



NOTEBOOKS

Time debate again

Debate on whether Hoosiers will wake up with people in Chicago or Cincinnati will be renewed this year.

Two bills have been introduced regarding daylight-saving time.

One, a Senate bill, would move Indiana to the Central time zone, meaning Hoosiers would be on the same time as Chicago, a preference expressed by northwestern Indiana residents.

A bill in the House would put a question on the ballot for the 2008 general election, asking voters whether Indiana should be on Central or Eastern time.

House Speaker Pat Bauer, D-South Bend, said another possible bill would ask voters whether Indiana should be on daylight-saving time at all. The bill had not been proposed by Friday.

Indiana won't be taken off daylight-saving time in the next year or two, Bauer said.

The question to voters would help legislators discuss what should be done and what the people want, he said.

Indiana lawmakers approved putting most of the state on Eastern time in 2005. Hoosiers sprang forward and fell back for the first time this year.

One call brings legislation

Two local legislators are proposing bills each based on a single phone call from a constituent.

State Rep. Woody Burton, R-Indianapolis, and State Sen. Patricia Miller, R-Indianapolis, said they got a phone call from a person concerned with an issue and they are proposing legislation to address it.

Miller's call was from a man who was at a workout center when someone died. He suggested the center should have had a defibrillator.

She is proposing a bill that would require workout and health centers to have defibrillators.

Burton's bill to stop large retail and grocery stores from carrying liquor came from a parent's phone call. The parent told Burton her underage son stole alcohol from a retail store.

He is proposing that only liquor stores can sell alcohol and said he might consider proposing that alcohol could be sold at a large retail or grocery store if it was kept behind the counter.

Burton received campaign contributions from liquor stores in Mooresville and Indianapolis and from political action committees from wine and spirit wholesalers and the beer industry.

He said he is proposing the bill because alcohol is too easily accessible to minors in retail and grocery stores compared to liquor stores, where a person must be 21 to enter.

Keeping them in Indiana

One of Gov. Mitch Daniels' big proposals for the session is to lease the Hoosier Lottery to a private venture for about 30 years in exchange for an upfront payment of about \$1 billion, as well as a percentage of annual revenues.

The \$1 billion payment would be used to pay for scholarships and attract top faculty to help stem the so-called brain drain of bright students leaving the state. Indiana's public university presidents support the idea, which they said would help retain the state's best students.

Recipients of the scholarships would have to remain in Indiana to work for three years after graduation or else pay back the scholarship money. The program would give students \$5,000 a year to attend four-year colleges in Indiana, either public or private.

Several lawmakers from both parties, including House Speaker Patrick Bauer, D-South Bend, have frowned on the plan or expressed reservations.

Bauer has said that he expected a private company running the lottery would want to expand gambling to make a bigger profit. He called chances of the proposal passing a long shot.

— Compiled by Annie Goeller and
The Associated Press

Telling legislators what they want

County leaders had something to say to politicians about issue's facing Indiana



Full-day kindergarten

Superintendents from Clark-Pleasant, Franklin, Greenwood and Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson school districts said funding the governor's proposal to take full-day kindergarten statewide by 2009 should be a top issue to legislators this year.

Clark-Pleasant Superintendent J.T. Coopman said he isn't against full-day kindergarten, but he worries about how to pay for the needed 18 new teachers and classrooms.

Without new funding, so money isn't taken from existing programs, schools won't be able to afford to implement the program across the district, said John Reed, N-H-J superintendent. Social service agencies in the county also will watch the issue.

United Way executive director Nancy Lohr Plake said full-day classes would provide child care for working families, eliminating concern over how the children will get to and from school every day.



Cost of prosecution

Johnson County Prosecutor Lance Hamner wants the state to make criminals pay for the costs of their own prosecution in court cases. Taxpayers support the cost to prosecute criminals, but people who file civil cases are required to pay court fees. Hamner said the process should be the same for criminals who are able to make the payments.

Judges would decide who pays, and prosecutors would make out invoices, showing how much work they did on the case.



Power for schools

Franklin Superintendent William Patterson wants the state to give schools an easier way to try new and different ideas, such as changing the daily schedule at Franklin Community High School and the upcoming countywide school staff development day.

Officials had to apply for a waiver for the new schedule.

The development day proposal was first denied until school officials called Suellen Reed, state superintendent of public instruction, and she approved the plan, Patterson said.

Schools should have more power to try new ideas without having to fight for approval, he said.



Biofuels

A Greenwood business and a local agricultural organization want the state to push forward in its work with biofuels, such as biodiesel and ethanol. Endress+Hauser makes some of the equipment used in the production of the fuels and wants to see the industry growth continue, said Brandyn Ferguson, vice president of Sales Center USA.

For farmers, the work means higher prices for their crops, but some are worried that the high prices will soon fall, said Kimberly J. Moore, Purdue University Extension office educator for agriculture and natural resources.

With more money, farmers can update their equipment, but no one is sure how long the boom will last, she said.

If the state encourages the biofuels industry to grow, farmers could continue to get increased revenues, she said.



Help hotline funding

The United Way wants more funding for a statewide help hotline, called 211. People who need government assistance can call the line and ask for help. The agency wants to be sure the service is funded and will ask the state for more money, said Nancy Lohr Plake, United Way executive director.



School funding

School officials want several programs fully funded in their districts, including summer school, alternative education programs and help for struggling students.

They said they were concerned about issues that could take money away from schools, such as tax cuts and credits for businesses.

Clark-Pleasant Superintendent J.T. Coopman raised concerns about a 2-percent property tax cap, which he said will hurt schools and cause funding shortages, the loss of the inventory tax and proposals from legislators to eliminate property taxes, which are a stable source of revenue for schools, he said.

Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson Superintendent John Reed wants more of school districts' money to come from the state, instead of local property taxes.

The change would allow him to focus more on educational issues, instead of presenting and selling a budget to the public.



ISTEP

Concerns over moving the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress exams to the spring, how it will affect educational time and programs that help struggling students were among the top issues for schools.

Clark-Pleasant Superintendent J.T. Coopman worried that students would lose too much educational classroom time if the test were moved to the spring because they would take the test twice in one school year: once in the fall and once in the spring.

He said he wanted legislators to make a plan to ensure students wouldn't spend too much time testing and too little learning.

The state needs to give schools enough money for programs to help students pass the ISTEP, said John Reed, Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson superintendent.

More subjects have been added in recent years, including science, and schools haven't gotten enough money to work with the struggling students, Reed said.



Veterans

County Veterans Service Officer Russ Bensheimer wants the state to pay attention to benefits for veterans this year, such as reinstating a lifetime hunting license and allowing disabled veterans access to the same programs.

The lifetime hunting permit should be reinstated for veterans at a lower cost than other hunters and should allow them to save money while reducing the deer population, he said.

All disabled veterans programs, such as property tax credits and college credits for their children, should be the same regardless of whether the veteran served during wartime or the extent of their injuries, Bensheimer said.



Criminals

Franklin Police Chief John Borges is interested in several proposed bills, including: increasing the time limit for prosecuting child molestation suspects until the victim is 31, making dealing cocaine within 1,000 feet of a church a more severe crime and not allowing mentally ill people to be sentenced to the death penalty or to life in prison without parole.



Family and Social Services Administration

United Way officials expressed concern over the future of the Family and Social Services Administration with the governor's proposal to privatize the application process. The United Way works with the administration and its programs and wants its clients to receive timely and efficient service, said Nancy Lohr Plake, United Way executive director.

During a changeover in an administration, programs and services such as distributing disability benefits and food stamps could be slowed. The United Way wants to be ready to help make sure clients get their services when they need them, Plake said.



Medicare reimbursement

Reimbursement for doctors and specialists who treat Medicaid patients should be increased, hospital officials. The state should provide all people with equal and fair medical care, said Robert J. Brody, St. Francis Hospitals CEO. That isn't being done under the current health-care system, he said.

Doctors are opting out of the Medicaid program because of the reimbursement level, and then hospitals get the brunt of Medicaid patients, said Gregg Bechtold, president of Johnson Memorial Hospital.

Specialty outpatient centers, such as physical therapy practices, get the insured patients that medical providers can make the most money from, leaving hospitals with less income, he said.



Home-schooling accountability

Making sure home-schooled students receive a good education should be a concern for legislators, said Suzanne Miller, Johnson County chief juvenile probation officer. Students who have disciplinary problems in school are sometimes pulled out of school by their parents and educated at home.

Some parents aren't teaching the children what they need to learn, she said. The state should implement guidelines for home-school programs and a system that holds parents accountable for what they teach their children at home, she said.

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