



ICAN Update

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

After a slow start to the Indiana General Assembly, this week saw a flurry of legislative activity including actions on many of the bills the Indiana Catholic Conference has watched since the session began. For insights on the most time-sensitive bills in this list, check out our latest podcast episode at indianacc.org/icanpodcast

Listed below are the bills the ICC is monitoring most closely. The list is not exhaustive yet highlights the issues of greatest priority and relevance within the legislative process.

Note: If a bill does not have a status, it has not yet been scheduled for a committee hearing.

SB233 TANF Eligibility (Sen. Ford, Terre Haute) Provides an update to Indiana law concerning the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which is funded by a block grant from the federal government. This bipartisan bill would expand the eligibility requirements, as Indiana has one of the lowest eligibility thresholds in the country (17 percent of poverty). In addition, it would raise the cash assistance amount from \$288 for a family of three, an amount set in 1988. The Church's concern for the wellbeing of the poor and emphasis on solidarity provides firm ground for supporting this expansion.

ICC supports this bill.

Status:

Passed out of committee.
Pending second reading in the Senate.

SB357 Cemeteries (Sen. Mishler, Bremen) Provides that a lot owner has the right to conduct maintenance on the cemetery lot (as the law currently stands, the cemetery has exclusive rights to maintenance, including the preparation and closing of a burial site). Catholic cemeteries around the state have raised concerns about the implications of this legislation. Just to name a few, it would complicate the multi-stage process of opening and closing burial sites, complicate the careful processes of larger cemeteries hosting multiple funerals in a day, introduce the risk of poorly trained contractors doing improper maintenance, among other issues. Burying the dead is one of the corporal works of mercy, and this bill would severely harm the ability of our Catholic cemeteries to do this important and merciful work.

ICC opposes this bill.

Status:

Awaiting second hearing in Senate Local Government.

SB389 Repeals State Regulated Wetlands Law (Sen. Garten, Henryville) SB389, if passed, would repeal all of Indiana's protections for state regulated wetlands. A small group of legislators have raised this issue due to past and ongoing regulatory conflicts between the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) and some individual farmers and other landowners. Wetlands are a deeply important ecological resource which protect our communities from flooding, provide water filtration benefits, and are necessary home for countless species. Some 80-90 percent of Indiana's existing wetlands fall under the state's jurisdiction and the remaining wetlands under federal jurisdiction would remain unaffected. The unprotected "isolated" wetlands would become subject to development without any permit process should SB389 pass. The Church's rich tradition of environmental stewardship and care for Creation supports the opposition to this bill. The Indiana Catholic Conference believes that the protection of all of our state's wetlands should not become the casualty of a regulatory battle between landowners and a government agency.

ICC opposes this bill.

Status:

Passed out of committee.

Pending third reading and vote in the Senate.

SB263 Religious Activities as Essential Services (Sen. Koch, Bedford) Prohibits the state from imposing restrictions on a religious organization that are more restrictive than the restrictions imposed upon other businesses and organizations that provide essential services to the public. Permits the state to require a religious organization to comply with a neutral and generally applicable health, safety, or occupancy requirement to the same extent as other organizations, if the requirement is otherwise allowable under Indiana's religious freedom law.

ICC supports this bill.

Status:

Awaiting a second hearing in Senate Judiciary.

HB1005 Various Schools Matters (Rep. Behning, Indianapolis) Expands the school choice program eligibility from 150 percent to 300 percent of Free or Reduced-Price School Meals (FRL). The bill also expands the number of "pathways" for school choice and creates state facilitated Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs). Increasing opportunities for school choice has long been a priority for the ICC. With expanded choice, more parents will have options for choosing the best educational setting for their children.

ICC supports this bill.

Status:

Bill scheduled for hearing.

HB1237 and SB204 Health Care Advance Directives (Rep. Young, Franklin and Sen. Rogers, Granger, respectively) Clarifies the laws regarding health care advance directives, making it easier for individuals to understand the requirements for laying out their preferences for medical care if unresponsive. The ICC collaborated with interested parties on a similar bill last session. In addition, nothing within the advance directives legislation conflicts with the Church's robust teachings on medical ethics and end of life care.

ICC supports these bills.

Status:

SB204 is scheduled for a second committee hearing and vote.

HB1358 and SB246 Pregnancy Accommodations (Rep. Negele, Attica and Sen. Alting, Lafayette, respectively) Requires and employers to provide reasonable employment accommodations for a pregnant employee. The House and Senate bills mirror each other. Supporting women in the workplace leads to healthier pregnancies and less stress on expectant mothers. The Church's social tradition speaks strongly to the rights of workers, particularly in the social encyclicals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In addition, St. John Paul II writes directly about supporting women and their unique traits in the workplace in *Laborem Exercens*.

ICC supports these bills.

HB1439 Coerced Abortions, Protection Of A Fetus, And Wrongful Death Or Injury Of A Child (Rep. King, Indianapolis) Requires that a woman seeking an abortion must be informed that a coerced abortion is illegal and increases penalties for intentionally coercing an expectant mother into having an abortion. The Church defends the sanctity of life through all stages.

ICC supports this bill.