

# This week's items: Food stamp asset waiver, immigration bills

By Will Rainford and Christine Tiddens

During the last several weeks at the Statehouse, the legislative advocacy team for Catholic Charities of Idaho and the Diocese of Boise has been busy working on several issues. Top priorities include the food stamp asset test waiver, a homeless shelter tax exemption, a proposal to permit unshackling pregnant female inmates during labor and delivery and a new immigration bill that will tear apart families.

The team has been working with the Idaho Interfaith Roundtable to support a temporary rule change that would eliminate the food stamp asset test, and efforts have been successful thus far. To date, the rule has passed the House and Senate Health and Welfare committees and now goes to the floor of both chambers, where it is expected to pass.

A proposal by Rep. Janice K. McGeachin (R-Idaho Falls) would limit the use of restraints (cuffs around the ankles, arms and belly) on incarcerated mothers during transport, labor, delivery and post-delivery in state prisons and jails and at all immigration holding facilities. Women represent the fastest growing

segment of the incarcerated, and thousands are shackled each year. Shackling during labor and birth can be emotionally traumatic, demeaning and embarrassing. It can negatively affect the mother-baby bond and pose a risk to the health of both. It is also an affront to the unborn

child, who spiritually enters the world under the shackles of her mother. The proposal has not yet been printed as a bill.

The team is also supporting HB 435, sponsored by Rep. Branden J. Durst (D-Boise), which would make sales, purchases and donations to homeless shelters in Idaho tax exempt for the next two years. Idaho has one of the highest populations of homeless per capita. Facing greater demands amid dwindling financial support, many shelters are being forced to turn away larger numbers of homeless. This bill would help alleviate some of the shelters' burdens. CCI, the diocese and several Treasure Valley parishes support Interfaith Sanctuary Housing Services Inc., and its Boise shelter, which serves 150

homeless men, women and families each night. The bill will be considered in the House Tax and Revenue Committee soon.

Finally, several bills target employment of undocumented immigrants. All are unnecessary because federal laws already target the em-

to pass the identification for employment purposes could be charged with a felony, punishable up to 14 years in prison and \$250,000 fine.

Immigrants stranded economically and socially in Idaho without proper documentation face an impossible choice. Either they must, under this proposal, act feloniously in obtaining employment, or they must let their children go unclothed, unfed, unsheltered and uneducated. The law would tear immigrant families apart. Particularly distressing is the negative impact of such actions on innocent children. Nearly two thirds of all undocumented families have children who are U.S. citizens by birth, including children left behind after immigration enforcement actions. When parents and other family members are suddenly taken away, children suffer extreme trauma and are separated from their means of sustenance and security.

One of the bills, SB 1303, sponsored by Sen. Mike Jorgenson (R-Hayden Lake), would make it a crime to aid or assist undocumented immigrants. This means that churches or CCI could be prosecuted for unknowingly assisting undocumented immigrants in obtaining

housing, food and shelter. Further, the bill will cause undocumented immigrants to seek work in neighboring states that do not have such criminal laws targeting employment. While working in other states, immigrants may opt to leave their families in Idaho, thereby rendering the family vulnerable.

The diocese and CCI support comprehensive immigration reform at the national level and justice for immigrants in Idaho.

Finally, the diocese is supporting SB 1270, which allows freedom of conscience for health care providers asked to perform services that might violate their consciences. On the national health care reform debate, this is an issue strongly supported by the U.S. bishops.

Sponsored by Sen. Russell Fulcher (R-Meridian), this legislation was printed and ready for a hearing in the Senate State Affairs Committee, but was temporarily pulled by the sponsors following criticism by the state trial lawyers and physicians and hospitals. A revised version is expected to be ready next week.

For more information on legislative priorities or to get involved, e-mail catholic. advocate@gmail.com.

## Legislative Update

ployment of undocumented immigrants. Immigration is a federal issue, not a state one. Further, in this economic crisis, with next year's state budget revenues estimated to be \$500 million below those of 2009, the state cannot afford the extra burden of enforcement of state employment laws that already takes place through federal law enforcement.

One bill, SB 1271, introduced by Sen. John McGee (R-Caldwell), would make it illegal to use fake identification to obtain employment. The bill makes it a misdemeanor to verify a person's false documents for employment purposes, or for an employer who knowingly hires someone using a false document. Either act could be punishable up to two years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. A person trying

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C.W. Moore Plaza  
 250 S. 5th Street, 2nd Floor  
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[pat@lawboiseid.com](mailto:pat@lawboiseid.com)

COMPLIMENTARY CONSULTATIONS

## Faith HISTORY - Quiz -

Test your knowledge of faith and church history with this feature. Match the correct words on the right with their meanings on the left. Answers are at the bottom.

- The covenant that divided human beings into many nations was made with him.
- He brought thousands who had embraced the Cathar heresy back to the church.
- This mother of the apostles James and John was also a relative of the Virgin Mary.
- Died giving birth to Benjamin.
- At the Transfiguration, Elijah symbolized this.
- The Christian family is the location of this.
- A conscious and free human act.
- This heresy started by a British monk implied that the acts of Incarnation and Redemption accounted for little and therefore was vigorously opposed by St. Augustine and the church.
- In him all nations were blessed.
- First school of Christian life.

A. Domestic church  
 B. Noah  
 C. The home  
 D. Salome  
 E. Rachel  
 F. Abraham  
 G. Believing  
 H. Pelagianism  
 I. St. Anthony of Padua  
 J. Prophets

1-B, 2-I, 3-D, 4-E, 5-J, 6-A, 7-G, 8-H, 9-F, 10-C

## SCRIPTURE SEARCH

Gospel for February 7, 2010  
 Luke 5:1-11

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C: the call of the fishermen. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

GENNESARET	FISHERMEN	WASHING
ASKED HIM	SPEAKING	SIMON
THE DEEP	A CATCH	MASTER
ALL NIGHT	NOTHING	HELP THEM
PETER	KNEES	SINFUL MAN
JAMES	JOHN	SONS
ZEBEDEE	BE AFRAID	FOLLOWED

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