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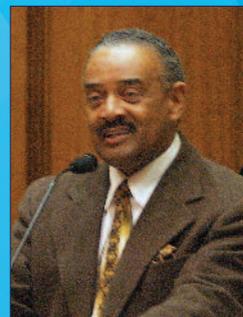
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State Representative **DR. VERNON G. SMITH** Indiana House District 14



MORE NEW LAWS MOVING INDIANA FORWARD

DEFINITION OF DYSLEXIA | A new law I co-authored provides an official definition of dyslexia in hopes that it will help teachers identify students who need extra help in the classroom with reading, spelling and writing.

FLEXIBILITY ON ISTEP | I co-sponsored a law that allowed the Indiana Department of Education to reduce the number of questions on the ISTEP test after concerns were raised about the length of this year's test.

EXTENDING STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS ON RAPE | Prosecutors may now file rape charges within five years of discovering new evidence regardless of how many years have passed since the crime was committed.

2015 Indiana State Legislature

135 HOUSE
BILLS

+

122 SENATE
BILLS

=

257

Total Bills Passed

SOURCE: Legislative Services Agency

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT PRIORITIES

- >> Economic Opportunities and Fairness
- >> A Quality Education for All Students
- >> Accountability and Transparency

State Representative Dr. Vernon G. Smith

My views of the 2015 Legislative Session

Dear Friends:

The 2015 legislative session has ended, but I am worried we will feel the effects for years to come. Your emails, letters and phone calls confirm my fears that too many people continue to fall behind, and I spent the past few months pursuing policies that I felt would give all Hoosiers an opportunity to succeed.

I share the disappointment that many of you expressed in several of our new laws, including the repeal of the common construction wage that I believe will mean lower wages for Hoosier workers and greater challenges for families; the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) that resulted in tourism boycotts and a canceled business expansion plan; and the transfer of certain decision-making powers away from our elected Superintendent of Public Instruction.

I believe the legislature missed great opportunities to increase household income for working families, provide net funding increases for all of our K-12 schools and increase the accountability of state government. It was frustrating that enough other legislators did not share the goal of such priorities as eliminating the cost of textbooks for all Hoosier families and a higher minimum wage for those on the lowest end of the wage scale.

To be fair, legislators did work together to pass some new laws that will benefit everyone across Indiana. I have detailed several of those laws in this newsletter. For example, we helped human trafficking victims, provided resources to reduce the infant mortality rate, and strengthened ethics rules and disclosures among elected officials. These efforts were worthwhile.

During the interim months leading into the next session, I will continue to build on our bipartisan successes and advocate for the areas where I think we can do better. I continue to need your thoughts, opinions and suggestions on how to improve life for all Hoosiers, so please continue contacting me to share your input on where our state is headed. I look forward to hearing from you!

Respectfully Yours,



Rep. Dr. Vernon G. Smith



March 31 - Black Male Youth Day at the Statehouse.



March 10 - Pages from St. Timothy Community Church.



Rep. Smith with student pages from the district.

GOOD POLICY. STRONG LEADERSHIP.

When legislators are able to work in a bipartisan manner, we can help Hoosiers and move our state forward. That was the case with these new laws that I believe put good policy ahead of politics:

DIPLOMAS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS | I supported legislation that outlines the manner in which special needs students may now earn a high school diploma. Currently they work toward a certificate of completion that often does not reflect the level of work and commitment put in by the students. The new law allows for a tailored curriculum where the likelihood of success in school and after graduation is much greater for special education students.

HELPING HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS | A new law will provide help to human and sexual trafficking victims. It allows trafficking victims to seek help without fear of prosecution, and establishes a system that will better coordinate information between law enforcement agencies and groups like the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

REDUCING INFANT MORTALITY RATES | We took important steps to reduce our state's alarming infant mortality rate with the Safety PIN (Protecting Indiana's Newborns) grant fund. I am hopeful applicants and organizations around the state will utilize the fund to administer local programs that will protect our youngest and most vulnerable Hoosiers.

Human trafficking is the fastest-growing and second largest criminal industry in the world. To learn more about Indiana's efforts to combat human trafficking, visit INNotBuyingIt.org.

MY FOCUS REMAINS ENSURING STATE GOVERNMENT WORKS FOR EVERY HOOSIER:

A GROWING ECONOMY
WITH GOOD-PAYING JOBS,
HIGHER WAGES AND
INCREASED EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES

A QUALITY EDUCATION
BUILT ON FAIR SCHOOL
FUNDING, ELIMINATING
TEXTBOOK COSTS AND
COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

A TRUST IN GOVERNMENT
WITH MORE
ACCOUNTABILITY,
TRANSPARENCY AND
BIPARTISAN SOLUTIONS