



**February 4, 2016**

*Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) is the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops in Indiana regarding state and national matters.*

This week marked the end of first of the three significant stages of the legislative process. It is commonly known as crossover week. This week all bills that hope to remain alive must have passed the body in which they were introduced. Hence, House bills had to pass the House and Senate bills had to clear the Senate. The focus of the week was second reading amendments and third reading debates. Many positive bills passed.

The biggest news is that **SB 344, Civil rights, failed to move** despite attempts to find compromise. **The bill and issue is dead for this session.** The demise of SB 344 demonstrates the complexity of balancing the fundamental freedoms of all persons. Balancing the rights of all is more complex than simply adding 4 words and a comma, as many advocated. No one supports unjust discrimination of anyone, which includes discrimination regarding one's exercise of Faith. Balancing conflicting rights is better achieved in the concrete and particular circumstances where the conflict exists. Only in the specific circumstance can the proper balance and mutual respect for each right be ascertained. **SB 344 provided some genuine protections for religious communities and institutions.** However, **it did not extend the same conscience protections to all.** Despite the good intentions of the authors to protect religious and affiliated institutions, there were concerns regarding the limits placed on the religious freedom and conscience and concerns regarding definitions of sexual orientation and gender identity and implementation of such a complex issue.

**Several positive bills passed with strong bipartisan support:**

**SB 132, Food stamp assistance after drug conviction,** authored by Senator John Broden (D – South Bend), **passed the Senate 43- 7.** It was **amended to remove any fiscal constraints.** If passed by the House, Indiana would join 39 other states who also have removed the prohibition of drug offenders accessing food stamps. **Persons will have to demonstrate that they are drug free or in a rehabilitation program.** All other eligibility requirements continue; only those who meet the financial and other eligibility criteria will receive this benefit. **ICC supports the bill.**

Another positive bill, **SB 272, Palliative Care and Quality of Life Advisory Council passed unanimously, 50-0.** The bill provides that the Department of Health ascertain the extent of palliative programs in the state and encourage palliative care programs. **Palliative care is a positive way to address the needs of persons with serious illness.** Palliative care is a positive rebuttal to physician assisted suicide. **ICC supports the bill.**

**SB 313, Abortion matters, passed the Senate 35-14.** The bill provides **that prenatal hospice information be provided** to mothers who are considering abortion when their child is diagnosed with a lethal fetal anomaly. **It also prohibits abortionists to abort the baby** if they know it is

because of race, sex or disability. There are also provisions that prohibit acquiring, receiving, selling, or transferring fetal tissue. **ICC supports the bill.**

Another related bill, **HB 1337, Abortion, passed the House on a bipartisan vote, 74-23.** HB 1337 primarily **strengthens several aspects of abortion regulations** and it **also deals with transfer of fetal tissue**, similar to the provision in SB 313. Regarding abortion regulations: Mothers must now be **offered the opportunity to view the ultra sound prior to the abortion.** It also clarifies that abortionists must annually update the arrangements for another doctor to cover at local hospitals. **ICC supports the bill for its added clarity** regarding regulations and the clarity regarding the disposition and handling of fetal remains.

**SB 325, Individual development accounts**, authored by Senator Mark Messmer (R – Jasper) **passed 50-0.** It **expands these accounts** to allow for purchase of a vehicle and increases the eligibility from 175% to 200% of poverty. The program assists low income persons to develop habits of saving and providing for capital and long term needs. **ICC supports the bill.**

**SB 334, Choice scholarships**, authored by Senator Carlin Yoder (R – Middlebury), passed **40-9.** It **extends the opportunity for a scholarship during the second semester and reduces the administrative procedures** for parents and administrators at choice schools. **ICC supports the bill.**

**HB 1340, Long term small loans**, authored by Representative Woody Burton (R – Whiteland), **passed the House 95-1.** It **provides for a committee to study the payday lending industry and its request to increase** the amount of and the interest rate for small loans. **ICC supports the change in the bill** to a study committee, as this stops the effort to increase the burden these loans place on families.

**Bills passed earlier, which we are watching:**

**HB 1064, Terminating the parent-child relationship**, authored by Representative Hal Slager (R – Schererville), passed **the House 93 -0.** HB 1064 **allows a parent who is the victim of an act of rape** from which a child was conceived **to file a petition** to terminate the parent-child relationship between the child and the alleged perpetrator of the act of rape. **ICC supports the bill** in that it supports victims of rape and may promote keeping the child; it also supports the woman from being further victimized later.

**SB 11, ABLÉ saving account for persons with disabilities**, sponsored by Senator Luke Kenley (R – Noblesville), **passed the Senate 48 – 0.** SB 11 **establishes a qualified ABLÉ program** under which a person may make contributions for a taxable year **for the benefit of an eligible individual with a disability.** **ICC supports the bill.**

**HB 1002, Next Generation Hoosier Educators Scholarship, passed 96 -1.** The bill **provides \$7500 scholarship** to attract and retain students to the **teaching profession and commit to teach at least 5 years in Indiana** schools, **including school scholarship or voucher schools.** **ICC supports the bill.**

In addition to the Update, one 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)