

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

CAPITOL UPDATE

June 13, 2007

SPECIAL EDITION

Contents Include:

1. Joint Finance Completes Work on State Budget
2. New Bills of Interest

Joint Finance Completes Work on State Budget

On June 8, the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) completed its work on the 2007-08 state budget and forwarded it, without recommendation, to the full legislature.

The budget bill first goes to the Democratic Senate and then to the Republican Assembly, each of which will have the chance to modify it. After each house passes its own version, the conference committee will work out a compromise that can be sent to the Governor for his signature. In Wisconsin, governors have wide discretion in using their veto pen to strike out and essentially rewrite large sections of the budget.

Many observers expect that the budget process will continue well beyond the beginning of the new fiscal year on July 1.

The following summarizes action taken on some of the issues of interest to the WCC.

Children and Families

Included:

- Creating a new Department of Children and Families, which will merge child welfare, child support, childcare services, and the W-2 program.
- Increasing funding for the state's six Post Adoption Resource Centers (WCC [memo of support](#)).

Workforce Development

Included:

- Partial funding of a new pilot program, known as "Real Work, Real Pay" to give W-2 recipients the opportunity to gain more realistic employment experience (WCC [memo of support](#)). JFC rejected the Governor's proposal to fund 500 individuals, in favor of 100.
- Fully funding Wisconsin Shares, the W-2 program that provides child care assistance.

Not included:

- Extending the period during which single parents in the Wisconsin Works program (W-2) may remain home with newborns before returning to work from 12 to 26 weeks.
- Providing cash assistance to unmarried, pregnant women with no other custodial children in the W-2 program who are in the third trimester of a medically verified, at-risk pregnancy and are unable to work (WCC [memo of support](#)).

Medicaid

Included:

- Expanding BadgerCare to include health care assistance for all Wisconsin children under 18, teens aging out of foster care, pregnant women, certain farmers and self-employed individuals, and caretaker relatives (WCC [memo of support](#)).
- Starting January 2009, providing a health care package for childless adults with incomes at or below 200 percent of federal poverty level.
- Expanding the Family Care program. JFC altered the Governor's proposal, choosing to retain JFC oversight of the Family Care program.
- Expanding long term care ombudsman programs.
- Approved funding reestimates for SeniorCare, BadgerCare, and Medicaid.
- Expanding the Family Planning Demonstration Project to include both males and females age 15 through 44 with family incomes at or below 200 percent of federal poverty level (WCC [memo in opposition](#)).
- Establishing a pilot program to increase dental reimbursement rates.

Education

Included:

- Increasing the state's reimbursement rate for school breakfast by 50 percent.
- Modifying the current funding split for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, in order to ease the burden on Milwaukee taxpayers. Beginning with the 2007-08 school year, for the first 15,000 pupils attending a school in the program, the current 55 percent state funding and 45 percent MPS funding split would apply. For all pupils above 15,000 attending a school in the program, the state would fund 100% of voucher payment costs.
- Funding a fiscal auditor for the Choice program to review the financial audits of participating schools. The cost of this position is to be funded by a fee assessed on all participating Choice schools.

Not included:

- Creating an Education Tax Credit for families and businesses that make contributions in support of public or nonpublic schools and students (WCC [memo of support](#)).
- Restricting transportation payments to a family with several children attending the same nonpublic school by reimbursing the family as if they had only one child attending the school ("One Family, One School, One Check"), (WCC [memo in opposition](#)).
- Mandating minimum degree and diploma requirements for Choice program staff.
- Mandating pupil records retention and access for participating Choice program schools.

Corrections

Included:

- Over \$5 million for community-based treatment programs for non-violent drug offenders, halfway houses, transitional jobs, etc.
- \$1 million for Project New Hope, a jobs program for released offenders in Milwaukee.
- Directing the Department of Corrections to submit a response to the audit regarding the effect of returning 17-year-olds to the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.
- Providing new health care staff for inmates at Taycheedah, Dodge, and Fox Lake.
- Expanding inmate substance abuse treatment programs to any correctional facility deemed appropriate for the Earned Release program.

Not included:

- Creation of a Truth-in-Sentencing Commission to propose clear sentencing guidelines to the Legislature.

UW System

Included:

- Permitting undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at a UW system school.

Other

Included:

- \$2 million for the 2007-09 biennium to the Department of Commerce for homeless shelters and transitional housing.
- Modifying the property tax exemption for educational, religious, and benevolent institutions by specifying that “benevolent institutions” includes those organizations that own low-income residential rental housing.

Not included

- Domestic partnership coverage for state employees.

New Bills of Interest

[SB-195](#) **Schools** (Carpenter) Provide employees with school conference and activities leave. *To Education.*

[SB-206](#) **Health Savings** (Harsdorf) Provides for a health savings account option under the Health Insurance Risk-Sharing Plan. *To Transportation, Tourism and Insurance.*

[AB-377](#) **Emergency Contraception** (Musser) Requires a hospital to provide information to a victim of sexual assault and, upon request, emergency contraception. *To Judiciary and Ethics.*

[AB-390](#) **Voting Rights** (Parisi) Restores the right to vote to a person barred from voting as a result of a felony conviction. *To Elections and Constitutional Law.*

[AB-391](#) **Parental Choice** (Pope-Roberts) Records requirements for pupils attending a private school participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. *To Education Reform.*

[AB-392](#) **Health Care** (Hraychuck) Covers certain private sector employers and their employees under the health care coverage plan for the state and its employees. *To Insurance.*

[AB-394](#) **Health Care** (Nygren) Provides a health savings account option under the Health Insurance Risk-Sharing Plan. *To Insurance.*

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.

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