

Legislation

The Chamber's position

The Indiana Assembly's 1999 legislative session is now well into its second half. The Democrats and Republicans are actively positioning themselves for strategic advantage in the all-important conference committee period. Over the course of the 1999 session, our legislators generated a staggering 2,000+ bills as they maneuvered for the best possible bargaining position during the final critical weeks of the legislative session — when the real work gets done on the two-year state budget and other important subjects. A number of issues of local interest are still being shaped through committees, party caucuses, and informal negotiations as the April 29 deadline to finish the session approaches. The Chamber is tracking a number of issues for its membership — mostly related to the 1999 Legislative Priorities list described in the January 1999 session. With the exception of casino gaming, all five elements of the Legislative Priorities are prominent this session. Our mid-term report follows:

Inventory Tax Elimination

Differing proposals to cut inventory taxes are the biggest bone of contention. The Republican Senate's proposal to completely phase out the property tax on inventory over the next 10 years contrasts with the Democratic House plan to exempt the first \$12,500 of inventory from property tax (HB 1001). Also in the mix is the Governor's 4-year temporary phase-down-a plan that raises concern due to its modest goal of a 35 percent reduction in inventory taxes. According to Tom Fellrath, The Chamber's Director of Public Policy, The Chamber supports a complete phase-out of the inventory tax.

Fellrath presented written testimony from Chamber members to the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means Committees, as well as the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and the other members of the St. Joseph County Statehouse delegation. "The written testimony packets had a profound effect during committee deliberations," says Fellrath. "Our package of written and live testimony generated a great deal of attention on both sides of the aisle, and I want to thank the members who took the time to write on this critical business issue."

IUSB Student Activity Center

The House version of the budget includes a 5 percent increase for public schools in each of the next two years, with similar increases for colleges and universities. IUSB's efforts to come away from this session with funds committed for the Student Activities Center appear promising. "Representative Pat Bauer, true to his word, made sure this was put in the House-approved budget," says Fellrath. While the campus has built a strong academic program, many other dimensions of a full university experience (recreation

See LEGISLATION page 2

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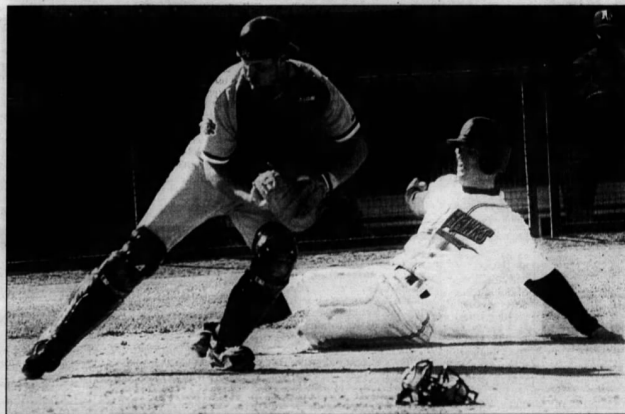


The Chamber

Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County

The Champion of Business

Cove a big hit in South Bend



A South Bend Silver Hawk player slides into home for the winning run.

The photo/Joe Raymond

There was a time when the name "Studebaker" was nearly synonymous with South Bend. In recent years, though, it has been the minor league baseball team named after one of the historic automaker's famed wonders that has been attracting thousands of fans to the newly resurgent Studebaker Corridor — and to the businesses that are once again thriving in downtown South Bend.

"Minor league baseball is bringing people into the downtown business community," asserts Erik Haag, vice president for Palisades Baseball, the owner and operator of the Silver Hawks. "The fans who come to see the Silver Hawks play are utilizing the restaurants in the area and are pumping money into the local hotel and restaurant industry."

The Silver Hawks play Class Single-A professional baseball in the Midwest League, which consists of fourteen teams from the states of Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan and Indiana. The teams in the league play a 140-game

Business After Hours at the Cove

On April 28, the renowned Upper Deck facility at Coveleski Stadium will host the Chamber of Commerce's Business After Hours. The premiere networking event of the baseball season will be from 5 to 7 p.m. Participants can meet Michigan business community — and then stick around and use a great baseball game as the South Bend Silver Hawks host the Quad City River Hawks.

The cost to attend is \$2 for pre-registered chamber members; \$5 for members of the day; and \$7 for non-members.

schedule in a season that runs from early April through Labor Day weekend.

Greg Ayers, Executive Director of the South Bend/Mishawaka Convention and Visitors Bureau, states, "The Silver Hawks have a definite impact on the economy here in St. Joseph County.

For 70 dates per season they offer our residents and visitors the opportunity to be entertained at Coveleski Stadium," says Ayers. "Out of town visitors have the opportunity to come in earlier in the day for evening games and take advantage of local shopping and area attractions like the College Football Hall of Fame."

In fact, according to South Bend Mayor Steve Luecke, the city's affiliation with Coveleski Stadium has paid off quite nicely. "The facility serves as an anchor at the southern edge of the downtown area," explains Luecke, "and is an excellent complement to the other downtown facilities and attractions."

The Silver Hawks, together with other area attractions such as the East Race Waterway, Century Center, the College Football Hall of Fame and the South Bend Regional Museum of Art have created the critical mass required to spur new development.

See SILVER HAWKS page 4