OPPOSITION NOTES

AN INVESTIGATIVE SERIES ON THOSE WHO OPPOSE WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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The Knights of Columbus: Crusaders for Discrimination

INTRODUCTION

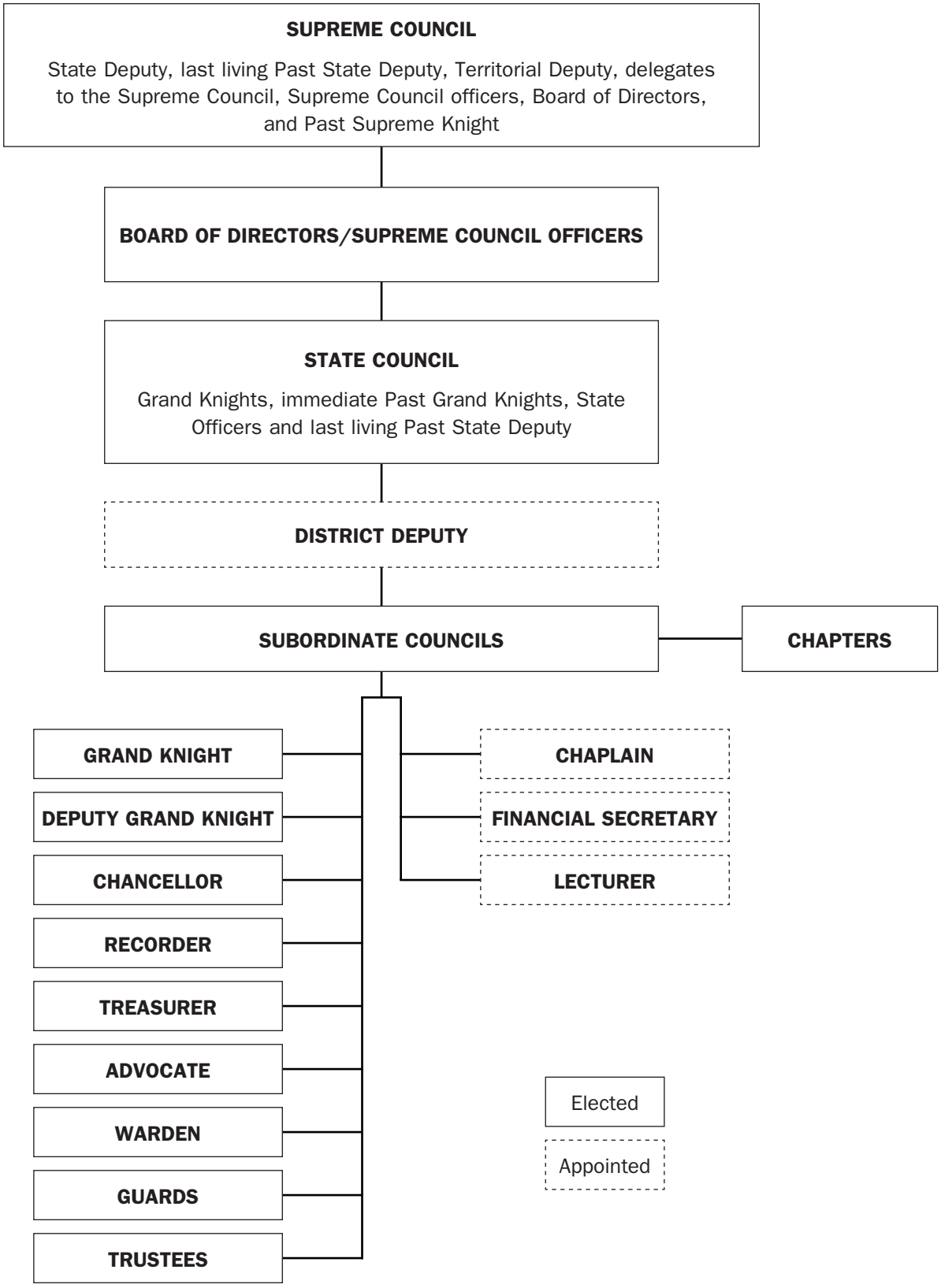
As the largest Catholic lay organization in the world,[1] the Knights of Columbus can be found in many parishes, where it has traditionally performed charitable works, led fundraisers to help the needy and brought communities together at pancake suppers.

But the Knights have a darker side. The order has pushed a conservative agenda ranging from the highly specific–a complaint against highschoolers reading *Catcher in the Rye*[2]–to systemic opposition to reproductive choice and marriage equality through sizable donations to programs run by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and other conservative organizations. The Knights of Columbus uses its manpower and money to push for legislation that does not match the beliefs of many Catholics or the will of the electorate. The Knights continue to wage a decades-long battle against abortion legislation, but what stands out now is the scale of its political expenditures–more than $10 million since 2004–and this does not include funds from the thousands of local fraternity councils and assemblies. The Knights' funding of anti-same-sex marriage campaigns goes towards a cause that is rejected by most Catholics–polling data reflects a stronger support for same-sex marriage among Catholics than any other Christian faith group, or the American population as a whole.[3]

Some have charged that certain Knights of Columbus expenditures ignore the needs of parishes and parishioners. This was the case with the $3 million grant the order made to the US bishops for an antiabortion campaign run by Hill & Knowlton, a major public relations firm–billed as a public information campaign.[4] More recently, the Knights' pursuit of a slanted version of "religious freedom" is expressed in a rhetoric of persecution and isolation that has abandoned the common good for a vision of society espoused by the very few.

Other Knights-supported programs target people on a more personal level by putting stumbling blocks in the way of women seeking abortions–in the form of sidewalk

TABLE 1: Organizational Structure



Adapted from: Knights of Columbus, *Grand Knight's Handbook*.

protesters with graphic and demeaning signs, as well as crisis pregnancy centers that rely on misinformation, manipulation and deceptive advertising.

This report aims to uncloak the fraternity from its familiar rituals and candy sales for kids, to reveal the depth of its conservative work and the conflict between its professed mission and the reality of its impact on the body politic in the United States. The story starts in a different America.

CORE VALUES AND POLITICS

In 1882, Fr. Michael McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus with a group of laymen to provide financial support to widows and their families. The order filled a niche because the anti-Catholic attitudes of the day led some insurance companies to refuse coverage for Catholic immigrants.[5]

While other Catholic benefit organizations like the Ancient Order of Hibernians[6] and the Catholic Knights of America[7] existed at the time, McGivney recognized the appeal of secret societies and sought to harness the power of ritual and ceremony to attract membership.[8] The plan helped the order's membership increase significantly within its first few years and proved a sustainable strategy for the organization that is now the largest organization of Catholic laity in the world at 1.8 million members.

At its inception, the Knights' two guiding principles were charity and unity.[9] Over the years, fraternity and patriotism were added, but the order's strong American sentiment was already reflected in the choice of Christopher Columbus as its patron, as well as the reenactment of Columbus' heroism that figures in the initiation ceremony.[10]

There has always been a certain tension between these values. Around 1910, anti-Catholic sentiments grew within the largely Protestant Progressive movement.[11] Around the same time, the Supreme Knight, in a speech to an organizational assembly, declared that the Knights had a responsibility to fight the rise of socialism because socialism equated to anti-Catholicism, a view echoed in the Knights' newspaper, the *Columbiad*.[12] The notion of "Columbianism," which sought to draw a connection between a free-market brand of patriotism and Catholicism, became cemented within the order.[13]

Yet, the emerging Columbianism came to include a strong social justice component. The first major charity project undertaken by the organization was the creation of "Huts" to provide free food and supplies to American and Canadian soldiers during World War I. As anti-Catholicism began to fade after the 1920s,[14] the Knights became increasingly devoted to social justice, both through charity and advocacy. Their charitable operations continued to grow throughout the 20th century with the help of the group's insurance arm. The Knights' continued push for social justice could be seen in their distribution and promotion of Pope Pius XI's social encyclicals, which called for a living wage for workers and credit unions while emphasizing the responsibilities of employers and landowners.[15]

But these liberal positions stood in contrast to the Knights' conservative agenda. Beginning in 1952, the Supreme Council adopted a resolution to push for a reference to God in the Pledge of Allegiance,[16] targeting their letter-writing campaign to the president, vice president and Congress.[17] When the bill was signed into law in 1956,[18] President Eisenhower sent a message to Supreme Knight Luke E. Hart, saying "We are particularly thankful to you for your part in the movement to have the words 'under God' added to our Pledge of Allegiance."[19] The subject was revisited in 2005, when the Knights joined a suit appealing a California judge's decision that "under God" was unconstitutional.[20] An appeals court ultimately ruled that the phrase was constitutional in 2010.[21]

It's difficult to pinpoint when the group became the well-oiled and well-funded political machine of today. In mid-1960s under Supreme Knight John W. McDevitt, the Vatican II spirit was running high and brought with it a greater focus on service to the general community,[22] but by the late 1970s there were signs of change. A 1979 article in *US Catholic* referred to a Knights-sponsored research study into the attitudes of young Catholics (and prospective Knights) as an example of "a smooth and polished organization" signifying that the old order of "cribbage players, billiards shooters and reactionary Catholics is dead."[23]

In 1979, Virgil Dechant, then-Supreme Knight, enumerated the order's premier programs: serving youth, the elderly, people with developmental disabilities and disaster victims, as well as printing antichoice literature. From the beginning of his tenure as leader, Dechant felt a need to "strengthen" the relationship between the order and the hierarchy, according to *US Catholic*, which reported that "in the United States and in Canada, this renewal of loyalty and fidelity has taken the form of periodic grants of $50,000 and $10,000, respectively, for support of the bishops' pro-life programs."[24] (Accounting for the rate of inflation, a $50,000 grant in 1979 is roughly equivalent to $150,000 today–still a fraction of the grants in excess of a million dollars the Knights donated to the bishops' antichoice activities in 2011.) Considering the organization's priorities, Dechant said prophetically, "I feel we need to become more politically active on moral issues…. We've got to make our clout be felt as Catholics first of all."[25]

As an organization that devotes a great deal of attention to women's reproductive issues, the Knights do not allow women as members.

By the year 1993, all of the hallmarks of today's Knights of Columbus were in place. The Knights were making headlines with their telephone bank and postcard campaign in opposition to the Freedom of Choice Act, which would have prevented states from restricting abortion rights.[26] That year the fraternity's discomfort with homosexuality came to the fore with the sale of its 50,000 shares in Disney because the Knights were "highly insulted" by the film *Priest*[27] about a gay Catholic priest struggling with celibacy.[28] Also, the Knights confronted their stance on prochoice public figures when considering whether or not to welcome President Bill Clinton to the fraternity's functions, as they did his two antichoice predecessors.[29] And finally, in 1993 a ripple of discord appeared within the fraternal unity when seven discontented Knights and former insurance agents sued the order, accusing it of unfair employment practices (namely, restrictive contracts forbidding them to engage in any other business pursuit without express permission).[30]

The Knights of Columbus' politics can currently be mapped across these four sectors–**antichoice activities**; **anti-marriage equality activities**; **public policy and policymakers**; and **dissent within the order**.

ANTICHOICE ACTIVITIES

View of Women

As an organization that devotes a great deal of attention to women's reproductive issues, the Knights do not allow women as members. There are several women-only groups similar to the Knights that will occasionally partner with local councils. These include: the Catholic Daughters of America,[31] the Daughters of Isabella[32] and the Columbiettes.[33]

The issue is perhaps less to do with the exclusion of women as members than with an underlying worldview that doesn't include women's agency, particularly in relation to reproductive

rights. The fraternity publishes a pamphlet, "The Gift of Woman," written by Dr. Maria Fedoryka, which says, "The key feature of femininity [is] receptivity ... to accept and *affirm* everything simply as it is. This is contrasted with the masculine soul, which reflects God's creativity, and which has been fashioned to take initiative–to 'make' and to 'do.'"[34] [Italics in original.]

The Knights are almost silent on what a woman's rights entail. For instance, the Massachusetts State Council proclaimed in a flyer, "We seek to support women who are driven to abortion as much as we seek to defend the defenseless in our society," and cited the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[35] They avowed that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person," but see this as applying exclusively to the fetus, and not to a woman's right to make her own reproductive healthcare decisions.[36]

Anti-Reproductive Rights Activities

"As long as there are Knights of Columbus, [*Roe v. Wade*] will someday be overturned," Knights leader Virgil Dechant pledged in 1989.[37] The Knights' opposition to reproductive rights stretches back much farther, however. In 1928 they were part of a coalition of Catholic groups that successfully pushed the Colorado State Assembly to vote down a bill that would have permitted sterilization.[38] In 1937, one of the leaders from the Knights of New York state petitioned *Life* magazine to recall an issue that featured stills from the film *The Birth of a Baby* showing the process of childbirth "in the name of human decency."[39] Though *Life's* publishers refused, the issue was banned in some cities, including Boston, Chicago and New Orleans.[40] These early misgivings about graphic images cannot be seen in the explicit signs routinely used by modern-day Knights at antichoice protests. For example, in 2012 a Knights council in Plainfield, Illinois, was involved in a demonstration that set up vivid depictions of abortion at busy intersections using signs that were so graphic that motorists were given advance warning of their disturbing nature.[41] The Knights have also brought graphic signs to demonstrations outside high schools despite parental protest.[42]

The order's vocal opposition to reproductive health issues on the sidewalk and in politics was established by degrees. As early as 1974, the Supreme Council passed a resolution supporting a constitutional amendment designed to overturn the previous year's *Roe v. Wade* decision. The next year, the Knights gave $50,000 to the US bishops' antichoice efforts.[43] Between 1973 and the mid-1980s, the Knights' leadership made periodic grants to the US bishops for "pro-life education" and the order was engaged in distributing antichoice literature[44]–but at this point politics still appeared to be secondary to the organization's charitable activities.

Shortly after they opened an office in Washington, DC, the Knights announced an unprecedented $3 million grant to the USCCB to fund a nationwide public relations campaign against abortion.

In 1987, the Knights of Columbus provided the funding for a Washington, DC, extension of the Rome-based Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family. The institute has since educated many leaders in the antichoice movement, including Jeanne F. Monahan, the president of March for Life.[45] The Knights' association with the March for Life has been cemented with yearly donations from the fraternal headquarters averaging $10,000. In addition, many local chapters charter buses to the event.[46]

The year 1987 also saw the creation of a DC location for the fraternity, which would be "responsible for monitoring legislative and public policy developments"–particularly those related to "family life" and "pro-life" issues.[47]

Shortly after they were settled in DC, the Knights announced an unprecedented $3 million grant to the US bishops to fund a nationwide campaign against abortion. The grant, which was used to employ both Hill & Knowlton, a major public relations firm, and the Wirthlin Group, a polling company, was billed as a public information campaign.[48] At the time, the *New York Times* reported that the campaign had its critics, who felt that the money should be directed to charities and to dioceses that were closing parishes and schools.[49]

In 2000, Supreme Knight Virgil Dechant retired, handing the reins over to Carl Anderson. While Dechant was certainly aggressive in transforming the Knights of Columbus into a leading opponent of abortion rights, he did not come from a background of antichoice activism.The outgoing leader, like those before him, had risen through the ranks of order: he served in numerous positions, all nonpolitical, within the fraternity before assuming the position of Supreme Knight.[50]

Carl Anderson's path to leadership, however, included his position as an aide to the controversial Sen. Jesse Helms from 1976 to 1981. Helms was regularly criticized for his extremely conservative views, especially those dealing with race and homosexuality. Anderson also worked as a special assistant to President Ronald Reagan and as acting director of the White House Office of Public Liaison during the Reagan administration.[51] Anderson claims to have been a co-author of the Mexico City Policy, which was instituted under President Reagan to prevent US funding of overseas programs that offered abortion services, provided abortion counseling, engaged in advocacy in their own countries or even spoke about abortion, no matter if these activities were subsidized by their own funds.[52] When Anderson was first tapped to direct the Knights' political office, it is unclear whether he was even a member of the Knights at the time–his extensive biography does not list a joining date.[53]

Carl Anderson's path to leadership included his position as an aide to the controversial Sen. Jesse Helms, who was criticized for his views on race and homosexuality.

Ultrasound Program and Crisis Pregnancy Centers

On the 36th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* in 2009, the Knights of Columbus launched its ultrasound program, which matches funds from the Supreme Council with money from state and local chapters to place ultrasound machines in antichoice crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs).[54] Since the program's inception, the Knights have purchased more than 290 machines at a cost of $8.5 million.[55] The program's web page alleges that "up to 90 percent of women considering an abortion choose to have their baby after seeing an ultrasound image,"[56] but crisis pregnancy centers are known to rely upon a variety of pressure techniques to prevent women from obtaining abortions. CPCs are the invention of Robert Pearson, who outlined methods to deceive abortion seekers in a widely used manual for starting antiabortion pregnancy centers: avoid answering direct questions about services provided and adopt "dual names"–one to "draw abortion bound women" and one to attract donations from people against abortion.[57] Other techniques include displaying graphic films or pictures of fetuses; passing judgment about a woman's moral character, such as for being pregnant and unmarried; making false claims of offering prenatal care or financial assistance after birth; imposing religious counseling and prayer upon women regardless of their religious beliefs; and making medically inaccurate claims about the supposed dangers of abortion.[58]

Though they may imply otherwise, the CPCs funded by the Knights do

not offer women a choice: upon receipt of an ultrasound machine, centers are required to sign a binding agreement in which they certify they will not refer for, recommend or provide contraception or abortion "to our clients for any reason without exception."[59] One agency featured in promotional materials for the Knights' Ultrasound Initiative, Problem Pregnancy of Worcester, lists on its website the different abortion procedures that exist, but fails to mention that they do not actually provide or refer for any of these techniques.[60]

The White Rose Women's Center of Dallas, Texas, which advertises its "open-minded counselors," has a video on its homepage listing the different kinds of abortion and asking "So many options, so which one is right?" while using the words "options" and "choice" several times. Abortion is not offered at this pregnancy center, which is listed on the Diocese of Dallas website as a "Catholic crisis pregnancy center."[61] The Knights of Columbus Francis of Assisi chapter funds the White Rose,[62] which has its own chapel on site.[63]

In order to be approved for receiving an ultrasound machine, the employment practices of CPCs are also scrutinized for any anti-Catholic "discrimination." According to the Ultrasound Initiative guidelines, this means anything that is not "respectful of the beliefs and practices" of Catholics or would encourage them to leave their faith.[64] No mention is given to antidiscrimination policies protecting any other individuals. Though many of these pregnancy centers receive federal and state funding, some also have restrictive hiring practices that will only accept Christian applicants.[65] Care Net Pregnancy Resource Center in Rapid City, South Dakota, received its ultrasound machine with the help of the local Knights chapter, which is a long-time funder of the center.[66] Care Net's volunteer application asked detailed questions about applicants' Christian faith[67] and the organization stated on its website that it "submits to the affiliation guidelines" of the Care Net national network, which include signing a statement of faith–a seven-point pledge, all related to Christian beliefs.[68] [69] The Huffington Post reported in 2012 that Care Net had received part of a million-dollar stimulus grant, which came from the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and was distributed through the Chiesman Center for Democracy.[70] According to the Huffington Post, a spokesperson from HHS said that grant "sub-recipients are required to follow the law" and that the agency was "currently reviewing" Care Net.[71] As of 2013, these pages are no longer accessible from the main website but are still live on the web.

In addition to raising money to purchase ultrasound machines for CPCs, the Knights of Columbus also provide a significant amount of direct financial support to the centers and their crisis hotlines, as attested by the CPC fundraisers that are frequently featured in Knights' newsletters from across the country. In Maryland, a chapter claims that 95 percent, or 37 of the state's 39 pregnancy centers, are "'connected' to a Knights council."[72]

Some crisis pregnancy centers also offer adoption programs. Bethany Christian Services, a network of "prolife adoption centers" linked to several Knights chapters[73] [74] has been the subject of a critical review of its adoption practices[75] and received low ratings from women who have used the service.[76]

Sidewalk Counseling/40 Days for Life

Knights of Columbus chapters encourage members to engage in "sidewalk counseling" and "prayer vigils" directed at women entering abortion clinics.[77] For instance, a Madison, Wisconsin, chapter sponsored a "Pro-Life Activist Training Camp" that covered topics including "how to answer common objections to the pro-life message … and practical hands-on information (how to help heal post-abortive men and women, [and] how to sidewalk counsel…)".[78] The

Coalition for Life, based in St. Louis, Missouri, lists several Knights chapters on its website promoting "free counseling and pregnancy options through what is called 'Sidewalk Counseling.'"[79] As with CPCs, the "counseling" presented involuntarily to women in this very public way does not include abortion. The atmosphere can get very heated in these sidewalk interventions: knights in Tucson, Arizona, helped finance graphic signs used in a demonstration outside a Planned Parenthood clinic–some depicting "fetal material" and others comparing abortion to "Hitler's holocaust."[80]

This language echoes that used by David Beriet, founder of Knights-allied 40 Days for Life, an extremist group that hosts 40-day-long sit-ins outside abortion clinics that sometimes block women's path to the door. Beriet, who is often invited to speak at Knights of Columbus events, is prone to using highly charged rhetoric, referring to *Roe v. Wade* as a "holocaust" and calling people born after 1973 "survivors."[81] Still, a Knights council located in Tampa, Florida, says that a protest in front of an abortion clinic in honor of 40 Days for Life is designed to "represent God's love."[82] A website recounting one 40 Days protest in Indianapolis described a young woman who said she had a "life-threatening" cancer and that her doctor had advised her to have an abortion. A protestor directed her to a pregnancy center for an ultrasound and advised she get a second medical opinion. There is no evidence that either the counselor, a pastor at an evangelical church, or the pregnancy center were authorized to provide medical advice, let alone treatment, but delaying a woman from seeking qualified care for a medically necessary procedure was listed as a "save."[83]

As a companion to the 40 Weeks for Life, the Supreme Council urges local Knights of Columbus chapters to place inserts in their parish bulletins during the 40 weeks leading up to Christmas "describing the stage of development an unborn child, such as Jesus."[84]

Contraception, Condoms and Abstinence

A 1911 headline proclaimed, "Knights of Columbus Vigorously Declare for Total Abstinence at Convention," but the annual meeting wasn't considering what you might think. It discussed the high cost alcohol-related deaths were inflicting upon the order, which decided not to serve spirits at events.[85] The cause-and-effect was clear to the Knights at the time, but the causal links between abstinence-only education, unintended pregnancy and abortion do not seem to be evident in the modern Knights' thinking, any more than they recognize that anti-condom policies leave people vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections.

A New York chapter came out against sex education at any age in the 1940s,[86] but a 2011 resolution was nearly as categorical in its rejection: "Vermont State Council express [sic] its disapproval of any sex education in our schools that encourages heterosexual or homosexual activity."[87] Not all sex education is deemed objectionable: many pregnancy centers, like the Knights-sponsored Heartbeat of Toledo, offer abstinence education programs.[88] However, there is ample data discounting abstinence-only sexuality education as ineffective.[89] For instance, a 2008 review of 56 studies that assessed both abstinence-only and comprehensive sex education curricula found that most of the abstinence-focused programs did not delay adolescents' sexual activity, and "only 3 of 9 had any significant positive effects on any sexual behavior." In comparison, about two-thirds of the comprehensive courses showed strong correlations with positive behaviors among youth participants.[90]

The Knights take exception to most, but not all, forms of contraception. The order donates large sums to the USCCB's Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities to promote natural family planning,[91] but is strongly against any other methods.[92] As an article in *Columbia* magazine explained, "Contraception may *seem* an invisible and in no way a negative factor in your marriage but it is a subtle and

insidious poison to marital love and the culture of life."[93] [Italics in original.]

Supreme Knight Carl Anderson wrote a blog post in 2009 discounting the importance of the C (for condom) in the ABC approach to fighting HIV & AIDS. He then added, "Those who would continue to make condom funding the top HIV-prevention priority in Africa, and would cut domestic abstinence education in the United States, should take note."[94] But the fraternity's misgivings about condoms appear to go further than Anderson's post, which was limited to an opinion that condoms shouldn't be the primary response to HIV. A St. Louis newspaper, the *Riverfront Times*, reported in April 2000 that the Pro-Life Committee of the Archdiocese of St. Louis and "several Knights of Columbus chapters" switched their support for Red Cross blood drives to another agency because the Red Cross promotes condom use to prevent HIV and also offers a teen education program including instructions on using condoms.[95]

A Narrow Definition of Life

In 2009 a $2 annual assessment on every Knight was implemented to support the "Culture of Life Fund" to oppose reproductive rights, and a separate service category was created for antichoice activities. That same year, opposition to reproductive rights was designated as one of the six service priorities,[96] and this value system is also reflected in the requirements for awarding knights an ACE Wings service award. The knight must participate in "five public Pro-Life events" with four of the five involving opposition to abortion, while the other activity may involve the Knights' traditional service areas of the disabled, veterans or the terminally ill.[97] The "ACE" stands for Pro-Life without Apology, without Compromise, and without Exception, referring to the order's official stance that abortion is never permissible under any circumstances.[98]

ANTI-MARRIAGE EQUALITY ACTIVITIES

In October 2012, Equally Blessed, a coalition of four Catholic organizations–Call To Action, DignityUSA, Fortunate Families and New Ways Ministry–published "The Strong Right Arm of the Bishops: The Knights of Columbus and Anti-Marriage Equality Funding." The report focused attention on what had been a little-known phenomenon–the huge sums the fraternal order was funneling into anti-marriage equality campaigns in several states, sometimes in its own name, sometimes under the aegis of other entities such as the National Organization for Marriage. The revelation had the public scrutinizing the order's funding priorities, but Knights' spokesman Patrick Korten dismissed any criticism: "The fact of the matter is that those who favor same-sex marriage are working hard to intimidate individuals and groups that support our cause, but [the Knights] are big enough that intimidation doesn't work on us."[99]

Knights-led opposition to same-sex marriage is not a recent phenomenon. In a July 1996 issue of *Columbia* magazine, same-sex marriage is the subject of the Supreme Knight's Father's Day message.[100] Already in 1997, the order's Crusade for Life had stated its commitment to opposing policies that "undermine the institution of marriage as a community of the whole of life between a man and a woman."[101]

Anderson said, "If homosexual 'marriage' is not wrong, then nothing is wrong.... We will never accept the destruction of the institution of marriage."

One of the first mentions of lobbying against same-sex marriage was a signature-gathering campaign led by Connecticut Knights in 2003. The gay magazine the *Advocate* reported that the Knights delivered a petition with 70,000 signatures to legislators asking them to insert language from the federal Defense

of Marriage Act into Connecticut law to define marriage as between one man and one woman.[102] In 2004, the Knights participated in a vigil to pray that an upcoming Michigan vote would "uphold the sanctity of marriage."[103] Ultimately, the Knights' Connecticut campaign proved to be futile, as the state began allowing same-sex marriages in 2008.[104]

In 2006, Supreme Knight Carl Anderson summarized the Knights' view of same-sex marriage as being antithetical to all that is right and true in the world–as he saw it: "If homosexual 'marriage' is not wrong, then nothing is wrong…. We will never accept the destruction of the institution of marriage."[105] Though the order claims not to condemn homosexuals or homosexuality,[106] the language it uses to describe them is very condemning. A 2007 Knights publication titled "Same-Sex Attraction: Catholic Teaching and Pastoral Practice," depicts every gay (and lesbian) individual as a pitiful person who "hates himself profoundly, often drowning himself in alcohol or contemplating suicide."[107] The author, Fr. John F. Harvey, also wrote that LGBT people must vow to live chastely, describing a grim existence "like the recovering alcoholic" in which 12-step-style programs are also useful.[108] A 2011 paper co-sponsored by the Knights of Columbus advocates for reparative therapy, i.e., therapy to change sexual orientation. The author, Dr. Richard Fitzgibbons, a marital counselor and psychiatrist,[109] lists one of the causes of homosexuality to be "rejection in early childhood as a result of a lack of eye–hand coordination" causing difficulties in sports.[110] In this publication, same-sex attraction is described in exclusively negative terms: "selfishness," "sexual narcissism," "sadness" and as damage resulting from abuse.[111] Likewise, the official Knights web page on the subject claims "not [to] condemn homosexuals or homosexuality," yet the title of the page, "The Homosexual Condition," implies that same-sex attraction is a disease, an impression confirmed by a statement that gays and lesbians are "burdened with this disorder."[112]

Just how accurately these organizational attitudes towards LGBT people reflect the views of individual knights is not known. What has been determined is that five years after Carl Anderson took over as Supreme Knight in 2000, the Knights of Columbus made its first known expenditure opposing gay marriage. The $100,000 donation was to DOMA Inc., a political committee in Kansas supporting an anti-same-sex marriage ballot initiative.[113]

After the 2005 donation to the Kansas campaign, ballot initiatives became the core of the Knights' opposition to same-sex marriage, with the fraternal headquarters donating nearly $7 million to this purpose between the 2008 and 2012 elections.

Public Pushback

The fraternity's media representative, Patrick Korten, said in 2010 that the push to block same-sex marriage "is a powerful, affirmative, broad-based effort that is strongly supported by the overwhelming majority of our 1.8 million members."[114] Nevertheless, both Catholics and non-Catholics have expressed their disagreement with the campaign, with Knights speaking out in support of their gay children in some cases.

Public criticism of the Knights' campaign against same-sex marriage goes back to 2008. The *Yale Daily News* interviewed Patrick Korten about the defeat of the ballot measure that would have led to a ban on same-sex marriage in Connecticut. Korten stated at that time that a "substantial" sum was donated for the ballot initiative, including funding for TV ads aired right before the election, and that the Knights' anti-marriage equality efforts extended to 30 states.[115] The same article quoted Dale Martin, a professor of religious studies at Yale, who said that "it was ironic that the KOC's founding was predicated on combating discrimination against Catholics, yet the

organization went on to discriminate against others."[116] It was a point echoed by a former vice president of the Knights' insurance branch who wrote to the *Portland Press Herald* in 2012. The Maine resident and father of seven sons, some of whom are Knights and one of whom is gay, evoked Father McGivney's opposition to discrimination and said "I strongly urge the Knights of Columbus to continue its blessed tradition of charity and not divert any more of its charitable funds toward the fight against marriage equality here in Maine or anywhere else in the United States."[117]

A DVD with an anti-same-sex marriage message was produced by the Knights in partnership with the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and 400,000 copies were distributed to Catholics right before the 2010 election.[118] Bob Radecki, a parishioner in Burnsville, Minnesota, organized the Return the DVD project, a self-described "group of mostly suburban, mostly middle aged, married Catholics" who sent 3,000 DVDs back to the archdiocese to express their disagreement with the video and the Minnesota church leadership's campaign against same-sex marriage.[119] There is no way to know how many copies ended up in the trash, but an artist, Lucinda Naylor, collected and returned another 1,000 DVDs and used others to make an art project.[120]

Greg Seivert, another Minnesota Catholic, told the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* about the difference between the Knights' new agenda and the order he knew growing up. "Before, the Knights were a charitable group that did the work of charity and mercy. This strikes me as a very different role. I would be very leery of contributing in any sort of way with their involvement in this political brouhaha."[121]

David Saavedra, co-president of Call to Action and the parent of a gay son, said, "The Knights portray themselves as representatives of a broad Catholic tradition, but they have become culture warriors."[122] San Francisco's *Bay Area Reporter* interviewed 88-year-old Edmund Burg, a Knight for 65 years and father of a gay son, who expressed "a sense of betrayal and disappointment with this organization that has done a great deal of good and now has turned on me."[123]

The Knights' anti-same-sex marriage fervor has even spilled over into cemeteries. A reader submitted a letter titled "Cemetery is no place for politics" to the *Morrison County Record*, a Little Falls, Minnesota, newspaper. He complained that a church had allowed the Knights of Columbus to display their "Vote Yes Marriage Amendment" at the graveyard where his family members were buried.[124]

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FINANCES

The Internal Revenue Service classifies the Knights of Columbus as a fraternal benefit society, a combination of a national structure and local chapters that is considered a 501(c)(8) tax-exempt not-for-profit entity.[125] As a 501(c)(8) fraternal organization, the Knights have more leeway regarding political activity than a 501(c)(3) organization, the most common tax designation for a nonprofit, but there are still limits. As the IRS states, "political activity is not considered a fraternal activity," but fraternal orders "may engage in some political activities, including intervention in political campaigns on behalf of, or in opposition to, candidates for public office, without jeopardizing its exempt status."[126]

The *Boston Globe* investigated the origins of the tax-free status for the Knights' insurance business in 1995 and came to the conclusion that any differences between taxed and untaxed insurance businesses had become irrelevant.[127] But when President Reagan

attempted to tax fraternal insurance companies, the Supreme Knight at the time, Virgil Dechant, wielded his White House connections while local Knights' councils started a phone bank and organized members to send 88,000 letters to the White House in protest.[128] The Reagan administration backed down, but according to the *Globe* the report subsequently released on tax reform said of 501(c)(8)s, "Much of the combined fraternal and charitable activity appears to be more fraternal in nature, largely benefitting members."[129]

The *National Catholic Reporter* questioned whether the Knights' charitable work was enough to offset the enormous tax benefits the fraternity receives, given that the insurance arm of the order ranks in the top one percent of the North American insurance market yet pays no federal and nearly no state or local taxes.[130] "Dechant told the *Globe* that the Knights spent on charity what it would owe in taxes, if it paid them," the *Reporter* wrote, and then performed an analysis of the fraternity's structure that concluded most of the charitable contributions, in dollars or in kind, come from the members at a grassroots level. While the insurance business, the other tier of the 501(c)(8), had recently turned a $224 million profit.[131]

The Knights' insurance business is very profitable–the amount of life insurance in force more than doubled from $40 billion in 2000[132] to a current total of more than $86 billion.[133] For the fraternity, this translates into ample resources to devote to conservative causes–tax returns for the Knights headquarters revealed over $2 billion in total revenue for 2011.[134]

Tax records reveal the extent of the Knights' expenditures on antichoice and anti-same-sex marriage activities during the 2004-2012 period, summarized in Table 2 on page 13. It is unclear whether the antichoice funding listed included the headquarters' matching donations to the ultrasound program, totaling $8.5 million and 290 machines since 2009.[135]

Antichoice funding went to a variety of efforts opposing specific reproductive rights, including antiabortion rallies, crisis pregnancy centers, programs spreading a negative view of modern contraception and Life Athletes, an athletic league that promotes sexual abstinence among its members. To join, athletes take a four-part pledge, with one component reading, "I will give myself only to the special person whom I marry as my partner for life."[136] Other grant recipients worked on the big picture of the antichoice movement–among these is the National Catholic Bioethics Center, which conducts research and helps formulate arguments about the supposed immorality of procedures like in vitro fertilization[137] and sex change operations.[138]

The catchphrases "life and family" or "marriage and family" appear in the titles or mission statements of many of the Knights' grantees, reflecting an overlap between antichoice and anti-same-sex marriage initiatives. For example, the course description for the "Law, Family and the Person" class offered at the John Paul II Family and Marriage Institute promises to examine subjects put in dismissive quotation marks: "same sex marriage," artificial "reproduction" technologies, "gay adoption" and contraception as a "fundamental right."[139] In 2011, the Knights gave $30,000 to the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-FAM), a group known for its brash opposition to reproductive choice and same-sex marriage at the United Nations.[140] C-FAM was established in 1997 by Human Life International and Human Life International-Canada to represent their interests in the United Nations after HLI was denied UN accreditation. Now run by Austin Ruse, the organization has yet to attain UN accreditation.[141]

In the Knights' campaign against marriage equality, election contribution records reflect about $7.1 million donated by the order headquarters to ballot initiatives. The largest single

TABLE 2: Knights of Columbus Headquarters Antichoice and Anti-Marriage Equality Funding 2004-2012

Based on 990 Forms from 2004-2012 and election-related expenditures from FollowTheMoney.org.

	Donations 2004-2012
Election-related spending from 2004-2012 total	**$7,119,877**
Knights of Columbus Family Life Bureau	$19,159,798
USCCB Prolife and Natural Family Planning	$4,063,002
National Catholic Bioethics Center	$3,017,695
Becket Fund for Religious Liberty	$2,222,500
National Organization for Marriage (including NOM California)	$1,780,000
Other antichoice or anti-marriage equality donations	$4,811,254
USCCB Grant for Defense of Marriage	$977,681
Life Athletes, Inc.	$900,000
Proposition 8 Legal Defense Fund	$500,000
National Life Center – Crisis Pregnancy Hotline	$376,000
Americans United for Life	$350,000
March for Life	$303,082
Family Institute of Connecticut	$295,542
National Office of Post Abortion Reconciliation and Healing	$290,581
Pontifical Council for the Family	$265,000
Lateran University Marriage/Family Studies	$249,688
Birthright USA	$235,000
Federalist Society	$210,000
USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty	$200,000
Susan B. Anthony List	$200,000
Vitae Caring Foundation – Media – abortion	$200,000
Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family	$125,000
Generation Life	$100,000
Human Life Foundation	$100,000
Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction	$100,000
Ut Vitam Habeant Fund (That They May Have Life)	$100,000
Campaign/Symposium about Adoption and Marriage for Children	$93,312
Sisters of Life	$89,000
C-FAM	$30,000
Total antichoice or anti-marriage equality spending 2004-2012	**$41,344,135**
Additional donations to the USCCB 2004-2007	$2,905,165

contribution was a $1,153,188 donation to ProtectMarriage.com, which promoted California's anti-marriage equality Proposition 8 in 2008, and ultimately, same-sex marriage was banned in the state. In 2011, Knights headquarters donated $500,000 to the Proposition 8 Legal Defense Fund. The order also sent a $1,030,000 grant to the National Organization for Marriage in 2009. In 2012, the Knights continued funneling resources into ballot initiatives in Maine, Maryland, Washington and Minnesota. Unlike California, the four 2012 contests all ended in costly defeats for the Knights' position. (In June 2013, California once again permitted same-sex marriages after a ruling by the Supreme Court.)

The Knights of Columbus has been unwilling to accept defeat, however. In Carl Anderson's New Year's message for 2013 he vowed to continue to fight marriage equality,[142] and one of the groups funded by the order is proving just as intractable. Although same-sex marriage was upheld by the Connecticut Supreme Court in October 2008,[143] the Knights gave a total of $245,542 in the years 2009-2011 to the Family Institute of Connecticut (FIC), which is largely focused on opposing marriage rights. Much of the content on the FIC website is out of date, but the still-active blog has recent posts dismissing the decision as invalid[144] and inviting readers to march against marriage equality in New England and Washington, DC, as a way of bringing Connecticut's "proud tradition" of opposition to marriage equality to other states.[145]

During the 2004-2011 period, significant sums were also dedicated to the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a law firm specializing in conservative causes (a total of $2.2 million). The Becket Fund is representing several colleges that are disputing the HHS contraceptive coverage policy[146] and, according to Political Research Associates, has made "the specious claim that marriage equality laws will force Roman Catholic churches to perform marriage for gay or lesbian couples."[147] An additional $200,000 was granted in 2011 to another entity dedicated to popularizing a very narrow view of religious liberty–the USCCB's Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, headed by Knights Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori.

All told, between 2004 and 2012 the Knights headquarters gave $44.8 million to programs opposing reproductive rights, marriage equality, true religious liberty or some combination of these. Determining the purpose for a given grant is much easier since the advent of the more specific 990 tax forms for nonprofits introduced by the Internal Revenue Service in 2008.[148] Between 2008 and 2011 the Knights donated $4 million to USCCB programs that were clearly antichoice in nature, but in the years accounted for with the old form, $2.9 million was given to unspecified USCCB activities, some portion of which must also have been for antichoice purposes.

None of these figures can capture the true extent of the entire order's expenditures, however. As the Equally Blessed report pointed out, in addition to the Knights' donations earmarked for anti-marriage equality campaigns, the fraternity funds other conservative organizations and causes that, in turn, provide resources to block same-sex marriage, making the Knights' true financial impact difficult to ascertain.[149] The order's nationwide structure also contributes to these difficulties with financial accountability. For instance, during the 2006 election in South Dakota, the Knights donated $80,750, of which $70,000 was "wired from an unreported location" in support of an abortion ban that was ultimately signed into law.[150]

There are also approximately 9,300 local Knights councils in the United States. These chapters, the state councils and the individual knights who belong to them are also undoubtedly donating

to antichoice and conservative political causes, but their budgets are outside the scope of this report, which focuses on the order's headquarters.

THE KNIGHTS, PUBLIC POLICY AND POLICYMAKERS

Just as it is difficult to get the big picture of the Knights' political spending, the table on page 16 is by no means an exhaustive account of the order's political activity on the state and national level. But with many prominent men among its numbers, it should come as no surprise that the order has attempted to exercise a more direct influence on policy than phone drives and letter campaigns. As Virgil Dechant said in 1989 to the *Hartford Courant*, "We worked hard in the Reagan years to get the right justices appointed."[151] The Knights also supported Supreme Court nominees Clarence Thomas and Robert Bork, hailed by the organization as men who stood for "positive forces for family life and pro-family issues."[152]

Not all of the Knights' public figures have voted according to the order's antichoice party line. The issue of what, if anything, the order should do about Knights who are policymakers and vote for same-sex marriage or reproductive rights is exacerbated by the ambiguous policies about allowing members with prochoice–or even pluralistic–views within their ranks.

In 1989, Supreme Knight Dechant was approached by several vocal antichoice figures, including Rev. Paul Marx of Human Life International and Judie Brown of the American Life League, with a list of ten legislators, including New York Governor Mario Cuomo and Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy, who they believed should be ousted from the Knights due to a history of prochoice votes. Russell Shaw, director of information at Knights headquarters, took a dim view of this intervention, saying, "We have a situation here where the Knights of Columbus is literally being instructed to be more Catholic than the Pope." Shaw professed he could not understand "what good purpose certain pro-life groups imagine they are serving by attacking or trying to embarrass the Knights of Columbus on this issue."[153] Then and now, the Knights' leadership appears to adhere to this pragmatic view. Dechant gave "direct orders" that Kennedy not be ejected, according to the *Catholic Messenger*.[154] The *National Catholic Reporter* further named Vatican officials who have come down against expelling the Knights, including Cardinal Agostino Casaroli and Archbishop Pio Laghi, as well as New York Cardinal John O'Connor.[155]

The Knights of Columbus have, however, made several prochoice legislators feel unwelcome at events or in the order itself. In 1996, Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT) attended a Knights event held in his honor and made a donation to the parish school, but the administrator of the church, Fr. George Parker, returned the check and called Senator Dodd "a disciple of death" from the pulpit. Dodd responded by standing up for his vote against gestational limits on abortion.[156] New Jersey's governor, Jim Florio, chose to resign from the order over criticism about his support for abortion rights, rather than denying his prochoice beliefs.[157] Ted Kennedy ultimately let his membership lapse, but the order's disapproval of his prochoice politics led Paul Devin, the Knights' Supreme Advocate, to leave the fraternity in 2009 when his contributions to Kennedy's campaign came to light.[158]

Virgil Dechant said in 1989, "We worked hard in the Reagan years to get the right justices appointed."

The leadership stopped short of outright suspension of prochoice legislators, although in 2007 the

TABLE 3: A Selection of the Knights' Political Tactics

Year	Location	Subject	Action
1996	National	Requested that Congress vote to override a presidential veto of a ban on certain late-term abortion procedures.	Conducted a postcard campaign.[159]
2006	Maryland	Asked a Maryland Court of Special Appeals to overturn a decision that had removed barriers to same-sex marriage.[160]	Filed an *amicus curiae* brief.
2006	California	Supported a constitutional amendment to make it illegal for physicians to provide abortions to underage girls without a) written parental consent and b) a 48-hour waiting period.	Led a campaign with bulletin inserts, homilies, voter registration drives and yard signs.[161]
2009	Connecticut	Supported a so-called "religious liberty" amendment to overturn a bill approving same-sex marriage.[162]	Headed a campaign that included newspaper ads, letters from the bishop read during homilies, as well as "more than 17,000 e-mails and letters to legislators, and thousands more phone calls."[163]
2012	Minnesota	Pushed for a constitutional amendment seeking to define marriage as between one man and one woman.	At least $31,000 donated by local chapters in addition to a $100,000 donation from national headquarters;[164] also led phone banks and seminars.[165]
2012	Maryland	Opposed a ballot measure that ultimately allowed same-sex marriage.	Followed directions from the Maryland Catholic Conference, which asked the Knights to seek permission to make pulpit announcements about the amendment, distribute materials after Mass, as well as "manning the polls on Election Day and early voting to hand out literature."[166]
2012	Pennsylvania	Supported a bill that would opt the state out of providing funding for abortions as part of any health insurance plan.	Conducted a phone drive to state senators.[167]
2013	Rhode Island	Proposed a "Choose Life" license plate, of which half of the proceeds will benefit the Knights of Columbus Choose Life Fund.[168]	Campaign headed by Mike Krzywonos, Pro-Life Chairman of Rhode Island Knights,[169] who is the contact for the "Choose Life" license tag.[170]

Knights reportedly made a move to ban advocates of reproductive choice, including policymakers, from attending order events or receiving awards, as well as renting Knights-owned properties or holding an office within the order.[171] The Catholic News Agency suggested that this was in response to a Boston protest led by the Concerned Roman Catholics of America (CRCOA), an ultraconservative faction that seems to have appointed itself as a watchdog over the Knights' orthodoxy, particularly on the subject of progressive legislators. CRCOA's president, Kenneth Fisher, deplored "the 16 Massachusetts state lawmakers–all Knights in good standing–whose votes helped quash a ballot measure that would have defined marriage as between a man and a woman and banned same-sex marriage."[172] [173] The group protested outside the 2007 annual Knights convention in Nashville because of what its website termed "pro-Sodomite, pro-abortion Knights of Columbus."[174]

The fraternity has dealt with this criticism by either downplaying the importance of the "few" Knights who may deviate from the official stance on marriage and abortion or deferring to church leadership on the question. Korten's response to the CRCOA protest was: "The Knights of Columbus is a strongly pro-life organization. If there are a few members who don't share those views, that's unfortunate, but irrelevant."[175] In 2010, the media spokesperson further deflected criticism of the order's practice: "There are those who believe that our time, resources and energy could be better spent hunting down a handful of members who constitute the rare exception. We disagree."[176] That same year, Supreme Advocate and General Counsel John Marrella wrote a letter opposing the Massachusetts State Council's plans to suspend the membership of any Knight in public office who supports abortion or same-sex marriage. Marrella deferred to the bishop's authority to decide a person's standing in the church.[177]

DISSENT AMONG THE RANKS

The existence of policymaker-Knights who vote for positions unsupported by the order leadership begs the larger question of how the Knights of Columbus handles dissent among rank-and-file members. Two of the order's principles, unity and fraternity, can translate into an organizational culture in which dissent is difficult. A staple publication, "These Men They Call Knights," recounts Father McGivney's original vision in which "the Order relied on the strength of unity to remain steadfast in the Faith while claiming their rightful place in society."[178] This philosophy born out of a milieu hostile to Catholics is seen as the basis of an antagonistic attitude towards society: "Today the Order uses that strength to speak out for religiously-grounded moral values in a culture that has forsaken them."[179] The section on fraternity also encourages a tight-knit structure.[180]

According to the handbook for chaplains, who have a say in the acceptance and censure of members, a man must be a "practical Catholic in union with the Holy See," which is defined as "supporting the Church in her defense of marriage and family life and in her crusades against divorce, abortion, pornography and all the evils of today." Members' failure to remain a "practical Catholic," which includes marrying outside the church or remarrying if divorced, is cause for their standing in the order to be questioned.[181]

The officers' handbook states that suspension for nonpayment of dues "represents a significant group of losses to our Order each year," which apparently happens more often than other possible reasons for suspension–a felony conviction or "lack of practical Catholicity."[182] Less clear-cut was the case of David Levine, a knight from Orange County, California, who was suspended in 1993 after he leaked a letter from Knights member Msgr. Vincent A. Yzermans, in

which the priest questioned the chapter leadership for creating a trust fund of approximately $36 million for "the Pope's personal charities." Yzermans said, "I do wonder if the individual members and/or individual councils were consulted about this sizable donation," and also challenged the gift of a $250,000 organ to Camp David–a presidential retreat 60 miles north of Washington, DC.[183] Levine alleged that "our Supreme Council may very well be losing touch with the rank and file," pointing to high salaries paid to the top leaders.[184]

Part of the *Boston Globe's* 1995 series on the Knights of Columbus covered a Knights chapter in Pennsylvania where four members were suspended for asking that the order's insurance salesmen be kept to the same code of conduct as the knights. Unexpectedly, the chapter leadership used these four knights as an example of those who create "discord and dissent," which in this case meant writing critical letters with proposals for policy changes directly to the top leadership. According to the *Globe*, order headquarters backed the local leaders and took what may have been an unprecedented step: calling in "politically prominent members, former US Attorney General William Barr and former Suffolk District Attorney Newman Flanagan, to hold disciplinary hearings against the members who had suggested the policy changes."[185]

The above cases involve rather specific discrepancies with leadership decisions, but in 2008 a group called "Knights for Obama" formed due to more fundamental disagreements with the order. The group created a website that now exists as a page on the Catholic Democrats site[186] and on Facebook, apparently spurred by an advertisement in major newspapers taken out by Carl Anderson in 2008 right before the election.[187] The Knights for Obama upbraided Anderson for publishing an open letter to Sen. Joseph Biden in September in which he compared Biden's prochoice views with slavery.[188] They felt strongly that the Supreme Knight should not make use of "his shared Catholic identity with Sen. Biden as a foil to attack him for blatantly political purposes," according to Dr. Patrick Whelan, president of Catholic Democrats.[189] Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill III, former lieutenant governor of Massachusetts, also disagreed with Anderson's advertisement.

> "As a member of the Knights of Columbus, I want to make it clear that Carl Anderson does not speak for me. For 125 years, the Knights have stood for solidarity and for aiding those in need. These statements, transparently promoting the McCain candidacy and by extension all the moral failures of the Bush years, do not reflect our Catholic tradition. Instead they risk making the Knights a tool of political partisanship at a time when the Knights can, and should, be focusing on the church's greatest gift to our country, the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching."[190]

Commonweal magazine said of Anderson's ad campaign, "The Knights took a strong anti-abortion position long before Anderson came to head the organization–but Anderson's decision to advertise his rebuke of the Democratic vice-presidential candidate in the heavily Catholic battleground counties of a battleground state crossed the line into partisan political activity."[191] While fraternal benefit organizations may engage in some political activity, Carl Anderson delivered a different message at the 126th Supreme Convention the month before. "Noting that 2008 is an election year in the United States, Anderson said that the Order would remain nonpartisan," the *Knightline* newsletter issue on the convention reported.[192]

The founder of Knights for Obama was Rick Gebhard, a member of Council 853 in Michigan and of Catholic Democrats.[193] "I guess I am trying to level things out a bit to show that the Knights are not a partisan group and to show there's a mix of beliefs," Gebhard

said, citing Catholic social teaching, healthcare and his disagreement with aggressive military policy as the deciding factors in his endorsement of the Democratic candidate.[194]

The statements from knights who feel disenfranchised from their order still have resonance after another presidential election. "Our organization is responding to those who have tarnished the great reputation of the Knights of Columbus by dragging its 1.3 million members into tacit endorsement of the Republican candidate in this crucial Presidential election," reads the Knights for Obama mission statement. Commenters echo this sentiment.

> "Thank you so much for starting this website! I have been a Knight for 5 years and felt out of step since Mr. Anderson's support of all things Republican…."

> "Since the Reagan years, KCs have revealed a pattern of partisan involvement and statements that is predominantly Republican. Reagan, G. W. Bush, current G. Bush have been prominently portrayed in KC literature and conventions…."

How many knights vote for candidates whose progressive policies contradict the fraternity's politics is a secret that will remain in the voting booth. Knights with dissenting beliefs have reason to fear being too open with their fellows, or they may find themselves shut out from the unity and fraternity. In 2001, a New York state resolution proposed to ban legislator-knights who vote in support of choice from all Knights of Columbus functions and facilities. Knight Ed Farrell upheld this proposal and expressed his total rejection of differing points of view: "We want to make it possible for dumb Catholics to get it into their heads that they should not vote for pro-abort politicians; rather they should be shunned."[195] Farrell also said more generally. "We want to flaunt our positions: that pro-aborts are not welcome on our property."[196]

RENTAL POLICIES: TURF FOR WARRING IDEOLOGIES

Rental policies have long been an issue among the Knights, along with the idea that those who rent a property belonging to the order should exemplify the order's values. One instance of ideological conflict between Knights and their tenants occurred in 1998, when Boston's Parker Hill/Fenway Neighborhood Service Center for people affected by HIV & AIDS was evicted by the Knights of Columbus chapter that owned the building because an individual falsely claiming to be HIV positive said he was practicing unsafe sex and was supplied with condoms.[197]

A Knight stated, "We want to make it possible for dumb Catholics to get it into their heads that they should not vote for pro-abort politicians; rather they should be shunned."

One of the alarmist myths used to justify anti-same-sex marriage sentiment deals with the supposed erosion of the Knights' property rights. The claim appeared in an ad sponsored by the National Organization for Marriage-Rhode Island in local newspapers right before the House of Representatives was to vote on legalizing same-sex marriage.[198] Titled "The Big Lie," the advertisement alleged that "religious groups like Knights of Columbus have been forced to allow same-sex marriage ceremonies in their facilities, against their beliefs."[199] Politifact Rhode Island debunked this statement, finding only a 2003 Canadian case involving a lesbian couple who booked a Knights-owned facility for their wedding reception–a British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal ordered the Knights to pay an injury settlement to the women, while also upholding the order's rights not to host a same-sex marriage. This Canadian case has no bearing on US laws.

The emerging precedent in the US suggests that Knights of Columbus halls will not be forced to host same-sex

nuptials. In 2011, the New York State Senate passed AB 520, which expanded conscientious objection to same-sex marriage to include "benevolent orders" like the Knights.[200]

One Knights chapter exerted a different kind of control over its tenants. In 2011, the Starz Denver Film Festival rented a Knights hall and was subsequently notified that they would not be permitted to recognize two LGBT advocacy organizations that sponsored the event along with other funders.[201]

Rental policies caused division in a Knights chapter in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 2010. Two priests resigned from the local Knights of Columbus Council 140 because the Knights had rented space to NARAL Prochoice America. The property in question was owned by a home association whose membership overlaps with the Knights and follows the council's directives on policy, although the association is a separate legal entity.[202] Richard Spead, a knight and the president of the home association, spoke out against the decision to withdraw the rental agreement from NARAL. He said that in the future the center would be operated separately from the Knights and "without regard to color, race or creed" because "that's what it means to be a good Christian."[203] Spead also conveyed his plans to withdraw from the Knights over what he deemed "hypocrisy."[204]

It is not uncommon for a chapter to maintain a home association such as a rental property, which, as a legally separate entity, does not enjoy the same religious exemptions as a fraternal hall.[205] Nevertheless, in December 2012 Jordan Ulrey, State Advocate for the New Hampshire State Council, instructed chapters that "any rental is in compliance with the mission of the Knights of Columbus since the Order's name is closely associated with, if not legally the same as, the home association." According to Ulrey, previous rental agreements that were not in compliance with the mission included the NARAL rental, same-sex marriage ceremonies and "XXX-rated" bachelor parties that had been posted on YouTube.[206]

The Knights have also turned their attention to others' rental agreements. In 2006, the Knights of Columbus spearheaded a telephone protest that resulted in the revocation of a Unitarian congregation's lease at the Stockton College Campus Ministry–simply because the Unitarians planned to host a speaker from an LGBT educational organization.[207]

The tables have been turned in a dispute over the Knights' lease with the US Forest Service involving federal land in Montana, where in the 1950s the Knights erected a six-foot statue of Jesus on the ski slope.[208] The permit for the statue was up for review in 2011, but a lawsuit was filed by the Freedom from Religion Foundation alleging a church-state violation. The dispute is ongoing.[209]

MISSING THE BOAT ON SEXUAL ABUSE

Real estate is not the only arena where the Knights enter into some contradictions. Some have found discrepancies between the knightly value of charitable service and the order's response to the issue of sexual abuse within the church.

There have been a few allegations of abuse made against the Knights. In 2010, lawsuits were filed by two men alleging that they had been abused by a leader from the Columbian Squires youth program, in Brownsville, Texas, and that the Knights had covered up the abuse.[210] [211] One of the lawsuits was dismissed in 2011 because the statute of limitations had passed.[212] An attorney for the Knights, Kevin O'Connor, said that the organization's archives revealed that these were not the first allegations of abuse: two lawsuits were on record from plaintiffs who claimed to have been abused as minors by different people in a Knights youth program.[213]

Beginning in 2003, the Knights have developed a comprehensive

set of policies and procedures to prevent abuse[214] as well as reporting procedures.[215] One aspect of the plan is the Resolution on Decency on the Internet and in the Media, which points to pornography as "a major factor leading to the sexual abuse of children."[216] Background checks were also required for youth leader applicants.[217] Nevertheless, the Knights of Columbus of Elkton, Maryland, discovered in 2005 that one of their members was convicted of abusing a minor and banned from contact with children, yet was still frequently present at the council hall with youth.[218]

At times, the Knights have shown less concern for abuse victims than would be hoped: one chilling example occurred when the Loveland Chapter of Knights in Colorado planned a silent auction and dinner fundraiser in April 2011 to benefit Steven and Edelwina Leschinsky, a couple who were charged with, and later pled guilty to, abusing their three adopted daughters.[219] Media reports used the word "torture" to describe the couple's actions,[220] but a church bulletin said of the planned event, "Let's all pull together to help this persecuted family."[221] The fundraiser was subsequently canceled due to "controversy."[222]

Others believe that the Knights have also chosen the wrong side in the larger sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic church. In this vein is the criticism from Rev. Tom Doyle, a canon lawyer and one of the leading advocates for clergy sexual abuse victims in the US, who stated, "The Knights of Columbus have totally missed the boat. They have supported priests and bishops in their moral bankruptcy and in their destruction of the bodies and souls of the victims of abuse. They have said and done nothing to support the victims."[223]

The Knights are on record as making a resolution in 2002 to express "support for victims of clergy sexual abuse, and continued solidarity with bishops and priests."[224] That same year, however, the Knights took out full-page ads that emphasized clergy, not abuse victims, which appeared in New York and Boston newspapers, local papers and national magazines. The ads began with, "Every vocation will face challenges. Now is such a moment for the priesthood."[225] [226] The Knights' messaging about the clergy sexual abuse issue had not changed much from the "In Solidarity with Our Priests" slogan displayed on banners and buttons at the 111th Annual Meeting in 1993. The issue of *Columbia* magazine from October of that year reported on this central theme from the conference and included a declaration of solidarity with clergy that only mentions priests "deeply hurt and bruised in spirit by the aberrations committed by a few of their number." The victims of abuse are not mentioned at all in the declaration.[227]

The web version of a particularly dismissive 2006 *Columbia* magazine article is currently available on the Knights of Columbus website. Titled "Stand up for the Church," it criticizes legislative efforts to extend the statute of limitations on sexual abuse cases. Calling these bills "Know Nothingism" (harkening back to the anti-Catholic "Know Nothing Party" of the 19th century), the article says these measures "are prolonging the sexual abuse crisis," allowing allegations "with very little or no supporting evidence" and "the aim of such laws is to cripple the Church financially."[228]

THE KNIGHTS IN AMERICA: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE COMMON GOOD

This allegation of "Know Nothingism" is one of many instances in which the Knights conflate a policy that is not to their liking with anti-Catholic sentiment. The Knights have always been ambivalent about the relationship between the Catholic community and larger society. In 1917, Col. Patrick Henry Callahan, chairman of the Knights' Religious Prejudice Committee,

spoke about a resolution calling on Mexico to practice the same religious toleration as the United States and acknowledged that the non-Catholic majority in America "has been very tolerant of us."[229] Another speaker, Joseph T. Brennan, strongly objected to Callahan's thinking because "that talk about tolerance is soft soap…. We are Americans with the right to be here and need no tolerance and accept none."[230]

When the Knights' leadership supports this ultraconservative interpretation of religious freedom, it is necessarily on a crash course with the order's commitment to charitable works.

The fraternity has at times seen the need to work for a more accepting attitude from the rest of America, applying this vision of tolerance to non-Catholic Americans as well. In the 1920s, the Knights were involved in an interfaith movement made up of Jews, Catholics and liberal Protestants united against the common threat of violence from the Ku Klux Klan–this at a time when Pope Pius XI instructed Catholics not "to take part in these ecumenical assemblies."[231]

Under Supreme Knight Carl Anderson, however, the order now seems to see respectful coexistence with people of differing views–a give-and-take version of tolerance–as just so much "soft soap." In a 2013 message regarding the HHS contraceptive coverage policy, Anderson's headline proclaims, "Our duties and rights in relation to religious liberty *precede the government* and go beyond mere toleration."[232] [Italics added.] The article mentions only Catholics–and at that, only the bishops and employers who might disagree with contraception–while the rights of other Americans, and the social contract that binds citizens with the government, are not placed in such a privileged spot.

This vision of church/state relations heavily weighted towards the government's obligations to the Catholic church is best expressed by the USCCB's Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty and its signature campaign, the Fortnight for Freedom. In 2012 the USCCB organized the Fortnight for Freedom to call attention to a number of federal policies it alleged to be infractions against "religious liberty."[233] Knights chapters helped organize events during the first Fortnight,[234] [235] and for 2013 they sponsored a candlelight vigil outside the US Capitol. Supreme Knight Carl Anderson said before the vigil, "Of all of our unalienable rights, the founders of our country chose to put religious liberty first in our Bill of Rights. As we gather, we will pray that those God-given rights be respected and protected by our government."[236]

Knights Chaplain Archbishop William T. Lori was the public face and lead agitator for the campaign in 2012 and 2013. In one communication about the first Fortnight, Lori dismissed the "secular notion of freedom [which] says that we create our own version of what is true and good and choose accordingly, so long as we do not violate another's right to choose similarly"–although this interpretation of the First Amendment as freedom of religion and from religion enjoys robust support from legal analysts.[237] For the archbishop, individual moral choices are insufficient if they are not grounded in "a fundamental law protecting the good and the true." As the chair of the Ad Hoc Committee, Lori spearheads a lobbying effort to encode only the most ultraconservative take on the "good and the true" into law.

The Ad Hoc Committee lists Supreme Knight Carl Anderson as a consultant[238] and it received $200,000 from the Knights of Columbus in its founding year of 2011.[239] The endeavor includes among its action points the idea that Catholic-run charities have a right to government grants even if they refuse to provide certain vital services for religious reasons. In one case, a USCCB program refused to provide access to or even referrals for

abortion and contraception services for victims of human trafficking. After they lost the contract, the bishops' claim that they had a right to these exemptions was subsequently struck down in a federal court.[240] The plan also prioritizes the campaign against marriage equality and pleads for religious exemptions for condom distribution in government-funded HIV-prevention programs and coverage of contraception in any employer-provided insurance plan.[241]

The Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty took a contentious posture from its outset, promoting harmful and hurtful policies with no regard for their human impact. In a statement launching the initiative, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, president of the USCCB, noted that court cases filed by the Department of Justice, among others, have begun challenging restrictive marriage statutes on the grounds of bigotry. Rather than contemplating whether their anti-marriage equality stance reflects bigotry on the bishops' part, or being concerned that this may be perceived as a bigoted position by others, Dolan threatened to embroil the courts in legal challenges over the USCCB's interests for the foreseeable future:

> "If the label of 'bigot' sticks to us–especially in court–because of our teaching on marriage, we'll have church-state conflicts for years to come as a result."[242]

When the Knights' leadership supports this ultraconservative interpretation of religious freedom, it is necessarily on a crash course with the order's commitment to charitable works. And no matter how the fraternity dresses it up, putting the "church" (narrowly defined as the most ultraconservative Catholics) before the government, over individual moral autonomy, and ahead of the common good is not Catholic. In fact, Catholics are instructed to give the individual conscience pride of place, and this is only practicable if society grants each person's moral center this due, rather than allowing the best-funded and best-connected groups to define political debate.

The USCCB's Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty asked the government to codify a wide variety of religious exemptions into law because of the services that Catholic charities perform for the country.[243] In the same way, the Knights have tried to deflect criticism of their huge donations to anti-same-sex marriage campaigns by pointing to the order's funding of charitable causes,[244] as if such work may be used to offset bigotry.

In 2011, Carl Anderson delivered a speech about John F. Kennedy's inaugural address in which he focused on the line "The rights of man [come] not because of the state but because of the hand of God." Anderson used this as support for the Knights' desire to impose an inauthentic version of religious liberty on the rest of the nation–which he described as "work[ing] so that our Christian values add to the ethical dimension of our nation's politics."[245] The Supreme Knight paid less attention to what Kennedy, a fourth-degree Knight himself,[246] said in the same speech about asking "not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Yet this line is much closer to what the Catholic News Agency called "the McGivney Way," exemplified by Father McGivney's refusal of a top leadership position in the order he founded because he preferred to work in a supportive role for the Knights.[247] Perhaps there was something left behind when the era of cribbage-players gave way to today's embattled and partisan atmosphere within the order. It's hard to imagine modern Knights hanging up a shingle reading "All Welcome," as did the Knights' huts that brought comfort and entertainment to soldiers of all kinds during World War I.[248] Instead, the Knights are increasingly focused on their legal right to keep certain people off their properties.

CONCLUSION

America has changed since Father McGivney banded together a group of men for mutual support in an environment that was not friendly to Catholics. Now, the organization seems to be building its own walls against a pluralistic society where more liberal views about abortion, contraception and same-sex marriage enjoy significant support, with Catholics leading the way with higher levels of support for same-sex marriage than any other Christian faith group or Americans as a whole.[249] And if behind these walls there are individual knights with progressive views, they have every reason to keep quiet. The order is extremely well organized, with defined protocols for meeting procedure, dress[250] and relating to the various levels of the power structure.[251] The Supreme Council is also vested with the right to make and enforce laws for the lower echelons according to the Knights' constitution (see Table 1 on page 2).[252] Nevertheless, the individual councils can determine their priorities and identities to some extent, leading to a diversity among the councils– one chapter in Tennessee devotes pages of its newsletter to anti-Obama material,[253] in apparent violation of tax laws.

The order's conflicted identity is not lost even on conservative Catholics like Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo, a knight and a contributor to the *Washington Post*. He wrote a column objecting to the huge sums spent on anti-same-sex marriage initiatives in 2012 because they were in contradiction to the fraternity's mission as a Catholic brotherhood, stating, "The chasm separating the original vision from the current drift, I contend, is unhealthy to the Knights of Columbus future."[254] For Stevens-Arroyo, it comes down to charity: "Our charity bears no exceptions. For example, there is scarcely a Knight unaware of gays and lesbians who are good people."

It is no secret that among the Catholic faithful there are many who have abortions, use birth control, have a same-sex partner or support their Catholic sisters and brothers who make these choices. When the order works against rights for women and LGBT individuals, even under the guise of caring for them, they forfeit the use of the word "charity."

It would be truly Catholic for the Knights to do away with any trace of paternalism in the way they approach women and their reproductive health. Social justice would be better served by not backing pregnancy center "options" that aren't really options and standing with women as morally autonomous individuals rather than shaming them from the sidewalk. The fraternity can stop its convoluted moral reasoning for "accepting" gays and lesbians but not their right to marry, and stand with the former Knights executive about his gay son, "I am extremely proud of the happy young man he has become and look forward to the day when I can celebrate his marriage just as I have the marriages of his older brothers."[255]

It's clear that the contemporary leadership of the Knights of Columbus has decided to use a no-holds-barred approach in pursuit of its political goals. The order's ultraconservative campaigns against religious freedom, health insurance coverage and reproductive healthcare services put it well outside the mainstream, of Catholics and non-Catholics alike. That may be a logical, if partial, interpretation of its founder's intentions, but it certainly does not sit well with those who see the Knights as a charitable organization. In fact, there is little that is charitable about the Knights' approach to women, LGBT individuals, those who support access to a full range of reproductive healthcare services and believers in a healthy separation between church and state.

Key Individuals

The Knights and their allies can be found in places of influence from Congress to the Vatican, so the order's human capital must be factored into any analysis of its resources. This section concentrates on the current fraternal leadership, but the definitive list of members of the Knights' board of directors, sometimes referred to as Supreme Directors, is difficult to ascertain from its website. The following individuals are listed as directors on the 2011 tax return (Internal Revenue Service Form 990), minus those individuals referred to on the website as former or deceased and with the addition of those newly appointed members mentioned in recent press releases.

Supreme Council

Carl Anderson

Carl Anderson has been the organization's Supreme Knight since 2000, serving as both the chief executive officer and the chairman of the board of directors. While he comes from a political background and has no degree in business or insurance accreditations, his annual compensation, nearly $1.5 million, is more similar to that of a well-qualified CEO at a for-profit insurance company than a nonprofit.[256]

Anderson worked as an aide to Sen. Jesse Helms from 1976 to 1981, where he spent "almost all of [his] time working on the pro-life cause."[257] As an aide to the controversial senator, Anderson worked for restrictions on abortion and contraception, most notably pushing a fetal personhood bill,[258] as well as contributing to the passage of the Mexico City Policy, which denied foreign organizations that received US funding the right to use their own money to provide information about, referrals to or services for abortion or even to advocate for the legalization of abortion in their country.[259]

In 1980, as the president of the American Family Institute, Anderson said the organization's "first order of business will be to suggest the nomination of our own candidates on federal judgeships." He told the *Washington Post* that "their candidates" would be hand-picked according to their stance on abortion, divorce, pornography and the rights of parents over children.[260]

In 1987, Anderson became the Knights of Columbus' Vice-President for Public Policy and director of the order's Washington office.[261]

Anderson maintained a position in the public policy arena with his seat on the US Commission on Civil Rights, where he served for nearly a decade.[262] Shortly after his appointment in 1990, he commented on a recently passed bill on hate crime statistics: "I'm not sure I would have supported the aspect as it applies to homosexual-rights groups in terms of beginning to establish them as a category."[263]

Carl Anderson currently serves as the vice president of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family. Since 2009 he is also one of five laypersons to join five cardinals in the leadership of the troubled Vatican Bank.[264] Because of Anderson's Roman connections and the Knights' wealth, the *Tablet*, a UK-based Catholic magazine, claimed that the Vatican's investigation into the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)—several communities of nuns in the United States—"was at least partially funded by the Knights of Columbus."[265] Among the reasons the Vatican gave for the inquiry were the LCWR's insufficient focus on abortion and its overly liberal view on homosexuality.[266]

Anderson has been known to promote his version of religious liberty in strong terms. Speaking to the 2012 National Prayer Breakfast, the Supreme Knight enumerated his points of disagreement with President Barack Obama and evoked the Nazi bombing of England as well as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He said, "Never in the lifetime of anyone present here, has the religious liberty of the American people been as threatened as it is today."[267]

The author of several books, Anderson wrote *Beyond a House Divided: The Moral Consensus Ignored by Washington, Wall Street, and the Media*. A review in *Commonweal* magazine called the book "a tedious compendium of stats and platitudes," and pointed out the irony of someone with such close ties to both Washington and the Vatican criticizing "the elites."[268]

Anderson's base salary in 2011 was $780,500, but including bonuses and other compensation, the total reportable amount was $1,488,682. This does not count the $32,728 he received from related organizations.[269] It is unknown whether he receives compensation for his Vatican Bank duties.

Archbishop William E. Lori

Archbishop William E. Lori has served as the Supreme Chaplain for the Knights of Columbus since 2005.[270] Lori first made a name for himself as an enforcer for Cardinal James A. Hickey in the Archdiocese of Washington, where he led an investigation into a parish in Georgetown that was purported to be unacceptably liberal.[271] He went on to become bishop of Bridgeport, Connecticut, before being named archbishop of Baltimore in 2012. In 2004, Lori dedicated the Villa Maria Guadalupe Life

Key Individuals (continued)

Center, an antichoice retreat center run by the Sisters of Life and funded by the Knights of Columbus.[272] Since 2011 he has headed the USCCB's Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, which opposes same-sex marriage and depicts the Affordable Care Act's contraception requirement as tantamount to a Democratic-sponsored "War on Catholicism."[273]

Dennis A. Savoie
Savoie currently serves as the Deputy Supreme Knight.[274] The highest ranking member of the Knights of Columbus to reside in Canada, Savoie has held an array of positions since joining the organization. In his professional life he worked as an executive in the electric and nursing industries. In a 2009 speech, Savoie compared abortion to the 9/11 bombings, callously questioning why Americans were so "bewildered by the 3,000 deaths on 9-11 when we're so silent about the 3,000-plus deaths that occur each day in North America from abortion."[275]

Charles E. Maurer Jr.
Maurer is the Supreme Secretary of the Knights of Columbus, a position he has held since 2011.[276] He has been with the Knights of Columbus professionally since 2007, when he was appointed vice president of business management. Before joining the Knights, he was an executive with Emerson Energy.[277] He also holds a seat on the American Fraternal Alliance Board.[278]

Logan T. Ludwig
Logan Ludwig has been the Supreme Treasurer since 2011. A former executive at a Catholic hospital, he has long been involved with the Knights and has filled a number of positions throughout the organization, including the board of directors, on which he has served since 2007.[279]

John A. Marrella
As the Supreme Advocate for the Knights of Columbus, John Marrella also holds the position of general counsel and receives a salary of more than $400,000 from the order.[280] Marrella worked as a trial attorney with the Department of Justice and an Assistant United States Attorney before becoming the Knights' Chief Advocate in 2009.[281] His 2010 decision not to heed calls for the expulsion of prochoice Knights drew criticism from ultraconservative Catholics.[282]

Directors

Virgil Dechant, ***former Supreme Knight***
Virgil Dechant is currently a director and consultant with the Knights of Columbus. Dechant served as Supreme Knight of the organization from 1977 until Carl Anderson took over in 2000. During his tenure, he presided over a major expansion of political activities within the organization. Although he works with the organization in a part-time capacity, he received a salary of more than $150,000 in 2011. Dechant has close ties to the Republican Party and in the 1980s was the director of Americans for Tax Reform, Grover Norquist's radical anti-tax group.[283] Like Anderson, Dechant was on the council of the Vatican Bank while serving as Supreme Knight.[284]

In 1995, the *Boston Globe* characterized Virgil Dechant as "an extremely controlling individual" and someone who "cares deeply about his public image"—the *Columbia* magazines of the day often featured as many as a dozen pictures of the Supreme Knight.[285] The *Globe* also recounted a 1990 incident in which Dechant asked an employee to hire a chauffeur for the Supreme Knight's use. When the employee placed newspaper advertisements for the position, however, Dechant fired him for the indiscretion.[286]

Other directors include:

Daniel Jackson Baker
Reginald Jackson Beckett
Meclea Casavant
Robert Francis Cayea
Michael Gerard Conrad
Yves Duceppe
Scott A. Flood
Natale L. Gallo
Michael Ted Gilliam
Arthur Harris
Paul Joseph Lambert
Javier Sanchez Martinez
Michael John O'Connor
Jim Scroggin
Brian Simer
Thomas P. Smith, Jr.
Kenneth E. Stockwell
Dennis J. Stoddard
Alonso L. Tan
John Paul Wainscott
Thomas M. Wegener
Ronald Bruce White

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