

2018 Key Legislative Issues



Our Top Priorities

CIVIL JUSTICE

- **Support transparency in asbestos trust claims.** Currently, claimants do not have to disclose “double-dipping” in these cases; meaning they can bring a suit against a business while having already been awarded damages from a trust that has been established for those impacted by asbestos exposure. We believe juries need to know when a level of monetary compensation for any physical impairment has previously been accepted. Additionally, we support fixing the state’s Statute of Repose for Product Liability for Asbestos, which was deemed unconstitutional by the Indiana Supreme Court.

EDUCATION

- **Support requiring computer science courses for primary and secondary students, culminating with making computer science a high school graduation requirement.** As we increase the number of jobs in the tech sector, it becomes even more important to have required STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) coursework – especially computer science. All students should have access to explore skills like this that are in demand. This will better prepare students and help improve the skills gap.
- **Support better alignment of the state’s various education and workforce programs, with overall efforts inclusive of business community needs.** Such a process would result in more Hoosiers being educated, trained and subsequently employed in higher-wage, in-demand jobs. A key to achieving this is having direct involvement by the business community.

ENERGY / ENVIRONMENT

- **Support prudent and effective water resource management, culminating in a statewide water policy to assure availability of resources, our economic future and ability to effectively compete with other states.** Access to water is a jobs and economic development issue. Our state’s economy is growing more diverse, but we always will make things. And it often takes large, reliable supplies of water to do so. A policy/plan is needed in order for the state to effectively manage its significant water resources, as well as to ensure delivery of an adequate, reliable and affordable supply of water. Our August 2014 research study and subsequent data-gathering legislation have set the stage for plan development.

HEALTH CARE

- **Support two-pronged approach to decreasing the state’s smoking rate.** Smoking causes \$3.1 billion in productivity losses in our state and nearly \$3 billion in annual health care costs. The Indiana Chamber supports increasing the smoking age from 18 to 21 (as several states have done in 2017) and repealing special privileges for smokers so employers (who pay most of the health care coverage cost) have the option to screen potential hires for tobacco use.

LABOR RELATIONS

- **Support a work sharing program that will allow employers to maintain a skilled stable workforce during temporary economic downturns.** Employers then could reduce hours without layoffs, enabling workers to keep their jobs – which hopefully could be returned to full-time status once

economic circumstances improve. Also part of the equation: unemployment compensation to partially compensate workers for their lost hours. Both labor and the Indiana Chamber support.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- **Support meaningful township government reform.** *Eliminating township government entirely to better serve taxpayers is preferred, but at a minimum reducing the number of townships by mergers in low population areas and enhancing the oversight of fiscal matters would be positive steps forward.*

TAXATION/PUBLIC FINANCE

- **Support clarifying software-as-a-service (SaaS) tax treatment.** *There is currently confusion and inconsistency regarding the state's tax treatment of these services. Having clarity on the exempt status of cloud-based services and SaaS would help to grow Indiana's software development economy, as well as prevent harmful taxation of other inputs throughout the business community. Imposing a tax on these business costs makes Indiana a less favorable location to headquarter or expand a business.*
- **Support maintaining and enhancing our attractive tax climate.** *Business personal property continues to be the tax area in which Indiana stands out most negatively. We need to find a way to reduce what is among the largest overall business property tax burdens of any state – and do so without harming our overall attractive tax structure.*

Additional Areas of State Focus

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Support the expansion of equal protection under our state civil rights laws to individuals regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.** *The Indiana Chamber believes that the recruitment, attraction and retention of talented individuals to businesses in our state and the ability of Indiana businesses to compete in a global economy are enhanced by our state's reputation for hospitality, diversity and freedom from discrimination.*

ENERGY / ENVIRONMENT

- **Support the development and implementation of an energy policy that ensures the state's continued access to adequate, reliable, affordable and cost-effective energy.** *The administration must act to establish a strategic energy plan that delivers on these essentials for long-term prosperity.*

TECHNOLOGY / INNOVATION

- **Support making technology innovation an integral part of the state's identity.** *Indiana is fostering an impressive entrepreneurial spirit and becoming a technology hub in the Midwest. We need to better support our technology successes and build on them. What's more, our technology efforts now provide tremendous support to three of the state's main industries: agriculture, logistics and manufacturing.*