

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

Capitol Update

February 10, 2012

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USCCB Response to White House Statement on the HHS Regulation

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) today issued the following on President Obama's statement concerning a modification of the recently promulgated rule of the Department of Health and Human Services mandating that employers provide health coverage for contraceptives, sterilization and abortion drugs:

“The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) sees initial opportunities in preserving the principle of religious freedom after President Obama's announcement today. But the Conference continues to express concerns. ‘While there may be an openness to respond to some of our concerns, we reserve judgment on the details until we have them,’ said Cardinal-designate Timothy Dolan, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

‘The past three weeks have witnessed a remarkable unity of Americans from all religions or none at all worried about the erosion of religious freedom and governmental intrusion into issues of faith and morals,’ he said.

‘Today's decision to revise how individuals obtain services that are morally objectionable to religious entities and people of faith is a first step in the right direction,’ Cardinal-designate Dolan said. ‘We hope to work with the Administration to guarantee that Americans' consciences and our religious freedom are not harmed by these regulations.’”

WCC Supports Assembly Bill to Ban Coercive and Webcam Abortions

On February 8, the WCC presented [testimony](#) in support of [Assembly Bill 371](#) (Rep. Michelle Litjens, R-Oshkosh) at a public hearing before the Assembly Health Committee. This companion bill to SB 306 would require 1) that the physician performing the abortion assess whether the woman is in fact consenting voluntarily to the abortion; 2) the repeal of state statute 940.04(3) and (4), which cannot be enforced because it is superseded by s. 940.13 (i.e., s.940.13 prohibits the prosecution of women who obtain abortions); and 3) prohibiting Wisconsin doctors from participating in chemical abortions over the web. The Committee took no further action on the bill.

WCC Supports Tax Deduction for CESA Contributions

On February 9, the WCC submitted [testimony](#) in support of [Assembly Bill 466](#) at a public hearing of the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means. The bill would allow individuals to claim an income tax deduction for amounts contributed to a Coverdell Education Savings Account (CESA). Most individuals can annually contribute up to two thousand dollars to a CESA, and while those contributions are taxable under current federal and state law, the accounts may grow tax free. Distributions can be used for expenses incurred at an eligible education institution, be it public or private, and can be used for all levels of education, including post-secondary education. The Committee took no further action on the bill.

WCC Testifies on Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility

On February 2, the WCC presented [testimony](#) for information at a public hearing before the Senate and Assembly Committees on Education on the state's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver request. While applauding the waiver's effort to improve educational outcomes, the WCC expressed concerns regarding the waiver's impact on private schools, especially those schools participating in the State's parental choice voucher programs.

Upcoming Hearings of Interest

(N.B. Only bills of interest are flagged. In most cases, committees will be considering other bills as well.)

Senate and Assembly Education Committees

11am, Wed., Feb. 15, 411-S

[AB-558](#). **Read to Lead** (Kestell) The Governor's Read to Lead development fund, the Read to Lead Development Council, grants in support of literacy and early childhood development programs, teacher licensure, screening kindergarten pupils for reading readiness, remedial reading services for certain pupils, evaluating teacher preparatory programs and educator effectiveness.

Joint Committee on Finance

1pm, Wed., Feb. 15, 412-E.

Department of Children and Families and Department of Public Instruction report on community partnerships with school districts and nongovernmental foster homes to improve educational outcomes and promote and teach self-sufficiency.

New Bills of Interest

[SB-419](#). **Epi Pens** (Vinehout) A pupil's possession and use of an epinephrine auto-injector. *To Public Health, Human Services, and Revenue.*

[SB-426](#). **Public Assistance** (Darling) Intentional program violations of public assistance programs. *To Judiciary, Utilities, Commerce, and Government Operations.*

[SB-427](#). **Bullying** (T. Cullen) School bullying, unlawful use of computer systems. *To Education.*

[SB-449](#). **License** (Grothman) Special distinguishing registration plates displaying the words Choose Life. *To Transportation and Elections.*

[AB-523](#). **Cemetery** (Wynn) Permits a funeral establishment to be located in cemetery, prohibits discrimination against a funeral establishment that has no relationship with a cemetery, prohibits discrimination against a cemetery that has not relations with a funeral establishment, and eliminates a property tax exemption for cemetery authority property. *To Consumer Protection and Personal Privacy.*

[AB-530](#). **Health Reform** (Craig) Reports on implementation of federal health reform. *To Insurance.*

[AB-531](#). **Health Reform** (Craig) Requires legislation for agencies to take action to, request federal moneys to, and use state agencies to assist the federal government to implement health reform. *To Insurance.*

[AB-534](#). **Public Assistance** (Krug) Intentional program violations of public assistance programs. *To Children and Families.*

[AB-551](#). **Teaching Permits** (Litjens) Professional teaching permits issued by DPI, the qualifications necessary to teach in a private school participating in a parental choice program. *To Education.*

AB-552. State of Limitations (Steineke) Statute of limitations for first-degree sexual assault, attempted homicide, and attempted first-degree sexual assault. *To Criminal Justice and Corrections.*

AB-558. Read to Lead (Kestell) The Governor's Read to Lead development fund, the Read to Lead Development Council, grants in support of literacy and early childhood development programs, teacher licensure, screening kindergarten pupils for reading readiness, remedial reading services for certain pupils, evaluating teacher preparatory programs and educator effectiveness. *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>

- 2011-12 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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