

The GOP plan

Hockey legend Wayne Gretzky once said that the secret to his success was that he "skated to where the puck was going to be, not where it currently was."

Gretzky's words present a common-sense approach that is applicable to Indiana's current fiscal and economic crisis. Like it or not, we live in an ever more competitive, ever-changing world economy. As we address our state's current problems, we must do more than simply solve the problems of today. We need to be progressive in our thinking and look for innovative solutions that will take us where the world is going.

That's why I was proud last week to join the Indiana House Republican leadership in announcing more than a dozen forward-thinking economic proposals that will make a difference for the future of our state. I would like to highlight just two — the Hoosier Headquarter Relocation Tax Credit and an independent, cabinet-level Department of Agriculture

If we are going to turn around Indiana's economy, we need to reverse the recent, pronounced trend of corporate headquarters leaving our state. According to the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, Indiana has lost more than 50 company headquarters in recent years, with a majority of those leaving during the last eight years.

As examples, Integrity Pharmaceutical Corp. moved to Kentucky. Central Soya moved to Missouri. Crowe Chizek and Co. moved to Tennessee. Keystone RV moved to Ohio. Meridian Insurance Group moved to Ohio. USA Group moved to Virginia. Arvin Industries moved to Michigan

Each of these losses is a major blow to the future of our state. These headquarters not only provide jobs, but they also provide



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That's why I support the Hoosier Headquarter Relocation Tax Credit. This proposal would grant a 50 percent non-refundable tax credit for reasonable and necessary costs of relocation and investments in buildings, equipment or other fixed assets. To qualify, a relocating corporate headquarters must have at least 250 employees and the company must generate at least \$1 billion in annual revenues.

Because these tax credits would be applied only to future tax liability attributable to growth in Indiana taxable income, the credit is revenue neutral and can be granted without any current fiscal impact to the state. (Obviously an important point given state government's projected \$1 billion dollar deficit over the next biennium.)

With this plan, we can hope to reverse the trend and get more companies to consider Indiana as a viable alternative for the location of their corporate headquarters. That would be good for job growth, good for state tax revenues and good for other sectors of Indiana's economy.

I would also like to see the state do more to promote our agricultural industry. That is why I support efforts to create an independent, cabinet-level Department of Agriculture head-

much-needed intellectual capital and charitable support for worthy community programs throughout Indiana. If we want a healthy state economy, we simply cannot allow this trend to continue.

ed by a commissioner of agriculture and appointed by the governor.

As Hoosiers, we are proud of the agricultural heritage in this state. Indiana farmers compete favorably with farmers from all over the world in the marketplace. Unfortunately, our state's convoluted maze of regulatory programs sometimes makes it more difficult for farmers to face modern-day challenges.

Believe it or not, we are one of only four states, along with Arkansas, Rhode Island and Alaska, that does not have an independent Department of Agriculture. By creating an independent commissioner of agriculture, we would provide a cohesive voice and an organized structure for this important industry.

An independent Department of Agriculture would combine the many agriculture programs currently overseen by multiple state agencies, including DNR and IDEM, and provide better service and efficiency to Indiana farmers and agribusinesses.

This concept is endorsed by Indiana Farm Bureau and the Indiana Farmer's Union. The creation of a Department of Agriculture is essential if we are going to continue to promote and maximize the agricultural sector and its impact on the Indiana economy.

In the end, it is going to require creative solutions to get our state economy headed back in the right direction. With the right leadership and some innovative thinking, we can turn our problems into economic successes that benefit all sectors of Indiana's economy and thereby its citizens.

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

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