

LEGISLATIVE HOT LINE



1-800-869-6525 Ext 6690

Sponsored by the Five Catholic Commissions and Catholic Campaign for Human Development of the Secretariat for Catholic Charities Health and Human Services

June 16, 2009

“As Catholics we must come together with a common conviction that we can no longer tolerate the moral scandal of poverty in our land and so much hunger and deprivation in our world. “

A Place at the Table USCCB 2002

STATE BUDGET HB 1

FUNDING FOR BASIC NEEDS AT RISK – URGE LEGISLATORS PRIORITIZE NEEDS OF POOR

BUDGET BILL NOW IN CONFERENCE COMMITTEE: Ohio’s budget has moved to the conference committee to resolve differences in the House and Senate versions. Currently the budget is projected to be \$3B short and difficult decisions need to be made before July 1, 2009.

We stand with the approx 2 million Ohioans who used pantries and hunger centers this past quarter, the 1.5 million Ohioans living in poverty (represents 13% of population); the 608,000 unemployed (double digit unemployment); and tens of thousands who have lost their jobs due to foreclosure. It is more important than ever that you contact your legislators - urge them to contact their colleagues in support of preserving funding for those programs that provide the most basic of needs – food, housing and health care.

ACTION: Contact members of the Conference Committee and leadership of the House and Senate NOW! Urge him/her to prioritize the needs of the poor and most vulnerable in the State Budget. Cutting safety net programs is not the answer to balancing the budget; rather they result in more families falling between the cracks, creating even more need and more strain on the budget.

- 1) **SUPPORT BASIC HUMAN NEEDS:** Maintain adequate funding for hunger, housing and protective services programs.
- 2) **SUPPORT FAIR, AFFORDABLE, AND ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE:** Maintain proposed plans that help hospitals and charitable nursing homes, and simplifies Medicaid eligibility.
IMPORTANT: Call or e-mail Conference Committee Members to encourage them to accept the Senate’s version of the budget regarding nursing home funding. This is especially important to our nursing home facilities, especially St Augustine Manor. **FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION AND TO SIGN ONTO SUPPORT LETTER LINK TO**
<http://www.staugustinemanor.org/medicaid.htm>
- 3) **SUPPORT ELDER CARE:** Maintain support for a Unified Budget for Long Term Care, the PASSPORT, Assisted Living and the National Senior Services Corp programs.
- 4) **SUPPORT FAIR TREATMENT OF CHARTERED NONPUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS AND TEACHERS:** Maintain funding to the Administrative Cost Reimbursement, Auxiliary Services, EdChoice and Cleveland Scholarship programs
- 5) **SUPPORT LIFE, ABSTINENCE EDUCATION AND CORD BLOOD RESEARCH:** Promote adult stem cell and blood cord funding, reapply for abstinence –based programs
- 6) **OPPOSE CASINO GAMBLING AND SLOT MACHINES.**

We must continue the pressure! Final budget will need to be approved by July 1, 2009. ACT NOW! For information on contacting your Senator or Representative link to: <http://www.legislature.state.oh.us> Urge him/her to contact their colleagues in Conference Committee and urge them to support the needs of the most vulnerable.

To contact Governor: <http://governor.ohio.gov/Assistance/ContacttheGovernor/tabid/150/Default.aspx>

To contact Conferees and Senate and House Leadership:

SENATE LEADERS AND CONFEREES	Phone Number	E-mail Address
The Honorable Bill Harris , President	614-466-8086	SD19@senate.state.oh.us
The Honorable Capri Cafaro , Minority Leader	614-466-7182	senatorcafaro@maild.sen.state.oh.us
The Honorable John Carey , H.B. 1 Conferee	614-466-8156	SD17@senate.state.oh.us
The Honorable Dale Miller , H.B. 1 Conferee	614-466-5123	SD23@maild.sen.state.oh.us
The Honorable Mark Wagoner , H.B. 1 Conferee	614-466-8060	SD02@senate.state.oh.us
HOUSE LEADERS AND CONFEREES	Phone Number	E-mail Address
The Honorable Armond Budish , Speaker of the House	614-466-5441	district08@ohr.state.oh.us
The Honorable William Batchelder , Minority Leader	614-466-8140	district69@ohr.state.oh.us
The Honorable Vernon Sykes , H.B. 1 Conferee	614-466-3100	district44@ohr.state.oh.us
The Honorable Ron Amstutz , H.B. Conferee	614-466-1474	district03@ohr.state.oh.us
The Honorable Jay Goyal H.B. Conferee	614-466-5802	district73@ohr.state.oh.us

MAKE "ISSUE 5 ENFORCEMENT ACT" A PRIORITY FOR PASSAGE

BACKGROUND: H.B. 209, the "Issue 5 Enforcement Act" would reinforce the mandate set forth by Ohioans regarding payday lending. It would require an interest rate cap of 28% for all loans of up to \$1,000 made for a term of 3 months or less, regardless of what license is used to grant the loan. This legislation would also eliminate "check cashing fees" that some payday lenders now charge borrowers to cash a check issued in the store of the payday lender. This legislation is critical for enforcing the mandate set forth by Ohioans in HB 545 and Issue 5, and further protects families from a cycle of debt.

Sponsor hearing on H.B. 209 is set to begin in the Financial Institutions, Real Estate, and Securities (FIRES) committee in the House. Pressure is needed to support passage of this bill before the summer recess.

ACTION: We cannot let the gains we have obtained for Ohio consumers be further eroded. **CONTACT YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE NOW!** And urge him/her to sign on as cop-sponsor of this important legislation. Urge their support of the "Issue 5 Enforcement Act" (H.B. 209)

In addition, call/ e mails to:

Members of the FIRES Committee urging them to take swift action to close lending loopholes. http://www.house.state.oh.us/index.php?option=com_displaycommittees&task=2&type=Regular&committeeId=110

Governor (614-466-3555) and Speaker of the House Armond Budish (614) 466-5441 - urge them to publicly support H.B. 209 and make closing payday lending loopholes a high priority

Write an editorial to your local newspaper stating that you are one of the 3.4 million Ohioans who voted for Issue 5 and you expect the Ohio General Assembly “to respect the wishes of the voters and to protect Ohio consumers from the predatory practices of the payday lending industry.”

LET ALL WORKERS EARN PAID SICK TIME

Please urge your Representative and Senator Voinovich (*Senator Brown is already co-sponsor*) to become co-sponsors of the Healthy Families Act (H.R. 2460/S.1152), which will allow workers to earn paid sick days. This legislation was introduced in the House and in the Senate in May. Additional co-sponsors are required to provide enough attention to bring the bills to the floor.

The Healthy Families Act will allow workers to earn up to seven paid sick days per year. These can be used for personal illness, care of an ill family member, birth of a child or adoption, recovery from stalking, sexual assault or domestic violence. Generally, higher paid workers already receive a paid sick leave benefit. However, lower-wage workers who can't afford to miss a day's pay rarely receive this. For example, nearly eighty percent of food service workers have no paid sick leave. This certainly does not contribute to the common good.

The legislation would not limit any existing benefits, and would broaden the scope for many.

“PREGNANT WOMEN SUPPORT ACT” INTRODUCED IN SENATE

On May 13, U.S. Senator Robert Casey (D-PA) introduced the "**Pregnant Women Support Act**" (S. 1032), legislation that would provide resources to pregnant women to reduce abortions, promote the health of the mother and baby, and support new parents. A similar measure (H.R. 2035) was introduced in the House of Representatives on April 22.

Some of the important provisions in the "Pregnant Women Support Act" include:

- Providing child care to low-income and student parents;
- Providing parenting education in maternity group homes and pregnancy centers;
- Improving adoption assistance;
- Ensuring that pregnant women are not denied health care by insurance companies and that coverage is continued for newborns;
- Codifying the regulation that extends coverage under the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to low-income pregnant women and unborn children;
- Increasing funding for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program; and
- Providing new mothers with free home visits by registered nurses.

Catholic Social Teaching: *“There are some statements that almost everyone can endorse. First, the fact that over a million abortions take place every year in this country is a tragedy, and we should at least take steps to reduce abortions,”* said Cardinal Rigali, chair of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. *“Second, no woman should ever have to undergo an abortion because she feels she has no other choice or because alternatives were unavailable or not made known to her. An abortion performed under such social and economic duress meets no one’s standard for ‘freedom of choice’,”* the Cardinal continued. *“In the meantime, pregnant women need our assistance now so that abortion is not promoted to them as their only choice... ”*

ACTION: This legislation was sent to the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. Call or e-mail Senator Brown, who is a member of the Committee, and urge his support for this important piece of legislation, the Pregnant Women Support Act (S 1032)

FORECLOSURE RELIEF FOR OHIO

BACKGROUND: Catholic Social Teaching insists that shelter is one of the basic rights of the human person. The lack of safe, affordable housing requires a renewed commitment to increase the supply of quality housing and to preserve, maintain, and improve existing housing through public/private partnerships, especially with religious groups and community organizations. The Catholic Church continues to oppose unjust housing discrimination and to support measures to meet the credit needs of low income and minority communities.

Foreclosures are a serious problem for owners and renters. In 2008, the state of Ohio ranked seventh in the nation in home foreclosures. There are several bills pending in Ohio addressing foreclosures:

HB 3:

- Requires more accountability from mortgage servicers,
- Declares a six month moratorium on foreclosures of owner occupied properties provided at least half the mortgage payment is made,
- Requires a \$750 foreclosure filing fee, which would be passed on to the servicer or lender
- Requires the Department of Commerce to provide more oversight, record keeping and reporting.

The House passed this bill on May 20, 2009. It is now pending in the Senate Finance Committee.

HB 9 and SB 13:

- These companion bills offer renter protections and notice regarding the foreclosure of the property from which they rent.
- Requires a 21 day written notice of pending foreclosure,
- Allows for month-to-month rental and the possibility of continued rental under new owners.

HB 9 passed the House on May 6, 2009. It is pending in the Senate Finance Committee.

SB 13 is pending in the Senate Civil Justice Committee. An amendment was added addressing compatibility with temporary federal law.

ACTION: *The Catholic Conference of Ohio supports the intent of foreclosure relief legislation, and encourages bi-partisan compromises that fairly help individuals, families and financial institutions impacted by foreclosures. Now is the time to consider contacting your Ohio State Senator to weigh in on these important housing issues.*

EVENTS AND RESOURCES

Resources on Health Care Reform can be found <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/health1.shtml> or www.catholic-action.org

Catholic Social Teaching: *“Reform of the nation’s health care system needs to be rooted in values that respect human dignity, protect human life, and meet the needs of the poor and uninsured, especially born and unborn children, pregnant women, immigrants, and other vulnerable populations.”*

Contact your Congressional representatives by FAX letter, e-mail, or phone.
Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at: **(202) 224-3121**; or call Members’ local offices.
Full contact info can be found on Members of Congress’s web sites at: www.senate.gov and www.house.gov

For contact information on your Ohio Legislators, go to:
<http://www.ohiocathconf.org/L/legisbydiocese.htm>
<http://www.legislature.state.oh.us>
.....or call: (800) 282-0253

Call the White House comment line at 202-456-1111 or send an e-mail to
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/CONTACT/>

Contact Governor Strickland by calling (614) 466-3555 or send e-mail to
<http://governor.ohio.gov/Assistance/ContacttheGovernor/tabid/150/Default.aspx>

For more information on the above, please call the Diocesan Social Action Office at 216-939-3851 or 888-620-5280. You can also visit our web page at www.catholic-action.org for more information. Thank you.