

★ Legislative Report Support aimed at poor, downtrodden, children

By Dr. William Rainford
Legislative Liaison

EDITOR'S NOTE

Rainford, a professor of government policy and research in the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs, Boise State University, is the legislative liaison for the Diocese of Boise and Catholic Charities of Idaho.



Oppose Medicaid Co-Pay! A bill is being proposed to require Medicaid co-payments in response to continuing increase of costs to run the program. The cost of Idaho's support of Medicaid is projected to be \$292 million dollars. While the costs are alarming, the solution does not rest on the backs of the poor. Requiring a co-pay of families who are already greatly over-taxed and financially fragile will not resolve the problem. The assertion that low-income families misuse medical care and need to be controlled through co-payments is beyond absurd. It is a violation of a fundamental human right that is held in high regard by the Roman Catholic Church—access to basic medical care. Dr. Rainford continues to work closely with other advocacy organizations on the Insure Idaho Task Force to both oppose restrictions/reductions in Medicaid, as well as to reform medical insurance in Idaho so that working families can insure medical care.

Celebrate! Death Penalty Dealt a Blow! U.S. Supreme Court decided to abolish the death penalty for children under age 18. Children are not fully cognitively developed, rendering them susceptible to impulsivity and recklessness born of hyper-aggression not found in normal adults. Under the "cruel and unusual" clause of the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights, the death penalty cannot be applied. Some 70 children were transferred from Death Row immediately after the ruling! The Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise will be working with the ACLU, the Interfaith Alliance, and Rep. Anne Pasley-Stuart to draft legislative proposals regarding the State of Idaho's misuse of the death penalty next year.

Support Human Trafficking Task Force! HCR18 would direct the legislative council to appoint an interim committee to study human trafficking in Idaho and to make recommendations to the legislature in 2006. Following passage of the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and the 2004 national conference on trafficking, the U.S. Department of Justice asked states to develop anti-trafficking legislation in order to partner with the federal government to protect victims, prosecute perpetrators and prevent

trafficking. Dr. Rainford worked with Rep. Anne Pasley Stuart and several advocacy groups to draft the proposal. It has not yet been scheduled for a hearing.

Support Mental Health Parity! HB286 proposes to create a pilot program to allow the state to establish the real costs and benefits of including mental health coverage in group health insurance coverage. This legislation sets forth findings of the legislature concerning the costs, both societal and economic, of leaving mental health disorders untreated. It creates prohibitions against excluding mental disorders from state health insurance and requires the Department of Administration to produce and submit a report to the legislature by January 31, 2009 detailing the actual costs of these benefits and allowing the legislature to evaluate the effectiveness of this legislation in stabilizing healthcare costs and reducing repetitive visits for physical ailments that may be associated with untreated mental illness. The bill passed out of committee in the House and is scheduled to be voted on by the House soon.

Support Drug Treatment for Pregnant Women! Dr. Rainford continues to work closely with Sen. Denton Darrington and others to produce a proposal that would create drug treatment options for pregnant women. As was reported earlier, few treatment options exist now in Idaho. It is likely that a proposal will not be introduced until next year.

Support AARP Prescription Plan for Low-income Idahoans! A new bill will be printed this week that incorporates an agreement between AARP, the pharmaceutical industry, and state pharmacists for a prescription plan that allows individuals below 300 percent of the poverty line to purchase a card providing them with access to low-cost drugs.

Contact your legislator today and tell her or him how you feel! Call (208) 332-1000 or (800) 626-0471. You may also send email to infocntr@lso.state.id.us.

A Social Action Network is sponsored by Catholic Charities of Idaho. Over 200 Network members receive alerts when important bills come up and then contact their own representatives. To join the network, on the Internet go to www.catholicidaho.org/cci/.

Support Drug Treatment for Pregnant Women!

LETTERS

The *Idaho Catholic Register* welcomes letters. Letters should be brief (250 words or less) and in good taste. The writer should include name, address and phone number. The editor reserves the right to edit.

Send letters to "Readers Write," *Idaho Catholic Register*, 303 Federal Way, Boise, ID 83705, or FAX to (208) 342-0224 in care of Editor Colette Cowman or email to ccowman@rcdb.org.

Legislation news

Editor, The *ICR*:

It seems the legislative diocesan reporters are more interested in entitlements and activism than news important to Catholics. So far, all we have heard about is how the legislature is cutting Medicaid benefits. Perhaps our reporters should take just five minutes to research that the more you give health care away, the more expensive it becomes as natural market forces of price controls are removed.

Worse, this isn't even a correct summary of what is going on because the legislature is simply setting priorities to keep the system from going

bankrupt. Ignored is the generosity that we even provide health services for people that are not here legally. We also cannot give more priority to drug addicted moms than mothers that are healthy.

Should we give smokers priority for lung transplants? Social justice does not equate to entitlements, and we should give priority to those that take better care of themselves.

Where is the moral ground when you have free health care, but won't raise a finger to protect marriage or the unborn? Even "Faithful Citizenship" by the USCCB with all of its flaws, states that protection of life and marriage are more important than health care entitlements. It's sad that as a Catholic I have to belong to Christian fellowship organizations to find out about legislation affecting Christians.

**Keith Hoene
Boise**