

2017

Indiana General Assembly Report

Week Five

This week saw the first month of the 2017 legislative session come to a close and the day-to-day activity of the Statehouse has begun to settle into a more consistent schedule.

We attended multiple committee hearings, monitored many more and awaited second reading of [House Bill 1495](#), which inexplicably disappeared off the House Calendar on Tuesday. HB1495 has been coined the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) “technical corrections and clean up bill” but contains a poison pill provision allowing ArcelorMittal to sidestep permitting process for an industrial waste site. We also saw [Senate Bill 511](#), a bill designed to address the cost of Indiana’s growing water infrastructure crisis, pass the Senate without opposition on Monday.

The House Utilities, Energy, and Telecommunications Committee passed [House Bill 1471](#), authored by Rep. Sally Siegrist (R-West Lafayette). The bill would transfer the administration of the *211 Connect 2 Help* dialing code from the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission to the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority.

Sen. Randy Head continues his work towards a healthy food pilot program for Indiana. [Senate Bill 277](#) passed the Senate Commerce Committee on Thursday. CAC is part of a large contingent of coalition partners on this issue, collectively called the *Healthy Food Access Coalition*.

Upcoming Next Week

On Monday the Senate Civil Law Committee is scheduled to consider [Senate Bill 500](#), a bill that would prevent homeowners’ associations from thwarting homeowners’ efforts to install solar panels on their homes.

The Senate Committee on Environmental Affairs begins hearing House Bills on Monday. This is somewhat a “first,” as bills that have passed one chamber are typically held until all bills have switched chambers. That said, [House Bill 1230](#) will be heard on Monday. HB1230 aims to assist Indiana’s electric utilities in complying with the updated Federal policy regarding coal ash.

There is a very good chance that [House Bill 1014](#), Indiana’s best bet for an unbiased, citizen-based redistricting process, will be heard in the House Elections Committee on Wednesday. We’ve been working on this issue with Common Cause Indiana for years. To learn more, head [here](#).

We are following a harmful bill that will be heard in House Environmental Affairs Committee Wednesday. [House Bill 1494](#) is authored by Rep. Dave Wolkins (R-Winona Lake) loosens even further regulations on large factory farms, commonly called Confined Animal Feeding Operations, or CAFOs. HB 1494 would eliminate some public notice requirements and remove other safeguards such as IDEM permitting for construction of new CAFOs.

In addition, we will be testifying on [House Bill 1519](#) and [House Bill 1551](#) before the House Utilities Committee on Wednesday. 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. However, [SB511](#), as well as existing laws, provide the necessary framework to achieve those goals without providing the utilities with more trackers to increase bills and circumvent the authority of the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission.

Update on Anti-Solar Legislation

By and large, the bill we've had the most interest in—[Senate Bill 309](#)—which ends Indiana's net metering rule. Net metering 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.

SB309 will be heard in the Senate Utilities Committee Thursday morning at 9am in Room 233 of the Statehouse. The chairman, Sen. Jim Merritt (R-Indianapolis) marked the hearing as "testimony only," meaning the bill will not receive a vote that day, leaving room for a decision later as to whether the bill will move forward, if at all. To read our fact sheet on SB309, head [here](#).

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,
Kerwin Olson & Lindsay Shipp