116TH INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY ★
# SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

**NEWS RELEASE**
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**Week in Review at the Indiana General Assembly**
**State Senator Jim Lewis, D-Charlestown**

INDIANAPOLIS—House and Senate committees moved into high gear this week as the General Assembly approaches mid-session deadlines. Committee agendas have become extensive as legislators work vigorously to get hearings on their introduced initiatives before next week's committee hearing deadline for bills in their house of origin. Bills gaining committee approval will advance to their respective chambers for further consideration by the full body. The following brief summary highlights some of the legislative action taken in the State Senate this week.

**Two joint sessions held this week**
Lawmakers met in two joint sessions this week hearing both the State of the State and the State of the Judiciary reports. In presenting his sixth State of the State address, Governor Mitch Daniels spoke to a joint session Tuesday evening and his speech received mixed reviews. Although the governor boasted about Indiana being in a better fiscal position than neighboring states, disappointment was felt by many legislators who believe that he missed the mark when he failed to provide leadership regarding job creation for out-of-work Hoosiers. Indiana is still experiencing a high unemployment rate of just under 10 percent with more than 300,000 Hoosiers looking for work. At a time when we urgently need to be creating jobs, the governor provided lawmakers with no direction or vision on how to get people back to work and help the state to begin to move out of this recession.

The State of the Judiciary was delivered on Wednesday by Chief Justice Randall Shepard who discussed the impact of the recession on the state's courts including an increase in bankruptcies, foreclosures and divorces.

**Bills in Senate committees**
The ***Senate Elections Committee*** approved legislation this week to create a redistricting study committee to study proposals to amend the Constitution of the State of Indiana allowing an independent commission to draw legislative and congressional district boundaries, beginning with the 2021 redistricting. Several who testified before the committee support the intent of Senate Bill (SB) 136, but don't believe the process should include amending the state constitution, which would take several years to accomplish. They expressed that the commission needs to be and could be established now so recommendations could be presented to the legislature for consideration prior to redrawing district lines in 2011. Legislation to do just that, SB 289, has yet to receive a committee hearing.

The ***Senate Corrections, Criminal and Civil Matters Committee*** advanced SB 25, a bill to prohibit employers from adopting or enforcing a policy or rule that would ban an employee from legally possessing a firearm that is locked in the employee's vehicle while at work. Exceptions include school property, property used by a school for a school function, and school buses; child care facilities and shelters; penal facilities; college campuses; domestic violence shelters; and private residences. In addition to these exceptions, a similar bill, House Bill (HB) 1065 which is moving through the House, would exempt refineries and certain facilities such as chemical plants that must register under anti-

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terrorism regulations. HB 1065 also contains a provision that would protect businesses from being sued if someone is shot at work.

Members of the ***Senate Judiciary Committee*** approved SB 163 that would, among other things, require gaming facilities to withhold cash winnings of those individuals who are delinquent in their child support payments. Testimony revealed that only about 58 percent of child support owed in this state is collected. This bill would provide another avenue for collecting delinquent child support and get some of those casino winnings to the children who need it most. Similar legislation is moving through the House of Representatives.

Several bills have been introduced this session that would establish a statewide smoking ban in public places. SB 95 proposes a statewide smoking ban in all public places and places of employment. The measure would initiate certain civil penalties for violations, and require the collected funds to be deposited in the Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Trust Fund. If approved, the smoking ban would become effective July 1, 2010. The bill has yet to be assigned a hearing date in the ***Senate Commerce, Public Policy and Interstate Cooperation Committee***. HB 1131 has similar provisions. This bill has passed the ***House Public Policy Committee*** and advanced to the full House for further consideration.

**Upcoming deadlines**

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| January 28 | Deadline for bills to move out of Senate committees |
| February 2 | Deadline for senators to amend Senate bills |
| February 3 | Deadline for senators to vote on Senate bills |
| February 8 | Senate begins review of House-passed bills |

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.

Visit my Senate web site at «website» 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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