



I-CANUpdate

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INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS (1967-2017)

Committees have one more week to hear bills. **After next week any bill not heard cannot be considered during this session.** This week many bills moving through committee and on the floor.

This week Monday, the House and Senate passed unanimously HCR 23, a resolution congratulating ICC on its 50th anniversary. Bishop Timothy Doherty of Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana and Bishop Charles Thompson of Diocese of Evansville were at the Statehouse for the recognition on the House and Senate floors. **Bishop Thompson also offered the invocation to begin the Senate session.** Many Catholic legislators of both parties joined Representative Pat Bauer (D – South Bend) in sponsoring the resolution. It can be seen [here](#).

On Wednesday **Senate Judiciary Committee heard SB 155, Capital punishment and severe mental illness**, authored by Senator James Merritt (R – Indianapolis). Testimony regarding prior bills took several hours and the **committee ran out of time for a vote on SB 155. Chairman Rod Bray** (R – Martinsville), **held the bill for a vote next week.** Prosecutors and the State Attorney General Office opposed the bill. Mental health organizations, veterans and **ICC supported it.** Several members of the committee raised concerns that this would eliminate death penalty completely and others believed that this defense could already be raised. However, current law does not provide for this. SB 155 would allow determination ahead of the trial if severe mental illness was a factor and, if so, the death penalty would not be a punishment. Currently, the determination of mental illness is after the trial and during the sentencing phase of the trial. **The bill is specific to specific severe mental illnesses and not widely applicable. Those who opposed suggested a study committee on the topic rather than passing the bill. Next week, the bill could be amended or voted upon as is.**

SB 245, Long term small loans, was defeated 4 – 5 in Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee. Despite an amendment that reduced the rate from 240% APR to 216% APR, and a reduction in total \$ loaned and length of the loan, **committee members were not convinced that this product was good for Hoosiers.** Senator Travis Holdman (R – Markle), recognized that the bill needed more work and offered to work on further compromise on second reading and would not move the bill unless he could get committee support. Two of the four affirmative votes, indicated that they voted yes to give the author an opportunity to work on the bill but not convinced of the merits of it at this time. **But five members recognized the effects of these loans on families.** In addition to the Catholic Conference, **many other organizations opposed the bill; these included** Indiana Institute of Working Families, Indiana Community Action Association, United Methodist Church, Christian Legal Aid, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Indiana Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, several veterans groups and pastors from Evangelical Churches and others. The topic could be resurrected and amended in a bill after crossover during March. ICC and the others will be diligent to stop it, if necessary.

HB 1128, Informed consent requirements for abortion drugs, authored by Representative Ron Bacon (R – Chandler), **was voted out of the House Public Policy Committee 7 – 6.** The bill deals with information regarding the possible reversal of the abortion drug, RU 486; it also codifies the report forms and establishes separate licensure regulations for surgical and medical abortion facilities. **The bill will be**

on second and third reading next week. Amendments to weaken the bill are likely. Bills dealing with abortion are always contentious. **ICC supports the bill.** You can contact your representative [here](#).

Senate Judiciary is expected to hear SB 404, Abortion, child abuse and sexual trafficking, next week. The bill seeks to address the concern of adults taking minor across state lines for an abortion as well as ensuring that a parent is notified when a minor receives an abortion. The bill would require the court to hear evidence from the parent before granting a waiver for the abortion and it creates a penalty if an adult, other than parent, takes minor across state lines. **It also raised the age to 16 (from 14) defining abortion on a minor and that these be reported to Department of Child Services. It raised the level of penalty for health officials if reports are not made. ICC supports this bill.**

Senator James Buck (R – Kokomo), announced that **SB 467, Public safety funding, will return next week;** he is preparing an amendment, but at this time there is no word on what he intends to do.

After attempts to amend the bill on second reading failed, SB 34 passed the Senate 49 - 1. SB 34 requires background criminal history and expanded child protection index checks of all school employees every five years. **SB 298, School employee background checks, passed Senate 48 -0.** it deals with the same topic but changes current law for newly hired teachers to be checked within two months of beginning employment rather than the current three months. **The House version regarding the same topic, HB 1079, passed earlier this month.** The House bill provides for all these issues within one bill. There are minor differences and these will be ironed out after March.

SB 276, Early education grant pilot program, was amended in Senate Education Committee and passed 8 - 3. The amendment was significant and calls for additional eligibility for the family and child. In addition to income qualifications the parent, unless home with a child under five years of age, must either be working or seeking employment or attending job training. Other requirements include taking part in engagement or involvement activities offered by the pre-K program and agreeing to allow the child to participate in an external evaluation to assess kindergarten readiness and measuring developmental and academic progress.

SB 154, Removal of asset limits for SNAP benefits, authored by Senator James Merritt, **passed Senate Family and Children Services 6 – 1 and passed second reading without amendment.** The bill expands eligibility for families. The bill would allow families with meager savings to maintain small savings accounts rather than spend down before eligibility, which only exaggerates the problems and poverty. **It is eligible for third reading next week. ICC supports the bill.**

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