



CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF ILLINOIS
Catholics for Life Legislative Update

Provided by:
Zach Wichmann
Director of Government Affairs

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The Illinois General Assembly adjourned in the early morning hours of June 1st after passing Medicaid reform and the FY 2013 state budget but failing to come to agreement on pension reforms. The Governor and legislative leaders are expected to call legislators into a special session in the coming weeks to deal with the pension crisis.

The Medicaid reforms passed by the legislature were significant. The reforms reduced the State's Medicaid liability by \$1.4 billion, cut spending significantly and included a \$1 per pack cigarette tax increase.

The \$33.7 billion FY 2013 budget, which cuts discretionary spending by \$700 million, was approved despite House Republican opposition stemming from pension reform disagreements.

Pension reforms were hotly debated in the final few days of the session. Anyone who doubts the state of Illinois and its pension system are in crisis need only to reflect that the pension system is less than half-funded with a funding gap of approximately \$83 billion, and that of the \$7 billion generated from the January 2011 tax increase, \$5.7 has gone to cover government-employee benefits.

Other legislative highlights this year include elimination of the much-criticized Legislative Scholarship program, changes to the procurement code and an expansion of on-line Lottery offerings. Lawmakers passed a major expansion of gambling in Illinois but Governor Quinn has threatened to veto similar legislation in the past.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

HHS RULE – CCI continues to lead opposition to President Obama's decision not to change the Final Interim Rules issued by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). These rules require private health insurance plans cover contraceptives, abortifacients and surgical sterilizations and contain an incredibly narrow definition of religious employer for purposes of exemption. The rule went into effect in the spring without revision, and although an accommodation for religiously sponsored employees has been promised, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has determined the accommodation cannot be sufficient. We are supportive of the nationwide lawsuits, filed on behalf of Catholic institutions, against the HHS rule. Our dioceses of Springfield and Joliet, as well as their Catholic Charities agencies, were among those filing suit.

We have crafted and submitted a letter protesting the HHS rule and asking support for **H.R. 1179 & S. 1467** (The Respect for Rights of Conscience Act) to the entire Illinois congressional delegation and communicated with staff from many of their offices, sent a "letter to the editor" to Illinois' newspapers and crafted a resolution for the Illinois General Assembly, which eventually evolved into Senate Joint Resolution 60, introduced by Senator Bill Brady (R- Bloomington), that urges Congress to override the HHS rule.

We also distributed an action alert and the USCCB bulletin insert on this issue to diocesan networks and encouraged grassroots activity based upon the Church's position. CCI staff also participated in several conference calls coordinated by USCCB, and we continue to follow the national conference's lead in expressing and coordinating opposition.

This week CCI will be coordinating with diocesan senior staff and communications departments to ensure coordinated activity during the “Fortnight for Freedom.” CCI’s primary efforts are to work with the Illinois Catholic Health Association on a public relations campaign promoting Illinois Catholic institutions and rolling out our new web-based Illinois Catholic Advocacy Network (I-CAN) with letters and sign-up cards in the Illinois parishes.

STATE LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

House Bill 4085 (Ultrasound Opportunity Act – Lyons-D) – CCI drafted this legislation and asked Representative Joe Lyons to introduce it. We eventually signed on 33 co-sponsors. The bill is the primary focus of the department’s state efforts in 2012 and simply requires a medical professional in any facility performing abortions to offer any patient, whose pregnancy is 7 weeks or older, an opportunity to view an ultrasound of her unborn baby before the procedure is performed.

CCI recruited the assistance of several Crisis Pregnancy Centers and other organizations serving women in unplanned pregnancies to support this bill. After the Executive Director of *The Women’s Center of Greater Chicagoland* testified in support, the bill passed 11-2 out of the House Agriculture Committee on February 21, 2012.

On March 29th, facing a March 30th deadline, Representative Lyons called the bill on 2nd reading so that votes could be taken on 5 hostile amendments. His and our good work led to the defeat of each hostile amendment by an average of about 30 votes. The bill was then advanced to 3rd reading for a final vote. Our internal roll call showed about 63 state representatives ready to vote for the bill. Unfortunately, on Thursday and again on Friday five of those people were absent from the legislature. Our sponsor would not call the bill knowing we were short the 60 required votes on those days. The bill failed to pass by the March 30 deadline and was returned to the Rules Committee.

Life Advocacy Days – On February 29th, CCI began implementation of the *Life Advocacy Days* campaign, designed by our Catholics for Life department, to bolster legislative support for House Bill 4085. The Dioceses of Rockford and Joliet sent contingents to Springfield, totaling about 85 people, to lobby lawmakers on that day. On March 8th, the Archdiocese of Chicago linked their efforts with an existing pro-life lobby day known as Speak-Out Illinois, and the Dioceses of Belleville and Springfield brought 15-20 people to Springfield for their lobby day on March 28th. We believe this coordinated plan, supported by prayer, greatly assisted our efforts in advancing this legislation.

House Bill 5346 (TANF Limits; Mitchell-R) – This legislation sought to amend the Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF) article of the Illinois Public Aid Code by stipulating that families receiving aid under the program shall not receive any increase on account of the birth of a child if the birth of the child would increase the number of children receiving aid within the family to 4 or more. The legislation was assigned to the House Human Services Committee where CCI opposed, and the bill was never called for a vote.

House Bill 5622 (Assisted Reproduction-Egg Donation; Feigenholtz-D) – This legislation sought to regulate rights of parentage in cases of assisted reproduction, such as intrauterine insemination, donation of eggs, donation of embryos; and in-vitro fertilization and transfer of embryos. It specifically set out provisions for “egg donation” contracts stipulating rights or parentage and

allowing for compensation for egg donation. The legislation also contains troubling definitions of “child” and “pre-embryos.” For these reasons, CCI opposed the bill. The bill was assigned to the House Judiciary I Committee but never called for a vote.

House Bill 4141 (Insurance Exchange; Mautino-D) – This legislation was to be amended to set up the state health insurance exchange as required by the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). CCI was prepared to oppose this legislation if it did not ban the provision of taxpayer-supported health insurance plans covering abortion. However, the legislation has many opponents and never moved forward. It is possible Governor Quinn could soon issue an Executive Order establishing the health insurance exchange. CCI will continue to monitor developments in this area.

House Bill 3027 (Comprehensive Sex Education; Lily-D) – This legislation seeks to require any public school district offering sex education to implement a curriculum of comprehensive sex education. The bill allows for the teaching of abstinence, but effectively prohibits abstinence-only education in public schools. The original bill deleted references to marriage in the context of abstinence and demanded the teaching of certain provisions of the Human Rights Act; however, in response to a failed vote fueled by our and other’s opposition, these provisions were removed via amendment. The bill does not apply to Catholic school practice. CCI opposed and provided testimony against the bill in the Senate Public Health Committee and House Human Services Committee. House Bill 3027 passed the Senate with a bare majority, but remains stuck on the Order of Concurrence in the House. The bill could be called for a vote in the Veto session as the roll call is very tight.