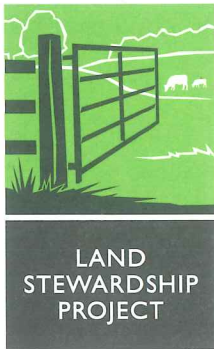


October 18, 2012



Dear LSP members and friends,

This summer, longtime Land Stewardship Project staff member and rural organizer, Doug Nopar, received a very unusual and disturbing phone call in our southeast Minnesota office in Lewiston. The phone call came one week after receiving written notice that LSP had been approved for its largest grant ever from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), the social justice funding arm of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The call that day was from CCHD's national representative in Washington, D.C. On that call, LSP was told it needed to resign its membership in two organizations: TakeAction Minnesota and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits. These are organizations to which LSP belongs because we work with them on issues like health care reform and local democracy (TakeAction) or because we receive training and support on efficient nonprofit administration (Council of Nonprofits). We were told if we didn't renounce our membership in these groups, the Catholic Bishops, which has the final say on all CCHD grants, would reverse their decision and LSP would lose the \$48,000 grant.

Why? Because these organizations have a stated position against the proposed constitutional amendment to limit marriage that's going to be on the ballot November 6 in Minnesota.

In other words, the Catholic Bishops decided to renege on their support of LSP's work for family farms, stewardship of the land and rural justice, not because of anything LSP did – LSP has no position on the marriage amendment and doesn't work on it – but because the Bishops don't approve of the beliefs of some of the organizations LSP associates with.

This unjust action by the U.S. Bishops has left a deep hole in LSP's organizing budget. It's serious. But after much consultation within LSP, with the board, staff, legal counsel, and member leaders in southeast Minnesota, LSP decided we could not in good conscience concede to such an unjust and unwarranted demand, and we informed CCHD of that decision.

We are also clear that LSP's work for family farms, care of the land and a more just, prosperous and democratic society must not and will not be stopped.

For that reason we are coming to you, our members, to ask you to step forward financially in a way that you may have never done before. We need to raise \$48,000 in the next six weeks. We believe that working together, we can do it.

Can you contribute \$1,000? Maybe you are in a position to make a one-time gift of \$5,000 or \$10,000 at this key time? Perhaps you have \$500 to support this work? Or maybe what you can give right now is \$100 or \$200.

The need is immediate and great. We urge you to take this moment to make the most generous contribution you can using the enclosed envelope or through LSP's website. The good news is that a donor has come forward with a \$25,000 match. This match will double all donations above member dues, all increased renewal dues (above what you paid last year), all new monthly pledges (for one full year) and all new

LEWISTON OFFICE  
180 E Main Street, Box 130  
Lewiston, MN 55952  
Phone: 507-523-3366

MONTEVIDEO OFFICE  
301 State Road, Suite 1  
Montevideo, MN 56265  
Phone: 320-269-2105

TWIN CITIES OFFICE  
821 E 35th St, Suite 200  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
Phone: 612-722-6377

[landstewardshipproject.org](http://landstewardshipproject.org)

memberships. The quick math is that if we can raise \$25,000 from our members and supporters in these ways it will be matched and LSP will raise \$50,000, covering the funds pulled by the U.S. Bishops.

## **The Rest of the Story**

No LSP funder has ever withdrawn funds because of who our organization had chosen to work with. Yet CCHD was demanding that LSP renounce our membership in two groups with a deep and lengthy history of working for a healthy nonprofit sector in Minnesota and for economic, social and racial justice throughout the state.

LSP appealed to CCHD and the Bishops to reconsider their decision. We pointed out in our appeal that if LSP's funding was revoked, the winners would be clear: the promoters of corporate backed factory farms and frac sand mining operations who want to take away local control from counties and townships for unbridled "development" of rural lands. Also benefiting from the Bishops' decision are those concerned with LSP's efforts to raise awareness about the exploitation of immigrant workers on large agricultural operations and in processing plants and those threatened by our work to expose excessive corporate power and its impact on rural communities and the land.

CCHD's response? Even as it acknowledged in its Sept. 10 letter to LSP its "consistent support over decades for the fine work of LSP to advance economic and racial justice, environmental stewardship and advance the rights and well being of immigrants in Minnesota," it is unwilling to continue funding if we maintain our memberships in TakeAction Minnesota and the Minnesota Council for Nonprofits.

Although LSP's appeal was denied, it is the decision of LSP's Board of Directors to not resign our membership in these two groups, but instead to carry on with the work that LSP is called to do for farmland stewardship, healthy rural communities and a truly sustainable agriculture. We will not allow an external funder to pick our allies or determine the strategies we use to create a better future for the people and the land.

LSP local organizing committee chair Kaye Huelskamp, of Lewiston, may have put it best: "We're just not going to let the Bishops or anyone else push us around and tell us what we can do and what we can't, not when justice and the land are at stake."

During all the years of CCHD funding, we've known that CCHD has required that its grant recipients not take positions against Catholic social teaching. And LSP has never done that. What is relatively new is that CCHD grant recipients are not permitted to associate with groups that have positions contrary to the moral views of the Catholic bishops. LSP has also learned that our organization is not the only group that has been punished for who it associates with. As it turns out, in recent years more than 50 grassroots organizations nationwide have been similarly identified and targeted. Some groups have lost funding for their work, while others have chosen not to reapply for support.

So why not give up our memberships in TakeAction Minnesota and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits? Because LSP's vision for rural communities and the land is bold, and to be successful we need to work with allies that share our values, know how to organize and know how to win. Our membership in both TakeAction Minnesota and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits is very important strategically, and our membership in these groups does not require LSP to agree with or be working on every position that they take. They are valued allies in LSP's work, and the benefits we gain from associating with them cannot be replaced with money.

The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits provides important administrative and financial counsel for its 2,000 organizational members and works to inform, promote, connect and strengthen individual nonprofits and the nonprofit sector. LSP staff have used the resources and trainings provided by the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits to build an efficient, effective organization with the highest standards of nonprofit excellence.

As for TakeAction Minnesota, many of our members have attended their meetings and workshops as well. It is a lead organization in the state pressing for affordable health care for all, an end to corporate dominance in politics and elections, and strong voting rights for all people. The organization also has a vested interest in rural Minnesota and sustainable agriculture. LSP's membership in TakeAction has brought attention to the need for reform in our food and agriculture system to their 14,000 individual members and thousands of other Minnesotans that had previously been unaware of this need. LSP is one of 26 organizational members of TakeAction.

Until this summer, LSP has had a very positive relationship with CCHD, with funding stretching back for the better part of 25 years. That funding has been hugely important to our rural community organizing and public policy work in southern Minnesota. In recent years, CCHD has supported LSP's efforts to: stop factory farms; protect local control (the ability of townships and counties to protect against potentially damaging development); win important victories for beginning farmers in the federal Farm Bill; win protections against large scale manure spills and for bluffland protection in the new land use ordinance in Winona County; challenge corporate power and control; raise awareness about factory farms that exploit immigrant farm workers; and produce the one-act play, *Look Who's Knockin: A retiring couple wrestles with the future of their farm.*

Some of our members certainly remember LSP's first campaign to rein in excessive corporate power in the 1980s. We held life insurance companies accountable when they foreclosed on award-winning conservation farms and removed long standing soil conservation practices. CCHD funded LSP for that organizing work too.

In the past, there have actually been other threats to LSP's CCHD funding, such as in 2004 when factory farm interests tried (unsuccessfully) to convince the local bishop of the Diocese of Winona to de-fund LSP.

Most recently, LSP's CCHD-funded work has been featured in two national Catholic publications within the last year.

CCHD itself has a 40-year history of funding grassroots urban and rural community organizing efforts that challenge corporations and government to better meet the needs of low- and moderate-income people in the U.S. It has been, throughout its history, one of the largest funders of community organizing in the nation. Unfortunately, the U.S. Bishops are changing that laudable legacy.

### **Next Steps – LSP members stepping up**

The Land Stewardship Project is a membership organization. It is our members and leaders who decide how and with whom we will carry out our work for family farms, rural communities and the land.

This is a difficult and unfortunate situation, but we will not let the U.S. Catholic Bishops' decision stop us from doing the much-needed work that we as LSP's members and staff are called to do.

The need right now is to raise \$48,000 in the next 6 weeks and together, we can do it.

Today, we are asking you to dig deep and give in a way you may never have before. Can you make a contribution of \$250, \$1,000, \$5,000 or \$10,000? Can you start a new pledge of \$20, \$35, \$50 or \$100 a month? Could you make a donation of \$50 or \$100 now and again before the end of the year?

Please take a moment right now to fill out the enclosed form and return it with your one-time contribution or pledge information in the envelope provided. You can also make your gift online at [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org).

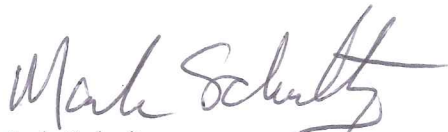
Our request is that you give as generously as you can to help assure that LSP's work of building a truly healthy and just farm and food system and a revitalized rural society moves forward.

Thanks much, in advance, for your understanding and commitment.

Sincerely,



Doug Nopar  
Rural Organizer  
Land Stewardship Project



Mark Schultz  
Associate Director/Policy and Organizing Director  
Land Stewardship Project



Kathleen Mary Kiemen  
Program Committee Chair, Board of Directors  
Land Stewardship Project



George Boody  
Executive Director  
Land Stewardship Project

P.S. LSP's organizing for stewardship, family farms and justice has come under attack. We ask you to thoroughly understand the facts of this situation and make an extra-generous contribution in order to raise \$48,000 to support the work that LSP is called to do. Please give today. Thank you.