



COMMITTEE UPDATE

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

No meetings scheduled.

COURTS & CRIMINAL CODE

No meetings scheduled.

INTERSTATE COMMERCE & COOPERATION

No meetings scheduled.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Monday, February 8 -- 3 p.m.

Tuesday, February 9 -- TBA

Wednesday, February 10 -- TBA

State Rep. Randy Truitt
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HB 1367 DEBATE: OUR KIDS DESERVE BETTER

Today, many Hoosiers are being challenged to do more with less, and state government is no exception. As state revenues have fallen sharply, our schools, which comprise well over 50 percent of the state's budget, have had to bear some of the burden impacting every other area of state government. Specifically, they've been asked by Governor Daniels to cut 4.5 percent (a total of \$297 million statewide) from their operating budgets. On Tuesday of this week, the Indiana House of Representatives passed House Bill 1367, a measure that among many things, attempted to help schools across the state deal with this budget cut by allowing them limited flexibility in the use of their funds.

The bill, which was authored by the House majority party (Democrats) and was passed on a party-line vote, allows schools to transfer money from other funds into their general fund in order to cover budget shortfalls. During debate, it was suggested that passing HB 1367 was the only thing the legislature could do to help our schools – that there were no other solutions. That simply is not true, and I feel it is important for you to be armed with the facts.

HB 1367 has three significant flaws. First and foremost, the bill only grants schools new flexibility to reallocate up to \$62 million from miscellaneous funds to their general fund. (While the bill references a much higher dollar figure, schools already have, under current law, the ability to move the vast majority of those funds listed in the Democrat bill. In fact, our local school districts have already utilized this ability.) Providing only \$62 million in new flexibility leaves our schools still holding the bag for a shortfall of \$235 million dollars, and thus, is no solution to this pressing problem.



Rep. Truitt discusses floor proceedings with the House Parliamentarian (the Speaker's chief attorney) this week.

The second flaw with this bill is that included in the \$62 million are funds that should be protected. These are programs of importance to education reform for which we've been fighting for such as \$1.2 million for ACT/SAT/PSAT test preparation programs, \$2.5 million originally set aside from the School Scholarship Tax Credit Program to allow disadvantaged families a choice in where they send their children to school, and \$876,000 from the Virtual Charter School Pilot Program. In addition, the Democrat plan would jeopardize K-2 diagnostic testing and Grades 3-8 acuity testing. These type of tests are critical in helping teachers identify students who either need extra help in a particular subject area or are not grasping current material that is being presented in the classroom.

The third flaw with this bill is that it imposes no restrictions on how the \$62 million is to be used.

(Continued)

In contrast, the Republican alternative to the bill, offered in a minority committee report, would have covered the complete gap facing school budgets by offering new flexibility equaling, but not exceeding, the \$297 million in required cuts. The plan protected programs of importance while also requiring that all funds be used in the classroom and not for other uses such as pay increases for employees- teachers, staff and administrators alike. We are confident that the economy will improve and one of our first priorities will be is to restore these education cuts. I will fight for this restoration as soon as practically possible.

The bottom line is this: The minority committee report for HB 1367 would have given schools true flexibility in their efforts to use the resources they already have to cover shortfalls and to provide the solution our schools and kids deserve in these tough economic times. It was a common-sense approach that would have allowed our local schools the ability to make their own decisions on how best to utilize funds...and without adding a penny to the property tax burden. I was deeply disappointed that this plan was not even considered by House Democrats and failed on a party line vote, and I feel strongly that House Bill 1367, as it was passed on Tuesday, is not the right path to help our schools.

The silver lining is that the content in the minority committee report is largely contained in Senate Bill 309, which passed the Senate on Tuesday with bipartisan (36-14) support. This bill will now be sent to the House allowing our body another chance to debate this critical topic and to give our schools and our children what they deserve.

I know we all believe the education of our children is a top priority and is too important a topic for political partisanship to interfere. House Bill 1367 simply does not provide our schools with the support they – and our kids – need and deserve. The solution to the current budget situation will require all stakeholders to participate. This includes parents, teachers, administration and the state. I urge you to please continue to stay engaged, to share your opinions with all the parties involved and to watch closely what happens in the coming weeks of the legislative session. I appreciate what our area schools have done to this point to be part of the solution and encourage all of us to work together to accomplish more.

INDIANA STATE TRIVIA

The Indianapolis Colts' first draft pick was CB Leonard Coleman (Vanderbilt), taken 8th overall in 1984.

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TRUITT LEGISLATION

AUTHORED

- **HB 1254** - Permits a county fiscal body to allow a 100% assessed value deduction for personal property that is primarily used to conduct high technology activity and is newly located within a certified technology park.
- **HB 1253** - Provides that a municipality may adopt an ordinance that establishes licensing requirements for a person who uses a trademark or service mark in connection with the sale, offering for sale, distribution, or advertising of goods.
- **HB 1017** - Provides a small school performance grant to a public school, other than a charter school, that has an enrollment of fewer than 2,000.

- **HB 1252** - Makes changes to the eligibility criteria for admittance to the Indiana Veterans' Home. Transfers administration of the Indiana Veterans' Home building and grounds from the Department of Natural Resources to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- **HB 1016** - Permits, with several restrictions, a school corporation to transfer money in the corporation's general fund, transportation fund, capital projects fund, or school bus replacement fund to another fund for the purposes of the fund to which the money is transferred.

CO-AUTHORED

- **HB 1013** - Establishes a redistricting commission to create, hold hearings on, take public comment about, and recommend plans to redraw general assembly districts and congressional districts.
- **HB 1150** - Imposes general expenditure controls on the state. Provides procedures for the implementation of the spending controls.
- **HB 1215** - Adds certain motor vehicle offenses committed while under the influence of a controlled substance to the list of offenses whose commission may cause a person to be a habitual traffic violator.
- **HB 1220** - Provides that a person who knowingly or intentionally permits a minor to possess or consume an alcoholic beverage on real property that the person owns or controls commits a Class B misdemeanor, and increases the penalty.
- **HB 1256** - Provides a two year adjusted gross income deduction to corporations that are new Indiana employers.
- **HB 1304** - Allows a police officer appointed by a public postsecondary educational institution to exercise the powers granted to the police officer at any location in Indiana if: the educational institution approves the exercise of the powers and the police officer is engaged in the discharge of the police officer's official duties.
- **HB 1339** - Makes it a Class B misdemeanor for an alcoholic beverage permittee or permittee's employee or agent to recklessly, knowingly, or intentionally, sell alcoholic beverages for carryout without first requiring the person to produce proof that he/she is at least 21 years of age.
- **HB 1345** - Requires that a minor must have a signed written statement by a parent or guardian before spray tanning may be applied to the minor.