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## **The challenge to ‘Choose Life’**

### ***Catholics encouraged to support specialty plate legislation***

by KEVIN E. MURRAY

editor

RALEIGH — Catholic Voice NC recently took part in a rally in support of pending legislation to promote life on vehicles with specialty license plates.

Catholic Voice NC is the nonpartisan initiative of the dioceses of Charlotte and Raleigh to give Catholics a voice in the political arena.

More than 100 people attended the “Why Not NC?” rally outside the N.C. General Assembly’s Legislative Building Feb. 17 in support of a bill that would make available in North Carolina the plate with the words “Choose Life” and the faces of two children on it.

Funds raised through the sale of the “Choose Life” plates would be distributed by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services to nonprofit crisis pregnancy centers that do not offer abortion-related services, referrals or counseling.

The rally was co-sponsored by North Carolina Right to Life and North Carolina Pro-Life Democrats. Twenty-two states have approved the plate; North Carolina is the only Southern state that has not allowed the plate nor allowed a vote on it by full assembly.

Currently North Carolina issues 122 specialty license plates that promote issues from environmental causes to colleges.

Among the rally speakers was Rep. Mitch Gillespie, sponsor of HB 168. Also speaking was Msgr. Michael Clay, legislative liaison and lobbyist for Charlotte Bishop Peter J. Jugis of Charlotte and Raleigh Bishop Michael F. Burbidge, who read a statement from both bishops during the news conference.

In their statement, the bishops said they speak “on behalf of hundreds of thousands of Catholics throughout the state of North Carolina who support our request that this bill be allowed a vote by the full legislature and endorse its passage.”

With limited financial resources available to the crisis pregnancy centers, the bishops’ statement said, “these centers would benefit from the revenue they would receive, at no cost to the state, to assist women in their time of need.”

“Surely no one would oppose assisting a needy pregnant woman who desires to bring her child to birth through funds raised from the sale of a license plate,” the bishops said.

Other speakers included two young women who shared their experiences of receiving assistance from such centers during childbirth.

Maggi Nadol, Respect Life coordinator for the Diocese of Charlotte, said the “Choose Life” license plates would allow more freedom of expression by pro-life Christians.

“Anything that we can do to promote the sanctity of life as an issue is important both to the unborn and for the advancement of our Christian mission,” said Nadol.

The bishops’ statement appealed to “Christians, especially the Catholics in our state, and all people of good will to contact their legislators and ask them to support this legislation and to allow it to be voted on by the full legislature.”

More information about the bill and how to contact legislators is available on the Web site of Catholic Voice NC, a nonpartisan initiative of both N.C. bishops to give Catholics a voice in the political arena.

*Contributing to this story was David Hains and Frank Morock.*

*Respect Life is supported in part by contributions to the Diocesan Support Appeal. This year’s DSA campaign runs Feb. 1 through March 8.*

**WANT MORE INFO?**

Visit Catholic Voice NC at [www.catholicvoicenc.org](http://www.catholicvoicenc.org).