

Week one of the 2016 Indiana General Assembly legislative session started on Tuesday, January 5. This year is a non-budget session also referred to as a short session. By statute, the Indiana General Assembly must adjourn by Monday, March 14. Three weeks of committee hearings remain before the first half deadline. Below is a list of key dates for this session:

- January 8 – Final day to file Senate bills
- January 12 – Governor Pence State of the State Address; deadline for filing House bills
- January 13 – Chief Justice Loretta Rush State of the Judiciary Address
- January 18 – Statehouse closed in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- January 28 – Deadline for bills to pass House and Senate committees
- February 2 – Second Reading deadline for House and Senate bills
- February 3- Third Reading deadline for House and Senate bills
- February 25 – Final day for House bills to pass Senate committees
- February 29 – Final day for Senate bills to pass House committees
- March 1 – Second Reading deadline for House bills in the Senate
- March 2 – Third Reading deadline for House bills in the Senate; Second Reading deadline for Senate bills in the House
- March 3 – Third Reading deadline for Senate bills in the House
- March 14 – Deadline to adjourn *sine die*

Civil Rights continue to dominate the headlines of Statehouse issues. There have been a number of competing bills filed regarding civil rights. The Senate Republicans released SB 100 on Organization Day in November as their proposal to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, but with several carve-outs for religious objectors. Advocacy groups on both sides of the issue have criticized the Senate proposal. Conservative religious groups argue the protections are unneeded, while LGBT activists say the proposal creates too many religious exemptions.

A number of education issues continue to serve as overarching session issues. This year, the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress exam (ISTEP) is one focus of lawmakers. There are discussions on whether lawmakers will simply call for a rebranding of the ISTEP exam or whether the state will move toward a new test altogether. A proposal in 2015 for the state to adopt a national, off-the-shelf test died. But talks were renewed following a long string of glitches in the delivery and grading of the 2015 ISTEP.

The Governor's office and nearly each caucus have their own transportation funding proposal this session. Governor Pence's four-year, \$1 billion proposal would not require new taxes. Instead, Gov. Pence wants to raise the funds through a combination of utilizing some of the state's reserves, creating new spending through 2020 and borrowing money through bonding. House Republicans argue their plan creates a longer-term solution by increasing taxes on gas and cigarettes. Senate Republicans are more in line with Gov. Pence and have proposed \$418 million for local roads and bridges to address what some argued was a weakness in the governor's plan.

Meanwhile, Democrats propose to spend \$2 billion over four years by heavily relying on the state's reserves. Lawmakers were widely expected to approve new infrastructure dollars when

writing the next state budget in 2017, but a highly contentious road closure along I-65 earlier this year helped accelerate talks.

A long-stalled proposal to require prescriptions for cold and allergy tablets that include an ingredient used to make methamphetamine could find traction this year. Speaker Brian Bosma (R-Indianapolis) has stated his support in requiring prescriptions for pseudoephedrine, which is found in Sudafed and other products. A Senate proposal doesn't go as far as requiring a prescription. Instead, it requires pharmacists to conduct a brief consultation with a person wanting to purchase pseudoephedrine over the counter.

Two long-time lawmakers announced their retirement at the end of their respective terms later this year: Sen. Pat Miller (R-Indianapolis) who is known to be influential on state health issues and Sen. Earline Rogers (D-Gary) a long-time education advocate. Sen. Miller has chaired the Senate Health & Provider Services Committee for many years and has represented the southeast portion of the Indianapolis area for 34 years. Before her election to the Indiana Senate in 1990, Sen. Earline Rogers (D-Gary) served eight years in the Indiana House of Representatives. A 38-year veteran of the Gary Public School system, Rogers spent much of her career advocating for greater educational opportunities for Indiana's children.

Committees will be in full-swing next week as we continue to review the impacts of filed legislation.