



Greater La Porte Chamber of Commerce

2016 Greater La Porte Chamber of Commerce Legislative Positions

Transportation and Infrastructure funding

Indiana's transportation system is facing a funding crisis. Major Moves invested significant money into roads, but was not a long-term program. Recently, lawmakers provided more money for highways by ending the diversion of fuel-tax money to other programs and by providing an amount equal to 1% sales tax on fuel.

However, costs of road building and maintenance continue to increase, while an adequate funding stream has not been found. At the same time, vital projects like the completion of US 31, remain in limbo. Lawmakers must address the funding shortfall for state and local projects and maintenance. Unless a better funding source can be identified, lawmakers must adopt any or all of the proven funding streams. Among the local priorities are:

- Support increasing the state fuel tax and indexing for inflation.
- Support that all money raised through fuel tax is directed to repairing and maintaining roads and highways.
- Support the completion of US-31 to a limited access highway between Indianapolis and South Bend.
- Support the upgrade of US-30 to freeway status.
- Support tolling of other roads throughout the state to increase funding for repairs and maintenance.
- US 30 Limited Access
- Support state funding for local roads and bridges
- US 35 Freeway Access
- La Porte Economic Development Corridor
- Upgrade US 421 to four lanes from I-94 to US 30
- SR 39 Additional Travel Lanes
- I-94/US 20/ US 35 Interchange Improvements
- US 6/ US 35 Interchange Improvements
- Illiana Expressway to US 20/US 31 Bypass

Aviation and Rail Service:

First: The Office of Aviation needs to be strengthened.

Second: We need to establish dedicated funding for the Office of Aviation. The use of aircraft excise tax should be used for this and not deposited into the State's general fund.

Third: Provide adequate funding for the relocation of the South Shore Rail Road in South Bend and Michigan City and support additional studies and funding for the South Shore Rail Line to better connect North Central Indiana with Chicago

Local Government Funding

Local communities face a variety of challenges that require the appropriate resources to address. While all levels of government should be efficient and lean, sometimes local taxation is the most appropriate option. We believe that the government closest to the people best knows the needs of the people and is best situated to address those needs. When thorough public debate has happened, local governments should be allowed to determine the source, the duration and expenditure of local taxation without seeking additional approval from the state or federal government. Specifically:

- Grant all Indiana communities the same local revenue producing options currently granted to only a few. A local food and beverage tax is an example of a local tax used by some communities, but not available to all.
- Uncouple the state-mandated use of the local option income taxes by empowering local governments to identify the area of greatest need.
- As options for reducing tax impacts are reviewed by state government (such as Business Personal Property Tax repeal), state government should also ensure that comparable replacement revenues are included in the tax relief package.
- Provide more transparency in collection of local income taxes to ensure all revenues return to the County of origin. Alternatively, let the local government collect the tax, like they do with the wheel tax.

Brief version:

Return the home-rule concept to Indiana government. If the legislature determines a local funding option is good for one community, it should be available to all communities. Let the government closest to the people decide on the value, and use, of local revenue options. Likewise, ensure all too local income taxes are returned to the local government, or allow the local governments to collect those taxes themselves.

Education and Workforce Development

- Support the development of an advanced Manufacturing Center on the Elkhart Ivy Tech Campus.
 - Ensure appropriate funding levels for pre-K programs and K-12 public schools located throughout the region.
 - Ensure that private and or charter schools receiving public funds adhere to the same regulations and admission requirements as public schools.
 - Support reevaluating the A-F Grading of schools in Indiana
 - Provide for state testing for Career Ready Expectations.
 - Support funding mechanisms for training Indiana's Workforce.
 - Support increasing funding for Skills Enhancement Fund.
 - Support maintaining access to a strong dual credit systems in Indiana High Schools.
- Education and Workforce Development

Economic Development

- Supports the continued focus and expansion of the Regional Cities initiative as a tool for enhancements throughout the state
- Supports the protection of economic development tools and innovative programs such as tax increment financing (TIF) districts, enterprise zones, and tax phase-in's for local government entities

- UEA Sunset Protection
- Supports Maintaining TIF as an Economic Development Tool
- Support continued funding for Urban Enterprise Zones
- Supports the expansion of high quality broadband internet connectivity to rural areas while maintaining affordability.

Taxation/ Public Finance and Policy

- Supports the elimination of the sales tax on Enterprise IT equipment
- Supports the alimenting the recently imposed caps on EDGE credits
- Supports Small Business Export Finance Assistance
- Reauthorization of Hoosier Business Incentive Tax Credit
- Reauthorization of the 21 Century fund (State match for Federal funds for technology research
- Oppose to County taxation of real estate held by municipal corporations.
- Election of the three County Commissioners by districts including three council members representing each districts.

Energy and Environment

- Oppose NIPSCO Rate Increase
- Waters of the US WOTUS Opposes the expansion and scope of what is considered a “jurisdictional” water, including land that is adjacent (as defined by the EPA) (EPA Rule) to traditional navigable waters and those waters that the agencies consider on a case by case basis, to be jurisdictional.