



THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
THE NANCY A. HUMPHREYS INSTITUTE
FOR
POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK



2009 Legislative Scoop Sheet

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From the Editor's Desk ~ by *Katharine Bobel and Nilda Fernandez*

It's that time of year, when the Connecticut General Assembly is hard at work creating the policies that dictate so many areas of our lives—especially how we practice Social Work! The legislature convened Wednesday, **January 7th**. Once again, the Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work (NAHIPSW) will be following issues that are important to Social Workers.

During the 2008 primaries we all experienced history in the making. We had the opportunity to witness the first woman, Senator Hillary Clinton and the first African American man, Senator Barack Obama running for President. On November 4th of 2008 we saw a major historical change among our country's political leaders. We had the opportunity to witness our country elect the first African American President, Barack Obama, as well as, gain significant majority in both chambers of congress.

Each year, NAHIPSW surveys the School of Social Work Community to discover which issues are most important to you. This year, NAHIPSW had a large number of participants in this survey.

The top five issues for the 2008-2009 Legislative Scoop Sheet Survey are as follows:
Affordable Housing, Expanded Access to Healthcare, Clinical Social Work, Domestic/Family Violence, and Social Work Loan Forgiveness (due to the lack of proposed legislation, we will not be following this issue at this time).

A few others are important as well:

Election Day Voter Registration, the need for early voting in Connecticut, Healthy Teens/ Comprehensive Sex Education, Multi-level licensing, Same-Sex Marriage, and the Dream Act.

Thanks to all who participated in this year's survey!

The Legislative Scoop Sheet will be published bi-weekly. We will keep you informed on how you can get involved in the legislative process, by updating you as to location and times of public hearings and other events. You can find/contact your legislator at **www.cga.ct.gov**. Please visit the NAHIPSW website at **www.politicalinstitute.uconn.edu**

Healthy Teens ~ Katharine Bobel

This issue is not going to be introduced this session because of the current economic crisis and budget cuts that are happening in our state. There is a possibility that a comprehensive sex education bill will be introduced and the state would ask the federal government to allocate dollars in order to help fund this program. We will keep you posted as to if this is introduced.

Domestic/Family Violence ~ by *Kate Parker*

Proposed Bill No. 20 introduced by **Sen. Crisco** of the 17th district is intended to ensure domestic violence shelters in the state to have on-site staffing twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The **24/7** Bill seeks to appropriate funding for the purposes of making grants available to domestic violence programs to provide such staffing. At the **24/7** Legislative Kick Off event hosted by the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) and attended by survivors, advocates, and community supporters it was noted that Connecticut is one of only five states in the country who do **not** provide **24/7** staffing in its shelters. Unstaffed shelters, particularly at night, fail to support survivors when they may be most vulnerable, potentially increasing the likelihood of returning to the abusive environment. In a 24- hour period in Connecticut, 186 people found refuge in such shelters (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Domestic Violence Counts 2007: A 24-Hour Census of Domestic Violence Shelters and Services Across the United States).

The **24/7** Bill has been referred to the Joint Committee on Human Services.

Same Sex Marriage ~ by Caryn Lacedonia

On October 10, 2008 the Connecticut Supreme Court announced a verdict in favor of the plaintiffs in the Kerrigan et al vs. CT Dept of Public Health, which granted same-sex couples the right to legally marry in Connecticut. Currently, a same-sex couple in Connecticut also has the right to a civil union. As of yet, no bill has been raised in the legislative session that would alter the current status of civil unions or same-sex marriage in Connecticut.

Multi-Level Licensure ~ followed by Sarah Chasse

A bill on Multi-Level Licensure was drafted by NASW/CT's Licensure Workgroup, comprised of social workers from various areas of practice, including Dean Salome Raheim. The bill addresses a need to add post-BSW and post-MSW levels to the current single LCSW level of licensure in the state. The issue is therefore particularly relevant to social work students, as multiple levels of licensure create increased professionalism and opportunities within the workforce. NASW/CT is currently meeting with The Department of Public Health, Public Health Committee Chairs, Vice Chairs and Ranking Members in order to secure bill sponsorship out of the Public Health Committee. In order to ensure support and sponsorship for the bill, constituents of Public Health Committee Chairs, Vice Chairs and Ranking Members are asked to contact their legislator in support of Multi-Level Licensure.

Public Health Committee Ranking Members:

Dist. - Name	Position	Party
S05 - Harris, Jonathan A. (West Hartford)	Co-Chair	D
038 - Ritter, Elizabeth B. (Waterford)	Co-Chair	D
S14 - Slossberg, Gayle S. (Milford, Orange)	Vice Chair	D
104 - Gentile, Linda M (Ansonia)	Vice Chair	D
S21 - Debicella, Dan (Shelton, Monroe, Stratford, Seymour)	Ranking Member	R
138 - Giegler, Janice R. (Danbury)	Ranking Member	R

Electoral Reform ~ followed by Addie Sandler

There are two bills being introduced this session that are important to voting procedures. First, Rep. Thomas Drew introduced Proposed H.B. No. 5082, an act to study the need for early voting in Connecticut in order to minimize lines at polling places on Election Day, to the Joint Committee on Government Administration and Elections. Rep. Andrew Fleishmann introduced Proposed H.B. No. 5082, an act concerning Election Day registration to promote voter participation by permitting people to register and vote on the day of the election. These two bills are crucial to help make voting more accessible to all people. As social workers it is important that we work together to empower all people---especially our clients---to use their political power to have their voices be heard on Election Day. Both of these bills would further the ease of voting to all people.

Affordable/Supportive Housing~ followed by Katharine Bobel

Proposed House Bill 5071, An Act Concerning the Supportive Housing Initiative was introduced by Representative Green of the 1st district. This bill will provide additional funds for supportive housing expansion. Supportive housing is permanent, independent, and affordable housing combined with on-site or visiting case management and support and employment services. The reaching home campaign works to end long term homelessness in Connecticut through the fight to create 10,000 units of supportive housing by 2014. This bill was referred to the committee on Housing.

Universal Healthcare ~ followed by Courtney Cullinan

I am very excited to follow issues concerning health care this legislative session. As we all know healthcare is one of our state's and in fact one of our nation's largest issues. This session I will follow the initiatives set forth by legislature to try to control the ever rising cost of healthcare. With the current financial situation of the state I think it will be interesting to see the dynamics of this session as well as the possible compromises. The two Healthcare authorities that were formed in 2007 are finalizing their recommendations to the general assembly and together will work to help position Connecticut to implement a better healthcare system.

Dream Act ~ followed by Nilda Fernandez

The in-state tuition legislation was originally introduced as HB 5329 in 2005. The bill would allow students to access in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities provided they have attended at least two years at a Connecticut high school and have graduated. If a student is not a legal permanent resident of the United States, the individual shall show that they have filed an application to become a legal permanent resident, or will file an application as soon as they are eligible to do so. This legislation would not provide any federal benefits to immigrant students (i.e., Federal financial aid, Federal scholarships or Federal loans). It would only provide students the same equal access to in-state tuition rates as other residents of Connecticut. In the 2009 legislative session its been introduced as Proposed House Bill No.15 by Senator Prague and Representative Widlitz.



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