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NEWS

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**For Immediate Release:
October 2, 2007**

Catholic Conference Statement On Issue of Drivers Licenses for Immigrants

Following is a statement from Richard E. Barnes, executive director of the New York State Catholic Conference, regarding Governor Spitzer's plan to allow undocumented immigrants to access to New York State Driver's Licenses:

“For the past several years, the Catholic Church has been involved in the area of comprehensive reform of our national immigration policies. In his executive action regarding identification requirements for state driver's licenses, Governor Spitzer has addressed a problem that is in actuality a symptom of a larger problem that should be resolved ultimately by the federal government. Clearly, a balance must be struck between important homeland security concerns and certain economic realities. But the federal government has not instituted a comprehensive immigration policy; therefore these issues end up being addressed piecemeal by state and local governments. Given that reality, we believe that Gov. Spitzer's action was appropriate.

“While this matter is partially one of economic justice for the immigrants themselves, the state also has an economic interest at play. In certain sections of our state, we see labor market shortages, which are being filled by this population. In order to fill these positions, which are of critical importance to our state's economic well being, the immigrant community needs valid licenses in order to get to the jobs.

“While the Church's role is to speak to issues of human dignity and economic justice, the government's role is to balance all of these needs, including the legitimate security issues that have been raised by others. We leave it to the Governor and other state officials to resolve these matters as they deem necessary to protect our citizenry, to ensure economic justice, and to meet the labor needs of business and industry.”

The Catholic Conference represents New York State's Bishops in matters of public policy.

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