



**March 19, 2018**

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

### **Wrap-up Update**

*\*Governor Holcomb has called for a special session sometime in May. ICC will monitor special session activity.\**

Although some media reports cite disappointment and unfinished business from the 2018 General Assembly, **ICC sees positive results in several areas**. Positive bills passed dealing with **pro-life matters**, with **protection of the poor and vulnerable**, with **support of Dreamers**, and **those suffering from drug dependency and mental illness**. Also, good results happened with bad legislation not getting a hearing or failing to finish the process.

It has taken three years, but this year, due the perseverance of **Senator Michael Bohacek (R – Michigan City)**, **ex drug offenders released from prison will be eligible for SNAP benefits**, should they qualify under SNAP criteria. In the previous three sessions, bills would pass the Senate only to be stopped in the House. Senator Bohacek was **able to amend the bill into a House bill** and **it survived the conference committee process to become law**. Indiana was one of a few states in which the life time ban on eligibility for drug offender remained.

**A major topic for the session was the opioid crisis**. One **bill ICC supported** in this effort was HB 1007. It authorizes FSSA to add 9 additional mental treatment facilities in Indiana. **Once completed, all Hoosiers will be within an hour's drive of a facility**.

**And for the third year, ICC, along with many other organizations, stopped an expansion of payday lending industry**. This year the bill did pass the House. But with the efforts of many it **did not get a hearing in the Senate**, thus effectively **killing the bill**. In part due to media attention and the lack of support in the Senate, House leadership did not try to resurrect it during conference committee. Payday lending focuses its loans on lower income households; the interest rate and fees amount to exorbitant APR, keeping families in a cycle of debt.

A surprise topic arose late in the session that resulted in a very **positive outcome for individuals with DACA certification**. Due to a change in the application form, late last year DACA individuals were **no longer eligible to receive licensing or certification** despite the training and experience. This was not only an injustice, since they are authorized to work; it also denied Indiana's labor force qualified workers. **To the credit** of the legislators and the Governor and the initiative of **Representative Ed Clere (R – New Albany)**, this was addressed quickly in the last days of the session.

**Parental responsibility and rights were enhanced with a bill to better inform and involvement parents regarding sex education in the public schools.** Parents will be given at least two notices asking them if their child is to participate in instruction on human sexuality. They are to authorize participation or not after receiving detailed information about the curriculum, materials and class instruction.

Pro-life bills were also successful. **Indiana's abortion regulations were updated** to require annual inspections of clinics and distinct requirements for surgical and chemical abortions. Due to the increase of chemical (RU486) abortions and complications arising from them as more and more drugs come from internet purchases, **doctors and emergency centers will now be required to report these complications** to the Department of Health.

**Fetuses and new born infants were also affirmed in legislation this session.** The **newborn safety device program** can now be expanded to fire departments with 24 hr. staffing. The program allows a parent to surrender anonymously an infant that she/he cannot care for. The device is monitored to ensure that someone cares for the infant quickly. Two infants have been rescued with this program in Indiana last year. And **Indiana's law regarding death of a fetus was also changed.** Current law provides that should a fetus be killed during an attack on the mother, the sentence for the crime would include the fetus if he/she had reached viability. The **law passed this year would allow an enhancement of the sentence for a fetus** at any stage of development, **affirming life at conception.**

There was **major disappointment regarding life bills** also. **A bill to facilitate In Vitro Fertilization passed** that will allow fertility clinics in Indiana to import ova for use here. The proponents claimed that there were not enough Indiana donors particularly from minority women. **In addition to the immoral nature of the process, it sets no restrictions and has the potential for misuse and abuse.**

Although filed, **several topics were avoided** with the cooperation of committee chairpersons; these included **doctor assisted suicide, requiring contraception insurance coverage** by Catholic universities and hospitals and other non-profit institutions. And **some bills which we would have supported did not get hearings** either; these included **resident tuition and driving certificates for undocumented residents.**

Although it passed the Senate, a **bill to allow eligible persons to possess a gun on school property which is attached to a church, stalled in the House.** Attempts to revive it during the final days also **failed** as it **was attached to another gun bill** removing the fees required for gun carry permits. While the bill allowed for Churches with schools to deny guns on the property, it would be better to have the law declare guns prohibited during times when any school related activities were scheduled. **This issue is likely to return** as proponents want gun owners with permits to be able to carry guns unless the Church or property owner prohibits it.

The media was focused on Sunday alcohol sales, cold beer sales, medical marijuana, and medicinal CBD oil. Legislative leaders and public officials were focused on workforce development, adjusting several tax issues, and several education related topics regarding graduation, teacher licensing and computer education. **ICC focused on human dignity, the vulnerable and the common good. The session provided several positive outcomes that supported our objectives.**