

Good afternoon,

The Indiana General Assembly adjourned *sine die* late Friday evening, marking the conclusion of the 2024 legislative session. In total, 172 bills were passed by both chambers. The governor has one week from the time a bill arrives on his desk to take action. If no action is taken, the bill becomes law.

The session began with Governor Holcomb's annual State of the State on the evening of January 9th, where he used his final address as an opportunity to announce the Lilly Endowment's grant of \$250 million to the Indiana Economic Development Corporation—the largest grant ever awarded from the Lilly Endowment. The Governor also stated his desire to make computer science classes a requirement to graduate high school and spoke to the needed policy changes to ensure third grade students reach reading proficiency.

In the House of Representatives, the House Republican priorities for the 2024 session were education and childcare, with [HB 1001](#) and [HB 1002](#) highlighting these matters. Another priority was [HB 1004](#), which included a 13th check for public retirees and addresses annual cost-of-living adjustments for public retirees moving forward. [HB 1003](#) was another Republican priority bill. It makes administrative law judges (ALJs) the final decisionmaker on disputes between state agencies and the general public. On the other side of the aisle, House Minority Leader Phil GiaQuinta (D-Fort Wayne) detailed the House Democratic Caucus' agenda for 2024 during his speech on the first day of the short session. Dubbed the "Economic Freedom Agenda", GiaQuinta spoke to the goal of lowering costs and increasing wages in the Hoosier state. Universal Pre-K, a \$15 minimum wage, and a 13th check for teachers and public servants were highlighted as priorities. GiaQuinta also advocated for codifying citizen-led ballot initiatives into Indiana law, referencing the recent ballot initiatives in Ohio regarding abortion access and recreational marijuana as a template for Indiana to follow. Speaker Todd Huston (R-Fishers) responded, agreeing on the need to reinstate the 13th check, and to conduct this session with respect from both sides of the aisle.

Senate President Pro Tempore Rod Bray (R-Martinsville) presented the Senate Republicans' agenda with bills focused on child care access ([SB 2](#)), improving student reading skills ([SB 1](#)), and the responsibility to protect Hoosiers' health ([SB 10](#)). Senate Democratic Minority Leader Greg Taylor (D-Indianapolis) called for providing homeowners with property tax relief, capping prescription drug costs, and echoed the Senate Republicans' priorities on improving reading levels in Indiana. Senator Shelli Yoder (D-Bloomington) also spoke on the importance of ensuring access to childcare for Hoosier families.

[HB 1002](#), authored by Representative Chris Jeter (R-Fishers), is designed to combat the rise of antisemitism since the start of the war in Israel. The bill received some pushback during the first weeks of the session, with protesters arguing that the bill protected the nation of Israel from criticism on college campuses and didn't do anything to combat the rise in Islamophobia that was also spiked by the war. During the second half of session, the Senate removed the reference to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition and examples of antisemitism, which satisfied some of those initially opposed but resulted in new opposition from the Jewish community. Ultimately, during the conference committee the bill was amended to include the definition, but not the examples, from the IHRA and was passed by both chambers.

[HEA 1199](#) and [SB 52](#), both bills targeting Marion County specifically, were heavily criticized by Democrats in each chamber. The bills initially would have repealed the economic enhancement district (EED) in Indianapolis' Mile Square (HB 1199) and banned the use of certain designated bus lanes (the blue line) in Indianapolis (SB 52). Many Democrats saw this as a direct attack on the City by Republican lawmakers. After much discussion and the success of the NBA All Star Game in February, HEA 1199 was amended in the Senate to extend the EED and make it more sustainable. SB 52 died in the House after Speaker Huston decided to not call it on third reading. Instead, Huston met with city officials and IndyGo to reach a compromise that will allow for dedicated lanes to still be used, just not in certain high traffic areas of the city.

In conclusion, while the 2024 legislative session of the Indiana General Assembly dealt with some important issues, legislators largely stayed true to their stated desire to keep a low profile in the midst of a 5-way Republican gubernatorial primary. This was evidenced by a lower passage rate and number of introduced bills than recent short sessions. However, lower volume also resulted in the punting of several important issues to the 2025 session, which promises to be a legislative session of monumental importance. Expect the budget, road funding, Medicaid forecasting issues, and the state's transition to managed care for long term services and supports to dominate the discussions, all overshadowed by the presence of a brand-new Governor's administration.

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Governor's Actions

- 172 enrolled acts were passed by both chambers. Some are still awaiting action by the governor. If Holcomb does not sign or veto the bills 7 days after they are presented to him, they will automatically become law the next day. You may view the status of bills received by the governor at the following link: [Governor Bill Watch](#).

Health Care

Insurance

- [HEA 1332](#) (Carbaugh) Insurance matters

Authored by Representative Martin Carbaugh (R-Fort Wayne), HEA 1332 is the Indiana Department of Insurance agency bill. The bill makes several changes to the Indiana Code, which the department says streamlines processes. Some of these changes include exempting registered 501(c)(4) organizations that deal with insurance fraud investigations from consumer data protection language, and repealing the law that requires foreign insurance companies to send annual asset reports to the department. The bill passed unanimously in each chamber but was sent to a conference committee over disagreements about the effective date. The issues were resolved, and HB 1359 was added, which requires providers to provide

90 days' notice to a health plan prior to terminating a contract. The bill now awaits the action of the Governor.

- **[SEA 215](#) (Walker) Medicare supplement insurance**

Authored by Senator Kyle Walker (R - Lawrence), this bill addresses Medicare supplement insurance for ALS or End Stage Renal Disease. An amendment that refined the scope of the bill and allowed greater flexibility outside the original intent was adopted unanimously in House Insurance committee. This amendment mandates Medicare parts A, B, D will be covered at 100% of the age 65 price for these patients. Senator Walker, the bill's author, says the legislation will allow for affordable medigap access. The bill passed 47-2 in the Senate, unanimously in the House, and was signed by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

- **[SEA 273](#) (Charbonneau) Biomarker testing coverage**

SEA 273, authored by Sen. Ed Charonneau (R-Valparaiso), requires health insurance plans to include coverage for biomarker testing. The bill was heard in the House Insurance and Senate Insurance and Financial Institution committees. Committee members heard testimony from several groups in support of the bill. These supporters stated that biomarker testing was an important diagnostic tool that will only grow in popularity as technology advances. The bill passed each chamber with only a single vote opposed to its passing and was signed by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

Mental Health

- **[HEA 1070](#) (Cash) Mental health grants**

Authored by Representative Becky Cash (R-Zionsville), HEA 1070 allows for-profit community mental health organizations to be awarded a mental health grant if a nonprofit organization does not qualify for the grant from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction within FSSA. Representative Cash said this bill will allow for the addition of more mental health resources and will make a difference in improving the lives of Hoosiers. The bill passed in both chambers and was signed into law by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

- **[HEA 1205](#) (Meltzer) Mental health standards and reporting**

This legislation was authored by Representative Jennifer Meltzer (R-Shelbyville) and requires FSSA to provide certification for services provided by community mental health centers. Such services need to be certified through a certain entity that meets the standards established by the Division of Mental Health and Addiction. The bill also requires that information must be reported by a community mental health center as part of an annual report for that center. The bill passed unanimously in both chambers and was signed into law by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

Work Force

- **[HEA 1067](#) (Clere) Human services matters**

Authored by Representative Ed Clere (R-New Albany), HEA 1067 amends the membership of the Indiana State Commission on Aging. It also requires the Services for Individuals with Intellectual and Other Disabilities Task Force to create a subcommittee regarding the barriers to employment for those with disabilities. This new subcommittee would also be responsible for making recommendations to the Task Force about the Medicaid buy-in program. After both chambers adopted the bill's conference committee report Friday night, the bill awaits action from the Governor.

- **[HEA 1259](#) (Barrett) Professions and occupations**

Authored by Representative Bradford Barrett (R-Richmond), this bill allows the Indiana State Board of Nursing to issue nursing licenses to graduates of a foreign nursing school by examination and allows a majority of nursing faculty to be part-time. This bill is an attempt to address the shortage of nurses in Indiana and reduce barriers to entry. There were no opponents of the bill, and supporters stated that healthcare is the only workforce group maintaining below pre-pandemic employment levels. In conference committee, provisions from SB 139 establishing a therapeutic psilocybin research fund and provisions from HB 1327 regarding ownership of claims data were added to the bill. HEA 1259 now awaits action from the Governor.

- **[SEA 132](#) (Brown) Professions and professional services**

Senator Liz Brown's (R-Fort Wayne) SEA 132 is an omnibus health care bill that accomplishes several things. First, the legislation simplifies and clarifies language passed in HEA 1461 (2023) and SEA 400 (2023) regarding health administrator licenses and provisional credentialing. SEA 132 also removes a certification requirement for out-of-state health care providers using telehealth to treat Indiana patients. In addition, SEA 132 also establishes a temporary emergency financial assistance program in the Managed Long-Term Service and Support (MLTSS) Program for the first six months of the program that will go into effect July 1st, 2024. Finally, SEA 132 requires dental insurance carriers to honor assignment of benefits and prohibits network leasing unless providers in a network are notified of and consent to such network leasing. Supporters advocated for the bill by saying it will give patients more authority and choice when deciding when and where they will be able to receive care. According to Sen. Brown, the bill aims to streamline organizational processes, increase workplace participation, increase patient choice, and ensure healthcare organizations get paid properly and in a timely manner. The bill passed 93-1 in the House and 45-0 in the Senate. It was signed into law by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

Child Care

- **[HEA 1102 \(Heine\) Child care](#)**

Authored by Representative Dave Heine (R-Fort Wayne), HEA 1102 revises the definition of a "childcare home" and increases the ratio of children to caretakers for childcare homes. The bill allows unlicensed childcare providers to care for up to seven children for increased hours. Some Democrats expressed discomfort with the bill because the childcare counts do not include children that might be relatives of the childcare provider. Supporters of the bill say it would expand childcare access and help put Hoosier parents back in the workforce. The bill passed in both chambers and was sent to a conference committee, after which the committee report was adopted. The bill now awaits action from Governor Holcomb.

- **[SEA 2 \(Charbonneau\) Childcare](#)**

Authored by Sen. Ed Charbonneau (R-Valparaiso), SEA 2 loosens restrictions on who can be employed by childcare providers and fund "micro-center" pilot programs for childcare in rural areas. The bill allows 18-year-olds, and even 16-

year-olds in some cases, legally supervise children in childcare facilities. Proponents of the bill testified in committee that these policy changes would break down barriers that are contributing to the dwindling workforce in the childcare space. The bill then made its way to the Senate floor where it passed 48-1, and later it passed 98-1 in the House. It awaits action from the Governor.

Birth Control

- **[HEA 1426](#) (Fleming) Long acting reversible contraceptives**

Authored by Representative Rita Fleming (D-Jeffersonville), HEA 1426 ensures that new mothers are offered long acting, subdermal reversible contraceptives (LARCs) before leaving the hospital. The bill has an exemption for religiously affiliated hospitals. The introduced bill would have applied to all types of LARCs but was amended in the House Public Health Committee to remove intrauterine devices (IUDs) during the first half of session. Some groups pointed out that this amendment would limit the options available to patients in favor of subdermal LARCs, making it less likely that hospitals would have IUDs in stock. The bill passed 94-4 in the House and 30-18 in the Senate, after several amendments failed to return the bill to its original language (which included IUDs). The House concurrence passed by a vote of 87-9 and was signed by the Governor on March 12.

General Health Care

- **[HEA 1058](#) (Negele) Breast cancer screening and services**

Authored by Representative Sharon Negele (R-Attica), this bill requires facilities to notify their patients of breast tissue density in order to better inform cancer screening results. The goal of the bill is to provide access to information for patients to make better decisions about their health. Many people came to testify in support of HEA 1058 during the committee hearings, many of whom were women who survived breast cancer. The bill was praised for requiring more access to healthcare information and clarifying misunderstandings about dense breast tissue. The bill passed both chambers unanimously and was signed into law by Governor Holcomb on March 6th.

- **[HEA 1216](#) (Steuerwald) Medical services for certain detainees**

Authored by Representative Greg Steuerwald (R-Avon), HEA 1216 builds on legislation from last year to help set up a better process for people who are arrested and how they should be evaluated and treated for mental illnesses. This bill would allow for more information to be provided to healthcare providers from family, friends, and others to influence an emergency detention order request. The bill also requires Medicaid reimbursement for services regardless of medical necessity. Everyone who testified in committee was supportive of the bill and its attempt to keep people out of jail for mental health issues. The bill passed the House on a 93-0 vote and 48-0 in the Senate. It awaits action from Governor Holcomb.

- **[HEA 1258](#) (King) Food regulation**

Authored by Representative Joanna King (R-Middlebury), HEA 1258 requires local health departments to issue permits and inspect food trucks. If passed, food trucks without a license would not be able to operate inside the jurisdiction of their local health department beginning in 2025. It would also require local health departments to institute an inspection fee. The goal of the bill is to uphold health standards and eventually set up a statewide licensing program so food trucks with proper licensure could operate everywhere in the state. Marion County already has a program for food truck licensure and health inspections, so they are exempt from the legislation. Supporters of the bill say that the growing number of food trucks pose a risk to public health if there is not a regulatory framework in place. The bill passed in both chambers, and during conference committees was amended to add the language from [HB 1260](#), which modernizes the health code related to food temperature safety. The conference committee report was adopted, and the bill now awaits action from the Governor.

- **[SEA 9](#) (Garten) Notice of health care entity mergers**

Senator Garten's (R-Charleston) requires health care entities to notify the Indiana Attorney General's office in the case of a merger or acquisition. The Attorney General would not need to sign off on a merger or acquisition for a deal to close, but he or she would have to be notified 90 days prior. The Senate Health and Provider Services committee heard testimony on this bill on January 25th. Those opposing the bill argued that the federal government already requires notice of mergers, and the 90 days of notice could lead to some mergers being delayed or

not finalized. After hearing the testimony in committee a few senators were hesitant to vote yes, but eventually the bill passed through the committee by a vote of 10-0. It then made its way to the Senate floor where it passed on third reading by a vote of 49-0, and later passed 60-35 in the House after being amended to make sure information provided to the Attorney General's office through a civil investigative demand remained confidential and under seal. The bill has been sent to the Governor's desk, where it awaits action.

Judiciary and Corrections

- **[HEA 1003](#) (Steuerwald) Administrative law**

Authored by Representative Gregory Steuerwald (R-Avon), HEA 1003 makes administrative law judges (ALJs) the final decisionmaker on disputes between state agencies and the general public. The stated goal is to give ALJs the flexibility to look at a variety of information in administrative cases. The bill was amended in the Senate Committee on Judiciary to allow ALJs and reviewing courts to make decisions without deference to previous findings from the agency. Opponents of the bill said they were concerned with the language in the bill relating to deference and say eliminating it is specifically harmful to permitting decisions and rulings upheld by agencies. Supporters of the bill claimed states have already begun to make the shift away from the precedent of agencies having the final say. The bill passed 85-10 in the House, and 40-7 in the Senate. The House voted to concur with amendments made in the Senate, and the bill now awaits further action by the Governor.

- **[HEA 1026](#) (Engleman) Commission, committee, and board administration**

Authored by Representative Karen Engleman (R-Georgetown), HEA 1026 clarifies the duties and responsibilities of certain statutory entities. It also moves parts of the code into locations that are more appropriate. Lastly, the bill repeals statutes governing the Medicaid oversight committee and relocates them to the law governing interim study committees. The bill passed in both chambers unanimously and was signed into law on March 11th by Governor Eric Holcomb.

- **[HEA 1032](#) (Torr) Legislative Notaries**

Authored by Representative Jerry Torr (R- Carmel), HEA 1032 solves a point of confusion in the Indiana Code. Currently, the law for legislative notaries states Representatives need to put the date they were elected, not specifying if that means the first time they were elected, or the most recent election. If passed, this section of the code would be amended to say the date of the end of the current term should be written. Torr joked that the hearing of this bill in committee could “break a record for fastest ever” due to its simple nature. The bill passed 95-0 on the House floor, and 49-0 in the Senate. It awaits action from Governor Holcomb.

- **[HEA 1047](#) (Negele) Sexual offenses**

Authored By Sharon Negele (R-Attica), this bill would expand the revenge porn statute to account for AI-generated images. An amendment added in committee addresses a noted sexual abuse case involving the Boy Scouts of America and may entitle survivors to receive additional compensation. Another amendment, also added during the committee process, includes the use of a concealed camera in the revenge porn sections of the bill. Supporters of the bill stated that HEA 1047 is a large step in the right direction and that the government needs to move faster in terms of regulating artificially generated images. The bill passed 82-0 in the House and 48-1 in the Senate. The House concurred with the amendments added in the Senate, and the bill now awaits further action by the Governor.

- **[HEA 1068](#) (Clere) Unlicensed real estate solicitors**

Authored by Representative Ed Clere (R-New Albany), the goal of HEA 1068 is to provide homeowners with transparency while dealing with real estate wholesalers. The bill defines an unlicensed real estate solicitor and states that real estate solicitors must disclose their intent with a homeowner. The bill received overwhelming support on the House floor. Representative Rita Flemming spoke in support of the bill, saying that one of her constituents had been fooled into selling her home to a person running one of the schemes for only 30 thousand dollars. The bill passed 94-0 in the House and 47-0 in the Senate. It was signed into law by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

- **[HEA 1101](#) (Lauer) Courts for children three years of age and younger in need of services.**

Representative Ryan Lauer's (R-Columbus) bill establishes a "Safe Baby Court" as a problem-solving court. The goal of the bill is for children in foster care or in the midst of a custody battle to be placed in a permanent home as soon as possible, while still making the best decision for the child. Lauer told the House Judiciary Committee that federal grants exist for this type of program, and that using the safe baby court would be voluntary for all jurisdictions. The bill passed both chambers with broad support and was signed by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

- **[HEA 1160](#) (Lehman) Civil proceeding advance payment contracts and commercial litigation financing**

House Majority Floor Leader Matt Lehman (R-Berne) authored HEA 1160, which bans a financier that is directly or indirectly tied to a foreign person from being involved in commercial litigation financing. During the bill's hearing in the House Judiciary Committee, Representative Ryan Hatfield (D-Evansville) said that he felt as if the passage of the bill would be a slippery slope of government interference in personal contracts. However, he still voted yes, concluding the bill has important consumer protections. The bill passed on the House floor 96-0 and was sent to the Senate. Senator Liz Brown (R-Fort Wayne) offered an amendment to the bill, which added clear definitions of "foreign person." The bill passed 46-2 in the Senate and now awaits action by the Governor.

- **[HEA 1182](#) (McNamara) Regulation of controlled substances**

Authored by Representative Wendy McNamara (R-Evansville), HEA 1182 includes the legislature's annual re-evaluation of drug scheduling and includes corrections to the code that have been passed in previous sessions. It passed on the House floor 95-0 and was then heard by the Senate committee on Corrections and Criminal Law. Senator Aaron Freeman (R-Indianapolis) proposed an amendment which would add more substances to the scheduled narcotics list. The amendment was both taken by consent, and the bill passed in the Senate 89-0. The House concurred with the amendments added by the committee and the act awaits action by the governor.

- **[HEA 1203](#) (Meltzer) Xylazine**

Representative Jennifer Meltzer's (R-Shelbyville) bill would criminalize the possession of xylazine, a narcotic that is sometimes added to other illegal drugs causing life-altering and deadly effects. The bill passed on third reading in the House 85-12 and was heard by the Senate committee on Corrections and Criminal Law. The bill received opposing testimony from some that argued that the bill would not do anything to stop the sale or use of illegal drugs, only pile on criminal charges to addicts. Sen. Rodney Pol (D-Chesterton) agreed with this testimony and also pointed out that most people using xylazine are unaware that they are using it because it is used to cut other drugs. Senator Pol asked Representative Melzer if she would be willing to amend the bill so that it would only criminalize the possession of large amounts of xylazine, but she declined, arguing that this was an important measure to keep communities safe. Senator Pol offered such an amendment on the Senate floor, but it failed. The bill eventually passed in the Senate 47-2 and was signed by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

- **[HEA 1204](#) (Meltzer) Publication of notices**

HEA 1204, authored by Representative Jennifer Meltzer (R-Shelbyville), allows for local governments to publish official notices of meetings in the electronic or print version of a locally distributed newspaper. The bill's purpose is to make sure that meetings do not go unnoticed by the public by posting them in a place that is readily available. Amendments were also added to make sure notices were not hidden behind paywalls on the newspaper's website. The bill passed in both chambers unanimously and now awaits further action by the Governor.

- **[HEA 1209](#) (Heine) Rule against perpetuities**

Authored by Representative Dave Heine (R-Fort Wayne), this bill would extend the time that nonvested property interests are valid from 90 years to 360 years. This would be in line with the actions of 33 other states that have outright banned perpetuities or extended the time frame greatly. Heine said that the reason that 360 years was chosen is because it is the same time frame that many other states have chosen. The bill passed on third reading in the House 85-8, and 31-17 in the Senate. It was signed into law by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

- **[HEA 1222](#) (Haggard) Residential real estate service agreements**

This consumer protection bill was authored by Representative Craig Haggard (R-Mooresville). If passed, the bill would limit the enforceability of some real estate service agreements. This bill defines the predatory agreements and says that liens put on the relevant properties can only last for one year. Groups like the AARP of Indiana and the Indiana Attorney General's Office testified before the House Judiciary Committee in support of the bill. It passed on the House floor 94-0, and 47-1 in the Senate. It was signed by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

- **[HEA 1235](#) (Jeter) Prohibited causes of action concerning firearms**

Authored by Representative Chris Jeter (R-Fishers), HEA 1235 retroactively changes Indiana Code to ban cities and towns from taking up civil lawsuits against gun manufacturers. Opponents of the bill say that it is intended to kill the City of Gary's lawsuit against gun manufacturers that has been going on since the late 1990's. Senator Liz Brown (R-Fort Wayne) introduced an amendment to the bill, which was accepted, that addressed some opponents' concerns over the ability of local governments to be in charge of their zoning. The bill received pushback from Democrats and some Republicans in both chambers, who argued that the City of Gary should be allowed to file lawsuits and that the lawsuit is not having a negative impact on anyone but the gun industry. Supporters of the bill responded by saying that the lawsuit was costing taxpayers money with little chance of being successful while also infringing on people's Second Amendment rights. The bill passed in the House by a vote of 68-27 and in the Senate by a vote of 33-15. Governor Holcomb signed the bill into law on March 11th.

- **[HEA 1238](#) (McNamara) Competency evaluation**

Authored by Representative Wendy McNamara (R-Evansville), HEA 1238 deals with competency evaluations for defendants and states that at least one evaluator must be a certified psychologist or psychiatrist for Level 5 felonies or more severe crimes. This bill will also create a certification program for non-physician professionals who conduct competency evaluations. The bill passed in the House 97-0. It was later amended in the Senate to fix unintended errors in the language, and then passed 87-2 on the Senate floor. The legislation is now awaiting action by Governor Holcomb.

- **[HEA 1369](#) (McGuire) Family and juvenile law matters**

Authored by Representative Julie McGuire (R-Indianapolis), HEA 1369 aims to put children in CHINS cases and foster care into permanent homes faster. It mandates that the child's best interests are the top priority of the Department of Child Services and the court when making a decision. It also adds sexual misconduct as an offense that may be alleged in a petition to terminate a parent-child relationship. Many foster parents came to testify in support of the bill while it was in committee, saying that this was a needed change to ensure the safety of children that have been previously removed from the home of a biological parent. The bill passed unanimously in both chambers and was amended in the Senate to become effective immediately upon passage. The House concurred with the amendment, and the bill was signed into law by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

- **[HEA 1422](#) (Gore) Trafficking harmful substances in jails**

Authored by Representative Mitch Gore (D-Indianapolis), HEA 1422 aims to close a loophole in the code that does not allow for people that smuggle intoxicating chemicals into jails to be charged. There have been cases in the state where people have sprayed bug killing spray on to paper and sent it to inmates in the mail. Inmates have then been smoking these pieces of paper, causing them to be intoxicated and in some cases fall ill. Supporters advocated that this was needed language to close the loophole in the code, while opponents argued that this would allow for additional charges to be tagged on to an accused person for the same action. The bill passed unanimously in each chamber and was signed by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

- **[SEA 16](#) (Bohacek) Guardians ad litem in adoption pilot program**

SEA 16 establishes a guardian ad litem pilot program. Authored by Senator Mike Bohacek (R-Michiana Shores), the pilot program is exclusively in LaPorte, Marshall, and Starke counties. Under the pilot, a guardian ad litem will be appointed in cases where a parent of a child has an intellectual disability. Guardian ad litem programs ensure that children in an adoption case have a third-party representative that can provide information that is in the best interest of the child.

The bill passed 45-0 in the Senate and 97-0 in the House. It has been sent to the Governor and awaits action.

- **[SEA 17](#) (Bohacek) Age verification for material harmful to minors**

Also authored by Sen. Bohacek (R-Michiana Shores), SEA 17 requires that adult website operators use a reasonable method of age verification. If a website operator were to violate this requirement, the bill also creates a cause of action for the guardian of a child harmed to pursue monetary damages, injunctive relief, and reasonable attorney's fees. The bill was passed on third reading in the Senate by a vote of 44-1, and 92-2 in the House. After initially dissenting to amendments added in the House, the Senate voted to concur and the bill now awaits action by the Governor.

- **[SEA 18](#) (Brown) Various probate matters**

Senator Liz Brown's (R-Fort Wayne) bill expands the definition of a health care representative. This bill creates a procedure to transfer interest to an heir or to a legatee upon the death of a certain single member. The bill also says that if an individual has a felony conviction, they would be disqualified from managing an estate. The bill passed out of the Senate on a 49-0 vote, and also passed unanimously in the House. Amendments were added that cleared up what the course of action would be if a previously divorced couple got remarried. The bill now awaits action from Governor Holcomb.

- **[SEA 172](#) (Crider) Compensation for victims of violent crime**

Authored by Sen. Michael Crider (R-Greenfield) SEA 172 is the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute's (ICJI) agency bill. If passed, it would update Indiana Code to be more in line with how the agency is administered on a day-to-day basis. After passing 46-0 in the Senate, the bill was heard by the House Committee on Courts and Criminal Code. The ICJI came to testify in support of their bill and answered questions on the clarifying language. The bill passed through the committee and then passed unanimously on the House floor. Governor Holcomb signed the bill into law on March 11th.

- **[SEA 179](#) (Koch) Commission on court appointed attorneys**

Senator Eric Koch's (R-Bedford) bill requires the justice reinvestment advisory council to conduct a study on criminal indigency determinations by all trial courts in the state. It also changes the name of the Indiana Public Defender Commission to the Indiana Commission on Court Appointed Attorneys. The bill passed unanimously in the Senate and then was amended in the House where it passed 96-2. The Senate filed a motion to dissent with the amendments, and the bill was sent to a conference committee. The bill was returned to the language as it passed in the Senate, with some changes to the number of counties eligible for reimbursement for indigent defense services. A conference committee report was adopted by both chambers and the bill now awaits action from Governor Holcomb.

- **[SEA 181](#) (Koch) Citizenship and immigration status**

Also authored by Senator Eric Koch (R-Bedford), this bill is intended to put an end to so-called "sanctuary cities" in Indiana. It gives the Attorney General of Indiana the authority to force cities and universities to comply in immigration investigations by federal agencies. The bill was controversial, passing each chamber by a vote down party lines. It now awaits action from Governor Holcomb.

- **[SEA 182](#) (Koch) Regulation of drones near correctional facilities**

Also authored by Senator Eric Koch (R-Bedford), this bill deals with the issue of criminals using drones to smuggle contraband into state prisons. The House Committee on Courts and Criminal Code heard testimony on the bill from the Department of Corrections, who urged the committee to pass the bill. Currently, there is nothing in the state code that denotes using drones to smuggle contraband is illegal. The bill passed unanimously in both Houses without any amendments and was signed into law by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

- **[SEA 226](#) (Gaskill) Attorney's fees**

Authored by Senator Mike Gaskill (R-Pendleton), this bill increases the amount of attorney's fees to \$250 per hour that may be incurred by an offeror. The total amount of expenses that may be awarded cannot exceed \$5,000. An amendment was made to the bill that changed the dollar amount presented in the bill from \$10,000 to \$5,000. No opponents of the bill came to testify during its hearing in committee. Supporters said these changes will allow for quicker resolutions and

would encourage good-faith negotiations. It ultimately passed the Senate by a vote of 48-0 and 95-0 in the House. Both chambers adopted the conference committee report for the bill, which awaits action from Governor Holcomb.

- **[SEA 234](#) (Garten) Disaster emergency**

Senator Chris Garten's (R-Charlestown) bill would limit the ability of the Governor to declare an extended state of disaster emergency. For the state of emergency to extend past 60 days, the General Assembly would have to vote in approval. This is in response to the state of emergency that was called during the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill received pushback, but it ultimately passed 38-10 in the Senate, and 71-27 in the House. It awaits further action by the Governor.

General

- **[HEA 1025](#) (Manning) Mixed beverages**

Authored by Representative Ethan Manning (R-Logansport), HEA 1025 defines the term "mixed beverage" and allows beer and wine wholesalers to sell ready to drink cocktails, which have increased in popularity in recent years. Opponents stated that this will create an uneven playing field by deciding "winners and losers" in the heavily regulated alcohol market, while proponents of the legislation argued that the bill will institute free market principles. The legislation passed in the House 75-19, and in the Senate 38-11. Governor Holcomb signed the bill into law on March 11th.

- **[HEA 1383](#) (Morrison) Wetlands**

Authored by Alan Morrison (R-Brazil), HEA 1383 was this year's legislation concerning wetlands. The bill faced opposition from legislators in both chambers and both sides of the aisle that believe new definitions in the bill may lead to further desecration of the state's wetlands. Supporters of the bill argue that the new definitions allow for new development with little environmental impact. The bill passed 64-30 in the House and 32-17 in the Senate, having the distinction of being the first bill to pass both chambers and be signed by Governor Holcomb this session.

- **[SEA 1](#) (Rodgers) Reading skills**

Authored by Senator Linda Rodgers (R-Granger), SEA 1 reinforces the state's policy of holding back students that do not pass 3rd grade reading exams. The bill also requires schools to track the progress of students that are struggling to read in 2nd grade and offer summer reading classes to students. After passing 36-13 in the Senate, House Democrats pushed back, offering 6 amendments on second reading (all of which failed or were ruled out of order). They argued that holding more students back would add an unnecessary burden to schools while harming the social development of students. Ultimately, the bill passed 68-28 in the House. The bill was signed into law by Governor Holcomb on March 11th.

- **[SEA 202](#) (Deery) State educational institution matters**

Authored by Senator Spencer Deery (R-Lafayette), SEA 202 requires public universities and colleges to take “intellectual diversity” into account when making staffing and tenure decisions. Deery and supporters of the bill say that this is a needed change, as many of the schools in Indiana have a reputation for being left leaning. Those who oppose the bill say that it will lead to censorship and decision making based on administrative politics rather than merit. After passing 39-9 in the Senate, the bill passed 8-4 in the House Education Committee and ultimately passed the House 66-31 after House Democrats filed a motion to adopt a minority committee report and a motion to recommit the bill (both unusual procedural methods to derail legislation). Both motions failed, and the bill now awaits the action of Governor Holcomb.