

Legislative Leaders Preview Key Topics

In the Indiana Chamber's traditional Central Indiana Legislative Preview event the day before Organization Day, three caucus leaders answered questions and shared their views on a variety of topics.

Participating were David Long (R-Fort Wayne), Senate President Pro Tempore; Vi Simpson (D-Bloomington), Senate minority leader; and Brian Bosma (R-Indianapolis), House minority leader. House Speaker Pat Bauer (D-South Bend) did not participate or send a representative of his caucus.

The topics and some of the comments included:

Keeping Major Moves funding for its intended use of addressing transportation needs

Bosma: "Those funds are fully allocated. We're the envy of the nation for the deal we cut in 2005. The challenge is to find the next Major Moves." (He indicated the need to look at interstate medians, terming them "valuable pieces of property.")

Education funding in today's difficult economic times

Simpson: "This is going to be one of the toughest budgets I've faced in 25 years in the Indiana Senate. We have reduced revenues coming in and increased responsibilities in the budget. The property tax legislation assumed 4% growth. The current quarter is flat. While the projections are flat for next quarter, I think that is optimistic. We have to be very careful how we go about setting priorities."

Bosma says a unique solution is needed this time as the state has assumed 100% of school operating costs. "When we faced this before, we could put whatever state money there was into it and allow the rest to go up in property taxes. That is not an option this time."

Repeating the 2008 vote to put 1%-2%-3% property tax caps in the Constitution

Long: "To delay implementation continues to leave uncertainty at the local government level. If we don't (approve the caps), we leave ourselves open to judgment on the constitutionality of the caps and for future General Assemblies to change. If we don't put it in the Constitution, I guarantee that 1-2-3 will change. Not putting it into certainty in the Constitution will be a serious mistake."

Simpson, saying it's too early to tell what types of property tax

shifts will take place with the caps, says, "I guess I'm the only conservative left in the Senate. Two years, in my mind, is not enough to know what these numbers are going to do. Waiting a year doesn't change when voters will get to vote on this."

Chances that immigration legislation will pass in Indiana in 2009

Simpson: "None."

Long: "One thing is very obvious and that is the true authority for this issue is with the federal government."

Bosma: He believes legislation will be introduced, but "I have no prediction as to whether or not it will be successful."

Support of a renewable energy mandate

Bosma: "We have to move in this direction. Indiana has been a leader the last few years, but we need to do much more. Despite the fact that, in general, I'm a free market person, on this one, we need to move the market."

Long: Concerned about anti-coal comments from the federal level, he notes, "We've been making great progress in the cleanliness of its use. Despite diversifying our economy, we will always build things in Indiana. To do that, we need energy. The realism is that a great deal of the nation gets its energy from coal. We have to push for cleaner

technologies within existing sources."

Which of the Kernan-Shepard Commission local government efficiency recommendations do you support?

Long: "The first two – having a single county executive and giving legislative powers to the County Council. I think that is doable (and will set the stage for other reforms) and give each county a chance to implement it by referendum."

Simpson says she supports local decision-making and wholeheartedly disagrees with a one-size-fits-all solution, adding, "Having served in county government, I can tell you there are too many locally elected officials at the county level. A word of caution, however, is that I don't think the way to get things passed this session is to bite off more than you can chew."



From left: Brian Bosma, Indiana Chamber President Kevin Brinegar, David Long and Vi Simpson.