



Session – Week 10
March 14, 2025

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Indiana Outdoor Management Association

Click here for current Bill Track:

<https://tinyurl.com/IOMA2025>

The tenth week was filled with committee hearings and sessions in both chambers. The House Ways and Means Committee discussed another approach to reforming property taxes. Rep. Thompson's approach came from HB1402, which he drafted, but didn't hear in the first half. Thompson's proposal cuts or caps many different taxes and aims to provide relief to property classes by creating a phased-in exemption for homestead property, a smaller exemption for rental property and farms, and a phased-out elimination of business personal property taxes. The committee discussed, but did not vote on the amendment, and held the bill for further discussion. One reason for the disparate approaches is that each plan is based on separate variables in the property tax equation, which include assessment, local government growth, and tax rates. The Governor's version of SB 1 focuses on capping the growth of assessment, the version that passed the Senate focused on the growth of local units, and Rep. Thompson's plan focuses on tax rates. Discussions will continue as the legislature attempts to balance the needs of taxpayers to reduce their taxes, without doing unnecessary harm to local government units and schools. We will continue to update you on this issue and your issues. Remember, click the link above to see your bill's status.

HB1531-Various Immigration Matters, authored by Rep. J.D. Prescott (R-Union City), requires state and local government units to comply with federal immigration orders. It also prohibits employers with ten or more employees from knowingly or intentionally recruiting, hiring, or employing an unauthorized alien, after June 30, 2025. Violation could result in a total or temporary suspension of an employer's operating or business license (i.e., pesticide applicator).

Our concern, which we outlined in the House Judiciary Committee hearing, is the bill's vagueness regarding how the AG's office would be engaged to initiate an investigation, and that whatever the method of initiating the engagement, our concern was that rival companies or individuals could use it to harass member companies.

We also shared our concerns with the AG's office. If the bill passes, the AG's office will work with us to ensure fair implementation. Our concerns remain the same. How the AG is engaged and how an investigation is initiated is unclear. Per the AG's office, this was intentional, and done to avoid frivolous complaints and give the AG's office discretion on where to expend their limited resources.

The AG's authority and ability to initiate an investigation come from his power to issue a Civil Investigative Demand (CID). If, based on the information provided, the AG has reason to believe (has probable cause) that there is a violation, he may bring an action in court. If the Court finds by a preponderance of the evidence (it is more likely true than it isn't), the Court may order any of the penalties provided in the bill.

We must look at how the AG becomes engaged in other matters to see how their office might get engaged in an investigation related to employing unauthorized aliens. For the Consumer Protection Division, which investigates and enforces cases of fraud and abuse of people by businesses. There is a portal where the public can file a complaint. The AG decides whether there is enough to warrant further investigation based on the information provided. Most complaints are common consumer disputes, don't rise to the level of fraud or abuse, and don't warrant additional investigation. However, if the information in the complaint is sufficient to show abuse or fraud, the CID process discussed above may be initiated.

Another avenue may be a media story, like one in Cass County where a local TV news outlet reported on the Cass County Health Director's claim that she found apartments with numbers far exceeding occupancy limits, and none of the inhabitants had personal transportation. These conditions often accompany labor trafficking, which the AG enforces. So, based on information provided by the news report, the AG issued a CID to the Health Director, quoted in the news story, to get more information and see if she could provide further evidence warranting an investigation. The AG believes the office will avoid unnecessarily harassing businesses because of their discretion and limited resources.

The Senate assigned the bill to the Senate Judiciary Committee. I spoke with Senate Judiciary Chairwoman, Sen. Liz Brown (R - Fort Wayne), to share our concerns. She told me she doesn't plan to hear the bill, which will kill it if she doesn't hear it before the committee deadline in April. We heard this week, that the Governor's office likes parts of the bill. We don't know if this causes her to hear it after all. She posted her committee agenda for this Wednesday, and HB1531 isn't on the agenda. We must maintain vigilance and will continue talking with stakeholders and legislators and sharing what we learn. If there is any movement, we will continue to work with Senate and maintain our lines of communication with the AG's office.

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Safe Haven Bill for Infants

[HB 1099](#), authored by Rep. Dale DeVon (R-Granger), makes changes to Indiana's safe haven law protecting abandoned children and foster youth. It received broad support from members of the community and first responders when it was heard in the Senate Committee on Family and Children Services on Monday, March 10. The bill passed out of the committee unanimously.

Indiana's safe haven law currently allows parents to anonymously surrender babies up to 30 days of age without fear of prosecution. The bill increases the maximum age of a safe haven infant to 60 days of age. Infants may be placed in two-way "baby boxes" located on the exterior of fire departments, hospitals, and other facilities. After a child has been placed inside, first responders are alerted by a silent alarm and can open the box from within.

The original safe haven law passed in 2000 and sought to ensure better safety for infants being surrendered. Since its enactment, numerous infants have been safely surrendered.

It is not common practice to track infant surrenders and there is no national database. However, one Indiana nonprofit [reported](#) that 42 babies have been surrendered since its first baby box opened in 2016. The state has 141 baby box locations with more being installed every year.

Teachers Compensation

Last year Indiana's average teacher salary hit \$60,000 for the first time, according to the [Indiana Education Employment Relations Board](#). This was a priority of former Governor Eric Holcomb, based on the 2019 [Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission](#) recommendations. Indiana still ranks 36th in the nation for average teacher pay and 28th for starting salaries, according to the National Education Association.

Governor Mike Braun continues to prioritize increased teacher compensation. SB 146, presented by Sen. Linda Rogers (R-Granger) in the House Education Committee on Wednesday, March 12, aims to improve teacher recruitment and retention.

The bill's main provision increases the minimum

teacher salary in Indiana from \$40,000 to \$45,000. Secretary of Education Dr. Katie Jenner shared data that highlighted the gap each local district must close to meet the \$45,000 minimum salary target. Around 6,000 teachers currently earn below this threshold.

Testifiers expressed broad support for the bill as a critical step to improving recruitment and retention in Indiana. Many called for even higher salary increases. A Teach for America representative stated that \$85,000 a year better reflects the work teachers do.

Rep. Vernon Smith (D-Gary) and Rep. Tonya Pfaff (D-Terre Haute) raised concerns about the "compression issue." Veteran teachers could see no pay increase as new teachers' salaries rise, leading to dissatisfaction and decreased retention. School districts may also face pressure to meet the new salary mandate without additional dollars.

While the bill received bipartisan support, funding concerns remain during a tight budget session and a broader property tax discussion. Chairman Bob Behning (R-Indianapolis) held the bill in committee.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

2025 UPCOMING DEADLINES

HOUSE: Senate Bills

Committees: Thursday, April 10, 2025
2nd Reading: Monday, April 14, 2025
3rd Reading: Thursday, April 15, 2025

SENATE: House Bills

Committees: Thursday, April 10, 2025
2nd Reading: Monday, April 14, 2025
3rd Reading: Thursday, April 15, 2025

HOUSE & SENATE

Anticipated Sine Die: Thursday, April 24
Statutory Sine Die: Tuesday, April 29

MIDPOINT STATISTICS

<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Bills Filed</u>	<u>#Alive</u>	
<u>Percent</u>			
House	708	185	26.2%
Senate	521	156	29.9%
Total	1,229	341	27.7%

BUDGET HEARINGS

Senate School Funding Subcommittee

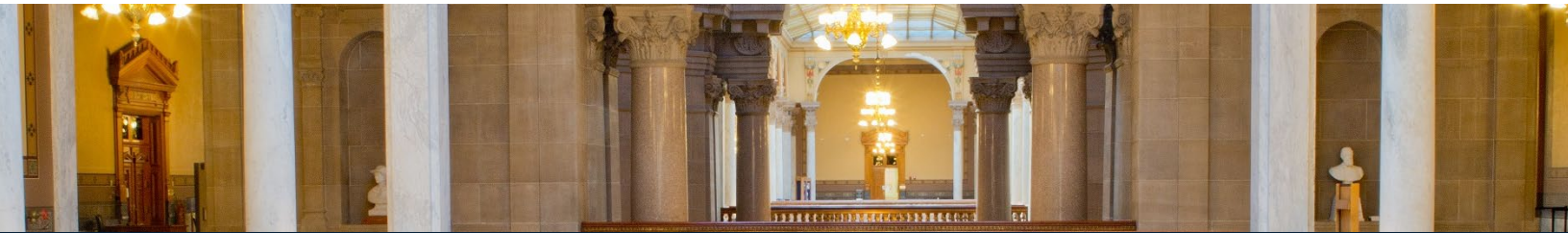
Monday, March 17
Upon Adjournment of Session
RM. 431

-K-12 School Funding
-Gifted and Talented Program
-Summer School Funding

Senate Appropriations

Tuesday, March 18
2:00 PM
RM. 431

2:00 – 2:20pm	Lieutenant Governor
2:20 – 2:40pm	Indiana Attorney General
2:40 – 3:00pm	Indiana Treasurer of State
3:00 – 3:20pm	Indiana State Comptroller
3:20 – 3:40pm	Indiana Secretary of State



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