



INTERCOM

Kentucky Council of Churches



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One Click to Make a Difference

The 2007 Legislative session has now begun, and very important issues will be on the table. Your voice is important, and when you contact your state and federal leaders, it can make a very positive difference. Sometimes KY Legislators perceive six or seven messages from their constituents as a groundswell of public opinion.

When you sign-up to receive "Action Alerts" in your e-mail inbox, KCC staff will monitor state and federal issues and they will contact you when you can make a difference. If you subscribe, we will supply you with all of the background information necessary and we will make it very easy for you to send a quick e-mail to the right person. With only the click of a button you can influence the course of legislation.

To stand up for what you believe and make a difference in the lives of all Kentuckians, please visit <http://capwiz.com/kychurches/mlm/signup/> fill in all the information, and then click "submit" at the bottom of the page. Soon you will receive Justice Action Alerts in your e-mail inbox.

Council Sets 2007 Legislative Priorities

The KCC's Executive Board, meeting on Jan. 3 in Frankfort, confirmed the recommendations of the Justice Ministries commission regarding legislative priorities for the 2007 session of the General Assembly.

Based on the Council's existing policy statements, all adopted unanimously at various assemblies over the years by delegates from the member communions, the KCC will be advocating for the passage of four pieces of legislation. Several other bills will also be under scrutiny and possible advocacy.

The four pieces of legislation address **increasing the minimum wage; restoration of voting rights to those who have completed their prison and parole sentences; the anti-bullying**

bill that we have endorsed in previous years; and a resolution to urge Congress to support a national health policy to insure affordable, accessible health care for all.

Ky Minimum Wage

HB-17, sponsored by Rep. J.R. Gray, would increase the **minimum wage** from \$5.15 per hour to \$7.00 on the effective day of the Act. It calls for annual adjustments for inflation and would increase the Ky minimum wage to the federal minimum wage rate if that rate exceeds the state rate. Finally, HB-17 would eliminate the "tip wage", and require all employers, even those where workers receive tips, to pay the minimum wage.

Some argue that the issue is a federal issue, but since

1997 29 states have raised the minimum wage. Although the US House passed a "clean" minimum wage bill, without attached amendments, the bill has bogged down in the US Senate. Kentucky workers cannot afford to wait longer. A broad based coalition of groups, including the KCC, is working together for the passage of HB-17. More information, including possible impact on small businesses, is available at [the website, www.raisethe wageky.org](http://www.raisethe wageky.org).

Restoration of Voting Rights

HB-70, sponsored by Rep. Jesse Crenshaw, would propose a Constitutional amendment to allow those felons who have completed their sentence and received final discharge from parole to have their **right to vote** automatically restored. Kentucky is one of only three states in the US that

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Day At The Legislature—Feb. 28th

Come to Frankfort on Wednesday, February 28th for the Kentucky Council of Churches Day at the Legislature. Bring friends and fellow church members. For the past few years, the KCC has been holding a forum on every Wednesday, called the Wednesday Witness for Justice, but because our agenda is smaller this year, and the session will be short this year (only 30 days during odd-numbered years), it was decided to return to the old format of a

single day. The fee for the program will be \$5.00.

Please call the KCC office (859-269-7715 or via e-mail) to register for the Day at the Legislature. In the event of inclement weather (ice), the program may be cancelled.

The program will begin at 10:00 a.m. in **Room 169 of the Capitol Annex**, one of the new committee hearing rooms. Participants will have a chance to meet key legislators, to learn

about the progress of various pieces of legislation on the Council's agenda, and an opportunity to practice being a citizen advocate with the legislators from the participants' home districts. The informational part of the program will end at 11:50.

We will eat lunch together in the Capitol Cafeteria. The cost of lunch is not included in the registration. Details about the program and directions to the Capitol Annex will be posted on the KCC website as they are confirmed

Life Together: And yet it moves...



Some months back I happened to see Madeleine Albright, the former Secretary of State under President Clinton, discussing on C-Span her book, *The Mighty and the Almighty*. What caught my ear was Mrs. Albright's statement that nations seemed less and less willing to participate in and support the collaborative organizations that they had created following World War II to solve international issues and conflicts. Instead, they seemed to be "going it alone," or in bilateral relationships. I thought to myself that Mrs. Albright could also be talking about American denominations as well as nations.

The facts, of course, are more complex and my thought was spontaneous rather than well-considered. What is more to the point is that denominational structures are struggling to do the same things, or more and different things than in the past, with less and less staff and less and less financial resources. Several of our regional judicatories here in Kentucky have faced difficulties in balancing budgets and some have had to lay off staff. The result is that these increased demands have led to lower and lower contributions to support the work of the collaborative organization that the denominations formed together, namely the Council (both the Kentucky Council of Churches and the National Council). There are many trends in American church life suggesting that we are undergoing a time of major transition to a condition reflecting post-modernism, that might best be described for churches as post-denominationalism. Denominational distinctives are less and less important to people these days as they join and change churches much like they change their wardrobes.

In a recent speech in Wisconsin, our friend and ecumenical theologian Michael Kinnamon noted that *ecumenism is a movement, and therefore it moves; it changes, it "morphs"*. He also noted that councils seem to come with 50 year life spans.

Send us your ideas for what a council or association of churches should be doing? How should we structure our life together? What do we need to change? Where do we need to expand? What would be helpful to Kentucky churches? Let us know what you think!

"We may lament some of these changes, but they do not necessarily mean that the ecumenical movement is losing steam," he said. **The KCC will celebrate its 60th anniversary next fall with its Annual Assembly in Owensboro, to be held at Third Baptist Church. October 18-19, 2007.** Dr. Kinnamon went on to note that Christians are people of hope. Although we may continue to be divided, or just isolated from one another by pressures of money, time, staff, and other resources, we cannot deny that God has already made us one, reconciling us all—in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism—to one another and to our God. So we do not lose hope.

You may have read in past issues of *Intercom*, or in letters that we have sent out at the end of the year that the financial support of the KCC from our member communions now provides only 50% of the income the KCC needs. If you believe that Kentucky still needs the KCC, and that the churches and their leaders need a context in which to meet, your individual gifts will be essential to our future. We must now raise at least \$100,000 from other sources. Gifts on-line are now possible and secure.

During January and February, I am preparing materials for a strategic planning process to be undertaken by our Standing Committee on Policy and Structure. These materials will outline trends among the churches, and ecumenical organizations, and put together some of the best practices of the more creative responses to these trends among other state councils so that we in Kentucky might move forward in hope, and in God's power. Your ideas, your insights, your criticisms of our present life together and our present witness, are all welcome as I and the

Committee work on a new plan to make ecumenical life in Kentucky a viable and strong witness to God's will for unity and justice. The new plan, and possible new structure for our life together as Christians in Kentucky, will be presented at the Annual Assembly in October. You can write to me at [njc@kycouncilofchurches.org](mailto:njk@kycouncilofchurches.org). Please give us your best thoughts, your hopes and dreams for how our life together can be strengthened and improved. **God is at work among us. This, I believe.** In hope always, Nancy Jo

KCC'S MISSION: to promote the visible unity of Christ's church and se



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Thank You!

Contributing to the support of the ministries of the Kentucky Council of Churches since the September, 2006 issue of *Intercom* are:

Ecumeniacs: (\$1000+ /yr): Howard Reynolds; Kathryn Johnson

Activists: (\$300+ /yr) Carolyn Heidemann; Janet Dakan in memory of Bill Dakan

Advocates: (\$60+ /yr) John Kays, in honor of KCC Staff and in memory of Ray Ranta; Albert Pennybacker; Charlie Coyle; Steve Rhodes; Joe Graffis; Mark Henderson; Darren Brandon; Kent Gilbert; Julie Billips in honor of Caleb Turner's birth; Robert Kittendorf; Ruth Eschbach; David Hilton; Robert Stauffer; Michael Ward; J. Donald Graham in honor of Nancy Jo Kemper; Mary Catherine Heath Brown; William and Jeane Dennler; Ron Gaddie; Peter Salerno; Eric Mount

Friends: (any amount) Bob Nesmith; Ray and Kathy Ranta; John and Ruth Porter; Betty Wray; Ramona Clifton; David Burg; Ellen Shelby; Mrs. Owen Scheldorf; Carolyn Seiffert; Nancy Kratt; Maurice LeFevre; Linda Crawford; Maryrhea Morelock; Sidney Simandle; Bruce Kinloch; James Hill; Betty Rush; Carol Davies; Paul and Merry Jones; William Poole; Jan and Curt Ehrmantraut; Wayne and Virginia Bell; Georgia Meece; Clarence Barton; Donald Nunnally; Melissa Holland; Loran and Catherine Broadus in honor of Paul Crow; Gary Pennington; Lee and Joyce Hubbard; Richard Beliles; Eileen Breslin; Mary Ann Gray in memory of Joe E. Gray; Gary Drehmel; Rose Nelson.

KCC BOARD VOTES TO ENCOURAGE CHURCHES TO JOIN DARFUR CAMPAIGN

Nick Clooney, a resident of Augusta, Kentucky, and columnist and radio personality from Northern Kentucky, (he also happens to be the father of George and brother of the late Rosemary Clooney!), address the Executive Board of the Kentucky Council of Churches in their meeting in Frankfort on January 3, 2007. Clooney spoke of his visit with his son George to the Sudan, explaining some of the genesis of the conflict and describing the situation, as well as telling heart-rending stories of families who lost children and homes in the ongoing attacks on the Darfuree people.

In response the Executive Board voted to encourage their churches and members to become involved in the Campaign to Save Darfur, to sign the petition to President Bush, and to contact their members of Congress regarding the desperate plight of the people of Darfur and the need of the world to intervene to prevent further devastation. Nearly 2.5 million people have already been driven from their homes in Darfur, Sudan. The refugees now face starvation, disease, and rape while those who remain in Darfur risk displacement, torture and murder. The petition asks President Bush, the Secretary General of the United Nations, and Congress to:

1. Push for the immediate deployment of the already-authorized UN peacekeeping force.
2. Strengthen the understaffed African Union force already in Darfur until the UN force can be deployed.
3. Implement a fair and lasting Peace Agreement.
4. Increase humanitarian aid and ensure access for delivery.

The web-site, www.savedarfur.org has information, resources, and recommended advocacy steps. A Sunday to learn more about Darfur, and an opportunity for people to write letters was one of the possible responses that Kentucky churches could undertake. Mr. Clooney said the time is now to stop this new holocaust that is underway in Sudan