

Action Alert - Contact Your Representative By Thursday

The entire House of Representatives will vote on 2 critical bills - the Jobs Omnibus bill and the Health Omnibus bill - in the next few days (on Thursday at the earliest). Your representative needs to hear from you by Thursday.

To find out what district you are: <http://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>

To track bills and find information on your Representative:

<http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/>

Jobs Committee Omnibus Bill

The Jobs Committee passed their Omnibus bill (HF1976) which is bad for Minnesota families and Minnesota communities. It cuts MFIP and child care funds for families struggling at the economic margins and wrongly uses federal child care and TANF funds to solve our state budget deficit. Urge your Representative to vote against this bill unless it contains amendments to (1) restore MFIP cash grants for families in subsidized housing and (2) restore funds for the Child Care Assistance Program.

Thursday, this bill passed on a party line vote (7-5). It included \$72 million in cuts on top of the \$70 million in child care cuts proposed by Governor Pawlenty. The committee voted to:

1. Maintain the freeze on child care reimbursement rates at 2001 levels
2. Take \$18 million in federal child care funds to balance the state budget deficit
3. Take \$32 million in federal TANF dollars to fund programs now paid by state dollars
4. Raise the housing penalty to \$200/month for MFIP households living in subsidized housing.

Late Thursday, several amendments were offered to provide additional funds for child care, education & job training, and MFIP grants, but all were defeated on party line votes. By using the federal child care and TANF dollars, the committee has created a potential hole that will need to be filled in the next biennium. And by raising the housing penalty, they have reduced the MFIP cash grants for families in subsidized housing by \$150 more each month.

Health Committee Omnibus Bill

The Health Committee Omnibus bill (HF1422) is bad for Minnesota families and Minnesota communities. Funding cuts would force at least 30,000 people off MinnesotaCare and do nothing to resolve our health care crisis. It also contains the so-called "Positive Abortion Alternatives Act" which is MCCL initiated bill to fund the anti-abortion efforts of so-called "clinics". *Urge your Representative to vote against this bill* unless it contains amendments to restore MinnesotaCare so that Minnesotans have access to affordable health insurance and amendments to remove the "Positive Abortion Alternatives Act" language. You may remember the "Positive Abortion Alternatives Act" from a previous Minnesota NOW action alert.

HF1422 / SF1313 and several other bills endorse and provide funding for the MCCL initiated Positive Alternatives Act. *"At a time when state leaders are looking to cut the rolls of MinnesotaCare, anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers could become eligible for millions of dollars in state grants under bills currently before the Minnesota House and Senate. Support from the governor and a majority of legislators in both houses—would make \$4 million available over two years to nonprofit programs that provide 'direct care to pregnant women and their unborn children through counseling and supportive services.' The bill also calls for an additional \$1 million to fund a statewide campaign explaining the stages of fetal development and promoting the state's 'crisis pregnancy centers.' Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life (MCCL), the state's most powerful anti-choice group, initiated the Positive Alternatives Act and has made passage of the legislation its top priority this session."* - Minnesota Women's Press - see the full article at: <http://www.womenspress.com/newspaper/2005/2026life.html>

In February, Governor Pawlenty proposed a budget that would reduce eligibility for MinnesotaCare to 190% of poverty and eliminate health insurance coverage for approximately 30,000 Minnesota families. The House Health Policy and Finance committee not only accepted the Governor's cuts and but also approved a bill that would reduce eligibility even further and raise out-of-pocket costs for participants.

For additional information on this bill, you can use the bill tracker:
<http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/legis.asp>

To Check Committee Schedule: Senate Health and Family Security Committee
<http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/committee/2005-2006/health/schedule.htm>



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