



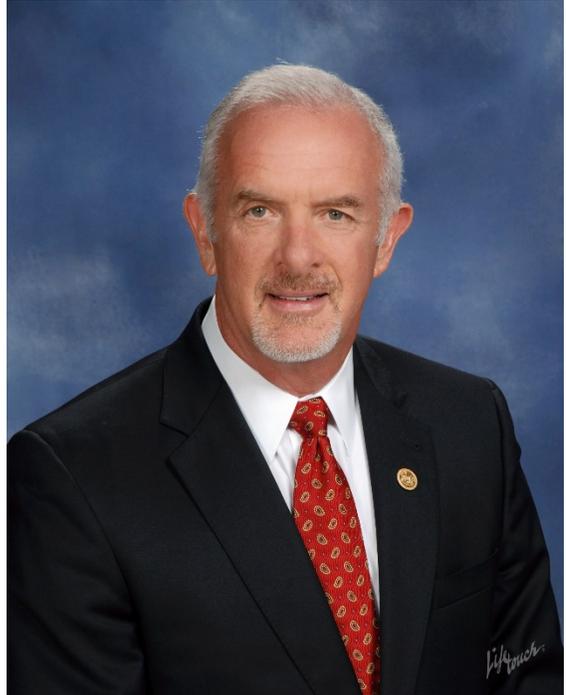
**2022**

# **Legislative Agenda**

**The Regional Chamber of Northeast Indiana, November 2021**

**11 Counties – One Voice**

The Regional Chamber of Northeast Indiana is the model for regional cooperation of business and government in Indiana. As a member of the legislative delegation from Northeast Indiana, our Regional Chamber provides the environment for communication and collaboration amongst the delegation that benefits our communities. Our Regional Chamber is well known in the General Assembly for its vision and accomplishments, and it is the envy of all other regions in the State of Indiana.



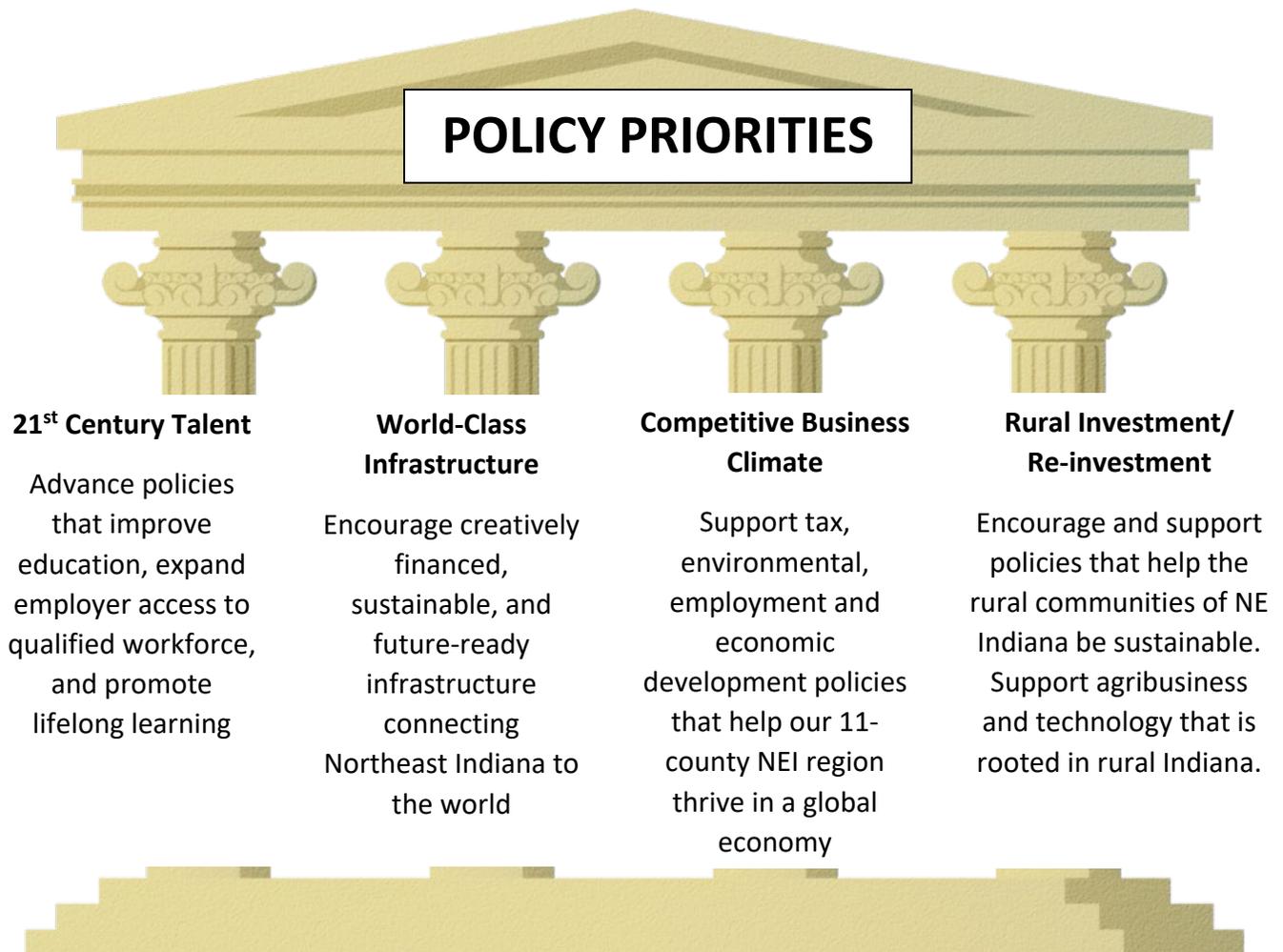
*Travis Holdman,*

State Senator – District 19  
Chair Senate Tax and Fiscal  
Policy Committee

## *Advocating for public policy that expands economic opportunity*

### Mission

The Regional Chamber of Northeast Indiana, Inc. advocates an environment in Northeast Indiana where individuals, businesses, and communities thrive in a global economy. We focus on supporting the Policy Priorities of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Talent, World Class Infrastructure, Competitive Business Climate, and Rural Investment/Reinvestment



### Our Values

**Trust | Collaboration | Accountability**

**Eleven Counties – One Voice**

**POLICY PRIORITY: COMPETITIVE BUSINESS CLIMATE**

Support tax, environmental, employment, and economic development policies that help our 11-county Northeast Indiana Region (NEIN) thrive in a global economy

- **REGIONAL STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT**

In 2021, the Indiana General Assembly passed HB 1238 to establish the Northeast Indiana Regional Strategic Development Commission. The purpose is to develop a strategic development plan for the region and to seek funding from the state and/or federal government for economic development projects with regional impacts. The Regional Chamber supported the bill with testimony in the House. Eventually, it became law as the Senate also passed the bill, and the governor signed it into law.

Our support was primarily due to the ability of a regional commission to receive \$10 million to \$12 million from each budget cycle, as does a similar commission in Northwest Indiana.

SEA 1238 establishes a commission with three appointments from the governor, one by the speaker, one by the House minority leader, one by the senate president pro tem, one by the senate minority leader, two by the caucus, with the presidents and CEOs of the regional partnership and the regional chamber as statutory members. The latter was added as voices for business in the region.

We believe it is critical for the president and CEO of each of these organizations to have a vote to go with their voices. The business voice is better heard if it comes with a vote.

- **TAX CUTS**

Tax revenues are performing well ahead of forecasts, and potential tax cuts are being discussed. In many cases, the Regional Chamber has supported tax cuts. However, in the current economic climate, we are concerned that the recovery from the pandemic will not last long. Some policies being advanced by the current administration also give concerns that the recovery will give way in short order to inflation, which is already evident, and an economic contraction.

Accordingly, we do not believe that this is the best time to contemplate a tax cut of any kind. Surplus tax collections should be either refunded to the taxpayers who actually paid the tax or expended for specific capital projects, which will enhance future economic growth and enhance the long-term stability of Indiana. Such capital projects could include rural broadband, U.S. Route 30, or other highway projects. Education is also a wise investment, targeted at early childhood education, K-12, or post-secondary education.

In any case, local revenues such as business personal property taxes should not be cut in any way without providing local units of government with an appropriate and stable replacement that does not require the shifting of the tax burden from businesses to individual taxpayers.

**POLICY PRIORITY: 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TALENT**

Advance policies that improve education expand employer access to a qualified workforce and promote lifelong learning

- **SUPPORT FUNDING FOR THE EXPANSION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION**

National site selectors advise that one of the emerging criteria for employers seeking locations to expand or locate operations is early childhood care and education. Employers recognize that states and communities providing high-quality early childhood care and education are communities that have larger skilled workforces and higher educational attainment. Quality early childhood care and education enable parents to continue careers uninterrupted due to quality care for their children. States and communities that provide for this quality of early childhood care and education are recognized as communities that value education and attract employees with higher skill levels from other parts of the country

Employers are suffering from the shrinking workforce. There may be many reasons the workforce is shrinking, but one is the availability and cost of quality early childhood care and education. One solution, now recognized by site selectors, many larger businesses, and an emerging core of medium and small businesses, is this shortage can be partially dealt with through creative means and funding.

The Regional Chamber has always supported quality early childhood care and education. We seek creative means to finance the operations of such institutions. Partners may include employers, employees, local units of government, school corporations, private childhood care, and education providers, and the state. Managed cooperatively in such a way, it is possible to overcome barriers and help increase the available labor force.

- **PROVIDE INCENTIVES, TO BE DEFINED, TO OUT-OF-STATE STUDENTS COMPLETING EITHER A TWO-YEAR OR A FOUR-YEAR ACADEMIC CREDENTIAL OR CERTIFICATION IN SPECIFIC HIGH-SKILL VOCATIONAL TRAINING TO ACCEPT EMPLOYMENT AND REMAIN IN INDIANA FOR AT LEAST FIVE YEARS.**

As in much of the rest of the country, the labor force in Indiana is declining. It is essential for the state of Indiana to retain out-of-state graduates of Indiana post-secondary academic or vocational students. The incentive could be in the form of

state income tax credits over a period tied to income earned and taxed in the state. The tax credit could run over five years and be connected to earned Indiana income and residency.

**POLICY PRIORITY: WORLD-CLASS  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

Encourage creatively financed, sustainable, future-ready infrastructure connecting Northeast Indiana to the world

- **SUPPORT PROPOSALS TO FACILITATE THE EXPANSION OF LEGITIMATE HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND INTO ALL AREAS OF THE REGION**

The COVID virus exposed the risk that non-metropolitan areas experience due to the lack of connectivity. In most state geographic areas, despite the large IPOs warnings to the contrary, most rural residents can receive neither adequate nor distance educations, telework possibilities, or telehealth care comparable with residents of metropolitan areas. This poses a substantial threat to the stability of most rural or mixed rural-urban communities. The solution is to expedite state assistance to these areas to enable all state residents to have equal access to this essential 21<sup>st</sup>-century infrastructure. We support the efforts of REMCs, and other utility partners offering their facilities to bring legitimate high-speed internet and connectivity to every part of Northeast Indiana.

- **CONTINUE SUPPORT WITH LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCHES FOR THE TRANSITION OF U.S. ROUTE 30**

Northeast Indiana is the most manufacturing intense region in the state of Indiana, which is among the top three manufacturing intensive states in the U.S. During the last legislative session, we secured budget commitments, promises, and a letter outlining the governor's intent to support this project. To date, very little has been done, and we must advocate to ensure the promises made are kept.

- **SUPPORT APPROPRIATE GREEN ENERGY CONCEPTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHICH ARE CREATIVELY FINANCED**

This may also be considered under the POLICY PRIORITY OF COMPETITIVE BUSINESS CLIMATE, especially if it includes economic development incentives.

Green or renewable energy power and use are essential, but they are also inevitable. The business community believes in being responsible users of energy and will support reasonable efforts that move us toward reducing carbon emissions while reducing costs.

**POLICY PRIORITY: RURAL INVESTMENT/RE-INVESTMENT**

Encourage and support policies enhancing the sustainability of rural communities of NE Indiana. Support agribusiness and technology rooted in rural Indiana.

- **CREATE HERITAGE COMMERCE DISTRICTS IN CITIES AND TOWNS WITH POPULATIONS UNDER 25,000**

Indiana rural counties continue to suffer from absolute population decline. There is no simple answer to the reversal of this problem, but one thing is sure, doing nothing will not solve the problem. While populations decline, market values of residential properties decline, and eventually, billions of dollars of personal equity are at risk. This is equity built by residents who labored and paid home mortgages over time. The wealth was created to pass on to another generation or help fund retirement.

Population loss caused and continues to be a primary cause of disinvestment in the historic commerce districts in these communities. Without such a district, even for retail shops, professional offices, or small businesses, the likelihood that a community will survive and once again become sustainable is challenging to imagine.

These small communities can survive, rebound, and prosper again. We have seen it demonstrated in Stellar Communities that relatively small amounts of seed capital or equity that public funds encourage and leverage private investment. An investment of up to \$500,000 in a community, with a 1: 1 match of either local public or private funds, can provide the leverage and encouragement to stimulate much more private investment. A vibrant commercial district is essential to a livable community.

We support the creation of such a program, administered by either OCRA or the Housing and Community Development Agency under the direction of the Lt. Governor. Both are experienced with these types of investments, and both are keystone partners in the Stellar Community program.

- **CREATE AN EXPEDITED PROCESS FOR THE APPROVAL OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR PERSONAL WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT**

Ex post facto mandates should not be required if occupancy loads remain unchanged to existing homesites. The most significant problem facing most of the geography of the state of Indiana is population loss. Population loss is accelerated by the difficulty in securing approvals of new technology for personal water filtration systems and membrane reactors that effectively clean the wastewater and discharge clean H<sub>2</sub>O.

Many existing homes in rural counties were developed in accordance with laws and regulations then in effect. Ex post facto change to the law and regulations regarding the size of lots and obsolescence of technology result in an inability to finance and sell existing homes. The resulting loss of marketable housing stock, equity, and wealth contributes to the population decline in most Indiana counties.

Existing codes allow that local health officials *may* permit the replacement of a failed residential on-site sanitary system, which would otherwise be non-compliant, under certain rules. The code should be amended to say, “will, with the concurrence of the County Board of Commissioners, allow deviations pursuant to the existing statute.”

Obsolescence of technology, fire damage, acts of God, or age should not be the sole reason a working system should be recognized or treated as a failed system. Industry standards suggesting that a system is obsolete after 25 years, regardless of its current working condition, make it nearly impossible for a buyer to secure a traditional 30-year mortgage.

Fire or storm-damaged homes may not permit repairs or occupancy if the lot upon which the house was originally constructed does not meet or exceed the current requirement for lot size. Lot size should not prohibit the reconstruction of a home and personal wastewater treatment system because the lot no longer meets the area requirements.

New and emerging technology, such as the Busse EGT personal water filtration system or others, should be considered for expedited approvals by local health officials. Our Great Lakes neighbors, Ohio and Illinois, have adopted procedures and permit their use in homes and businesses.

## Policy Committee Chairman

Todd Hollman, President & CEO, Fort Wayne Pizza Hut

## Policy Sub-Committee Chairs

21st Century Talent – Hallie Custer, Director of HR Operations, Parkview Health

World-Class Infrastructure – Michael Vanover, President & CEO, Clean Fuels National

Competitive Business Climate – Chris Graham, Senior VP, Steel Dynamics

Rural Agribusiness – Bob Vitoux, Senior Investing Leader, Ambassador Enterprises

## Executive Committee

Chairman of the Board – Terry Redmile, Plant Manager, BF Goodrich

President & CEO – Bill Konyha, President & CEO, Regional Chamber of Northeast Indiana

Past Chairman of the Board – Dent Johnson, VP of Merchandising, Do It Best Corp.

Vice-Chairman of the Board – Chris Graham, Senior VP, Steel Dynamics

Secretary – Jeff Harding, Haller & Colvin Attorneys at Law

Treasurer – Pat Sullivan, Executive VP, Hylant Group

## Endorsed by:

The Chamber Coalition of Northeast Indiana

The LEDO Council of Northeast Indiana

GFW Hispanic Chamber

Mayors & Commissioners Caucus

## REGIONAL CHAMBER OF NORTHEAST INDIANA

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**CHRIS GRAHAM**, Vice-Chairman, Senior Vice President, Steel Dynamics

**BILL KONYHA**, President & CEO, Regional Chamber of Northeast Indiana

**PAT SULLIVAN**, Treasurer, Executive Vice President Hylant

**JEFF HARDING**, Secretary, Haller Colvin Attorneys at Law

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**ANDY BROOKS**, President Brooks Construction Company, Inc.

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**JOSEPH URBANSKI**, CPA, President & CEO Farmers State Bank

**SCOTT GLAZE**, Chairman & CEO, Fort Wayne Metals

**DR. EARL BROOKS**, President Trine University

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**TODD HOLLMAN**, President and CEO, Pizza Hut of Fort Wayne, Inc

**MIKE VANOVER**, President & CEO, Clean Fuels National

**MICHAEL CONNELL**, General Manager, Cardinal IG

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**BRAD SMITH**, President, and CEO, Hagerman Group, Inc.

**ERIC OTTINGER**, Executive Vice President, Chief CBO, Lake City Bank

**KEITH GILLENWATER**, CECD, President & CEO Grow Wabash County

**ROB PARKER**, RCNEICC Chairman, President & CEO, Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce

# Committee Assignments

Senate District	Name	Committees – Chair (CHR); Vice-Chair (VCHR); Ranking Majority Members (RM); Ranking Minority Member (RMM)
9	Ryan Mishler	<b>Appropriations (Chair); Health and Provider Services (RM); Tax and Fiscal Policy</b>
12	Blake Doriot	<b>Agriculture and Natural Resources (Vice-Chair);</b> Homeland Security and Transportation; Local Government; Natural Resources; Pensions and Labor; Veterans Affairs and The Military
13	Susan Glick	Natural Resources (Chair); Water Infrastructure Task Force (Co-Chair); Agriculture; Corrections and Criminal Law; Judiciary; Elections; Government
14	Dennis Kruse	<b>Education &amp; Career Development (Chair);</b> Family & Children Services; Pensions & Labor; Rules & Legislative Procedure; Employment and Labor
15	Liz Brown	<b>Ethics (Chair); Public Health, Behavioral Health, and Human Services (Vice-Chair); Appropriations (RM);</b> Environmental Affairs; School Funding; Roads and Transportation
16	Justin Busch	Agriculture; Corrections and Criminal Law; Health and Provider Services; Natural Resources; Environmental Affairs; Government; Public Safety and Military Affairs
17	Andrew Zay	Agriculture; Education and Career Development; Insurance and Financial Institutions; Natural Resources; Corrections and Criminal Code
18	Stacey Donato	Commerce & Technology; Education & Career Development; Elections; Family & Children Services; Utilities
19	Travis Holdman	<b>Tax and Fiscal Policy (Chair); Courts and the Judiciary (Vice-Chair); Rules and Legislative Procedure (RM);</b> Appropriations
<b>House</b>		
House District	Name	Committees – Chair (CHR); Vice-Chair (VCHR); Ranking Majority Members (RM); Ranking Minority Member (RMM)
18	Craig Snow	Agriculture, Elections & Apportionment; Family, Children, & Human Affairs
22	Curt Nisley	Natural Resources; Government & Regulatory Reform
31	Anne Vermilion	<b>Family, Children and Human Affairs (Vice-Chair);</b> Elections and Apportionment (MM); Public Health (MM)
50	Daniel Leonard	<b>Employment, Labor, &amp; Pensions; Rules (Chair);</b> Ways & Means
51	Denny Zent	Local Government (Chair); Public Health; Veterans Affairs & Public Safety
52	Ben Smaltz	<b>Public Policy (Chair);</b> Roads & Transportation; Rules & Legislative Process
79	Matt Lehman	<b>Majority Leader;</b> Public Health; Public Policy; Financial Institutions & Insurance
80	Phil GiaQuinta	<b>Minority Leader; Committee on Joint Rules (Ranking Min. Leader)</b>
81	Martin Carbaugh	<b>Financial Institutions &amp; Insurance (Chair);</b> Education; Employment, Labor, & Pensions
82	Dave Abbott	<b>Natural Resources (Vice-Chair);</b> Employment, Labor, Pensions; Government &
83	Christopher Judy	Regulatory Reform; Public Safety and Military Affairs
84	Robert Morris	<b>Commerce, Small Business, &amp; Economic Development (Chair);</b> Roads & Transportation; Utilities, Energy, & Transportation
85	David Heine	<b>Ways &amp; Means, (Chair of Local Gov't Finance Committee);</b> Agriculture & Rural Dev; Roads & Transportation





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