

2017 Key Legislative Issues



Our Top Priorities

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT / INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Support** establishing a long-term sustainable funding stream for the state's roads, bridges and other surface transportation infrastructure. The plan must ensure enough revenue is raised to completely fund both maintenance needs and important new projects, and that every user pays their fair share. Specific funding strategies the Indiana Chamber could support include: indexing the fuel excise taxes/fees to inflation; raising fuel excise taxes/fees; charging fees for alternative-fuel vehicles (which aren't subject to the regular fuel tax); tolling a major interstate; and dedicating all of the sales taxes on fuel to infrastructure (the current model allots a penny with the other six cents going to the state's general fund). (Note: the Indiana Chamber would support replacing the revenue lost to the general fund with another revenue source so that the general fund is left whole.)

EDUCATION

- **Support** the fiscally-responsible expansion of publicly-funded preschool initiatives for children from low-income families. The prospects for making significant improvements to our state's educational outcomes will remain challenging as long as large numbers of children are entering kindergarten unprepared for school. Those challenges are compounded and ultimately impact all Indiana students as schools are forced to deal with wide gaps in achievement levels. The state of Indiana needs to provide funding that will help low-income parents access their choice of preschool programs (via a mixed delivery model) that are high quality, educationally based and accountable for outcomes.
- **Support** suitable testing for students and accountability measures for all involved in the education process. Such measures for students, teachers and schools are critical. They allow us to accurately predict student progress, rate teacher effectiveness and compare and contrast school performance relative to state and national peers.

ENERGY / ENVIRONMENT

- **Support** a statewide water policy to assure future resources, our economic future and the ability to effectively compete with other states. A policy/plan is needed in order for the state to effectively manage its significant water resources, as well as to ensure delivery of an adequate, reliable and affordable supply of water. The August 2014 research study released by the Indiana Chamber Foundation and subsequent data-gathering legislation set the stage for plan development.

HEALTH CARE

- **Support** comprehensive approach to decreasing the state's smoking rate. Smoking causes \$3.17 billion in productivity losses in our state and nearly \$3 billion in annual health care costs. The Indiana Chamber supports increasing the smoking age from 18 to 21, raising the price of a pack of cigarettes via a tax increase and repealing special privileges for smokers so employers (who pay most of the health care coverage cost) have the option to screen potential hires for tobacco use. A portion of the revenue from the tax increase could also fund more robust smoking cessation programs that are desperately needed.

LABOR RELATIONS

- **Support** a work sharing program that will allow employers to maintain a skilled stable workforce during temporary economic downturns. Employers then could reduce hours without layoffs, enabling workers to keep their jobs – which hopefully could be returned to full-time status once economic circumstances improve. Also part of the equation: unemployment compensation to partially compensate workers for their lost hours. A win-win issue that both labor and the Indiana Chamber support.

TAXATION/PUBLIC FINANCE

- **Support** maintaining and enhancing our attractive tax climate. Business personal property continues to be the tax area in which Indiana stands out most negatively. We need to find a way to reduce what is the largest burden on businesses of any state in the country and, at the same time, adequately replace the revenue for needed local government services. And do that without trading one detrimental tax with another – like sales taxes on services – or harming our overall attractive tax structure. Separately, combined reporting is an unnecessary and ill-advised method that tasks businesses with operations in multiple states with adding together all net income for one report.

TECHNOLOGY / INNOVATION

- **Support** making technology innovation an integral part of the state's identity. With various collaborative co-working spaces and activity in Indianapolis and other pockets of the state, Indiana is fostering an impressive entrepreneurial spirit and becoming a technology hub in the Midwest. We need to better support our technology successes and build on them. What's more, our technology efforts now provide tremendous support to three of the state's main industries: agriculture, logistics and manufacturing.

Additional Areas of State Need

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Support** the expansion of equal protection under our state civil rights laws to individuals regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. The Indiana Chamber believes that the recruitment, attraction and retention of talented individuals to businesses in our state and the ability of Indiana businesses to compete in a global economy are enhanced by our state's reputation for hospitality, diversity and freedom from discrimination.

ENERGY / ENVIRONMENT

- **Support** the development and implementation of an energy policy that ensures the state's continued access to adequate, reliable, affordable and cost-effective energy. The new administration must act to establish a strategic energy plan that delivers on these essentials for long-term prosperity.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- **Support** meaningful township government reform. Eliminating township government entirely to better serve taxpayers is preferred, but at a minimum moving oversight to the county level for fiscal matters, poor relief and public safety protection. Far too many township trustees/employees have ended up in jail for stealing taxpayer dollars. The current township system lacks accountability and can be made far more effective with a coordinated delivery of services, which will better serve Hoosiers and produce more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

Indiana Chamber of Commerce

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