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# Contributing to a Platform for the Common Good: A Pre-Convention Dialogue Process

## March – April 2008

### INTRODUCTION

During the 2008 Election season, many Catholic groups have come together to try to change the national conversation to include a substantive discussion of government for the common good. We are asking for help from people around the country to develop a “Platform for the Common Good.” Your input will help to develop the platform which will be ratified at the *Convention for the Common Good* in Philadelphia in July 11-13, 2008. This platform will be used to engage people and candidates in discussion of common good policies during the 2008 election campaigns and beyond.

Catholics and people of faith across our country will convene diverse groups to **dialogue about the needs and issues of our communities--both local and global--and how these should be addressed.** We want people to draw on their own experience, relate that experience to the issues that affect the common good, and **send a summary of the dialogue to NETWORK (before April 30) to use in building the “Platform for the Common Good.”**

*The following is a suggested process for facilitating a small group dialogue in your community.*

### SMALL GROUP PROCESS

**Prayer and Introductions** – Use your own prayer or the prayer included here:

*Holy God, your Spirit led Jesus into the desert. There he found the inner strength to embrace his mission of love, justice and mercy. As followers of Jesus, we desire to grow in our ability to love others and to be just and merciful. Conversion to “believe in the good news” for all people stretches our hearts and minds and even our time and energy. Help us to believe in our efforts to pray for and work towards justice for all. We pray in your name, now and forever. Amen.*

**The Common Good** – Ask someone in the group to read aloud, then reflect on silently for a few moments:

*“Building a culture of the common good requires us to balance our own self interest with a commitment to greater common interest as well. It is the understanding that we are a community together, and that when one person suffers, we all suffer. The common good is rooted in the Catholic faith tradition, as we are called to “love our neighbors as ourselves.” A vision of a government and ‘commonwealth’ that stands for the interests and needs of all of its people, not just the few, is also embedded in our nation’s founding documents.” (from “A Pledge for Catholics to Support the Common Good”)*

### Dialogue

We would like the group to identify a few of the most important issues that need to be in a “Platform for the Common Good.” There exists a host of issues which cry out for our attention, from healthcare to immigration to economic inequality to foreign policy and so on, but it is important for this group to identify our own issues. We want to make sure that all voices are heard in our discussion. (If the group is large, over 8 people, break into smaller groups to start the discussion, and then summarize with the larger group. Make sure that someone takes notes during the summary!)

*Questions to consider:*

- *What do we feel are the most important common needs and worries in our community?*
- *What are the four most important issues facing our community, locally and globally, right now?*
- *What should government (at any level) do to respond to the concerns about these issues?*
- *What should citizens do to respond?*

### Closing Group Reflection

Who is missing from this table today? How can we engage others and make sure they are represented?

### WRITTEN SUMMARY

Make sure that your group takes time to summarize your input (during or after the meeting). A written summary should be sent to: **NETWORK; 25 E St. NW Suite 200; Washington, DC 20001 or by email at [network@networklobby.org](mailto:network@networklobby.org) by **April 30**.** Please include:

1. The list of the four most important issues for your group. You may also include other issues the group discussed. For each issue, please summarize people’s comments about why the issue is important for the common good, what government should do, and what citizens should do to respond to concerns about these issues.
  2. A list of people who participated -- include mailing address and e-mail address.
  3. A short description of the group (e.g. parish social justice committee), the group demographics (e.g. ethnicity, gender, age, religious affiliation, etc.) and the date and place (including City and State) where the dialogue took place.
  4. Please also include any comments people had about participating in this dialogue process.
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