

ACTIVATE ALLEN COUNTY



**GREATER
FORT WAYNE INC.**

METRO CHAMBER ALLIANCE

2024 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

ACTIVATE ALLEN COUNTY

BUILDING A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED ECONOMY

On behalf of our 1,300+ members, Greater Fort Wayne (GFW) Inc. works each day to build a nationally recognized economy. We do not do it alone. We work collaboratively with our community partners and government officials to create strong public policy that stimulates economic growth and investment, activating our community's potential.

GETTING RESULTS

For more than a decade, the top challenge for local businesses has been attracting and retaining talent. Our community has risen to the challenge, investing in our quality of place and making Allen County a magnet for talent. The return on that investment is real: for six consecutive years, Allen County has seen positive net domestic migration.

ACCELERATING INTO THE FUTURE

We aren't slowing down, we are accelerating. We are attracting people and businesses from coast to coast and beyond, making us one of the fastest growing communities in the Great Lakes region. To continue this momentum, we must focus on creating strong conditions for business growth, high-wage job opportunities, and continued investment in quality of place.

In 2022, we launched the Allen County Together (ACT) plan—a 10-year strategic roadmap to success that creates a more high-growth, innovative, and inclusive local economy. It will take legislative action to support the strategic goals of the ACT plan and help ensure future economic growth. The decisions made at the council table, in the chambers of the Statehouse, and the halls of Congress have a direct impact on whether—and how—we achieve these goals.

We work with all levels of government and advocate year-round for public policy that helps grow our community into a nationally recognized economy. The 2024 Legislative Agenda presents our policy position statements as well as our key legislative priorities. This agenda unites and advocates with one voice on behalf of Allen County's business community.

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THE BLUEPRINT FOR BUILDING A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED ECONOMY

ALLEN COUNTY TOGETHER

Economic Development Action Plan

Fort Wayne is among the fastest-growing metros in the Great Lakes region, and we're just getting started. We're building on our momentum with this 10-year plan, driving bold projects and initiatives that are:



HIGH-GROWTH



INNOVATIVE



INCLUSIVE

View the full plan: act.gfwinc.com

2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

LOCAL

- Advance the implementation of the Allen County Together (ACT) economic development action plan
- Support the advancement and long-term sustainability of quality-of-place projects including a \$1 billion Riverfront District in downtown Fort Wayne, continued investment in southeast Fort Wayne, and improvement projects throughout Allen County communities to build best-in-class amenities that attract and retain talent and businesses



STATE

- Support the continued funding and conversion of U.S. Route 30 to a limited-access highway to improve connectivity in northeast Indiana
- Elevate Indiana's economic competitiveness by strengthening successful economic development tools such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF), the Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) Tax Credit, the Skills Enhancement Fund (SEF), and the Redevelopment Tax Credit

FEDERAL

- Support feasibility and environmental studies for the modernization of facilities at the Fort Wayne Air National Guard Base
- Preserve and strengthen federal economic development programs such as Historic Tax Credits, New Markets Tax Credits, Foreign Trade Zones, and Opportunity Zones



ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

GFW Inc. is focused on attracting new businesses, helping existing businesses grow, and creating best-in-class amenities to attract and retain talent. We encourage creative uses of resources and support policies to improve quality of place, maintain infrastructure, and provide an environment for businesses to succeed.

- Advance the implementation of the Allen County Together (ACT) economic development action plan
- Support the advancement and long-term sustainability of quality-of-place projects including a \$1 billion Riverfront District in downtown Fort Wayne, continued investment in southeast Fort Wayne, and improvement projects throughout Allen County communities to build best-in-class amenities that attract and retain talent and businesses
- Support local revenue-enhancement opportunities to give communities the tools to adequately fund capital improvement projects
- Support art and cultural institutions and developments such as the Arts Campus Fort Wayne, as they are part of our community identity— attracting and retaining talent, leveraging tourism dollars, and helping sustain a positive quality of life for our residents





- Support the implementation of Visit Fort Wayne's comprehensive Tourism Master plan
- Support the state enacted ability for local communities to establish Tourism Improvement Districts to fund destination development and tourism promotion
- Support a comprehensive feasibility study of destination entertainment and sports venues and potential future developments
- Support the local creation of a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area to enhance visitor experience, encourage tourism, and increase retail and restaurant development
- Rejuvenate neighborhoods by incentivizing investment in distressed properties, as vibrant neighborhoods are critical to our community's growth
- Support the implementation of state initiatives that encourage strategic investment in quality-of-place projects such as READI 2.0 and the Northeast Indiana Strategic Development Commission



- Advance a countywide site-development and land-banking policy to have strategic sites available for new commercial, office, and industrial development
- Evaluate potential alignment of local and state site strategies and resources
- Support incentives to modernize and increase the competitiveness of aging and functionally obsolete downtown commercial office buildings
- Elevate Indiana's economic competitiveness by strengthening successful economic development tools such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF), the Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) Tax Credit, the Skills Enhancement Fund (SEF), and the Redevelopment Tax Credit
- Preserve and strengthen federal economic development programs such as Historic Tax Credits, New Markets Tax Credits, Foreign Trade Zones, and Opportunity Zones

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Reliable, high-quality infrastructure is a key building block of economic success. Indiana must invest in infrastructure—such as airports, roads and highways, broadband, railways, public transportation, and trails—that fuels business growth. GFW Inc. supports transportation and infrastructure projects and policies that reflect the needs of our region and strengthen the ability to do business.

- Support the continued funding and conversion of U.S. Route 30 to a limited-access highway to improve connectivity in northeast Indiana
- Support the logistic and capital improvement planning to restore passenger rail operation along the Midwest Connect corridor with service connecting Chicago, Fort Wayne, Columbus (OH) and Pittsburgh
- Advance policies to improve access to public transportation to support workforce and higher educational mobility needs
- Support initiatives that increase accessibility to high-speed internet and investment in broadband infrastructure, as access to affordable, quality broadband is critical for economic development, education, and community connectivity
- Support the expansion of air service and air cargo in Fort Wayne—in a global economy, it is essential for Fort Wayne International Airport (FWA) to maintain and expand air service to business destinations
- Continue to support FWA's terminal expansion project, Project Gateway, to increase capacity



Photography: 122nd Fighter Wing, Indiana Air National Guard

- Support the military presence in northeast Indiana, including maintaining a combat fighter mission for the 122nd Fighter Wing
- Support feasibility and environmental studies for the modernization of facilities at the Fort Wayne Air National Guard Base
- Support local and state efforts to leverage federal funding from the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for local and regional priority projects

ENTREPRENEUR & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Entrepreneurs are the core driver of new, emerging growth businesses. Their ingenuity is the basis for a growing economy in which businesses can become national industry leaders. GFW Inc. supports programs that promote entrepreneurship, accelerate the growth of innovative businesses, and enhance the development of early-stage industries.

- Support development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Allen County that improves access to entrepreneurial networks, mentorship, spaces, and other services
- Enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem by strengthening local and state programs and initiatives that support local entrepreneurs and startups to become high-growth firms and successful main street businesses
- Support the strategic alignment and coordination of services provided by local entrepreneurial support organizations (ESOs) to entrepreneurs
- Support initiatives such as a community-based venture fund and accelerator to increase available capital to local startups by attracting national investment and incentivizing the retention of homegrown capital within Indiana
- Support opportunities for entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship within targeted industry sectors
- Support initiatives to attract and retain the orthopedic and medical device industry in the region
- Support initiatives to attract music production, industry innovation, technology development, and music technology training and education in a concerted effort to expand our music economy



- Support the expansion of Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) capacity to deploy \$10 million to close the disparity gap, providing financing to underserved individuals and small businesses
- Support investment for business development and expansion in R&D-intensive, engineering-focused, and technology-driven target industries to attract and grow high-wage jobs
- Support initiatives and policies to make northeast Indiana a national destination for the development of innovative automotive technology such as autonomous vehicles and mobility, microelectronics, electric vehicles, charging infrastructure, and other advanced technology

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Access to a diverse and talented workforce is critical to business growth. GFW Inc. supports education and workforce policies that prepare students to be college- or career-ready, provide advanced training for current employees, and promote collaboration among educational institutions and businesses.

- Support initiatives to increase access to high-quality, affordable childcare and early-childhood education
- Support K-12 education programs that help prepare all students to be college- or career-ready by providing early access to career exploration opportunities, access to career and technical education (CTE) programs, and increase dual-credit attainment
- Support the growth and expansion of all our higher-education institutions to provide high-quality education that aligns with the workforce needs of the community
- Support Indiana Tech and the University of Saint Francis' efforts to obtain the Lilly Foundation's College and Community Collaboration grant to advance local economic development and quality of place
- Support additional student housing for Purdue Fort Wayne and our other higher education institutions to meet the on- and off-campus student housing needs
- Support initiatives that increase the availability of additional workforce housing throughout the region
- Support the development of local and state relocation incentive programs to attract new talent including remote workers
- Support workforce initiatives such as MadeByMe that connect educators and businesses to highlight skilled-trades career opportunities to students
- Support workforce development initiatives that align with employers' training and education needs
- Advocate for policies that cultivate diverse talent and leadership, and address equality, inclusion, and equity through leadership development, economic development, and employment
- Support initiatives that help businesses create workplaces that are more accessible to all people
- Support incentives to attract and create significant job growth in southeast Fort Wayne and other areas of limited employment opportunities
- Make Indiana the state of choice for retiring military veterans
- Support modernization of the federal immigration system including annual quotas for employment-based immigrant and non-immigrant visas to help employers meet their critical workforce needs

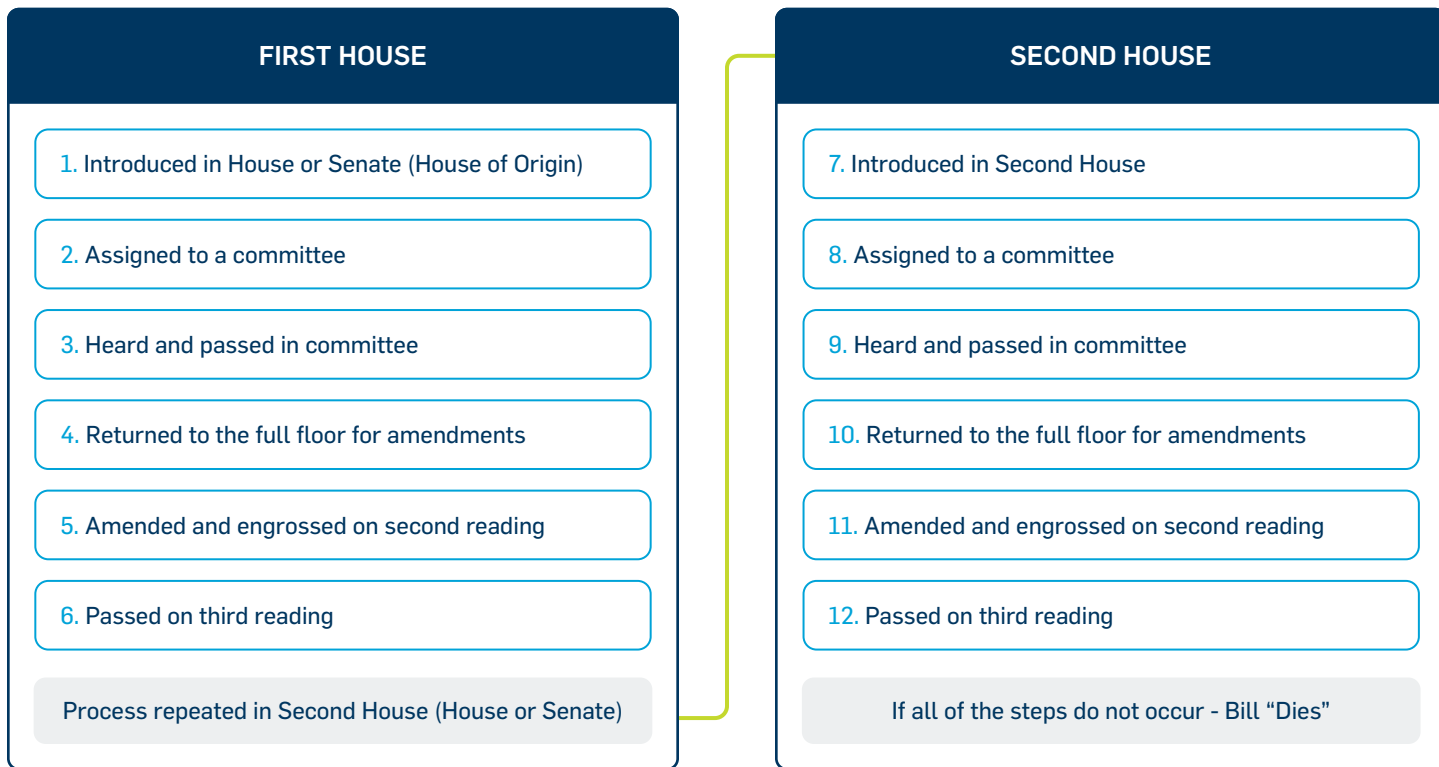
GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Government can create a premier business environment by minimizing unnecessary regulations and providing efficient, high-quality services. GFW Inc. will continue to collaborate with our government officials at all levels to move our community forward.

- Support zoning updates at major gateways and along key corridors to better align with the vision of the community and redevelopment potential
- Support a clear, concise, and predictable local tax phase-in policy for businesses
- Support the review of local government staffing capacity to provide the needed support to sustain a high-growth economy
- Support an annual review of local surplus and unused funds
- Support the continued implementation of efficient and effective local permitting procedures
- Encourage efforts to diversify key revenue sources, expand voluntary efficiencies, and allow for more flexibility for local government
- Oppose overreaching administrative rulemaking and state and federal regulations that unduly burdens small businesses
- Monitor the State and Local Tax Review Task Force
- Support expanding access to health care through virtual health care
- Address the increasing cost of health care benefits for employers and employees

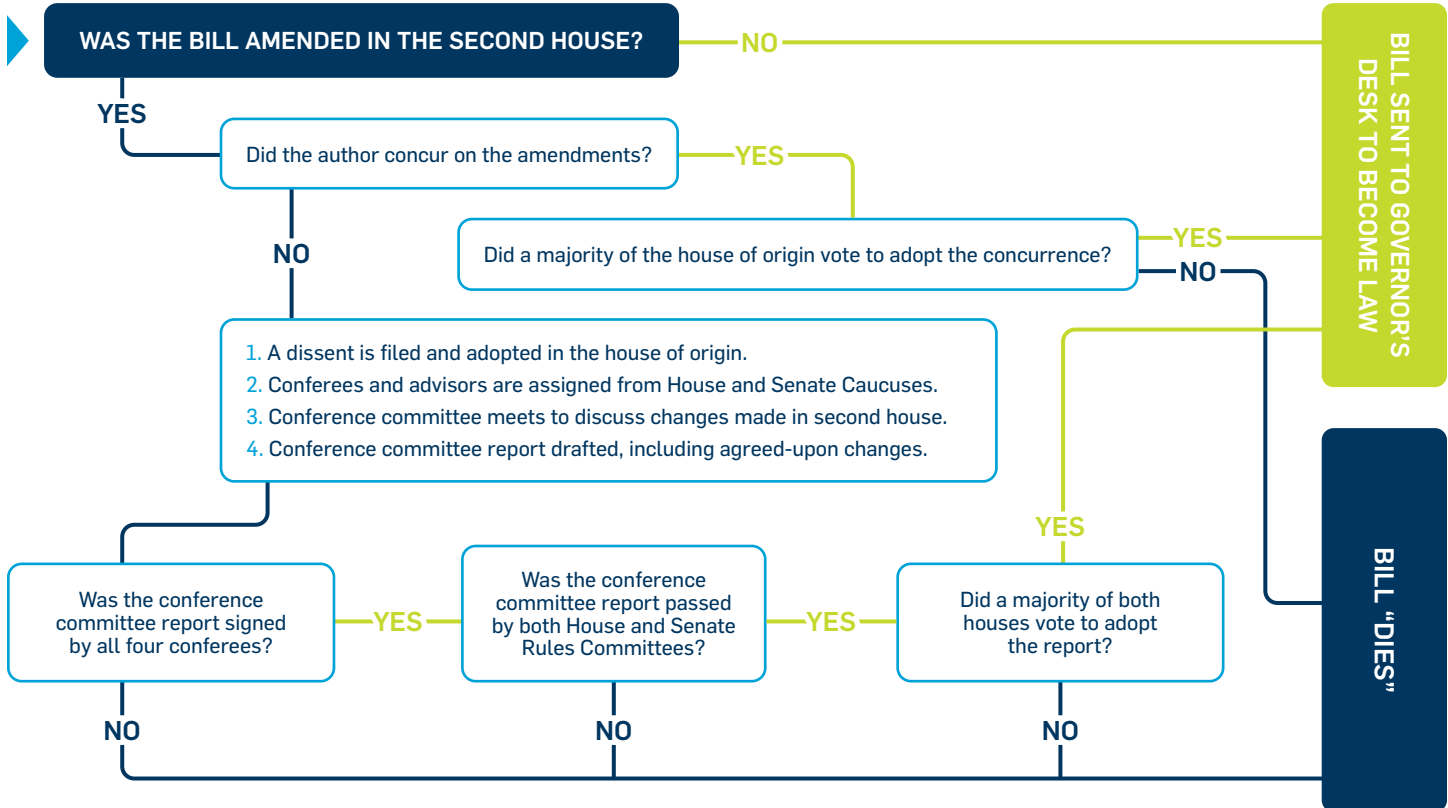


HOW A STATE BILL BECOMES A LAW



If Bill completes process in Second House, proceed to Conference Committee flowchart

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE FLOWCHART



GET INVOLVED

STAY INFORMED

Get weekly updates on business advocacy news, the latest policy issues, and emerging legislative actions that impact your business by subscribing to GFW Inc.'s weekly advocacy e-newsletter, GovConnect. If your company is a GFW Inc. investor and you'd like to receive GovConnect, or you'd like to learn more about becoming a GFW Inc. investor, email advocacy@greaterfortwayneinc.com.

CONNECT WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Attend GFW Inc. legislative events for opportunities to meet and interact with local, state and federal elected and government officials. Events include:

- Legislative Preview Luncheon
- Third House Forum
- Legislative Wrap-Up Breakfast

TAKE ACTION

Contact your elected officials on issues that impact your business. Take a few minutes to write a letter, send an email, or give them a call. You can also visit [GFWINC.COM](https://gfwinc.com) to learn more about opportunities to engage with elected officials or reach out to:

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Visit in.gov/sos/elections to learn more about your elected officials



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Greater Fort Wayne Inc. is a nonprofit membership organization serving the business community in Fort Wayne and Allen County, Indiana. Policies and positions expressed in this document do not represent those of any elected officials or government entities, and do not represent endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by any such officials or entities.