ADVOCACY 101

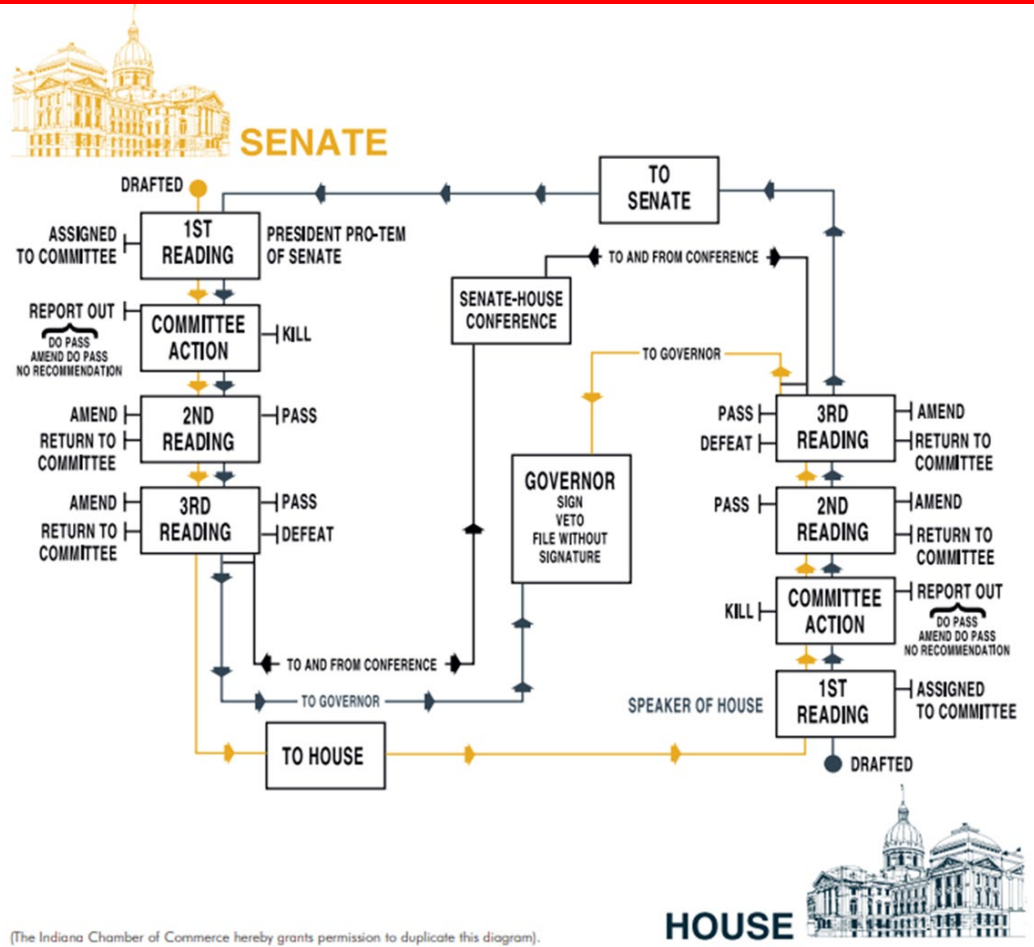
THE INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY & STATE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- **Part Time Legislature, Full Time Staff**
  - Staff: Clerk, duplicating, fiscal policy staff, policy analysts, Legislative Assistants (LAs), press secretaries, media
- **Short Session (2026)**
  - Even years, January – March
- **Long Session (2027)**
  - Budget writing: biennial budget
  - Odd years, January – April
- **Special Sessions**
  - Occasional/rare
  - Specific topic or need

THE STATE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

- **First Reading**
  - Bill is read in its chamber of origin and then assigned to a committee
- **Committee Action**
  - Committees consider bills, hear public testimony, make additions or deletions to language
- **Second Reading**
  - Bills are ready for floor amendment, engrossment, or recommitment
- **Third Reading**
  - Must receive constitutional majority to pass (Senate: 26 votes; House: 51)



(The Indiana Chamber of Commerce hereby grants permission to duplicate this diagram).

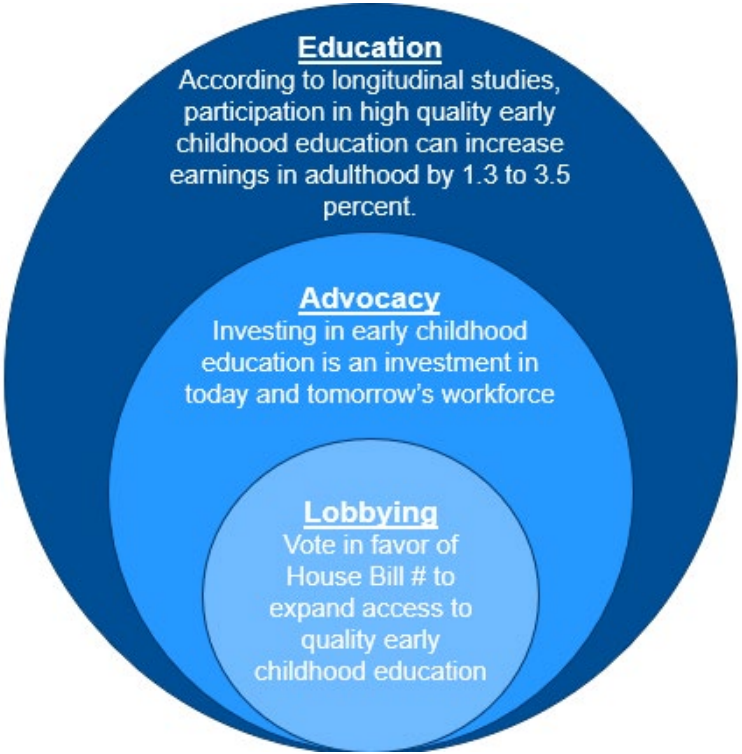
POLICY LANDSCAPE

FACTORS INFLUENCING POLICY

- **Conservative State**
  - Small Government/Hands-Off Approach
    - Childcare choice is family choice
    - Low-regulation
    - Religious influence and social conservatism
      - Example: reluctance to regulate registered ministries
  - Market-Based Approaches
    - School Choice/Vouchers
    - Influential Business Community
- **Urban vs. Rural Dynamic**
  - Marion County vs. State

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITY ARE WE DOING?



- Education:
  - Social media efforts to inform public about On My Way Pre-K program
  - Sending ALICE report to state and local elected officials
- Advocacy:
  - Participation in Fiscal Policy interim study committee on sources of child care funding
- Lobbying:
  - Voter calls to action in support of expanded child care funding in state budget bill (HB1001) in 2027
  - Direct advocacy for HB 1001 in 2027

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

Legislator Engagement

- Session Agenda Items/Specific Asks: September – March or April
- Prioritize who to meet with based on committee assignments
- If you have a 'big' ask (budgetary or new policy) plan to lay the groundwork very early on and have follow-up conversations

Relationship Building & General Education: May – September

- Prioritize meeting with your district or region's legislators
- Invite legislators to events
- Grassroots Engagement

During Session: January – March or April

- Testify at Committee Hearings
- Submit Written Testimony/Letters of Support
- Write op-eds, letters to the editor to raise public awareness
- Attend statehouse days (like INAEYC/UWCI Childcare Day at the Statehouse) for legislator meetings

ADMINISTRATIVE ADVOCACY

- Why engage administratively?
  - Policy implementation and bureaucratic discretion
- Ways to Engage:
  - Relationship Building
  - Support Agency Bills
  - Provide Capacity Support
  - Spread Program Awareness
  - Letters of Support & Recommendations
  - Public Comment Periods
- Outcome
  - Invited to the table
  - Access to information and data sharing
  - Impact implementation process

TIPS FOR MEETINGS

How do I get a meeting?

- You can call or email the official's office, but the best way to schedule is often through their LA (legislative assistant) whose emails can be found on the caucus websites
- During session, legislators may be harder to meet with or ask you to meet briefly at the Statehouse. Outside of session, try to meet them in their district!

What do I talk about?

- Legislators are people – build rapport before jumping in with a hard ask
- Bring data and professional knowledge, but also be prepared to share stories and anecdotes to help explain impact
- If you're making an ask, position yourself as a resource in return
- Do not ignore alternative viewpoints – acknowledge and stay on message

Follow Up

- Thank legislators & staff
- If you mentioned data or a report, email it to their LA after the meeting
- Stay connected to your area legislators and be a go-to source of information for them

MAKING POLICYMAKERS CARE

Start with admission: advocacy for people who rely on social programs is an enormous challenge in a state with our political culture

Often need to connect issues to things that resonate with right-of-center policymakers: economic opportunity, personal choice, free enterprise, economic/workforce development, and (sometimes) more traditional notions of family

Bring data, but also personal, in-district stories; most policy proposals come about because of a story/experience, not macro data

Have to change the political calculation for officeholders

CONNECTING WITH VOTERS

Non-profit organizations can, and often do, engage in voter registration, voter education, and get out the vote efforts:

- Can put together non-partisan voter guides or voter education materials (like toolkits)
- Partner with other nonprofits to broaden the reach (ex., UWCI works to help broadcast the voter education work of our partner MCCOY)
- Public advocacy through media engagement, like LOEs/op-eds

EARLY LEARNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ELAC)

WHAT IS ELAC & WHAT'S IT DOING?

- **What is ELAC?**
  - Statutorily created advisory committee made up of representatives from core stakeholders of the child care/early learning system: providers, non-profits, government, business, state agencies.
  - Most appointed by governor, though four are appointed by General Assembly (one by each legislative caucus).
  - Holds six meetings per year to receive information from agencies and general public; makes recommendations to governor and General Assembly on systems-level issues impacting early learning and child care.
- **Current Work**
  - This year, took more meetings on the road: Porter County, Orange County, East Side of Indianapolis, and Delaware County (November).
  - Will present and adopt 2027 recommendations at November meeting; will include recs on funding, support for local partnerships/innovations, defining and creating conditions for quality, and review of provider supports and reimbursement rates.

THANK YOU

Q&A

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INAEYC Indiana Advocacy Training & 2027 Session Preview

Tuesday, October 20th, 2026

Heather D. Harris, Partner

Barnes & Thornburg LLP

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Legislative Leadership

Indiana House of Representatives

70 Republicans
House Speaker,
Todd Huston (R)
Fishers

30 Democrats
House Minority Leader,
Phil GiaQuinta (D)
Fort Wayne

Indiana State Senate

40 Republicans
President Pro Tempore,
Chris Garten (R)
Charlestown

10 Democrats
Senate Minority Leader,
Shelli Yoder (D)
Bloomington

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2027 Indiana General Assembly

- The 2027 Session is a long session
  - Budget year
- First Day of Session is likely January 11th or 12th, 2027.
- Closed on January 18th, 2027, for MLK Day.
- Session Break (likely the last week of February or first week of March)
- Organization Day is November 17th, 2026 - session dates should be solidified around this time.

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Long Session

- Long sessions occur in odd-number years and must adjourn by April 29th.
- These are known as “budget sessions” where the General Assembly creates a two-year (biennial) budget for the state.
- Budget session is important as we revisit funding for childcare, education, and essential government programs throughout Indiana.

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2026 Interim Primary Elections and Caucus Priorities:

- Election results
- New Senate leadership
- Chairperson changes
- Caucuses have not yet stated specific 2027 legislative goals but discussions on eliminating property taxes, lowering utility rates, handling inflation and limiting state agency funding remain top concerns. Other issues include healthcare affordability and accessibility.

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Primary Election Recap/Results

- 100 Indiana Representative seats and 25 State Senate seats are up for re-election this year.
- Six Senate incumbent Republicans were defeated in the Primary.
- One House incumbent Republican was defeated in the Primary.
- No House or Senate incumbent Democrats were defeated.

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One House Republican Incumbent Defeated in Primary:

- Bruce Borders – Jasonville, IN
- House District 45 (Daviess, Greene, Knox, Sullivan and Vigo)
- Defeated by Kellie Streeter (Knox County Commissioner)

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House Retirees:

- Mike Karickhoff (R)
  Kokomo, IN

- Brad Barrett (R)
  Richmond, IN

- Ed Clere (R)
  New Albany, IN

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House Retirees Continued:

- Craig Haggard (R)

Mooresville, IN

- Michelle Davis (R)

Whiteland, IN

- Shane Lindauer (R)

Jasper, IN

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House Retirees Continued:

- Karen Engleman (R)

  Corydon, IN

- Sue Errington (D)

  Muncie, IN

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Six Senate Republican Incumbents Defeated in Primary:

- Travis Holdman – Markle, IN
- Senate District 19 (Adams, Allen, Blackford, Jay and Wells)
- Defeated by Blake Fiechter (Bluffton City Councilman)

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Six Senate Republican Incumbents Defeated in Primary:

- Linda Rogers – Granger, IN
- Senate District 11 (Elkhart and St. Joseph)
- Defeated by Brian Schmutzler (Physician)

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Six Senate Republican Incumbents Defeated in Primary:

- Jim Buck – Kokomo, IN
- Senate District 21 (Hamilton, Howard, Tipton)
- Defeated by Tracey Powell (Tipton County Commissioner)

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Six Senate Republican Incumbents Defeated in Primary:

- Rick Niemeyer – Lowell, IN
- Senate District 6 (Benton, Jasper, Lake and Newton)
- Defeated by Jim Starkey (Construction Manager)

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Six Senate Republican Incumbents Defeated in Primary:

- Greg Walker – Columbus, IN
- Senate District 41 (Batholomew, Johnson)
- Defeated by Michelle Davis (Current House of Representatives Member)

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Six Senate Republican Incumbents Defeated in Primary:

- Dan Dernulc – Highland, IN
  - Senate District 1 (Lake)
- Defeated by Trevor G. DeVries (Transactional Risk)

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Senate Retirees:

- Kyle Walker (R)
  Lawrence, IN

- Eric Bassler (R)
  Washington, IN

- J.D. Ford (D)
  Indianapolis, IN

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Senate Retirees Continued:

- Andrea Hunley (D)

  Indianapolis, IN

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New Senate Leadership

President Pro Tempore

Chris Garten (R)
Charlestown

Majority Floor Leader

Eric Koch (R)
Bedford

Caucus Chair, pending…..(Sen Tyler Johnson, Sen Justin Busch…)

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General Assembly Chair Changes

- Senate:
  - **Tax and Fiscal Policy**, Sen Travis Holdman
  - **Family and Children Services**, Sen Greg Walker
  - **Local Government**, Sen Jim Buck
  - **Environmental Affairs**, Sen Rick Niemeyer
  - **Pensions and Labor**, Sen Linda Rogers
- House:
  - **Public Heath**, Rep Brad Barrett
  - **Natural Resources**, Rep Shane Lindauer

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Gov. Braun's Agenda

- Increase Access to Rural Healthcare
  - Add further incentives for rural healthcare facilities
  - Improve access to prenatal care
- Lower Healthcare Costs
  - Add further price transparency requirements
  - Reform the prior authorization insurance process
  - Further regulate pharmacy benefit managers

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Gov. Braun's Agenda

- Reform Mental Health Treatment
- Insurance
  - Add protections for pre-existing conditions
  - Increase coverage of telehealth for rural Hoosiers

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Childcare – HOT TOPIC

- Childcare is certain to be a hot topic during the 2027 session.
- Funding will be at center point to these discussions.
- “Right-sizing” regulation – deregulation, workforce strategies, removing barriers to receive care.
- Governor’s bill will be carried by Rep. Ben Smalz.

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BACKGROUND ON HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

- The following portion of this slide deck focuses on the mechanics of how a bill becomes a law in Indiana and gives useful information about how to access pending legislation, watch session or committee online, and how to contact your legislators.

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What Nonprofits Can / Cannot Do

CAN

- Hold non-partisan voter education activities including
  - public forums and
  - publishing voter education guidelines.
- Encourage participation in the electoral process
  - voter registration
  - get-out-the-vote drives

CANNOT

- Prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, intervening in, any political campaign on behalf (or in opposition) of any elective public office.
- Make contributions to a political campaign on behalf of the organization.

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How a Bill Becomes a Law – Step 1

Introduction:

"The style of every law shall be: "Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana"; and no law shall be enacted, except by bill. Bills may originate in either House, but may be amended or rejected in the other; except that bills for raising revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives" Article 4. Section 1; Article 4, Section 17

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How a Bill Becomes a Law – Step 2

Consideration:

"Every bill shall be read, by title, on three separate days, in each House; unless, in case of emergency, two-thirds of the House where such bill may be pending shall, by a vote of yeas and nays, deem it expedient to dispense with this rule; but the reading of a bill, by title, on its final passage, shall, in no case, be dispensed with; and the vote on the passage of every bill or joint resolution shall be taken by yeas and nays." Article 4. Section 18

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How a Bill Becomes a Law – Step 3

Passage:

"A majority of all the members elected to each House, shall be necessary to pass every bill or joint resolution; and all bills and joint resolutions so passed, shall be signed by the Presiding Officers of the respective Houses" Article 4, Section 25

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How a Bill Becomes a Law – Step 4

Presentment:

"Every bill which shall have passed the General Assembly shall be presented to the Governor."
Article 5, Section 14

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How a Bill Becomes a Law – Step 5

Filing:

"Every bill presented to the Governor which is signed by him or her on which he/she fails to act within said seven days after presentment shall be filed with the Secretary of State within ten days of presentment. In the event a bill is passed over the Governor's veto, such bill shall be filed with the Secretary of State without further presentment to the Governor." Article 5, Section 14

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How a Bill Becomes a Law – Step 6

Circulation:

"No act shall take effect, until the same shall have been published and circulated in the several counties of the State, by authority, except in case of emergency, which emergency shall be declared in the preamble, or in the body, of the law." Article 4, Section 28

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SO WHAT DOES THAT REALLY MEAN?

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From Idea to Bill…

- An idea is developed. A legislator – either a Representative or a Senator – decides to sponsor a bill. This could be an original idea, or it could come as a suggestion from a constituent, an interest group, a public official, or the Governor. Other lawmakers may be asked to join as co-sponsors. The co-sponsors may or may not be of the same political party as the sponsor. A bill is drafted. At the sponsoring legislator's direction, the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency (LSA) provides research and drafting assistance. LSA prepares the bill in proper technical form. The bill is introduced. The bill is filed by the legislator in her/his own chamber, which could be either the Senate or the House of Representatives. If the chamber leadership does not call the bill for First Reading, it "dies." If the bill is called, it is scheduled for First Reading. The bill has its First Reading in the house of origin. The bill is read by title for the first time to the full legislative body.

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Committee

- The bill is assigned to committee. The President Pro Tempore of the Senate or the Speaker of the House of Representatives can choose not to refer the bill to a committee. In this event, the bill “dies.“ If the bill is to advance, it is referred to a committee for review. The committee takes action on the bill. The committee chairperson may choose not to schedule the bill for hearing. In this event, the bill “dies.“ If the bill is to advance, it is scheduled for a public hearing. At that hearing, the committee discusses the merits and disadvantages of the bill, and any interested party may ask to speak to the committee. Interested persons may speak in favor of or in opposition to the bill. Following this hearing, the bill can be voted upon or tabled. If the bill is tabled, it may or may not come back for a vote. If it does not come back for a vote, the bill “dies”. If the committee casts a vote on the bill, the bill can be defeated or it can advance.

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Second Reading

- The committee sends the bill back to the house of origin for Second Reading. If the committee advances the bill, it is printed and the full body of legislators has at least two days to review it. Chamber leadership may choose not to schedule the bill for Second Reading. In this event, the bill "dies." If the bill is scheduled, any legislator of the house of origin can suggest amendments to the bill. The amendments can be approved by a majority vote of the full body of legislators. Following a vote on amendments, a vote is held on the bill itself. The bill may "die" at this point, or it may advance.

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Third Reading

- The house of origin holds the Third Reading and the bill is voted upon by the full chamber. Again, chamber leadership may choose not to schedule the bill for Third Reading, and the bill "dies." If the bill is scheduled, amendments can once again be made. However, on Third Reading, the amendments cannot be approved unless two-thirds of the legislators agree to the change. Following a vote on amendments, the bill once again comes to a vote by the full body. A simple majority of the full house can advance the bill. If a majority vote is not received, the bill "dies."

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Bill in Second Chamber

- The process repeats in the other chamber. Once the bill has advanced through the house of origin, it is sent to the second house, where the process repeats. The second chamber may fail to act on the bill, in which case the bill "dies." If action is taken, the bill must pass through First Reading, Committee, Second Reading and Third Reading. The bill can "die" at any step of the way, just as it can in the house of origin. At the same stages as in the house of origin, as long as the bill is advancing, amendments may be proposed and accepted.

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Bill Returns to House of Origin

- The bill returns to the house of origin. If the bill advances through the second chamber without amendments, the bill is sent to the Governor for signature. If the bill advances with amendments, it returns to the house of origin. The house of origin may fail to take action, and the bill "dies." The legislative body may vote to approve the changes made by the second chamber. If this happens, the bill is sent to the Governor for signature. If the first chamber does not approve the changes made by the second chamber, and both houses want the bill to advance, the bill is assigned to a Conference Committee.

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Conference Committee

- Conference Committee. Conference Committee is made up of two members from each of the legislative bodies. Each chamber sends one member from both major political parties. The four members attempt to reconcile differences between the chambers. If agreement cannot be reached, the bill “dies.” If agreement is reached, the bill returns to both chambers. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives must approve the bill before it can be sent to the governor for signature.

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Whack an Amendment…

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Governor's Review

- The bill is sent to the Governor. Once the governor receives a bill, he can sign it, veto it, or do nothing. If he signs it, the bill becomes law. If he does nothing, the bill becomes law without his signature. If he vetoes the bill, and the Senate and House of Representatives do nothing, the bill "dies." If he vetoes the bill and the Senate and the House of Representatives attempt to over-ride the veto, the bill may still become law. If less than 26 Senators and less than 51 House members do not vote to over-ride the veto, the bill "dies." If a simple majority of both chambers vote to over-ride the veto, the bill becomes law. The bill becomes law. The bill becomes law at a date specified in the body of the bill. It could be the date of the actual passing or a date at some point in the future.

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How to Contact a Legislator at the State House

1. Search the member list directory to find the legislator.

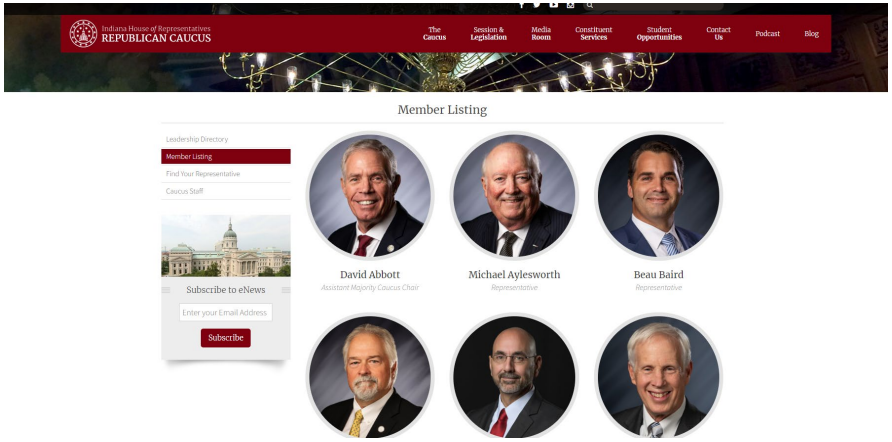
   Caucus Directory Links

   -House Republican Caucus

   -House Democrat Caucus

   -Senate Republican Caucus

   -Senate Democrat Caucus



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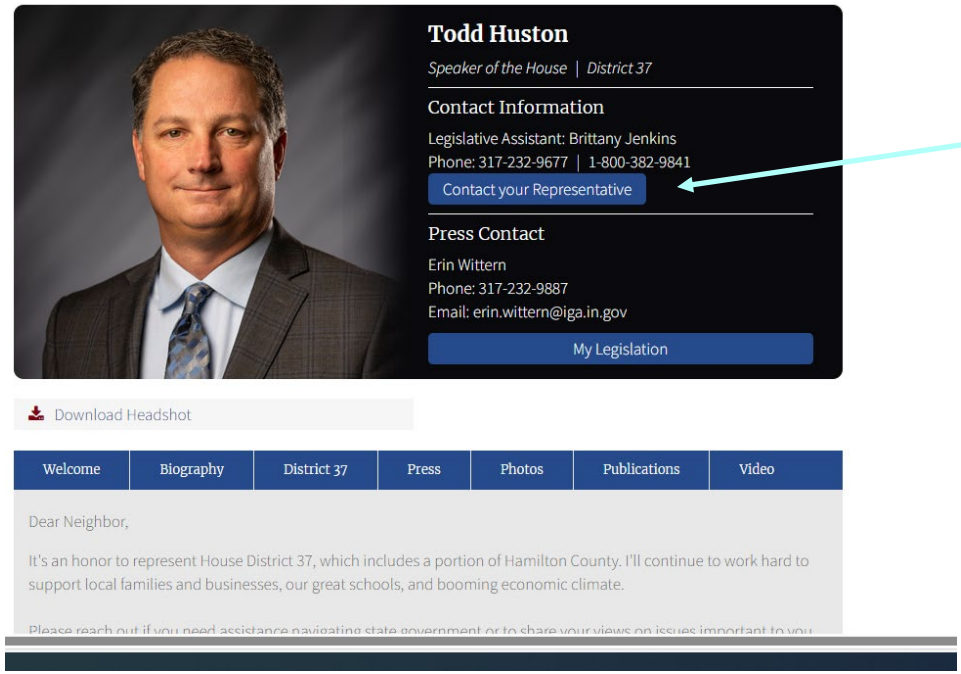
How to Contact a Legislator at the State House cont.…

2. Click on the Legislator's profile and press "Contact your Representative".



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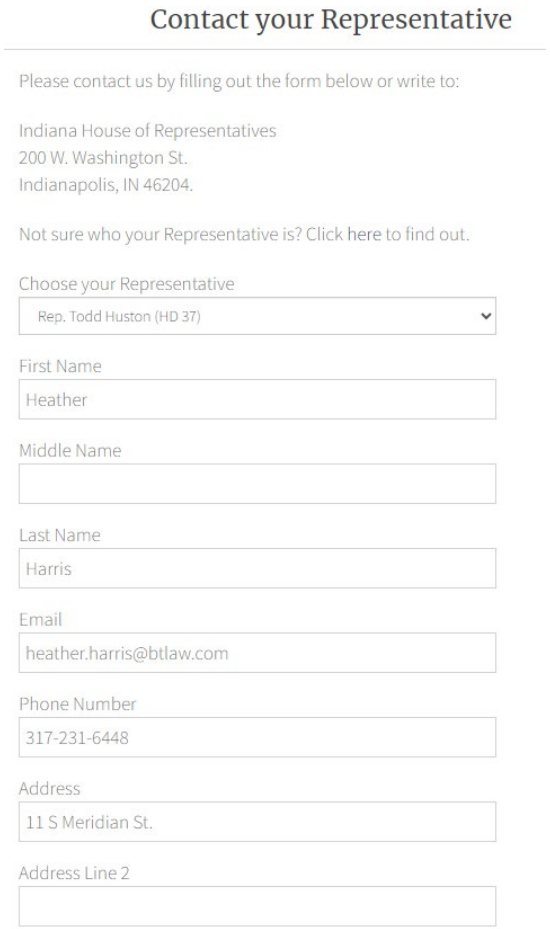
How to Contact a Legislator at the State House cont.

3. Fill out the “Contact your Representative” form with your information and any questions and or concerns you may have.



Contact your Representative

Please contact us by filling out the form below or write to:

Indiana House of Representatives
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204.

Not sure who your Representative is? Click here to find out.

Choose your Representative

Rep. Todd Huston (HD 37)

First Name

Heather

Middle Name

Last Name

Harris

Email

heather.harris@btlaw.com

Phone Number

317-231-6448

Address

11 S Meridian St.

Address Line 2

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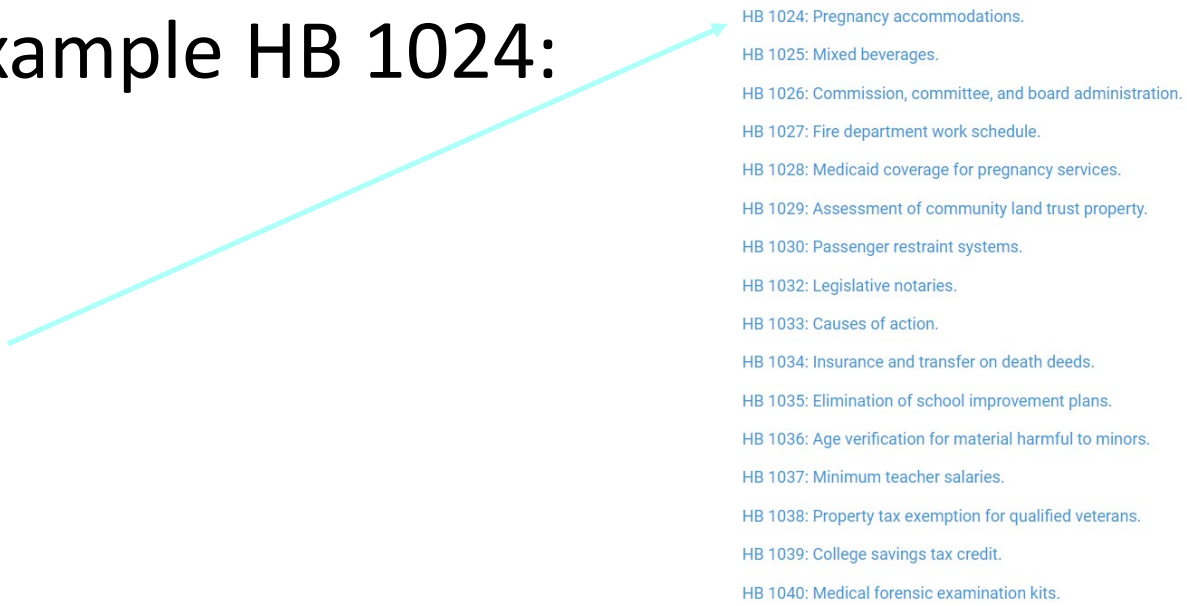
How to Find a Bill or Amendment

1. Visit this Indiana General Assembly website for the 2024 Legislative Session Bills.
2. Click on the bill you're searching for.

Example HB 1024:



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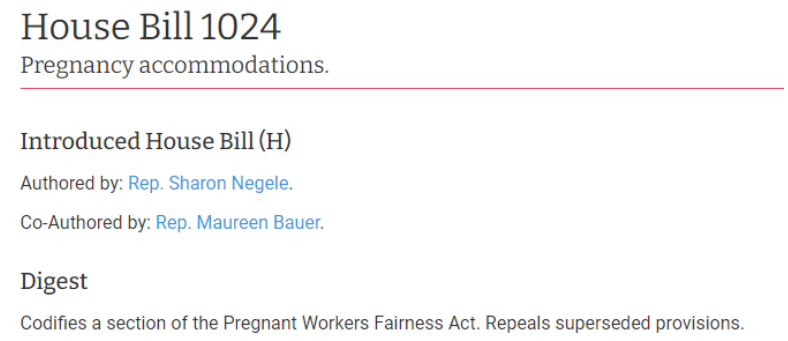
How to Find a Bill or Amendment cont.

3. You will then be prompted to the *Bill Details* page.

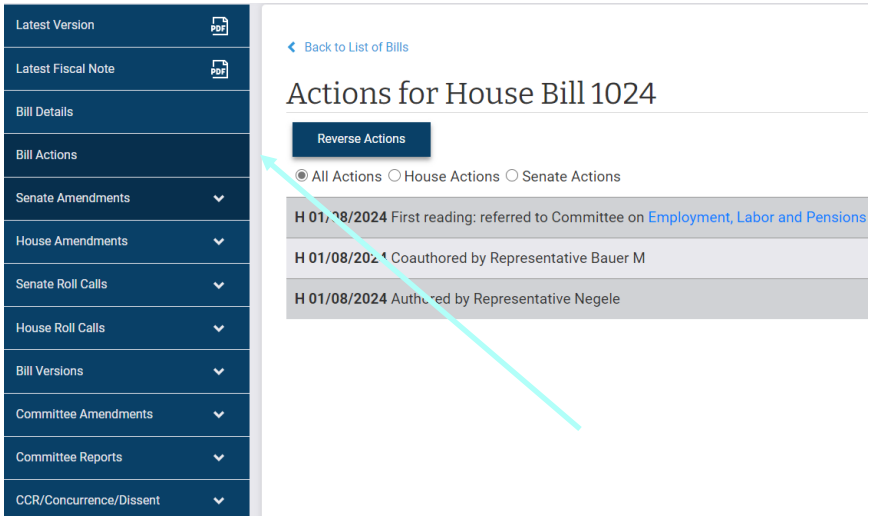
Which includes

-Author / Co-Author

-Digest



4. The left side bar will allow you to toggle through the bill actions and any amendments to the bill.



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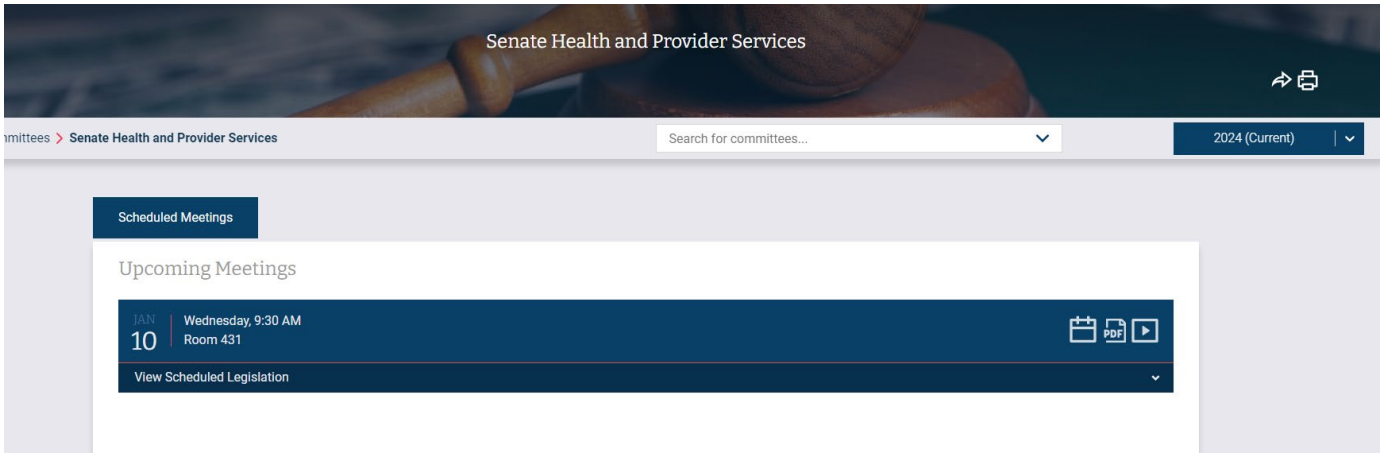
How to Watch a Committee Online

1. Visit the Indiana General Assembly Website links below:

-House Public Health Committee

-Senate Health & Provider Services Committee



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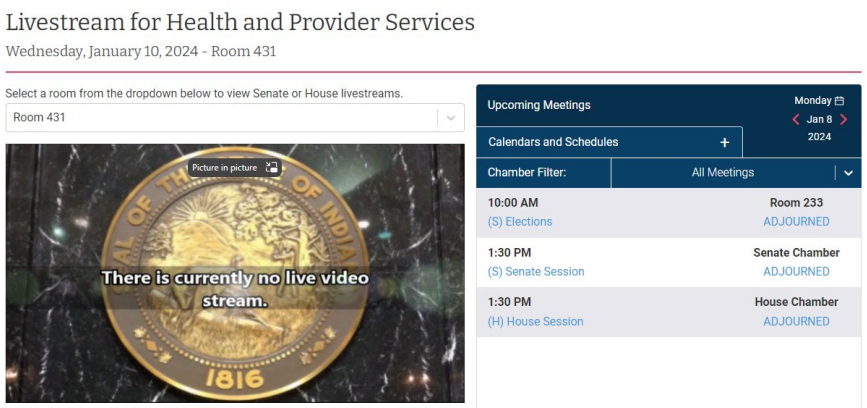
How to Watch a Committee Online cont.

2. Click on the video icon to join the committee livestream with closed captioning.

- The link also provides:
  - Video recordings
  - Meeting agenda



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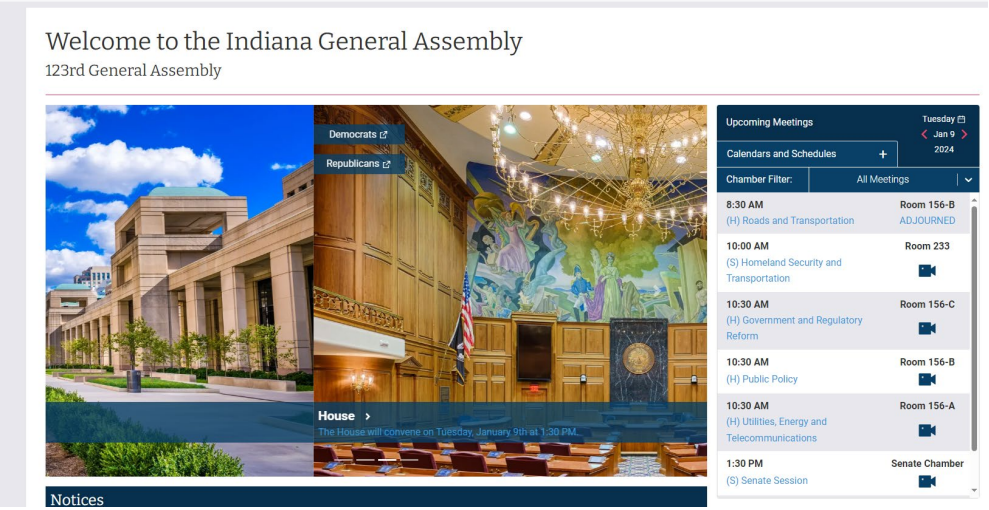
How to Watch a Session Online

1. Visit the Indiana General Assembly link
2. On the right side of the page you will see an “Upcoming Meetings” calendar. This will have all the current committee and session schedules currently available.



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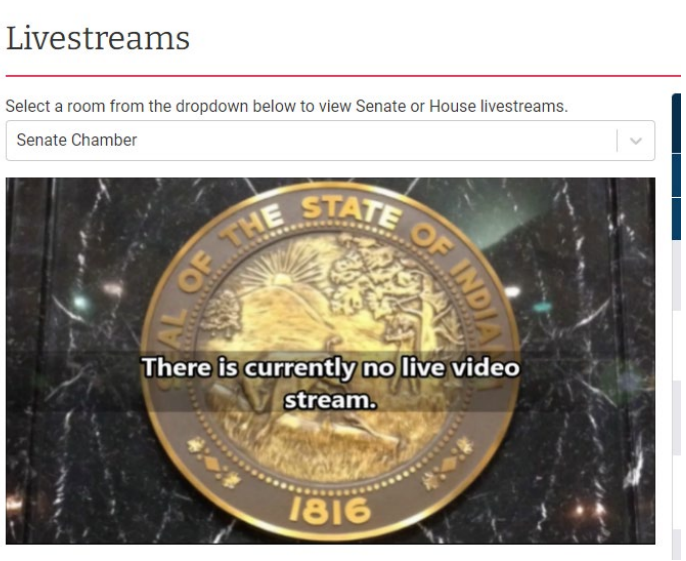
How to Watch a Session Online cont.

3. Scroll through the schedule until you find either *Senate Session* or *House Session* and click the icon.

4. You will then be prompted to the video livestream of the session.



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Questions?

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