WSCC 2010 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2010 SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGETS

PRINCIPLES

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Mt 25:35-40) We are called to witness the love of God through compassionate care of all God's children and to work prophetically, as Jesus did in his time, to build a more just and equitable society." Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

Recognizing that the state's budget is a moral statement, WSCC's advocacy efforts prioritize attending to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable persons in our society. We seek budget choices, both in revenue decisions and expenditure decisions, that focus on the common good.

In 2009, the legislature and the governor enacted an operating budget for 2009-2011 that reflected the economic conditions of our time. The $9 billion budget deficit was balanced by reductions in funding for social services and education, by the federal stimulus, and by transferring dollars between different state funds. Federal stimulus dollars helped support some programs, but the economic downturn continues to negatively affect the revenue available to maintain the state's services at current levels. Revenue forecasts are down due to a number of factors including reduced housing, car sales, and consumer spending. Caseload forecasts are up as families struggle with losing their jobs and their homes. The November revenue forecast indicated a $2.6 billion deficit. The governor's budget, which is released in December, must be balanced taking into account this reduction in revenue. The legislative budget must be balanced against the February, 2010 revenue forecast.

The deficit's impact on human services could be more severe than last year. The majority of the $31 billion operating budget is protected either by state constitutional requirements or federal requirements. Not protected is $9.3 billion of the budget, of which $5.5 billion is in human services. The potential for cuts in human services is significant, especially for immigrants and state funded social programs.

The capital budget will also be negatively impacted by the reduced revenue forecasts because it is dependent on the sale of bonds. The constitution limits the amount of debt the state can incur. Annual debt service payments cannot exceed nine percent of the average general state revenues in the preceding three years.

Revenue is being considered due to the unprecedented crisis facing human services. The potential for the most vulnerable to be harmed by cuts, particularly in state-only funded programs such as General Assistance Unemployable, has spurred serious discussions about how best to support programs for those most in need. Revenue discussions are difficult in these economic times, and any proposal must be balanced between support for social services and the negative impact a proposal may have on families and the economy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Retaining programs that provide services for the most vulnerable persons
- Maintaining programs for immigrants
- Collaborating with policy leaders to improve efficiencies in the provision of services
- Changing the structure of the state's revenue system to improve stability