

UPDATE NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2015



Switzerland County Tax Burden is Second Lowest in Indiana

Switzerland County's historically low tax rates are now the second lowest in Indiana, according to a prominent online financial data group. Smartasset is a financial technology company that provides financial data to businesses and individuals to allow for more informed decisions on matters ranging from which community a business should choose to locate to what neighborhood an investor should choose for a project.

The company's website provides a variety of comparison tools, including a comparison of Indiana property tax rates by county.

Switzerland County's overall tax burden was second lowest among 92 counties.

Switzerland County's overall tax burden was second lowest among 92 counties. The overall tax burden is combination of Income Taxes, Property Taxes, Sales Taxes, and Fuel Taxes. The purpose of the measurement is to determine what communities offer the best value for a locating business or individual.

In terms of Property Taxes. Switzerland County has made strategic investments to help keep rates low. Investments into the Switzerland County School Endowment have allowed the Switzerland County School Corporation to keep debt service off of the property tax bill. Investments in economic development, like the Markland Business Park bring new taxpayers into Switzerland County to lower the

overall tax burden for other residents and businesses.

Workforce investments, like the Switzerland County Technology and Education center allow county residents to earn more money by developing

new skills and credentials. This results in a smaller percentage of their income going to taxes and, in some cases, dollars saved on public services. More information on the study can be found at <https://smartasset.com/taxes/indiana-tax-calculator#us/tax>.

Dual Enrollment Program Offers SCHS Students College Credit

The Switzerland County Technology and Education Center, an initiative of the SCEDC, has partnered with Ivy Tech Community College and the Switzerland County School Corporation (SCSC) to allow Switzerland County High School students to enroll in Ivy Tech courses while still in high school.

Classes will be held Monday through Thursday at the TEC Center. SCHS students who successfully complete the class will earn both Ivy Tech college credits and credits toward their high school graduation. Parents will be responsible for the Ivy Tech tuition, while the Switzerland County School Endowment Fund will provide textbook fees for the students. The SCSC also will provide transportation to the students from the high school to the TEC Center. The SCEDC is providing the facility rental

charges for the classes, and is upgrading the instructional equipment in the TEC Center's classrooms.

Switzerland County High School Principal Greg Goewert, SCSC Superintendent Mike Jones, and Ivy Tech Madison campus president Katie Mote all played critical roles in making this program accessible to Switzerland County residents. With over 30 students expressing interest in this program, the first year's success of the program is assured.



County Avoids Damaging Casino Legislation

Policy leaders in The Indiana General Assembly set out in 2015 to enact new legislation aimed at making Indiana's casino industry more competitive. This process began with a study committee in the early fall. The recommendations of the study committee were drafted into House Bill 1540, introduced when the legislature reconvened in January 2015. During the legislative process, the bill saw drastic changes that would have directed millions of dollars away from riverboat communities.

Local tax dollars generated by gaming operations are critical to economic development. In smaller riverboat communities like Switzerland County, economic development efforts would not exist without dollars generated by gaming activities. In Southeast Indiana as a whole, local investment of casino tax dollars has led to the commitment of over 10,000 jobs and over \$1 Billion in private investment. The loss of these resources would have been a devastating blow to the region.

Leaders in Southeast Indiana's riverboat communities worked together to communicate a consistent and sincere message to members of the Indiana General Assembly that starving one of Indiana's strongest economic development engines was bad for business growth. Legislative leadership ultimately agreed and amended the bill to remove the language most harmful to riverboat host communities. House Bill 1540 was passed, without this language. The final version of the Enrolled Act gave casinos new options for land-based gaming operations and options to reduce their overall burden. It also called for additional study of the issue of gaming taxes in Indiana.



Workforce Development: A Priority for Switzerland County

Workforce development issues remain a top factor in deciding where to locate or expand a business venture.

“Finding highly skilled labor is the number-one driver for nearly every site-selection decision. Companies are increasingly seeking more refinement in identifying specialized skill sets as their labor needs become more specialized,” writes Mark Crawford in *Area Development*, a site selection publication for the economic development industry.

This sentiment was reinforced by Indiana Lt. Governor Sue Ellspermann during her visit to the Switzerland County Technology and Education Center in 2013. “Nothing we can do is as important as creating a skilled workforce in Indiana,” she said.

In 2008, the Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation joined nine other Southeast Indiana counties in an effort to improve our workforce rankings. Funded initially by the Lilly Endowment, EcO15 sought to bring business, community leaders, and education administrators together to help Switzerland County better prepare citizens for good-paying jobs, both today and in the near future.

A Georgetown University study predicted that by 2018, 55% of available jobs in Indiana will require some level of post-high school education. To ensure that there are enough skilled workers to fill those jobs, more Indiana communities will need to follow Switzerland County’s lead and commit economic development resources to worker education and training. As part of the EcO15 initiative, the SCEDC created a position to specifically address workforce issues. The Switzerland County Technology and Education Center was developed to help

residents find resources they need to further their own skills. And EcO15 helped create Advanced Manufacturing and Project Lead-the-Way courses in the Switzerland County schools to give students an edge in starting their working careers.

Switzerland County residents can receive one-on-one assistance with state and federal workforce programs at the Switzerland County Technology and Education Center. The WorkOne office is open each Tuesday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Switzerland County resident Rosie Rohmann staffs the office along with Youth Program manager Sandy Wehner.

WorkOne

Southeast



SOUTHEAST INDIANA
your location for success!



Belterra to Sell Real Estate Assets to Management Company

Pinnacle Entertainment, Inc, the owner of the Belterra Casino and Resort has announced an agreement to sell their real estate assets, including those in Switzerland County. Gaming and Leisure Properties, Inc. has agreed to buy the real estate assets. Under the agreement, Pinnacle Entertainment will continue to lease the property and to operate the Belterra Casino and Resort. The deal was projected to be worth over \$4 billion. Gaming and Leisure Properties is a real estate investment trust (REIT), based in Wyomissing, PA.

With the completion of the Pinnacle deal, Gaming Leisure Properties will become the third largest REIT in the United States holding 35 casino and properties in 14 states. Fourteen of these properties will be operated by Pinnacle Entertainment. Eighteen of the properties will be operated by Penn National, operator of the Hollywood Casino in Lawrenceburg, IN. Once the deal is finalized, Pinnacle Entertainment will hold a ten year, triple net lease on the Belterra property, with options for a five year renewal at the end of the term.

As their 2015 fiscal year came to a close, Belterra saw a 3% decline in adjusted gross receipts from their 2014 fiscal year. While this is a loss, it is a very strong performance compared to the two other Southeast Indiana casino who saw much larger losses. During the same time period, the Hollywood Casino in Lawrenceburg saw a decline of 16% and the Rising Star Casino in Rising Sun saw a decline of 17%. This strong performance in the face of increased competition should encourage ongoing investment in the property.



GAMING & LEISURE
PROPERTIES, INC.

Pinnacle
Entertainment



SWITZERLAND COUNTY
economic development corporation

www.SwitzerlandUSA.com

Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation

OFFICERS

Jonathan Bond

*JD, CEcD
President*

Michael Busch

*Vice President
Workforce and Business
Development*

BOARD MEMBERS

Judy Firth Chair

Rhonda Griffin

Bruce Williams

317 Ferry Street
PO Box 192
Vevay, IN 47043

812.427.9100

f 812.427.9173