

STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

February 11, 2022

2022 INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY WEEK 6

GENERAL INFORMATION

- This week was the first full week of the second half of the 2022 “short” legislative session. With potentially just 3 1/2 to 4 weeks remaining, committees got off to a swift start. Note that the committee deadline is now just 2 weeks away, followed by the conference committee process and then final adjournment of the General Assembly no later than March 14th.
- Long-time Highland, Indiana, Clerk Treasurer Michael Griffin was elected by a Lake County Democratic caucus last Saturday to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of State Senator Frank Mrvan (D-Hammond). Senator Griffin was sworn in on Monday this week. Given that the session is moving along quickly, Senator Griffin will be getting to work in his new role right away!
- Last Friday marked the end of the filing season for the May Primary election. Of particular note, the 9th Congressional district is an open seat with no incumbent running due to Congressman Trey Hollingsworth not seeking re-election. CD 9 is solidly Republican and there are nine individuals seeking to get the GOP nod to replace Congressman Hollingsworth: Jim Baker, a commercial real estate broker; Stu Barnes-Israel, an Army veteran; Salem State Representative J. Michael Davisson; Dan Heiwig; former State Senator Erin Houchin; Bill Thomas, who ran in the 9th District Democratic primary in 2016; Brian Tibbs, a pastor who ran unsuccessfully for a Statehouse seat in 2020; D. Eric Schansberg, an economics professor; and Mike Sodrel, who previously represented the ninth district from 2005-2007.
- The committee calendar will grow next week. Several priority issues, including House Bill 1002 (tax policy), House Bill 1116 (absentee voting changes), House Bill 1077 (gun permitting) and Senate Bill 411 (siting for renewable resources) are all awaiting attention.
- There is still a vast difference of opinion between the two chambers on the administrative authority of the Governor specifically as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic and actions taken to date by the Governor, as well as over tax policy.
- Oh my! An interesting bill moving through the process currently is House Bill 1248. HB 1248 would ban the public from coming into direct contact and touching certain big animals like lions and tigers and bears. It passed out of the Senate Natural Resources Committee on Monday.
- Senate Bill 237 is also moving through the process. SB 237 deals with notice and publication of public meetings under the Open Door law. It requires an agency of a political subdivision to post meeting notices and agendas on the local agency’s official website in addition to other methods under current law. SB 237 also expands the definition of “official website” to include a social media platform, if a political subdivision designates that site as their primary source for public information. For those without an official website, and who still publish in newspapers, this will allow those entities to realize some cost savings by providing another option through social media.

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- Chatter this week in the limestone halls of the State House is that Senator Phil Boots' perennial annexation legislation may get a hearing next week after passing out of the Senate earlier this session. Senate Bill 73 contains language that has died each of the last four or five sessions after passing only one chamber. In essence, SB 73 would remove the ability of municipalities to initiate annexations. Only voluntary and super-voluntary annexations would be allowed if this legislation were to pass into law.
- On the energy and utilities front, both the House and Senate jurisdictional utilities committees met this week to kick off the second half of the session.
 - The House Utilities, Energy and Telecommunications Committee heard Senate Bills 147 and 272. SB 147 adds “underground pumped storage hydropower to the list of sources and technologies that qualify as “clean energy resources” in Indiana. The committee approved this bill, and it will now be considered by the full House. SB 272 contains numerous provisions dealing with water and wastewater infrastructure and is result of recommendations made by the Water and Wastewater Task Force that met this past interim. The bill was held with a vote likely next week.
 - The Senate Utilities Committee also met this week and heard House Bills 1111 and 1221. HB 1111 pertains to the content of the IN Utility Regulatory Commission’s annual report to the Governor and legislature, and it allows the IURC to adopt rules necessary to implement Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Order 2222 dealing with Distributed Energy Resources. HB 1221 concerns electric vehicle charging pricing and allows an investor-owned utility to establish a public use EV pilot project that would allow them to install, own or operate charging infrastructure or make-ready infrastructure to support public use EVs. Public use EVs are defined as electric school buses, electric transit buses and electric vehicles used by a public or private commercial enterprise to deliver goods/services to the public. Both bills were approved by the committee and will now be considered by the full Senate.



Please see this week’s updated tracking list for additional information on these and other pieces of legislation that are potentially continuing their journey through the legislative process.