



WASHINGTON STATE CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

February 9, 2015

With less than two weeks left before the first major deadline in the 2015 Legislative Session, one can sense a greater urgency among legislators and their staff. Policy bills must be voted out of their originating committees by February 20th or they are considered "dead" --- although "resurrection" is always possible. The Senate Ways and Means Committee voted on the supplemental budget on Monday, February 9th. The entire Senate is expected to vote soon on the supplemental budget, providing funding for several pressing needs in the current fiscal year that ends June 30, 2015.

ACTION ALERT: This bulletin contains an important action alert. Please take action on the abortion mandate bill (see below).

Homeless Youth ([HB 1436/SB5404](#)) - Supported by WSCC, **HB 1436** would create an Office of Homeless Youth Programs (Office) to coordinate a spectrum of funding, policy, and practice efforts related to homeless youth. The new office would focus on four stated service priorities: (1) stable housing; (2) education and employment; (3) permanent connections; and (4) social and emotional well-being. By improving coordination among existing programs and services, **HB 1436** would prevent state systems from discharging youth and young adults into homelessness. The committee is scheduled to vote on the bill this week.

Substance Abuse Prevention ([HB 1642](#)) - Last week, the House Early Learning and Human Services Committee heard testimony on **HB 1642** that would create the Youth Substance Abuse Prevention and Education Grant Program. **HB 1642**, which WSCC supports, would provide funding for community-based and statewide substance education programs designed to reduce initiation of substance use by children and youth. In New Slavery, New Freedom [1990], the U.S. bishops recognized that substance abuse creates many casualties, the most tragic of which are the children. In Putting Children and Families First [1991], the bishops identified that unborn and other children are at risk from substance abuse. Among other initiatives, they called for expanded national efforts at education and prevention. The committee is scheduled to vote on the bill this week.

Farm Worker Training ([HB 1127](#)) - On Monday, February 9th, the House Labor Committee voted on **HB 1127** that would fund training for agricultural workers to improve their skills and safety. In addition to providing better housing, the WSCC supports efforts to enable farm workers to do their vital work more safely.

UPDATES (of legislation described in previous bulletins):

State Voting Rights Act ([HB 1745 / SB 5668](#)) - Two identical bills to create equal voting opportunities in certain political subdivisions are being considered by the Legislature. The House heard **HB 1745** last week and are continuing the hearing this week. The House State Government Committee is scheduled to vote on **HB 1745**, Thursday, February 12th. **SB 5668** is being heard by the Senate Government Operations and Security Committee on February 10th.

Human Trafficking ([HB 1139](#)) - Supported by WSCC, **HB 1139**, which would establish a working group to study the trafficking of youth, was passed by the Public Safety

Committee and is now in the Rules Committee.

Flame Retardants (**[HB 1174](#)**) - The House Environment Committee passed HB 1174 which WSCC supported in testimony. The bill would decrease children's exposure to toxic chemicals. **HB 1174** is now in the House Appropriations Committee where its fiscal impact will be considered.

Breakfast After the Bell (**[HB 1295 / SB 5437](#)**) - The House Education Committee passed **HB 1295**, it is now in the Appropriations Committee. **SB 5437**, was heard in the Senate Early Learning Committee, but no vote has been scheduled. WSCC supports improving access to meals in school settings.

URGENT ACTION ALERT: *Please take action on the following legislation before Friday, February 14th, as the House Health Care and Wellness Committee has scheduled a vote for that afternoon.*

Abortion Insurance Mandate (**[HB 1647](#)**): Religious Liberty at Risk! The House Health Care and Wellness Committee will conduct a hearing on Tuesday, February 10th regarding legislation to require all private health insurers in Washington State to cover abortion services, if they offer maternity care. Bishop Eusebio Elizondo testified on behalf of the Washington State Catholic Conference strongly opposing **HB 1647** stating, "Deeply rooted in our Catholic faith is the belief that life is sacred from the moment of conception until natural death. We cannot equivocate about that belief." He also pointed out that, "...this legislation discriminates unjustly against churches, religious organizations and people who for religious reasons oppose abortion," and do not want to offer or pay for abortions in their health care plans.

TAKE ACTION: Click [here](#) to contact your state Representatives and urge them to uphold the rights of conscience and eliminate risking the loss of federal funding by voting NO on **HB 1647**.

There are only a few weeks left to register for Catholic Advocacy Day on Thursday, March 26. Please register by March 5th - click [here](#) to register.

Click [here](#) to view previous WSCC advocacy bulletins. Click [here](#) to view this bulletin on the WSCC website.

The Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) is the public policy voice of the Catholic Bishops of Washington State.

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