

Insights

Take Five: 5 Things you Need to Know About Indiana Government - November 2023

November 9, 2023

By: Amy M. Levander, Amy E. Schwarz, and Ariel S. Mason

1. Mayoral Elections

Indiana's municipal elections were held on Tuesday, November 7, and while Democrats were able to hold or flip many of Indiana's larger cities, Republicans showed strength up and down the ballot in Hamilton County and also notched some wins of their own across the state. Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett (D) held off a well-funded challenge from businessman Jefferson Shreve (R), while other incumbent mayors including Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry (D) and New Albany Mayor Jeff Gahan (D) also won their races. Republicans won a high-profile race in Carmel where current Councilor Sue Finkam (R) bested fellow Councilor Miles Nelson (D), while Democrats were successful in electing Eddie Melton (D) in Gary and Brandon Sakbun (D) in Terre Haute. Finally, the cities of Evansville, Lawrence (Marion County), and Michigan City elected their first black women mayors in Stephanie Terry (D), Deborah Whitfield (D), and Angie Nelson-Deutch (D), respectively, while the city of Marion elected its first black mayor in Ronald Morrell (R).

2. Organization Day

The Indiana General Assembly will be convening on Tuesday, November 21st for the ceremonial start of the 2024 legislative session. While this session's work will begin in earnest during the week of January 8th, the General Assembly will meet to finalize the rules for each chamber for the upcoming session and hear from caucus leaders on their priorities for the session. The 2024 session will be a short session, where legislators are required to finish their work by March 14th. There will be a handful of freshman legislators in each chamber that have been caucused in or recently elected since the bodies last met, including:

1. Senator Cyndi Carrasco: R - Indianapolis, District 36
2. Representative Lori Goss-Reaves: R – Marion, District 31
3. Senator Greg Goode: R - Terre Haute, District 38
4. Senator Randy Maxwell: R - Guilford, District 43
5. Representative Alex Zimmerman: R - North Vernon, District 67

There will also be a new senator representing District 3 in Gary come January, as current State Senator Eddie Melton (D) will step down from his position to become the new Mayor of Gary.

3. House Committee Updates

House Speaker Todd Huston recently announced committee changes for the upcoming 2024 session. Some changes to note include Rep. Chris Jeter (R - Fishers) who will now serve as the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee and Rep. Stephen Bartels (R - Eckerty) will now serve as Chair of the House Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee. We anticipate the Senate announcing committee changes in the coming weeks, including new committee chairs for the Senate Commerce and Technology Committee and the Senate Elections Committee due to the retirements of Sen. Chip Perfect and Sen. Jon Ford.

4. Interim Study Committee Updates

The 2023 interim study committees are starting to complete their work, although few recommendations have officially been made by the committees. The Public Health Interim Study Committee has focused on the infrastructure issue of child care and shared some interest in further researching the legalization of psilocybin. Meanwhile, the Health Care Cost Oversight Committee has been concentrating on large nonprofit health systems' efforts to reduce costs, with a key emphasis on consolidation in the provider and insurance marketplaces as drivers of healthcare expenses. Some groups have raised prior authorization/insurer issues, but legislative leadership appears to be waiting for the results of the SEA 400 pilot before moving forward. The Health Care Cost Oversight Committee is set to meet one final time on 11/13 to discuss recommendations. The Land Use Task Force is working on recommendations on a host of factors that impact rural development and sustainability of those communities. The Interim Study Committee on Commerce and Economic Development heard hours of testimony on legalization of marijuana. This marks the second year in a row that the Legislature has studied this issue; this year focusing on workforce and youth use. However, the committee failed to make any specific recommendations signaling the issue may not get traction during the upcoming short legislative session.

5. Podcast: The Indiana State Legislature and Current Issues Important to Hoosiers with special guest, Indiana Senator Rod Bray

In this episode of the Krieg DeVault Podcast Series, Krieg DeVault attorneys, George Lepeniotis and Randy Head, speak with Senator Rod Bray, President Pro Tempore of the Indiana State Senate. The trio discuss the priorities and challenges of Indiana's legislature and other top issues important to Hoosiers right now. Tune in to hear about Senator Bray's role as President Pro Tempore and what his job entails, what he believes makes Indiana's legislature so successful, and what to expect in the upcoming session. Their discussion also covers current topics that are top of mind in Indiana as well as nationally, such as the high costs of childcare, healthcare costs, rising housing costs, and alternative energy. Randy, who is also a former Indiana State Senator, talks about his experience in the Senate and describes the culture in the legislature that has served Hoosiers so well.

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