

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

CAPITOL UPDATE

March 20, 2009

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WCC Summary of Governor's Budget

This summary covers those items in the Governor's budget that appear to be of greatest interest to the WCC and diocesan agencies. Where the WCC has a position on a provision, that position is noted. Since the Governor's budget will be revised by the legislature before being approved around July 1, 2009, the WCC's position on individual items may change. The WCC will provide status reports on the budget in future *Capitol Updates*.

Children and Families

Community Aids. Reduces the current level of state funding for the Community Aids program by 1% and does not offset the loss of about \$20 million in federal funds under the federal Title IV-E program. This is an important source of funding for Catholic Charities (CC), and the WCC is deeply concerned about the effect this reduction will have on the efforts of CC and other human service agencies to care for those in need. *The WCC supports efforts to mitigate the loss of the federal Title IV-E funding.*

Child Care Rating System. Rates child care providers receiving Wisconsin Shares subsidy payments and posts the ratings on the Internet for parents to see. Child care centers not receiving the subsidy payments can be rated voluntarily.

Foster Care and Kinship Care. Includes a 5% increase in uniform foster care rates to take effect on January 1, 2010, and an additional 5% to take effect on January 1, 2011, and provides additional funding so that relatives can take care of children. *The WCC supports these provisions.*

Foster Parent Training. Includes over \$1 million distributed over the next two years to fund a statewide foster parent training program. *The WCC supports this provision.*

Corrections

Criminal Justice Reform Initiative. The budget includes a number of provisions to redirect prison spending by reducing time spent in prison for certain non-violent offenders and by

increasing the use of community corrections. *The WCC supports the state's shift from incarceration to community corrections.*

Elementary and Secondary Education

Revenue Limit Exemptions for School Safety, Nurses and Transportation. Phases in, over a three year period starting FY 2011, exemptions to school revenue limits for safety equipment and security personnel, school nurses, and those prior-year transportation costs per pupil above the statewide average. *The WCC supports efforts to maintain pupil transportation services.*

Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP). Includes a number of provisions to increase regulation and accountability in the MPCP. Some of these are problematic for Catholic schools in the program. While some additional accountability is appropriate, some of these provisions will undermine the mission of Catholic schools. *The WCC will ask that accountability provisions be removed from the budget so they may be given more careful consideration.*

Health and Social Services

BadgerCare Plus Coverage of Childless Adults. Expands coverage of childless adults (with incomes under 200% of federal poverty level) statewide on July 1, 2009. An estimated 41,000 childless adults will benefit from this coverage. *The WCC supports this provision.*

Family Planning Waiver for Men. Expands eligibility for services to men who meet the specified qualifications of the Medical Assistance family planning waiver program. *The WCC will ask that this provision be removed from the budget.*

Children's Long-Term Support Program. Funds 1,000 slots over four years in the children's long-term support waiver program. The program provides Medicaid-eligible children with disabilities or severe emotional disturbances with at-home or community-based care. Currently, the waiting list for this program stands at over 3,500. *The WCC supports this provision.*

Mental Health and Substance Abuse. Directs an amendment to the Medical Assistance state plan allowing counties to access over \$7 million in federal funds per year for improvements in mental health and substance abuse services. Additional funds have also been dedicated to expand community-based services, including substance abuse screening, brief intervention, and referral treatment services for all Medicaid enrollees (starting January 2011). *The WCC supports these provisions.*

The Wisconsin Works Program (W-2)

W-2 Participants with Newborn Children. Extends the time a woman who participates in the Wisconsin Works program may remain at home with her newborn from 12 weeks to 26 weeks. *The WCC supports this provision.*

W-2 Eligibility for Pregnant Women. Extends eligibility for a monthly cash benefit payment to women with no other children who are in the 3rd trimester of pregnancy and are not able to work because of a medically verified at-risk pregnancy. *The WCC supports this provision.*

Emergency Assistance. Adds \$1 million for assistance to families facing a current emergency due to fire, flood, natural disaster, energy crisis, or homelessness. *The WCC supports this provision.*

OTHER

Domestic Partnership Registry and Benefits. Directs counties to permit same sex couples to register as domestic partners and sets forth criteria for doing so. Those who register become eligible for some of the legally recognized prerogatives or benefits that currently accrue to married couples (and, in some instances, other relatives). Also includes a provision for the dissolution of such partnerships. *The WCC will ask that this provision be deleted from the budget.*

Public Hearings on State Budget Starting Next Week

The Joint Finance Committee will be holding public hearings around the state on the Governor's budget bill. All of the hearings are scheduled for 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- Monday, March 23: **Sparta.** American Legion Hall, 1116 Angelo Rd.
- Wednesday, March 25: **West Allis.** State Fair Park, Banquet Rm. 2, 640 s. 84th St.
- Friday, March 27: **Eau Claire.** UW-Eau Claire Haas Fine Arts Center, 121 Water St.
- Monday, March 30: **Racine.** Case High School Theater, 7345 Washington Ave.
- Wednesday, April 1: **Appleton.** Lawrence University Stansbury Theater, 420 College Ave.
- Friday, April 3: **Cambridge.** Amundson Community Center, 200 Spring St.

Upcoming Hearings of Interest

(N.B. Only bills of interest are flagged. In most cases, committees will be considering other bills as well.)

Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families

**2pm-7pm, Tue., Apr. 2, Holy Redeemer Education Complex (Symposium Room),
3501 West Mother Daniels Way, Milwaukee, WI 53209**

Discussion of committee assignment: Bill draft relating to creating a bill of rights for foster children. Bill draft relating to training for foster parents. The Special Committee will hold a public hearing from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at which anyone is welcome to address the committee on issues related to the child welfare system in Milwaukee County, foster care, and training for foster parents.

New Bills of Interest

SB-108. Health Care Workers (Robson) Prohibits mandatory overtime hours and on-call time worked by health care workers. To Health, Health Insurance, Privacy, Property Tax Relief & Revenue

SB-111. Teachers (Plale) Adopts federal law relating to an income tax deduction for certain educators; creates an individual income tax deduction for educators who purchase classroom supplies with personal funds. To Tax Exemptions.

[SB-122](#). **Child Welfare** (Taylor) Notice of intent to remove a child from the home of a relative and review of decisions or orders involving the placement and care of a child placed in the home of a relative. To Children and Families

[AB-140](#). **Teachers** (Hixson) Adopts federal law relating to an income tax deduction for certain educators; creates an individual income tax deduction for educators who purchase classroom supplies with personal funds. To Education.

[AB-141](#). **Autism** (Newcomer) Requires distribution of autism-related information; requires a referral when certain diagnoses are made; provides funding for the MA autism benefit; licensure of autism paraprofessionals; creates an autism paraprofessional board. To Finance.

[AB-144](#). **Inmate Telephones** (Kessler) Limits charges for inmate telephone use at a jail or house of correction to the same amount charged to a prisoner in a state institution. To Corrections and Courts.

[AB-151](#). **Drunk Driving** (Zepnick) Makes various changes to drunk driving laws, creates penalties; provides for consumption reports; and intoxicated driver deterrence. To Public Safety.

[AB-152](#). **Health Care Workers** (Pasch) Prohibits mandatory overtime hours and on-call time worked by health care workers. To Health and Healthcare Reform.

[AB-164](#). **Child Welfare** (Grigsby) Notice of intent to remove a child from the home of a relative and review of decisions or orders involving the placement and care of a child placed in the home of a relative. To Children & Families.

Web Sites of Interest

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/waml>

- Who are my legislators

[Directory of Senate Members](#)

[Directory of Assembly Members](#)

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/leginfo.html>

- 2009-10 Session Schedule
- Weekly Schedule of Committee Activities
- Senate and Assembly Daily Floor Calendar

Capitol Update is a periodic e-mail on legislative issues from the Wisconsin Catholic Conference.

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