



**CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE  
OF KENTUCKY**

*The Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops, established in 1968. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. There are 403,000 Catholics in the Commonwealth. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute CCK's Board of Directors.*

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## **Health Care & Support for Infants and Mothers Need Funding; Fair Taxation Necessary for the Common Good**

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**Kentucky has a moral obligation to provide the revenue necessary to meet important social needs. The budget, the way we raise and allocate our funds, is one of the most important bills passed every 2 years. Funding decisions reflect not only economic policies, but also moral values. We must resist the temptation to say “there is no money.” When Kentucky had budget surpluses, they were spent on tax cuts. If as a state, we have a will and perceive a compelling need, we must find the money.**

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### **Health Care for Poor Persons Is a Compelling Need**

*Kentucky must have the will to find the money to increase funding for Medicaid.* Medicaid provides health care for persons who are poor and vulnerable, especially pregnant women and their unborn children; persons who are mentally ill or mentally retarded; children and adults in low-income families; the frail elderly, the disabled, and immigrants, documented and undocumented.

For our Catholic community, health and the healing ministry are rooted in the biblical vision to heal persons who are sick, with special protection urge for people who are poor and needy. Adequate health care is a basic human right, necessary for the development and maintenance of life in accord with the dignity of human beings. A just society is one that protects and promotes the fundamental rights of its members – with special attention to meeting their basic needs, including the need for health care for people who are poor. Our Church seeks to embody our Savior's concern for the sick.

The Administration's budget proposes important new funding for Medicaid but the funding falls \$54.9 million short of what is needed. We urge fully funding the Medicaid program.

### **Encouraging Childbirth Is a Compelling Need**

*Kentucky should increase funding for the HANDS program.* The HANDS (Health Access

Nurturing Development Services) program provides women who have one or more risk factors help in having a positive pregnancy.

Currently, Kentucky's HANDS program serves first time mothers, 902 KAR 4:120, from their pregnancy until the child is two years old.

Mothers receive individualized home visits and assistance on issues they face with their pregnancy.

This program promotes positive pregnancy outcomes, healthy child development, safe homes and self sufficient families.

A February 5, 2008 article in the Courier-Journal reported the following:

[T]he program known as HANDS — Health Access Nurturing Development Services — is showing reduced rates of underweight and premature babies, infant deaths, birth defects and child abuse and neglect.

Parents who participate have higher rates of educational improvement and employment and show improved parenting skills and family communication, and a better understanding of child development, according to a recent evaluation conducted for the Cabinet for Health and Family Services by REACH of Louisville, a private human - service and government consulting group.

With increased funding in 2008, HANDS can assist more of Kentucky's pregnant women to bear healthy children and provide for their well-being after birth.

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## Support HB 137 & HB 443 — Addressing Addictions; Helping to Heal

Catholic parishes and other Catholic groups hold 30 percent of the charitable gaming licenses in the State. Some of those who gamble at our games are problem or pathological gamblers.

We have a moral obligation to help those who need treatment and to pay our fair share to do so. **House Bill 137** will provide awareness, prevention and treatment for problem and pathological gamblers.

This bill requires no money from the General Fund, but does require that each entity that engages in the provision of gambling opportunities pays for the services needed by those who become problem gamblers.

Keeneland and Churchill Downs endorses this legislation, as does the Kentucky Lottery.

Urge your state representative to co-sponsor and support **HB 137**. Ask your Senator to support it when it arrives in the Senate chamber.

Its sponsors are: J. Wayne, C. Siler, S. Brinkman, T. Burch, M. Cherry, L. Clark, J. Crenshaw, C. Embry Jr, D. Floyd, D. Graham, K. Hall, J. Jenkins, D. Keene, F. Nesler, D. Owens, J. Stacy, D. Watkins, R. Webb, S. Westrom.

Kentucky has the second highest number of women in the nation who smoke during pregnancy, a factor that harms their children.

Kentucky also has one of the highest percentages of youth who smoke.

**House Bill 443** creates an additional cigarette surtax of 70 cents; increases the tax rates for other tobacco products and snuff; and imposes a floor stock tax as of July 31, 2008.

Not only will passage of HB 443 reduce smoking by youth and pregnant women, it will produce revenue to fund our social needs. As fewer children and women smoke, wealthier citizens who continue to smoke bear the brunt of the tax.

Urge legislators not to settle for a lower rate of tax, but to support at least a 70 cent increase above the current rate. A lesser rate does not have the health benefits associated with the higher rate.

Its sponsors are D. Watkins, M. Marzian, T. Burch, J. Crenshaw, J. Jenkins, R. Meeks, C. Miller, H. Moberly Jr, D. Owens, R. Palumbo, C. Rollins II, K. Stein, J. Wayne, S. Westrom . It is now in the House Appropriations & Revenue Committee, awaiting a hearing to move it to the House floor.

## Fair Taxation Is Progressive Taxation

We believe that:

- ◆ All citizens and corporations have the right and responsibility to contribute to the common good through the payment of taxes.
- ◆ Kentucky should seek and maintain revenues sufficient to meet the basic needs of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.
- ◆ Taxation in any form should be based on one's ability to pay.

**House Bill 262** helps those in Kentucky who are poor and makes our system of taxation more progressive. It increases the tax rate on income over \$75,000; establishes a refundable earned income tax credit at 15% of the federal credit; decouples from the federal estate tax phase-out; and includes a list of selected services as subject to sales tax;

Its sponsors are: J. Wayne, J. Jenkins, L. Belcher, T. Burch, L. Combs, K. Hall, R. Henderson, M. Marzian, R. Meeks, T. Riner, K. Stein. The bill is in the Appropriations and Revenue Committee a hearing to move it to the House floor. Urge lawmakers to enact progressive tax legislation during 2008.

A bill not yet filed (so there is no number) will have two chief features:

1) A **Worker Opportunity Tax Credit** of up to \$300 for an employer who hires an employee from a target group that includes: families on welfare; Food Stamp recipients; resident of federally designated Empowerment Zones (EZ), Enterprise Communities (EC), or Renewal Communities (RC); veterans who are members of a family receiving Food Stamps; Vocational Rehabilitation Referrals who completed or is completing rehabilitative services from a State certified agency, an Employment Network, or the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; ex-felons; and recipients of Supplemental Security Income benefits.

2) A Kentucky **Earned Income Tax Credit** that would allow the poorest workers in Kentucky an additional credit of 5% of the federal amount for which they are eligible. This provides a return of \$30 million to Kentucky's poorest workers. Much of this money, spent in the communities where these persons live, will enhance local economies. Urge lawmakers to support a **WOTC-EITC** bill, a win for employers, workers, and their communities.

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