



Missouri Catholic Conference

# Good News

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*Bringing the Light of Christ to Missouri.*

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*"A Society that wishes and intends to remain at the service of the human being at every level is a society that has the common good—the good of all people and of the whole person—as its primary goal. The human person cannot find fulfilment in himself, that is, apart from the fact that he exists 'with' others and 'for' others."*

—Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church pgh. 165

## 2014: A Banner Year for Pro-life Legislation

By: Tyler McClay

The 2014 legislative session ended up being a banner year for pro-lifers. The Missouri General Assembly passed and sent to the Governor a bill expanding the waiting period for having an abortion to 72 hours; a bill increasing the tax credits for pregnancy resource centers and maternity homes; and a bill increasing the funding available for the alternatives to abortion program in Missouri. They also passed a bill increasing access to healthcare for pregnant women living in poverty.

House Bill 1307, filed and co-sponsored by Representative Kevin Elmer (R-Nixa) and Rep. Keith Frederick (R-Rolla) in the House, and carried by Sen. David Sater (R-Cassville) in the Senate, will increase the current waiting period for an abortion from 24-hours to 72-hours if signed into law by Governor Nixon.

The Missouri House passed the bill in a bi-partisan fashion on a vote 111-39. The Senate passed the bill after threats of a filibuster by a vote of 22-9. See how your Representative and Senator voted, below.

Senator David Sater (R-Cassville), who filed a companion bill (SB 519) in the Senate, felt compelled to file this legislation to protect children in the womb, stating on the Senate floor that women need additional time to contemplate and fully grasp the implication of this decision after receiving the



state required information regarding the abortion procedure.

House Bill 1307 and SB 519 were priority bills for the Missouri Catholic Conference this session, and the MCC worked with legislators from both sides of the aisle to get this legislation passed. "By allowing a woman this reflection period to consider the gravity of this decision we can hopefully reduce the number of abortions seen in Missouri, saving lives of the innocent," Mike Hoey, Executive Director of the MCC, said.

Members of the MCC's Citizens Network continuously voiced their support for this legislation throughout this year's session. The MCC would like to thank all of the efforts made and remind you that this could not have happened without you! The legislation is now sitting on the governor's desk

## >>Pro-Life Continued

where it can be vetoed or signed into law; the last day for the governor to act on legislation is July 14, 2014.

The General Assembly this session also passed legislation increasing the amount of tax credits available for donations to pregnancy resource centers, and maternity homes by \$500,000 for each program for fiscal year 2015. These programs, in many cases operated by volunteers, provide material and spiritual support to women facing crisis pregnancies. Because these centers rely heavily on private donations, these tax credits provide an incentive for donors to be even more generous.

Funding for the Alternatives to Abortion (ATA) Program was increased during the 2014 legislative session as well. The legislature appropriated just over \$2 Million for the program, close to a \$500,000 increase from last year. Funding for public awareness of the program was increased as well to \$75,000, up from \$50,000.

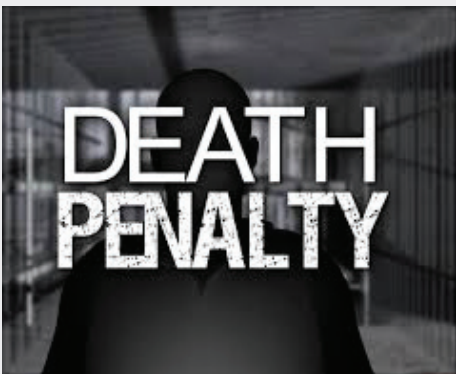
The ATA program is designed to help pregnant women carry their child to term instead of having an abortion. ATA also assists women in caring for their child or placing their child for adoption. ATA aims to reduce abortions and aid in improving pregnancy outcomes by assisting women in need with medical and non-medical services. For up to a year after the child is born, ATA will also assist with job training and placement. For more information on ATA please visit their Web site.

The General Assembly also passed SB 716, an ominous public health bill, which included the “Show-Me Healthy Babies” proposal. This program, which is to be administered by the Department of Social Services, offers a separate children's health insurance program for low-income unborn child. For an unborn child to be eligible, the mother must not be eligible for Medicaid or have access to affordable employer-subsidized health insurance that includes coverage for unborn children. The unborn child must be in a family with income eligibility of no more than 300% of the federal poverty level or the equivalent modified adjusted gross income unless the income eligibility is set lower by the General Assembly through appropriations.

Representative Jeff Grisamore (R-Lee's Summit), sponsored the “Show Me Healthy Babies” legislation, and Sam Lee of Campaign Life coordinated the efforts to pass the legislation with the assistance of the MCC and other pro-life organizations. The omnibus public health care bill, SB 716, also included provisions requiring the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services to transport collected, donated umbilical cord blood to Cardinal Glennon Hospital in St. Louis. The collection sites must be designated and trained by the blood bank in how to handle the umbilical cord blood specimens. For several years the MCC has supported this proposal as a way to assist the Cardinal Glennon cord blood bank. Umbilical cord blood can be used to provide ethical alternatives in medical treatment of various health conditions.

# General Assembly Fails to Improve Transparency of Death Penalty

By: Rita Linhardt



Despite several bills being introduced to improve the transparency of Missouri's death penalty system, none of the measures passed the General Assembly. The session began amid controversy relat-

ing to Missouri's execution protocols. Missouri had resumed executions in the fall of 2013 and it had been revealed in January that the state was obtaining its lethal drugs from a compounding pharmacy in Oklahoma that was neither licensed in Missouri nor had any oversight by the FDA. A House legislative committee convened a hearing to look into whether state law had been violated and whether Missouri officials were carrying out executions before all appeals

were exhausted. The committee took no further action after testimony from the Department of Corrections, defense attorneys and the Attorney General's office.

However several bills, including HB 1737, sponsored by Rep. Eric Burlison (R-Springfield); SB 787, sponsored by Sen. Jolie Justus (D-Kansas City) and SB 804, sponsored by Sen. Rob Schaaf (R-St. Joseph) were introduced. Each bill would have provided some mechanism for more public oversight of Missouri's execution procedures, primarily through the administrative rules process of the General Assembly.

Of the three bills, HB 1737, made it the furthest in the legislative process. The language of the bill was included in a bill that passed the House and the Senate Governmental Accountability Committee. Unfortunately the oversight language was removed in the last days of the session.

Even though the General Assembly failed to address the issue, the controversy remains. With \_\_\_\_\_ inmates now executed in the last \_\_\_\_\_ months, Missouri is continuing to face legal challenges because of the secrecy surrounding its executions procedures and the type of drugs being used.

# A Missed Opportunity on Medicaid Reform

By: Mike Hoey

State lawmakers missed an opportunity this session to reform Medicaid while providing health coverage to more of the working poor. This is the second year in a row that the Missouri General Assembly has turned down full federal funding for Medicaid reform and expansion.

During the session, the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) urged legislators to act on the Medicaid opportunity. In a letter to state legislators the MCC stated: "Properly structured, Medicaid reform will place as much responsibility on individuals as is reasonable, but recognize when people need assistance from others."

Passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) gives states the opportunity to expand Medicaid with full federal funding initially, dropping to a 90% federal match in 2020. Opponents expressed concerns that the federal government would back out of its financial commitment, leaving the state of Missouri with budget shortfalls that would lead to funding cuts in other state services.

In response to these concerns, Republican sponsored legislation championed by State Representative Noel Torpey (R-Independence) included a proviso that Missouri would cancel its participation in the Medicaid expansion if federal funding were reduced.

Torpey's legislation – HB 1901 - also included reforms such as requiring co-pays by recipients, offering incentives for the adoption of healthier habits like limiting tobacco use, and allowing recipients to establish health saving accounts to manage their health purchases. Similar legislation was put forward in the Missouri Senate by Senator Ryan Silvey (R-Kansas City).

The push to expand Medicaid had support from the Missouri Chamber of Commerce, which said expansion would bring \$2.2 billion in new federal money to Missouri every year and create more jobs and economic activity. A report issued in February by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) of the Missouri Department of Economic Development projected Medicaid expansion would create 23,868 jobs over an eight year period.

The MCC focused its message on the needs of the working poor. Missouri has one of the stingiest Medicaid programs in the country. Single low-income adults are not eligible and parents qualify only if their annual income is no more than



If Missouri expands its Medicaid program to 138% of the federal poverty level many more of the working poor will be able to get health coverage. A mother with one child would qualify for Medicaid with an income up to \$21,707 a year. Although some lower income workers may have health insurance through their employer, others do not and could obtain health coverage through the expansion. For example, single parents with the annual earnings showed below would qualify if Medicaid were expanded.

Occupation	Annual Salary
Home Health Worker	\$19,720
Maids	\$19,540
Cashiers	\$19,460

Missouri Department of Economic Development, Missouri Economic Research and Information Center *Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, 2012*

19% of the federal poverty level. A mother with two children can't obtain Medicaid health coverage if her income is just over \$3,612 a year.

As a result, many parents with low-income jobs as store clerks, maids or home health workers are uninsured. They may work two part-time jobs so their employer does not offer a health plan. It is true that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) offers premium subsidies to purchase a private health plan through the newly created insurance exchanges, but this option is not available for those with annual incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level, as ACA assumes, mistakenly, that those below the federal poverty line will be eligible for Medicaid. But states set the eligibility levels and so many of the working poor in Missouri fall in the "Medicaid gap."

So far 26 states have expanded Medicaid, many taking the opportunity to also reform their program. Indiana may be next. Its Republican governor, Mike Pence, wants to take the federal money and use it to both expand Medicaid and continue the reforms the state passed earlier, the Healthy Indiana Plan.

Will Missouri follow the Indiana example? No one knows for sure, but the Medicaid issue will certainly be revisited next year. At present, Missouri taxpayers are paying for the Medicaid expansion in other states while none of the ben-

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## General Assembly Lifts Ban on Food Stamps

After seven years of advocates pushing for a bill lifting a ban on ex-drug offenders getting food stamps, the General Assembly finally passed the measure in the last week of the session. No other offenders were banned from receiving food stamps and the MCC argued that the law singling out ex-drug offenders represented punitive action that undermined the rehabilitative efforts of offenders. SB 680 now awaits the governor's signature to become law.

Sponsored by Sen. Kiki Curls (D-Kansas City) the measure lifts the ban, but ex-offenders would need to wait one year after conviction or release from custody to get the food stamps. Also, it requires that the individual be in drug treatment, be on a waiting list or deemed not to need treatment. The individual would still need to meet the income eligibility requirements to receive food stamps.

In the end, SB 680, which also includes other changes in the food stamp program, easily passed the House by a final vote of 122-19 and the Senate by a final vote of 27-3. If the bill is signed by the governor, Missouri will join 42 other states in opting out of this harsh provision that was put in the 1996 federal Welfare Reform Act.

The saga of this bill is a story of perseverance. Numerous organizations, individuals, and legislators worked together over the years to correct a flaw in the law that was not well known. A special thanks to all the legislators who sponsored this legislation through the years; including Sen. Kiki Curls and Representative Paul Wieland (R-Imperial) who sponsored the Senate and House bills this year.

Through the years the MCC worked with other groups including Catholic Charities of St. Louis, the Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission and the Missouri Association for Social Welfare to raise awareness with legislators of the injustice of this food stamp ban that only discriminated against ex-drug offenders. A special thanks goes to Pat Dougherty, the Senior Director of Advocacy for St. Louis Catholic Charities.

The issue took on a human face when former drug users like Johnny Waller, whose son had cancer, and Christine McDonald, a young mother who became blind, told legislative committees of their efforts to rebuild their lives and become productive citizens. They said food stamp assistance would have helped them in their journey to recovery. The support of citizens, including MCC network members, who contacted their legislators at crucial times helped moved the issue forward. While the bill had moved some in pass legislative sessions, it was not until this year that all the pieces fell in place and the bill was finally approved by overwhelming majorities in both chambers.

This is well deserved victory! Thanks to all who supported this important cause.