

The 2015 legislative session convened this past Tuesday for a long session. As is the case with all long sessions, the Indiana General Assembly must pass a two year budget before Sine Die (April 29th). Governor Mike Pence released his proposed budget on Thursday, with modest increases in spending, especially in the area of education. This of course was a shock to no one as the Governor had outlined his legislative agenda this past December, saying this year's session would focus on education in Indiana. Under the proposed budget, charter schools would receive an additional \$1,500 per student increase on top of the tuition support they already received from the State. The Governor would also like to see the cap on private school vouchers removed, which his proposed budget would do. The current cap is set at \$4,800 per students in Grades 1-8. Eliminating the cap would cost the State another \$4 million. Opponents of these initiatives fear these two measures, along with a modified school funding formula, will continue to take away money from public schools, which has been the trend since 2011 when vouchers were introduced and charter schools expanded around Indiana.

Other items of note within the budget include an \$84 million appropriation to support the Indiana Economic Development Corporation's Regional Cities initiative, a \$50 million appropriation for the 2016 State Bicentennial, and a continued commitment for increased infrastructure funding. The actual budget bill, House Bill 1001 (Budget), should be released sometime next week.

While most of the focus will be on the budget and the education initiatives within it, many other issues will be taking the spotlight this upcoming year. They include:

- Annexation procedures by municipalities
- A bill to define religious freedom for private enterprise
- Sunday sales of alcohol
- Final leg of the I-69 expansion

As mentioned earlier, this year will be a long session. That means it is a budget year with the Legislature meeting right until the April 29th deadline for adjournment. Here are some important deadlines for the 2015 Session.

- Tuesday, January 13th – Deadline for filing House Bills
- Wednesday, January 14th – Deadline for filing Senate Bills
- Wednesday, February 25th – Last day for 3rd Reading of Senate bills in the Senate
- Wednesday, February 25th – Last day for 3rd Reading of House bills in the House
- Wednesday, April 15th – Last day for 3rd Reading of House bills in the Senate
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- Wednesday, April 29th – Last day for adjournment (Sine Die)

Below is a summary of actions taken on this week on key bills included in your Bill Track list:

The following bills on your Bill Track list are scheduled for a committee hearing next week:

- **SB 037 (Possession of paraphernalia)** – Scheduled to be heard on Tuesday in the Senate Corrections and Criminal Law Committee.
- **SB 193 (Northwest Indiana Law Enforcement Academy)** – Scheduled to be heard on Tuesday in the Senate Homeland Security and Transportation Committee.
- **SB 265 (Purchase of 1977 Fund Service)** – Scheduled to be heard on Wednesday morning in the Senate Pensions and Labor Committee.

As is our policy, we have attached an updated Bill Track List, with bills that are of an interest to you. Due to the bill filing deadlines for both Chambers, the attached list is not a final representative list.

If you would like to see a full copy of any bill, please visit

<https://iga.in.gov/legislative/2015/bills/>

or let us know if you would like for us to furnish you with a hard copy of a particular bill. As you review the bills, please let us know of any questions or comments you have with the legislation that we may not be aware of.