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2009 Legislative Scoop Sheet

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

The Connecticut Legislature passed the third Deficit Mitigation Package on February 25th. This is the third Mitigation Package for this fiscal year which ends on June 30, 2009. The bill that passed on February 25th would reduce the state's **current** deficit by \$1.2 billion dollars. However, some lawmakers predict that because of the declining economy, they will be returning to the state Capitol, possibly in two months to work on the fourth Deficit-Mitigation Plan. It is imperative that the legislature solve the deficit of this current fiscal year (2008-2009) before they can really dig in to the biennium (2009-2010 and 2010-2011) budget which is expected to be worse.

Remember if there is an issue that you care about, you can always contact your legislator. Public hearings of the Appropriations Committee are currently being held.

Upcoming Events

The 13th Annual Campaign School: Friday, April 17th and Saturday, April 18th from 9:00am-4:00pm. Come learn how to create effective campaign strategies and run successful political campaigns from experienced and knowledgeable social workers. This year's faculty includes well-known political social workers such as: **Kate Coyne-McCoy, Nancy A. Humphreys, newly elected Social Workers: Hartford Registrar of Voters, Urania Petit and State Representative, Chris Lyddy**, plus other Political Social Workers.

The 1st Annual Jane Addams Forum on Electoral Reform: Wednesday April 1st from 12:30pm-2:00pm. Program is free but space is limited. To r.s.v.p or for more info, contact the NAHISPW at 860-570-9262 or send an email to politicalinstitute@uconn.edu

SB 15 "An Act Providing In-State Tuition to Children of Immigrants ~ by Nilda Fernandez

To date nothing has been presented in the Joint Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement on the in-state tuition. You may contact your legislator or the Joint Committee at 240-0280 with questions or concerns.

24/7 Staffing at Domestic Violence Shelters ~ by Robin Kraemer

The appropriations committee heard public testimony in support of the need for 24/7 staffing at domestic violence shelters at the February 18th public hearing. Linda Blozie, the Director of Public Affairs at the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV), discussed the possibility of using some of the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) monies to fund 24/7. As part of the Federal economic stimulus plan, Connecticut will be receiving approximately \$17 million of ESG monies. This grant has been used to fund domestic violence shelters in the past due to the substantive link between domestic violence and homelessness among women and children. Cathy Zeiner of the Women's Center of Southeastern CT Inc., discussed the loss of 24/7 shelter staffing at their New London shelter this October and the effect of the transition on the women and children they serve.

On March 19th at 9:00 am in the Old Judiciary room in the Capitol Building, CCADV will be holding a Domestic Violence Awareness Day to advocate for the preservation of domestic violence shelters in CT as the resource of last resort. This event is open to the public and light refreshments will be served.

Multi-Level Licensure ~ by Sarah Chasse

The National Association of Social Workers Connecticut Chapter continues to meet with state agencies to finalize bill language for "**An Act Concerning Clinical Social Workers**". Please refer to NASWCT.org for updates, as a bill number and public hearing are expected shortly. Those willing to contact your legislators in support of the bill, testifying on the bill, or volunteering in any capacity on behalf of this legislation, please contact Sarah Chasse at NASW/CT, (860)257-8066.

Happy Social Work Month!



Establishing a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program ~ by Kate Parker

HB 6361: An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program.

The SANE/SAFE bill awaits its next steps in the legislative process with no movement this week in terms of being voted out of the public health committee. As a regional pilot program, the bill encompasses two major values being touted this legislative session, regionalism and cost-effectiveness. Looking to Massachusetts as a guide, it has established 6 service regions in the state with a one regional coordinator in effect centralizing the work over the service area. Additionally, Massachusetts notes that costs saving measure are being seen through early guilty pleas avoiding prosecution costs and the expenses associated with criminal trials. (Massachusetts Department of Public Health retrieved on February 25th from <http://www.mass.gov>.)

Same Sex Marriage- ~ by Caryn Lacedonia

SB 899 "An Act Concerning the Guarantee of Equal Protections Under the Constitution of the State of Same-Sex Couples", was referred to the Joint Committee on Judiciary as of 2/11/09. This "clean-up" bill addresses issues that were not ruled on by the CT Supreme Court in *Kerrigan et al vs.* Ct Department of Public Health, such as civil unions. If passed, S.B. 899 would merge all civil unions into marriages on 10/01/10. Couples with a civil union who merged into a marriage in 2010 will have a marriage date that is reflective of the date of their previous civil union.

Hearings and Events at the Legislative Office Building (LOB)

Don't forget to check the "Bulletin" online at <http://www.cga.ct.gov> for full details on daily hearings, events, committee meetings, and contact information.

Also be sure to check out <http://www.ctn.state.ct.us/> to view live events and archived resources on the CT Network.

NAHIPSW Resources

As always, feel free to contact us at the NAHIPSW with any information related questions regarding the legislative process, testifying, finding your legislators or questions related to legislation that is of interest to you or your clients.

Electoral Reform ~ by Addie Sandler

There is nothing new to report on regarding **HB 5012 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING IN CONNECTICUT** as well as on **HB 5082 AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION.**

Affordable/Supportive Housing ~ by Katharine Bobel

House Bill 5071 had a public hearing on February 19th. Several testimonies were heard by advocates and concerned citizens from across the state. Some of the organizations, coalitions, and groups that were represented at the hearing were NAMI-CT (National Alliance on Mental Illness), Keep the Promise Coalition, The Institute for Housing and Economic Development, The Yale College Democrats Lobbying Committee, and the Neighbor Works - New Horizons. All of the following testimonies submitted were in support of **HB 5071, AN ACT CONCERNING THE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING INITIATIVE.**



Universal Healthcare ~ by Courtney Cullinan

Senate Bill 678 is still in the committee process. It is currently being drafted in the Public Health Committee. The co-chairs of the committee are: Senator Jonathan Harris and Representative Elizabeth Ritter. The committee can be reached at 860-240-0560. Please feel free to call with any questions or concerns about the bill. I will continue to keep an eye on it and update you on the progress.



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