

SVdP Voice of the Poor Weekly Legislative Briefing by Tom Finnerty 3/22/10

State Budget:

Last week Governor Brewer signed all of the budget bills sent to her by the Legislature. The votes on the bills were along party lines. The Governor remarked that the combined cuts totaling \$2 billion represent the greatest slimming of state government ever.

As a result, 418,000 people, including thousands of children and the mentally ill face the loss of medicine and health services. Their alternative: Hospital emergency rooms.

Meanwhile, Arizona hospitals estimate there will be a loss of 48,000 jobs in the healthcare industry and predict emergency rooms will be overwhelmed. The Arizona Hospital Association has filed a lawsuit against the cuts.

The feds

Last night the U.S. House of Representatives passed a health care reform bill that is being spoken of as an historic bill. It is nearly identical to a bill proposed by Senator John Chafee, a moderate Republican from Rhode Island, back in 1993. This good Senator died in 1999.

The vote was nearly on strictly party lines, but 34 Dems joined the Republicans to vote against it. The debate of the bill's impacts will continue as happened when both Social Security and Medicare were passed. Various aspects of the bill will be phased in over the next four years. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the bill will result in over \$1 trillion in cost savings over the next decade. Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI) stated this morning that the president will issue an executive order barring the use of federal funds for abortion.

Immigration:

VOP will continue to watch to see when and if HB 2632 (immigration; felony trespass) comes to the House floor. If it passes, we will urge Governor Brewer to veto the bill. The bill is opposed by the bishops of the Arizona Catholic Conference.