

Legislators Put Brakes on Progress

Individual circumstances often determine whether one is happy when their child brings home C grades on his or her report card. When it comes to measuring Indiana's economic performance, a C is definitely not good enough. Unfortunately, it would appear that too many Hoosiers are content with simply being average.

While there is evidence of improvement, the seventh edition of the Indiana Chamber's *Economic Vision 2010* Report Card (see more on Page 68) gives Indiana an overall grade of C, slightly better than the C- of the last two years. Individual areas of progress can be found since the first Report Card in 2000, but a mindset that the status quo is okay is sending us down the road to economic mediocrity.

As always, this Report Card utilizes the latest statistical information available for all 50 states. Thus, the many positive accomplishments of the last few years from Gov. Mitch Daniels and his administration are not yet reflected in the data.

Since day one of taking office, the Daniels team has stressed economic development. Record job announcements and private sector investment, innovative infrastructure and telecommunications reform, passage of Daylight Saving Time, extension of the research and development tax credit and more have paved the way for improved Report Card grades in future years.

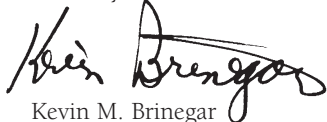
But we need to go even farther faster. We need more of the progressive actions that Gov. Daniels has brought us in the past two years and less of the "business as usual" scenario that has returned in the 2007 General Assembly. What do I mean?

In the first three-plus months of the legislative session (press deadlines required this to be written before the lawmakers were scheduled to end their work on April 29), there was the additional opportunity to stimulate economic growth through public-private infrastructure financing, funding for scholarships and life sciences research, and a job training tax credit to boost our workforce. Instead of enacting programs to actually improve employees' education and skills so that they could earn higher wages and benefits, House-proposed legislation would have had government increase the minimum wage, expand collective bargaining rights, construction wages, and workers' and unemployment compensation rates.

That's simply not acceptable. Citizens who want today's young people and future generations to receive the education and training they need to excel in the jobs of the 21st century must demand more.

The governor is trying to shine a bright light of hope with much-needed aggressive reform proposals. But too many people prefer to erroneously view that light as an oncoming train instead of a beacon of hope.

Sincerely,



Kevin M. Brinegar
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