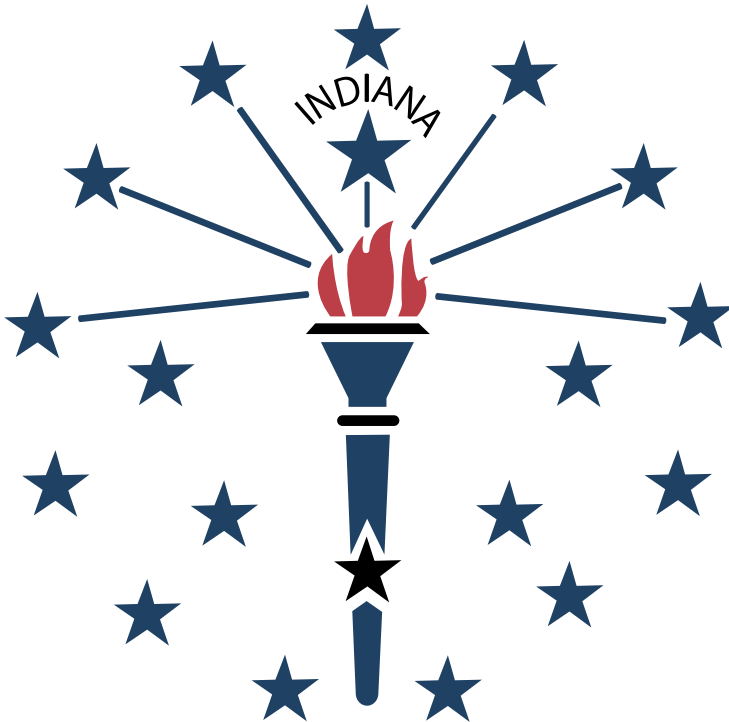


# REPORT CARD 2007

OUTCOMES ON STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County



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The Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County

## WELCOME

David A. Switzer  
Chair  
Legislative Affairs Council

## LUNCH

## RECAP OF LEGISLATIVE SESSION

## ST. JOSEPH COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

### House of Representatives

Speaker B. Patrick Bauer (D)  
Rep. Ryan Dvorak (D)  
Rep. Craig Fry (D)  
Rep. Tim Neese (R)  
Rep. David Niezgodski (D)  
Rep. Jackie Walorski (R)

### Senate

Sen. Jim Arnold (R)  
Sen. John Broden (D)  
Sen. Vic Heinhold (R)  
Sen. Ryan Mishler (R)  
Sen. Joseph Zakas (R)

## CLOSING REMARKS

Mark N. Eagan, CCE  
President and CEO  
Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County

*With appreciation we recognize the public service of Senator Anita Bowser.*



## 2007 Legislative Report Card

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### GROW PRIVATE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

#### ◆ POSITION

The Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County supports the focus areas of Indiana's Strategic Economic Development Plan. It outlines a coordinated and aggressive economic development strategy that encourages both private and public initiatives to accelerate investment, create private-sector jobs and grow the population. This will be accomplished by retention and growth of existing companies and by attracting target industries in the state.

#### ◆ OUTCOME

HB 1426 provides increased accountability for agreements made between Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) and recipients of certain tax credits, loans and grants.

HB 1774 authorizes the establishment of not more than two regional development authorities in each economic growth region: designated by the Department of Workforce Development.

SB 105 requires the Indiana Department of Transportation to commission six feasibility studies on mass transit in Indiana by region and requires both INDOT and an independent organization to study the Illiana Expressway.

SB 524 transfers certain programs from Indiana Finance Authority to the IEDC. They include a shovel-ready site development center, capital access program, industrial development loan guaranty program, agricultural loan and rural development project, and the business development loan fund.



### EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

#### ◆ POSITION

The Chamber advocated for the following initiatives:

#### K-12 EDUCATION

- ❖ The Chamber calls for the state of Indiana to fully fund and mandate compulsory student attendance in full-day kindergarten.
- ❖ The Chamber supports the elimination of textbook rental fees in Indiana.
- ❖ The Chamber endorses legislation that changes the Indiana kindergarten enrollment cut-off date to September 1.

#### ◆ OUTCOME

HB 1001 appropriates \$92 million over the biennium for grant money for optional full-day kindergarten. It also provides for \$78 million in textbook reimbursement over the biennium.



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### EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (CONT.)

#### HIGHER EDUCATION

- ❖ The Chamber supports state funding of the renovation of the old Associates Building into the Indiana University South Bend Education and Arts Building. This renovation will provide modern facilities for nearly 2,000 students daily. The growing enrollment at IUSB is the foundation for creating an educated workforce for new employment opportunities in northern Indiana.
- ❖ The Chamber supports state funding of expansion of Ivy Tech Region 2 facilities in South Bend, Warsaw and Elkhart. Rapid growth in post-secondary education is necessary to prepare the workforce for the high-skilled and high-paying jobs being created.

#### ◆ OUTCOME

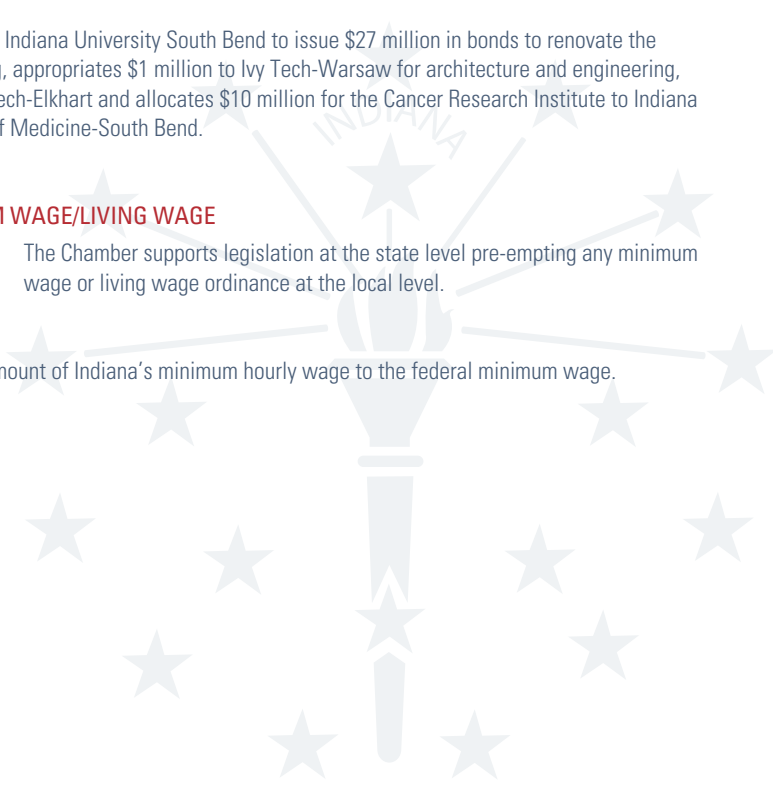
HB 1001 authorizes Indiana University South Bend to issue \$27 million in bonds to renovate the Associates Building, appropriates \$1 million to Ivy Tech-Warsaw for architecture and engineering, \$16 million to Ivy Tech-Elkhart and allocates \$10 million for the Cancer Research Institute to Indiana University School of Medicine-South Bend.

#### LOCAL MINIMUM WAGE/LIVING WAGE

- ❖ The Chamber supports legislation at the state level pre-empting any minimum wage or living wage ordinance at the local level.

#### ◆ OUTCOME

HB 1027 ties the amount of Indiana's minimum hourly wage to the federal minimum wage.





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### TOWNSHIP ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION BY COUNTIES

#### ◆ POSITION

The Chamber supports state legislation that would require each county to determine by ordinance how poor relief shall be managed for the county. The General Assembly should provide an equitable funding source for benefits.

#### ◆ OUTCOME

A proposal similar in nature to The Chamber's position was addressed in HB 1568. Little consensus was found in the final hours of the Indiana General Assembly, and the bill was not called down for a final vote. This topic has been debated the last three sessions and will most likely be proposed again in the future.



### PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENT BY COUNTIES

#### ◆ POSITION

The Chamber supports legislation that would require each county to determine by ordinance how assessment shall be managed for the county.

#### ◆ OUTCOME

While a law wasn't passed to address The Chamber's specific position, SB 287 requires assessors to be certified as level two assessor-appraisers. Additionally, all registered voters and real property owners will now be allowed to remonstrate against a bond issue or lease rental.



## 2007 Legislative Report Card

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### PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

#### ◆ POSITION

The Chamber supports changes in state law and state and local government administration that will reduce the county's property tax rates. The Chamber supports a variety of specific initiatives designed to achieve lower property taxes, including:

- ❖ Reform local government to enhance the efficient delivery of public services and reduce government spending.
- ❖ Partially replace property taxes with user fees and alternative revenue sources.
- ❖ Partially replace welfare, education and other services from the property tax levy and fund them at the state level.
- ❖ Reinstate and tighten controls on the growth of property tax levies.
- ❖ Support policies that encourage growth of the base of total assessable property in St. Joseph County.
- ❖ Support taxation of commercial and industrial properties at the same effective rate as residential properties.
- ❖ Support full state funding of the Property Tax Replacement Fund to be used only for property tax credits.
- ❖ Support adjusting municipal general obligation bonding limits to allow additional authority that will result in lower financing costs for bond issues.

#### ◆ OUTCOME

HB 1478 allows counties to adopt a county adjusted gross income tax, not to exceed 1%, to replace estimated increases of certain property tax levies.

Beginning in 2009, all capital projects projected over \$7 million must be approved by the County Board of Tax and Capital Projects Review.

Before this session, homestead deductions were limited to \$35,000 on annual property taxes. The deduction was raised this year to \$45,000 in order to offset trending. The \$45,000 will remain in place next year. It will then drop by \$1,000 a year to settle at \$40,000 for 2013 and after.

The Circuit Breaker was also adjusted to exempt school general funds from the 2% tax cap. Homeowners' property taxes will be capped at 2% of their home's assessed value plus the dollar amount necessary for the school's general fund.

Beginning in 2010, business and rental property will have a 3% cap of total assessed value plus the dollar amount necessary for the school's general fund.

To offset the expected 24% increase in property taxes, fees generated from allowing Indiana's horse tracks to have slot machines will give \$300 million and \$250 million in property tax relief over the biennium. Estimates project the effective increase to be around 8%.



## 2007 Legislative Report Card

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### ST. JOSEPH COUNTY INNKEEPERS TAX RATE

#### ◆ POSITION

The Chamber supports increasing the St. Joseph County Innkeepers Tax Rate from 6% to 7% to provide the South Bend/Mishawaka Convention and Visitors Bureau with increased funding to grow the tourism sector of the local economy.

#### ◆ OUTCOME

The 2007 Indiana General Assembly did not address this position.



### INTERSTATE STANDARD U.S. 31

#### ◆ POSITION

The Chamber supports full funding to interstate standards of the U.S. 31 corridor between South Bend and Indianapolis.

#### ◆ OUTCOME

The 2007 Indiana General Assembly did not address this position.



## 2007 Legislative Report Card

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### BASIC HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN

#### ◆ POSITION

The Chamber supports legislation that would allow small business to have the option to purchase a basic health plan with high-deductibles that cover catastrophic illness and injury. These plans might not include all of the state-mandated medical benefits.

#### ◆ OUTCOME

HB 1678 provides a tax credit related to small employer-qualified wellness programs and raises the cigarette tax to 44 cents per pack. The new tax revenue will help fund the Indiana Check-Up Plan and the Indiana Check-Up Plan Trust Fund. Additionally, HB 1678 allows the insurance commissioner and FSSA to develop a program to provide for certain small employers to join together to purchase group health insurance.



### HEALTH DEPARTMENT REGULATION OF SEPTIC SYSTEMS

#### ◆ POSITION

The Chamber opposes implementation of proposed rules by the Indiana State Department of Health setting nitrate standards for septic systems. Additional testing and research are needed to determine problem areas within each county. County government has a responsibility to develop a county sewer and water plan.

#### ◆ OUTCOME

The 2007 Indiana General Assembly did not address nitrate standards for septic systems.





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