

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

CAPITOL UPDATE

May 11, 2007

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State Budget Developments

The Joint Finance Committee (JFC) continued its work this week on the state budget by taking action on less controversial items and deferring many of the more important decisions to a later date. In two developments of interest to the WCC:

- The JFC voted 11-5 along bipartisan lines to approve the creation of a new Department on Children and Families. The new department will merge child welfare, child support, child care services, and the W-2 program into a single, unified agency.
- The JFC has initially voted not to establish a statewide Affordable Housing Trust Fund, but the Committee is expected to revisit the issue later in the session. The funding would have included \$1 million dollars earmarked for homeless shelters. The WCC urges readers to contact their legislators and ask them to include the \$1 million for homeless shelters in the final budget.

WisconsinCare to Replace SeniorCare

Governor Doyle this week announced that federal funding for SeniorCare has been extended until the end of this year. He also announced a proposal that, if approved by the Legislature, will replace SeniorCare with WisconsinCare beginning January 2008. The new program will provide prescription benefits to seniors and to people with disabilities.

WisconsinCare participants will be required to choose a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan and will receive assistance in paying their premiums based on their annual gross income. WisconsinCare will pay all premiums, deductibles, and drug costs for those in the lowest income bracket (less than \$14,292 for singles and \$19,166 for married couples).

WisconsinCare has bi-partisan support in the state legislature and is expected to pass either as part of the biennial budget or as a separate bill.

Felon Bias Bill Passes Assembly

The Assembly this week passed AB-30, which would permit an educational institution to refuse to employ or to terminate from employment an unpardoned felon. The bill was amended to prohibit employers from terminating an employee after 270 days of learning of the felony. The bill now goes to the Senate. The WCC [testified in opposition](#) to the bill.

Assisted Suicide Bill Introduced in Assembly

[AB-298](#) (Rep. Frank Boyle, D-Superior) would permit terminally ill individuals to make written requests for medications to end their lives. AB-298 is the companion to [SB-151](#). The WCC is opposed to the bills, which have very few co-sponsors and are therefore not expected to receive serious consideration.

Education Tax Credit Initiative Announced

Rep. Phil Montgomery (R-Ashwaubenon) held a press conference May 11, 2007, in Green Bay to announce a tax credit proposal to benefit families and businesses. If approved, the initiative would create tax credits for businesses who contribute to student scholarship funds and for parents who pay tuition at independent schools. Formal introduction of this initiative will most likely occur as part of state budget process.

Upcoming Hearings of Interest

Assembly Committee on Education Reform

11am, Tues, May 22, 415-NW

[AB-165 School Bussing](#) (Friske) Transportation of four-year-old kindergarten pupils attending private schools.

New Bills of Interest

[AB-298 Assisted Suicide](#) (Boyle) Permits certain individuals to make written requests for medication for the purpose of ending their lives. *To Public Health, Senior Issues, Long Term Care and Privacy.*

Web Sites of Interest

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

- Who are my legislators

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

- 2007-08 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. To "subscribe" or "unsubscribe" please send a request to office@wisconsincatholic.org.

Wisconsin Catholic Conference
131 W. Wilson St., Suite 1105
Madison, WI 53703
608/257-0004
www.wisconsincatholic.org