116TH INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY ★

SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

NEWS RELEASE

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Week in Review at the Indiana General Assembly
State Senator Vi Simpson, D-Bloomington

INDIANAPOLIS—The fast-paced atmosphere surrounding the Indiana General Assembly this week marked the arrival of crucial mid-session deadlines. Of the 420 bills and 15 joint resolutions introduced in the Senate in early January135 bills and 2 joint resolutions were approved by the Senate. The House approved 104 out of 391 bills introduced and 1 joint resolution. These measures now move to the House of Representatives for its consideration. Next week the Senate will begin its review of House-passed proposals. This brief summary highlights some of the action taken by the Senate thus far.

Senate Democrats continue push for jobs creation – This week members of the Senate Democratic Caucus continued their push for the passage of legislation that would create jobs and promote economic development. Various members offered a series of amendments that would protect Hoosier jobs and encourage businesses to rehire laid-off workers. Specifically the amendments would:

- Allow for the recovery of local property tax incentives if a business closes during the deduction period or fails to employ the number of individuals promised in the application for the deduction.
- Require the Office of Community and Rural Affairs to submit a comprehensive report of an ongoing local food grant program's impact and findings to the General Assembly. This would provide information on how the state could work with local farmers and grocers to expand local and organic food production and distribution to local farmers' markets, grocers and restaurants.
- Provide a tax credit for Indiana employers that rehire laid-off workers. The credit would be funded by an already established training fund and not require a new state appropriation. **(Authored by Simpson)**
- Require the immediate release of all state appropriations for building and renovation projects at state universities and colleges. Over $300 million is awaiting approval by the State Budget Committee, and if released, would provide immediate work and jobs in local communities. **(Authored by Simpson)**

Although these efforts failed, Senate Democrats will continue to work on these issues.

Ethics reform - The Senate unanimously approved a major ethics reform measure contained in Senate Bill (SB) 114. Senate and House members worked together to also include several components of the House-passed ethics bill, House Bill (HB) 1001. This bi-partisan, bi-cameral proposal, **co-authored by Simpson,** includes numerous provisions including one which would reduce the amount of reportable single gifts or total daily gifts from a lobbyist to a legislator from $100 to $50. In addition, the bill would extend the waiting period to one year before elected state officials and political appointees could become lobbyists.

Agriculture – SB 35, now including language to reinstate the requirements of the Meat and Poultry Inspection Program under the Indiana Board of Animal Health, has passed the Senate. Recent budget cuts by the governor threatened locally owned state-inspected meat processing facilities as well as an estimated 1,600 jobs in those processing facilities. Many Hoosiers who own farms expressed concerns that without the amendment to reinstate the inspections, the recent investments made in their family farms would be threatened.

Education - Legislation which would create a uniform start date of the day after Labor Day for all public schools around the state starting with the 2012-2013 school year advanced out of the Senate this week.

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Supporters of SB 150 explained that this would help with August utility bills for schools as well as allow for more family vacations during the month of August. Opponents expressed concerns that local school boards now have this authority and local communities should be allowed to keep this flexibility.

Bills dealing with alcohol matters - Several bills pertaining to the sale of alcohol have gained Senate approval. SB 75, **authored by Simpson,** would allow microbreweries to sell their own product for carryout on Sundays and permit these businesses the same opportunity as local wineries to offer sales of their product during Sunday tastings and events. SB 118 would allow alcoholic beverages to be sold on election days. SB 119 would allow bars and restaurants to sell alcoholic beverages on Sunday from 7 a.m. until 3 a.m. the following day. (Current law stipulates the hours from 10 a.m.to 12:30 a.m. the following day.)

Electronic dissemination of indecent material – The legislation is in response to young people taking and sending sexually explicit photos and/or videos on cell phones. Otherwise known as "sexting," this bill would make sending, having or transmitting a photo, video or other material that shows a minor engaging in sexual conduct by a child a delinquent act. SB 224 would also require a child's parent to participate in outpatient treatment or an educational program if a juvenile court orders either the treatment or the program for the child. The Senate unanimously approved this bill which basically considers these child offenders as delinquents, rather than sexual predators who, upon conviction, must register on the Sex Offender Registry for the rest of their lives.

Township and local government reform – SB 240 was approved and would eliminate township advisory boards after January 1, 2013. A nepotism provision was amended into the bill that would grandfather in employees on staff before July 1, 2010. Nepotism exemptions include contractors for construction projects, mowing or property maintenance, and paid or volunteer firefighters. A bill moving through the House, HB 1181, calls for a November 2010 township-by-township referendum to keep or eliminate township trustees and three-member advisory boards. SB 241 would apply to all counties except Marion and, among its many provisions, the bill would move municipal elections to even-numbered years and move school board elections to general elections beginning in 2010.

Net metering – Small-scale renewable energy production has become more popular due to modern wind mills and the installation of solar panels. Net metering allows for the measurement of both the usage and production of electricity. The Senate passed SB 313 this week which would make net metering available to all customers. Passage of this legislation would help to reduce demand from power plants and increase the amount of alternative energy available.

Upcoming Senate deadlines

February 8	Senate begins review of House-passed bills
February 25	Deadline for Senate committees to review House-passed bills
March 3	Last day for the senate to approve House bills
March 14	Session adjourns

To stay informed about legislation moving through the General Assembly or to track legislation, log on to www.in.gov/legislative/.This site provides complete bill information as well as committee hearing dates and agendas. From this site, you can also tune in to House and Senate floor debate as well as some committee hearings.

Citizens can stay current on legislation scheduled for action through a free online program available at www.BillWatch.in.gov. Track up to ten bills and receive e-mail notifications only when action is taken on those bills.

Visit my Senate web site at www.in.gov/s40 and subscribe to receive periodic e-mails about the major issues facing us this year. The Senate Democrats are also providing multimedia updates on the daily activities in the Senate at The Briefing Room and Twitter updates at INSenDems. Personal contact with constituents has a direct impact on the legislation we consider and what ultimately becomes law. Feel free to contact me with your comments and concerns regarding pending legislation or if I can provide any

assistance.

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