

Sen. David Ford
and Rep. Brian Hasler
2004 Government Leaders of the Year

It's a common expression, and often rightfully so, to say that business moves faster than government. Recent efforts, however, to close the gap between the two have yielded impressive legislative results and promise for future progress.

Technology, the flow of information and global competition have only quickened the pace for business. The Indiana General Assembly has moved forward in its own way, largely through the creation of committees dedicated to those issues. The committee leadership – Sen. David Ford (R-Hartford City) and Rep. Brian Hasler (D-Evansville) – in the first two years has helped bring about a closer working relationship between all involved parties.

“From a technology standpoint, we've seen private industries come together, trade associations come together and universities come together,” says David Millard, an attorney with Barnes & Thornburg who works closely with entrepreneurs and their companies. “The committees and particularly the chairmen have provided leadership in state government. If you get any one of the sectors out of sync, it's much like a wheel that is not round. Moving forward is very difficult.”

Crafting change

The names may be different – Economic Development and Technology in the Senate; Technology, Research & Development in the House – but the missions are the same. Both Ford and Hasler praise the party leadership for recognizing the importance of the issues and establishing new committees in a legislative process that, at times, goes long periods without changes.

“When I decided to run,” recalls Ford, first elected in 1994, but around the legislative process since serving as a Senate intern in 1973, “one thing I didn't know was ‘what are the long term plans here?’ After six or eight years, I learned, not in the executive branch, not in the legislative branch, that no one was looking over the horizon very much. The development of technology that would help push us into the 21st century – we were not set up to look at it.”

A 2001 letter from Ford to Senate President Pro Tempore Robert Garton set the stage. House members discussed the importance of the technology issues with their leadership. Garton and House Speaker Pat Bauer led the way in the establishment of the committees.

Hasler, first elected in 1996, brought a strong economic development background to the table. When he and Ford were named committee chairmen, they quickly found that they shared a similar thought process.

“We talked often, really before the process started,” Hasler notes, “and found we were kindred spirits. One of the most important things to making this work was open communication. It was not about egos, but what we can do for the people of Indiana.”

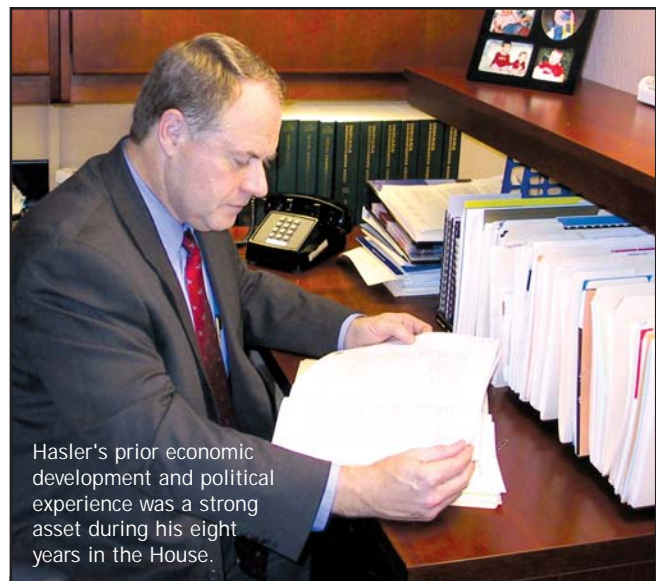
Ford concurs. “There was a real opportunity, with two committees with no history, no prior expectations. We put a lot of emphasis on what we could get done rather than who gets credit.”

With this new effort, however, came a responsibility to quickly learn more about the issues that would be brought before the committee. Despite what Hasler calls a “wide range of technology interests” among the House members appointed to his committee, both legislators realized the learning curve would be quite steep.

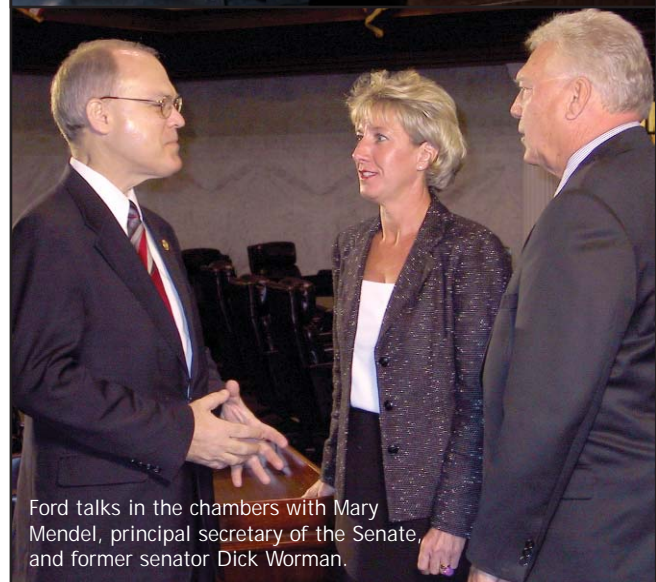
“We wanted committee members to understand what the latest technologies were,” says Ford, adding that there were numerous presentations mixed in with on-site visits. “That generated a certain amount of understanding, a certain amount of excitement.”

Hasler credits the committee members for their perseverance. “It was important to get the right people in the room, to bring that expertise to the table.”

Millard terms the process a very good example of how the legislature should work. “We can't expect the people involved in the



Hasler's prior economic development and political experience was a strong asset during his eight years in the House.



Ford talks in the chambers with Mary Mendel, principal secretary of the Senate, and former senator Dick Worman.

Hasler and Ford quickly found common ground in their effort to see the state emphasize technology as an economic development tool.



legislature to be the most technically sophisticated among us. We can expect them to be cognizant of the issues and willing to learn. We've moved light years ahead."

Right time, right place

Much of that movement emerged at the end of the 2003 legislative session. The work of the committees in establishing the importance of the issues and enhancing the understanding of their colleagues led to a number of developments, including:

- Extension of the research and development (R&D) tax credit to 2013
- Increased funding for the 21st Century Research & Technology Fund (\$75 million over two years) and initial funding for the state's certified technology parks

- Improvements in the certification process for the venture capital tax credit bill that had previously passed
 - Expansion of the I-Light 2 fiber optic system, increasing broadband capabilities for public entities around the state
- "I don't think anyone expected the kind of success we had. The credit goes to leadership and the administration," Hasler offers. "All the stars were aligned and we were able to get things through."

It's difficult to rank the accomplishments, Ford contends, but bringing permanency to the R&D tax credit (in 2004) was critical. Removing the uncertainty allows companies to invest in the facilities that are needed to attract and keep the Ph.D.s and other personnel necessary to be competitive.

"Technology is fun, but if it's all you have, it's just a toy," Ford asserts. "If it leads to better goods and services and improves the quality of life that people have, then it's a tool for the right reason." The role of the government is, in part, to "transfer the technology from the theoretical to the practical, from the academic to the commercial."

The state's fiscal condition and a short session in 2004 resulted in less to brag about than a year earlier. Several initiatives were passed, but did not receive funding. But, if 2003 was a home run, 2004 could easily be called a run-scoring double.

Hasler takes pride in passage of the STAR (State Technology Advancement & Retention) program that will eventually fund grants to enhance technology and reduce the number of Indiana college graduates who leave the state. Parts of that bill were introduced eight years earlier in his first session, and he says his House colleagues have vowed to continue the fight for funding.

Hasler did not seek re-election in 2004. Ford returns as chair

Continued on page 23

Government Leader of the Year

Rep. Brian Bosma and Rep. Pat Bauer	2003
Sen. Larry Borst	2002
Gov. Frank O'Bannon and Supt. of Public Instr. Suellen Reed	2001
Rep. Jeff Linder	2000
Rep. Bob Behning	1999
Sen. Teresa Lubbers	1998
U.S. Rep. Lee Hamilton	1997
U.S. Rep. David McIntosh	1996
Rep. Michael Smith and Sen. Thomas Weatherwax	1995
Rep. Paul Mannweiler	1994
Sen. Morris Mills	1993
Hon. Thomas Barnes	1992
Sen. Joseph Harrison	1991
U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar	1990



Technology companies like INCAPS (Indiana Centers for Applied Protein Sciences) and Therametric Technologies are benefiting from recent legislative initiatives. Hasler learns about INCAPS from Rick Ludwig, while Ford receives a demonstration and overview from Dr. George Stookey.

Government Leaders

Continued from page 12

of the Senate committee with an anticipated focus on broadband (the expansion of various technologies and statewide access) and the government role in enhancing geographic information systems (GIS).

Kraig Vonderan is CEO of MOST (Managed OutSource Technologies), a developer of medical software. The company is among those certified for the venture capital tax credit, with benefits already realized. He looks to further developments to improve the state's technology competitiveness.

"We've traditionally been a follower state," Vonderan notes. "The legislators are trying to change that; they're very focused on what needs to be done to put Indiana on the cutting edge."

The technology advancements directly relate back to economic development. Steve Beck, president of the Indiana Venture Center, says the companies that left Indiana in the past due to a lack of high-tech tax incentives are staying. In addition, his staff has been working with firms from Illinois and Ohio, among others, that are candidates to move here due to the improved business climate.

"The venture capital tax credit has caused early-stage investors to be interested in investing in new ideas," Beck adds. "It provides an immediate return on their investment through the tax deduction. That has been big for our angel network (linking investors with entrepreneurs)."

Full-time jobs

When not on General Assembly business, Ford is a lawyer in Hartford City. Other than college and the military, the east central Indiana area has been his lifelong home. Agriculture and manufacturing remain major parts of the economy in his district.

Education and developing a highly skilled workforce are essentials throughout the state, he says. Technology – using the tools available – can assist in the process. The way Ford sees it, developing those technologies and making people more aware of their existence is part of the job.

"The reason we send people to the General Assembly is to find ways to make life better for the people we represent," he states. The 40-plus hours a week, even when the legislature is not in session, make it a difficult juggling act at times. But the end results are worth the effort. "You see individual companies and schools; you see what they're doing. It makes you a bit of an optimist about Indiana."

Hasler entered the General Assembly representing portions of Vanderburgh and Warrick counties with aspirations of one

day moving on to Congress (he worked for three congressmen in his career). After learning that "if you worked hard, you could get results," he found a home in the legislature.

Marriage and two young children later, Hasler decided that family came first in not seeing re-election in 2004. He continues as director of new business development with Veazey Parrott Durkin & Shoulders, a rapidly growing architectural and engineering firm with offices in Evansville and Indianapolis.

Hasler hopes the life sciences initiative that has its deepest roots in central Indiana expands statewide. Like Ford, he stresses the need for putting the building blocks in place to assist Indiana workers now and in the future.

"We have to continue to improve the output of our young people so they are prepared to work in these areas. Business and tax climate and other things are important, but what we're hearing in economic development is, 'Do you have the people to support what we want to do?'"

Making a difference

Hasler proudly points to no party-line committee votes in the past two legislative sessions. He also recalls that a Republican member of the panel made the comment that "this was his favorite committee because we get things done. That can become infectious. People are realizing the economy is changing, and we have to change to."

In addition to the technology-related accomplishments, Hasler singles out his first bill that established an inventory tax-free zone at the Evansville airport and his involvement in the 1999 Workforce Investment Act. Improving economic development was the primary reason he ran for office, and he made an impact in that area throughout his four terms.

Ford will carry on the work that he describes with a passion – whether it's the mannequin simulator used for medical training at Indiana State University or the other "gizmos" he's witnessed at various universities and companies. He took it as a challenge when Garton questioned whether enough ideas would be generated for committee consideration.

"We still have not had enough things come before us," Ford says. "The legislative process is a very rolling process. If it's worthy of discussion, if it looks like it might make the people of the state better off, let's talk about it."

Talking – and acting on those discussions – has been a successful path the last two legislative sessions. It will undoubtedly continue in the future.