



State Legislative Update

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TO: IN American Academy of Pediatricians
FROM: Bose Public Affairs Group

BIG PICTURE

Even though lawmakers were away from the Statehouse this week, there have been plenty of updates on many of Indiana's top issues. From Governor Mike Braun's thoughts on the legislative session so far to signing new executive orders, there was no shortage of activity in the capital.

Legislators will return to the Statehouse next week with clear minds ready to dig into bills filed and passed by the opposite chamber. This session, 708 bills were filed in the House and 178 passed out and have been sent to the Senate. In the Senate, 521 bills were introduced and 156 have been sent to the House for further consideration.

The House of Representatives will continue their new procedure of limited full chamber sessions for the first three weeks of March before returning back to their typical schedule of going into session every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. This change has allowed lawmakers to spend more time considering potential new laws in committees with less time constraints due to session schedules, and vote on more bills in one sitting.

BRAUN COMMENTS ON LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

Governor Mike Braun held a news conference this week to mark the halfway point of the legislative session and discuss his priorities on property tax relief, budget cuts, healthcare, education and public safety.

Braun pushed for property tax savings through Senate Bill 1, despite the Senate scaling back the proposal. Braun signaled he would continue pushing for stronger tax relief, positioning House Speaker Todd Huston as the key player in shaping the final version. While emphasizing collaboration with the legislature, Braun made clear he would not hesitate to use his veto power or even call a special session if lawmakers do not craft a plan that earns his support.

Braun also discussed his commitment to cutting state government spending, criticizing the federal government's pandemic-era spending as unsustainable. With uncertainty around potential spending cuts at the federal level, the Governor said the state must continue to prioritize fiscal discipline.

Braun also voiced strong support for expanding Indiana's school choice system. He indicated his support for controversial legislation that would require traditional public schools to share local property tax dollars with charter schools, a measure critics argue is a cost shift away from the state coffers to property taxpayers. Braun also said he supported efforts to raise teacher salaries, enhance school safety and expand career scholarship programs.

Braun touted several healthcare bills aimed at lowering costs and improving transparency. These measures align with Braun's long-standing criticism of the healthcare industry, particularly nonprofit hospitals that he argues behave like for-profit businesses. Proposals under consideration include:

- Site-neutral pricing to ensure hospitals charge the same rates for outpatient services regardless of location
- Prior authorization reform to cut down on delays for patient care
- Crackdowns on Medicaid fraud
- Tighter oversight of hospital mergers and acquisitions
- Transparency requirements for prescription drug prices and pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs)

Braun highlighted proposals to hold prosecutors accountable if they refuse to enforce certain laws, a nod to an ongoing debate over prosecutors who may categorically decline to prosecute certain crimes. He also backed plans to increase penalties for violent crimes and boost funding for local prosecutor offices.

Braun briefly addressed a bill that would ban DEI initiatives in state agencies and schools, a hot-button issue in Indiana and across the country. While not taking a definitive stance, Braun said he preferred policies based on "merit" and "equality" rather than "equity," a term he suggested implies government interference in outcomes. He noted recent meetings with Black pastors, educators, and Martin University, Indiana's only historically Black college, to discuss the issue.

BRAUN SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDERS TIGHTENING UNEMPLOYMENT RULES

This week Governor Mike Braun also signed two executive orders aimed at tightening the state's unemployment insurance system by increasing work search requirements and cracking down on fraudulent claims. While supporters say the changes will strengthen the system's integrity, critics warn they could make it harder for struggling Hoosiers to access the help they need.

Indiana workers who lose their jobs through no fault of their own can currently receive unemployment benefits for up to 26 weeks, with payments capped at \$390 per week. Claimants must complete two job search activities each week, but Braun's order instructs the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to require additional, more meaningful work search activities when appropriate. He argued that unemployment benefits should act as a safety net, not a long-term solution, while encouraging a stronger culture of work.

The executive orders also aim to prevent fraud in the unemployment system. Indiana has paid out an estimated \$55 million in fraudulent claims over the last three years, according to Braun. The new orders require the DWD to verify applicant eligibility using state and federal databases, including incarceration records, death records, and the multi-state Integrity Data Hub. The agency will also investigate cases where multiple claims are filed from the same device or bank account and will closely review claims from out-of-state applicants before paying them out. Braun said Indiana's unemployment system suffers less fraud than many other states, but he wants Indiana to be the best in the country at protecting taxpayer dollars.

The orders include measures to help job seekers return to work faster. The DWD will contact applicants within a week of enrollment to create personalized job search plans and hold them accountable to those plans. The agency must also study best practices from other states and

increase audits of work search activities, particularly for applicants most at risk of exhausting their benefits.

The executive action follows a failed legislative attempt earlier this year to cut Indiana's maximum unemployment benefits from 26 weeks to 14 weeks, with limited extensions for those in job training programs. Critics argued the bill was unnecessary, given that Indiana already has some of the lowest unemployment benefits in the country and serves a smaller share of jobless workers than most states. Although that proposal did not advance, Braun's executive orders show his administration is still determined to impose stricter requirements on unemployment recipients.

LAWMAKERS NOT GIVING UP ON GAMING ISSUES

Despite setbacks, Indiana lawmakers are not completely abandoning their efforts to change the state's gambling landscape this session.

An attempt to legalize online casino gaming and online lottery through [House Bill 1432](#) failed to advance during the first half of session. The bill, authored by Rep. Ethan Manning, passed the House Public Policy Committee but did not receive a hearing in the Ways and Means Committee. Manning expressed disappointment, arguing that the proposal could generate tens of millions in new state revenue during an especially tight budget year. However, House Speaker Todd Huston emphasized that gaming expansion should be driven by policy considerations rather than simply raising revenue. Despite this, Manning vowed to continue advocating for online gaming as lawmakers seek ways to bolster state finances.

Another proposal, [Senate Bill 293](#), would have allowed the state's poorest-performing casino, located in Rising Sun in southeast Indiana, to relocate to New Haven near Fort Wayne, a more profitable location. While the bill to permit the move died without getting a vote in the Senate Public Policy Committee, lawmakers did advance [Senate Bill 43](#), which calls for a study on relocating the casino. The Indiana Gaming Commission would hire an independent research firm to identify the top three regions where a casino could relocate, evaluating potential revenue, tourism impacts and the effect on existing casinos and the horse racing industry. Some lawmakers, including Sen. Liz Brown, argued the study should take a broader look at all forms of gaming revenue, including charitable gaming, rather than focusing solely on casino relocation. The Senate approved the measure, sending it to the House for further consideration.

FEDERAL TERM LIMITS GETS A PUSH IN INDIANA

A push to call a constitutional convention for congressional term limits has gained traction in Indiana this year. After failing in previous years, the Indiana Senate recently passed Senate Joint Resolution 21 despite bipartisan opposition. The measure now heads to the House for consideration.

The resolution is part of a national campaign led by U.S. Term Limits (USTL), which seeks to gather the 34 state applications required under Article V of the Constitution to trigger a convention. If successful, the convention would propose amendments to limit U.S. House and Senate terms.

Supporters, including Governor Mike Braun and Lt. Gov. Micah Beckwith, argue the move would pressure Congress to act. However, both Democrat and Republican critics fear the convention could spiral beyond its intended scope, jeopardizing existing constitutional rights.

Opponents also note the measure applies only to Congress, not state legislators, raising concerns about hypocrisy. Some lawmakers warn that term limits could empower lobbyists and staffers, while others see the effort as a necessary disruption to career politicians.

If Indiana approves the resolution, it would become the 10th state to back USTL's convention language, still far from the 34-state threshold.

WHAT'S NEXT?

To access other bills, view the latest session calendars, and watch session live go to iga.in.gov. Please contact your BPAG Professional with any questions regarding the topics above.

Below are the major session deadlines to keep in mind:

House	Senate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• April 10 – Deadline for Senate bills to advance out of committee• April 14 – 2nd Reading Deadline for Senate bills• April 15 – 3rd Reading Deadline for Senate bills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• April 10 – Deadline for House bills to advance out of committee• April 14 – 2nd Reading Deadline for House bills• April 15 – 3rd Reading Deadline for House bills
<i>Conference Committees Begin April 16</i>	
<i>Required Sine Die Date: April 29</i>	

PRIORITY LEGISLATION