

Indiana General Assembly committees were immersed in hearings this week as the committee deadline nears for the first half of session. January 28 is the final day for bills to pass House and Senate committees. A number of controversial issues remain at the committee level, including bills on civil rights.

The Senate Rules Committee will take testimony next week on two proposals related to civil rights. [Senate Bill 100](#) would provide protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity, but with exceptions for small wedding service providers and religious-affiliated organizations, including hospitals and universities affiliated with a particular faith. The second, [Senate Bill 344](#), was drafted after growing qualms over transgender issues and would grant civil rights only to gays and lesbians. It would also include somewhat broader exemptions for religious objectors.

As recent reports have indicated, a number of current lawmakers have announced their intention not to seek re-election in 2016. This week, Rep. John Price (R-Greenwood) announced he will not seek re-election upon the conclusion of his current term in 2016. Price is finishing his second term in House District 47.

Current lawmakers that are running in 2016 have been filing with the Secretary of State as the deadline to submit a declaration of candidacy is on Friday, February 5.

Governor Pence signed into law the first two bills to pass both chambers this session in response to issues encountered during the statewide ISTEP test. The first, [Senate Enrolled Act \(SEA\) 200](#), authored by Sen. Dennis Kruse (R – Auburn), Sen. Luke Kenley (R – Noblesville), and Sen. Ryan Mishler (R – Bremen), holds schools harmless for their A-F accountability grade for the 2014-2015 year to accommodate the transition to more rigorous academic standards. The second, [House Enrolled Act \(HEA\) 1003](#), authored by Rep. Robert Behning (R – Indianapolis), ensures that teacher bonuses and evaluations are not negatively impacted by the transition to a new test this year.

Next week is the final week for committee hearings in the first half of session. This session, 430 House bills and 411 Senate bills were filed. We expect an active week in committees and also on the House and Senate floor as lawmakers seek homes for their legislation which may have not received a hearing prior to the deadline.