legislative Chair could visit her pastor to acquaint him personally with the objectives of the Operation Morning Star program and determine if there is already someone in the parish handling legislative issues. If not, the Court Legislative Chair could offer her committee's assistance.

6. It is important that records are kept on legislative actions initiated in the local court. For the future, this will help to know what issues have been covered.

## **SOURCES FOR OBTAINING BILL INFORMATION**

### **Federal bills – With access to the Internet:**

1. Go to [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov) (no [www](http://www)).
2. Insert bill number or bill name, if known.
3. Some identifications which may appear with a specific bill:
  - “IH” = Introduced in House
  - “IS” = Introduced in Senate
  - “PSC” = Placed on Senate Calendar
  - “Engrossed” = Final copy of a bill passed by either the House or Senate with amendments. Bill is then delivered to other chamber.
  - “Enrolled” = Final copy of a bill passed by House **and** Senate in identical form.
4. There could be other identifications after a specific bill number, but no matter how many are listed, the last one is the most current.
5. If specific bill number or name is not known and you type in a phrase dealing with the bill’s subject, many bills may come up – with several having nothing to do with what you are searching. Contact State or National Legislative Committee for assistance.

### **Federal bills – Without access to the Internet:**

1. Contact district office of state’s U.S. Senator or district office of your Congressional District’s U.S. House Representative.
2. Contact CDA’s State or National Legislative Committee.

### **State bills – With access to the Internet:**

1. Go to your state legislature’s website. Each state’s site varies.

### **State bills – Without access to the Internet:**

1. Call office of your State Senator or State House Representative (depending upon if it is a Senate or House bill).
2. Contact State Legislative Chair.
3. Contact Diocesan/State Catholic Conference.

## **HOW TO CONTACT FEDERAL LEGISLATORS**

- **Via telephone:** Call U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. and ask for U.S. Senator or U.S. House Representative by name. Call:  
1-202-224-3121 or 1-800-828-0498
- **Via Internet:** [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) (for U.S. Senator). [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) (for U.S. House Representative). You will receive e-mail address and direct telephone number.

- **Via Internet:** May also obtain information through [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov).
- Many State Legislative Directories will include information on federal legislators. State Directories may be obtained from your State Capitol or sometimes through the Diocesan/State Catholic Conference. It is advantageous for the State Legislative Chair to secure a copy of the State Directory and furnish a copy to each local court. The Court Regent should supply a copy to each member.
- **Via U.S. Mail:**

U. S. Senator:  
The Honorable (first & last name)  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

U.S. House of Representative:  
The Honorable (first & last name)  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515
- **NOTE:** E-mail messages reinforce communications sent through postcards, letters, phone calls, and personal meetings.

## **MONETARY DONATIONS TO PRO-LIFE ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Donations to Right-to-Life Organizations**

When a court donates to a state or national “Right to Life” organization, it is advisable to make donations to the organization’s Educational Fund -- for example: “Your State Right to Life Educational Fund.”

Money donated to “Your State Right to Life” may be used by the organization as they want – could be promoting their organization, promoting a specific political candidate or party, or for any other means. Money donated to “Your State Right to Life Educational Fund” would need to be used to educate citizens on issues.

Some state organizations may go by a name other than “Right to Life” but perform the same type of work.

### **Political Action Committee (PAC)**

It is recommended that **no** court donations be made to a Political Action Committee (PAC). This money is definitely used for political purposes.

### **Religious “Action” Organizations**

Some religious organizations have a second organization and use the word “Action” in their name. This is particularly true during an election cycle. **Contact the National Legislative Committee before any information from this type of organization is distributed to CDA members.**

## INFORMATIVE TIPS

### Did You Know?

“One letter triggers our knowledge,” one U.S. Representative stated. He went on to say, “Believe it or not, five or six letters can constitute significant support for an issue.” He further noted that “congressional staff often develop important new legislation based on the suggestions of a single constituent.”

All the more reason to write federal (and state) legislators!

### A Thought to Ponder

There are two Beatitudes that are especially important when involved in pro-life work:

*Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; and*

*Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.*

Do not become discouraged, continue on; *we have a duty.* “Rejoice and be glad for your reward will be great in heaven ....”

Be wary of constantly being told, or constantly wanting to hear, “you are doing a good job.” When we experience trials and sufferings, we are doing God’s work.

(Speaker at Archdiocesan meeting)