



GOP fought for jobs, taxpayer protection



With the 2010 session of the Indiana General Assembly just a fond (or not so fond) memory for taxpayers, it pays to take note of the successes and shortcomings of your state legislature. Fortunately, the taxpayer came out the winner this year.

House Republicans began the session with the announcement of our "Taxpayer Protection Plan" focusing our efforts in three key areas: protecting Hoosiers' pocketbooks, growing jobs and enacting meaningful government reform. With the help of Gov. Mitch Daniels and the Senate, eight of these 11 initiatives were enacted.

The Republican-led charge to cap property taxes through a constitutional amendment passed the General Assembly and will be on the ballot this November. Every Hoosier will have the opportunity to support or reject the proposed tax caps, to potentially establish permanent constitutional protection for the future. This effort was the No. 1 priority for House Republicans.

A second primary goal of Republicans was to delay the crippling employer tax increase mandated in 2009. Republicans understood that a \$350 million increase on 80,000 employers, including 72,000 small businesses, would further damage our economy.

The speaker's efforts to hold this initiative hostage in the closing 10 days of the session were rewarded with the adoption of a few of his pet projects and Big Labor initiatives, but overall the help for employers was worth the price.

The enactment of a strong legislative ethics reform package and granting local schools much-needed flexibility in "silos" of available funds count as additional bipartisan successes.

The final hard-fought jobs victory was the enactment of authority for our governor to enter into public-private partnership agreements for the construction of the Illiana highway in Northwest Indiana and two bridges over the Ohio River; these are key economic development initiatives for our state's future. The failure of some Democratic leaders to set their opposition to the governor's proposals aside and support these commonsense initiatives resulted in a near meltdown in the process and expulsion of a moderate Democratic leader from his long-held post. But with the courageous stand of former Democratic Speaker Pro Tem Chet Dobis of Lake County, this initiative finally passed.

As for shortcomings, the continued unwillingness of Democratic leaders to embrace even the most modest proposals to reform local government or improve the legislative redistricting process were again front and center. Their continual fixation on removing school choice options for the neediest Hoosier families inexplicably continues, and the unwillingness to allow public or minority party input on many key issues was again prevalent.

While Indiana has avoided some of the disastrous circumstances facing many other states, the General Assembly elected in November will face unprecedented challenges in our economy, education reform and budget shortfalls. The re-establishment of Indiana as an innovative leader in these arenas is under way, but much remains to be done, and Hoosier leaders must step up. Our children's future depends on it.

http://www.state.in.us/legislative/house_republicans/homepages/r88/index.html