

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

CAPITOL UPDATE

June 29, 2007

Contents Include:

1. Senate Passes Democratic Budget
2. Children and Families
3. Workforce Development
4. Education
5. Corrections
6. Health Insurance
7. Other
8. New Bills of Interest

Senate Passes Democratic Budget

By a vote of 18-15, the Senate this week passed its version of the state budget, restoring many of the Governor's proposals that had been deleted by the Joint Finance Committee. In addition, the Democratic controlled Senate incorporated a major universal health insurance plan for all state residents, known as the Healthy Wisconsin Plan.

The Republican controlled Assembly is expected to unveil its version of the budget early next week.

The following summarizes the Senate budget on some of the issues of interest to the WCC:

Children and Families

Included:

- Providing annual grants of \$20,000 each to 12 child advocacy centers to assist child victims and their families.

Workforce Development

Included:

- Restoring Governor's proposal to provide W-2 grants to women who do not have children but are in the third trimester of an at-risk pregnancy (WCC [memo of support](#)).

Education

Included:

- Providing an additional \$3 million annually to the SAGE program to satisfy an increase in the per pupil allotment to \$2,250 for all SAGE students.

Not included:

- After lengthy caucus deliberations, Senate Democrats rejected the Governor's proposal to provide \$21 million in state funding for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, and in so doing, reduce the tax burden on Milwaukee property owners. Instead, the Democrats proposed directing \$21 million to high poverty and rural school districts around the state.

Corrections

Included:

- Restoring the Governor's proposal to rename the Parole Commission the Earned Release Review Commission (ERRC) and permit it to reduce prison sentences and extended supervision of inmates convicted of Classes F through I felonies after they have served 75 percent of their sentences.
- Restoring the Governor's proposal to allow those convicted of violating a term of their extended supervision to serve their time in a DOC facility, Huber facility, or a work camp. Current law mandates these individuals serve their time in either a regional detention facility or county jail.

Health Insurance

Included:

- Creating the Healthy Wisconsin Plan, a comprehensive health care system that will provide coverage for almost every person who resides in Wisconsin. Benefits offered under the plan will be nearly identical to the benefits offered under the state employee health plan. The initiative will be funded through employer and employee contributions, a limited deductible, and co-payments. A newly created board, the Healthy Wisconsin Authority, will provide oversight and regulatory authority for the new program.
- Increasing minimum insurance coverage requirements for the treatment of mental health and substance abuse problems.

Other

- Restoring the Governor's domestic partnership coverage for state employees.
- Permitting local governments to offer health insurance coverage to domestic partners.

Not included:

- Provisions adopted by the Joint Committee on Finance regarding the exemption of low-income residential rental housing from the property tax.

New Bills of Interest

[SB-218. Abortion](#) (Breske) Voluntary and informed consent to an abortion; requires provision of information on domestic abuse services. *To Health and Human Services.*

[AB-395. School Activities](#) (Black) Allows 16 hours for employees to use for school conference and activities leave. *To Jobs and the Economy.*

[AB-398](#). **Private Schools** (Wasserman) Transportation of pupils to private schools. *To Education Reform.*

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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