



The Florida Catholic Conference is the nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Bishops of Florida.

2008 LEGISLATIVE SESSION: WEEK 5 SUMMARY

March 31-April 4, 2008

UPDATED LEGISLATIVE REPORT

With four weeks left to the session, Conference staff has identified from its list of closely followed bills those that are expected to continue to move through the legislative process. Our legislative report has been updated to reflect this, so that our advocacy members are able to focus on active, proposed legislation. This report will continue to be undated on a daily basis.

> **Legislative Report**

LIFE AND DEATH

Ultrasound Prior to Abortion/Parental Notice - CS/HB 257 (Traviesa)

Unborn Victims of Violence - HB 513 (Poppell)

Infant Abandonment - SB 7007 (Healthcare Council)

On Wednesday, April 2, all three bills passed the House, thanks in part to a quick response to our action alert by members of our FCC Advocacy Network. For details, a vote record and descriptions of these bills, please see our [Alert Update](#). Next stop is the Florida Senate.

SOCIAL CONCERNS

Jack Davis Florida Restaurant Lending a Helping Hand Act

SB 276 (Rich) received final passage in the House Wednesday ([116-0](#)) and is expected to be signed into law by Governor Crist. This bill allows licensed restaurants and public food service establishments to donate foods to homeless service providers and protects them from criminal or civil liability except in cases of negligence or misconduct. Attention to this cause to "feed the hungry" was raised by Jack Davis, a middle-school student from South Florida. Companion, **HB 99** was laid on the table by the House and **SB 276** was taken up in its place.

Relief for Wrongful Imprisonment

With the final passage of **HB 7037 (Policy & Budget Council)** by the Senate ([33-5](#)), Alan Jerome Crotzer, after serving more than 24 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, was awarded compensation of \$1.25 million dollars for the purchase of an annuity. DNA evidence has excluded him as the person who committed the crimes for which he received a 130 year prison sentence. No part of the funds can be used to pay attorney's fees or any expenses incurred to lobby for this compensation. Additionally, Mr. Crotzer has tuition and fees waived for up to a total of 120 hours of higher education at any state school if he meets the admission requirements and maintains satisfactory academic progress. Companion, **SB 12 (Aronberg)** was laid on the table by the Senate and **HB 7037** was taken up in its place.

HEALTH

Certificate of Need

The Conference has been concerned about deregulation of the process through which new health services are established in Florida. **SB 2326 (Peadar, Jr.)**, which passed through its first Senate committee this week, now incorporates provisions that streamline the process and retains important provisions that preserve the integrity of the program. There is currently no house companion bill. For the Conference's position paper on Hospital Certificate of Need, click [here](#).

HEALTH BUDGET

Services for Medicaid beneficiaries are reduced in the budgets proposed by both House and Senate as are payments to providers for remaining services. Decreased reimbursement is of serious concern beyond the Medicaid population because they further destabilize the delivery system that serves the entire community. Because state funds are matched by the federal government, all state budget cuts impact providers even more so, because the federal match funds are also forfeited. The Conference is communicating concerns to legislative leadership and the governor's office on these and other areas below.

Hospital Services

Hospital services face combined cuts for providing services to Medicaid beneficiaries of approximately \$500M in both the House and Senate budgets. When considering reductions taken in Special Session 2-C, the total reductions exceed \$630M.

Nursing Home Services

Payments for nursing home services are reduced by \$163M in the Senate and \$278M in the House. The proposed cuts are unsustainable following years of incremental increases in mandated staffing levels. Temporary but appropriate staffing decreases should be implemented in light of insufficient funds to sustain them.

Kidcare Growth

Funds are appropriated to permit some program growth of 38,000 new slots in the Kidcare program in the coming year. The program provides subsidized health insurance for children in families earning up to 200% of the federal poverty level. Current enrollment is approximately 230,000. (The program receives a very generous federal match.)

EDUCATION

Florida Healthy Teens Act

SB 848 (Deutch) provides sex education standards that deviate from existing policies that make abstinence the expected standard for all school aged children. This bill received favorable passage by the Senate Pre-K-12 Education Committee ([4-3](#)) this week. Conference staff met with the bill sponsor, Senator Deutch, to convey opposition to the bill. For the Conference's position paper, click [here](#). House companion, HB 449 (Bendross-Mindingall), has not been heard in committee and is not likely to advance this session.

Corporate Income Tax Credit Scholarship Program

SB 1440 (Gaetz), which increases the amount of the scholarship from \$3750 to approximately \$4300, received favorable passage in the Senate Finance and Tax Committee ([3-2](#)) this week. An amendment was adopted that provides program eligibility for students in foster care. The bill is expected to be heard next in the Senate Education Pre-K-12 Appropriations Committee. Companion, **HB 653 (Traviesa)** is on the House calendar on second reading.