116TH INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY ★

SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

NEWS RELEASE

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Week in Review at the Indiana General Assembly
State Senator John Broden, D-South Bend

INDIANAPOLIS—The General Assembly is rapidly moving through the second half of session. Committee agendas have been full as members worked through the committee hearing deadline this week reviewing bills that were previously approved by the opposite chamber. Final consideration deadlines are next week. Legislation that moved through the second house without amendments will proceed to the governor for final consideration and possible enactment. Bills amended by the opposite chamber must return to the house of origin for consideration of those changes. If amendments are not agreed to, then those bills are assigned to joint House-Senate conference committees where compromises are sought. Lawmakers have until midnight March 14th to conclude business. However, due to the economic climate, only fiscally-neutral bills are advancing, and there seems to be a growing consensus amongst legislators that session may adjourn early. This brief summary highlights some of action taken by the Senate this week.

Receipt of property tax bills – A Senate committee has advanced House Bill (HB) 1059 to require counties that anticipate being behind schedule with spring property tax bills to send provisional tax bills in which 50 percent of the previous year's total tax liability would be due in May. If the final property tax bills cannot be determined by fall, the remaining 50 percent of the previous year's bill would be collected in November. If the final amount for the current year can be determined, a reconciliation bill for the balance of the current year's taxes would be issued and due in November. Only two counties were able to send tax bills on time last year. This legislation will not only help taxpayers to better budget for property taxes, it will also help local units of government to develop more accurate operating budgets and avoid taking out loans with costly interest rates.

Domestic violence – **Broden is a co-sponsor of** HB 1234 which addresses "no contact" orders. The measure would require a court to include as a condition of bail the requirement that a defendant charged with a violent crime refrain from any direct or indirect contact with the victim if the defendant is released to bail without the court having held a bail hearing in open court. This bill now goes before the full Senate.

Regulation of appraisal industry – HB 1235 **is advancing through the Senate and sponsored by Broden**. The bill would require increased regulation in the real estate appraising industry by requiring appraisal management companies to register with the state Real Estate Appraiser Licensure and Certification Board. Passage of this requirement would increase the level of transparency in the appraisal process and ensure the professionalism of the real estate industry in Indiana.

Improved health assessments for National Guard – Members of the National Guard would receive improved post-deployment health assessments under HB 1178. The legislation would require face-to-face assessments to be conducted during a clinical interview with a trained health care provider for Indiana National Guard servicemen and women returning from deployment. The comprehensive health assessment would provide a better opportunity to address all service-related health issues that may be easier to discuss face-to-face rather than by a phone interview. The bill has advanced to the full Senate for further consideration.

Health and provider services – Legislation advanced by the Senate Health and Provider Services Committee would improve the safety and effectiveness of medical care through a study of pharmaceutical

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prescription practices. HB 1277 was amended to create a summer study committee to determine the potential benefits of providing prescription drug labels in a patient's preferred language. The committee would also consider the issue of requiring pharmacists to report changes in the use of generic and name brand prescriptions.

The committee also approved HB 1320 which would create a statewide electronic ephedrine tracking program, and require pharmacies to post a sign notifying customers of the purchasing limits under state law. Ephedrine is found in commonly-purchased cold and allergy medications and is also used in the manufacture of methamphetamines. Under current law, these medications can only be obtained through a pharmacist and only in limited quantities. This program would allow these purchases to be immediately tracked to prevent someone from purchasing more than the allowed allotment by going to multiple pharmacies.

College credits for AP exams – Students bound for college who score a three, four or five on advanced placement (AP) exams would receive credit toward degree requirements at state colleges and universities under HB 1135. The measure would standardize how credits are awarded by each university.

Dual enrollment costs and fees – HB 1365 is advancing and provides that a student may not be charged tuition or fees for a college course or test that the student completes in order to obtain a core 40 high school diploma. In addition, the bill requires state educational institutions that offer dual credit courses in liberal arts, professional, or career and technical disciplines to be approved by the Commission for Higher Education.

Biomass projects – Legislation that would promote biomass and resolve distribution problems in the state by providing grants for more production and delivery options is eligible for final consideration in the Senate. Under HB 1261, grants would be awarded from the agricultural biomass infrastructure grant fund for infrastructure projects, including the purchase or renovation of renewable fuel compatible fueling stations. The grants would be awarded for infrastructure expenses incurred after December 31, 2008, and capped at 50 percent of the recipient's investment or $100,000. Biomass is agriculturally-based sources of renewable energy such as agricultural crops, agricultural waste and residues, wood and wood byproducts, animal waste, and aquatic plants and algae.

Wild game donations – A proposal to establish a procedure to collect voluntary donations when hunting licenses are sold is advancing through the process. HB 1064 specifies that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) establish a procedure to collect the voluntary contributions for processing wild game donations. The DNR would coordinate with nonprofit entities to use the money collected to assist meat processors in processing donations of wild game that would go to help feed the state's hungry. The minimum suggested donation would be $1.00.The introduced version of this bill was prepared by the Natural Resources Study Committee.

Upcoming Senate deadlines

February 25	Deadline for committees to review bills passed by the opposite chamber
March 3	Last day for the Senate and House members to consider each other's bills
March 14	Lawmakers must complete all business by midnight

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.

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Visit my Senate web site at www.in.gov/s10 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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