

Legislatively Speaking

Chamber Identifies Top 2011 Priorities

Health care and the business of sports are featured prominently in this issue of *BizVoice*®. Legislative sessions, however, do not come with documented treatment strategies or clear game plans. But just as doctors/nurses and coaches/athletes adapt to unexpected circumstances, so do the Chamber's issue experts.

Numerous topics, some anticipated and others unexpected, come to the forefront each year. The Chamber, through its policy committee work with volunteers from member companies, is ready for action. The following are the top pre-session priorities as the Chamber represents its nearly 5,000 member companies that employ 800,000 Hoosier workers.

EDUCATION

- **Support restricting items for teacher collective bargaining strictly to those involving compensation (wages and benefits).** Collective bargaining should not be an avenue to leverage and decide other school-related issues outside of compensation.
- **Support enacting merit or performance-based pay structures for teachers and school administrators.** Would encourage and reward school personnel who have a positive impact on students' academic growth.
- **Support expanding school options for parents** to allow, at a minimum, sending children in failing schools or school districts to attend other public or private schools. Would engage parents by allowing them to make the most important decision about their children's education.
- **Support expanding entities that can authorize charter schools.** Charter schools have proven to be a source of high quality and high level learning for students.
- **Support funding and facilities equity for charter schools.** Operational funds for charter schools should not be delayed, as is current practice; and unused public school facilities should be made available for charter schools, along with equitable shares of facilities and transportation funds.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Support the state adopting a right-to-work statute** banning the practice of requiring union membership or financial support as a condition of employment. Would remove a significant impediment to investment and job creation. Would help Indiana continue to distinguish itself from neighboring states and to build a national leadership position in economic development.
- **Support a statute authorizing public-private partnerships (or P3s) statewide for transportation/infrastructure projects.** Would increase private sector investment and job creation while providing critical financial resources to meet state and local infrastructure needs.

ENERGY

- **Support net metering** (what remains after the deduction of energy outflows from metered energy inflows) provided it does not create additional cost for business or unrealistic requirements for utilities. Within appropriate limits, net metering has the potential to promote the generation of additional power.
- **Oppose renewable energy mandates.** Any such mandate would present unreasonable costs to power consumers and utilities. Plus, Indiana already has significant renewable energy development without benefit of a mandate.
- **Support policies that allow Indiana to use its coal supply.** Coal is plentiful in Indiana and clean coal should be an important part of the state's energy mix.

The Central Indiana Legislative Preview was one of nearly a dozen events in which Indiana Chamber issue experts provided an early look at key topics in the 2011 General Assembly session.



ENVIRONMENT

- **Oppose** any state regulation that is more restrictive than a similar federal regulation without first being examined for necessity. Sound science rationale, a cost-benefit impact analysis and review by the state's environmental boards should clearly show any difference between the state and federal rules, and justification for a state rule if it is to be adopted.

HEALTH CARE

- **Support** total ban on smoking in the workplace. Smoking is detrimental to employee health and productivity, and contributes to higher premiums for businesses providing employee health benefits.
- **Oppose** any health care mandates or assignment of benefits (AOB) policy. Mandates and AOB both serve to increase the cost of health care premiums for employers and their employees.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- **Support** meaningful local government reform, with a strong focus on townships. Eliminating township government entirely is preferred, but at a minimum: eliminate township boards, move fiscal oversight to county and have one entity oversee poor relief, plus coordinate safety protection at county level. Nepotism and conflicts of interest should not be tolerated. Current local government system, particularly in townships, lacks accountability and can be made far more effective in the delivery of services, which will better serve Hoosiers and produce more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

LABOR RELATIONS

- **Support** overhaul of state's unemployment insurance system to address tax levels, eligibility and benefits to bring revenues and benefits more in line with each other. Would decrease the amount of fraud in the system and make better use of limited revenues.
- **Oppose** any immigration policy that attempts to take away an employer's right to do business. Employers should not be made to act as immigration police; policies that include revoking a business license if unwittingly employing an

How You Can Stay Informed

You can take advantage of a variety of tools the Indiana Chamber offers to remain updated on Indiana Statehouse issues and how they impact your business. Among the offerings:

- All legislator biographies, committee assignments, contact information and more are included in the "2011 Indiana General Assembly Legislative Directory"
- Members-only monthly policy calls bring the latest topics and issue experts to you, with the opportunity to ask questions and make comments
- The *Legislative Report* for members each Friday provides an overview of that week's events and a preview of what is to come

Learn more about these and other programs at www.indianachamber.com.



Legislators presented their viewpoints at the Central Indiana event. Participating were (top, left): Sen. Jim Arnold (D-LaPorte) and Sen. Brandt Hershman (R-Monticello); (bottom) House Speaker Brian Bosma (R-Indianapolis) and Rep. Linda Lawson (D-Hammond).

undocumented worker are detrimental to countless innocent workers and the state's economy on the whole.

- **Oppose** following HR policies: paid Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), mandatory break periods and worker classification. Policies on FMLA and breaks have the potential to be abused by employees and negatively impact productivity. Separately, laws already exist that adequately define what constitutes a worker vs. independent contractor.

TAXATION

- **Oppose** any new or increased business tax to balance state budget, including sales tax on services and suspension of research and development tax credit, patent income credit or job growth incentives. In order for signs of economic recovery to continue, employers need to see certainty in the business climate to hire workers and invest money.
- **Support** exempting the taxation of machinery and equipment. Would encourage more business investment to enhance productivity.
- **Support** improvements to the tax administration procedures that would result in more fairness and uniformity of the audit and refund processes. Currently there are inconsistencies and inequities in both, which can also take longer than necessary.

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Learn more about the Chamber's issue expert team at www.indianachamber.com/index.php/specialists