



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

GRIFFIN REFLECTS ON CHAMBER CAREER

By Tom Schuman

EDITOR'S NOTE: Vince Griffin has retired after more than 18 years with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and as a statewide authority on environmental, energy and water issues. He looks back on some of the major topics, as well as his experiences working on behalf of Chamber members and the state's business community.

BizVoice®: Indiana Vision 2025, the Chamber's long-range economic development action plan, has a goal of attaining a top five ranking for Indiana's regulatory environment. How is the state doing in this area?

Griffin: Tom, we're doing great. Our air, land and water haven't been this clean since arguably before the Industrial Revolution. All 92 counties in the state of Indiana meet every one of the air quality standards. That's exciting because we routinely get hammered because we are the number one manufacturing state in the nation and we do have emissions. So sometimes, comparably, we don't look as good as other states.

BV: Those annual reports that come out criticizing Indiana's air quality. Why do some of those not quite tell the whole story?

Griffin: That's a good observation. What a lot of these different reports do is misrepresent some of the facts. Keith Baugues, the assistant commissioner for air, has for the last three or four years gone into (data for) every county in the United States and done a deep-down analysis. Compared to some of these reports, Indiana looks very good as a result of the studies he has done, which are credible. Some of the other studies, I say, it's like shooting the arrow and then painting the target. They are very accurate because they've cherry-picked the data and not presented it in a fair, scientific way.

BV: Talk about the shift – from punitive to partner – that has been seen in the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) during your time at the Chamber.

Griffin: Back in the 1960s when the environmental regulations were first coming out, industry was in a kind of, "Heck no, we won't go" attitude. Then in the '70s, they were in a compliance mode. In the '80s and '90s, there were even books written – focusing on beyond compliance – as industry got into this. From 2000 on, most businesses and industries have been in a stewardship mode – how can we do a better job. IDEM has also followed that. Governor Daniels, when he came into office, said, "Let's work with industry first, instead of just punishing them, and we can be even better than we already are."

BV: What are a couple of the biggest issues that stand out during your time at the Chamber?

Griffin: I would say that key topics have been the "no more stringent than", which is a statement that we won't be any more restrictive than the federal standards, which are already very restrictive. We, the Indiana Chamber, have long stood up and said, "We don't need to have that law. We have adequate amounts of regulations and the process we work with right now with the Environmental Rules Board." And there's a statute that says if we go beyond the federal standards, here's all the hurdles we have to cross first.

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It takes a minimum of 18 months to move a rule through the process. We don't think that we should have something more aggressive. We've certainly asked our Environmental Affairs Committee: Should we do this? And they've come back every time and said, "No, we should not have more stringent regulations going forward." We have a process that works very well.

Another thing that has been exciting to work on is water. I've been called AquaVince and Aquaman a number of times, which I find amusing. But we, the Chamber, have been the leader, I think, in developing a credible water plan for Indiana.

BV: Could you have anticipated the reaction to the 2014 Indiana Chamber Foundation study on water resources?

Griffin: I didn't expect the groundswell of attention we got from our study. We recognized we needed to do something – to say here is where we are; where do we need to go? We contracted with Dr. Jack Wittman, internationally renowned water expert who lives in Bloomington, Indiana. In six months, we produced a study that received national attention. I got phone calls from all over the nation when we released it, asking, "When is Indiana going to run out of water. You're doing this water plan. We thought you guys had plenty of water."

I would say, "No, we're not running out of water. The point is that now is the time when we can be doing something proactively before we hit a crisis." Unfortunately, the policymakers in the Statehouse often don't react until there is a crisis. We don't have a crisis; that's the opportunity we have. And I would like to give

tremendous credit to Sen. Ed Charbonneau from Valparaiso, for taking this on four or five years ago, working with us and not being resistant, but being receptive. Going forward, I'm very excited about some of the possibilities.

BV: What are some of the next steps?

Griffin: The mantra that I've been pushing and Sen. Charbonneau has been pushing is data before decisions. Indiana, as Dr. Wittman points out, has one of the most robust data sources in the nation because we've been collecting data since 1983. But we don't do anything with it – not much with it. It's kind of like having a Ferrari in the garage that you drive around the block once a year. We can do so much more with that data. One, we need to secure that data and better collect that data and use it in a productive way – that's going to be very important.

BV: Talk about energy. Indiana has traditionally had adequate, reliable, low-cost supplies. What is today's energy landscape?

Griffin: It is changing dramatically. When everybody goes home at night, you flip a switch, your turn a tap and you flush – and you expect those things to work. We've been blessed in Indiana and throughout our country to have those things. Not that we're going to run out of electricity, but the source of that electricity is being seriously challenged. Indiana has about a 300-year supply of coal in ground and we've used that coal in a very productive way over the decades.

As much as 80% to 90% of our electricity has historically come



Whether testifying at the Statehouse or sharing insights on the radio, Vince Griffin has always provided strong representation to Indiana Chamber members and worked well with colleagues (former Chamber President Chris LaMothe with Vince in bottom center photo).

from coal and that's shifting as Washington, D.C., the EPA, has declared a war on coal to pretty much shut it down.

You've seen a lot of that coal-fired power switching over to natural gas right now and at a cheaper cost certainly. How long will that cheap gas be there? How long will that volume of gas be there when you start making electricity? Renewable energy is an important part of our energy pie, if you will, but it's not the main thing because if the wind doesn't blow and the sun doesn't shine, you don't have that energy. Until we create a way to store that energy, it's not going to be a huge part of our energy pie.

BV: Who are one or two people who have made the biggest impact on your career?

Griffin: So many people have helped me. I've tried to learn from everyone I've ever worked with whether they're doing something positive or negative – (saying to myself) that's something maybe I ought to think about doing or maybe that's something I shouldn't do.

I'd have to say my wife, Pamela, has been a tremendous influence on me. She's always been positive, always been probably overly confident about me, more so than I have, about doing things – (saying) you can do that. That's very exciting to have – your best friend, your spouse helping you through this. Then I have to say my mom. She was an incredibly upbeat person, extremely intelligent, everybody's friend. I think I learned a lot from her in a very positive way about how to react to situations and work with people.

BV: What have you enjoyed the most about being part of the Chamber team?

Griffin: The Chamber's a family. We have 50 people in that

family – and I joke and say that's just a few more people than we have in the Pam and Vince family. But it's always been a team effort; we've always gone at things in a group way, a family way. I think we've got the best quality government affairs team of any association, any organization in the state. And that's been exciting. I think we've always been able to make a difference and produce a quality product.

BV: What's next in addition to spending more time with your family?

Griffin: That's Pamela's biggest worry, that I'm not going to be challenged enough. We love bicycling. We've had the opportunity to bicycle all over Europe and we have a lot of friends around the country who have encouraged us, at this point anyway, to come visit and bicycle with them. I still play racquetball, enjoy playing tournaments, and that's a family sport for us too.

Pamela's training to run her 30th consecutive Mini Marathon. We ran 25 of them together until my knee surgery. I will be out there on the course on a bicycle supporting her. Then with all the kids and grandkids – we have 18 grandkids from ages 1 to 21 – we'll be going to lots of sporting events. We do now and we'll probably do even more.

BV: Are you going to miss those marble floors at the Statehouse?

Griffin: Tom, I've done the (bicycle) ride across Indiana three times and, as I said, run 25 mini marathons, but those marble floors hurt a heck of a lot more than doing that. It is painful. It's hard to believe when you go home at night after being over there for hours – you're just exhausted. I won't miss that. (But) I'll miss the people and the associations.

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