



Hendricks County Chambers Weekly Statehouse Update

By Caryl Auslander • Mar 18, 2023

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General Statehouse Update



Lawmakers are deep into committee work as we wrap up week 10 of the legislative session. Public policy regarding the state's utilities saw a particularly productive week, with three pieces of legislation moving through the House, two of which are now on their way to Governor Holcomb's desk. Budget writers were presented with several proposals from state agencies, and controversial legislation concerning gender-affirming care might be dead for the session. Where do things stand at the end of the week? Let's dive in...

Budget Hearings Well On Their Way

This week Senate Appropriations heard from several state government entities. The Indiana Finance Authority kicked off the week and presented the state's debt overview, which can be [found here](#). Several other state agencies, including the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, the Department of Workforce

Development, and the Department of Education, presented their budget proposals.

In addition, the [Senate School Funding Subcommittee](#) of the Appropriations Committee [held a hearing](#) on K-12 education funding, English Language Learner (ELL) issues, and Special Education proposals on Thursday afternoon with nearly 100 individuals signed up to testify. Nearly half of the [House Republican budget](#), 48%, goes to K-12 education, which will get a boost of nearly \$2 billion over its current appropriation. The Senate will likely unveil their version of the budget later this month, with the final budget expected in late April.

Utilities Legislation Sails Through Second Half

This week, the House Utilities Committee successfully moved three bills to and through the floor. Two proposals now head to the governor, and one is waiting for a final concurrence after changes were made to the bill in the second half.

[SB 114](#) is a response to a high-profile incident in Indianapolis where an out-of-state landlord collected utility payments from tenants but never paid the utility company itself. This bill appoints a receiver when a multifamily residential property owner with more than four units hasn't paid a utility bill for the property for an extended period of time. That receiver would then have broad powers to operate the rental property in place of the landlord, including the authority to collect rents, pay debts and even sell the property. The Senate must now consider, for a final time, changes made in the House.

A bipartisan proposal to increase the pay for a trustee serving on a regional water, sewage, or solid waste district now saw broad approval. Under [SEA 374](#), trustees could earn \$150 per day, up from \$50 per day. [SEA 176](#) increases the threshold for “small” reactors from 350 to 470 megawatts. This change would open up the ability for a proposed facility out of the UK to do business in Indiana, a facility building a 450-megawatt facility. Federal guidelines defining “small reactors” average 300 megawatts of energy.

If you notice, two of the bills listed above are named SEA (Senate Enrolled Act) instead of SB (Senate Bill). This is because they have moved through the entire legislative process. SEA 374 and SEA 176 now move to the Governor, who can sign them into law, veto them, or let

them lay on his desk and automatically become law after 10 days. The Governor's bill watch site can be found [here](#).

Critical Infrastructure Bill Sees House Approval

In a [move to protect](#) Hoosier roads, energy, water, communications systems, and other critical infrastructure from ownership by foreign-owned entities from China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia, the House Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee easily passed [SB 177](#). The bill would also block those citizens and companies from buying or leasing land next to military facilities, effective at the end of June of this year. In a committee amendment, the Indiana National Guard was added to the list of properties where buying and leasing land would also be blocked.

FAFSA Requirement Easily Moves Through House Ed Committee

Lawmakers have [advanced a measure](#) to require high school students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, better known as the FAFSA. Supporters of [SB 167](#) could give students more money to go to college and convince more of them to enroll in higher education in the first place. If passed, Indiana would be one of eight states to make the form a requirement. An estimated \$69 million in Pell Grants are left on the table each year by Hoosier students, which requires completion of the FAFSA. SB 167 was approved by House Education on Wednesday and now moves to the floor for full consideration.

Health Department Funding Legislation Sees First Senate Hearing

A bill to give local health departments access to new state dollars if they opt into a new set of standards had its first hearing in House Public Health Committee on Tuesday. [SB 4](#) contains a list of about two dozen core services local health departments must provide if they want to get significantly increased funding from the state. This optional program would be offered to all 92 counties and the cities of Gary, East Chicago, and Fishers and aims to shift the state out of defense mode and into a more proactive and preventative healthcare landscape.

SB 4 results from findings from the Public Health Commission, co-chaired by former State Senator Luke Kenley and former State Health Commissioner Dr. Judith Monroe, who [delivered their findings](#) in

August of 2022. Food protection, local pool inspections, immunizations, and maternal and child health services are a few of the affected areas and saw broad committee support from many in the state's healthcare industry and economic, manufacturing, and agricultural organizations. The funding needed to accompany this legislation is expected to be included in the state budget bill. After significant testimony, the bill was held for future consideration.

Parental Consent Bill Likely Dead in Senate

A controversial [proposal to ban courts](#) from removing transgender children from their parents based only on parent refusal to seek gender-affirming care or gender transition support might have been put on ice by Senate President Pro Tempore Rod Bray, he sent it to Senate Rules Committee this week. [HB 1407](#) includes what supporters have called a "parents' bill of rights." But current litigation has given lawmakers pause, with Bray saying he "does not see a path forward" for the bill. We will be watching, because we could see the language find a home in another bill, perhaps in [SB 480](#) as it makes its way through the House.

Up Next Week

Next week expect to see full floor calendars. Committees will continue their work with the House Republican mental health bill, a high-profile pet shop bill, TANF legislation, and a substantial number of utilities proposals still on deck. As always, Torchbearer Public Affairs will be there monitoring, testifying, and advocating for your needs. Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

Hendricks County Chambers Update



Session is ramping up as committee agendas this week were packed with bills moving through the policy process. We are about three weeks away from the first committee deadline, which means many committee Chairs have likely laid out their agendas for the remainder of the year. The next few weeks will move quickly, and we are anticipating that more controversial legislation will be popping up as we approach deadlines. As always, we will keep you up-to-date with relevant information on your issues.

Childcare/PreK:

- As we have reported, [HB 1591](#) is an omnibus education bill authored by Representative Behning and was heard in the Senate Education committee two weeks ago. It was amended during the first half of session to include language that gets rid of the term “pilot” for On My Way Pre-K, making the program permanent throughout the state after 12 years. The bill was held in committee for future consideration. It has not been added to the calendar for next week at this time.

Housing:

- As we have reported previously, [HB1005](#) is an omnibus housing infrastructure bill and it was assigned this week to the Senate Appropriations committee. We are hearing that the House is not going to hear the TIF bills that came over from the Senate. This will create an opportunity for the House to make the TIF changes they want to HB1005 when it comes back over from the Senate. The author has mentioned that he is not opposed to adding TIF language to his bill, but has not elaborated on what changes he would make.

Workforce:

- [HB1451](#) deals with unemployment compensation and increases the number of earnings someone can keep when they work part-time while drawing unemployment insurance. The bill was heard for a second time in the Senate Pensions and Labor committee this week and was voted out unanimously. The bill is eligible for second reading amendments on Monday.
- [HB1528](#) deals with addressing the teacher shortages and allows for a scholarship of up \$10,000 for remaining education needed for

teachers' license. The bill was amended in committee this week that eliminates the requirement to have a bachelors degree if they are a teaching assistant and allows those currently obtaining their degree to apply for this scholarship. The bill passed out of committee with a 11-2 vote and was referred to the Senate Appropriations committee due to its fiscal impact.

- [HB 1002](#) is a House priority bill that is a “re-branding” of the high school diploma. As we have reported on this bill in past reports, and it has been assigned to the Senate Education committee. It has not been scheduled for a hearing at this time, but we anticipate it will be soon.
- [HB 1160](#) is a workforce training pilot program bill that made it through the first half. The bill requires the commission for higher education to establish an education and career support services pilot program. The bill targets workforce training for unemployed or underemployed individuals who are eligible for the TANF program. The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Family and Children services and has not been scheduled for a hearing at this time.

Health Care:

- As we have reported previously, [HB 1006](#) and [SB 1](#) are this year's priority mental health bills for each caucus. Both bills are receiving pushback from lawmakers due to the fiscal or applicability of the language. Some House members believe that SB 1 is too expensive of an effort are skeptical of how successful the rollout will be. HB 1006 is questioned by some members due to the fact that there is involuntary holding provisions in the bill. We helped draft a letter of support on behalf of the business community in support of the General Assembly fully supporting and funding both of these bills. *HB1006 has been scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Corrections and Criminal Law committee on Tuesday.*
- [HB 1003](#), Representative Snow's health care bill, deals with inefficiencies in the system and incentivizing employers through tax credits. The bill would incentivize employers through tax credits to use "health reimbursement arrangements" rather than a traditional health care plan for their employees. As we have previously reported, of the numerous House health care bills aimed at lowering costs for

Hoosiers, HB 1003 has been met with the most support from stakeholders. The bill was heard in the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions committee this week and was amended to ensure that Medicaid is not impacted by the bill, and further defines certain terms. The bill passed out of committee unanimously and has been referred to the Senate Appropriations committee due to its fiscal impact.

- Also previously reported, [HB 1004](#) is a healthcare bill that deals with what hospitals can charge for services. This bill has been labeled the “titanic” bill, as no one can seem to come to an agreement long enough for the bill to start moving. Currently, the bill would create a penalty for hospitals that charge above the national average for services, which is 260% of the federal Medicare reimbursement rate. The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Health and Provider Services but has not been scheduled for a hearing at this time.

Please review your bill track list (below) and let us know if you have any questions - Chambers care about a lot of issues, so this list is very expansive!

Here is the [live link](#) to your bill track for 2023.

Action Items



- Please review your bill track and let us know of any bills of interest to you.

Important Dates



Tuesday, April 11th - House Committee Report Deadline

Thursday, April 13th - Senate Committee Report Deadline

Thursday, April 13th - House 2nd Reading Deadline

Monday, April 17th - Senate 2nd Reading Deadline

Monday, April 17th - House 3rd Reading Deadline

Tuesday, April 18th - Senate 3rd Reading Deadline

Thursday, April 27th - Anticipated Sine Die

[Senate Session Calendar](#)

[House Session Calendar](#)

