LEGISLATIVE SESSION REACHES MID-POINT

Mid-point of this “short” legislative session will occur Feb. 7th. Some of ACEC Indiana’s top priorities appear to be progressing, and some of the bills of greatest concern are either not moving, or have been improved.

Interest in water-related infrastructure funding has moved at a much quicker pace than expected, with bills passing each chamber already; HB 1267 authored by Rep. Ed Soliday includes drinking water, waste water, and storm water, while SB 361 authored by Senator Ed Charbonneau only includes drinking water and waste water. ACEC continues to push for inclusion of all three types for the most comprehensive review of the funding needs.

Professional Liability insurance issues contained in HB 1015, specifically restoring “comparative fault” and prohibiting the automatic “Duty to Defend” a client/owner when there has been no claim of negligence has passed the House 86-11 and will be eligible for action in the Senate after the “cross over.” Rep. Jerry Torr’s extensive knowledge and understanding of the issues helped to usher the bill through the House, along with support from Rep. Greg Steuerwald and Rep. Ed Delaney.

Specifications for K-12 Schools, SB 383 remains a work in progress to address a specific issue on certain proprietary systems for capital projects in these schools, and ACEC continues to work closely with Sen. Mark Messmer, the bill author, to ensure the legislation is not expanded for other purposes that would be adverse to our membership’s interests as Professional Engineers.

There have been a few surprises, too, such as SB 399 dealing with Occupational Licensing. This bill could impact P.E. licenses, as it attempts to remove barriers to a myriad of occupations by reviewing the need for licenses, find less restrictive methods to protect consumers. After discussion with the bill author, Sen. Travis Holdman, ACEC testified about our concerns to protect public health and safety, and retain licensing for Professional Engineers. As a result, the Senator agreed to work with ACEC to differentiate “professionals” vs. “consumer-oriented” occupations as the bill continues to move through the Senate.

More than any other session in recent history, ACEC Indiana members have stepped up to testify on several bills, offering that “real world experience” and it is making a vital difference!