



Session – Week 7
February 21, 2025

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Indiana Outdoor Management Association

Click here for current Bill Track:

<https://tinyurl.com/IOMA2025>

The seventh week featured key deadlines. First, Monday was the committee report deadline, and all bills that did not pass their assigned committee died after the noon deadline passed. The first and second reading deadlines on Wednesday and Thursday followed. Any bill that wasn't heard and passed out of its chamber of origin died when both chambers adjourned on Thursday.

It is important to note that while the bills as vehicles are dead, their language is still technically alive and can be incorporated into a live bill as an amendment. However, it is rare for language that failed to pass a committee to be considered. If any dead bill language is considered, it will likely be from a bill that passed a committee. There is no session next week. The second half will begin on Monday, March 3. Please see the chart at the end of the report for more information on second-half deadlines. Click the link above to see the status of your bills.

HB1184—State Chemist, authored by Representative Steve Bartels (R - Eckerty), would transfer the office's reporting line, including its duties, authorities, and employees, from Purdue to the Indiana Department of Agriculture in 2027. The office would continue to exist, but instead of reporting to the Dean of the School of Agriculture at Purdue, it would report to the State Agricultural Commissioner, who reports to the Lt. Governor. It did not receive a hearing, and the bill died.

SB123-Unemployment Compensation, authored by Senator Scott Alexander (R - Muncie), would reduce the maximum amount of regular unemployment benefits. Employers pay into an Unemployment Insurance Fund, which provides unemployment benefits. An employer's UI rate is based on several variables, but one of the most significant is the number of workers who receive UI benefits. Seasonal industries pay more than non-seasonal industries because their workers use UI benefits. It did not pass the committee, and the bill died.

HB1418-Employing an Unauthorized Alien, authored by Rep. Jim Lucas (R - Seymour), prohibits an employer from intentionally employing an unauthorized alien or entering into an agreement with an employer (even as a subcontractor) who employs unauthorized aliens. It provides for a complaint process alleging a violation that the Indiana Attorney General must investigate. Employment, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman Heath VanNatter (R - Kokomo) did not schedule a hearing, and the bill died.

HB1638-Government and Regulatory Matters, authored by Rep. Steve Bartels (R - Eckerty), required agencies to complete additional actions and new requirements to analyze and determine a rule's necessity. It merged, consolidated, and eliminated boards with similar duties or membership, including the Pesticide Review Board and Invasive Species Council, into one board. I confirmed with the author that the governor's office had concerns. The Government and Regulatory Reform Committee did not schedule a hearing, and the bill died.

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 from recruiting, hiring, or employing an unauthorized alien. Violation could result in a total or temporary suspension of an employer's operating or business license (i.e., pesticide applicator).

The House Judiciary Committee heard it on Monday. Before the hearing, we met with the author, and he promised to work with us to address our concerns. The committee adopted an amendment that clarified that the employer must knowingly or intentionally recruit or hire an authorized alien for a violation. This is important because, as amended, it mirrors the federal statute. It also clarified that the new law only applies to employment after June 30, 2025. Initially, it was retroactive. We testified as neutral with concerns. The concern we outlined was 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. It passed the committee 9-4.

On Wednesday, I spoke with Deputy AG Blake Lanning to better understand the AG's investigation authority and how an investigation is initiated. The conversation was productive, and if HB1531 becomes law, the AG's office wants us to be at the table to discuss fair implementation. There is no clear avenue for how an investigation might be caused to be initiated. The bill contains no complaint mechanism, which was done intentionally 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). A CID is a request for information. The process varies and depends on several factors. Generally, if the subject receiving the CID cooperates with the AG, the next step will be to "meet and confer" to discuss what kind of information is producible. 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.

There is no clear path to how the AG may become involved. Looking at other enforcement activities can shed some light on how they might be engaged. In the Consumer Protection Division, the public may file a complaint alleging fraud or abuse, and based on the information provided, the AG will decide if the complaint warrants further investigation. Most complaints don't warrant further investigation and are common consumer disputes that don't demonstrate fraud or abuse, but if the information in the complaint is sufficient to show abuse or fraud, then the CID process discussed above may be initiated.

Lanning shared another example. A TV news station reported on a story about Cass County and the local 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.

On Wednesday, the House adopted an amendment saying that the employer has ten or more employees for the purposes of the bill. It passed 64-26 and was referred to the Senate. From there, it will be sent to the Senate and assigned to a committee. Once we know the committee, we will contact the chair. The likely choices are the Judiciary Committee or the Pensions and Labor Committee. We have a strong history of working relationships with either chair.

The AG's office is pushing the bill. They will seek to remove the House's floor amendment. Other state AGs have this authority, and the Indiana AG wants it. So, we will work carefully and deliberately with the Senate, keeping the lines of communication with the AG's office open.

Stephen M. Wolff, Esq.
The Corydon Group
swolff@thecorydongroup.com
317.956.4606

The Budget in the House

On Monday, [HB 1001](#), the budget bill, was amended in committee to reflect the budget priorities of the House Republican Caucus. The chairman of House Ways and Means Committee, Rep. Jeff Thompson (R-Lizton), authored the amendment. Though much of the bill was relatively aligned to the Governor's proposed budget there were some differences.

A 5% cut across state agencies, 2% increase in K-12 education, funding for universal school vouchers, and a fully funded Medicaid forecast remain within the House Republicans' proposed budget. However, the budget has fewer tax cuts than originally proposed by the Governor and does not fully fund childcare vouchers. It does include increased funding for the Department of Child Services and the Department of Corrections that was not included in the Governor's proposal.

An [amendment](#) authored by Rep. Gregory Porter (D-Indianapolis) was also adopted during committee deliberations. The amendment has three main provisions. It restores funding to both the Civil Rights and Native American Indian Affairs commissions and increases funding for the state's minority health initiative.

On second reading on Wednesday, February 19, Rep. Porter presented House

Democrats' [version](#) of the budget, which he referred to as "The People's Budget." Rep. Thompson ultimately asked the body to defeat the amendment due to this biennium's tight budget and priority differences between the two caucuses. It was defeated.

Eleven amendments of the twenty-two filed were offered during floor debate. The only adopted amendment, offered by Rep. Thompson, fixed technical issues in the bill. Democrats offered the other ten amendments.

On Thursday, February 20, HB 1001 passed third reading along party lines, 66-28. The budget will now move to the Senate.

Office of Entrepreneurship and Innovation

[Senate Bill 516](#), authored by Sen. Brian Buchanan (R-Lebanon), passed second reading on Monday, February 17. The bill establishes the Office of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Indiana to help spur local small business growth in the state.

The bill requires the office to develop growth support programs that enhance small businesses, entrepreneurship, and innovation in Indiana as well as overseeing fundraising measures.

The hope is that, in coordinating with state agencies and other entities, this new office can enhance

learning and skills, provide technical support, and expand access to resources for entrepreneurs across Indiana.

SB 516 has several provisions to reach underrepresented groups including rural communities and lower socioeconomic communities. The office would identify strategies and metrics around the disbursement of funds into these communities and develop programs to support and encourage youth entrepreneurship.

A [report](#) from the federal Small Business Administration (SBA) highlighting Indiana's small businesses showed that there are roughly 537,058 small businesses employing 1.2 million workers and accounting for 44.0 percent of total employment in the state.

The U.S. Treasury [reported](#) that almost 14,000 new business applications are filed each day in the country, a 50 percent increase from 2019. Most small businesses fail within the first five years of operation due to a lack of resources. Offering educational courses on financial planning, management, and market research may help boost the success rate of Indiana's small business community.

SB 516's sister bill, [House Bill 1172](#), authored by Rep. Jake Teshka (R-North Liberty), passed out of the House and now awaits further discussion in the Senate.

2025 UPCOMING DEADLINES

HOUSE

Senate Bills

Committees: Thursday, April 10, 2025

2nd Reading: Monday, April 14, 2025

3rd Reading: Thursday, April 17, 2025

SENATE

House Bills

Committees: Thursday, April 10, 2025

2nd Reading: Monday, April 14, 2025

3rd Reading: Thursday, April 17, 2025

HOUSE & SENATE

Statutory Sine Die: Tuesday, April 29

MIDPOINT STATISTICS

| <u>Chamber</u> | <u>Bills Filed</u> | <u>#Alive</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| House | 707 | 185 | 26.2% |
| Senate | 521 | 160 | 30.5% |
| Total | 1,228 | 345 | 28.1% |



The Corydon Group

2024 Legislative Team

CHRISTOPHER M. GIBSON, ESQ.

Managing Principal

MORGAN E. PERRILL

Senior Vice President

AMELIA D. MCCLURE, ESQ.

Vice President

RYAN P. KENNEDY

Manager, Communications & Policy

RACHEL M. GIBSON

Senior Vice President

TRISTAN M. FRIEDERCH

Legislative Intern

LOUIS M. BELCH

President

STEVE M. WOLFF, ESQ.

Vice President

JOHN COCHRAN, ESQ.

Senior Advisor

J. CAMERON CARTER

Vice President

KIMBERLY S. WILLIAMS

Senior Advisor

GRACE A. SARRAZIN

Legislative Intern