

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

CAPITOL UPDATE

July 12, 2007

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Assembly Passes Budget

By a vote of 51-44, the Republican-controlled Assembly this week passed its version of the budget. As expected, the Republican budget eliminated many of the Governor's and Senate's proposals, especially those related to tax increases. Gone are the fee increases on hospitals, oil companies, and tobacco. Gone too is the Senate's universal health care plan.

In addition to eliminating these tax increases, the Assembly budget includes several tax cuts and credits: workplace wellness tax credits, tax cuts for retirement income, angel investment credits, and Health Savings Accounts (HSAs). The budget also includes a property tax freeze that limits the increases municipalities can levy based on the growth of new construction.

Because of the wide discrepancies between the Senate and Assembly versions of the budget, the versions will now be reconciled in an 8-member conference committee, consisting of 4 senators and 4 representatives, starting as early as next week. Observers expect lengthy negotiations, taking at least several weeks, to reach an agreement.

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

Children and Families

Not included:

- New Department of Children and Families.
- Increased funding for Post Adoption Resource Centers.

Included:

- Increased foster care payment rates by 5% for FY 2008-09.

Workforce Development

Included:

- Increased funding to improve quality and availability of child care.
- Earned Income Tax Credit funding.
- Requiring documentary proof of citizenship or legal status for state public benefits.

Not included:

- \$52.6 million in child care subsidies (Wisconsin Shares).
- Real Work, Real Pay transitional jobs pilot program.

Education

Included:

- Expanding the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) to all high schools in Milwaukee County.
- Allowing for annual pupil increases in the MPCP, starting in 2008-09, equal to prior year enrollment plus 2,250.
- Expanding the Choice Program to Racine County in 2009.
- Increasing school transportation aid.
- Permitting an educational agency to terminate or refuse to hire an unpardoned felon.
- Phasing out school integration programs by 2015 by prohibiting new students from participating in the interdistrict and intradistrict programs beginning in 2009-10.

Not included:

- Increase in school breakfast reimbursement rate.
- Grant program for districts that initiate a four-year-old kindergarten program.
- Additional funding for SAGE program.

Corrections

Included:

- Creating statutory language prohibiting the DOC from compensating inmates for their participation in education and program activities.
- Delete funding for stamps and writing materials that the DOC provides to prisoners.
- Requiring sex offenders to use special license plates.

Not included:

- Grant funding to organizations that provide civil legal services to the poor.
- Expansion of Earned Release for prisoners, which would reduce certain prison sentences.
- Expansion of the community alternatives to revocation program, including \$500,000 for the New Hope Project in Milwaukee for transitional jobs training.
- Grant funding for Milwaukee County to establish a treatment alternatives and prison diversion program.

Health Care

Included:

- Limiting the Family planning demonstration project by: 1) not expanding it to include males 15-44; 2) limiting participation of women to 18 years and over; 3) not changing the qualifying income level from 185% to 200% of federal poverty level; 4) not permitting nondirective information explaining pregnancy termination; and 5) preventing DHFS and counties from providing funding for family planning to organizations that counsel or provide abortion services, or to private entities.
- Full funding of SeniorCare.
- Require DHFS to apply for federal abstinence education funding and to use these funds when awarded.

Not included:

- Governor's expansion of BadgerCare Plus.
- Expansion of Family Care.
- Senate Democrats' Healthy Wisconsin Plan.
- Increasing the minimum insurance coverage requirements for the treatment of mental health and substance abuse problems.

Other

Included:

- Permitting employers to refuse to employ or terminate individuals who have been convicted of a sex or violent offense and who have not been pardoned, whether or not the circumstances of the offense are substantially related to the circumstances of the particular job.

Not included:

- \$1 million for homeless shelters and transitional housing.
- Governor's domestic partnership coverage for state employees.
- Exempting low-income residential rental housing from the property tax.
- Instate tuition at UW system for certain undocumented students.

New Bills of Interest

[AB-427](#). **Abortion** (Gundrum) Voluntary and informed consent to an abortion and requiring provision of information on domestic abuse services. *To Judiciary and Ethics.*

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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