

# 2020 Key Legislative Issues

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## Our Top Priorities for 2020

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Support** empowering local communities in regions across Indiana to come together to create regional management authorities to boost quality of place funding throughout the state. A regional authority formed by municipalities and counties should be given flexibility for raising and deploying funds so long as it does so pursuant to a certified plan meant to attract and retain talent, contemplates a holistic approach to improving its region and appeals to public and private investment.
- **Support** reducing or eliminating unnecessary professional licensing requirements that can hinder talent attraction, especially from those out of state or the country. Indiana should establish itself as the least restrictive state in the country for entering the professional workforce and opening a new business while at the same time making sure consumers have relevant, accurate and up-to-date information about the professional services they consume and those who perform them.

### EDUCATION / WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- **Support** strengthening Indiana's high school accountability system to provide greater transparency and comparability for parents and more meaningful outcomes for students, including academic proficiency and completion of postsecondary credentials valued by the business community. The Indiana Chamber specifically endorses the college and career readiness indicators (e.g., employment, enrollment and enlistment) recommended by the state's School Accountability Panel to ensure relevant postsecondary pathways that prepare all Indiana graduates for success beyond high school.
- **Support** requiring Indiana high school seniors to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) – with an opt-out option – to ensure that more Hoosier students have the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials and degrees with reduced or no debt. Indiana currently lags behind its Midwestern peers in FAFSA filings, ranking 34th among all states. Louisiana, the first among several states to establish a high school FAFSA requirement, now leads the nation in FAFSA completion.

### 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 General Assembly and Governor must continue working to establish a strategic energy plan that delivers on these essentials for long-term prosperity.
- **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 vaping and smoking rate. *The Indiana Chamber supports raising the legal vaping/smoking age from 18 to 21 and having significant vaping and cigarette taxes to discourage the behavior. Between 2012 and 2018, vaping usage among Indiana high school students increased 387% and nearly as much among middle schoolers. The results have been life-threatening illnesses and deaths. Smoking causes more than \$6 billion in annual productivity losses and increased health care costs.*
- **Support** efforts to make health care costs more transparent and lessen the incidence of "surprise billing." *We need to find a method that does not drive up costs or potentially erode plan networks any further.*

## LABOR RELATIONS

- **Support** unemployment insurance (UI) tax liability certainty for employers while ensuring fund solvency. *Keeping the Schedule E classification for businesses means money will not be taken out of the economy unnecessarily and helps maintain proper UI fund levels needed for an eventual downturn.*

## Long-Term Priorities / Additional Areas of Focus in 2020

## CIVIL JUSTICE

- **Support** transparency in asbestos trust claims. *Indiana's legal climate is an important factor that businesses consider when deciding where to expand or locate facilities. Hoosier employers are facing growing competition from many other states that have lower litigation costs. Currently, in our state, claimants do not have to disclose "double-dipping" in asbestos trust 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.*

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Support** policies, including incentives, that encourage communities and businesses to work collectively to increase the net in-migration of out-of-state residents with postsecondary credentials to support Indiana's current and future workforce. *Indiana has more job openings than job seekers and its talent pool is not expanding as quickly and diversely as needed to grow all components of the state's current and future economy.*

## EDUCATION / WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- **Support** further evaluation of the state's various education and workforce programs, with input from the business community and a priority placed on training for the current job market. *Such a process would result in more Hoosiers being educated, trained and employed in higher-wage, in-demand jobs.*

## ENERGY / ENVIRONMENT

- **Support** fundamental and transformational changes to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management's implementation and administration of Indiana's Excess Liability Trust Fund (ELTF) funds to pay for the cleanup of leaking underground storage tanks. *These changes are needed to protect the longevity of the ELTF.*

## **HEALTH CARE**

- **Oppose the legalization of medical and recreational marijuana 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, 10 (and the District of Columbia) subsequently opted to also approve it for recreational use, with Michigan being the most recent.*

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

- **Support meaningful township government reform.** *Eliminating township government entirely to better serve taxpayers is preferred, but at a minimum either reducing the number of townships or finding ways to simply make township governments more efficient, effective and accountable.*

## **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.*

## **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.*