

Session in full swing; some successes reported

By Annie Henna

The 2009 legislative session is in full swing, and advocates from Catholic Charities of Idaho have been working on behalf of marginalized and low-income families, with some success along the way. A short list of issues follows:

– **The Gas Tax.** Significant concerns were raised when Gov. Butch Otter first revealed his plans to fund transportation projects around the state by raising gas taxes. While we understand the importance of transportation projects and support them, raising gas taxes in any amount would disproportionately impact low-income families. This was especially true in light of the economic climate. After watching hearings closely and speaking with individual representatives, a CCI advocate testified before the House Transportation Committee. Many lobbyists from the construction and trucking industry spoke in support of the raised tax. Catholic Charities was lauded later by many of the committee members for standing up for economically vulnerable families.

The House Transportation Committee told the governor that they could not support the bill in its current form. A new bill would phase in the gas tax, raising it to seven cents after three years, instead of 10 cents after five years. The bill passed out of committee to the House for a vote. CCI advocates continued to urge legislators to vote against it. The bill failed in the House, 43-27.

– **Foodbank Check-off.** A bill proposed by Rep. Donna H. Boe (D-Pocatello) would add a donation check box to the state income tax form. The goal was to make donating to the Idaho Foodbank more convenient and to boost

donations. CCI provided testimony for House and Senate Revenue and Taxation committees. Members supported it and sent it to their respective chambers. The bill

proposed by Sen. Tim Corder (R-Mountain Home). CCI has been involved in this legislative effort for several years and strongly supports the legislation. During a Senate

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was approved unanimously in the House and was passed with little opposition in the Senate.

– **Daycare Licensure.** A bill strengthening daycare licensing requirements to make daycares safer by requiring background checks, fire safety standards (working smoke detectors and extinguishers), a working phone on the premises and no alcohol or substance use during operating hours was

Health and Welfare Committee hearing, a CCI representative testified in favor of the bill, which subsequently won committee approval and passed in the Senate. The bill is now in the House, where CCI will continue to work to pass the measure.

The legislative session is not expected to end until mid-April. There is still much work to do. Please continue to pray for these efforts. For more information, call 350-7486.