



2nd Legislative Update

January 26, 2009

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Idaho State Legislature
2009 Legislative Session

Idaho Legislators Focus on Funds

We are only two weeks into the 2009 Legislative Session and lawmakers are working feverishly on the budget, taking special care to research any potential fiscal impact of proposed legislation. The tension is tangible throughout the temporary quarters of the legislature. This intense focus on funds promises to be a trend throughout the rest of the session.

Major Progress on proposed IVC Child Welfare legislation

IVC's 2009 policy priority for Child Welfare includes reforming the Idaho de facto custodian provisions to (1) better define the circumstances under which an individual has standing as a de facto custodian, (2) better define how de facto custodians can pursue custody of a child, and (3) what legal rights are accorded the de facto custodian when custody is granted by the court.

Great news! Senator Denton Darrington (R - Declo), Chair of the Senate Judiciary & Rules Committee, has agreed to be the main sponsor for this proposed legislation. Sen. Darrington has also agreed to send the proposed legislation to Legislative Services, where it will be printed and assigned an RS number (a routing slip is the precursor to a bill). We expect to receive an official copy of the RS any day, and we'll keep you posted as this proposed legislation moves forward.

IVC well represented at Governor's Health Care Summit

The Governor's Health Care Summit met again on January 17, 2009. During the discussion major emphasis was placed on (1) incrementally increasing enrollment of currently uninsured children in S-CHIP and (2) streamlining the enrollment process for S-CHIP. These are two of the recommendations from the IVC Health Care Workgroup. Several IVC members and volunteers were in attendance, including (but not limited to) Dr. Patrice Burgess, Chair of the IVC Workgroup; Margeret Henbest, former legislator and member of the IVC Workgroup and advisor to the IVC Legislative Committee; Corey Surber of Saint Alphonsus, member of the IVC Workgroup; Denise Chuckovich of IPCA, member of the IVC Workgroup; and Dr. Jerry Hirschfeld of St. Luke's Children's Hospital, an organizational supporter of IVC.

Update on IVC's 2009 Early Learning Policy Priority

IVC's 2009 policy priority for Early Learning is to work towards the establishment of a committee to provide a means to bring together gubernatorial representative(s), legislative leaders, and key stakeholders concerned with the early learning of young children (ages 0-5 years) in Idaho and begin the work towards establishing an early learning blueprint for Idaho. [Click here to read a one-page document explaining why we need this committee.](#)

What's going on right now? A draft is being circulated in the legislature, but legislators do not recognize a document as "draft legislation" unless it has been printed by Legislative Services and assigned an RS (routing slip) number. [Click here to see the draft.](#)

What are we trying to do? We are encouraging Rep. Bob Nonini, Chair of the House Education Committee (208-332-1148) & Sen. John Goedde, Chair of the Senate Education Committee (208-332-1321) to have the draft printed and assigned an RS number so it can be circulated and discussed by lawmakers as an official legislative document.

Thank you to everyone who has already called or written to Rep. Nonini and Sen. Goedde encouraging them to have this draft printed. We have not seen a lot of progress to date but we are still continuing to press the issue. *(continued on next page)*

Early Learning (continued)

Moving Forward: We want to keep up the pressure on the House Education Committee. Sen. Goedde has told us in a written statement that “I am not going to waste my time on a dead issue in my committee. I have urged early childhood supporters to focus their efforts on the House this year...should the House move forward, I will follow suit and hold hearings in the Senate Education Committee.” We encourage you to call Rep. Nonini, Chair of the House Education Committee at 208-332-1148 and express your support for having this draft printed as an RS so the issue can be discussed in a committee hearing.

Other Efforts: John Watts, IVC Lobbyist, has been working with the Executive Branch on this issue also. He has visited with staff in the Governor’s office and with Superintendent Luna to discuss the proposed committee. The Governor’s staff will be looking to Superintendent Luna for a recommendation on how to proceed. At the present time, Superintendent Luna is cool to new initiatives in early learning because of the current budget cutbacks.

We will keep you informed of any movement on this issue.

Emerging Issues

IVC is researching possible initiatives to strengthen sentencing in child abuse cases. We will report back to you after the session on our findings and the IVC Policy Workgroup on Emerging Issues will make recommendations to the IVC Board on a possible course of action for the 2010 Legislative Session. Of course, the big issue this session is the budget, and we will be monitoring the work of JFAC and letting you know how their work affects children.

IVC’s 2009 Policy Priorities

Below you will find a list of the major efforts that we will be focused on during the course of the legislative session. To see the full “2009 Policy Priorities” document, which includes a list of our overarching beliefs and 3 - 5 year goals, [click here](#).

IVC’s 2009 Policy Priorities	
Issue Area	Policy Priority
Child Health & Safety	IVC will work towards increasing the numbers of children enrolled in the Idaho Health Plan Coverage for Children (Medicaid and S-CHIP) by encouraging the State of Idaho to provide ongoing high quality outreach, implement a streamlined health insurance application process and establish the eligibility level of S-CHIP at 200% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) . Given the difficult economic conditions we are not pursuing an increase in eligibility this year.
Early Learning (legislation)	IVC will work towards the establishment of a committee to provide a means to bring together gubernatorial representative(s), legislative leaders, and key stakeholders concerned with the early learning of young children (ages 0-5 years) in Idaho and begin the work towards establishing a quality rating system that will meet the needs of Idaho’s children and families.
Child Welfare (legislation)	IVC will advance legislation to enhance the legal process and strengthen the legal supports for relatives caring for related children (a.k.a. “Grand Families”) by supporting legislation that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reforms the Idaho de facto custodian provisions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better define the circumstances under which an individual has standing as a de facto custodian Better defines how de facto custodians can pursue custody of a child and what legal rights are accorded the de facto custodian when custody is granted by the court. Reforms the Grandparent Visitation Statutes to better clarify position of grandparents’ rights to visit related children. Reforms the Child Protective Act to require that the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare to actively consider whether a child may be safely placed with relatives in lieu of non-relative foster care.
Emerging Issues	Many children’s issues are addressed during the session that do not fall directly under the stated 2009 Policy Priorities. IVC will continue to support efforts to: raise the eligibility rate for the Idaho Child Care Program; expand children’s health care coverage; improve child care regulations; provide quality early learning opportunities; provide supports for low-income working families; and strengthen sentencing in child abuse cases (Jessica’s Law).

Stay tuned for our next Legislative Update!



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This legislative report has been sent to all *Idaho Voices for Children* members. If you have questions or wish to remove your name from this mailing list, email Sara Herring at sara@idahovoices.org or call 208. 336. 5533 x 233

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