

UNEXPECTED MATCHUP



Gregg: Here Are First Steps We Need to Take

By Tom Schuman

Due to election cycles, John Gregg admits that economic planning in government typically doesn't go beyond two years – or maybe four.

“As far as a statewide plan that focuses out this many years (the Indiana Chamber’s *Indiana Vision 2025*), that is quite an accomplishment.”

Gregg emphasizes some of the short-term actions he would take if elected.

“My focus is to lift all Hoosiers up. First thing we have to do in Indiana is work on our image. The first day in office, I would sign an executive order granting LGBT civil rights protections to the 33,000 employees of the state of Indiana. In the State of the State, I would ask the Legislature to pass civil rights protections for the LGBT community. This isn’t a Democrat or Republican issue; it’s an economic issue.

“On the economy, I want to focus on the quality of the jobs, not the quantity of jobs. I want to implement work share,” he continues. “This is one of many places where management and labor come together.

“On education, first thing we have to do is stop the political fighting. We need progress over politics. I was glad to see the ISTEP test go away. We have to have accountability. I want to implement statewide pre-kindergarten. It would be fully funded, not an unfunded mandate, and not just for disadvantaged students but all students in the

state of Indiana.”

Other than the LGBT rights, Gregg emphasizes, “Any social issue that hits my desk, whether I agree with it personally or not, is going to be vetoed. I’m not interested in fighting the old fights. It’s about practical solutions and that’s what your *Indiana Vision 2025* is all about. Simply put, the choice comes down to this: I have more in common with you and your business vision than the (current) governor. We’re going to have differences, but we’re going to work them out together.”

Gregg notes during the conversation that full details on infrastructure and pre-K funding are to be released soon (available now at www.greggforgovernor.com). He adds this, however, on raising the skills of the current workforce.

“We have to do more with retraining; part of it is under the IEDC, the lieutenant governor, veterans’ services – we have to make sure everything is coordinated. I am amazed in six years of traveling around our state, I’ve never had one business person say anything about our tax structure – it’s always about the skilled workforce. There are

Continued on page 24



John Gregg anticipated a rematch of his 2012 contest against Gov. Mike Pence, but says he is utilizing the experience of four years ago in his current campaign.

Gregg

Continued from page 22

going to be hundreds of thousands of new jobs created and if we don't have the skilled workforce, those jobs are going to go elsewhere and we're going to continue to spiral down in per capita income."

What is your position on charter schools and vouchers?

Gregg: "I am not a supporter of vouchers. On charter schools, I'm very proud that when I was Speaker of the House, Indiana passed its first charter school bill. Charter schools are not going away. I do think we have to admit we have some charter schools that are not working. And I support accountability."

"My thoughts on some issues are why I started out this race with two announced opponents in the primary and a couple of others waiting in the wings. It's those extremes that are unwilling to move to the middle and try to solve things that cause both parties problems. The extremes drive all of us crazy. And if you think my party doesn't have them, go with me to Bloomington when they remind people I worked in the coal industry, I'm a gun owner, I'm a pro-life Democrat and that I believe in the death penalty."

What areas might we be in disagreement?

Gregg: "I don't think there are those issues that exist. That's why I referred to the old fights. Let's throw those elephants on the table. Right to work would have been one in the past, but that is the past. That's not going to change. You know the makeup of the Legislature. I think you'll find we share a lot of common goals together."

"We may disagree from time to time on how to get there, but the truth of the matter is that in our administration we're going to be dealing with an overwhelming Republican legislature. Having a check and balance – right now there is not one – is good."

What is your position on the property tax caps?

Gregg: "I was not in the Legislature when the property tax caps were passed. One thing we have done wrong in Indiana – the Legislature over manages our local governments. Mayors have such little flexibility with their money. They have to play 'mother may I' with the Legislature. They should have flexibility. If they abuse that flexibility, the public will catch up with those mayors and council members."

"We give them money with strings on it. People don't move to the state, they move to



Gregg is joined in his 2016 bid by lieutenant governor candidate Christina Hale, who served four years in the Indiana House of Representatives.

the community. I would like to see all of Indiana be thriving and growing like the Central Indiana area from Lafayette to Bloomington. We've got to work with our communities and giving them some flexibility on money would be a start."

Superintendents talk about not being able to set teacher wages based on skill sets and demand, especially in the STEM fields. Would you support this setting of wages and rewarding teachers for performance?

Gregg: "That is a toughie. It's something we're very likely to embrace; there are some things we're working through. We definitely have a problem keeping some of those individuals because of the pay. I see it every day."

You said you support accountability. The current superintendent does not. Your thoughts on the importance of accountability – how will you help us maintain and improve it?

Gregg: "The ISTEP needed to go – some time ago. I have not ever met a school teacher who told me they do not want to be held accountable. I'll make the ultimate decision, but we have to have the business community, we have to have school administrators, the reformers, classroom teachers, parents at the table."

"The agents of change in education are going to be in the classroom. If they're not at least at the table where there is a little buy-in, I don't think it's going to happen. I'm all for accountability; we've got to have some reasonable teachers sitting at the table going forward. We've got a great opportunity to redo that."

What further opportunities do you see in local government reform?

Gregg: "Before the Legislature and state government goes telling local government how to reform, we've not had a set of eyes look at state government and our inefficiencies for some time. We need to do that. We need to get our house in order before we go working on local government. I've always wondered why we elect a surveyor, why do we elect a county coroner. There are a lot of issues like that."

"I'm more interested in giving them flexibility and more interested in jobs, the economy and education and infrastructure. We get that stuff headed in the right direction, then we can have the adult conversation on local government. It's a matter of priorities and that's not a burning one on my stove right now."

What can and should state government do to assist with rising electricity prices?

Gregg: "We've all seen what is the clamping down on the coal industry. Trust me, being a Democrat in southwestern Indiana, President Obama makes it a little more difficult each day. The realization is the coal industry has reached its peak. How we go about working with the federal government and the EPA (is critical)."

"Filing suit, which is what the governor has done, boy it sounds great. The problem is when you sue the federal government, they're going to win. You can sit down with them and come up with a plan, as you're going along, to try and implement this and lessen the bargain. The states of Kentucky and West Virginia, two coal mining states, that's what they have done."