

# Better days ahead

With the governor's State of the State speech and the presidential inaugural, this was an extraordinary week in the world of politics. It was a time of big ideas and bold proposals. I promise to address these ideas in upcoming columns, but for this week, I cannot resist a more lighthearted topic — our state seal.



LUKE  
MESSER

This year, I have renewed my efforts to change the legal description of the state seal from a 'setting' sun to a 'rising' sun. Clearly, this is not one of the most important pieces of legislation facing this year's General Assembly. However, while there will certainly be dozens of bills passed during this session that have greater impact on the future of the state, there may be no bill that better describes the future of our state. The bill makes the simple point that it is important to have a sense of optimism about our future.

This bill seeks to change the official legal definition that is currently used to describe the seal as: "The inner circle has two (2) trees in the left background, three (3) hills in the center background with nearly a full sun setting behind and between the first and second hill from the left."

My bill would replace the word "setting" with the word "rising" under Indiana code. The proposed legislation would keep the appearance of the seal the same, only the definition listed in the Indiana code IC 1-2-4-1 would change. The nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency has indicated that the bill would result in no fiscal implications for the state.

Versions of the pioneer scene have been used on Indian seals since territorial days. They are found on official papers as early as 1801. Both the 1816 and 1851 constitutions provided for a seal to be kept for "official purposes."

The 1963 Indiana General Assembly gave legal sanction to the design and provided an official description, which is the current definition.

This type of legislation is not unprecedented. The Pledge of Allegiance has undergone multiple changes over the years. In 1923 and 1924, the National Flag Conference changed the Pledge of Allegiance's words from "my Flag" to "the Flag of the United States of America."

In 1954, Congress, after a campaign from the Knights of Columbus, added the words, "under God," to the Pledge.

The change that I am proposing is done in a similar spirit. I believe that all Hoosiers understand it will



take optimism and resolve to address the issues that are facing our state. By changing the seal, we encourage the idea that it is morning in Indiana and our state's best days are still ahead.

This symbolism can be important. Before we can take the steps necessary to make major improvements to the state, we have to believe in our future. We have to believe that tomorrow can be better than today.

Benjamin Franklin noted at Independence Hall in Philadelphia as the Founding Fathers signed the United States Constitution that the chair George Washington was sitting in had a half picture of a sun and said, "I have often...in the course of this session...looked at that...without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting; but now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun."

Franklin symbolized America's optimism then, and that is something that has never left this country.

Today, we have major obstacles in front of us, but don't let anybody tell you that America's or Indiana's best days are behind her. We are a great nation and a great state. Working together, we will see better days again.

Messer is chairman of the Indiana Republican Party and represents District 57, including most of Shelby County, in the Indiana House.

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