



January 28, 2016

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

Committees were very active, as all bills, if they stand a chance of passage, had to pass committee this week. All bills must pass the floor of each respective house by Wednesday night, February 3rd.

Senate Rules Committee heard hours of testimony regarding SB 100 and SB 344, sponsored by Senator Travis Holdman (R - Markle); **both deal with adding protected class status for sexual orientation and gender identity**. After more than 4 hours of testimony and discussion **SB 344 passed on a 7 -5 vote**. It was amended to include crisis pregnancy centers along with an amendment to repeal RFRA and the fix, using Indiana Supreme Court case, as the standard of review by which constitutional freedoms would be judged. **The amended bill provides sexual orientation as a protected class but does not include gender identity**. Rather, it provides that this gender identity would be a study committee matter after session. Religious and affiliated institutions would have exemption from the law as would businesses with fewer than 6 employees. **ICC appreciates the effort to protect integrity of religious institutions but is concerned about religious and conscience rights of all persons and businesses**. Therefore, **ICC does not support the bill**. **The bill now must pass the Senate by Wednesday night or the bill dies for this session**. All who voted for the bill were interested in keeping it moving but were not completely happy with all its provisions. We expect many attempted changes on second reading and the outcome is still in doubt. You can locate/contact your Senator simply by inserting your zip code under "Find Officials" located [here](#) and then your street address.

On a related matter, although scheduled, **Senate Judiciary did not hear SB 66, Civil rights**. The bill **would repeal the RFRA statute passed last session and replace it by identifying fundamental rights in addition to religious freedom**. Leadership decided the bill was too controversial and in light of the other civil rights bills was not needed.

Senate Health Committee dealt with two bills of significance for the Church. SB 313, Abortion matters, sponsored by Senator Holdman **passed Senate Health Committee 7 – 4**. The bill is similar to his bill last session that prohibits abortion of fetus for reasons of race, sex or disability, such as Downs. This year it adds a provision that women who are considering an abortion are to be provided information about prenatal hospice care to women who are considering abortion for fetus that has a lethal fetal anomaly. The bill provides that an abortionist who knowingly conducts an abortion because the fetus is of a certain sex, race or disability would be subject to sanctions and civil liability. It also provides that such abortions would violate the anti-discrimination laws. **ICC supports the bill**.

Senate Health also passed SB 272, Palliative Care and Quality of Life Advisory Council, sponsored by Senator Tim Lanane (D – Anderson) , **9-0**. SB 272 establishes a council to assess the extent of palliative care programs and to educate the public and health care providers regarding palliative care. **Palliative care is a positive way to address the needs of people with serious illness**. Our society should embrace what St. John Paul called “the way of love and true mercy” by surrounding patients with love, support, and companionship, providing the assistance needed to ease their physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering. Palliative care is designed to do just that by **providing for the needs of the patient while respecting the sacredness and preciousness of human life**. **ICC supports the bill**.

House Public Policy Committee passed HB 1337, Abortion, sponsored by Representative Casey Cox (R), **9 – 3**. The primary focus of the bill is to **clarify and tighten Indiana’s abortion law**. Current law requires an ultra sound; the bill requires that the viewing of the ultra sound be done at the time consent is given, at least 18 hours prior to the abortion. Now, it could be done just prior to the actual abortion. The intent of the original law was to do it at least 18 hours prior. **The major focus of the bill is to prohibit misuse of aborted remains**. This would require cremation or burial rather than being treated as waste. And it **prohibits transportation of aborted remains into Indiana from other states**. **ICC supports the bill**.

Two education bills made progress. **SB 334, School scholarships**, sponsored by Senator Carlin Yoder (R – Middlebury), **passed Senate Appropriations Committee on a bi-partisan vote**. **SB 334 extends another opportunity for students to access a voucher after the start of the school year**. Currently, vouchers are only available at the beginning of the school year. **This would allow students in the second semester to enroll**. Also, it **reduces the paperwork on administering the program** by allowing the parents to only have to endorse the state support once during the year rather than twice. **ICC supports the bill**.

Senate Education Committee amended SB 93 this week and **removed the language regarding transportation of non-public school students by public school corporations**. Nor was the topic assigned to a study committee. This is the outcome ICC advocated. **Other aspects of the bill relate only to public school matters**.

House Financial Institutions Committee heard HB 1340, Long term small loans. It would **extend the amount and the interest rate allowed for small loans between \$550 and \$2000**. The poor and disadvantaged are not benefitted by expanding the amount that check cashing and payday loan companies can lend - especially at the predatory pricing of 20% interest. A \$600 could end up costing as much as \$2000. **ICC opposes the bill** as it targets low income families who are desperate to care for family emergencies and needs. Thankfully, the **bill was changed to make this topic a study committee item after session**. **ICC supports this change**.

Senate Pension and Labor Committee heard SB 285, Employment of unauthorized aliens, sponsored by Senator Mike Delph (R - Carmel). The bill will further punish business that knowingly hires unauthorized aliens by stripping them of any license it holds. Current law already punishes businesses that hire unauthorized aliens through tax penalties. **SB 285 provides an affirmative defense for those who use E-Verify system**. However, the E-Verify system is costly for small business and still contains many false positives, hence denying someone a job. **ICC does not support the bill because it is unnecessary and will likely harm families, particularly low income families**. Many opposed the bill including the prosecuting attorney association, Farm Bureau, State and Indianapolis Chambers and others. **The committee did not take a vote on the bill; hence, the bill dies for this session**.

Senate Appropriations unanimously passed SB 132, Food stamp assistance after drug conviction, sponsored by Senator John Broden (D- South Bend). It allows individuals who were convicted of a drug offense but have not been convicted of another drug offense in the previous five years before applying for food stamps to receive food stamps. It also permits individuals who have had a conviction in the past five years but who are receiving specified treatment and drug and alcohol testing to receive food stamps. The reason for the bill is that currently these persons are barred from assistance.

Individuals after serving their sentence and release from jail or prison have many obstacles when rejoining the community. In addition to the culture and family adjustments, employment is often denied because of the conviction and prison record. When jobs are available, often these are temporary or part time. Hence, **this assistance is tangible and needed**. This benefit will go a long way to assisting persons to maintain themselves and their dignity. While food banks are willing and provide assistance, these institutions are stretched to serve all who are in need. **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