



Thursday 13 March, 2008

Honorable Casey Cagle
Lieutenant Governor
State of Georgia
State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Re: HB 978 Vehicle Seizure Bill

Dear Lieutenant Governor Cagle:

I am writing to express my serious concern about HB 978 Vehicle Seizure Bill which is before the Senate Public Safety Committee. This bill has the potential to unjustly affect many people in this State. I respectfully urge that the Senate take no action on this bill during this session and study this issue between now and the next session of the General Assembly.

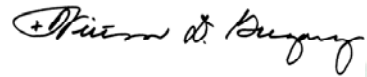
This bill could cause great harm to families, many of whom have combinations of citizens and non-citizens living under one roof. HB 978 proposes an extremely harsh and grossly disproportionate penalty against families and particularly against the poor of our State. In Georgia today, a motor vehicle has become an irreplaceable part of virtually every family's well being so that individuals may work, obtain food and necessities and take care of other family needs. Justice should not allow the summary confiscation of a vital component of a family's means of livelihood without even a warrant from a court.

The Catholic Church does not deny that the State has the right to enforce its laws and we recognize that there are those individuals who lack the necessary federal documentation or who have overstayed their authorization. If there have been violations of federal immigration law, however, those violations should be adjudicated and punished in accordance with federal law, not by taking the property they need to live and to support their families.

From the experience of ministering to hundreds of thousands of people in Georgia, the Archdiocese of Atlanta knows (as do the ministries of other religious and social service organizations) that determination of a person's citizenship or immigration status is rarely obvious and often difficult to determine. Seizing a family's car could instantly throw a family into crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the legislation. I hope that the Senate will study this bill more intensely because of its great potential for harm to the poorest among us in Georgia.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Wilton D. Gregory

✠ Wilton D. Gregory
Archbishop of Atlanta

WDG/pmc

