Dear Friends,

The short session of the Indiana General Assembly started on January 7th and is in full swing. Four hundred thirty bills were introduced in the House and 533 in the Senate. Two bills have already dominated our discussions: restructuring our tax system, House Bill 1003, and balancing our budget, House Bill 1004.

I am frequently asked why I am a member, held seven hearings around the state on these two bills, with two additional hearings in Indianapolis. By the time you receive this mailing, the bills will have been changed with amendments and received some type of action in the House.

The proposed 21st Century Tax Plan was developed following bipartisan discussions led by Lt. Governor Joe Kernan with assistance from tax experts from across the state. I have included this newsletter some of the details of the proposed plan.

There has been discussion in Indiana for several years about the need to restructure our tax system. The Indiana Tax Court ordered that we change how we conduct reassessment, and it has been predicted that those changes could cause property taxes to rise an average of 33%. Many Hoosiers are calling for increased property taxes and this is our opportunity to accomplish that. At the same time we must improve Indiana's ability to attract new and better jobs to the state. A recent Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette Editorial stated it well, "There are many ways for lawmakers to reduce the tax burden on homeowners, but most Hoosiers realize there's not much reason to own a home here if there aren't good jobs, good schools and healthy communities to go with it."

As you know, the national recession has severely affected our state income, thus affecting our ability to pay our state bills. It is projected that at the end of this two-year budget, we will have a $1.3 billion budget deficit. Forty-three other states also have lower revenues than expected. The Governor has cut expenses that many of us paid much attention to critical state programs and return a portion of the surplus back to you, and I will do everything in my power to continue to make the kinds of decisions that ensure our state government runs efficiently.

As a legislator, I frequently hear from people who worry that we didn't provide enough funding for roads, education, home health care and prisons, among countless other programs. Now we have new concerns: energy management and homeland security. Before September 11, I doubt that many of us paid much attention to those issues, but they will demand our consideration in the years ahead.

Within the framework in which we operate, I believe the Legislature has done a good job of balancing the need to fund critical state programs and return a portion of any surplus to the Indiana taxpayers who helped to create it. I am comfortable with the decisions that returned much of the surplus back to you, and I will do everything in my power to continue to make the kinds of decisions that ensure our state government runs efficiently.

As you know, the cut in the state income tax is $1.3 billion. As we work to balance the budget, we will have a $1.3 billion budget deficit. The proposed 21st Century Tax Plan was developed following bipartisan discussions led by Lt. Governor Joe Kernan with assistance from tax experts from across the state. I have included this newsletter some of the details of the proposed plan.

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There are several ways to stay in touch with the Statehouse during session. A good place to begin is at www.in.gov, our state Web site.

You can track the progress of particular bills as they make their way through the legislative process, and stay informed of any public hearings that you may want to attend. You should also be able to find answers to questions about a particular agency or state office online.

I encourage you to visit my Web site at www.in.gov/R60. I’ll post news about the bills that I’m working on and other items of interest to our district. You may also request several House publications which are available through my office.

Feel free to call my legislative office at 1-800-382-9842. I hope that you will make an effort to contact me during this session and throughout the year as we work to improve our state.

Throughout this session I’ll be working to stay in touch with you as I represent our district in the Statehouse. Many of the meetings that I attend are open to the public, and I would be glad to speak with you regarding the issues of the day.

You may also keep informed of current activities by visiting my Website (www.in.gov/R60), sending an e-mail (H60@in.gov) or calling my office, 1-800-382-9842.

When you call, you may speak with my Legislative Assistant, Katie Coyle. Katie is a recent graduate of DePauw University where she studied History and Political Science. If I am unavailable Katie will be able to reach me for you or direct you to another contact or agency.

The following publications may be requested free of charge from my Statehouse office by calling 1-800-382-9842.

House Publications

- **Women’s Health** — Answers to your questions about breast cancer, osteoporosis, pregnancy and other important issues are provided in this booklet.
- **Relax . . .** — This informational booklet for senior citizens discusses a variety of issues, from taxes to health problems to leisure activities.
- **Guide to State Agencies** — This booklet details various agencies within Indiana state government, listing phone numbers, functions and general areas of responsibility for each of the state agencies.

Stay informed with online legislative updates

Telephone Privacy List

It’s not too late to register

You may still register to have your name included on the Telephone Privacy List. Those who sign up before February 20, 2002 will appear on the second quarterly list which becomes effective in April. If you have already registered, there’s no need to re-register.

If you haven’t signed up yet, you may call toll free, 1-888-834-9969, or register online at www.in.gov/attorneygeneral.

The Telephone Privacy list is designed to prevent most telephone solicitors from contacting you. If you wish to file a consumer complaint regarding an alleged violation of the Privacy List, you may either download the complaint form from the Attorney General’s Website (www.in.gov/attorneygeneral), or call (812) 355-5915 to have the form mailed to you. The Attorney General’s office must have a written and signed complaint form to begin an investigation of any violations.

At left, Rep. Welch attending a hearing with the Ways and Means Committee. At right, Rep. Welch with Legislative Assistant Katie Coyle.