



SENATOR
JAMES LEWIS
116TH INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY ★ SENATE DISTRICT 45

NEWS RELEASE

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General Assembly approves Lewis legislation

INDIANAPOLIS— The 2010 legislative session of the 116th General Assembly ended on March 13, with 115 bills sent to the governor's desk for final action. State Senator Jim Lewis (D-Charlestown) sponsored or authored a number of bills that gained approval by the legislature and are awaiting action by the governor or set to become law. These include:

Assessment of agricultural land

SEA 396, coauthored by Sen. Lewis, protects Indiana farmers and agriculture companies by more accurately reflecting land values. Beginning with taxes payable in 2011, SB 396 will change the calculation by which farmland assessments are determined. Under the proposal, the base rate formula for farmland assessments would be done on an adjusted six year average with the highest value eliminated. The Indiana Department of Local Government and Finance currently determines farmland value based on a six-year rolling average. The value is based on a formula that takes into account information on land rents, crop yields and prices, and interest rates. Farmland values are recalculated each year as part of the trending process. The bill was approved 50 to 0 in the Senate and 97 to 1 in the House. SEA 396 is awaiting final consideration by the governor. If enacted, the bill will become effective July 1.

Change of name requirements

House Enrolled Act (HEA) 1047, sponsored by Sen. Lewis, requires that a petition for a change of name must include more detailed identification information for individuals at least 17 years of age in order to proceed with a name change petition in civil court. This bill would require individuals age 17 and older, who are not formerly convicted felons, to provide certain information in order to proceed with a name change petition in civil court. The bill was approved by a unanimous vote in both chambers and has been sent to the governor for possible enactment. If enacted, HEA 1047 will become effective July 1.

Wild game donations

HEA 1064, sponsored by Sen. Lewis, establishes a procedure to collect voluntary donations for the Indiana Sportsmen's Benevolence Account when a hunting license is sold. This account covers the cost of processing donated wild game that is used to help feed Indiana's hungry. The introduced version of the bill was prepared by the Natural Resources Study Committee. The bill was approved by a unanimous vote in both chambers. HEA 1064 was signed into law by the governor on March 12 and becomes effective July 1.

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Local port authorities

HEA 1076, sponsored by Sen. Lewis, eliminates the requirement that a local port authority contract be in the name of the political subdivision creating the authority. The bill also states that the port authority may exercise certain powers independent of any political subdivision and authorizes local port authorities to borrow funds. The legislation will clear up the language clearly defining port authorities as instruments of the state. The ports in Indiana provide competitive advantages to the companies that move cargo by water, highway and rail. The legislation would make it easier for port authorities to contract with companies that transport goods from the ports to manufacturing and agricultural markets. The bill was approved 30 to 20 in the Senate and 94 to 0 in the House. HEA 1076 was signed into law by the governor on March 12 and becomes effective July 1.

Inmate possession of a cellular device prohibited

HEA 1100, sponsored by Sen. Lewis, makes it a Class A misdemeanor for a person incarcerated in a county jail to possess a cellular telephone or other wireless or cellular communications device. The ban would apply to people incarcerated in county jails, including people awaiting trial or returned for additional trials by the Department of Correction. In 2009, there were about 17,500 inmates in county jails in Indiana to whom this bill would apply. The bill was approved 46 to 4 in the Senate and 94 to 0 in the House. HEA 1100 was signed into law by the governor on March 12 and takes effect July 1.

Soil and water conservation districts

HEA 1119, sponsored by Sen. Lewis, allows the governing body of a soil and water conservation district to approve payment of certain expenses subject to review and approval at the governing body's next regular meeting. HEA 119 also requires the district's fiscal officer to certify payments. The bill was approved 50 to 0 in the Senate and 76 to 19 in the House. HEA 1119 was signed into law by the governor on March 12 and takes effect July 1.

1977 Police and Firefighter Fund purchase of service credit

HEA 1127, sponsored by Sen. Lewis, allows an active member of the 1977 Police Officers' and Firefighters' Pension and Disability Fund to purchase service credit in the fund at full actuarial cost if they have prior service in certain Indiana public retirement funds. The member cannot be vested in the pension fund from the prior public service to apply for this service credit. Cities and towns with members in the 1977 Fund appropriate money from police and fire pension funds. The sources of these funds are property taxes, Motor Vehicle Excise Taxes, and Financial Institutions Taxes. The 1977 Fund is funded by a 19.5 percent contribution rate of payroll by the participating cities and towns. The bill was approved by a unanimous vote in both chambers and will now go to the governor for possible enactment. If enacted, HEA 1127 will become effective July 1.

For more information on Sen. Lewis, his legislative agenda or other State Senate business, call 1-800-382-9467 or visit www.senatedemocrats.IN.gov.

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