



The Northeast Indiana Chamber Coalition is comprised of Chambers of Commerce joined together under the common goal of improving the business climate in Northeast Indiana by promoting free enterprise and an enhanced quality of life in our communities. The Coalition develops and communicates its endorsed issue positions with federal, state, and local government officials as well as educates its individual business members on issues affecting their ability to be leaders in the state, nation, and global economy.

The NEICC is a partnership of 14 Chambers of Commerce with a member base of over 10,000 businesses providing nearly 150,000 jobs in Northeast Indiana. Serving as forum for business to engage in the public policy arena, the NEICC *advocates, educates, and acts* on issues that matter most to area businesses.

Transportation and Infrastructure

An efficient, accessible, and reliable transportation system is crucial to the success of Northeast Indiana. The state's economy and your bottom line depend on our ability to move people and goods effectively. The NEICC strides to lead the private sector in securing funding for critical infrastructure and will continue to assist in the retention and expansion of the Fort Wayne Region's business community through strategic transportation advancements aimed at increasing economic development opportunities and meeting the needs of businesses located in Northeast Indiana. The Coalition will work to see that we spend infrastructure dollars more wisely, apply new technology, attract more private investment and pursue innovation that leads to a first class infrastructure and economy.

- Fort to Port Interchanges

With the passage of Major Moves, the widening of US 24 from I-469 east to the Ohio line, has been fully funded, without interchanges. The Coalition will continue to seek funding so that the interchanges will be included as in the original design.

- Regional Improvements, Multi-modal Transportation System & Development of FWA

The NEICC, in conjunction with the Northeast Indiana Chamber Coalition, has compiled a "Regional Transportation Priority List." This list includes long-term, large scale projects throughout Northeast Indiana. The Coalition supports the exploration and consideration of these projects.

Northeast Indiana needs a unified vision for transportation infrastructure, operations, and funding. We will work towards a business vision for transportation that will be planned and executed as a system, not as individual lines, with input from all types of industries. We will continue to work to increase air travel and development at the Fort Wayne International Airport, while working with the airport, local, state, and the federal government to provide assistance in these efforts.

- Major Moves Dollars for Transportation Projects

Major Moves created an opportunity for our state to capitalize on the critical need to enhance our road system. The NEICC will continue to advocate that all Major Moves dollars at the state or local level, generated from the lease, be used exclusively for capital road construction projects.

Local Government Modernization

Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of governmental services is essential to providing a system that benefits business growth and job creation. The quality of local government, not quantity, is critical to how our region operates. An inefficient, ineffective government that struggles to make ends meet, cannot focus on best practices, or establish a vision for economic growth. A more efficient and solvent government can participate in the important work of creating economic growth, educational opportunities, sound infrastructure, outstanding public safety and more.

- Local Government Efficiency Efforts

The Chamber Coalition will continue to advocate for local government improvements through consolidation and intergovernmental cooperation. We will work to promote efforts that will reduce bureaucracy, end duplicate services, and eliminate jurisdictional disputes in our region.

- Local Spending Controls based on County Income Levels

NEICC supports spending controls based on growth at county levels, rather than state levels.

- Kernan-Shepard Commission

The Coalition supports the evaluation of local government structure and services through the Commission on Local Government Reform. The review of local government is past due, and a critical step as Indiana attempts to reduce the financial burden on taxpayers.

Fiscal Policy

NEICC promotes policies that reduce the financial burden on businesses and allow them to invest valuable dollars to expand and grow in the local economy. The NEICC will work to reduce federal, state, and local regulatory requirements which create unnecessary obstacles for business. We will also assist state & local government, school districts, service providers and others to achieve meaningful reform by working together to find long-term creative solutions to fiscal challenges.

- Property Taxation

The Coalition supports comprehensive property tax relief initiatives that will not harm the business climate in Northeast Indiana or the state. We urge reform to a fair and balanced tax system that serves to make Indiana more competitive. We oppose any attempts to relieve the property tax burden of homeowners by shifting it to business taxpayers.

- Uniformity Clause

The Coalition supports maintaining the uniformity clause of the Constitution that requires all types of property to be assessed and taxed at equal tax rates and assessment ratios.

➤ **State Takeover of School General Funds & Transportation Funds**

The costs of operating our schools are already primarily a state responsibility. The Coalition supports the state takeover of school general and transportation expenses in order to take the burden of these costs permanently off local property tax payers.

➤ **Funding of County Welfare Programs**

The administration and funding of county welfare programs should reside at the same level of government; the state. The NEICC supports legislation that would replace county welfare property tax levies with state funds, thereby putting both the administrative and the funding of these programs at the state level.

➤ **Tax on Services**

The Chamber Coalition opposes taxing services. Small businesses are usually impacted most by a services tax, in paying it and in the administration. Expanding sales tax to services could also damage Indiana's competitive posture.

Economic Development

Continued investment by local employers in new capital and equipment is critical to the economic competitiveness of our region. An excessive reliance of real and personal property to fund local government activities adversely affects the climate for investment. This burden is particularly counterproductive when it impacts business personal property. The NEICC urges state and local governments to relate tax policy to economic development objectives.

➤ **Support economic development tools such as tax increment financing, community revitalization districts, and consistency with eligibility and the awarding of these and other incentives.**

The Coalition applauds efforts in creative financing and strategic thinking in economic development activities that will benefit our region. We advocate for consistent incentives so that those developing our region can be reasonably certain in their investments.

Education & Workforce Development

The Chamber Coalition will continue to work for the enhancement of strong education standards that will ultimately prepare students for an advancing workforce and college preparedness. We will support initiatives that will prepare the emerging and incumbent workforce to meet the needs of our changing economy.

➤ **Promote our region's higher education institutions**

NE Indiana's colleges and universities educate nearly 35,000 students and employ almost 4,000 faculty and staff members. Our higher education institutions prepare our workforce, and serve as an introduction to our communities, and are economic drivers.

➤ **State-wide initiatives to raise educational and skill attainment level.**

The NEICC advocates for student progress to be measured in a way that allows individual educational attainment to be tracked over time and across grade levels. While

Indiana has had strong presence nationally in terms of educational attainment, our competition is no longer only within this country. Our systems, standards, and test results need to reflect the demands of a global economy and reflect how our students rate on an international level.

- State tax credits for workforce training and college tuition and other strong incentives

The Coalition supports the establishment of state tax credits to be applied to business income tax liabilities for: qualified employer-funded employee training programs and work-based learning initiatives conducted in partnership with local school corporations, public or private training programs and/or institutions of higher education.

- Release of dollars appropriated to the region in the last budget

The Coalition encourages the release of dollars appropriated to IPFW and Ivy Tech as projects are ready to go to bid, rather than holding statewide system appropriations until all projects are ready.

- Four-Year Medical School in Fort Wayne

The Chamber Coalition continues to support a four-year medical school in Fort Wayne. The school will spur research and educational development, and further Northeast Indiana's strong presence in the medical and biotechnology arenas.

Labor, Employment, & Business Enhancement

The more integrated global economy offers greater opportunities for American enterprises and workers to prosper. Greater productivity worldwide means more wealth for those who can trade their services to willing customers. But to do so, Indiana workers and the businesses that employ them must be empowered to act quickly to meet market demands. That means eliminating the laws and regulations that destroy jobs and make workers a burden rather than an asset to employers.

- Return Chamber Safety

Last year, unintended consequences of legislation resulted in state law prohibiting INSAFE consultants from teaching safety courses without first doing a consultation with a participating company. Many Chambers have offered these courses for years so that local businesses have the opportunity to train a small number of employees, rather than being forced to host their own consultation at a minimum of 10 employees. NEICC encourages the correction of this costly error so that the business community can be more efficient with their training time and dollars.

- Provide Employers Greater Latitude to Make Wage Deductions

Current law provides that employers can only make deductions from the wages of employees for certain statutorily stated reasons such as: dues to labor organizations, loans to employees, pledges or contributions to charitable non-profit organizations, and premiums to pay for insurance policies. However, employers have no easy legal way of making deductions from an employee's paycheck for repayment of uniforms and tools, and other legitimate deductions. This can be accomplished only through loan documents with the employee, which adds cost to the employer's financial posture for setting up for

each wage deduction program. The Coalition advocates for greater latitude for employers to allow for wage deductions.

➤ Worker's Compensation and unemployment benefits

The NEICC opposes any additional changes to the unemployment insurance system that would lower eligibility requirements for claimants or increase benefits above those already enacted. Unemployment benefits should not be so high as to provide a disincentive for an individual to actively seek employment, nor should the solvency of the unemployment fund be jeopardized.

➤ Paid time off to attend school functions

The NEICC is not supportive of legislation that would require an employer to provide paid time off so that an employee could attend school functions.

➤ Health Care

The Chamber Coalition will continue to support market-based solutions to the health care crisis to make private and public healthcare more affordable and accessible without placing undue burdens on employers. The Chamber opposes new health care mandates.