

Legislative

Update

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Week One of the 2008 Legislative Session

The first two weeks of the 2008 “short” legislative session are now complete. Throughout the latter half of last year, everyone talked about property taxes and how the issue had to be addressed by the legislature in the then-upcoming session. It was predicted to be the “one” predominant issue that the legislature could not leave town without addressing. When the General Assembly met for its Organizational Day in November, it became apparent that legislators were definitely taking the issue seriously. Both the House and Senate fiscal committees began meeting in December to get a jump start on the process. Well, now that the General Assembly is two weeks into the current session, it is very clear that property tax relief and reform is The Issue this session.

Sure, there have been 402 House Bills (plus 11 House Joint Resolutions) and 368 Senate Bills (plus 22 Senate Joint Resolutions) introduced, and those bills take on various other issues aside from the property tax situation, but overall it will be that one issue of property tax reform that drives this session, which must be completed by March 14th.

This past week, Governor Daniels gave his fourth State of the State speech, in which he outlined the issues – in this case, The Issue – which legislators must address. The Senate is already taking action on several tax bills and the House Ways and Means Committee has approved House Bill 1001 (the Gov’s Tax Plan) unanimously, sending it to the full House for amendment and discussion on Tuesday, January 22nd.

Thursday, January 24th, is the deadline for committee activity in both the House and Senate. It will be a very busy week as legislators try to move a lot of legislation. If the legislative calendar holds, the first half will be complete by the end of January. As mentioned above, this is a “short” session. That means that everything is on somewhat of a fast track. Final adjournment can be no later than March 14th. The million dollar question is can the General Assembly get its work finished by then or will there be a need for a special session?

Of particular interest to municipal electrics, legislation has been introduced pertaining to renewable energy resources, the environment, economic development, and others. A watchful eye is being kept on all of this in addition to all of the property tax discussions. If you want to read more about the legislature, including all of the 770 bills introduced, committee schedules, etc., please go to www.IN.gov/legislative.

I hope that you will be able to attend the 2008 legislative reception that we are sponsoring in conjunction with the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns Annual Legislative Conference on February 13th. This event will be held at the Marriott Hotel in Downtown Indianapolis from 5:30 – 7:30. We really need a strong turnout of representatives from ALL of Indiana’s municipal electric communities. This is a key opportunity to come to Indianapolis and talk with your legislators about what is happening not only at the State House, but in your local communities as well. Please RSVP to me by February 7th!

Additionally, the APPA Legislative Rally is coming up February 25-27 in Washington, D.C. If you have not already informed me that you plan to attend, please do so as soon as you can.

The IMPA Legislative Update is published by the Indiana Municipal Power Agency. For questions regarding legislative activities, please contact Carolyn Wright, Vice President of Government and Member Services for IMPA, at (317) 575-3873 or cwright@impa.com.