



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **General Assembly approves Deig initiatives**

INDIANAPOLIS—The 2010 session of the 116th General Assembly ended on March 13, with 115 enacted bills sent to the governor. State Senator Bob Deig (D-Mount Vernon) sponsored or authored a number of bills that found approval by the legislature and are awaiting action by the governor or set to become law. They include:

### **Public employee pension funds**

Lawmakers approved a number of bills that will affect various retirement benefit programs in the state of Indiana. Senate Enrolled Act (SEA) 172, coauthored by Deig, and House Enrolled Act (HEA) 1050, sponsored by Deig in the Senate, are two pieces of legislation that allow for a member of the 1977 Police and Firefighters Pension and Disability Fund to designate one or more beneficiaries to receive the member's contributions to the fund plus interest if the member dies without collecting benefits. Sen. Deig said this initiative will help those that have not collected benefits or designated a beneficiary like a child, spouse or parent. These bills also provide that if a member does not specify a beneficiary, the member's contributions and accumulated interest will be refunded to the member's estate.

SEA 172 was unanimously approved by the Senate and House of Representatives, and was signed into law by the governor on March 12 to become effective immediately. HEA 1050 was also approved unanimously in both chambers. The governor has until March 17 to sign the act into law, veto it or let it become law without his signature.

Also concerning the 1977 Police and Firefighters Pension and Disability Fund is HEA 1127. The bill, cosponsored by Deig in the Senate, allows a member of the fund to purchase service credit at cost for the member's prior service in a position covered by a public retirement fund. Deig said that this bill will provide equity in the system by allowing those who serve our state to consolidate their time of service under one retirement plan. HEA 1127 was approved unanimously by the Senate and the House of Representatives in its original form and was sent to the governor March 11 for final action. The governor has until March 17 to sign the act into law, veto it or let it become law without his signature. If approved, the law will become effective July 1, 2010.

SEA 30 was coauthored by Deig and will allow members of the Indiana Public Employees Retirement fund (PERF) and the Indiana Teachers Retirement fund (PRF) to withdraw from their annuity savings account if the member has separated employment and is not employed in a covered position after 30 days. Current law provides that a member in this position would have to wait 90 days before drawing benefits.

SEA 30 will also give members the ability to petition the board of trustees of their respective funds to correct an error in a determination of the member's creditable service or benefit at any time, and to appeal if the request is made within 6 years of the determination.

The act further provides that, before July 1, 2012, an active member of the 1977 Police Officers' and Firefighters' Pension and Disability Fund who is eligible to receive an unreduced retirement benefit may elect to receive a partial lump sum distribution equal to the monthly benefit times the years of service in exchange for an reduced monthly benefit.

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A bicameral compromise on the final draft of SEA 30 was unanimously approved by the Senate and House of Representatives and will be sent to the governor for final action and will become effective July 1, 2010, upon passage.

### **Renewable energy**

House Enrolled Act (HEA) 1261 will promote projects to create the renewable energy system infrastructure necessary for the production and distribution of biomass and biofuels in the state. Biomass means agriculturally based sources of renewable energy such as agricultural crops, agricultural wastes and residues, wood and wood byproducts, forest thinning, animal wastes, aquatic plants and algae.

The bill, sponsored by Deig in the Senate, will allow grants to be awarded from the agricultural biomass infrastructure grant fund to develop infrastructure projects like purchasing renewable-fuel compatible fueling stations or renovating a fueling station that are not renewable-fuel compatible. The grants would be awarded to only those infrastructure expenses incurred after December 31, 2009, and is capped at 50 percent of the recipient's investment or \$100,000.

The final draft of the bill was approved by the House of Representatives with a vote of 95-1 and a 49-1 vote in the Senate. The act will be sent to the governor for final action and will become effective January 1, 2011, upon passage.

### **Handgun license information**

HEA 1068, sponsored by Deig in the Senate, will keep an individual's personal information regarding handgun licensing private for purposes of the law concerning access to public records. HEA 1068 will keep certain information about an individual licensed to carry a handgun private, such as the information submitted by a person to obtain or renew a license to carry a handgun as well as the name, address or any other information that can be used to identify a handgun license holder.

HEA 1068 was approved in its original form by the House of Representatives with a vote of 85-11 and was approved unanimously by the Senate. The bill was signed by the governor March 12 and will become effective July 1, 2010.

### **Government ethics and lobby reform**

Lawmakers worked this session to establish a bipartisan government ethics reform package. HEA 1001, cosponsored by Deig, will bar legislators from entering a lobbyist position for a year after leaving office, require universities to report the tickets and gifts they give to legislators, require more lobbyist disclosure of gifts by lowering the threshold for reporting a meal or gift from \$100 to \$50 for a single day, and bars the governor from raising campaign funds during the budget session of the legislature.

A bipartisan, bicameral compromise on HEA 1001 was approved unanimously in both chambers and sent to the governor on March 11. The governor has until March 17 to sign the act into law, veto it or let it become law without his signature. If approved, the new law will become effective January 1, 2011.

### **Veteran's benefits**

HEA 1165 will protect a veteran's service-connected benefits from being seized through legal action to collect a debt. The bill, cosponsored by Deig in the Senate, will place what is already federal law into state statute. HEA 1165 was unanimously approved in the House of Representatives and the Senate and was signed into law by the governor March 12. It will become effective July 1, 2010.

For more information on Sen. Deig, his legislative agenda or other State Senate business, call 1-800-382-9467 or visit [www.senatedemocrats.IN.gov](http://www.senatedemocrats.IN.gov).

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