

Legislative Leaders Have Their Say

The Indiana Chamber's Central Indiana Legislative Preview takes place each year the day before November's Organization Day. At the 2007 version, Chamber President Kevin Brinegar presented a property tax overview and members of all four caucuses participated in a question-and-answer session.

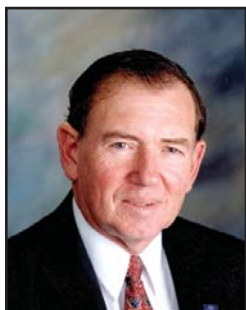
Below is a comment from each on property tax reform.



Senate President Pro Tempore David Long (R-Fort Wayne):

"How often have you heard the devil is in the details around here? But it is true. And obviously when you get down to trying to deal with issues like controlling spending and debt, those are going to be the most difficult issues to try to get right. We'll have a lot of resistance from the schools and from local government. There will be a lot of hue and cry about whatever happened to home rule. I can understand those comments, but if you don't get control of the spending and the debt you're not going to get through reform here at all.

"I think the rest of the issues we can work out. But that one issue there will be the one that will be the most difficult to bring everyone together. But I think we can do it. We have to. We're all stewing in the same pot here. Republican or Democrat, it doesn't matter to the public."



Senate Democrat Leader Richard Young (D-Milltown):

"I represent seven rural counties. The impact is all across the board. But there is a consensus that property taxes are too high. There's also a consensus, I think, that ... we need to build a system that is fair and is understandable in how it works, and that is based on the ability to pay. I think that with regard to doing away with property taxes, I think all of our goals would always be: How can we do away with all taxes? We know that we have functions of government and responsibilities that require funding.

"We need to get a system that is understandable and builds uniformity across the state of Indiana. I believe that other states have been able to accomplish this. I believe that we will, and I know there is a tremendous will within the General Assembly in a bipartisan way to find solutions to make the citizens of this state feel that we have a fair system of taxation."



House Republican Leader Brian Bosma (R-Indianapolis):

"I think we have a unique opportunity this session to restructure our tax system and local government in a way we've never had the opportunity to before. Now, why do I say that? Number one, we have the perceived tax crisis out there which is a crisis, in fact, in some places and is a perceived crisis other places which, I believe, will result in our General Assembly dealing with our tax mix.

"It will be our responsibility to do so in a way that isn't just politically positive but is positive for our state's economy for the next generation. Because I believe that if we are successful in coming to a solution, we will be charting a course for the next generation with respect to tax policy."



House Democrat Caucus Chairman Dale Grubb (D-Covington):

"If we were to eliminate property taxes totally, the figures I see from all the experts are we've got to raise sales and income taxes 3(%) and 4%. I live in a border community. I already see jobs going into Illinois because of various factors and I don't want that to continue to happen. We simply can't do it. I would love to stand here, and I'm sure every other politician up here would love to say, 'Let's eliminate property taxes.'

"But the second part of that is I've got a constitutional responsibility to ensure that the children of this state have a fair and decent education, that we have an infrastructure that's supportive of the businesses that we have, and hopefully (conductive) to job expansion. I don't have the latitude that some of the specific self-interest groups have of just saying 'I want to eat the pie.' I've got to help bake it. And that means tough decisions. It's (eliminating property taxes) not feasible."