



**Sowers of Justice**

Catholic Legislative Network

**Action  
Alert**

**Ask Governor Pawlenty to  
Take a Real Leadership Role:  
Negotiate as Session's End**

**Nears**

**May 9, 2005**

**Background:** Over the last two weeks, both the Minnesota House of Representatives and the Minnesota Senate have passed their major omnibus spending bills in several categories.

The House and Senate have put forward very different omnibus spending bills in the area of health and human services. The House proposes deep cuts to programs like MinnesotaCare and Basic Sliding Fee child care, and favors tougher penalties for families living in public housing who receive cash assistance through the Minnesota Family Investment Program. The Senate seeks to expand MinnesotaCare coverage, to lift a freeze on childcare reimbursement rates, and to restore full cash grants to MFIP participants who are disabled or living in public housing.

The Senate's health and human services proposal is clearly superior in terms of protecting programs that enhance access to the basic necessities. It would ensure basic, adequate health care and child care for a far greater number of Minnesotans and would help families currently living in poverty as they struggle for economic security. The Senate is willing to spend hundreds of millions of dollars more than the House to accomplish this goal.

The differences between the House plan and the Senate plan will now be negotiated through a conference committee made up of ten conferees: five members of the House and five members of the Senate. Before they can begin their work in earnest, the Governor, House Speaker Steve Sviggum, and Senate Majority Leader Dean Johnson must agree on an overall spending target for the conference committee. If these leaders do not set a sufficient target, the Senate conferees will be put in a very difficult negotiating position and it will be more difficult for them to protect and invest in families and individuals who are economically vulnerable.

The Governor, by virtue of his office, has a huge part to play in situations like these where the differences are so great. To truly be effective in leading such negotiations, however, the Governor has to be able to compromise with all of the players in the debate. This is difficult given his campaign promise not to raise taxes. As Senator Sheila Kiscaden (I-Rochester) recently put it: "You're seeing tripartisan support for spending bills that suggest that some things are too essential, that we're not going to jeopardize our future for someone else's promise."

It will take great courage for Governor Pawlenty to break his "no new taxes" pledge, but this is an instance that calls for such courage. If the Governor shows no willingness to talk about raising taxes to meet our public responsibilities, there can be no compromise between the House and Senate, and surely, people struggling for economic security will bear the brunt.

**Recommended Action:**

***Call Governor Tim Pawlenty at 651-296-3391.***

Urge him to negotiate a compromise on raising taxes so that we can meet our basic public obligations to those people who are struggling for economic security in our state.

FFI: Call Matt Gladue at 651-291-4484