



PREFERRED VIEWING

Legislators Mixed
on Computer Usage

Approximately five million pages of legislative bills were printed during the 2007 General Assembly session. Five million sheets of paper equal approximately 50,000 pounds — 25 pallets with 40 cartons per pallet. A typical semi-trailer can hold 22 pallets.

A 2007 story in *State Legislatures* magazine was titled “Going Paperless.” While the article goes on to say there may never be a completely electronic lawmaking body at the state level, it indicates that some are certainly moving in that direction. Many states, including Indiana, make computers available to all legislators and put bills, schedules and other needed information online. Whether those computers are used, and how often, is up to the individual lawmakers.

The advantages: increased efficiency, enhanced ability to communicate with constituents and others, and cost savings (see sidebar story on Page 26). But even some of the staunchest technology supporters at the Statehouse say that sometimes they can't do without a paper copy of the legislation. Other lawmakers simply aren't comfortable with the computer and prefer to rely on the paper methods they have used throughout their careers.

‘E’ for electronic

Matt Pierce (D-Bloomington) was first elected to the House in 2002 but has been around the legislative process since the late 1980s, including a stint as principal clerk. He recalls the Bill Room in which staffers were basically guessing how many printed copies of legislation that people might need.

“At the end of the session, before recycling, I'm sure there were mountains of paperwork hauled off to the landfill,” he says.

While there were bumpy patches in the road in the early days of electronic communications, Pierce states, “It's hard to think how we would operate without it today.”

E-mail has replaced letters as the primary form of written communication. “With people used to using e-mail, you can be informal and turn around an answer pretty quickly. A one-paragraph response can get to the heart of the matter. It speeds up the process. If you write a one-paragraph letter, people are not happy.”

Allen Paul (R-Richmond) has served in the Senate since 1986. He is self-admittedly “not a great computer person,” but strongly believes that no matter the format, the communication from outside comes too often and too fast.

“E-mail is a whole new ballgame – with no more staff. I'm splitting a staff person with another senator (as nearly all legislators do), and it's impossible to cover the subjects people want to cover. It overwhelms the person,” Paul emphasizes.

“Things travel so quickly. We have a debate on the floor, and I've got 50 e-mails in a matter of minutes. People expect information and a response immediately. This session will be particularly interesting to watch,” he continues. “It will be absolutely unbelievable the comments and information we will receive regarding property taxes.”

Paul adds that the fax machine, which sits outside his Senate office, is going 24 hours a day and his wife hands him a stack of e-mails at home at night. The electronic revolution hasn't made it any easier on the mail carrier or the legislative recipient. Paul calls back after our



Rep. Bill Crawford (D-Indianapolis) shows (during the first House Ways and Means Committee hearing in December) some of the paperwork already associated with the HB 1001 property tax legislation.



“If I have to go to the podium or if I'm giving a speech, it's easier than taking the computer up there. My son would probably have no trouble taking the laptop to the podium and giving a speech. He's used to working from the screen. I grew up on paper and am more used to it.”

Scott Reske (D-Pendleton)



Sen. David Ford (left) utilizes streaming video on the Internet to keep better informed about what is taking place in other areas of the Statehouse.

interview to report a daily mail bundle of “invitations – 10 of them today – people asking for donations, newspapers, books, magazines, annual reports, school projects. We get phone calls at home.

“I talk about it – it’s a changing job. Who can do this in the future and still make a living.”

Maximum efficiency

David Ford (R-Hartford City) is Paul’s Senate colleague and a longtime legislative leader in all things technology. His laptop, he points out, is indispensable.

“You can have it all right there no matter where you are, as long as you have an Internet connection. It’s a very good way to keep track of all my things,” Ford comments. “I keep things in spreadsheets, color coded. The biggest thing for me is just keeping organized.”

Beyond the computer, Ford finds great benefit in the streaming audio and video webcasts that have increased in recent years. The result is enhanced communication, both internally and externally.

“Being on the Senate side, if I want to know what’s going on in the House, I can tune in and watch. I can send messages to House colleagues, staff members or others. When I first got here, we did all that with pages,” he offers. “You didn’t know if your message ever got there.

“Now, I can have a conversation instantly with anyone, anytime. People at home watching the video can make comments on the debate.”

Coming Attractions: the Indiana Channel?

Indiana residents who wish to, on their own, pay close attention to the legislative process have a difficult task. That job becomes even more difficult the farther one lives away from Indianapolis.

Senate President Pro Tem David Long (R-Fort Wayne) wants to change that. David Ford (R-Hartford City), chair of the Economic Development and Technology Committee, is leading the way in making it happen.

“Sen. Ford has wanted to complete the I-Light system (the state’s fiber optic network for higher education). I shared that interest, as well as wanting to bring the Legislature to areas outside of Indianapolis on a regular basis,” Long summarizes, “so people can watch, to the extent they’re interested, not only our full sessions but committees.”

Funding was passed in 2007 to complete both. The idea for a C-SPAN type television channel for Indiana government has evolved into efforts to create the Indiana Channel (strict copyrights are associated with the C-SPAN name). The logistics will not be completed in time for the 2008 General Assembly session.

Meetings throughout 2007 were driving toward the use of the (nine) public television stations around the state, with I-Light as the delivery system, Long explains. A recent request for information from the state opens the process to other potential providers.

“That was a very proper and necessary step,” Long reports. “There has to be a cost analysis for what it will take to get this up and running. We have to do it responsibly so taxpayers benefit. I think we’re on the way to doing this in the most fiscally responsible way we can.”

What started as a Senate Republican initiative now has all four legislative caucuses involved in a nonpartisan approach. Long says the executive and judicial branches are included, with his personal desire to see state agency and Supreme Court hearings be part of the broadcasts.

Long says the technology is in place. It’s important to have an informed citizenry, one that is not entirely dependent on media coverage. Although a final plan is not set in stone, the Senate leader notes, “I’ll be extremely disappointed if we’re not up and running by 2009.”

Credit for keeping the project on track must go to Ford, according to Long. “He has all the contacts in the technology world in Indiana and has been bringing all the right people together. He deserves special kudos for getting this where it is.”

Although the Indiana Channel is not ready to hit the airwaves, increased Internet access will be available in 2008. All Senate committee rooms (and many in the House) have been wired for streaming of committee hearings.

Resource: David Long, Indiana Senate, at (317) 232-9416

Ford also makes extensive use of archived sessions. Even the simple step of putting a video monitor in the hallway outside several committee rooms has been a big plus. "The rooms are small; it's hard to hear; it's almost impossible to get a seat. If you just want to hear and don't have to be there, you can see better, hear better and come and go when you want."

Ford believes that nearly all of his colleagues, in both the Senate and House, are at least making some use of technology. It's progressed from a few laptops in use several years ago to nearly all of them open on their desks today.

Sheila Klinker (D-Lafayette) has been a member of the House since 1982. She will respond to e-mail at the office (she doesn't have Internet access at home), having her legislative assistant provide her with the messages. She doesn't begrudge the efforts of others to incorporate technology, but provides a cautionary note.

"A lot of people have computers on their desk. If I do, I can't see and there's no room to write," she claims. "Vernon Smith is next to me and he uses half my space with his computer. Even though it's convenient for some, they still turn around and get the paper copy of the bill from me."

Klinker is certain that computer usage will continue to grow. "But it can negate listening if you have a computer in



Rep. Sheila Klinker cautions that it is important to not let computers get in the way of simply doing a good job of listening.

there (in committee meetings). It's really important to be attentive and listen."

Paper has its place

Scott Reske (D-Pendleton) was first elected to the House in 2002. He says access to data and speeding up the information gathering process – through word processing, document management and the Legisoft software program – are appreciated.

Indiananet[®]

**INDIANA'S MOST POWERFUL
ONE-STOP-SHOP FOR
LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION**

- UNLIMITED ACCESS
- MULTIPLE USER ACCOUNTS
- FREE TRAINING AND CONSULTATION

Subscribe today: www.indianachamber.com/indiananet
or contact Jonathan Wales at (800) 804-6854



Sen. Allen Paul (left) has seen the days of senators typing their own response letters to constituents become a thing of the past. Rep. Matt Pierce believes that technical advances only help improve efficiency.



use e-mail, word processing and Legisoft.”

Pierce also says it’s easier to go to the podium on the House floor with paper in hand. At his desk, he says he can “pretty much put the laptop on auto pilot. You can bring up the bills, the amendments. I like it particularly when we’re on deadlines for second and third readings, and a huge amount of bills are coming up.” If a factual debate is taking place, he’ll even go on the Internet to find an independent report that provides the answer.

The term technology, however, is best reserved for his full-time role with a civil engineering firm or for the Technology, Research and Development Committee that he chairs that focuses on issues such as telecommunications, nanotechnology, biomedical technology and connectivity issues.

Reske, like Pierce and Ford, is a devout computer user. All, however, still rely at times on those paper copies of the bills.

“It’s easier on my eyes,” Reske contends. “If I have to go to the podium or if I’m giving a speech, it’s easier than taking the computer up there. My son would probably have no trouble taking the laptop to the podium and giving a speech. He’s used to working from the screen. I grew up on paper and am more used to it.

“Sure, the computer has reduced the paper, but it’s certainly not eliminated it. I would say most legislators

Just How Much Printing Takes Place

In the 2007 legislative session, almost five million pages of bills were printed at a cost of nearly \$250,000 – about five cents per page. Before the printing for the Legislature was brought in-house earlier this decade, the state was paying 9.5 cents per page.

Jack Ross, preparing to go through his first session as executive director of the Legislative Services Agency (LSA), says there has been efficiency measures implemented and cost savings realized in recent years. He explains that printing takes place at the following times:

- When a newly prepared bill has gone through all the checks and balances and been approved by the author, a “few copies” are printed. That initial version is not distributed to all legislators, although 62 copies of introduced bills are dispensed to media, state agencies and others. All bills are made available electronically.
- When a bill comes out of committee in the first house, it is reprinted and a copy given to every senator or representative in that chamber. The date on that bill, Ross explains, triggers the deadline for second reading amendments.
- The extent of amendments at second or third reading helps determine if another reprinting takes place in the original house. The Speaker of the House or Senate President Pro Tem makes that determination.
- The same procedures are followed in the second house: reprinted after committee consideration and reprinted, if requested by the leader of that chamber, after amendment.
- Ross says legislation that goes to conference committee is not reprinted by LSA. When legislation is passed, 25 copies

of the enrolled act are printed for the house of origin.

In 2007, the length of bills ranged from two pages to a high of 609 pages. The average length was five pages. Additional printing, Ross adds, may take place by individual legislators or caucuses.

Bringing the printing in-house, he notes, “saves hundreds of thousands of dollars each session. There is better turnaround time, and if there is a problem we don’t have to call a vendor.”

Recent legislation has also reduced paper usage. Various bills require agencies and commissions to file reports with the General Assembly. The paper copies of the past have been replaced by electronic versions. LSA organizes and indexes the reports, posts them on its web site and reminds legislators they are there for their viewing.

LSA also is charged with publishing the monthly *Indiana Register* and the *Indiana Administrative Code*. New laws, proposed rules, notices and more are now available electronically or on CD.

“There has been some push back on that,” Ross admits. “Some groups want to make sure the electronic records are authenticated. A lot of lawyers like to have those books (with the code) in front of them. Universally, people say it’s much easier to do research and find documents. It’s better than thumbing through paper copies, which can be very tedious.”

LSA does pay attention to its counterparts in other states. Despite the progress made in reducing paper costs, Ross says the search continues for additional savings.

Resource: Jack Ross, Legislative Services Agency, at (317) 232-9873



But in committee, he says, “I like a hard copy. Bills are being amended on the fly. It’s more practical to work over the bill, to line out what you want to change, to reword, then read it back to make sure it’s doing what you want it to do.”

While Ford is happy that the days are past when legislators wrote and pasted in changes in elaborate notebooks, he will still utilize the paper copies of each bill that are provided for floor votes. “I’ll have interns put them in folders, in order. It’s a little quicker that way to find things and write things on the pages.”

Also a part of history is the day, as Paul recalls, when “senators were doing their own mail, typing them out.” He says it’s a bit overwhelming today for him to even be able to sign all his letters.

As for the recent advances and a look ahead, Pierce offers, “When I first started, we struggled to have the disk space to have enough room to store all the bills. Now I have archives of all the session materials for the last six, eight years. As the technology increases, you have those things that give you new abilities and make what you have now more efficient.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: State Rep. Matt Pierce at h61@in.gov

State Sen. Allen Paul at s27@in.gov

State Sen. David Ford at s19@in.gov

State Rep. Sheila Klinker at h27@in.gov

State Rep. Scott Reske at h37@in.gov

Indiana Chamber.
The Voice of Indiana Business.®

2008 Indiana General Assembly
LEGISLATIVE DIRECTORY
Brought to you by:
Casino
association of INDIANA

**STATEHOUSE
DECISION-MAKERS
AT YOUR FINGERTIPS**

**2008 Indiana
General Assembly
Legislative Directory**

- Biographies
- Photos
- Contact information

Call Ann or Lisa at (800) 824-6885 or www.indianachamber.com/publications