



What's Up in the Legislature

(February 25, 2007)

We are at the more than half way point in the Legislative time zone. The deadline for hearing any bills in Legislative committees with the exception of Appropriations is March 16. There are only three weeks left, and many of the committees are not bothering to meet next week.

We can say goodbye to any hopes we might have had for controlling HB 2224, (the payday loan shops), SB 1440, (eliminating the "gag" rule for KidsCare), and HB 2380, charitable institutions; tax credits (eliminates the "baseline requirement" which would allow this credit to work like the one for schools. HB 2380 has been waiting since the end of January to get a hearing in House Rules. That appears doubtful at this stage of the game although last week our President, Steve Jenkins, who is the official spokesperson for the Society, sent a personal letter thanking all 22 sponsors and co-sponsors of this bill and urging the other members of the House to approve it..

Supported by SVdP this week at the Leg:

Health bills:

Senate Approps - Tues., 1:30 p.m. SHR 109

SB 1361 Leff et. al. Bill expands AHCCCS eligibility for pregnant women from federal minimum of 133% of FPL to 185% of FPL (37 other states have already done this). Impact on General Fund of up to \$4 mil (this is a federal matching program where feds pay 2/3 of cost) depending on number who enroll - estimated between 500 to 2,000 low income expectant moms.

SB 1437 Allocates \$200K for outreach and education regarding various vaccinations for children ages 11-17. (Appropriations for vaccines themselves are a separate budget item). While this is NOT same as KidsCare outreach (SB 1440 which Sen. Jack Harper did not place on the agenda of his Senate Government Committee), it is important. for ALL Arizonans that children are innoculated against the usual childhood diseases.

Job bills:

Senate Public Safety and Human Services - Thurs, 9 a.m.

HB 2247 - TANF Hersberger, Anderson et. al. Bill that has cleared the House. Allows 3 mo. lump sum "diversion option" for welfare applicants who have a high probability of employment. They are also allowed to use employment services offered by the State for 90 days.

Also on Tuesday at 10:

Children's Action Alliance is holding a press conference to support Gov's proposal that KidsCare healthcare be expanded to cover children in families up to 300% of FPL. 16 states have already expanded eligibility to this level (\$60K per year for a family of 4) to meet the growing numbers of families who lack health insurance through work and find the combination of high premiums and deductible impossible to meet.

The Hike for the Homeless on March 3 sponsored by St. Joseph the Worker is still looking for hikers!