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Milwaukee Archdiocese Priest Alliance makes a statement regarding the two ballot initiatives that will appear on Wisconsin's November ballot. Drawing on their pastoral experience, the priests of the Alliance at their Fall General Assembly approved a statement asking that the public and the public servants in the state look beyond the issues suggested by the ballot referenda to the more weighty causes of marital instability and violent crime.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin    October 5, 2006

Beginning of the Alliance's statement:

We priests work daily with the joys and sorrows of marriage and family life. We try to uphold a consistent ethic of life in our preaching and programs of religious instruction. Because we have a stake in policies that touch on these matters, we wish to join the public debate stirred up by the November ballot measures, namely the constitutional amendment defining marriage and the advisory referendum about restoring the death penalty.

The death penalty is contrary to our deeply held belief in a consistent ethic of life. This barbaric practice was rejected by the people of this state in the 1850s. We do not believe its restoration will stop the brutal crimes that prompt calls for its return.

On the proposed constitutional amendment concerning marriage and the larger concerns for the stability of marriage and family life, we have these concerns and hopes:

We affirm the call of our bishops to work for the strengthening of marriage and family. We are especially grateful that they have urged that a vote on the defense of marriage amendment be accompanied by a repudiation of 'words and deeds that demean individuals with a homosexual orientation, many of whom are our brothers and sisters in Christ.' Many gays and lesbians are a part of the Catholic family and we do not want to see them marginalized or driven away.

We concur with the analysis offered by Fr. Bryan Massingale in his Catholic Herald 'Guest Opinion' of September 21, 2006. We share his well-founded fear that the amendment may be construed to deny rights and services, including health care, not only to those in civil unions but many other citizens of Wisconsin as well, irrespective of their marital status.

Indeed, our pastoral experience tells us that the prospect of gay unions is not a chief cause of marital instability and family dissolution. Marriage and family are more at risk from more

immediate challenges –problems that can and should be addressed by candidates. Among them are:

-The worsening poverty which is pervasive in a land blessed with wealth. One of every four Milwaukeeans lives below the poverty line.

-The fragility of jobs, the stagnation of salaries, the loss of pensions and the shrinking access to health insurance and healthcare.

-The commercialization of sex through pornography, prostitution and worldwide internet access.

These and other factors break apart marriage and undermine family life. We strongly encourage public officials to address how they will address them if elected or returned to office. We pledge our continued efforts to encourage marriage and stable family life. However, we need the reinforcement of sound public policies which strive for economic justice and the common good.

End of Statement

The Milwaukee Archdiocese Priest Alliance is a grassroots organization of 140 priests (diocesan and religious, active and retired) who serve in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

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