



January 21, 2016

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

With the deadline of next week for committee work, this was a very busy week of committee hearings and bills moving on the floor.

Two education bills that are a major focus for educators and school officials this year **passed the entire process this week. HB 1003, Teacher evaluations, passed the Senate 48 -0 and SB 200, Measuring school and school corporation performance, passed the House 97 -1 and are now awaiting the Governor's signature.** Both deal with the ISTEP controversy of the past year. **SB 200 exempts schools from the letter grade** that would have been assigned if ISTEP scores were to be used. This does **impact our schools that participate in the school scholarship or voucher program.** Our educators were supportive of this bill. HB 1003 deals with ISEP as it relates to teacher evaluations and compensation in the public schools. Catholic schools are not affected by this bill. **ICC supports SB 200.**

In other education matters: **HB 1002, Next Generation Hoosier Educators Scholarship, unanimously passed the House Education Committee on Thursday.** The purpose is to **provide a \$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.** HB 1003 establishes the program; it would have to be funded in the next budget cycle. **ICC supports the bill.**

On Wednesday, the **Senate Education Committee passed SB 334, Choice scholarships, on a bipartisan 9 – 1 vote.** SB 334 **provides for an additional opportunity for students to be eligible for a scholarship.** Currently, students are only able to receive a scholarship in the fall; the bill would provide another opportunity during the second semester. **It also reduces the administrative burden for voucher schools by allowing for the parents to cosign only the first of the two tuition checks from the state. ICC supports the bill.**

**Senate Education also heard SB 93, Various education matters,** deals with a great variety of issues. However, **it had a provision that would have substantially changed current law which provides for school corporations to pick up non-public students and deliver them to the non-public school.** I am happy to report that **the provision will be removed.** It is expected that this topic will be assigned to an interim study committee. **The bill will be amended and voted on next week.**

**Senate Tax and Fiscal Committee passed SB 11, Able savings accounts for persons with disabilities, 12 -0.** The bill **establishes a qualified ABLE program** under which a person may make contributions for a taxable year **for the benefit of an eligible individual with a disability** to an ABLE account to meet the qualified disability expenses of the designated beneficiary in compliance with federal law. **ICC supports the bill.**

**Coming next week**

**Senate Judiciary will hear SB 66, Civil rights, next Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>.** SB 66 specifies certain provisions of the Constitution of the State of Indiana as "fundamental rights" and prohibits the government from substantially burdening a fundamental right unless the governmental entity demonstrates that the application of the burden to the person: (1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and (2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest. **It also repeals the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (including the "fix") from last session.** The fundamental rights are: freedom of religion, speech, press, right to assemble and petition the government and the right to bear arms. SB 66 not only repeals RFRA and the "fix", it goes beyond only a court standard. It set this as the policy of the state and therefore applicable to the legislative and executive branch. **ICC supports the bill.**

**Also on Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, Senate Rules Committee will hear SB 100, Civil rights, and SB 344, Civil rights.** Both bills deal with the issue of protected class provisions for sexual orientation and gender identity.

**SB 100 prohibits discriminatory practices** in acquisition or sale of real estate, housing, education, public accommodations, employment, the extending of credit, and public contracts. Also, **it provides protections for religious liberty and conscience for religious entities, including schools.** And **it preempts local civil rights ordinances that conflict with the state civil rights law.** However, **it does not provide for rights of conscience for individuals and businesses.** Because it does not protect the right of conscience and could be used to coerce persons to participate in activities that are immoral, and many of its provisions leave questions and concerns, **ICC does not support the bill.**

**SB 344 is similar** but does not include gender identity as a protected class. **It does extend rights of conscience to individuals but not business persons.** Also, **it allows enforcement of local ordinances passed before December 31, 2015.** SB 344 is an improvement but still lacks clarity in definitions regarding religious affiliation and does not extend religious liberty to all. **ICC does not support SB 344.**

On a positive note, **Senate Health Committee will hear SB 72, Palliative Care and Quality of Life Advisory Council.** The bill provides for the Department of Health to convene health care doctors and nurses to find way to promote palliative care throughout Indiana. **The Church supports palliative care as a positive response to those experiencing suffering and end of life stages. This is a positive response to those who would advocate physician assisted suicide. 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)