

# WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

# CAPITOL UPDATE

October 9, 2009

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## USCCB Criteria for Federal Health Care Reform

On Wednesday, October 8, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) released a [letter](#) from the three chairmen of the bishops' committees working on health care reform urging the U.S. Congress to improve current health care reform legislation and expressing their "disappointment that progress has not been made on the three priority criteria for health care reform" cited in their previous letters.

Bishop William Murphy, Cardinal Justin Rigali, and Bishop John Wester, chairs respectively of the USCCB Committees on Domestic Justice and Human Development, Pro-Life Activities, and Migration, reiterated the U.S. bishops' main concerns: 1) that no one should be forced to pay for, or participate in, an abortion; 2) that health care should be affordable and available to the poor and vulnerable; and 3) that the needs of legal immigrants be met.

The bishops also reaffirmed their commitment to work with Congress and the Administration toward genuine health care reform, but stated, "If final legislation does not meet our principles, we will have no choice but to oppose the bill... We sincerely hope that the legislation will not fall short of our criteria. However, we remain apprehensive when amendments protecting freedom of conscience and ensuring no taxpayer money for abortion are defeated in committee votes."

*WCC Update* readers are urged to contact their Congressional representatives, asking them to adopt the proposals set forth by the bishops. You can contact your representative and senators through the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121. You can also find information on your Members of Congress at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov).

For more information, visit <http://www.usccb.org/healthcare/>.

## Catholics Testify on Payday Lending Reform

Three representatives from Catholic agencies in Wisconsin offered testimony on payday lending practices before a joint informational hearing of the Assembly Committee on Consumer Protection and the Assembly Committee on Financial Institutions. Deacon Richard Sage, Director of Catholic Charities in the La Crosse diocese, Rhonda Schmitt, a family financial counselor for Catholic Charities in the Green Bay diocese, and E. Michael McCann, of the

Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Milwaukee Council, all spoke of the harmful effects of payday lending and the need for greater regulations. No executive action was taken on any of the current payday lending bills.

## **WCC Supports Increased Access for Public Defenders**

The WCC offered [testimony](#) this week in support of [Senate Bill 263](#) and [Assembly Bill 395](#), before a joint hearing of the Senate Judiciary, Corrections, Insurance, Campaign Finance Reform and Housing Committee and the Assembly Committee on Judiciary and Ethics. The companion bills would require the State Public Defender's (SPD) office to raise its eligibility standards and to hire additional staff. No executive action was taken on either bill.

## **New Bills of Interest**

[SB-319](#). **Statute of Limitations** (Lassa) Statute of limitations for sexual contact with a child. To Judiciary.

[SB-324](#). **Sex Education** (Taylor) Instruction in human growth and development. To Education.

[SB-338](#). **Cemeteries** (Lehman) Maximum amount of funeral and burial expenses under the funeral, burial, and cemetery expenses program. To Ethics Reform and Government Operations.

[AB-447](#). **Payday Loans** (Jorgensen) Regulates payday loan providers. To Financial Institutions.

[AB-453](#). **Statute of Limitations** (Parisi) Statute of limitations for sexual contact with a child. To Children & Families.

[AB-458](#). **Sex Education** (Grigsby) Instruction in human growth and development. To Education.

## **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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