



2017 Legislative Report

With the 2017 legislative session on the horizon, let's see what issues the Executive Branch and General Assembly plan to address.

Indiana Governor's Office

Addressing the 2016 Bingham Greenebaum Doll Legislative Conference, Governor-elect Eric Holcomb highlighted five key legislative priorities for his new administration in 2017.

1. Diverse Economy
2. Infrastructure
3. Workforce Development
4. Opioid Crisis
5. Quality Performance in State Government

First, Holcomb emphasized that magnifying jobs and diversifying Indiana's economy would be a priority. He then stressed the need to fund a long-term solution for our infrastructure system by letting data, not politics, drive our decisions and empowering cities to invest more in local roads and sidewalks. Holcomb mentioned transformational projects such as the completion of I-69 and new bridges over the Ohio River as ways to maximize our location and mission as the "Crossroads of America." Third, he discussed educating, retaining, retraining, and recruiting the best and brightest workforce as a top priority. Next, he said eliminating the drug epidemic is necessary for Indiana moving forward. Holcomb concluded by discussing the need for quality state government and mentioning plans to expand successful programs and cut the unsuccessful ones.

Holcomb also announced that Allison Karnes would be his Legislative Director. Allison was formerly the Public Safety Policy Director under the Pence Administration.

Governor-elect Holcomb will release more detail and specifics regarding these five items when addressing the public again on Friday, January 5.

The General Assembly

At Organization Day on November 22nd, House Speaker Brian Bosma gave a speech outlining legislative priorities for House Republicans.

1. Infrastructure
2. Balanced Budget
3. Pre-K
4. Public Safety
5. Opioid Addiction

While passing a balanced state budget and long-term road funding plan top the agenda, he also promised to support education opportunities, job creation, workforce development, addiction treatment and public safety. When asked by reporters about addressing any social issues this session (abortion or civil rights expansion language), Bosma said “there are cultural issues that have no simple political accommodation. Forcing a solution through the legislative process that makes one side or the other a winner is not right for Indiana.”

Senate President Pro Tempore David Long also addressed his legislative priorities on Organization Day this year.

1. Infrastructure
2. Education/Pre-K
3. Public Safety
4. Opioid Addiction
5. Vaping Law Fix

Long said Senate Republicans will focus on crafting a long-term road funding plan, supporting local schools, replacing the outdated ISTEP exam, fighting illegal drug abuse in communities and fixing the monopoly created in the vaping law from last session.

House Minority Leader Scott Pelath and Senate Minority Leader Tim Lanane have not released their legislative priorities, but intend to present them on the first day of session.

Here are some tentative upcoming dates/deadlines for the 2017 Session.

- Tuesday, January 3-Senate's first day of session
- Wednesday, January 4-House's first day of session
- Tuesday, February 21-Senate/House Committee Report Filing Deadline
- Monday, February 27-Last day for 3rd Reading of Senate bills in the Senate
- Monday, February 27-Last day for 3rd Reading of House bills in the House
- Monday, April 10-Senate/House Committee Report Filing Deadline
- Thursday, April 13-Last day for 3rd reading of Senate bills in the House
- Thursday, April 13-Last day for 3rd reading of House bills in the Senate
- Saturday, April 29-Last day for adjournment (Sine Die)

2017 Budget

On Thursday, December 15th, the State's Budget Committee released their revenue forecast for and unfortunately it wasn't positive news for the current year. While the State remains strong fiscally, with over \$2 billion still in surplus, projections for this current budget cycle (to end on June 30th, 2016) show collections down an unexpected \$380 million, or two-percent of the budget. Most of the two-percent drop was attributed to lower gas prices, which lowered state sales tax revenue by \$265 million.

While that was not welcome news to the new Administration, House and Senate fiscal leaders, there was some positive takeaways. State revenue is expected to grow almost one billion dollars over the next biennium (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2019). Even with this strong outlook, don't expect lawmakers to go on a spending spree this session with the next budget. All members of the Budget Committee continued to urge caution, as there are still many uncertainties with the national economy. Please remember the next round of budget revenue forecasting will be made available to lawmakers in mid-April, right before they finalize the biennium budget of 2017-2019.

Infrastructure Funding

On Monday, December 19th the Funding Indiana's Roads for a Stronger Safer Tomorrow task force announced its recommendations for the General Assembly to consider for the 2017 legislative session. The task force was created as part of a comprehensive two-year road funding plan passed in House Enrolled Act 1001 in 2016, and was charged with identifying new revenue sources to increase long-term funding for Indiana's transportation infrastructure.

The findings provide a variety of new revenue options for the state, including tolling, user-based fees and increasing the gas tax. These options will be carefully debated and discussed by lawmakers, stakeholders, and citizens when the legislative session begins in January.