

Indiana State House Profiles



Name: Todd Rokita

Position: Attorney General

Served in the Role Since: January, 2021

Previous Political Positions Held:

US House of Representatives 2011-2019

Indiana Secretary of State 2002-2010

Describe, in general, your role within the Indiana Government.

As Indiana's attorney general, I am the state's chief legal officer — the top lawyer, in other words, responsible for representing Indiana government on behalf of the citizens. Our office defends liberty and upholds the rule of law.

I defend state laws passed by the legislature when their constitutionality is challenged. I represent state government agencies when they are sued. And I represent statewide elected officeholders such as the governor and others in their official capacities.

My office also brings lawsuits against U.S. federal government agencies and offices when their actions infringe on the rightful authorities of state government and the liberties of Hoosiers.

We don't provide legal advice directly to individual citizens, but we do provide some direct services. Our Consumer Protection Division, for example, investigates consumer complaints and takes actions to penalize businesses that illegally mistreat consumers, and we work to obtain restitution for consumers who sustain losses from such mistreatment.

What are some of your most important daily responsibilities?

Perhaps the most important daily responsibility is prioritizing actions I deem most essential to protecting Hoosiers' liberties and well-being. For example, upon taking office in January 2021, I heard from many parents of schoolchildren — directly and through their legislators — about their concerns that some schools were placing more emphasis on political indoctrination than academic instruction.

In response, I worked with my staff to create a "Parents Bill of Rights" — a document that serves as a roadmap for Hoosier parents and caregivers on how they can exercise their legal rights in regard to their children's education. We want to ensure that all parents, whatever their individual viewpoints, know how to get involved and make a difference in their school districts.

So that's just one example of where we saw a need and stepped outside the box to meet that need as part of our service to Hoosiers.

More generally speaking: Each day, I oversee the work of a staff of approximately 400 people via a chain-of-command of division directors. Our divisions include such specialties as, for example, criminal appeals. Anytime a defendant appeals a guilty conviction in an Indiana criminal court at the county level, our office represents the state in defending the verdict.

On a regular basis, I provide counsel and direction to legislators who have questions about legal ramifications of bills under consideration. Sometimes we issue formal advisory opinions on high-profile legislative legal matters, and other times we simply work with lawmakers to help ensure bills pass legal muster.

Besides lawsuits in which our office is a direct party representing the state, we also must decide when to put the weight of our office behind lawsuits in which other parties are involved. We do this via amicus briefs filed with courts — also known as "friend of the court" briefs. We typically file amicus briefs in high-profile cases in which important principles of government are at stake and cases whose outcomes would have a direct bearing on Hoosiers' interests.

Other aspects of our office include a Medicaid Fraud Control Unit; a data-privacy group (often focused on cybersecurity issues); the Unclaimed Property Division (search names at IndianaUnclaimed.gov to see if anyone you know has unclaimed money); and various other divisions and units.

Whatever any given day brings, our chief aim is always to serve the people of Indiana to the absolute best of our ability.

How does your position require you to interact with other government officials on a daily basis?

Because other officials in state government are essentially my legal clients, daily interaction with them to discuss strategy and policy matters is an essential part of my job.

In addition, I also talk often with attorneys general of other states. There are many critical issues that state attorneys general can best address through collaborating with one another. Citizens of every state in the union, for example, frequently complain about getting unwanted robocalls. Besides being annoying, these calls also can be dangerous; they often come from scammers trying to defraud people out of money. State AGs can work together to develop shared plans for tackling such issues.

We also collaborate sometimes with federal agencies. On any given day, our Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, for example, might work together with the FBI on an investigation. Or our Consumer Protection Division might work together with the Federal Trade Commission.

What do you think is the most important aspect of Government?

I believe the most important aspect of government is the role of elected officials in protecting liberty. Obviously, there are other important priorities as well related to people's safety, security and well-being. But the thing that has made America a truly exceptional nation has been our commitment to liberty.

At America's founding, for the first time in world history all the best ideas for self-government and safeguarding liberty came together at the same time at the same place. And our experience has proved that humans prosper best when they live amid the blessings of ordered liberty rather than under the iron fist of tyranny and suffocating government control.

That's why the main focus of my work as Attorney General is to take strong steps to defend Hoosiers' liberty. We don't want to treat liberty as just a patriotic buzzword; rather, we want to defend and advance it in meaningful ways. I often refer to our agenda as one that promotes "liberty in action."

How did you get involved in Government? What made you want to run for office?

Growing up in Munster, Indiana, I really had no great, overwhelming interest in government or politics. As a student at Wabash College, however, I gained the opportunity to work as an unpaid intern for Dan Coats, one of Indiana's two U.S. senators, out in Washington D.C. That experience really stoked my interest in getting more involved with government and public issues.

After graduating from Wabash, I went to law school at Indiana University, and after several years as a practicing attorney, I joined the Office of the Indiana Secretary of State as its first general counsel and then Deputy Secretary of State. On the side, I got involved as a lawyer with the recount of ballots in Florida in 2000 in the presidential race between George W. Bush and Al Gore.

In 2002, I ran for Indiana Secretary of State and won. At age 32, I was the youngest secretary of state in the nation at that time. After eight years in that role, I then represented Indiana in Congress for eight years.

Following those years in public service, I worked in the private sector as general counsel and principal for Apex Benefits, Indiana's largest health benefits consulting firm. I expected to remain in that position longer than I did, but then some things happened that just really left me feeling duty-bound to get into the race for Attorney General.

At every juncture, the thing that has made me want to run for office has been the opportunity to make positive difference in the lives of others through servant leadership.

What advice would you give to young people that are interested in learning more about Government or becoming involved in public service?

Take all the "hard" classes you can — whether in math, science, reading, history, etc. Our founders meant our government to be driven by citizens. Any citizen can do it. Don't "plan" to be in elected offices. These opportunities are very difficult to plan. But those opportunities will come, I promise.

Get involved now. Read everything you can, especially American history. Read the news as well, but make sure you read it from various perspectives without getting indoctrinated by a particular outlet's ideological agenda.

Stay well-informed. Be as interested or more interested in hearing the beliefs and concerns of others as you are in expressing your own opinions. But at the same time, be strong in your own convictions.

Know your elected officials. Spend time with them. Offer to work as an intern in a public office.

Remember, nothing is just about you. But for all of us, there is a cause to be served that is bigger than ourselves. Pray for guidance in knowing how to best apply your talents for a larger good.