

LAWRANCE'S LEGACY

Retiring Leader Leaves Lasting Impact

By Tom Schuman

In various sports, a utility player is referred to as someone who can help the team while playing several different positions. Over most of the last 18 years, Mark Lawrance elevated that term to a much higher level, excelling in various roles with the Indiana Chamber and its programs.

With Lawrance retiring at the end of 2018, we look back at a few of his many contributions. We do so with the assistance of some key leaders who worked closely with him in those efforts.



Foundation: Part 1

The research role of the Indiana Chamber Foundation has been critical to the organization's policy and programming efforts for a number of years. That has evolved since 2000 with long-term economic development plans – first, *Economic Vision 2010* and now *Indiana Vision 2025*. Lawrance led the staff execution of the initial plan and formulation/progress of the current initiative.

Mike Kubacki, retired day-to-day leader of Lake City Bank and current chair of the Indiana Chamber Foundation board, says the

accomplishments of *Economic Vision 2010* make the challenges for further progress greater in *Indiana Vision 2025*. He notes that Lawrance's overall perspective has been crucial.

"When I think of Mark, I think about his enthusiasm and his big picture vision. Mark is a reader; he and I will compare notes on what books we are reading lately," Kubacki offers. "He has a very eclectic set of interests. I think of his bike riding and how actively engaged he is. When thinking about business and the Chamber, Mark comes from a place where he knows how society works."

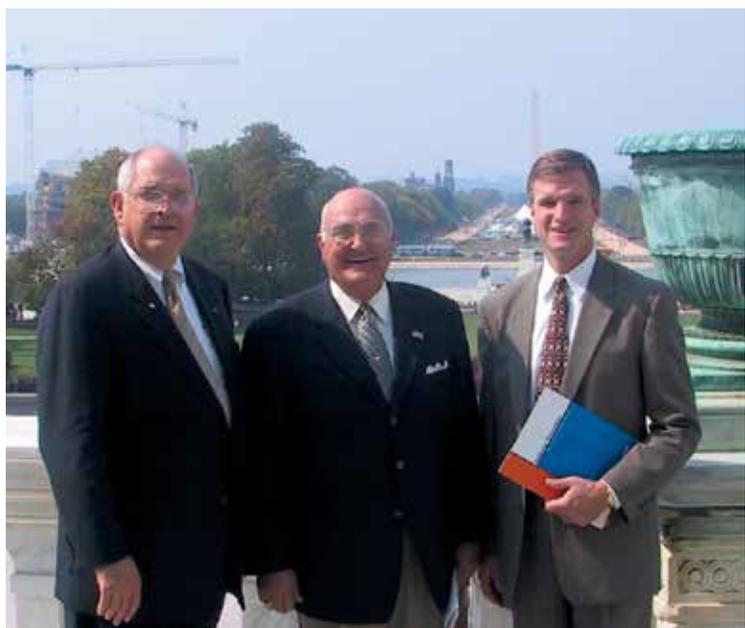
Foundation: Part 2

In the mid-2000s, the Chamber completed a series of studies focused on Indiana's workforce. They included an early identification of the demographic challenge of retiring Baby Boomers, as well as recommended policies and best practices for adult education, workforce training and related work.

Teresa Lubbers, Indiana's Commissioner for Higher Education, states, "Mark has provided leadership on critical workforce issues, and his vision and strategic thinking have marked the development of the Chamber's agenda to align with the needs of the state and employers. As the Commission for Higher Education has advocated for more purposeful career planning, we have had no better partner than the Chamber."

The work done by Lawrance will have long-lasting impacts, according to Lubbers.

"In so many ways, Mark's legacy will be seen in the transformation of a state that places greater value on preparing a 21st century workforce. His clarity of purpose defines not only how he approaches issues and programs, but also how he lives his life."



Mark Lawrance presents information on *Economic Vision 2010* in the early 2000s (left) and with longtime board members Jerry Semler (left) and Jim Heyde at the annual D.C. Fly-in event.



Indiana INTERNnet

The internship matching program evolved out of Indiana Chamber Foundation research in the late 1990s. David McKinnis, a longtime Purdue administrator, has been chair of the Indiana INTERNnet (IIN) board of directors since IIN came to the Chamber beginning in 2006. Lawrance was the longtime liaison between the two organizations and served this year as interim executive director following the May retirement of Janet Boston.

Referring to Lawrance as the “whole package,” McKinnis comments, “Mark has been involved from day one. His talent and ability to engage with people on complex and challenging topics is renowned. He has been just stellar in helping Indiana INTERNnet engage with additional external partners (foundations, government agencies, economic development groups and more). Those connections have resulted in partnerships around the state that have led to more internships.”

No matter who has been participating from a staff standpoint, “Mark has brought the full talent of the Chamber,” McKinnis shares. “He understands the big picture of economic development – the critical importance of our universities and employers engaging with students in high-value experiential learning here in Indiana. And he understands the impact in terms of retention of talent.”

And how does he get it done? “It might look easy, but it’s not easy. Mark certainly helps us avoid issues and problems. He’s not focused on problems; he’s focused on doing things right in the first place and avoiding those difficulties.”

Public policy: Local government reform

Jean Wojtowicz, president of Cambridge Capital Management Corporation, recalls working with Lawrance in many areas. Those include the Foundation, economic development efforts and local government reform.

The *Indiana Project for Efficient Local Government* study in 2004 began a years-long process to improve the effectiveness of a government system that dates back to 1851. While there were a few victories along the way and some recent successes in regional cooperation that Wojtowicz attributes to Chamber work, there were more than a few frustrations to overcome.

“That (eternal patience from Lawrance) is so true,” she contends. “That kind of patience most of us don’t have. He just understood we had to live to fight another battle and that you couldn’t burn any bridges – and again keep your eye focused on what the ultimate goal was. Take small wins, every step that you can, and not allowing the next year to fall back.”

Strong listening skills helped Lawrance effectively balance an array of policy initiatives.

“Mark had a broad range of committee assignments and I thought he always did a great job of making sure the various committees stayed focused on their particular task and didn’t expand into other committees’ responsibilities. And that can be tough – keeping narrowly focused on the problem at hand,” Wojtowicz continues.

Specifically on *Indiana Vision 2025*, she says, “Mark had a nice way of making sure we were aiming and keeping our focus on what was necessary to position Indiana as the global leader we want to be.” The measurement aspects continue to be so important to maintaining support and identifying next steps, according to Wojtowicz.

And as so many are able to offer about Lawrance, “Mark always has a smile; it’s always fun for him to share his latest adventures. I appreciate that side of him as well.”

Public policy: Infrastructure

In another example of taking that utility player status to the next level, Lawrance engaged in the critical infrastructure funding issue. He worked closely with Dennis Faulkenberg, a leading authority on the topic and chair of the Chamber’s policy committee.

The strategy Lawrance put together was a part of the ultimate success.

“Mark is such a nice guy. It was somewhat disarming,”

Faulkenberg admits. “He went deep into the issue but gave deference

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Lawrance confers with Rep. Todd Huston (left) at the Statehouse and catches up with Indiana INTERNnet board chairman David McKinnis.

Mark Lawrance

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to experts, those who specialized in different areas of infrastructure. Mark was like, 'Sure, you do it, you testify, you present the policy' – rather than, 'Hey, I'm in charge. I'm representing the Chamber.' It just worked so well, and he built a great team."

A steady approach was also helpful in the ultimate 2017 passage of a highly regarded, long-term funding plan.

"What stand out to me is his cool and calm demeanor,"

Faulkenberg reflects. "I'm an excitable guy and Mark was such a great counterbalance to that. He was just calm and steady and kept working through it and working through it.

"What an asset he has been – both personally and professionally – for me and for the Chamber."

Public policy: Technology and innovation

Lawrance returned to the Chamber in 2016 after a stint as leader of the Indiana University Public Policy Institute. At the same time, the organization was refocusing on technology and innovation policies and partnerships.

Bill Soards, president of AT&T Indiana, is pleased Lawrance "welcomed that opportunity with open arms." The result, he adds, was "a whole lot of new Chamber members coming to the table that didn't

have much background in the policymaking process. And I just think about how warm Mark welcomed all of those new players. Mark was always very patient with people. I've never worked with a more intellectually engaged and passionate advocate than Mark Lawrance."

The issues came quickly, as in venture capital development, autonomous vehicles, software as a service and more. The game plan Soards saw play out sounds familiar.

"Mark is a good listener. He always wanted to know as much as he could about the issue so that he could be a better advocate. When it came to advocate, Mark would always lay the foundational information with legislators but would quickly empower and rely on members of the Chamber to give real-world testimony as to why these policy changes were necessary."

It did not matter to Lawrance who received the ultimate credit, but Soards is clear in his perspective.

"I think about the dramatic technology policies we have been able to achieve in Indiana in the last couple of years and none of them would have been achieved without the direct engagement of Mark and the Indiana Chamber," he professes. "It was more about the policy victories than personal recognition. And no one deserves more personal recognition than Mark Lawrance."