



I-CANUpdate

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INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS (1967-2017)

The Indiana General Assembly ended April 21 and fulfilled its constitutional duty of preparing and **passing a biennial budget for 2017-19**. The session included many other items. There were 675 bills introduced in the House and 570 bills in the Senate. Of these, 139 House bills passed and 132 Senate bills were sent to the Governor. **While not all bills of our liking passed, the session outcomes were generally positive. Below are the highlights.**

Life issues

SB 404, Abortion, child abuse and human trafficking, is on its way to the Governor. The new law **strengthens parental rights and should result in fewer teens being forced into an abortion.** Currently, someone can pose as a parent giving consent to an abortion for a girl younger than 18. The new law requires that persons will be required to show proof of parentage. It further improves child abuse law in that abortion providers are to report pregnancy and an abortion of a teen younger than 16 years of age as abuse of a child. The new law clarifies abortion reports to the state and now requires that hospital emergency facilities report complications they treat following abortions; formerly, these went unreported. **Indiana's strong abortion law was made stronger.**

In addition to what was passed, what was not passed also can be termed success. **Doctor Assisted Suicide bills were not given a hearing.** Although **two bills**, one in the House and one in the Senate, **were filed** and imitate the Oregon assisted suicide law; **neither bill was given a hearing** by the respective committee.

And **for the first time in many years the topic of death penalty was given a hearing.** Although **SB 155, Capital punishment and serious mental illness**, did not get a vote, a **committee hearing demonstrated progress.** It has been at least 10 years since this topic received any attention at the legislature. And in addition to the author of the bill, two additional Senators agreed to sponsor the bill. **Clearly there is interest.** And there is a **possibility of the topic being added to study committees** this fall. **Ending or at least restricting the use of the death penalty has long been a priority of the Conference.**

And **clarity was provided regarding the baby safe device program.** The legislature authorized that hospitals may install and monitor such devices in order that parents who cannot take care of an infant can surrender the child instead of abandonment. (**SB 246**)

Education

This session also saw success in education matters. In addition to protecting the parental choice features of the preschool program, this year's bill also **added the school scholarship connection for students entering kindergarten.** Students in Pre-K program that is connected to an elementary program can continue in that same school with access to the school voucher. As in the school scholarship program, students must meet income criteria to be eligible for the Pre-K program. **When the Pre-K program began two years ago this link was not possible.** The change is in the best interest of the child's educational and social development.

Also, an **increase in the tax credit scholarship program was needed.** The budget increases the credit limit by \$3M to \$12.5M in 2017-18 and to \$14M in 2018-19. **More students will have support for tuition and fees at schools across Indiana.**

Poverty and social needs

The legislature **did respond to the opioid and drug addiction problems** by addressing law enforcement and treatment concerns. But it **failed to add to the list of positive bills when SB 9 providing SNAP benefits for former drug addicts did not get a hearing in the House.** It did make a positive change to Indiana law regarding SNAP benefits by raising the asset limit to \$5,000 from the current \$2,250. **(SB 154) Allowing poor families to retain modest savings strengthens the family and enables families to better sustain themselves** for other needs/emergencies.

Indiana's social safety net was also strengthened by the changes made in the CHOICE program (HB 1287). The program **can now be more flexible in responding to the elderly and disabled** and help them stay in their homes by connecting community resources and making small adjustments before enrolling them in the extensive program. **This change stretches the resources and allows independence much longer.**

And **ICC was instrumental in stopping an expansion of the payday lending industry.** **SB 245** would have increased the amount and interest rate on small loans. The **bill failed in committee.** Current loans are limited to \$600. The bill would have allowed loans up to \$1,750 with interest of over 200% APR. Persons would have been trapped and paying for the loan many times over.

Not everything that passed or did not pass was positive. **Immigration and universities is one such bill that ICC opposed.** But **in general, of the topics we followed, the outcome was favorable.** The legislature ended its work a week earlier and many considered it to be a positive year. **This concludes the weekly state legislative update for 2017.** But the U.S. Congress is just getting started. **As federal issues arise, we will be in touch.**

In addition to the Update, you can obtain more detailed information regarding the bills, as well as detailed information about the legislative process and the Indiana General Assembly by clicking [here](#). You can also access the archived I-CAN Updates, ICC positions and other background information at the ICC website www.indianacc.org