



# I-CANUpdate

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March 9, 2017

INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS (1967-2017)

**House is now considering Senate bills and Senate is dealing with House bills.** Senate Appropriations Committee is meeting daily to listen to state agencies and other state entities such as universities regarding their needs and the House version of the budget, HB 1001. House Ways and Means Committee is also busy considering the Senate's bills regarding appropriations and fiscal matters.

Committees have begun hearings but primarily on the less controversial bills. And some committees are awaiting all their assignments before determining which bills to hear and in what order. Hence, this week fewer committees met and fewer bills were heard.

**Senate Family and Children Services Committee met Monday and unanimously passed HB 1287, CHOICE program, following two technical amendments** dealing with definitions. **It passed second reading on Thursday** without amendment. **It will be eligible for third reading next week.** HB 1287, authored by Representative Ed Clere (R – New Albany), updates the program that helps elderly and disabled persons to access community resources and assists with financial assistance to enable these individuals to remain in their homes and with family. **ICC was involved with the initial CHOICE bill** which enabled elderly and others remain in their homes rather than the only option of a nursing or long term care facility. **ICC supports this update and expansion of the program.**

**Senate Education Committee heard seven bills on Wednesday.** Senator Dennis Kruse (R – Auburn), Committee Chair, listens to testimony regarding the bills one week and amends/votes on them the next. **Several bills were of interest were on the docket; these included HB 1004, Pre-kindergarten education; HB 1024 Prayer in schools; and HB 1079, School safety.**

**HB 1004 provides an expansion of the On My Way pre-K program** by adding five additional counties to the pilot program. It also provides that a child with a pre-K voucher is eligible for a school scholarship (voucher) beginning in kindergarten. **The program is supported by ICC because it provides help for low income children and families; and it supports parental choice and provides alternatives from which parents can choose the appropriate and best fit for their child.** HB 1004 is substantially different from the Senate version passed last week. In addition, most of those opposed to the bill centered on the voucher connection. **Amendments are expected next week** to make it conform to the Senate version of the program expansion, SB 376.

The hearing for **HB 1024, Prayer in schools**, also generated opposition from many who see the bills as either unnecessary because **constitutional case law has set parameters** for religious expression in public schools; or they are concerned that it will single out minority students to self-identify in order to be excused from classes or events. Some administrators see problems with extraneous cults being able to exploit the law. **There is no doubt that implementing religious civil rights and constitutional rights requires prudence and is not simple.**

Proponents see the bill as providing protection of religious rights that often are denied by school officials in order to err on the side of making sure government does not endorse religion. The bill does codify much of case law established by the courts. **ICC supports the law in hopes that it will provide guidance and balance to allow students to express their faith in appropriate manner and protect religious civil rights of everyone.**

**Also heard was HB 1079, School safety. This bill passed the House 99 – 0;** it covers the issues studied and recommended by the interim study committee regarding school employees and child sex abuse. HB 1079, as the Senate bills dealing with this topic, requires extended background checks and child protection index check of all employees every five years, to be conducted on a rotating basis. Catholic schools already have this policy. **The bill will be voted on next week.**

**House Family, Children and Human Affairs Committee will hear SB 154, Asset limitation for SNAP eligibility.** The bill updates the eligibility criteria by increasing the asset limit to \$10,000 and exempts child savings and burial arrangements. The increase helps encourage savings to a level of several months' needs for a family of 4. **ICC supports the bill.** It is expected that **SB 9, SNAP and drug convictions, will be heard later this month.**

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](http://www.indianacc.org)