

February 2007

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Government Help Is On the Way

It has become embarrassing to appeal to eternal concepts, embarrassing to state that evil makes its home in the individual human heart before it enters a political system. —Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

It's the best of times or the worst of times in Olympia—depending on one's worldview. If government is the solution, these are very good times. A dumpster load of legislative proposals have been filed that, if approved, will shift many burdensome private sector responsibilities to the public sector. Not just a few of the proposals will relieve parents, churches and local school boards from the thankless job of training up the next generation in the way it should go.

Something government is wont to imprint in the minds of the next generation is that a sociable community is a gender-free community. That was evident last week when concerns regarding hurtful language in a public pensions law, led the State Senate to vote (41-1) to remove references to "fireman" and "policeman," replacing them with the more gender-neutral terms "firefighter" and "police officer." Senator Val Stevens (R-Arlington), the lone dissenter, described the matter as "silliness." But Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Wells (D-Seattle) disagreed, saying SB 5063 will force the Office of Code Reviser to review thousands of state statutes that still might contain other hurtful gender-specific references.

Gender-distinction (bias) in the family and the community is being addressed this session as well. HB 1350 repeals the state's ban on marriage between persons of the same sex. It also amends the state's marriage laws to change the definition of marriage from a "civil contract between a male and a female" to "a civil contract between two persons." Although the bill is not on a fast track this session, it has 26 sponsors—Democrats all—and is strongly supported by Gov. Gregoire.

A bill that is on fast track, thanks to the passage of last year's landmark "Sexual Orientation Bill" (HB 2661), creates a new legal entity called *Domestic Partnerships*. HB 1351 provides marriage-like benefits for couples involved in a same-sex sexual relationship and persons—wink, wink—age 62 and over. Legal experts conclude that this is MARRIAGE—by another name. The measure is sponsored by 74 Democrats and 3 Republicans.¹

Government is also working with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender groups to implement values-free solutions to sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Some 38 lawmakers, including 3 Republicans, are concerned that schools may be over emphasizing sexual abstinence and not arming students with the latest medically and scientifically accurate information. HB 1855 requires public schools to adhere to *Guidelines for Sexual Health* (GSH) developed by State School Superintendent Terry Bergeson—suggesting sex-ed (state mandated) could become part of the WASL requirements for high school graduation. Opponents of GSH say the guidelines violate the *AIDS Omnibus Act* because they do not "give emphasis to the importance of sexual abstinence outside lawful marriage" (marriage isn't mentioned). They also are troubled by requirements regarding sexual orientation and inappropriate graphic sexual instructions.

When medically and scientifically accurate information isn't enough, government has

another solution—easier access to abortion-inducing pills. HB 1348 promises to address *unfair prescription drug practices*. The bill addresses pro-life pharmacists who do not wish to dispense life-destroying chemicals such as RU-486, the French designer drug also known as “the morning after pill.” HB 1348 would force druggists to violate their conscience or find other employment. Earlier this month, Gov. Gregoire appointed NARAL board member Vandana Slatter to the State Board of Pharmacy and warned others on the board that failure to force pharmacists into compliance with her pro-abortion views will result in their dismissal. The bill has 13 sponsors, including Rep. Tom Campbell (R-Spanaway).

It is well to note that government is willing to do more than just protect the health of children. It wants to pay for it as well. SB 5093 is a government health care measure that extends full state medical coverage to all children in households of four or more with annual income under \$62,000. A recent *National Bureau of Economic Research* paper indicated that for every four uninsured enrolled in this type of government program, six additional people will drop their private coverage and sign on.

A couple of bills not so good “for the children,” use terms like “advisory committee” and “guidelines,” but essentially, and ultimately, lead to the harvesting of embryonic stem cells for medical experimentation. An embryo is a tiny human being. Removing a stem cell destroys that human being. Strong backing for House Bills 1163 and 1336 comes from the University of Washington, a world-leading wholesaler of “fresh fetal tissue” (baby parts).

Democrats, however, are radically pro-life when it comes to convicted murderers. Under consideration are five bills that deal with the death penalty. One of them, HB 1518, calls for a task force to study the matter, and questions the practicality of a death sentence when so many are reversed on appeal. There are also concerns in the area of racially-proportional verdicts and sentencing—perhaps due to the under representation of Asians on death row.

In other areas of criminal justice, HB 1003 calls for free condoms for inmates in state prisons. House Bills 1729, 1874 and 2069 call for the early release of offenders—getting them back on the streets up to six months sooner than allowed under current law. HB 1473 restores voting rights of convicted felons upon release from prison without regard to court-ordered restitution to their victims.

To pay for new social programs, the government may get some help from the gambling industry. Although voters continue at every opportunity to reject the expansion of gambling, HB 1477 and SB 5558 would permit house-banked card games and could override local community ordinances banning such activities. Not to forget the tribes, Gov. Gregoire recently signed a compact allowing the Spokane Indian tribe to operate up to five Las Vegas-style casinos with as many as 4,700 video gambling machines. Following federal approval, the compact will allow other tribes to expand their operations as well.

So what are the non-governmental solutions? Prayer. The enemy has come in like a flood...to fill a cultural and spiritual role vacated by the Church. Pray for the Church to be driven from pleasure to brokenness. Pray that pastors will lose their fear of men and call sin, sin.

And, having done all to stand, stand.

Rick Forcier

Executive Director

¹ Hankins (R-Richland), Jarrett (R-Mercer Island), Walsh (R-Walla Walla). Names are noted where votes are substantially inconsistent with party platform.