



2021 MID-SESSION KANSAS LEGISLATIVE REPORT

by Chuck Weber, Executive Director, Kansas Catholic Conference

Dear Kansas Catholics,

March 18, 2021

As Catholics, we are called to be in the world but not of the world. Put another way, we seek to inject the voice of Christ and His Church into laws and other public policies that reflect justice and compassion toward our fellow human persons. It is a distinct honor to serve the Catholic Bishops of Kansas as their representative for public policy questions at the federal, state and local level. The Kansas Catholic Conference (KCC) is primarily engaged with policy on the state level, but not exclusively. **Here are some selected highlights from the current Kansas Legislative Session as of March 18, 2021:**

- The Value Them Both state constitutional amendment for life has been passed by both the Senate and House chambers and will be voted on by the people of Kansas in August of 2022. This is AWESOME. Thank you legislators, and praise the Lord!
- The “Fairness in Women’s Sports Act” passed the Senate and now moves to the House. http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2021_22/measures/sb208/
- Payday Loan Reform is strongly supported by the Kansas Catholic Conference and the Kansans for Payday Loan Reform coalition. **This legislation is at an impasse.** Lenders and members of the reform group have been asked to meet and work on a compromise. http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2021_22/measures/hb2189/
- Prospects for expanding grade school and high school educational opportunities beyond public schools for low and middle-class families and students are still alive. http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2021_22/measures/sb61/



Those are some of the highlights. If you would like to take a deeper dive into what’s happening here at the Kansas Statehouse in Topeka—or in Washington, D.C., read on.

The news is unsettling, but it cannot be ignored. The stakes are too high. The nature and meaning of who we are as people, specifically surrounding human sexuality, is being twisted into public policy (laws) that must be stopped.

In the midst of this oppressive environment, which is a worldly manifestation of a spiritual war, the U.S. Catholic Bishops remind us:

**“Every person is made in the image of God and should be treated accordingly,
with respect and compassion.”**

This does not mean we roll over in the face of injustice and falsehoods and attacks.

We begin with the so-called “**Equality Act**” recently passed by the United States House of Representatives. As Catholic scholar George Weigel explains, the Equality Act is about almost everything *except* equality. <https://eppc.org/publications/woke-rights-the-equality-act-and-speaker-pelosi/>

Here are some of the implications we face if the Equality Act becomes law.

- Religious employers like Catholic schools may be punished if they do not hire LGBTQ+ staff.
- Conscience protections for medical professionals will be removed.
- Women and girls will be big losers. Under this law, domestic abuse shelters, bathrooms, changing areas and showers will be opened up to men identifying as women.
- Biological men identifying as women (transgender) will be eligible to compete in women’s sports (it’s already happening!).
- Physicians will be forced to remove healthy body parts from those demanding gender-reassignment surgery, likely paid for by tax dollars or even private insurance policies.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a strong statement of condemnation. <https://www.usccb.org/equality-act>

Pope Francis has spoken out against the gender ideology mindset:

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2019-06/vatican-document-on-gender-yes-to-dialogue-no-to-ideology.html>

The following Kansas Representatives voted NO on the Equality Act:

Rep. Ron Estes: <https://estes.house.gov/contact/>

Rep. Jake LaTurner: <https://laturner.house.gov/contact>

Rep. Tracy Mann: <https://mann.house.gov/contact>

The following Kansas Congresswoman voted YES on the Equality Act:

Rep. Sharice Davids: <https://davids.house.gov/contact>

Be sure to let your elected official in Washington, D.C. know how you feel about the Equality Act. Fortunately, there is still a way to stop the Equality Act. The United States Senate can stop the Equality Act with a tactical procedure known as a filibuster. Please ask our two United States Senators to remain strong in their opposition to the Equality Act.

Contact Senator Jerry Moran: <https://www.moran.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/e-mail-jerry>

Contact Senator Roger Marshall: <https://www.marshall.senate.gov/>

CLOSER TO HOME—DEFENDING FAIRNESS IN WOMEN SPORTS

Here in Topeka at the Kansas Statehouse, the gender ideology mindset is being challenged head on by legislators seeking to protect our daughters. The “Fairness in Women’s Sports Act” was debated on the Senate floor on Wednesday, March 17. The measure then passed the Senate on a 24-10 vote. Here is a link to the debate, which begins at 3:33:18:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiFDJXtKwQc>

On February 23, 2021, a hearing was held on the “Fairness in Women’s Sports Act.” The idea is simple. It would require that biological girls would compete on athletic teams that only include members who are biologically female.

Here’s one example why this legislation is necessary:

<https://adfflegal.org/selina-soule-track-athlete-story>

Rather than describe the recent hearing, here is a link to a video recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5pFd-5nfg0>

The first 32 minutes features testimony from Kansas women athletes. Opponent testimony begins at about the 32-minute mark with a statement from Rep. Byers of Wichita who identifies as a transgender woman (a biological male, now identifying as a woman).

Here is information from the Kansas legislative website about the Save Girls Sports Act:

http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2021_22/measures/sb208/

Here are links to helpful information regarding the Catholic view of sexual identity.

<https://personandidentity.com/>

<https://couragerc.org/?s=identity>

IN OTHER NEWS...

- Legislators continue wrangling over details of the Kansas Emergency Management Act (KEMA) that will provide guidelines to powers delegated to the Governor and the Legislature in times of statewide emergencies. The COVID crisis is the most visible aspect of KEMA, but it can also include natural disasters like floods, fires and tornadoes. One concern of the KCC is ensuring our churches can remain open at the discretion of the Bishops and not be subject to closure or governmental overreach.
- The Kansas Catholic Conference testified in favor of a bill that would regulate sexually oriented businesses. These businesses are hubs for pornography, which has been declared a public health hazard by the Kansas Legislature.
http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2021_22/measures/hb2403/

- The Kansas Catholic Conference testified before a Senate budget sub-committee in favor of the restoration of \$22 million in funds that had been designated for state programs supporting the intellectually and developmentally disabled that had been “swept” (deleted) by the Kelly Administration in a budget cut last June.
- The Kansas Catholic Conference supports Medicaid Expansion now that the Value Them Both amendment for life is on the ballot. We have stated it many times—if Value Them Both had passed the legislature last year, the legislative floodgates would have been opened for passage of Medicaid Expansion. Regretfully, neither happened. We continue to lobby individual legislators for Medicaid Expansion, but the political winds have changed, and opposition is stronger than ever. This is the current political reality.

In “normal times” I would invite you and your group to come to Topeka and visit the Capitol. These are not normal times and COVID restricts access to the Statehouse only to those “doing business.” We hope this will soon change.



If you have questions about public policy or wish to communicate, please send me an email at: Chuck@KansasCatholic.org Please review our web site www.KansasCatholic.org and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/kscathconf/>

Please pray for our legislators—they greatly appreciate your support.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!

We persevere,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Weber". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chuck Weber

Kansas Catholic Conference