

DRAFT—TEXT IS NOT FORMATTED

Fight FOCA
Postcard Campaign
January 24-25, 2009
Instructions

[NCHLA logo]

CONTENTS

Why the “Fight FOCA Postcard Campaign” Is Needed.....[page numbers]

Plan Ahead.....

 First Step: Meeting with Your Pastor

 Other Steps to Increase Effectiveness

Coordinating the Postcard Event.....

 Method One – In the Pews

 Method Two – After Mass

Effective Follow-Up.....

Thank You for Your Help.....

Materials Available Online.....

Program Aids.....

 Talking Points

 Sample Bulletin Announcements

Parish Reporting Form.....

E-Mail Sign-Up Form.....

With the approval of the U.S. Bishops at their November 2008 general meeting, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment are co-sponsoring the “Fight FOCA Postcard Campaign.” The target day for this event is the weekend of January 24-25, 2009, though your diocese or parish may set a different weekend.

WHY THE “FIGHT FOCA POSTCARD CAMPAIGN” IS NEEDED

The “Freedom of Choice Act” (FOCA) is a radical piece of legislation that creates a “fundamental right” to abortion throughout the nine months of pregnancy. No governmental body at any level—federal, state, or local—would be able to “deny or interfere with” this right, or to “discriminate” against its exercise “in the regulation or provision of benefits, services, or information.” For the first time, abortion would become an *entitlement* the government must fund and promote.

FOCA goes far beyond the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* abortion decision of 1973. A broad range of laws currently allowed under *Roe* would be eliminated—informed consent laws; parental involvement laws; laws promoting maternal health; abortion clinic regulations; government programs and facilities that support childbirth and other health care without subsidizing abortion; conscience protection laws; laws prohibiting a particular abortion procedure (e.g., partial birth abortion); laws requiring that abortions only be performed by a licensed physician; and so on. No other piece of legislation would have such a destructive impact on society’s ability to limit or regulate abortion. FOCA would impose an extreme abortion regimen on our country. Despite its misleading name, it would deprive the American people of the freedom they now have to set at least some limits on the abortion industry.

Pro-abortion groups have been trying to pass FOCA since 1989—and now we have a Congress more disposed than any in recent years to pass the bill and a President who has said he will sign it into law.

FOCA embodies the public policy goals of pro-abortion groups. These groups will promote the bill’s passage directly, and also advance its agenda by working to reverse pro-life laws one at a time—for example, by overturning existing federal laws against funding and promoting abortion.

The “Fight FOCA Postcard Campaign” sends the message to Congress that the radical policies of FOCA are out of step with the most basic values of the American people and should not become a part of our nation’s laws in any way.

The postcard signing event gives parishioners, as individuals and as a body, an opportunity to give public witness to their belief in the sanctity of human life. People remember signing the cards, and public officials understand that the postcards represent concerned constituents.

In addition to the postcard:

--An educational flier is available, “FOCA: A Radical Threat to Human Life.” This piece contains a brief statement on the threat FOCA represents and lists in concise form actions a person can

take.

--Parishioners are also encouraged to visit the special e-mail action page on **nchla.org**, where they can send e-mail messages to their federal elected officials in Congress and to President Obama.

E-Mail Sign-Up Form

The internet represents a new and growing form for communicating and acting. E-mail networks allow pro-life constituents to communicate to legislators effectively and quickly. At the end of this booklet is an E-Mail Sign-Up Form. Please reproduce copies of this form and make them available at the postcard signing event. Those who sign postcards will then have an opportunity to join church legislative networks and to participate in subsequent action alerts. Thanks!

Prayer Pledge

Each day until the postcard project is conducted, please say a prayer for God's blessing on your efforts and for God's assistance in establishing public policies that respect the dignity of the human person. Thank you!

PLAN AHEAD: GET YOUR PARISH EXCITED ABOUT THE POSTCARD PROJECT

The following instructions are designed to help the Parish Pro-Life Committee conduct an effective postcard project.

1. Meet with your pastor and obtain permission to conduct the project

- *Arrange a meeting with your pastor as soon as possible.
- *Explain what the program involves and its importance.
- *Ask your pastor for permission to implement the program. Be sure the discussion concludes with an exact understanding between you and your pastor about what you are permitted to do.
- *If the diocese has not already done so, set a date for the event. The nationally suggested weekend is January 24-25, 2009.
- *Ask your pastor to ensure that on the Sunday of the postcard event, parishioners are instructed about signing the postcards. This task can be carried out by the pastor, the celebrant at each Mass, or by a layperson the pastor designates. Please see "Talking Points" in Program Aids.
- *Ask for permission to arrange a series of bulletin announcements the weekend before the postcard event, as well as on the weekend of the event itself (see Program Aids).
- *After your meeting, send a note thanking your pastor for his time and support. At the conclusion of the project, send the pastor a report on its success.

If your pastor has any questions you cannot answer, please refer those questions to your Diocesan Pro-Life Director.

2. Other Steps to Increase Effectiveness

*Design a simple poster with key information about the event. Place posters in prominent locations such as the church building, school or parish hall, or rectory.

*Mobilize different parish groups to work on this project.

COORDINATING THE POSTCARD EVENT

The following straightforward guidelines will help ensure a successful postcard project in your parish.

You have been sent postcard strips—they are available in English and Spanish versions. Each strip has three postcards, one for your U.S. Representative and one for each of your two U.S. Senators.

--Do not separate the postcard strips prior to distribution. Give them to parishioners as a set.

--Parishioners should sign the three cards and include their return address on each to ensure that, as a constituent, they will receive a response.

--The names of the Representative and Senators need to be filled in on the front of the postcards. To save time—and avoid confusion—the parish can pre-address the postcards. Rubber stamps can be prepared and purchased for this purpose. If signers are asked to fill in the names, be sure the names are displayed at the signing tables—and be prepared afterwards to fill in the names left blank. Representatives can be identified through the signer's address.

Be prepared to distribute the postcards at each Mass on the postcard signing weekend. There are two basic methods for doing so.

METHOD ONE—IN THE PEWS

The postcards can be distributed while your pastor, other celebrant, or designated lay person is addressing the congregation about the project (see “Talking Points” below).

In addition, place a few inexpensive pens (not pencils) in each pew.

Special Instructions

- 1) Ask parishioners to sign their name on the back of the postcards and to print their name and address where indicated. Urge them to complete the cards while in church. If they take the cards home, they may lose them or, despite their best intentions, forget to sign them.
- 2) This project costs money. Ask each adult parishioner to donate \$1.00. Explain that the money will be used to buy stamps and defray other costs associated with the project.
- 3) Ushers should collect the signed postcards. Donations can be collected at the same time.

Follow-up after Mass

Even though postcards are distributed and collected during Mass, make sure that there is a collection basket at every church exit for postcards and contributions not collected during Mass. One or more tables can be set up for this purpose. Educational materials also can be made available at these locations.

METHOD TWO—AFTER MASS

If postcards are not filled out during Mass, you can conduct a successful event by setting up tables where people can gather after Mass.

Announcement during Mass

The pastor, celebrant or designated lay leader should announce that today the parish is participating in a postcard signing event sponsored by the U.S. bishops and explain the reason for this project (see “Talking Points”).

Parishioners should be encouraged to sign postcards at the tables or other designated places after Mass. Again, if parishioners take the cards home, they may lose them or forget to sign them.

Signing after Mass

At the end of each Mass, your postcard signing tables should be staffed with volunteers ready to encourage and assist parishioners.

You must be prepared to accommodate large numbers of people in a short time. Be sure you have a sufficient number of tables.

Set up your tables in well-trafficked areas.

Make your tables as attractive and visible as possible. You may want to hang a banner at your tables, “Sign Pro-Life Postcards,” “Fight FOCA,” or similar wording.

Place baskets or containers on the tables for donations.

In addition to having postcards at the tables, place postcards and pens on clipboards and circulate them among people waiting in line and among those socializing after Mass. This is a particularly good activity for youth volunteers; they can easily approach the parents of their friends and other members of the parish.

Have several large boxes where people can drop the cards off before leaving church property. Identify the boxes clearly. Make them physically accessible.

Please reproduce several of the E-Mail Sign-Up Forms and make these available to those who would like to sign up for church e-mail legislative networks.

The less effort people must make to find you, to stand in line, or to figure out what to do next, the more successful your postcard project will be!

Recommendation: Assign someone to take photos of the signing event. These can be used to report on this parish event, e.g., as part of a photo essay in the diocesan Catholic paper or to place on the parish web site.

EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-UP

After ushers or volunteers have collected the postcards and taken them to a central location, the Parish Pro-Life Coordinator must accomplish a few small tasks to successfully complete the project:

- 1) Count the postcards to the Representative and each Senator. Immediately record this information on the Parish Reporting Form found in the back of this instruction booklet.
- 2) Check to be sure the names of the appropriate Representative and Senators have been filled in. If necessary, please fill in these names for the parishioners. As noted above, a rubber stamp can be prepared and used. If necessary, the signer's street address and/or ZIP code can be used online to determine a person's Representative. See "Contact Your Congressperson" at: www.nchla.org/contcong.asp. Or see "Find Your Representative" at: www.house.gov.
- 3) Affix a 27-cent stamp to the upper right corner on the front of each postcard.
- 4) Mail the postcards at your local post office. *Mailing the postcards in a bulk container is not recommended.* People sign the cards as individuals. Bulk mailings downplay the personal dimension of the communication. Sometimes boxes of postcards "get lost" in busy congressional offices. When the postcards are mailed individually and directly to senators, it is more likely that people will receive a response.

NOTE: If you choose to hand deliver the postcards to a Representative's or Senator's office, please be sure that this occurs in a public setting: Official representatives from the parish and/or the diocese should formally present the postcards. Carefully explain to the staff the message of the card, and be prepared to dialogue with staff members. Be polite and cheerful. Thank the staff for receiving the cards. Express the desire that the constituents who signed the cards receive a personal response from the senator. Advise local newspapers, especially the Catholic paper, that the presentation is taking place. Bring your own camera to the event. Use the photos when reporting back to the parish or parishes, e.g., place a photo on the parish bulletin board. Include photos in any reports in newsletters, mailings, and the like.

- 5) Complete the Parish Reporting Form and mail it to your Diocesan Pro-Life Office. This

information will assist the diocesan office in evaluating the effectiveness of the project.

6) Send copies of the E-Mail Sign-Up Forms to your Diocesan Pro-Life Office and to the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment, 1500 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 24, Washington, DC 20005.

7) Thank all who helped you. Acknowledge the efforts of volunteers by sending a short but gracious thank-you note, or perhaps call them on the phone to express your gratitude. Remember to thank all the priests who assisted in the project. Your report on the project's success can be included in your thank-you note to the pastor.

Place a note in the parish bulletin thanking parishioners who signed postcards. Include a short report on the success of the project—the number of postcards sent, success stories, and the like.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

Following the steps outlined in this manual will result in the widest possible mobilization of parishioners signing postcards, and make a significant difference in promoting the dignity of human life.

The U.S. Bishops' Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities and the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment are grateful for your help and your participation. God bless you in all you do.

MATERIALS AVAILABLE ONLINE

Copies of the postcard, the educational flier, and these instructions can be downloaded online at: **nchla.org**. Materials are available in PDF format.

PROGRAM AIDS

English

Talking Points

The following suggested text can be used by the celebrant or designated lay leader to announce that the parish is participating in a national Fight FOCA Campaign and to explain why. According to instructions above, adapt these talking points for signing the postcards in the pews or for signing after Mass.

Our new President and Congress face serious national challenges at this time, requiring all Americans to unite for the common good of all. This is no time to divide our nation by attacking the weakest and most powerless among us, or ignoring the pro-life values of millions of Catholics and other Americans.

A bill in Congress called the “Freedom of Choice Act,” or FOCA, represents the most serious legislative threat to unborn children ever. FOCA would create a “fundamental right” to abortion that government could not limit but would be required to fund and support. It would overturn a broad range of pro-life policies currently allowed under the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* abortion decision: laws protecting parental involvement in an underage daughter’s abortion decision, laws upholding conscience rights, limits on abortion funding, bans on partial-birth abortion, and so on.

FOCA itself may become law, or the harmful policies it represents may become law one step at a time. In either case, we must oppose FOCA and all that it stands for.

Today parishioners have an opportunity to sign and send postcards to their U.S. Representative and two U.S. Senators. The message on the cards urges our federal elected officials to oppose FOCA and to retain existing laws against government funding and promotion of abortion.

If each of us takes just a few moments to sign the postcards, together we can send an important message to our nation’s Capitol to uphold the sanctity of human life. Please complete the cards before leaving church today. A small donation of \$1.00 will help pay for postage and program materials.

Please feel free to add a short personal note on each postcard to increase the effectiveness of your message.

Thank you for making your voice heard on this important matter.

Spanish

[Text to be supplied]

English

Sample Bulletin Announcements

Ideally, bulletin announcements should be placed in the parish bulletin on the weekend leading up to the postcard event, and on the weekend of the event itself.

1. One Week Before

POSTCARD SIGNING DAY! Next week our parish will join Catholics across the country in sending a message to Congress: Please oppose the “Freedom of Choice Act” (FOCA) and retain laws against government funding and promotion of abortion. You will have the opportunity to sign postcards to your U.S. Representative and two U.S. Senators. Please plan to participate in this important event.

2. Weekend of the Event

SIGN PRO-LIFE POSTCARDS! Today our parish, along with thousands of other parishes across the nation, will sign postcards urging Congress to oppose the “Freedom of Choice Act” (FOCA) and to retain existing laws against government funding and promotion of abortion. Sign a postcard to your U.S. Representative and your two U.S. Senators. Let your voice be heard! Thank you for standing up for life at this important time!

Spanish

[Text to be supplied.]

PARISH REPORTING FORM
 Fight FOCA
 Postcard Campaign

Instructions to Parish Coordinator:

As soon as postcard signing is completed in your parish, please fill out this “Parish Reporting Form.” Either photocopy it or cut it from this booklet, and return it to your Diocesan Pro-Life Office. Your prompt response will assist in evaluating this important project.

Your Diocese _____
 Your Parish/Organization _____ City _____
 Your Name _____
 Address _____
 City/State/ZIP _____
 Phone _____ FAX _____
 E-mail _____

1. How many postcards were sent from the parish to your Representative and two Senators?

NAME	## OF POSTCARDS
Representative _____	_____
Senator _____	_____
Senator _____	_____
Total postcards sent:	_____

2. Use the reverse side of this form to share any comments you may have about this “Fight FOCA Postcard Campaign.” Please include any photos of your event that you would like to share.

3. Please mail this form to your Diocesan Pro-Life Office. Thank you! *God bless you!*

[NCHLA logo]

National Committee for a Human Life Amendment

1500 Massachusetts Avenue, NW Suite 24 Washington, D.C. 20005 (202)393-0703 FAX (202)347-
1383 **nchla.org**