

2017

Indiana General Assembly Report

Week Six

This past week was by far the busiest week of the 2017 legislative session yet. CAC staff monitored six committee hearings this week and testified on legislation regarding Indiana's water infrastructure at the House Utilities Committee and the Senate Bill 309 during the Senate Utilities Committee.

The bill ending Indiana's net metering program, [Senate Bill 309](#), was heard Thursday in a standing room only Senate Chamber. Testimony was taken for more than five hours, with Hoosiers traveling from all four corners of the state to speak against ending the program which has enabled hundreds of Hoosier small businesses, farms, households, places of worship, and schools to install renewable energy systems on their property and save tens of thousands of dollars by generating their own energy.

No vote was taken on SB309 but it was amended to end the program in 2022 instead of 2027. An "amend and vote" hearing, meaning no additional testimony will be taken, has been announced for the bill this coming week and we will update you on social media as soon as we learn more.

We testified in opposition of [House Bill 1519](#) and [House Bill 1551](#) which were rolled into one bill, now known as House Bill 1519. These bills would subject ratepayers to significant rate increases (via trackers) from investor-owned water utilities. The bills are being sold as a solution to the potential lead crisis and to extend water service to underserved communities. We support the Senate's take on water infrastructure: [SB511](#), which is awaiting a hearing in the House.

We are still following [House Bill 1494](#), authored by Rep. Dave Wolkins (R-Winona Lake), which loosens regulations on large factory farms, commonly called Confined Animal Feeding Operations, or CAFOs. HB 1494 was heard but did not receive a vote last week. It would eliminate some public notice requirements and remove other safeguards such as IDEM permitting for construction of new CAFOs.

[House Bill 1471](#) would allow the Indiana *211 Connect 2 Help* fund to be administered by the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority. This bill passed out of the House unanimously.

You may remember the "No-More-Stringent-Than" bill, [HB 1082 \(2016\)](#), authored by Rep. Dave Wolkins (R-Winona Lake) was vetoed by then-Governor Pence. On Thursday the House voted to override Governor Pence's veto, 65-29. The issue remains a divisive one, especially given uncertainty surrounding federal environmental policy.

Note: last week we had information that [House Bill 1014](#), Indiana's best bet for an unbiased, citizen-based redistricting process, would be heard in the House Elections Committee. That didn't happen. We join with Common Cause Indiana to call for an immediate hearing. We will update you on social media as soon as we learn more.

Upcoming This Week

The first House Bill to be heard in the Senate, [House Bill 1230](#), unanimously passed the Senate Environmental Affairs committee and will be heard on third reading this week. HB1230 aims to assist Indiana's electric utilities in complying with the updated federal policy regarding coal ash.

We also expect [House Bill 1344](#) to be heard on the House floor this week. HB1344 will ease the bureaucratic requirements in dealing with the East Chicago lead crisis. On the Senate Floor we expect to see action on Sen. Randy Head's healthy food pilot program, [Senate Bill 277](#) as well as [Senate Bill 500](#), a bill that would prevent homeowners' associations from thwarting homeowners' efforts to install solar panels on their homes.

We got word from the [Institute for Working Families](#) that a harmful piece of legislation, [Senate Bill 245](#), would receive a hearing in the Senate Committee on Insurance and Financial Institutions this week. SB 245 unnecessarily expands payday loan products to include a 24-month loan of up to \$2,500 with an APR of 240%. This "loan shark" bill was recently covered by the [Indy Star](#).

To follow these bills in real time, make sure you follow us on [Twitter](#). We tweet throughout the week as to the progress of bills we mention in our reports and on our Indiana General Assembly Bill Watch [website](#).

Respectfully Submitted,
Lindsay Shipps & Kerwin Olson