

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Former airline exec ready for next challenge:  
Bringing Catholic perspective to state's public policy arena**

Former Alaska Airlines executive Joe Sprague assumed the role of executive director of the Washington State Catholic Conference on September 29 after 17 years with the airline. Sprague was senior vice president of external relations for Alaska.

In comments on his new job as leader of the public policy arm of the Catholic Church in Washington State, Sprague said the move gives him an opportunity to work for the common good by serving the state's bishops.

"The Catholic Church is a force for tremendous good in our community," said Sprague. "The opportunity to serve the Washington State Catholic Conference is really an opportunity to help share the hopeful message of the church in Washington's public policy arenas."

On behalf of Washington's Catholic bishops, Archbishop of Seattle J. Peter Sartain said in a message announcing the hire, "We welcome Joe Sprague to his new role as Executive Director of the WSCC and look forward to working closely with him in the years ahead. His deep faith and commitment to Catholic life, coupled with his impressive background and experience, have prepared him well for this critical role. He will be a blessing to the WSCC and all those served by our advocacy efforts."

The Washington State Catholic Conference serves as the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of the Archdiocese of Seattle, the Diocese of Spokane and the Diocese of Yakima. Sprague replaces Dominican Sister Sharon Park as the conference's executive director. Park served the WSCC for more than 38 years.

"I know I have large shoes to fill but I look forward to the challenge and the opportunity to serve," Sprague said

"The issues that can sometimes divide people can feel as tall and jagged as the mountains running through our state," Sprague remarked. "It is exciting to be able to play even a small role in bridging those divides and boosting our state by sharing the Catholic perspective."

Sprague holds a B.S. in Aeronautical Science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and an M.B.A. from the University of Washington. He has been active in a variety of civic involvements, including Board membership on the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Washington Business, the University of Washington Communications Advisory Committee and Angel Flight West.

His contributions to the local Catholic Church also run deep. He and his wife, Jenn, are active members of St. Madeleine Sophie Parish, Bellevue. For several years, they were members at St. Anthony Parish, Renton, where Sprague served as a member and president of the Parish Council.

He has also served as a member of the board of directors of Catholic Community Service of Southeast Alaska in the Diocese of Juneau, and is currently a member of the Crozier Society of the Archdiocese of Seattle and the Board of Trustees of the Fulcrum Foundation, which serves Catholic students and schools in need. They have two children, both graduates of Kennedy Catholic High School in Burien, who are now in college.

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