

State Legislative Update

January 12, 2024

2024 INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY WEEK 1

General Legislative Information

- The 2024 “short” legislative session is off to a fast start. Week 1 is now complete. By statute, the IN General Assembly must adjourn by March 14th. However, it is widely anticipated that they will finish business earlier than that, potentially as early as March 8th.
- Bill filing deadlines in both chambers have passed and there are now just over 2½ weeks for committee hearings to be held by January 30th in the House and February 1st in the Senate. All bills must clear the first chamber or be “dead” for the session by February 5th in the House and February 6th in the Senate.
- Governor Eric Holcomb delivered his eighth and final State of the State address to the General Assembly Tuesday evening.
 - The Governor highlighted accomplishments of his Administration in the areas of economic development, business and personal property tax reductions, increased public health funding, increases in teacher and state police salaries, and the completion of I-69 from Evansville to Indianapolis to name a few.
 - He also touched on his priorities for the final 12 months of his term – improved literacy rates among Indiana’s third graders, addressing child-care needs in the workforce, higher education goals and the creation of more 3-year and associate college degree opportunities.
- Legislative leadership announced their respective agendas.
 - House and Senate Republicans are prioritizing legislation that focuses on increased retirement benefits for public employees (13th check), bans antisemitism in public educational institutions, expands work-based education to prepare students for today’s workforce, increases third grade reading proficiency, expands child care access, health care reforms, protects taxpayers and business owners who interact with state agencies by creating more efficient processes, and enables water utility companies having IURC-approved lead pipe replacement plans in place to move ahead more quickly and cost effectively.
 - House and Senate Democrats laid out a slightly different agenda for the session which focuses on child care accessibility, capping prescription drug costs, establishing a statewide universal pre-kindergarten program to help boost Indiana’s reading proficiency rates, increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates, offering a \$250 property tax credit to every homeowner and increase the renter’s deduction for non-homeowners, and raising the state’s minimum wage to \$15/hour.

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- Importantly, State House leaders have said they intend to focus only on the most pressing issues during this very short legislative session. While that is the goal, individual legislators are always free to introduce their own priority legislative concepts, so we are keeping an eye out for those!
- Key dates for the first half of the 2024 legislative session:
 - January 15th – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – no session
 - January 30th – House committee deadline
 - February 1st - Senate committee deadline
 - February 5th – 3rd Reading deadline for House bills
 - February 6th – 3rd Reading deadline for Senate bills

Highlights from Week 1

- Legislators have come out of the gate quickly on a few bills, including priority legislation that makes a few changes to last year’s high school apprenticeship law (House Bill 1001), banning antisemitism in public educational institutions (House Bill 1002), and changing dates for town conventions from August 21st to the 28th (Senate Bill 29).

Of Specific Interest to IMPA/Municipal Electric Utilities

- The **House Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Committee** met this week for an informational hearing on electric utility preparedness for “off nominal” events such as weather and unplanned interruptions in service. As was the case with the IN Utility Regulatory Commission’s fall hearing on storm response, restoration and preparedness, this meeting focused primarily on IOU utilities.
- The **Senate Utilities Committee** met this week to hear Senate Bill 5, which deals with the replacement of customer-owned lead water service lines. Per EPA regulations currently in place, all water utilities (including municipal water systems) must identify all lead service lines in their service areas by October 2024. SB 5 is an effort to enable Indiana’s water utility companies that have IURC-approved lead pipe replacement plans in place to move ahead more quickly and cost effectively.

State Legislative Departures in 2024

- In December, State Representative Randy Lyness (R-Lawrenceburg) became the 5th House Republican not running for reelection in 2024. Representative Lyness will complete his term. He has represented Ohio, Switzerland and Dearborn counties, and a portion of

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Jefferson County, since 2015. He represents IMPA member communities Lawrenceburg, Greendale, and Rising Sun.

- State Representative Denny Zent (R-Angola) also announced his intention to retire following the conclusion of his current term, making him the 6th Republican legislator not seeking reelection in 2024. Since 2012, Representative Zent has represented House District 51, which includes portions of LaGrange and Steuben counties in northeast Indiana. This district contains no municipal electric communities.
- On the Democrat side, State Representative Ryan Hatfield (D-Evansville) announced this week that he will forego reelection to the General Assembly and will instead seek a Vanderburgh County Circuit judge position. That makes him the 7th overall member of the IN House of Representatives leaving this year – to date. State Senator John Crane (R-Avon) announced last year that he was not running again in 2024. So far, he is the only Senator who will not run.
- Former Democrat state Senator Eddie Melton successfully ran for Mayor of the City of Gary in the 2023 municipal election. A caucus was held in December to select his replacement in the IN state Senate. Senator Dave Vinzant was sworn into office on Monday January 8th. He will finish Melton's term this year and has filed his candidacy for the 2024 election.

Congressional Departures Announced This Week

- Indiana's 8th District US Representative Larry Bucshon announced Monday that he will retire at the end of his term and will not seek reelection in 2024. Congressman Bucshon is currently in his seventh term representing Indiana's 8th Congressional District. Prior to being elected to Congress in 2010, Dr. Bucshon was a practicing heart surgeon and served as President of Ohio Valley Heart Care in Evansville. Congressman Bucshon is the longest-serving member of Indiana's Republican House delegation. The 8th District covers portions of 21 counties in western and southwest Indiana. The Congressman currently serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee and previously served on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.
- Indiana's 6th District US Representative Greg Pence also announced his intention to step away from Congress at the end of his term and will not run for reelection this year. Congressman Pence is the brother of former Vice President and Indiana Governor Mike Pence. He is currently serving his third term representing Indiana's 6th Congressional District and also serves on the US House Energy and Commerce Committee. Current State Representative Mike Speedy of Indianapolis has announced his candidacy for this now open Congressional seat, which means he, too, will be leaving the state legislature as he cannot run for both Congress and the General Assembly.

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- Of note, Indiana will have four open Congressional seats in 2024: CDs 3 (Banks), 5 (Spartz), 6 (Pence), and 8 (Bucshon).

2024 Election Filing Opens

- The 2024 election season officially began on Wednesday January 10th when candidates for a number of offices could officially begin filing their declaration of candidacy in the Secretary of State's office for a major political primary nomination. This includes candidates for federal office, as well as statewide, legislative, and judicial offices. The Elections Division of the SOS office will accept declarations of candidacy through noon on February 9th.

