



Session – Week 9  
March 7, 2025

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



## Indiana Outdoor Management Association

*Click here for current Bill Track:*

<https://tinyurl.com/IOMA2025>

The ninth week saw the legislature's return to begin the second half and the ever-quicken march to the end of the session. See the chart at the end of this report for a list of the critical second half dates. The next deadline is April 10, when all bills must pass their assigned committees. Several committees met this week to ensure their work was done by the deadline. The House Ways and Means committee met and heard approximately nine hours of public testimony on SB 1 - Property Tax relief and SB 518 School property taxes combined. Property taxes will continue to be a driving issue during this session, and the Senate version has both sides dug in, with taxpayer advocates saying it doesn't go far enough. Local government units are saying it cuts too deeply. We will continue to update you on this issue and your issues. Remember, click the link above to see your bill's status. 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.

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.

After it passed the committee 9-4, 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.

At the time of the last report, we did not know to what committee the Senate would assign the bill. Leadership assigned the bill to the Senate Judiciary Committee. I spoke with Senate Judiciary Chairwoman, Sen. Liz Brown (R - Fort Wayne), on Tuesday to share our concerns. Sen. Brown told me she was not going to hear the bill. If she maintains this position, this is good news because the bill will die. That said, we must be vigilant for several reasons, but top among them, the language passed one chamber, so it can be amended into another bill later in the session. Also, we know that the AG's office is pushing for the bill. Other state AGs have this authority, and they want it in Indiana. 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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### Partisan School Board Elections

The House Elections and Apportionment Committee heard [SB 287](#) on Thursday. The bill proposes increasing the maximum salary for school board members and aligning their elections with other state races. If passed, candidates must participate in both a primary and general election and declare a political party affiliation. Under current law, Indiana school board elections are non-partisan. More than 40 individuals from across the state, including many school board members, testified at the committee hearing.

Sen. Gary Byrne (R-Byrneville), the author of SB 287, believes that school board elections are already influenced by party politics. He pointed to campaign materials, contributions, and support from unions and partisan groups as evidence. According to Sen. Byrne and other supporters, school board members may not disclose their political affiliation but inherently make decisions based on their ideology.

Sen. Byrne said the goal of SB 287 is to enhance election transparency and increase voter turnout. He believes that displaying party affiliation on the ballot would give voters clearer insight into candidates' ideologies, helping voters make more informed choices and leading to higher turnout and greater confidence in the election process.

Opponents of the legislation argued the bill would discourage and even disqualify many community members from running or continuing to hold their positions on school boards, either due to their employment or a desire to avoid partisan politics.

Democratic lawmakers voiced concerns that the bill would discourage voters from researching candidates and increase divisiveness. Many opponents denied any party affiliation and emphasized the importance of keeping partisan politics out of education.

The Senate narrowly passed SB 287 on third reading with a 26-20 vote. A similar House bill, [HB 1230](#), authored by Rep. J.D. Prescott (R-Union City), did not pass that chamber.

SB 287 was held by the committee chair but is eligible for further action.

### Food Cultivation

A House bill covering the production and sale of cultivated or lab-grown food passed out of the House in the first half of session. [HB 1425](#), authored by Rep. Beau Baird (R-Greencastle) and sponsored by Sen. Jean Leising (R-Oldenburg) and Sen. Sue Glick (R-LaGrange), hopes to raise consumer awareness through improved labeling on products that fall within this emerging market.

The [AP](#) reports that more than 150 companies around the

world are trying to develop these food products, all working on a variety of meats: chicken, beef, pork, and lamb. The process is initiated by growing tissue harvested from muscle cells until they form into their respective cuts. Cultivated meat benefits from its reduced vulnerability to zoonotic diseases and requires less land and water to produce.

HB 1425 was heard in the Senate Agriculture Committee on Monday, March 3, and makes changes to the labeling of lab-grown meat sold within Indiana and prohibits the term "meat" from being used to describe the product. Advertising must be compliant with the Board of Animal Health (BOAH) and in a manner that clearly indicates it is a cultivated product. This bill is a product of multiple bills pertaining to the advertisement for lab-grown meat. The bill passed out of the Senate Agriculture Committee with one no vote from Sen. Shelli Yoder (D-Bloomington) and will be on the Senate second reading calendar next week.

This marks a significant step toward improving transparency within the lab-grown meat industry. It offers a promising future for greater consumer awareness in the ever-changing marketplace.



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

### 2025 UPCOMING DEADLINES

#### HOUSE: Senate Bills

Committees: Thursday, April 10, 2025  
2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Monday, April 14, 2025  
3<sup>rd</sup> Reading: Thursday, April 15, 2025

#### SENATE: House Bills

Committees: Thursday, April 10, 2025  
2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Monday, April 14, 2025  
3<sup>rd</sup> 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%

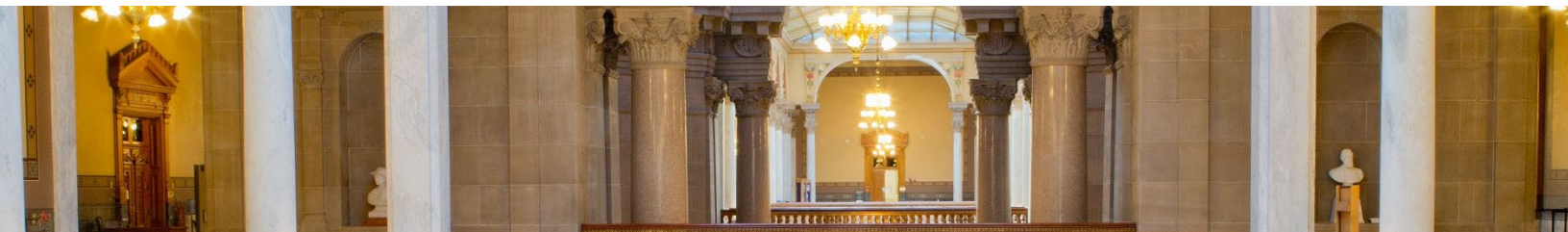
### BUDGET HEARINGS

#### Tuesday, March 11

2:00 – 2:20 PM	Rep. Thompson, Introduction
2:20 – 2:40 PM	Ball State University
2:40 – 3:00 PM	Purdue University
3:00 – 3:20 PM	Indiana University
3:20 – 3:40 PM	University of Southern Indiana
3:40 – 4:00 PM	Indiana State University
4:00 – 4:20 PM	Vincennes University
4:20 – 4:40 PM	Ivy Tech University
4:40 – 5:00 PM	Indiana Supreme Court

#### Thursday, March 13

11:00 – 11:30 AM	Management & Budget
11:30 – 12: 00 PM	Business Affairs
12: 00 – 12:30 PM	Public Safety
12:30 – 1:00 PM	Energy & Natural Resources
1:00 – 1:30 PM	Commerce
1:30 – 2:00 PM	Transportation
2:00 – 2:30 PM	Education
2:30 – 3:00 PM	Health & Family Services



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