

Saturday, March 2, 2024

What the **HEC** is happening at the Statehouse?



Dear HEC Supporter,

After this week at the Indiana General Assembly, we have some cause for celebration as several bills HEC opposed died and others that we supported have moved forward. Our team is deeply appreciative of your support and action on the many bills we have been watching. We hope this is an encouragement and a reminder that the calls, emails, petitions signatures, and attendance at public hearings - they all have an impact. YOU, as a resident of Indiana, have an impact.

As the Session winds down, HEC will be at the Statehouse until adjournment, keeping a watchful eye and being ready for swift action should harmful language appear. While we do not currently have many calls to action for you, we kindly ask that you keep an eye on our email for any urgent calls to action in the last week or two of the Session.

Updates on Public Transit

OPPOSE SB 52: Prohibiting Dedicated Bus Lanes

It has been a roller coaster week for [Senate Bill 52](#). The bill was amended and passed for full House consideration after an impassioned hearing in the House Roads and Transportation Committee on Tuesday. Fortunately, as the House was in session and moving toward second reading of SB 52, the Speaker released a [statement to the press](#) announcing the bill will not move forward.



This is great news for all persons who rely upon and support public transportation, including:

- all those in the disability community who will soon have improved sidewalks and ADA compliant crossings;
- all parents of children who will be safer following construction of the Blue Line and its attendant road improvements;
- all future visitors to Indianapolis who will enjoy first class transit throughout the city;
- and to all those who believed, with their investment funds, in the City's progress.

The environmental community also welcomes the news because it will preserve the progress of the city and state toward multi-modal transit, reducing the number of cars on the roads, calming traffic, improving stormwater infrastructure, and thereby reducing noise, air, and water pollution. HEC and our allies are heartened by the environmental justice benefits. Not only have the voices of so many citizens who participated over the last 10 years to achieve this result been heard, but the build-out of the Blue Line will connect over 30,000 city

residents who do not have use of a car to their work, school, workforce development centers, parks and recreation amenities, and entertainment centers.

Updates on Wetlands



SUPPORT SB 246: Assessment of wetlands classified as wildlands

Senate Bill 246 has passed the House! With an **almost-unanimous vote of 93-2**, SB 246 is now eligible to be sent to the Governor for signature. This good wetlands bill, which HEC has been advocating for over multiple years, would allow wetland areas as small as 0.5 acre to be classified as wildlands for purposes of tax assessment, thus creating a strong incentive for farmers and developers who own wetlands to preserve them.

Please thank **[your state legislators](#)** for their support of wetland preservation if they voted for SB 246.

Environmental Health Legislation

OPPOSE HB 1399: PFAS

We had great news from the Senate Environmental Affairs Committee to start the week. **House Bill 1399** was withdrawn by Committee Chair Rick Niemeyer (R- Lowell, Dist. 6), who correctly pointed out that there was no need for a definition of PFAS prior to any consideration by the Indiana Dept. of Environmental Management (IDEM) to implement regulations. This bill would have included a proposed definition of PFAS chemicals (aka forever chemicals) that would have excluded thousands of harmful chemicals from any future state regulations.

Please thank **[Sen. Niemeyer](#)** for withdrawing HB 1399!



SUPPORT SB 5: Lead Service Lines

After receiving no votes against it in either chamber, **Senate Bill 5** is eligible to head to the Governor's desk! SB 5, which would make it easier for utilities to replace lead service lines, passed the House and the Senate has concurred with House amendments.

Please thank **[your state legislators](#)** for their support of this bill!



SUPPORT: Updating the Drainage Handbook

Indiana's Drainage Handbook is based on some of the state's earliest statutes, and it hasn't been updated since the



1990s. This session, we've been watching efforts to update the Drainage Handbook in [Senate Bill 105](#), a bill introduced by Sen. Jean Leising (R- Oldenburg, Dist. 42). After not receiving a hearing in the House Ways & Means Committee ahead of the committee report deadline, this bill did not advance. Language from this bill was amended into another bill dealing with agriculture matters generally, House Bill 1417, but, unfortunately, was later removed. We see a path for insertion of this language in another bill, so we will continue to watch this issue.



Other Legislative Updates

OPPOSE SB 297: Administrative rulemaking

Despite receiving broad Republican support in the Senate, [Senate Bill 297](#) failed to gain traction in the House and does not advance after not receiving a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee. This bill would have required approval of the General Assembly for any rule or regulation that could cause greater than \$1M in compliance costs.



OPPOSE HB 1108: Construction on Slopes

Unfortunately, the Senate passed [House Bill 1108](#) along party lines ([39-10](#)). Since there were no amendments in the Senate version of the bill, it returns to the House and is eligible to be sent to the Governor for signature.

Check out how [your state legislators voted](#) on our [Bill Watch 2024 page](#), and share your thoughts on their vote.

Welcome, Kimberly Koczan!

Meet the newest member of our team, Kimberly Koczan, who joins us as our new Environmental Justice Manager!

Kimberly Koczan is passionate about the well-being of people and planet. She is a Kingian Nonviolence facilitator, a Senior Fellow of the Environmental Leadership Program, and engaged with numerous regional environmental organizations. She comes with a background in sustainable agriculture, social services, theology, and education. She is based in Fort Wayne and is working across the state.

Welcome, Kimberly!



New from our Green Infrastructure Blog:

[Indiana municipalities must uphold their environmental policy goals](#)

Cities, counties, and towns in Indiana often steer development according to goals and values laid out in comprehensive plans. In central Indiana, many of these plans have language that suggests environmental protection is a priority. The problem? When local planning departments are faced with the pressure of new development, those environmental values are often forgotten.

[Read more in our latest blog post.](#)



Supporter Spotlight: Liz Masur

HEC could not do the work that we do without the support of our passionate and generous donors. One of those supporters is Liz Masur, who is also a featured presenter for our [Native Plants webinar](#) on 3/21!

Liz says, "I am a 61-year-old retired teacher and newly elected member of the City of Lawrence Common Council. My husband, Jim, and I moved to Indiana with our three daughters almost 30 years ago. The whole family has always enjoyed being outdoors, whether it's planting a garden, swimming at the neighborhood pool, biking/hiking/running at Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park, or sitting on our porch on a summer evening watching fireflies."



We have supported HEC ever since a volunteer knocked on our door, over 20 years ago, and asked us to help HEC help otters...how can you not love an organization which looks out for otters?! I support HEC because it stands up for Indiana's environment. It lobbies for clean water and clean air, and it tirelessly works to defend Indiana wetlands from the building industry."

Read more about Liz in our [Supporter Spotlight page](#). Interested in becoming a supporter? [Join our Sustainability Club](#) or contact our Development Director, [Marianne Holland](#).

Register for our Free Native Plants Webinar!



Landscaping with Native Plants, Cost Savings and More to Dig!

ONLINE WEBINAR
Thursday, March 21
7 pm EST

Have you heard the buzz about native plants lately? Whether in home gardens, city parks, your neighbor's yard, or maybe even in your HOA, native plants are making their way into a number of landscapes. Are you wondering what the big deal is?

Join HEC for a free webinar, [Landscaping with Native Plants, Cost Savings and More to Dig!](#), on Thursday, March 21 at 7 pm EST. Featured presenters will be Liz Masur, native plant enthusiast and newly elected member of the City of Lawrence Common Council, and HEC's Jeni Jenkins, who brings years of experience of landscaping with native plants. You'll learn why native plants are such a hot topic, and how replacing even a little bit of turf grass with native plants can make a big difference in your pocketbook, your health, and your community! Whether you are an individual, a community representative, or a member of your neighborhood HOA, you're invited to join us and learn why even non-gardeners can join in on the native plant movement.

[Register now!](#)

Take Your Advocacy to the Next Level!



[Attend Meet your Legislator Events](#)

Meet your lawmakers face-to-face at a "Third House" event near you. Check out our website for a list of some of the upcoming events.

[Third House Events Calendar](#)

Your Advocacy Resources:

Find your state legislators and their contact information. Be sure to save this information in your contacts!

[Find Your Legislators](#)

For the latest details on what we're watching at the Indiana General Assembly, check out our Bill Watch page.

[Bill Watch 2024](#)

Learn how YOU can make a difference this Legislative Session using HEC's Legislative Advocacy Guide.

[Legislative Advocacy
Guide](#)

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