

Property Tax Reform: Latest News Available Online

There is not one word in this largest-ever issue of *BizVoice*® magazine about the current property tax crisis. That is done intentionally – and I will tell you why shortly. By the way, I use the word crisis because that's one of the things we learned in an Indiana Chamber statewide voter poll on this most contentious topic.

Why isn't *BizVoice*® inundating you with stories and statistics on the problem and the quest for a solution? Because, as we have learned in other instances in recent years, the printed word often can't keep pace with the electronic media on a rapidly developing story. While I will share a few thoughts in this space, the bulk of our coverage is contained on a new Property Tax Central portion of the Indiana Chamber web site at www.indianachamber.com/propertytax.

I mentioned poll results. In a Chamber-commissioned independent poll of 800 registered voters statewide, 56% characterized the current property tax dilemma as a "crisis" and 34% termed it "an important issue." In addition, when asked to name the most important issue facing Indiana today, 35% selected taxes/budget/spending. In annual polls conducted since 1993, never has a single issue ranked that high.

The complete poll results can be found at Property Tax Central.

While excessive spending by local units and the archaic government structure are at the core of the problem, the solution must come from the state. Between the press deadline for this article and the distribution of the magazine, Gov. Mitch Daniels was to have submitted his property tax reform proposal. Various other plans and priorities have, or will be, emerging as we move closer to the General Assembly session.

In addition, the work continues in the legislative arena and for the Daniels-appointed Commission on Local Government Reform.

In the end, it is critical not to play the shell game of shifting property tax burdens. Raising new taxes or using money from gaming or the state surplus also miss the mark. Such tinkering are Band-Aid reactions and provide no long-term solutions.

We must make the organization of local government more efficient by design. We must make it simpler for consistent assessments to be generated. We must make government spending transparent. Only when these issues are dealt with will there be long-lasting solutions that impact all taxpayers.



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