

Insights

Take Five: 5 Things You Need to Know About Indiana Government - October 2024

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1. Indiana Governor's Race

Indiana's marquee statewide race is the gubernatorial contest featuring US Senator Mike Braun (R), former Superintendent of Public Instruction Jennifer McCormick (D), and Donald Rainwater (L). Braun's top priorities are Hoosier jobs and economic growth, improving education, and putting kids first, while McCormick touts protecting reproductive rights and freedoms, defending public education, supporting high-wage jobs and unions, and demanding responsible tax spending as her platform. After two debates back-to-back this week hosted by various media outlets, the three candidates will debate for a final time on Thursday, October 24. Available polling has shown Braun leading McCormick by anywhere from 2 to 11 points, and Democrats are hoping to capitalize on enthusiasm from the Democratic base while tying Braun to his Lieutenant Governor running mate Micah Beckwith's more polarizing views. The voter registration deadline in Indiana is Monday, October 7, with early voting beginning the next day on Tuesday, October 8. Hoosiers can check their registration or register to vote by visiting www.indianavoters.in.gov.

2. Economic Plans in the Governor's Race

Both of the major party candidates in the Governor's race have released information regarding their plans for Indiana's economy. Braun's plan, titled "Freedom and Opportunity Agenda – Plan to Fight Inflation," includes policies intended to deliver "historic tax relief, good-paying jobs, affordable and reliable energy, streamlined regulations and government services, and a leaner, more efficient state government". The McCormick/Goodin ticket has released two fact sheets in this economic development arena: a property tax relief plan and an economic development plan. Both candidates mention changes they would make to the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), which has been criticized by the legislature for a lack of transparency, particularly around the planned LEAP district in Boone County. Braun's plan would focus the IEDC towards operations that "support businesses that invest in their employees" rather than just focusing on job creation, while McCormick goes even further and dedicates sections of her plan to "Reform the Role of the IEDC to Original Intention" and "Increase Transparency and Accountability at the IEDC." Regardless of the outcome, the pressure from the incoming Governor as well as the legislature will likely result in changes to the IEDC during the 2025 legislative session.

3. Mike Braun's Healthcare Plan

Earlier this week, Mike Braun released a healthcare plan with policies that will look familiar to those who have been following recent healthcare policy debates in the Indiana legislature. The plan includes six pillars to improve quality, lower costs, enhance transparency, expand access, promote wellness, and increase competition. Specific policies include prohibiting non-profit hospitals from utilizing non-compete clauses in physician contracts, regulating pharmacy benefit managers (referred to in the plan as "the Middle Man"), and reforming the prior authorization process. In the plan's introduction, Braun states that the Indiana General Assembly "has set a firm foundation for more ambitious work" towards healthcare affordability, and the 11-page plan provides more insights on how he would achieve this goal.

4. Attorney General Race

Another race to watch on election night is the Indiana Attorney General race, where incumbent Attorney General Todd Rokita (R) faces Democratic challenger Destiny Wells, a former Deputy Attorney General and former candidate for Secretary of State. Both candidates have focused on the office's role in medical privacy after litigation and licensure action between Rokita and Dr. Caitlin Bernard stemming from comments made at a 2022 rally in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. There has been wide variability in polling on this race, with the Wells campaign releasing an internal poll in mid-September showing her within the margin of error, while a poll conducted by Indy Politics shows a larger gap. The Rokita campaign has not released any internal polling.

5. Legislative Races

Within the legislature, the big question in 2024 is whether the Democrats will be able to gain 4 seats in the House to break the supermajority or if Republicans will once again hold their ground. With all 100 seats in the House on the ballot this year, there are a plethora of races to watch. Two of the closest contests are open seats in the northern suburbs of Indianapolis, where Pacers executive Danny Lopez (R) faces Navy veteran Matt McNally (D) and former Colts punter Hunter Smith (R) faces attorney Josh Lowry (D). To break the supermajority, Democrats would also need to hold the current seats of Rep. Victoria Garcia Wilburn in southern Hamilton County, Rep. Sue Errington in Muncie, Rep. Mitch Gore in Indianapolis, and Rep. Wendy Dant Chessner in Jeffersonville, who was caucused into her seat after the retirement of former Rep. Rita Fleming. Similarly, Republicans are investing in their members with close races, including Rep. Ed Soliday in Valparaiso, Rep. Dale DeVon in Granger, Rep. Becky Cash in Zionsville, and Rep. Dave Hall in Brown and Monroe Counties.

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