



January 4, 2018

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

The Indiana General Assembly began the 2018 session on January 3rd. **Thus far, over 350 bills have been released for consideration.** Well over 500 are expected to be filed this year. During the short session, House members are limited to 5 bills each and the Senate has a limit of 10 each. Potentially this could be as many as 1000 bills. Not everyone reaches their limit.

The **session must end on or before March 14**, hence, the number of weeks for committee hearings and legislative work is limited to just a few weeks during January. **All bills must clear their respective house of origin by the first days of February.** The first part of the short session is a sprint to keep up with bill filings and committee hearings.

Several high profile topics will dominate much of the media. These include **medical marijuana and CBD oil, gun permits and alcohol sales.** While there will be lots of conversation about these topics, only minor adjustments in current law are likely. **ICC will monitor as to their effect on the common good. We do expect another high profile topic to return from last year -bias or hate crimes.** The bill does not establish a hate crime but **does allow the judge to consider bias motivation as an aggravator when determining a sentence** for the criminal activity. **ICC is neutral regarding the bill as it is drafted.**

Committees are getting started this coming week.

SB 123, Newborn safety device at fire departments, authored by Senator Travis Holdman (R – Markle), **will be heard in Senate Civil Law Committee on Monday, January 8.** SB 123 is a **follow-up to a bill enacted last year that provided for baby safe devices to be installed in hospitals, on a voluntary basis, and grandfathered the two existing devices** in fire departments in Michigan City and Woodburn, Indiana. The device allows for anonymity should a parent be unable to care for the infant. This past fall the device at Michigan City saved an infant. The baby is now adopted and doing well. SB 123 will allow devices to be installed at other fire stations on a voluntary basis. **ICC supports the bill** as the devices have saved lives and are adequately designed to properly notify safety personnel and properly care for the child to ensure that someone will provide assistance in a timely manner.

Other bills of interest:

SB 325, Small loan finance charges, authored by Senator Greg Walker (R – Columbus), **addresses the unjust interest charged by lenders in payday lending industry.** The bill **will limit the amount of fees and interest to not more than 36% APR.** Current law allows up to has 390% APR. **ICC supports the bill.** Current law and practice often puts persons and families into a debt trap by taking advantage of their circumstances. Usury and exploitation of people violates the seventh commandment. Lending practices that, intentionally or unintentionally, take unfair advantage of one's desperate circumstances are unjust. **We are seeking a hearing in the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee**, chaired by Senator Chip Perfect (R - Lawrenceburg)

SB 11, Eligibility for Supplement Nutritional Assistance, authored by Senator Michael Bohacek (R –Michigan City), **reprises a bill from last year. SB 11 will remove the lifetime prohibition of drug offenders to receive SNAP benefits (food stamps).** All persons have a right to food and shelter. Persons who have paid their debt and attempting to rectify past mistakes should be given the opportunity to prove themselves and be eligible for support and programs that can assist them and affirm their human dignity. **ICC supports SB 11** and is **seeking a hearing in Senate Family and Children Services Committee**, chaired by Senator Ron Grooms (R – Jeffersonville).

And we expect bills dealing with prolife, education, immigration and other social topics that impact the common good. **Physician assisted suicide bills are expected and will be opposed.** **Immigration bills** have been filed dealing with **resident tuition for undocumented students** and providing for a **driver permit for undocumented residents.** **ICC supports both issues but the chances of getting a hearing are slim.**

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