

## Taxed Out? Let's Talk Improved Structure, Reduced Spending

So, it's only January and you're sick and tired of hearing about property taxes. Feel free to read on. The entire property tax (last mention of those two words in this column – I promise) reform issue received a welcome addition in mid-December with the release of the Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform report.

The focus of much of the debate thus far has been on who pays what. While an integral part of the solution, true reform will not take place without comprehensively addressing the spending side of the equation. The recommendations from the panel led by former Gov. Joe Kernan and Randall Shepard, chief justice of the Indiana Supreme Court, effectively shine the spotlight where it truly belongs.

Page 34 has the details on the commission's findings. In short, the panel has put in place a blueprint for action. Establishment of a financing structure for our state's future goes hand in hand with local government efficiency. One does not work without the other. They should be considered together as we continue the movement through the legislative process.

The Indiana Chamber was proud to contribute to the commission's comprehensive review. Past studies, including the 2004 Chamber report titled *Indiana Project for Efficient Local Government*, served as important sources of information and analysis. Key Chamber staff and business community leaders identified by the organization were among the many interviewees as the Kernan-Shepard panel gathered input from a wide variety of statewide resources.

It has been noted many times over the last four years that Indiana's government structure dates back to 1851. The goal is to not only modernize that configuration, but put a process in place that guides our state's future. That requires bold, aggressive measures – which the commission has delivered.

The ball now moves to the General Assembly and the governor's office. The Indiana Chamber is prepared to do everything it can to help carry it the rest of the way for the benefit of all Hoosiers.



Kevin M. Brinegar  
President



# BizVoice

www.bizvoicemagazine.com

January/February 2008  
Volume 11, Number 1

**BizVOICE®**

**Publisher**

Kevin Brinegar

kbrinegar@indianachamber.com

**Editor**

Tom Schuman

(317) 264-3792

tschuman@indianachamber.com

**Layout/Graphics**

Tony Spataro

tspataro@indianachamber.com

**Managing Editor**

Rebecca Patrick

rpatrick@indianachamber.com

**Writers/Editors**

Candace Gwaltney

cgwaltney@indianachamber.com

Symone Salisbury

ssalisbury@indianachamber.com

Matt L. Ottinger

mottinger@indianachamber.com

Jonathan Wales

jwales@indianachamber.com

**Advertising**

Jim Wagner

(317) 264-6876

jwagner@indianachamber.com

**Contributors**

Tim Brewer

Steve Corona

Jenifer Groth

David Nilssen

Michaline Pavnic

Brooke Pyne

Bill Stanczykiewicz

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**Indiana Chamber of Commerce  
Chair**

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*BizVoice®* (ISSN 1521-0146) is published bimonthly by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, 115 W. Washington, Suite 850S, P.O. Box 44926, Indianapolis, IN 46244-0926. *BizVoice®* magazine is provided as a benefit of membership in the Indiana Chamber of Commerce. Non-member subscriptions: \$25.20 per year (includes sales tax). Periodicals postage paid at Indianapolis. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *BizVoice®*, 115 W. Washington, Suite 850S, P.O. Box 44926, Indianapolis, IN 46244-0926.

Indiana Chamber of Commerce  
115 W. Washington, Suite 850S  
P.O. Box 44926  
Indianapolis, IN 46244-0926  
Phone: (317) 264-3110, Fax: (317) 264-6855  
Internet address: www.indianachamber.com  
E-mail: bizvoice@indianachamber.com

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