



Legislative Update

122ND INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, JANUARY 6, 2022

Week One Overview

Happy New Year! Amidst the continuing public health pandemic, the Barnes & Thornburg LLP Government Services Team hopes this update finds you all well and in good health. The beginning of January not only brings an end to the previous year but also the start of a new legislative session. The Barnes & Thornburg LLP Government Services Team is excited provide you weekly updates on the 2022 legislative session of the Indiana General Assembly.

Point of Interest

The Indiana General Assembly has introduced several bills which will be topics of significant discussion this session. Notable topics with hearings this week included COVID-19 immunizations, easing firearm obtainability, and punishments for reckless driving. Additionally, Governor Holcomb announced his 2022 Next Level Agenda which includes a wide range of topics, further detailed below.

COVID-19: The House committee on Employment, Labor, and Pensions held a hearing on HB 1001 (Lehman, Republican) on Thursday, which addresses employer mandates regarding immunizations against COVID-19. The committee passed the bill after adopting two amendments. Notable additions to the bill include a guarantee for employees terminated due to vaccination status to have unemployment benefits and mandatory opt-out options for employees subjected to vaccination requirements. Employers mandating COVID-19 vaccinations must provide four such opt-out methods: medical reasons, religious reasons, provable natural immunity, and subjection to weekly testing.

Handgun Carry Permits: Since the last session, firearm reform has been a topic of discussion nationwide. This week, the House introduced HB 1077 (Smaltz, Republican), which repeals the law that requires a person to obtain a license to carry a handgun in Indiana. As long as a potential firearm purchaser is not prohibited to carry a handgun, they will not be required to possess a permit within the state. While this will reduce the restrictions on handguns, HB 1077 will increase the severity of the theft of a firearm from a level 6 to a level 5 felony.

Speeding Fines: The House Committee on Courts and Criminal Code heard HB 1138 (Cook, Republican) on January 6th. Under this bill, a person who drives more than 24 miles per hour about the speed limit on a highway would commit a Class C misdemeanor. The exception to this punishment would be if the offense causes any damage to another person's body or property. The maximum penalty for a Class C misdemeanor under Indiana Code 35-50-3-4 is 0-60 days in jail with a maximum fine of \$500.00.

Next Level Agenda: Gov. Holcomb announced his 2022 Next Level Agenda on January 3rd. The Next Level Agenda prioritizes five categories which include: economic development, education, and workforce development, public health, community development, and good government service. In order to increase economic productivity, the Governor wants to eliminate business personal property tax on new equipment and modernize Indiana's economic development toolkit. Education and workforce development programs are in development that would supply grade school students with supplemental education outside of the classroom and create an efficient system of pairing Hoosier educators with job opportunities. A key focus on public health includes allocating funds to promote the awareness and treatment of mental health. In addition, an expansion of data collection involving unexplained infant deaths for further research was mentioned. Gov. Holcomb emphasized strengthening cybersecurity by implementing grant programs and connecting communities by developing better infrastructure. Under good government service, the agenda detailed a strategy to focus on firefighter safety and law enforcement reform.

Session Floor Highlights

The first week of session primarily involved introducing bills and attending to other procedural formalities. Next week, bills will start to move to the House and Senate floors for debate, including HB 1001. To watch Gov. Holcomb's 2022 Next Level Agenda announcement in its entirety visit: <https://www.in.gov/gov/next-level-agenda/>.

Looking Ahead

The deadline for filing bills in the House is January 11th. The Senate's deadline is January 8th. Please use the live link sent in your weekly report email to keep up to date with new bills.

Please feel free to contact a member of our legislative team should you have questions regarding the happenings in the Indiana General Assembly!

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