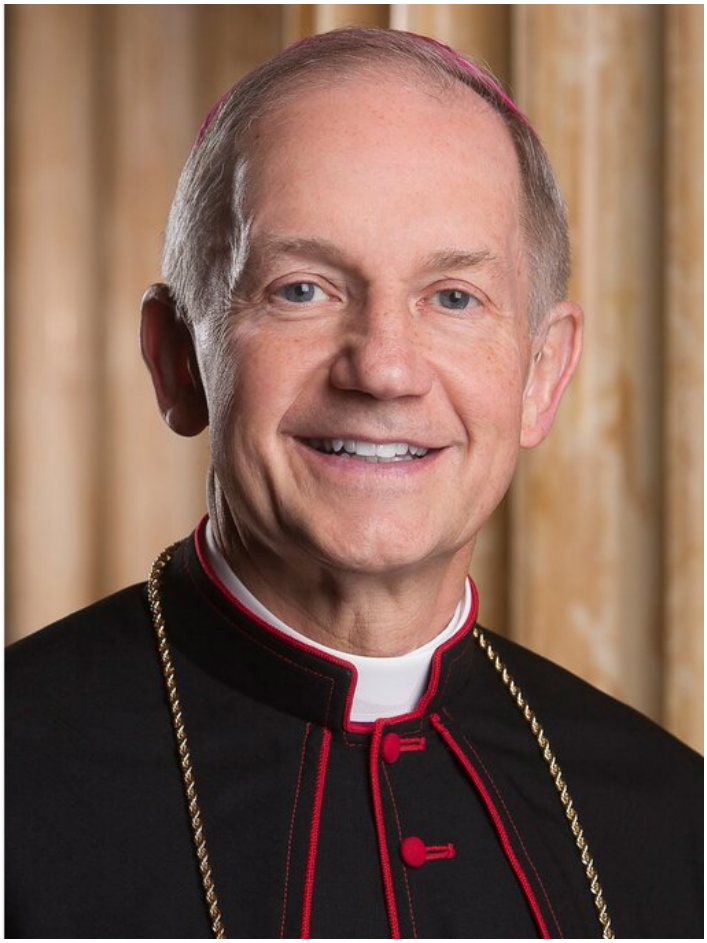
News





A combination photo shows San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone and Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, Ill. The two prelates has criticized the Archdiocese of Chicago's decision to present a "Lifetime Achievement Award" to U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., Nov. 3, 2025, for his work on migration issues, because of Durbin's public position on abortion. (OSV News/Archdiocese of San Francisco/Diocese of Springfield in Illinois/Dennis Callahan)

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The Archdiocese of Chicago is scheduled to present Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., a "Lifetime Achievement Award" for his work on immigration issues in November, but the decision has been criticized by some Catholic bishops over Durbin's public position on abortion.

Some have argued as well that presenting the award contradicts archdiocesan policy.

The Archdiocese of Chicago's Office of Human Dignity and Solidarity Immigration Ministry and Cardinal Blase Cupich are scheduled to give Durbin, who is Catholic, the award at an event supporting the Archdiocese of Chicago's local Immigration Ministry and National Pastoral Migratoria.

On its website, the archdiocese said, "We will recognize community leaders whose generous work and dedication have helped to advance our mission in the Archdiocese of Chicago and beyond," noting Durbin would receive the award "for his work with immigrants."

But Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois, in whose diocese Durbin resides, said in comments to The Pillar that he was "shocked" by the announcement due to Durbin's public position on abortion.

"Given Senator Durbin's long and consistent record of supporting legal abortion — including opposing legislation to protect children who survive failed abortions — this decision risks causing grave scandal, confusing the faithful about the Church's unequivocal teaching on the sanctity of human life," Paprocki said in the article published Sept. 20.

In a Sept. 21 post on X, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco wrote that he "stand(s) in solidarity with Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois, in

urging Cardinal Cupich to reconsider giving Senator Durbin a Lifetime Achievement Award through the Archdiocese of Chicago's Office of Human Dignity and Solidarity given his long record of supporting legal abortion."

"Bishop Paprocki, who is Senator Dick Durbin's bishop, has expressed shock that the Archdiocese plans to honor Senator Durbin who, although a self-professed Catholic, supports access to abortion so radically that he has even opposed legislation to protect babies born after an attempted abortion," he said. "Bishop Paprocki is correct that both clarity and unity are at risk. I hope this will be a clarion call to all members of the Body of Christ to speak out to make clear the grave evil that is the taking of innocent human life."

The Diocese of Springfield has barred Durbin from receiving Communion in his home diocese over his position on abortion.

Durbin has a record of supporting policies aimed at protecting legal abortion — such as voting against the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act — while on some other issues he holds policy positions that appear more closely aligned with the church, such as his efforts to repeal the federal death penalty. Durbin is also known for his efforts to pass immigration reform and has introduced several pieces of legislation to do so, including some bipartisan efforts.

In a Sept. 22 statement acknowledging the controversy, Cupich said, "Recently some have criticized the decision of the Archdiocese of Chicago to recognize Senator Dick Durbin at our annual fundraiser for our immigration ministry, Keep Hope Alive."

"At the heart of the consistent ethic of life is the recognition that Catholic teaching on life and dignity cannot be reduced to a single issue, even an issue as important as abortion," he said. "The annual celebration of immigrants, Keep Hope Alive, will recognize all the critically important contributions Senator Durbin has taken to advance Catholic social teaching in the areas of immigration, the care of the poor, Laudato Si', and world peace. The recognition of his defense of immigrants at this moment, when they are subjected to terror and harm, is not something to be regretted, but a reflection that the Lord stands profoundly with both immigrants who are in danger and those who work to protect them."

Cupich also said, "Senator Durbin informed me some years ago that he has taken up residence in Chicago, registered in a parish of the archdiocese and considers me to be his bishop."

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"Accordingly, I have remained faithful to the May 2021 instructions of the then-Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, advising bishops to 'reach out to and engage in dialogue with Catholic politicians within their jurisdictions ... as a means of understanding the nature of their positions and their comprehension of Catholic teaching,'" he said.

Durbin's official biography on his website says he resides in Springfield, but he has a residence in Chicago's North Side neighborhood.

Some critics of the decision to award Durbin pointed to an item in the archdiocese's policy handbook stating, "Any Catholic entity subject to the authority of the Archbishop of Chicago, and any boards/fundraising committees affiliated with them shall not give awards or honors or host presentations, speaking opportunities or appearances by individuals or organizations whose public position is in opposition to the fundamental moral principles of the Catholic Church."

Mary FioRito, a Catholic commentator and Cardinal Francis George Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, as well as the former vice chancellor for the Archdiocese of Chicago, told OSV News Sept. 22, "I'm genuinely baffled by it, because there are such clear policies on who may receive awards and honors from a Catholic institution."

"To call it a 'lifetime achievement award,' that implies the totality of his life," FioRito said, arguing that could prompt confusion for the faithful.

Generally, "even if a person has done some other good things," the written policy still would prevent that person from receiving an award, she argued.

Mary Kate Zander, president of Illinois Right to Life, said in a Sept. 18 statement, "The Church emphasizes that human beings are integrated persons and that we cannot live in spiritual harmony if we are denying even one aspect of the truth of the faith."

Presenting Durbin with an award, she argued, "is an explicitly inconsistent and un-Catholic choice by Cardinal Cupich. Not only does it cause scandal among the faithful by creating confusion, it also puts the Senator's soul at risk by failing to hold

him accountable for his refusal to oppose abortion in the U.S. Senate."

A spokesperson for the Archdiocese of Chicago did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

On Sept. 22, Durbin, who is the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, joined Sens. Alex Padilla, D-Calif., and Rand Paul, R-Ky., as well as Reps. Deborah Ross, D-N.C., and Mariannette Miller-Meeks, R-Iowa, to reintroduce bipartisan, bicameral legislation that would provide a pathway to citizenship for those who were brought legally to the United States as children as dependents on their parents' work visas, dubbed the "America's CHILDREN Act."

Durbin's office said the bill would protect from deportation more than 250,000 documented "Dreamers," or those immigrants who were brought into the country as children without legal status and are beneficiaries of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA.

At a Sept. 18 press conference about DACA, Durbin was among the senators and members of Congress who expressed concern about the Trump administration's immigration policy.

"Let me tell you, we're going to continue this battle," Durbin said. "It's going to be a battle we're going to win in the churches, in the meeting halls, and the streets, and the restaurants, and in Congress as well. We're going to stand up for these DACA recipients. They are the best of America, and they deserve protection."

The event where Durbin is to get the Chicago Archdiocese's award — the Keep Hope Alive Benefit 2025 — is scheduled for Nov. 3.