



STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

March 8, 2019

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2019 Indiana General Assembly Week 9

- ▲ The IN General Assembly kicked off the second half of the 2019 legislative session this week. Both the House and Senate began deliberations on the bills that were approved by the other chamber during the course of the first half of session.
- ▲ All bills that were passed by the House and Senate and sent to the other side of the State House have been assigned to an appropriate committee, and those committees are now meeting in earnest. Next week, we will see committee activity ramp up even more with legislation starting to move toward the House and Senate floors. Over the next 4 ½ to 5 weeks, the high profile issues of the session, including gaming, education, and hate crimes, will be emerging in the second chamber.
- ▲ The Senate Appropriations Committee has already begun to hear aspects of the state budget bill, House Bill 1001. There will be a state budget forecast released around April 15th, after which the General Assembly will be able to put together the final pieces of the \$34 billion biennial state budget.
- ▲ Of general interest, Senate Bill 94 (annexation) was heard in the House Government and Regulatory Reform Committee this week. SB 94 would require municipalities to get 51 percent of the land owners or the owners of more than 75 percent of the assessed valuation of the area to be annexed to sign an annexation petition. The bill would also void all remonstrance waivers in which people who bought land agreed not to contest future annexations. SB 94 basically ends involuntary annexation in Indiana. After considerable testimony, Committee Chairman Kevin Mahan held the bill, with no vote taken. SB 94 is the only annexation bill still alive at this point of the session.
- ▲ Also of interest, Senate Bill 535 (extraterritorial jurisdiction of municipalities) was assigned to the House Select Committee on Government Reduction. No hearing has been scheduled yet.
- ▲ On the utility front, the House Utilities, Energy and Telecommunications Committee met this week and heard Senate Bills 4 and 193. SB 4 is one of two water infrastructure bills moving through the legislature this session. The measure establishes the Indiana Finance Authority as the single point of contact for the state's water programs, establishes a Storm Water Management Task Force and prescribes its make-up, creates water study areas throughout the state where utilities can meet voluntarily to determine regional priorities and promote cooperation, and it requires every water utility to perform an audit of its water distribution system to determine the causes of the utility's non-revenue water (the difference between the amount of water entering the utility's distribution system and the amount of water received by the water utility's customers). The committee approved SB 4, unanimously.
- ▲ Senate Bill 193 was also heard this week. SB 193 concerns water and sewer connections through rights-of-way. The bill allows a property owner with a failing septic system to access a public right of way to connect to another local unit's water or sewer utility. It allows the municipality that owns and operates the water or sewer system to which the connection is being made to waive the annexation remonstrance waiver requirement for connecting. No vote was taken by the committee after several stakeholders expressed continued concern about making these kinds of changes to local decision making over ROWs, as well as concerns about potential amendments to the bill.
- ▲ As the legislative process continues, we will be keeping a keen eye out for any amendments or any other areas of concern to IMPA and our municipal electric members.