

97-GS-32 VOTED: The Twenty-first General Synod adopts the resolution "Affirming Government's Role to Protect the Common Good."

RESOLUTION A AFFIRMING GOVERNMENT'S ROLE TO PROTECT THE COMMON GOOD®

WHEREAS, General Synods of the United Church of Christ have repeatedly expressed concern for people and the world by supporting laws to safeguard consumers, workers, and those who suffer discrimination; to protect public health and the environment; and to guide economic and social activities for the common good;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-first General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon local congregations, Associations, Conferences, and national settings of the church, as well as interest groups and institutions related to the United Church of Christ, to support the following guidelines for sustaining, reforming, improving, and enforcing laws and regulations:

1. It is an appropriate activity of government to establish laws to preserve and improve the common good, including laws to protect consumers, to protect against discrimination, to protect the environment, to protect public health, to ensure fair labor practices and safety for workers, to create economic opportunities for low-income and marginalized people, to protect those who have no reasonable chance of meeting their own needs and to ensure fair business practices.
2. Laws which support and preserve the common good should be made effective through the timely establishment and implementation of appropriate regulations. The creation of regulations should allow a sufficient time for public comment and otherwise encourage appropriate public participation. Such regulations should not be unreasonably expensive to enforce and should be as understandable as possible.
3. Enforcement of laws and regulations should be fair. Those responsible for enforcement should have sufficient resources for effective and timely action.
4. Legislation, regulation and enforcement practices should be based upon the best information available. The process of gathering information and estimating consequences should not be unduly burdensome or expensive and should not create long delays in implementation.
5. Penalties and sanctions for non-compliance with laws and regulations should generally be commensurate to the level of damage done to the common good and to individuals who are most affected by non-compliance. The awarding of punitive damages and the awarding of legal fees may be appropriate parts of penalties.
6. The right to private property and the right to engage in economic activity are important rights and should not lightly be abridged by governmental action. However, private property rights and the right to engage in economic activity are not absolute rights that are independent of the common good or the integrity of creation, justice and peace.
7. The appropriate goal of regulation is neither more nor less regulation in general but rather appropriate and efficient regulations based on laws passed in the common interest. There should be no general moratorium on regulatory activity, no "regulatory budget," nor any general constraint upon the effectiveness of regulatory and enforcement activities.
8. Laws and regulations should not selectively harm people based on their circumstances. In laws or regulations intended to serve everyone there should be no adverse effect because people happen to live in rural or urban areas, nor on the basis of religion, age, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual or gender orientation, or economic status.
9. When laws and regulations are aimed at providing resources or services to the public, such as assisting entry into the work force, there should be appropriate guarantees that individuals will have recourse, including a private right of action in appropriate courts to secure these benefits when they have wrongfully been denied.
10. The writing, reviewing and interpretation of regulations and their enforcement should not be contracted out to private organizations.

Subject to the availability of funds.