

**Summary Minutes**  
**National Representative Council Meeting**  
**Philadelphia PA**  
**April 25-27, 2008**

The meeting at the Renaissance Philadelphia Airport Hotel was called to order at 7:10 pm on Friday, April 25. After introductions two special announcements were made because elections would have to be held at this meeting. Bill Culleton and Sheila Peiffer both resigned from the Steering Committee. Both resigned because of changes in their personal lives. Anne Southwood made a motion to thank Bill and Sheila for their service. Susan Vogt seconded and all approved. The Chair noted that elections would be held on Sunday morning and Reps should consider submitting their names in nomination.

**Preliminary Reports from Ad Hoc Committees.**

Preliminary reports were made by chairs of four separate Ad Hoc Committees. Final reports are due in 30 to 60 days.

**Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Accountability of Religious Orders**

Representative Ron DuBois delivered the report in the name of the committee. The committee had done research on documents from the USCCB, the National Review Board (NRB); the Conference of Religious Superiors of Men (CMSM); the Leadership Conference of Religious Women (LCWR); the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA); and a company that manages risk concerning issues of sexual abuse, Praesidium Services, Inc.

According to the Vatican comments on the Essential Norms produced by the U.S. bishops for dealing with sexual abuse by priests and deacons, Religious Institutes of priests and deacons are, “mutatis mutandis” subject to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, also produced by the U.S. bishops. CMSM has employed the services of Praesidium Services to provide training and a set of 28 Standards: ten for prevention of sexual abuse; eleven for responding to allegations of sexual abuse and seven for supervision of members of Religious Institutes who have abused minors.

The Committee submitted a series of eleven tentative recommendations for actions by Voice of the Faithful and its Affiliates around the country and the world. These recommendations can be found in attachments and on the VOTF website.

Discussion centered on next steps, many of which are contained in the recommendations. It was recommended that a committee be established to follow up on the work of this ad hoc committee. It was also pointed out that the recommendations include actions that can be undertaken by Affiliates in their local parishes and dioceses.

## **Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Membership Requirements and Due Process for the Denial or Removal of Someone from Membership**

Representative Chuck Miller presented a very preliminary report that just looked at current policies concerning membership and removal of members. None of these policies concerned denial of membership or removal of a person from membership.

Discussion focused on creating criteria for membership, such as a commitment to the mission and goals of VOTF and the inclusion on applications of a street address and an email address. We need to find better ways of communicating with our membership. Also included was a call for due process for the exclusion from membership and the removal of a person from membership. The committee will continue to work on this.

## **Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on a Lay Synod**

Vice President, Janet Hauter, presented a preliminary report in the name of the committee. She noted that they had three tasks: 1) outline the purpose of the Synod; 2) identify people to serve on a larger Synod planning committee; and 3) convene an organizational meeting. The purpose of the Synod is to fulfill the right and duty of the faithful to participate in the governance of our Church. The tentative theme is Pentecost 2010: Finding our Voice – Back to the Future (Renewing/Transforming our Church. Time line is Spring/late Summer 2010 depending on availability of a venue. Location would be Central U.S., perhaps Chicago. Guiding principles: VOTF as a catalyst; time and opportunity for the Spirit, for enlightenment, for dialogue; respectful differences of opinion; atmosphere of co-responsibility; inclusion of survivor/crisis issue.

Discussion centered on who would be invited. Answer: all Catholic groups whether progressive, central or conservative, including clergy and bishops as well as lay people. Concern was expressed about the cost of such a venture, with the observation that VOTF simply does not have the financial resources.

## **Report from the Ad Hoc Committee to Study VOTF Policy Toward the National Review Board (NRB)**

Representative Pat Gomez made this presentation on behalf of the committee. The committee has reviewed documents and reports issued by the NRB and the Office of Child and Youth Protection (OCYP), including the 2007 Annual Report on the Implementation of the Charter and the Status Report of the NRB, December 2007. They are in continual conversations with Judge Michael Merz, Chair of the NRB, Teresa Kettelkamp, Executive Director of the OYCP and Jim Kelly, Fordham University and researcher involved with the John Jay “Cause and Context” study.

Current focus and disappointment is with how compliance with the 17 articles of the Charter is unfolding. Several dioceses are non-compliant, especially with Article 12, to maintain safe environment programs and codes of conduct. The committee made a series

of eight recommendations that can be found in an attachment. Also an appendix is attached outlining the steps taken as a result of various audits.

In the discussion, suggestions were made to get the Affiliates involved, and perhaps to continue the work of this committee under the auspices of the Protecting our Children Working Group. In response to the recommendation that VOTF become involved in raising funds for the Causes and Context study. Chairman, Bill Casey, expressed concerns that he could not see that as a role for VOTF

### **Report by President, Dan Bartley**

The Church is at a crossroads in the U.S. and we need to move decisively to wake up the Catholic in the pew. We plan to build on the publicity we received with the ad in the NY Times on the occasion of the papal visit to increase our media presence and improve our image.

We need to shift to a new image. We should be realistic and, at the same time, hopeful about our Church. We need to continue our message that the Church has many challenges and VOTF has solutions. The bishops are still not held accountable and the laity are still not involved as they could be.

Our media outreach at the time of the papal visit was impressive. We reached an audience in about 230 major newspapers and had several calls for interviews with both print and electronic media. New members and new money have come in as a result. We will continue to use the quotes from Pope Benedict to press the bishops.

We need to find new ways to engage our members. We should be surveying our members and ask them what they think we should be doing and how we should work. And, finally and most importantly, we must remain a Spirit-centered organization. We are doing God's work and we must remain prayerful and hopeful. We will be moving forward with a carefully designed strategic plan.

In the discussion the question of the resolution on the Role of Women in the Church was brought up. Representatives wanted a clear statement from Dan about the Officers' concurrence with the resolution. Dan responded that the Officers had concurred, but with several conditions. People asked for a wider publication of the results of the ad campaign. Also mentioned was a need for continued communication so that we are not interfering with one another's work. Finally, it was noted that strategic planning should include all three centers: the Board, the Officers and the NRC.

### **Discussion on how we communicate with our members**

Representative Jim Beyers presented his concerns that we are not able to communicate effectively with all of our members, especially since so many of them do not have email addresses. We need to find ways to get printed materials to our members without email

addresses. Since we can't afford postage, we should ask for people to subscribe to a printed newsletter.

In the discussion, Representatives suggested that we work hard to get as many email addresses from our members as possible. We should ask our Affiliates to send complete addresses of their members to the National Office. The Long Island affiliate sends out quarterly newsletters and asks people to respond with contributions to cover the expenses. They almost always receive more than the costs of the printing and mailing. We also need to get out wide distribution of the news about the ad and the election of our new officers.

## **Saturday, April 26, 2008**

The meeting opened at 8:30 with a reflection on the wound of sexual abuse, anger and the search for healing – led by Diane Loucks. This prayer, meditation and discussion lasted until 10:00 am.

### **Presentation on Implementation Plan for the resolution on the Role of Women**

Representative Rich Moriarty presented a vision for implementation (see attached.) This vision statement listed a variety of ways the resolution could be implemented, focusing on a bottom-up approach. This would include listening sessions and collaboration with a variety of organizations, colleges and universities, and even ecumenical collaboration.

The discussion called for a more specific implementation plan to be developed over the next six months. Concerns that were raised had to do with the question of ordination of women; the reaction of those who would be opposed to this resolution; the criteria for success and a focus on goals and objectives. Rich emphasized that the resolution was not about the ordination of women and that the Sponsors would be willing to make that public and explicit. He promised to have a more detailed plan by the next Council meeting.

### **Final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Roles and Authority of VOTF Leadership**

Representative Bill Culleton presented this report on behalf of the committee that had been formed in response to the need to promote more effective collaboration among the three centers of leadership in VOTF (Board of Trustees, Officers and NRC.) Bill presented two documents: one a working document that represented the substance of the committee's work and one the recommendations of the committee. Bill summed up the recommendations of the committee in the phrase "No surprises." (A copy of the recommendations is attached.)

Very little discussion followed and a resolution was made to recommend the provisional adoption of the Ad Hoc Committee's Roles and Authority recommendations for a trial period of six months. The motion was approved with 16 Reps voting aye, one nay and

three abstaining. (Nay – Ed Friedl; Abstentions – David Biersmith, Joseph Juhasz and Steve Sheehan.

**Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on National/Local Balance**, (that is, the relationship on the Roles of the Officers and National Office vs. the local affiliates on issues arising in the local area.)

Representative Jim Beyers made the presentation on behalf of the committee. He presented the resolution that had been developed by this committee. He stated that the intent of the resolution is to communicate that the affiliates need to have considerable autonomy. This autonomy is based on the fact that these affiliates are closest to the problems, know the background, and have the capacity to act quickly. He argued that this is consistent with the grassroots nature of VOTF and is consistent with the principle of subsidiarity, which states that no issue should be dealt with by a higher-level organization that can be effectively handled at a lower level.

Representative Culleton had previously presented an alternate resolution that focused on when and how the Officers and National Office can and should step into a situation that develops on the local level. Representative Susan Vogt suggested that an amendment to the Committee's resolution could incorporate Representative Culleton's resolution and preserve the best of both. The discussion went back and forth arguing the merits of both sides. There was a concern expressed about the use of the term "Catholic doctrine" in one article of the resolution and it was recommended that it be eliminated.

Several Representatives commented that the Affiliates are hurting and that the Council needs to work to restore the importance of the Affiliates. Representatives have a responsibility to communicate with the Affiliates and the members and to seek their input.

Jim Beyers moved the resolution and Kevin Mondloch seconded it. Susan suggested her amendment to add an article about the role of National in certain situations. Jim Beyers seconded. Joseph Juhasz then made a motion to table the resolution until 10:30 the next morning. The vote was 18 in favor; Hugh O'Regan opposed and David Biersmith abstaining.)

### **Treasurer's Report**

VOTF treasurer, Kevin Connors, made his report. Year to date revenue is up by \$69,000 over 2007. Expenses are up only \$3,000. Net assets have increased by \$34,000. However he is forecasting a deficit by the end of the current fiscal year (May 31) of \$38,000. He reported that the Development Committee is developing plans to dramatically increase our revenues in the future. The ad campaign surrounding the papal visit has gained us new recognition among American Catholics, and should contribute to more successful fund-raising in the future. We need to work to have a reserve to cover at least six months of expenditures.

## **Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director, Donna Doucette reported on the results of the ad campaign in the NY Times and also on efforts to control expenses. As we know, the fund-raising campaign for the ad brought in designated funds in excess of \$70,000 from 1079 donors. Fifty-six of those were new members and 221 were members who had never contributed in the past. There were also 48 who contributed to our operating expenses as well as to the ad campaign.

The National Office and Officers were deluged with media requests. VOTF received mention in more than 200 media outlets. Officers were contacted for many interviews and for printed articles. National Secretary, Julie McConville and local Boston VOTF affiliate officer, Dorothy Kennedy were interviewed on local television. An 11"x 17" version of the ad was distributed to affiliates. Some affiliates used the ad material in their local newspapers.

There was enough money left from the NY Times ad, to purchase advertising on mobile banner trucks on the streets of Washington DC and New York City during the papal visit. At the time of the meeting nearly 6500 signatures had been gathered for the petition to the Pope.

Donna also reported that the Office had greatly reduced the costs of snail mail for financial appeals by contracting with a new mailing service. The results of the ad campaign have given us new opportunity to reach new targets for fund raising.

## **Chairman's Report**

Board Chairman, Bill Casey, reported on the problems associated with the recent election of Officers. There were three issues with which he dealt: 1) invalid votes; 2) suspected premature communication of election results; and 3) candidates' access to email addresses of members. A committee of the Board investigated these problems and a report based on these investigations will be sent to all members and placed on the VOTF website. Briefly, here are the problems that surfaced.

1. Twenty-six invalid votes were cast by individuals who did not have a special code provided by the consultant who administered the election. Although we have IP numbers for those who cast these votes, we have no way of tracking them down without significant costs. Two of them came from Berlin, Germany. These 26 votes did not affect the final results of the election.
2. The suggestion that someone had revealed balloting results before the election was finalized turned out to be based on rumors on the closeness of the race and not on anyone's awareness of actual numbers.
3. Nearly three-dozen members complained that they were receiving unsolicited campaign ads on their email addresses that could not have been known by those sending them. Evidence was found that someone using one of two IP numbers had accessed the VOTF database in at least ten of our fourteen regions.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm. Bus transportation was provided by the local Philadelphia Affiliate to transport the members to Old St. Joseph's church in downtown Philadelphia for Mass and a covered dish supper in the church hall.

## **Sunday Morning**

After an opening prayer, the first order of business was the selection of two Representatives to join the Board of Trustees and the election of two Representatives to replace Bill Culleton and Sheila Peiffer on the Steering Committee. Here are the results:

### **Board of Trustees selection**

<u>Nominees</u>	<u>Votes</u>
David Biersmith	5
Ron DuBois	15
Kris Ward	6
Ed Wilson	11

### **NRC Steering Committee Election**

<u>Nominees</u>	<u>Votes</u>
Joseph Juhasz	17
Hugh O'Regan	11
Bud Bretschneider	11

Representative Bretschneider deferred to Representative O'Regan to increase geographical presence of the West on the Steering Committee.

### **Working Group Reports**

Reports were made by members of several of our Working Groups

### **Prayerful Voice**

Gaile Pohlhaus, interim chair of the Prayerful Voice Working Group, reported that she is attempting to revitalize the Prayerful Voice group. She provided the Council with a description of the goals of this working group and asked each Representative to find at least two potential members from their region.

### **Protecting our Children (POC)**

Representative Pat Gomez, member of the Protecting our Children Working Group reported on activities of this group since the last NRC meeting in November 2007. POC arranged for the keynote speaker at the Providence Convention, presented the results of the National Survey at their booth at the same Convention, coordinated a Breakout Session with 3 panelists at the Convention, collaborated on the production of a film for awareness of abuse entitled: "It's Not Just Jena," suitable for teens and adults, sponsored a facilitator's training on child personal safety program (TAT), and issued 2 Press Releases concerning Child Safety. Three members of POC are on the Ad Hoc Committee studying the relationship of VOTF with the National Review Board of the NRC.

**Convocation Implementation Team (CIT)**

Representative Susan Vogt made a brief presentation. The responsibilities of the CIT ended at Pentecost. The on-going projects of this team have been incorporated into other groups, particularly the Diocesan Surveys under Protecting our Children and financial accountability under the Structural Change Working Group.

**Structural Change Working Group (SCWG)**

Board member, Elia Marnik, reporting in place of Chair Margaret Roylance, noted that they welcome the addition of CIT projects and members to their Working Group

**National Local Balance Resolution**

Discussion of this resolution had been tabled from the day before. Representative Chuck Miller had spent time making a number of suggested edits to the original resolution. Each edit was discussed separately and voted upon separately. All of the individual edits were approved. Representative Beyers made the amended motion and Representative Vogt seconded. Eighteen Representatives voted in favor. Ed Friedl and Steven Sheehan voted against the resolution. A copy of the final resolution is attached.

The meeting was adjourned on time with a prayer. Four representatives: David Biersmith, Joseph Juhasz, Hugh O'Regan and Susan Vogt promised to investigate hosting upcoming meetings and inform the Council very soon about possibilities in their regions.