

2000-2009: Chamber Produces Decade of Policy Victories

A lot happens in 10 years. Legislative speaking, the last decade saw some policy milestones for the Hoosier state. Some issues you are undoubtedly familiar with, while others require a gentle reminder. All are important to enhancing Indiana's business climate and the Indiana Chamber played a key role – either as a staunch advocate or leading defender.

Tax restructuring (2002)

Monumental tax restructuring plan put in place to trim business taxes by \$800 million per year. This was achieved through, among other provisions, the inventory tax elimination, reduction in school property taxes, corporate gross income tax elimination and creation of the Venture Capital Tax Credit.

Creation of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (2003)

Public-private group established to manage and expand the state's economic development initiatives, involving substantial private sector visioning and oversight from leaders throughout Indiana.

Education grand slam (2005)

Four significant K-12 policies were realized: 1) Core 40 curriculum requirement (heavy in English/language arts, math and science) for high school graduation; 2) dual credit enrollment option (with postsecondary institution) for all qualifying high school students; 3) revised state graduation rate calculation that provides for more accurate numbers; and 4) school dropout age raised from 16 to 18 years.

Observance of daylight saving time (2005)

Put the entire state on daylight saving time and in line with rest of the country, ending a decades-long debate over the issue. Indiana had negatively set itself apart from neighbors and all major economic development centers outside of the state by being on "Indiana Time." This led to confusion, missed appointments, logistical problems with shipments and the delivery of goods, plus inconvenience factors in doing business and recreational activities.

Variety of tax credits expanded (2005)

Substantial improvements were made to the state's economic toolkit with the extension and expansion of TIF (tax increment financing) and tax abatement, as well as expansions to the EDGE Tax Credit, the Hoosier Business Investment Tax Credit, the Venture Capital Tax Credit and the R&D Tax Credit.

Major Moves (2006)

A \$4.2 billion road improvement and job creation plan funded by the leasing of the Indiana Toll Road. Communities throughout the state have and will continue to benefit from being able to place numerous road and bridge projects (over 200) on the fast track to completion.

Telecommunications reform (2006)

Many businesses and residents had been unable to benefit from the latest broadband technology. This bill deregulated the telecommunications industry in the areas of broadband, advanced services, telecommunications and mobile services, plus utilized state video or cable franchising. To date, this legislation has brought broadband services to 102 rural Indiana communities, jobs to over 2,150 residents and more than \$1.5 billion into the state's economy.

Removal of township assessors (2008)

Eliminated nearly 1,000 township officials and transferred property assessing duties to county assessors. The impetus was to create the best possible property tax assessing system by having uniform and equal assessments, as required by the state constitution.

Labor policy wins (multiple years)

Bills repeatedly defeated: allowing employees to bring their gun onto employer property; paid family and medical leave that would be treated by many employees as another 12 weeks vacation; attempts to expand state age discrimination law beyond federal law; and putting responsibility of ensuring people can lawfully work in this country on employers rather than the proper governmental entities charged with immigration matters.

Health care policy wins (multiple years)

Beginning in 2004, various bills that would have increased the cost of health care insurance for both employers and employees have been defeated one by one. These include mandates for coverage of certain medical conditions and the assignment of benefits concept (directly paying out-of-network providers for medical services provided), which would jeopardize the integrity of networks. On the positive side, the state insurance program – the Healthy Indiana Plan – was established in 2007 to provide affordable coverage for individuals who do not have access to insurance. This means less cost shifting now takes place among those who pay for insurance to compensate for the uninsured.