



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 30, 2011

Illinois Diocese Ends Adoption as Homosexual Unions Legalized

As the Illinois Civil Unions Act takes effect on June 1, one the state's Catholic dioceses has decided to close down its adoption agency rather than be forced to grant adoption and foster-care privileges to same-sex couples. As reported by the Associated Press:



Officials from the [Rockford Diocese](#) said they were forced to terminate state contracts worth \$7.5 million after lawmakers failed to pass an amendment exempting religious groups from provisions of the state's new civil unions law, which will let gay and lesbian couples form civil unions, a rough equivalent to marriage.

Penny Wiegert, a spokesperson for the diocese, said that a group of Illinois religious agencies had asked the state to allow them to refer homosexual couples who desired to adopt or be foster parents to other agencies "so as to not violate the moral teachings of their faith. Tragically, that did not happen. The state legislature failed to pass an explicit amendment exempting religious entities from the application of the civil unions law in its state-funded adoption and foster care programs."

Wiegert added that denial of the common-sense exemption "leads one to believe that our lawmakers prefer laws that guarantee freedom from religion. We simply can not compromise the spirit that motivates us to deliver quality, professional services to families by letting our state define our religious teachings."

Wiegert emphasized that Catholic doctrine "does not condone same-sex unions or unmarried cohabitation between individuals of the opposite sex," adding that "we believe in the natural order of marriage and the sacrament of matrimony between one man and one woman. We also believe and promote the optimal God-given privilege of every child to be reared in a safe and loving family with a committed and loving male father and female mother whenever possible."

Frank Vonch, the diocese's director of Catholic Charities, said that the 58 employees who lost their jobs because of the closure were involved in a special mission. "Our caseworkers do this work not just because it's their job, but because it is their calling," he explained. "The families they serve are just an extension of their commitment to serve humanity, so it is a very grave loss for them as well as for everyone involved with charities."

Vonch added that while "leaving this work will be very painful for our client families, employees, volunteers, donors, and prayerful supporters, we can no longer contract with the state of Illinois whose laws would force us to participate in activity offensive to the moral teachings of the church — teachings which compel us to do this work in the first place."



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The [Catholic News Service](#) noted that diocesan charities not funded by the state — “including private adoptions, school counseling, private family and marriage counseling, outreach and emergency services, immigration and refugee services, and crisis pregnancy counseling” — would not be impacted by the diocese’s move.

Anthony Martinez, spokesman for the homosexual activist group Civil Rights Agenda, called the diocese’s decision “a sad day for the many foster families and parents involved and the children who are in the care of Catholic Charities. Those are the victims in this, and my heart truly goes out to them. This is a sad display of bigotry by Catholic Charities, and their bigotry will now be harming the children in their care.”

But Erwin McEwen, director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, said that even with the pull-out of the diocese, there were still sufficient private agencies to handle the approximately 300 children that would be affected by the move. “Catholic Charities in Rockford has served children and families with compassion for many years, and we thank them for their service,” McEwen said in a written statement. “We will take every step necessary to ensure that the children are well cared for and the foster families are well supported during this transition.”

During debate over the legislation to legalize same-sex unions in the state, the [Catholic Conference of Illinois](#) noted that its six dioceses provide about 20 percent of the adoption and foster-care services in Illinois and had placed about 3,700 at-risk children within stable families over the past 10 years. Bob Gilligan, executive director of the Catholic Conference of Illinois, warned that the legislature’s decision not to provide an exemption to religious organizations could cause other dioceses to pull out of the state-funded adoption and foster care program. “We’re not bluffing,” said Gilligan. “This is a serious issue. No diocese is going to willingly put a child in a same-sex household.”

Gilligan declared that it should not be considered a “radical notion” to believe “that children are best served by being in the home of a married couple or a single individual.”



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