

# Leaders Speak: Most Bold Idea to Reshape Indiana by 2025



"I think the aspect (of *Indiana Vision 2025*) that I'm passionate about and one that's consistent with what we've been doing in our administration is the talent aspect – to attract, to cultivate, to really hone and develop the best talent in Indiana, and particularly in all sectors.

"It's easier for business to develop and attract talent because they typically pay an above-market rate or

certainly higher than other sectors, but we need to develop that same talent in government, in our non-profit sector, in all aspects of our economy so that the talent that is developed can work collectively to (move) Indiana forward.

"Of course, that has to be based on the level of education that we make available to all Hoosiers, so it starts in preschool and it continues into elementary and junior high and high school, and ultimately at the postsecondary level. But it can't simply be that we're going to have a top tier of schools, or some really good schools and some that aren't as good; we have to be willing to invest in the level of education that is accessible to the largest number of Hoosiers – and that's public education.

"I would really like to see a greater investment in preschool education. I think, also, to emphasize STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education for our students, particularly at the elementary and middle school level (is important) because if you do it early, you have a real opportunity to get kids involved and interested early."

– Karen Freeman-Wilson, Mayor, Gary



"I think the boldest idea for reshaping Indiana's future is the one which can be achieved quickest, has the greatest impact and can be implemented at the lowest cost. As a state, Indiana has the immediate ability to become 'the most attractive tax climate in our nation.' It's the ultimate tagline.

"The inevitable impact of innovative tax law restructuring would provide the means for improving our talent

pool, finance infrastructure and market our creativity to the world by portraying Indiana as the ultimate business climate. It's a big, bold, achievable Hoosier idea and the fruit is dragging on the ground.

"Reinventing Indiana as 'the best business climate in the U.S.' requires key elements. *Indiana Vision 2025* has done an admirable job of honing our multitude of deficient keys to a fine edge. Now, we've consolidated what's needed to raise the bar.

"Would revamping Indiana's tax structure be easy? Obviously not. But, neither would it be for our competitors. Somebody's going to do it. And *Indiana Vision 2025* is fundamentally a competitive response to our need for tactical change.

"While change is notoriously difficult, 'lower taxes' (and both business and personal taxes are what we're talking about) is a relatively soft political sell. Reinventing Indiana's business climate demands one actionable political caveat: Every decision, at every level, must be weighed against its impact on job creation. And, taxing less than everybody else is a great place to start."

– Tom Utley, Montgomery County Councilman At-Large, Linden



"To me, so much of what we need to do in this state is related to a culture where I think aspirations are just too low and too many people are satisfied with the status quo – this grates on me because I'm never satisfied with things the way they are. What we really need to do in this state is raise aspirations.

"We rank low in the things you want to rank high in and we rank high in

the things you want to rank low in, and sometimes I get the impression that the only thing we excel in is mediocrity.

McClelland suggests "a 10-year campaign to raise aspirations. Maybe the overall theme could be 'Aim High.' You could use that in a variety of areas of emphasis: Aim high in efforts to raise

educational attainment levels, to encourage people to have healthy lifestyles, to (build) more attractive communities people want to move in and stay in. Each area of emphasis – whether it's education or healthy lifestyles or just amenities in a community – could have its own set of short-, medium- and long-term goals, action steps and progress indicators.

"(With) anything like this, you need constant repetition, constant reinforcement and you need it over a long period of time. I'm not a psychologist, but it seems to me that there's so many things to improve on; it was really hard for me to say there's one thing that could make a difference.

"If this idea is adopted, we have to make darn sure that the campaign itself is funded properly and you get the best talent you can to serve as an example."

– Jim McClelland, President and CEO  
Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana, Indianapolis



"Indiana Humanities is a statewide nonprofit, so part of why I was so interested in attending the sessions in different regions is because we work statewide and have a statewide audience. It was exciting for me to visit so many corners of our state and listen to the feedback from all of the community leaders who attended.

"What excited me about the exchange is that the conversations at

many of the tables I sat in were about important subjects such as education – both K-12 and beyond. I was glad to see there was so much conversation on the need for talent attraction and the need for Indiana to be viewed as a place that's welcoming to all people.

"The big idea is that this broad notion of economic development is one that appears to be embraced by the leaders of our state. I certainly sensed an urgency in the air that we are a great state, but we can do better, and there was a real desire to pull around these elements.

"The way we're going to see progress in all of these areas is to bring a wide sector together to solve the problems – it isn't something just shouldered by the business community."

– Keira Amstutz, President and CEO, Indiana Humanities, Indianapolis

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"As a leader, what I think Indiana needs to do is get exceptionally aggressive in attracting technology-based companies. The reason why is because with those types of industries come really high-paying jobs, which translate into higher tax bases, which translate into better schools and producing just an entirely different generation of people.

"Technology breeds technology – I say that all the time. What we need

to do is invest in getting that started. We dabble into it by saying we have incubators or we encourage start-ups. But 99% of start-ups fail. We need to go after the big companies and bring them here. And it's just going to require an enormous investment.

"Companies are seeking new homes that are favorable to their balance sheets. Indiana needs an entire makeover and it needs to be thought of as a progressive state instead of a farming state.

"We build software for the most part for the federal government – high-end, defense related software mostly in cyber security. We're building a 54,000-square-foot software facility in Southern Indiana to house 200 expert software developers. We can't find them, so we're trying to hire people from Louisville and get them to come to Southern Indiana, and the only thing the state has offered us is basically tax incentives. ... Indiana is great at putting incentives (on the table) for manufacturing, but they (state officials) do not understand and do not have a vision for technology companies."

– Joey Rivera, President and CEO, Rivera Consulting Group, Sellersburg

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"It's absolutely vital that we have outstanding talent in Indiana. In Northeast Indiana, we've adopted The Big Goal, which is part of the outstanding talent driver in 2025 to increase the proportion of Indiana residents with high-quality postsecondary credentials to 60%. Currently, we're at 30%; we want to double that. It's vital for us as we look at being investment worthy for businesses within the state, but also

businesses outside the state. We have to have a talented workforce.

"The other area we're focused on is the STEM-related fields – making sure that we have talent and residents with credentials in the STEM-related fields. We know that starts early. Really it starts in elementary school and middle school and high school – making sure kids are ready to learn and that when they graduate they're ready to go to college or go into a program for career training.

"Our early childhood is extremely important to us in this part of the state, knowing that we have to deliver a four-year old to the schools to be ready to learn if we're going to have a chance to have 18-year-olds graduate ready to be productive citizens."

– Mike Packnett, President and CEO, Parkview Health, Fort Wayne

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"Children come to us with all different types of developmental awareness and needs. I'm definitely an advocate for preschool and early education because we need to start them on the right foot. I'm also an advocate for mandatory full-day kindergarten. Those two factors are extremely important and as we go forward with things, the gift of literacy is one of the most vital things we can give a child.

"As we develop our children from preschool and kindergarten, (it's about) making sure we have plenty of people who can help with interventions with children who may be delayed, who need extra interventions with literacy. Once we get them going on the right path, I don't think there's any way to stop them.

"Another issue we face today is making sure we have enough counselors and social workers on hand. There's a lot of things students deal with emotionally. We can't forget it's not all academics; we have to also take care of that emotional side of our children.

"It's all about being well rounded. I think the most important things you've seen us do differently in Northwest Indiana is (the) partnership with employers and higher education. We're making great strides."

– Peggy Buffington, Ph.D., Superintendent, School City of Hobart

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"I think we need to embrace all of the diversity that we have in Indianapolis. It's an accepting place, but I don't see it as welcoming and warm and diverse as I do when I go to other states. I'd like to see ... (our city and state) take more risks in the area of diversity and capitalize on the richness through education.

"I'm excited about the new (K-12) standards because they will help our

students compete in this new global economy. I don't think people understand that if Indiana is not in front of this, there will end up being a gap in states. I don't want to see Indiana – because of a lack of willingness – (fail) to really embrace where we are and move forward.

"I also think by 2025, we should have a plan on a really good transit system ... making accessibility available to everyone. That would bridge some of the gap with diversity. By embracing and coming together and being a more inclusive place versus exclusive, we'll be a rich community by 2025. It's not necessarily ethnic diversity – it's women, it's girls in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

"I mean inclusive in really looking at what we offer here. Are we talking with and surveying our communities to say, 'What is it that you (need)?' ... Are people being listened to? We're on our way and people are having these conversations, but I think you have to have them at the local levels instead of having them at the top."

*Dena Cushenberry, Ph.D., Superintendent  
Metropolitan School District of Warren Township, Indianapolis*

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"We need to attract businesses to Indiana that have a global perspective. We're going to be competing with many, many locations – global, international, domestic – and we've got to prove to those corporate leaders and their future employees that Indiana is a great state. We have it all, including health care at a lower cost, and you don't have to leave the state of Indiana to receive the very best.

"It really is about approaching health care not from an illness viewpoint, but from a wellness viewpoint. Let's think about keeping people healthy. Let's think about preventive measures. Let's think about rewarding people for staying healthy. Let's think about how employers and employees can work together to improve the health of the employee base.

"Don't make (participating in workplace wellness initiatives) a punishment – make it a reward system for staying healthy, for not missing days at work, for being prepared, for being alert. Indiana has lots of smoking, lots of obesity. That's nothing new, but let's work together and put some accountability and responsibility and a reward for being healthy. I don't think employees and employers should take anything off the table in terms of trying things to promote a healthy work environment.

"This entails a lot of emphasis on primary care – and primary care by definition includes internists, family medicine, advanced practice nurses, pediatricians. Working with these medical providers has got to unlock some opportunities for keeping us healthier."

*– Linda E. White, President and CEO  
Deaconess Health System, Evansville*

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"Universities are strong incubators for new growth and development in the state. We can't underestimate enough that creative culture and what that adds because even as businesses are growing into South Bend, it has an effect on our whole area (region) because it's attracting talent.

Generally, because of the level of talent employers need to fill those positions, they have to pay a little bit more, which ultimately has an impact

on the overall community in terms of growing personal income.

"Our economy is about a seven-county region that has 700,000 to

800,000 people in it. Spin-off effects from the universities are felt in the seven-county region that surrounds us.

"It's (about) building on the strong networks in particular we're starting to see ... that Purdue (for example) has had for a while and is starting to build. For example, in our own community, we're starting to see the fruits of that labor where some of the tech transfer is creating real economic development opportunities.

"Part of reinventing Indiana's economy (requires) those new ideas and entrepreneurs and the tech transfer piece that will create some of those job opportunities in the future. Hopefully if it's done right, it keeps the students and faculty in Indiana."

*– Jeff Rea, President and CEO  
St. Joseph County Chamber of Commerce, South Bend*

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