

# 2019 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.*

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Support Indiana adopting a meaningful bias crimes statute, with the overriding goal being to remove Indiana from the short list of states without one.** *Enacting a bias crimes statute is not only the right thing to do, it is also important to helping our employers recruit and retain talented employees – it’s vital in a 21st century global economy. Ideally, this statute would define bias and hate broadly and include penalty enhancements for crimes motivated by bias against the victim based on their race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, disability, gender, age, political affiliation, sexual orientation or gender identity. In the end, Indiana must adopt the most exhaustive statute possible that will also make it through the General Assembly.*
- **Support increased investment/efforts to deploy broadband in rural parts of the state.** *It is critical to provide greater economic prospects for all Hoosiers (businesses and residents) through the advanced communications technologies that are essential in today’s world.*

### EDUCATION / WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- **Support requiring the completion of at least one career-technical education credit as a high school diploma requirement beginning with the class of 2023.** *STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) jobs are in high demand; therefore, it’s important students explore this area. A class in computer science, for example, would likely spur more interest in that high-demand, high-wage field.*
- **Support further evaluation of the state’s various education and workforce programs, with input included from the business community and prioritization put on training for the current job market.** *Such a process would result in more Hoosiers being educated, trained and subsequently employed in higher-wage, in-demand jobs like in the technology sector.*
- **Support additional workforce development funding to expand on the initial efforts of the Next Level initiatives.** *Having a large skilled workforce ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow is the state’s No. 1 challenge and area of biggest opportunity.*
- **Support moving up the effective date for making the state superintendent of public instruction an appointed position to 2021 instead of 2025.** *There is no point to delay this important step, especially since the current superintendent of public instruction has announced she will not run for re-election. Our Governor – whatever party he or she represents – is the true leader on the state’s education policy; thus, the governance structure should reflect that and allow for a superintendent of the Governor’s choosing.*

## **ENERGY / ENVIRONMENT**

- **Support** significant investment in Indiana's water infrastructure and prudent planning for the future. Safe, affordable and reliable water supplies are critical for health, safety and economic development. Our August 2014 research study and subsequent data-gathering legislation have set the stage for plan development. The study, "Evaluation of Indiana's Water Utilities," by the Indiana Finance Authority showed immediate costs for drinking water infrastructure improvement of \$2.3 billion and an additional \$815 million a year thereafter. Research has demonstrated a similar need for wastewater improvements, as well as a \$100 million annual need for stormwater infrastructure – not to mention that many of our state's water pipes appear to be near the end of useful life.

## **HEALTH CARE**

- **Support** two-pronged approach to decreasing the state's smoking rate. Smoking causes \$2.8 billion in productivity losses in our state and nearly \$3.3 billion in annual health care costs. The Indiana Chamber supports a cigarette tax increase of \$2.00 per pack and increasing the smoking age from 18 to 21 (as several states have done recently).
- **Oppose** the legalization of medical marijuana (as well as recreational) in Indiana. Consistent safety and effectiveness in clinical trials – as indicated by the Federal Drug Administration – currently doesn't exist, which we believe is crucial. Additional clinical data is critical to ensure the state moves forward appropriately. The effects of marijuana on job performance and employers are indisputable and measurable, including: decreased complex motor skills, interference with attention span, loss of efficiency of short-term memory and cognitive impairment (inability to think effectively). Also noteworthy: Of the 31 states that legalized marijuana for medicinal purposes, eight quickly opted to also approve it for recreational use.

## **TAXATION / PUBLIC FINANCE**

- **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**

## **ENERGY / ENVIRONMENT**

- **Support** the development and implementation of a diversified 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.

## **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.

## **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.