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Catholic Conference laments Illinois House passage of taxpayer-funded abortion bill

CHICAGO – The head of the public policy arm of the state’s Catholic bishops today lamented Illinois House passage of legislation authorizing the use of taxpayer money to pay for elective abortions for Medicaid recipients and state employees.

Robert Gilligan, executive director of the Catholic Conference of Illinois, criticized lawmakers for turning a moral argument into campaign fodder.

“Elected representatives today chose raw politics over the innocent lives of the unborn,” Gilligan said.

Today’s passage of House Bill 40 denoted the culmination of a legislative spring break marked by Gov. Bruce Rauner’s promise to veto the legislation, which was quickly followed by accusations of broken campaign promises. Cardinal Blase Cupich of the Archdiocese of Chicago last week issued [a public statement](#) in which he thanked the governor for his “principled stand” to veto HB 40.

“Abortion is a controversial issue in this country, but using public money to provide abortions should not be,” Cardinal Cupich stated.

Public opinion polls indicate strong opposition to public funding of abortion. A [January 2017 poll](#) conducted by the Marist Institute for Public Opinion for the Knights of Columbus shows that 61 percent of Americans oppose taxpayer funding of abortion, including 40 percent of those who say they are pro-choice.

Only 15 states currently pay for elective abortions for Medicaid participants, and 11 of those states do so through a court order, not legislative action.

Gilligan stressed the House’s vote represented a dangerous misplacement of priorities, especially when the state has not had a budget for 22 months and has nearly \$13 billion in overdue bills.

“The state can’t pay for essential services, and lawmakers are funding elective abortions – where is the logic in that?” he said.

Illinois’ Catholic bishops have lobbied hard against House Bill 40, [issuing letters to parishioners](#) urging them to contact their state representatives to vote against the measure. Cardinal Cupich and the other bishops noted that a better use of taxpayer money in such dire fiscal times would be to fund prenatal services for the poor and child care for working mothers, as well as expand health-care options for those in need.

HB 40 passed the House on a 62-55 vote, and now moves to the Senate for consideration. The vote roll call can be [seen here](#).

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The Catholic Conference of Illinois was created in 1969 to serve as the public policy voice of the Illinois bishops and the six diocese of the state: Belleville, Chicago, Joliet, Peoria, Rockford and Springfield-in-Illinois.