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## 03

April

**FIERY DISCOURSE: Lt. Gov. Beckwith Fields Questions In Heated  
Johnson County Town Hall**



Lt. Gov. Micah Beckwith stands before a passionate group of Hoosiers concerned about issues ranging from school vouchers to immigration at a town hall in Franklin, Ind. on March 31, 2025. (Photo/Juliann Ventura)

By Juliann Ventura  
The Indiana Citizen  
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When Lt. Gov. Micah Beckwith made his way to the front of a group of Hoosiers at a Johnson County town hall Monday evening, the spirited crowd of nearly 100 people was ready with hot-button questions.

Eager attendees filled the seats in a cramped room at Franklin City Hall, with roughly two dozen people standing on the outskirts of the room as the Republican navigated pointed questions for more than an hour. The longtime Noblesville pastor responded to each question with a smile as attendees came at him with fiery questions over his policies and previous remarks.

While Monday's town hall was heated, it wasn't as contentious as some recent meetings with other lawmakers, like Republican Rep. Victoria Spartz, who represents the Fifth Congressional District north of Indianapolis, [reporting](#) from the Indiana Capital Chronicle showed.

"It means a lot that you'd come out because it's our community, it's our state, and I want

to hear your concerns, take it back to the Statehouse and, fight for you and at least give you a voice here, if we can,” Beckwith said as he introduced himself to an eager crowd. “So that’s why we’re doing these all over the state.”

Throughout the evening, Beckwith replied to questions that ranged from why the public should trust him, to how he reconciles his role as pastor with some of his previous controversial comments, to school vouchers. Concerned Hoosiers raised their hands and shouted questions from their seats as they also asked about infrastructure plans and immigration.

One question came from another pastor in Indiana, Paul Dazet, who said his congregation is made up of people “from all walks of life: veterans, single moms, immigrants, LGBTQ+, youth, seniors on fixed income, children with special needs and many people with mental health issues.” He added that every week, they express fears that they’re going to lose access to “healthcare, education, simply the dignity to be seen and valued.”

Dazet, a pastor at Sandy Hook United Methodist Church in Columbus, wondered how Beckwith reconciles the call to be a pastor with some of his language that Dazet said “dehumanizes others,” such as his use of different words including “Jezebel,” which has deeply sexist and racist roots in American history. Dazet’s question was met with raucous clapping.

“There is evil. There is evil ideology,” Beckwith responded, adding that he “separates the idea from the person.”

The lieutenant governor added: “I’m not going to attack the person, but I will call out the idea. I will call out those things that I believe are wrong and that are destructive.” Some members interrupted his reply with dissents, with one person yelling, “these are people’s identities.”

Beckwith further pressed his point. “You can say that’s who they are. I can also say, ‘No, I think that’s not who they are, that God has something better for them,’” Beckwith said. Several members of the crowd yelled in disagreement.

Another question centered on why money for Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security don’t follow seniors if Beckwith thinks taxpayer dollars should follow students – a view that the Republican has regularly repeated. The attendee who asked the question wore a shirt that said “Jezebel spirit.”

“That might be a great idea. Listen, I’m not against that,” Beckwith said, adding, “I think it should.”

Beckwith's support for school vouchers was brought up repeatedly mostly by members of the crowd who disagreed with his view.

"I think it's fair to let the tax dollars of a family follow that family," Beckwith said. "If you want to talk about fair, why is it that you're forcing a family who doesn't go to that school to pay tax dollars to that school?"

Several members of the crowd erupted in loud yells of disagreement and at least one person argued that sending tax dollars to public schools is for the "public good." Beckwith shook his head and shrugged off the reactions, explaining that parents can then send their kids to whatever type of school they want.

Another attendee pressed Beckwith on his previous calls to deport Haitian immigrants who are in Logansport legally and his unsubstantiated [claims](#) that those immigrants are taking resources and being dumped there.

Beckwith's assertions were largely exaggerated as city officials have said that they believe that most immigrants are in Logansport legally and while research shows that the number of Haitian students did appear to increase from 2023 to 2024, Logansport Community School Corp. Superintendent Michele Starkey at the time said the influx is not negatively impacting other students, an [investigation](#) by WTHR found.

"I did not say that. I said, if you're here illegally, right, you should not be here," Beckwith responded during Monday's town hall. "If you're here legally... then you absolutely have a right to be here."

At the time, Beckwith had said during an interview on Fort Wayne's Morning News on WOWO (92.3 FM) last October that immigrants admitted under Temporary Protected Status (TPS) – an immigration designation that allows those whose homelands are experiencing widespread violence and instability to temporarily live and work in the United States – won't leave once their status expires. He had added that city leaders should be identifying those participants.

TPS is a separate immigration status from visas, which generally allow entry into a country for a certain duration of time for a specific purpose like work or education.

In an attempt to separate state from federal issues, Clark Township Board Member Chuck Harlow, a Republican, asked if Indiana or the governor's office control or grant visas. While the federal government has jurisdiction over issuing visas, states can largely play a role in immigration enforcement, according to the [Immigration Legal Research Center](#).

Beckwith said no and thanked him, agreeing that the federal government handles visas.

Concerned attendees also touched on the Indiana Department of Transportation's U.S. 31 Project, a multi-phase project aimed at improving traffic on U.S. Highway 31 in Franklin. The project has faced scrutiny in the community as some have expressed worry that access to certain businesses could be hindered during construction, among other concerns, [reporting](#) from The Daily Journal showed.

Open to hearing concerns about the project, Beckwith invited attendees to contact his office.

When the questions turned to a piece of legislation that would prevent law enforcement officers without certain training from using their full powers outside of their jurisdiction, Beckwith agreed with the concerns mentioned, saying his team thinks "it's a bad bill."

[House Bill 1186](#), authored by Republican Rep. Steve Bartels of Eckerty, has faced scrutiny from some law enforcement groups, like the [Southport Police Department](#), which argue that the legislation could create limitations for reserve officers' authority.

Beckwith said his team has been lobbying against the legislation, which has been [stalled in committee](#) for a month.

"It's a bad bill, and we've actually been fighting against that bill," Beckwith said.

*Juliann Ventura is a political reporter who grew up in Indianapolis. Prior to joining The Citizen, Juliann reported in Washington, D.C., chasing down federal lawmakers on Capitol Hill, and was most recently on The Hill's breaking news team covering all things politics and policy. She earned her master's in journalism from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism and her bachelor's in international studies and criminology from Butler University (Go Dawgs!). Juliann's reporting has been featured in The Washington Post, ProPublica and numerous state and local publications.*

*Judy Wolf, a freelance editor based near Indianapolis, edited this article. She is a former content and copy editor at five daily newspapers in Indiana and Illinois, including The Indianapolis Star. She's known to some friends for turning down The New York Times once and The St. Petersburg Times thrice.*

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