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Start Your Engines

Summer has arrived, and though the highlights of spring are in the rearview, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on one springtime tradition that Hoosiers know and love, which has something to teach us at this time too.

I am not, generally speaking, a racing fan. Outside of May, I couldn't tell you where the IndyCar Series, or any other series for that matter, happens to be running on any given weekend. But I do love the Indy 500, when the racing world turns its attention to 16th and Georgetown in Indianapolis for the running of the Greatest Spectacle in Racing. I remember listening to the race on the radio as a kid, usually while attending a barbecue, and then watching the tape-delayed broadcast on television that evening. Now I attend the race with my family, and they fall into the same category as I do — racing agnostics for the better part of 12 months, who turn into gearhead experts every Memorial Day weekend.

And as thrilling as the race usually is, I think we are also drawn to the traditions and the pageantry that surround the race and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway (IMS) itself. The party that is Carb Day. The singing of "Back Home Again in Indiana." The winner chugging a bottle of milk and kissing the yard of bricks (and if you're Helio Castroneves, climbing the fence like Spider-Man). And, of course, all that the Speedway does to honor our men and women in uniform for their service to our country.

Contrast those time-honored traditions with the advancements in technology that occur on the racetrack. Ray Harroun, in his Marmon Wasp, won the first Indy 500 in 1911 with an average speed of 74.602 mph. Meanwhile, Marcus Ericsson won last year's race with an average speed of more than 175 mph. IMS, originally conceived as a testing facility for Indiana's automotive industry, is the birthplace of not just speed, but of the rearview mirror and seat belts.

The Indianapolis 500 honors our past and our traditions while embracing the future like few other events on the sports calendar.

As the Indiana Food and Fuel Association embarks on a new era, we must follow that same road map. Over the last 20 years, Scot Imus has built this organization into one of the premier business trade associations in the state. It is the voice for the fueling and convenience store industry among legislative leaders and policymakers. And it provides immeasurable benefits to IFFA members and the more than 50,000 Hoosiers you employ. Scot's impact on this organization will be felt for many years after his well-deserved retirement.

It's incumbent upon your new leadership to continue Scot's legacy while putting our own stamp on the organization. We must build on our past successes as we look toward the future — a future that will present certain challenges but will also offer great opportunities. And like any race team, it will require all of us working together to achieve those successes.

Be on the lookout for new opportunities to get engaged and involved with the IFFA as we roll out new programs in the coming months and years. We know that the most impactful voices for the industry are the members themselves. You are the ones employing Hoosiers, collecting and remitting tax dollars, and investing in your communities. We'll be working with you to ensure your voices are heard. We hope that you are ready to join us in moving the IFFA into the future. In many ways, you'll be driving these efforts.

So, ladies and gentlemen, start your engines. 