The Association of Indiana Counties (AIC) is pleased to announce a new job shadowing program for county officials and state legislators. The *State and Counties Partnering for Progress* program was launched in July in Clinton, Monroe, and Randolph Counties. The program encourages county officials to lay out the ‘welcome mat’ by inviting their legislators to their offices to learn the ins and outs of county government processes.

Randolph County officials put State Rep. Bill Davis to work for several hours on July 13, doing data entry in the Treasurer’s office, entering court judgments in the Circuit Court Clerk’s office and various other tasks. Rep. Davis told the *Winchester News Gazette*, which covered the AIC’s new program on its front page on July 15, that the program is helpful in making the connection between state and local government.

“They (county officials) have to deal with the legislation we pass on a daily basis, and may have a totally different impression of how it really works,” said Rep. Davis. “This lets me see exactly what goes on after we pass the legislation – how it affects county workers and their constituents. We want to serve taxpayers in the most efficient way possible.”

Randolph County Treasurer Jane Grove said that Rep. Davis was very willing to accept the invitation.

“We were able to put Rep. Davis to work on several county processes which will give him an even greater understanding of how laws that the legislature passes affect citizens as well as county officials who implement those laws,” said Treasurer Grove. “This program allows us to reach out to legislators and form a working partnership.”

A similar event also occurred in Clinton County on July 8 when State Rep. Heath VanNatter and Clinton County Commissioner Mike Beard job shadowed Clinton County Coroner Ed Cripe. Some of the day was spent reviewing the new online death certificate process which Coroner Cripe said was not widely accepted by some physicians in his county. Coroner Cripe explained that though the law did not require this, he had to spend some time educating doctors on how to use the system.

Rep. VanNatter said the job shadow day was a good experience and that he now plans on visiting with more county officials in other parts of his district.

**JOB SHADOWING: A HINDSIGHT PERSPECTIVE FROM MONROE COUNTY**

The AIC realizes that many legislators visit with their county officials regularly. The goal of the *State and Counties Partnering for Progress* initiative, however, is to encourage more of these interactions, and in a very hands-on way, much like what happened in Monroe County in the early 2000s. Indiana was on the heels of legislation that required Indiana property taxes to transition to a fair market value system and Rep. Matt Pierce was in the midst of his first legislative session.

“County officials were testifying about how changes that were being required were going to be very costly because of software changes that would be needed. There was a lot of finger pointing going on,” said Rep. Pierce. “And since I didn’t have
a background in county government it occurred to me that I needed to do some fact finding on my own. So I asked to be an intern for the county for a few days.”

Monroe County Assessor Judy Sharp said it was a confusing time because they were creating a whole new property tax system.

“The State was making many changes to the property sales disclosure form, and those swift changes were creating some frustration,” said Assessor Sharp. “So when Rep. Pierce asked to be put to work, I set him up in a backroom where he spent an entire afternoon entering sales disclosure form information into the system.”

Rep. Pierce said that experience later proved to be useful when he was in a legislative committee hearing on a bill that would later require property sales disclosures be released for public record. A sticking point in the bill was a clause that involved the redaction of social security numbers prior to the public release of property sales information.

“Because I had worked here (Assessor’s office), the thing that immediately came to mind was this giant room with all of these filing cabinets full of sales disclosure forms,” said Rep. Pierce. “I told them (fellow legislators) that we have to think this thing through. Because you’re basically saying that someone has to go through with a sharpie and mark out thousands and thousands of social security numbers in a short period of time.”

Rep. Pierce’s experience as a county government ‘intern’ provided him the information he needed to persuade the legislature to give county officials more time to redact those social security numbers.

Today, those filing cabinets no longer exist because the state has passed legislation in more recent years that allows certain documents to be stored electronically, thanks to a State and County partnership that the AIC hopes will be strengthened through the AIC State and Counties Partnering for Progress initiative.

Article submitted by Karen Avery, AIC Director of Communications. If you would like more information on the program and on tips for planning a successful job shadow event for your county, contact Karen Avery at 317.829.3656 kavery@indianacounties.org.

You may also contact AIC Executive Director David Bottorff at dbottorff@indianacounties.org. More information can also be learned by viewing a video production (video to be produced by late August) and news media coverage of the program on the AIC Website. Visit www.indianacounties.org and look under the ‘Quick Links’ section in the upper left side of the homepage.