



ICAN Update

Indiana | Catholic | Action | Network

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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.

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. Bills are ordered by bill number.

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

SEA148 Zoning and Housing Matters (Sen. Doriot, New Paris) During the 2020 legislative session, the Indiana Catholic Conference opposed the passage of SB 148, as it was rushed through the hearing process with little opportunity for input. Most importantly, the bill negatively impacted retaliation protections for renters. Unfortunately, the bill passed quickly and the negative language remained intact. The bill, however, stopped at the Governor's desk. Governor Holcomb vetoed one bill during the 2020 session: SEA 148, stating that “the language in the bill is overly broad...preventing almost any type of local control over landlord-tenant relationships.” The Indiana Catholic Conference believes that an override would open avenues of harm for vulnerable renters in our communities, many of whom are served by Catholic social service organizations such as Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

ICC opposes the veto override.

Status:

The Senate voted to override the veto, 30-17
The House voted to override the veto, 67-32
SEA148 is now law.

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 6-2

Passed Senate floor 43-5

SB252 Death Penalty (Sen. Boots, Crawfordsville) This bill assigns the topics of the death sentence and life without parole to a study committee. The ICC supports looking more deeply into the moral and financial costs of the death penalty in Indiana, and ultimately hopes for its abolition.

ICC supports this bill.

Status:

Passed out of committee 8-0

Passed Senate floor 46-1

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:

Passed out of committee 8-2

Passed Senate floor 40-7

SB357 Cemeteries (Sen. Mishler, Bremen) Among other provisions, this bill limits the fee charged by a cemetery owner for opening and closing a burial lot of a family member that is one of at least two burial lots purchased in the same transaction. Catholic cemeteries around the state have raised concerns about the implications of this legislation. It would complicate the multi-stage process of opening and closing burial sites, and restrict the cemetery to unnecessary price limits for opening and closing fees. Burying the dead is one of the corporal works of mercy, and this bill would harm the ability of our Catholic cemeteries to do this important and merciful work.

ICC opposes this bill.

Status:

Passed out of committee 7-0

Passed Senate floor 48-1

SB373 Carbon Credit Programs (Sen. Glick, Lagrange) This bipartisan bill allows private investors to purchase carbon credits to incentivize carbon sequestering land use practices. In other words, this bill provides incentives for landowners and farmers who voluntarily take on climate-friendly practices. The Church's Magisterium supports responsible care for God's Creation. However, in *Laudato Si* #171, the Holy Father warns against the use of carbon credits to justify excessive consumption. Due to the Holy Father's analysis, the ICC cautiously supports SB373 while maintaining a commitment to pursuing responsible environmental policy.

ICC cautiously supports this bill.

Status:

Passed out of committee 8-0

Passed Senate floor 33-16

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 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 8-3

Passed Senate floor 29-19

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. The Church teaches that parents are the first and primary educators of their children.

ICC supports this bill.

Status:

Passed out of committee 8-4
Passed House Ways and Means 16-8
Passed House Floor 61-38

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 passed out of committee 8-0
SB204 passed Senate Floor 46-0

HB1309 Pregnancy Accommodation (Rep. Karen Engleman, Georgetown) Allows an employee to request an accommodation for the employee's pregnancy without retaliation. This bill, however, does not require an employer to make any reasonable accommodation. This bill, while well intended, falls short of the important provisions in other legislation (such as HB1358 and SB246). Because this bill is very weak, the ICC is opposing while hoping for more robust legislation in this area.

ICC opposes this bill.

Status:

Passed out of committee 12-1
Passed House Floor 95-2

HB1577 Telemedicine and Abortion Related Services (Rep. Mayfield, Martinsville) This bill requires ultrasound images to be provided to pregnant women seeking an abortion, requires information about abortion reversal to be supplied to women undergoing chemical abortion, and prohibits the use of telemedicine for prescribing and dispensing abortion-inducing drugs after nine weeks post-fertilization. The Church believes in the dignity of unborn life and supports efforts to limit the use of abortion in Indiana.

ICC supports this bill.

Status:

Passed out of committee 9-3
Passed Senate floor 67-29

DEAD BILLS as of 2-23-21:

SB319 Driving Cards (Sen. Niezgodski, South Bend) Allows undocumented Hoosiers to register for Driving Privilege Cards (DPCS). Also requires proof of insurance for DPC holders. Similar laws have passed in other states with bipartisan support. There are compelling moral justifications for this legislation, as transportation is necessary for accomplishing many tasks which contribute to human flourishing. These tasks include purchasing groceries, healthcare, accessing social services, attending school, and many others. In addition, the well-researched fiscal and safety benefits are numerous.

ICC supports this bill.

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.