

Indiana General Assembly Remarks- House and Senate**January 19, 2016****(As Prepared for Delivery)***Introduction*

Thank you Speaker/President pro tempore

Good afternoon and Happy New Year! It's always good to be Home! And today it's especially good because I am not only back in my beloved State, but also back in this great State House, a place I called home for eight statewide elected years and a place to which I always look forward to coming back.

It's also good to see so many old friends, and to see some new faces-- all who share my passion for reform and for keeping this state on the cutting edge of common sense progress. Thank you all for your continued leadership. Not a week goes by in Washington that I don't rightfully brag about the good things Indiana is doing and how we in many areas are a model for the rest of the Nation to follow.

To that end I bring some good news from Washington—an all-too-rare occurrence, I know. So, I would like to thank Speaker Bosma for accepting my request to brief you on two particular pieces of federal legislation that I expect will have immediate positive impact on your work here and your constituent service.

[Senate version: So, I would like to thank President pro tem David Long for accepting my invitation...].

I was intimately involved with each of these education and transportation initiatives, both of which are now law. In Congress I serve on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, where I am the K-12 education subcommittee Chairman. I also serve as the Vice Chairman of the Budget Committee and I am the only Hoosier from the majority party on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. I want to thank the many here who have helped me get good policy in these bills, like Bob Behning, Tony Cook, Todd Huston, Heath VanAtter, Ed Soliday, Peggy Mayfield, and former State Representative and now Congressman Luke Messer who also serves on the education committee. [Senate Version: Erin Houchin, Randy Head, Jim Buck, Ron Alting, and Pete Miller].

Regarding Education:

Starting with my education subcommittee four years ago and ending on the President's desk a few weeks ago, we just handed states, including Indiana, what the Wall Street Journal called "the largest devolution of federal control to the states in 25 years." Meaning, not since welfare reform in the 90's has the federal

government returned this much authority back to the states, where it rightly belongs.

While I wished that I could have eliminated the federal Department of Education (perhaps like some of you!), the fact is we were able to:

Gut the most egregious parts of No Child Left Behind;

Prohibit Common Core from being federally mandated;

Expand states' rights;

Increase Indiana's opportunity to use more funding for school choice;

Make you entirely responsible for student, school and teacher testing and evaluation;

And expand early childhood education, if you decide to do so.

By anyone's observation, we really moved the ball downfield. The entire theme of the work here is New Federalism: transferring authority, responsibility, and yes, money, from Washington to here—a government closer to the people---especially in areas like education.

Now as you might imagine, not everyone in Washington D.C. agrees with this and perhaps that's the case with some of you on this floor. But here's the truth: you and your elected school board members working directly with teachers,

parents, voters, and taxpayers know what serves Hoosier students best, and you are the most concerned—certainly more than any federal bureaucrat in Washington D.C.—about our kids. Including what they need to learn to grow up in a 21st century world -- and win!

So, you now have this new opportunity, and really, this terribly important responsibility to improve our education system for a 21st Century world. Here is what you can take advantage of in the new law. I have also included much of this information in the packets at each of your desks, so quickly:

Accountability

In the new law, we maintain that accountability is a good thing. However, it will now be completely up to you to determine what successful students, schools and teachers look like. And, the federal requirement that every student be caught up to grade level within a year (or beg for a federal waiver) is **COMPLETELY ELIMINATED**. So, yes, the federal government will require some kind of test once a year in grades 3-8 in reading and math, and then again in high school, but how long you test, how many times to test, and what methodologies you use is **COMPLETELY** your responsibility.

Regarding teacher certification and evaluations, we **COMPLETELY ELIMINATE** the “Highly Qualified Teacher” definition and evaluation

requirements. You may decide to test, rank, or otherwise assess your teachers--- or you may not. This is entirely your decision now.

Reining in the Federal Dept. of Education and Restoring Local Control

The Every Student Succeeds Act takes unprecedented steps to rein in the Secretary of Education. For example, the Department of Education is prohibited from influencing, forcing, or coercing a state to adopt specific standards, including Common Core. It is similarly prohibited from conditioning the receipt of any funds, through grants, contracts, or agreements on the adoption of any academic standards, including Common Core. States no longer have to submit their standards to the secretary for review or approval. And the department is prohibited from exercising any direction or supervision over a state's academic standards. State plans will still be submitted, but only for transparency purposes as they will be made available to the public. Additionally, the department is now prohibited from adding new requirements to our state education plan. It must accept it as we write it.

Flexible Funding

We eliminated 49 federal education programs and took the money, increased it, and created flexible funding for school districts to use on anything THEY

determine is important to the mission of educating our children—not what D.C. bureaucrats and education elites dictate.

More Federal Money Following the Students, not the Schools

New authority is created, if you allow it, for Indiana school districts to combine federal funds with state and local education funds and allocate them to schools based on the actual number of students enrolled in each school. This will allow federal funds to follow the child to the school he or she chooses to attend, rewarding high-performing schools that enroll more and harder to teach students. Initially, this pilot is limited to 50 school districts nationwide, so if you believe schools that compete for students and their tax dollars is a good thing, like I do, you might encourage your districts to apply for this authority. And, after 3 years, the 50 schools district cap is removed.

Transportation

Since there are only two Hoosiers from “the Crossroads of America” on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Andre Carson and I do our best to represent Indiana as a whole on these issues. You now have the first long-term highway bill in a decade. By fully funding highway projects for five years, it gives certainty so that we can plan the needed fixes to our roads and bridges to stay competitive and bring even more jobs and economic growth to Indiana. In

addition, Indiana will receive over \$5 billion in federal highway funding, over five years, plus \$470 million from other sources, such as mass transit and highway safety accounts.

The increased funding is not just good for the construction industry, but also for the businesses, farmers, and all of us who depend on a modern, well-maintained infrastructure. The FAST Act received support from over one hundred groups, including the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, the Agribusiness Council of Indiana, and the Indiana Farm Bureau.

Like the education bill, my goal in helping write this bill was the 10th Amendment: that the powers not enumerated in the federal Constitution, are reserved to the states and the people. The FAST Act created the Surface Transportation Program, a block grant with the flexibility to fund different transportation programs according to whatever you and the Governor decide is needed.

We also created a pilot program to accelerate project approvals. Instead of forcing projects to undergo duplicative state and federal environmental reviews, the pilot program empowers states to use their own existing environmental laws if they already match federal environmental requirements. Here, major projects would break ground quicker with reduced red tape and paperwork. I encourage

you to review this program to see if we are eligible from an environmental law standpoint.

Indiana might also be able to take advantage of the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Program. This program was created to help fund large-scale projects of regional importance, but which cannot be done with Indiana's annual funding allotment alone due to the sheer size of the projects. It would be in addition to Indiana's \$5 billion. This is something we might consider to finish transformative projects such as the I-69 extension.

Previously, Indiana received a loan from the federal government for the construction of both the Ohio River Bridges Downtown Crossing and the Ohio River Bridges East Crossing. The FAST Act expands the scope of Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) funding to projects that are located in **less-populous areas**. This is important for communities that are looking to leverage their funding to finance larger projects, such as the construction of the Ronald Reagan Parkway to I-65.

Although this is my first term on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I have been committed to improving Indiana's infrastructure since I was Secretary of State and would visit all 92 of our counties every year.

To that end, I know you are reviewing options for funding our infrastructure system and I applaud you for taking that brave, but very necessary, step. I have read that tolling is something you may consider, among other ideas. So you know, we put a small reform in the FAST Act. Although there was no expansion of the Interstate Tolling Pilot program, the FAST Act requires that the three states currently in the program must move forward and submit their plan within a year, or lose the slot. If these states do not move forward, Indiana must be ready to take a potential slot, if you want to exercise a tolling option sooner.

Critical Commerce Corridors

I am particularly proud of two specific policies that have roots in Indiana. The one I will mention today is Critical Commerce Corridors, an idea developed by the Hudson Institute and Purdue University. These corridors will physically separate passenger vehicles and trucks, decrease congestion and make our highways safer. As you know, we are a logistics state—I say the best in the nation. CCC's, as they are called, would help logistics by helping cargo reach its destination faster and reduce wear and tear on highways.

Conclusion

Thank you for lending this fellow public servant your ears. I came here today out of respect for each of you and your work, with excitement for the

opportunities and newly re-acquired responsibilities Indiana now has in education and transportation. I wish only that you have a successful session and help Indiana remain a national model. Thank you for your service.