



ROKITA REPORT

Office of Indiana Secretary of State Todd Rokita

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Ethics reform must include redistricting to be true reform

Indiana House Speaker Pat Bauer and all who have voted for legislative ethics reform so far deserve credit for the legislative ethics reforms passed recently in the House. The legislation would increase public confidence in the General Assembly by addressing ethics concerns for lawmakers becoming lobbyists and would require more stringent reporting of gifts. However, Hoosiers need the General Assembly to broaden the scope of ethics reform to encompass redistricting reform, which really is an ethics reform and perhaps the most important one.

Many leaders in state government, like Senator David Long, Senator Vi Simpson and Representative Brian Bosma, realize something needs to be done. Senate and House Republicans, as well as Senate Democrats, should be commended for including redistricting in either their caucus platforms for this session or in their public comments in favor of such reform. And Governor Daniels has made the possibility of reform more real by saying he has no intention of signing new maps into law if they're drawn the way they have been in the past. Clearly this is not a partisan issue.

There is more than enough opportunity for House Democrats to add this reform to their good government agenda. This week the Senate Elections Committee passed SB 80, a redistricting bill that could be considered along with Representative Jerry Torr's bill in the House, but that bill has yet to be granted a hearing.

As Speaker Bauer said himself, "all those included in the process should be part of the reform." But Speaker Bauer recently broke his silence on redistricting reform, calling it a "distraction" that the General Assembly doesn't have time for this session. He might as well say that the General Assembly doesn't have time for Hoosiers, period. Nearly 900 letters have been written to legislators through www.rethinkingredistricting.com alone, calling for redistricting reform. I am sure many other Hoosiers have contacted their legislators outside of the web site. Not only is this clearly an issue Hoosiers care about, but it is also a paramount step in the quest for comprehensive legislative ethics reform.

Furthermore, the only two actions the Indiana Constitution requires the General Assembly to take are to pass a state budget every two years and draw new districts every ten. And redistricting reform is a distraction?

Indiana's adoption of commonsense redistricting principles, long advocated by the U.S. Supreme Court and followed in most states, will not only increase public confidence and access, but legislative accountability as well. Redistricting reform will create more competition, encourage more Hoosiers to be politically active and ultimately will lead to more responsible government. In short, it will allow Hoosier voters and taxpayers to better

Take action: Redistricting reform legislation moves to Indiana House

Last week, the Indiana Senate passed redistricting reform legislation that would establish guidelines for the legislative redistricting process following the census in 2011. The Senate also passed legislation that would establish a redistricting study committee to examine best practices from other states, including the practice of an independent commission to draw the maps.

The legislation passed in the Senate would require the new legislative maps to respect county and township lines, preserve traditional neighborhoods and communities of interest, protect minority voting rights and create simple, compact districts. The legislation does not include Secretary Rokita's recommendations for prohibiting the use of partisan data, including incumbent addresses, or implementing nesting, the idea that each Senate district would encompass two House districts.

As this legislation moves to the Indiana House, we need to focus our efforts on convincing the House leadership to take up this legislation. Previously in this session, Republicans in the House introduced House Bill 1013. Disappointingly, this bill did not move forward, as it was assigned by Speaker Bauer to the House Committee on Rules and Legislative Procedures and never received a hearing. We need Speaker Bauer, his Democratic caucus, and all members of the House to consider additional criteria recommended by Secretary Rokita's office, including prohibiting the use of incumbent addresses or vote history, and implementing nesting.

We need to seize this opportunity to capitalize on the bipartisan leadership displayed in the Indiana Senate and cement the most meaningful and lasting redistricting reform possible. Contact your representatives in the Indiana House and tell them that you want redistricting reform legislation to be heard. [Write to them](http://www.rethinkingredistricting.com) through our web site, www.rethinkingredistricting.com. Make your voice heard!

In the News

Editorial: A breakthrough and a roadblock

The Indianapolis Star
January 19, 2010

[Read the editorial online.](#)

Secretary Rokita launches new, user-friendly legislator search application

This month, Secretary Rokita's office launched an upgraded version of Indiana's online legislator search application. Hoosiers can now use the application to more easily search for and contact their elected officials at the state and federal levels through geographic information system technology. The application is available on the Secretary of State's web site, and will soon be available to other state of Indiana sites.

"My office continually looks for ways that we can use technology to make government more accessible and cost effective," Secretary Rokita said. "Over the past few years, we have been able to harness geographic information system technology for economic development, natural resources and disaster recovery. We were able to use that same technology to empower voters and taxpayers to easily connect with their elected representatives."

The upgrade to the online legislator search application provides a more intuitive user interface and more accurate search results. Hoosiers can either enter their address or point and click on a map of the state to search for their elected officials. Previously, search results were based on zip code. The upgrade provides search results based on a specific address or a pinpoint location on the map. This eliminates the confusion of finding a legislator when more than one legislator in the same chamber serves the same zip code.

The upgrade provides search results that include all state and federal elected officials, including contact information for each legislator. The previous version produced results for one chamber at a time and required users to open a new window for contact information. The upgrade provides Hoosiers with a more easily accessible way to contact their elected officials.

Secretary Rokita presents Honorary Secretary of State award

control their government. That is why this is an ethics reform. It helps ensure our government stays in our hands.



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Friends,

Thank you for continuing to follow me and my office through the Rokita Report. If you are interested in my campaign for U.S. Representative for Indiana's 4th Congressional District, please visit [my campaign Facebook page](#).

Best,
Todd

More News

Indianapolis Star "Johnson County woman sentenced in online fraud" [Read editorial](#)

The Paper of Montgomery County "Rokita launches new online legislator search application" [Read article](#)

Winchester News-Gazette "Secretary of State Rokita visits Parker City business" [Read article](#)

Louisville Courier-Journal "Indiana's top court to decide constitutionality of voter ID law" [Read article](#)

Indianapolis Star "Officials have resolutions, too, be they personal or political" [Read article](#)

On January 26, Secretary Rokita presented an Honorary Secretary of State award to John Barrett at the Westfield Rotary club luncheon. John (below, left) serves as a legal volunteer for the Secretary of State's office.

John goes the extra mile to diligently serve Hoosiers. He works in the Secretary of State's executive office three days per week, and without pay. His ability to proactively address constituent concerns is a tremendous benefit to the office. John's project management is thorough, thoughtful and complete.

The leading example of this is the Indiana Corporate Compliance scam that was targeting Hoosier businesses throughout the last couple of years. Businesses were receiving notices from an out-of-state con artist that were designed to look like they were coming from our Business Services Division. Dozens of businesses fell for it - sending \$125 to what they thought was a government agency, but was really a mailbox at a UPS store. Working under the direction of our General Counsel, John researched the source of the mailings, and worked with the Attorney General and the Office of the US Postal Inspector to bring legal action against the scammers - which led to the state winning a court case against them.

Secretary Rokita tours Townsend Tree Corporation

Secretary Rokita (left) visited Townsend Tree Corporation in Parker City, Indiana on January 15. Townsend Tree, despite its name, does so much more than growing and selling trees- they clear and construct power lines, provide agrochemicals to local governments, and function as a key player in the wind energy business.

Secretary Rokita took the opportunity to tour Townsend's state-of-the-art facility, which is one of only a handful in the country. One of the company's unique services is its method of mixing specialty blends of agrochemicals to fit the specific needs of each customer.

Townsend is a true Hoosier success story. Starting in 1945, Townsend now employs about 2,000 people. In 2006, they became one of the few U.S. companies to construct and manage electric collection systems for wind farms. This business, founded by two brothers with only a car, tool trailer and a vision, has grown into a workforce in 20 states and abroad.

"As the national economy struggles, businesses are seeking cost savings in overhead, which provides Indiana and businesses like Townsend with new opportunities," Secretary Rokita said. "Townsend and others have found Indiana's attractive business climate a great reason to headquarter operations in the Hoosier state."

Secretary Rokita tours Nature's Fuel

On January 20, Secretary Rokita toured Nature's Fuel in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Nature's Fuel is a company that turns waste into useable fuel through a relatively simple process so it can be sold at a low cost. The fuel product has less sulfur, which eliminates some pollution. Essentially, they turn trash into treasure.

The Nature's Fuel plant is located in Atwood, Indiana. There are plans to build a second plant in Huntington, Indiana on an old landfill. Leaders at Nature's Fuel estimate that this would bring in excess of 100 jobs to the Huntington area. The current unemployment rate in Huntington County is 11 percent.

Nature's Fuel doesn't just turn landfill waste into energy; they also produce cellulosic bio-fuels and process manure to energy. Cellulosic bio-fuels are made of non-food plant sources, such as switch grass. The manure-to-energy process uses manure based energy to generate electricity.

"As Hoosier voters and taxpayers, we need to look for opportunities to separate Indiana from the rest of the pack," Secretary Rokita said. "Nature's Fuel is a great example of how Hoosier innovation and technology are moving Indiana forward."

Look in this space next month for more visits to Indiana businesses.