



Holcomb's first session stacks up well

Compared to modern governors, Holcomb used his personality and timing to emerge with key achievements

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The gold standards of first General Assembly success for a modern Hoosier rookie governor must be measured against the years 1973, 1981, 1989, 1997, 2005 and 2013.

Mining down into that history, Gov. Eric Holcomb's first foray stacks up well against Gov. Doc Bowen's tax reforms, Gov. Frank O'Bannon's Consecration Fieldhouse deal and workers compensation reform, Gov. Mitch Daniels passing Daylight Saving Time, the creation of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation and Northwest Indiana's Regional Development Authority, and Gov. Mike Pence's \$600 million tax cut along with



Gov. Eric Holcomb and Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch proclaim a successful first session on Tuesday. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

reduction of the corporate tax rate and the elimination of the death tax.

Holcomb was also dealt a great hand, having two Republican super majorities that allowed him to opt into some of the groundwork already forged on his 20-year road and infrastructure plan that had been championed by Speaker Brian Bosma and House Transportation Chairman Ed Soliday last year.

It came after Holcomb ascended to the gubernatorial nomination last July,

Continued on page 3

A coming change of guard

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Shortly before 1 a.m. last Saturday, Senate President David Long proclaimed his 10th sine die. His session-ending speech became a precursor to the inevitable change of the guard.



It's been more than a decade since Senate Finance Chairman Larry Borst was upset in the 2004 primary, quickly followed by Senate President Robert Garton two years later. It paved the way for Long's ascension to power. The Senate had been a restive place, with Sens. Murray Clark and Luke Kenley once banished to the back bench after a failed palace coup. Senate guard changes are



“Addressing the threat North Korea’s weapons and ballistic missiles pose to the United States and our allies need to be a top national security priority of the president and Congress.”

- U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly after a White House briefing



Howey Politics Indiana
WWHowey Media, LLC 405
Massachusetts Ave., Suite
300 Indianapolis, IN 46204
www.howeypolitics.com

Brian A. Howey, Publisher
Mark Schoeff Jr., Washington
Jack E. Howey, Editor
Mary Lou Howey, Editor
Thomas Curry, Statehouse
Mark Curry, photography

Subscriptions

HPI, HPI Daily Wire \$599
 HPI Weekly, \$350
 Ray Volpe, Account Manager
317.602.3620

email: HoweyInfo@gmail.com

Contact HPI

bhowey2@gmail.com
 Howey's cell: 317.506.0883
 Washington: 202.256.5822
 Business Office: 317.602.3620

© 2017, **Howey Politics Indiana**. All rights reserved.
 Photocopying, Internet forwarding, faxing or reproducing in any form, whole or part, is a violation of federal law without permission from the publisher.



rare, with Garton's elevation coming in 1980 after his predecessor, Martin "Chip" Edwards, had been indicted. Garton restored the ethical integrity to the upper chamber, and Long certainly has hewed to a similar path.

Now here in the spring of 2017, President Long seemed to suggest that the chamber's finance team is about to depart.

Of Kenley, the Senate Appropriations chairman, Long said, "We can't leave without talking about old Six Lanes Kenley. If there is a hall of fame in the Indiana General Assembly, he would be a first-year pick. I don't know how long Luke will stay with us. He's getting on in years. He's an incredible talent.

This guy this year brought home a fantastic budget. It wasn't long ago we had trouble with our budgets."

There had been speculation in the lobby that at some point in the near future, Kenley will opt for a retirement on his Texas ranch where he can ride into the sunset and clear brush. Long talked about Kenley's role in finishing HB 1002, the roads and infrastructure bill that will bring upwards of \$30 billion to local and state roads over the next two decades. "I know he wanted to get it done before he leaves this place," Long said. "I don't want them to carry you out, Luke. It's been an honor to serve with you. We've had a good year. We've got a lot done, as usual."

The respect for Kenley crossed the aisle, with Minority Leader Tim Lanane observing, "We are so fortunate to have someone like Sen. Kenley. We've done some good work this session. I didn't vote for your budget, but it was a heck of a great budget I'm gonna tell ya that. And I thank you for what you do."

Lanane added that "Indiana is a better place" following the historic

120th session.

Then Long turned to the "gentleman who sits next to me," Senate Budget Chairman Brandt Hershman. The former aide to U.S. Rep. Steve Buyer has been on the short list to be the Republican member of the Federal Communications Commission. It fits Hershman's portfolio. In 2006, he played a key role in the Telecommunications Act of 2006 that has resulted in billions of dollars of changes over the past decade.



Senate President David Long pays tribute to Sens. Hershman and Kenley at sine die on Saturday.

"He has an opportunity or two in Washington D.C.," Long said. "Brandt Hershman is a rare talent and he's become my right hand. It's possible he may be serving his last day in the Senate. He likely will not be here next year. If this plays out, we wish you the very best."

While recent FCC speculation lists on Politico have not included Hershman, the fact that he is a known entity to Vice President Mike Pence who has played a key role in shaping the Trump cabinet, and the slot has stayed open through the end of the Indiana General Assembly along with Long's comments boost speculation that he may end up in that post.

The other option for Hershman would be the 4th CD, with U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita preparing to enter the 2018 U.S. Senate race where he faces a showdown with U.S. Rep. Luke Messer and others.

If Hershman doesn't get the FCC post and Rokita does go for the Senate, Hershman would become the front runner in what would likely be a crowded 4th CD primary field.

The other departure is that of Chief of Staff Jeff Papa, who is returning to Barnes & Thornberg as a partner. Long bragged that he convinced Papa to take a pay cut nine and a half years ago to become the first modern Senate chief of staff.

Long noted the arrival of 10

new senators this session. "That is unprecedented for a body that turned over at a glacial pace," Long explained. "They bring a bright future to this body."

Long, Kenley and Hershman were all easily re-elected last November. But Long's wife, Melissa, has retired as a Fort Wayne TV anchor, and you get the sense that by 2020, none of this trio will be on the ballot.

On the House side, there is much speculation on the political future of Speaker Brian Bosma, now one of the longest serving speakers in state history.

Bosma had always been on credible short lists for governor or Congress, but his political fortunes took a freakish hit in 2016.

Had there been a normal, open primary for an open gubernatorial seat, Bosma seemed ideally positioned, with a history of raising tens of millions of dollars and a 70-seat House caucus he helped forge that placed allies across the state. Bosma's lone vulnerability was his



Speaker Brian Bosma and Sen. Luke Kenley. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

relationship with the Indiana Republican Central Committee, which complained to him about some of the recent social issues that came out of his caucus, and the fact that the House Republican Campaign Committee wasn't paying rent at State HQ. Some of Bosma and Long's recent appearances before the committee were volatile and agitated.

When Gov. Mike Pence was chosen by Donald Trump for the ticket and bolted the nomination, it became a 22-vote race. After a quick flurry of phone calls, Bosma could count the votes and there was no way for success with the committee. So that race boiled down to Eric Holcomb and U.S. Reps. Susan Brooks and Rokita.

With Gov. Holcomb likely in place for the next seven plus years and off to a great start, Bosma's options now seem to be either in Washington . . . or patience.

There is some speculation that he might enter the 2018 U.S. Senate race, though it is just that at this point. There are no overt signs that Bosma is preparing to run statewide. If he did, it would almost certainly throw the emerging GOP primary into the tossup zone.

Change of the guard at the Indiana Statehouse? It may play out over the next four years. It could begin taking shape next week. ❖

Holcomb, from page 1

then forged a 100-day campaign that he likened to building an airplane in the sky. Between July and November, Holcomb had little time to craft the kind of policy Gov. Daniels showed up at the Statehouse with in 2005. But Holcomb meshed with legislative leaders, crafted his "five pillars" of policy, then used his personal charm and deft timing to emerge this past week with the kind of victories that set the foundation for historically strong governors.

Holcomb's emergence stands in utter stark contrast to Gov. Evan Bayh, who in 1989 found a 50/50 split House that ended up with alternating speakers and committee chairs. While Holcomb found universal support and praise, Secretary of State Bayh had to fend off a firestorm in the final weeks of 1988, when some Democrats believed he could break the tie from that



constitutional station before assuming his second floor office.

This 1 p.m. today in the Statehouse rotunda, Holcomb will join Speaker Brian Bosma and Senate President David Long, Sens. Mike Crider, Brandt Hershman and House Chairmen Tim Brown and Ed Soliday in signing HB1001 and HB1002, the gold standards of policy achievement for the rookie governor, making for a \$32 billion biennial budget that funds everything including economic development and a better workforce, and makes a down payment on the state's coming epic battle against the opioid epidemic. HB1002 will pump billions of dollars over the next two decades into Indiana's deteriorating roads and infrastructure.

"The legislature over-delivered," a beaming Holcomb said at a press conference in his Statehouse office. Flanked by Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, Holcomb vowed to "pivot and execute" on what he has described over the

past five months as his "five pillar" policy plan. He said he had asked the General Assembly in January for the "tools and our new resources to govern aggressively." He said the biennial budget "satisfies that underlying goal."

"In January when I took office, I asked the General Assembly to provide me and the lieutenant governor the tools to govern aggressively. We submitted an agenda and budget to satisfy that underlying goal. We said we wanted to focus on five key areas: Strengthen and diversify our economy, strengthen our infrastructure, tackle the opioid epidemic, make sure we continue to deliver great state government service and great taxpayer value. We've done just that. We passed another balanced budget and going further from that, we have passed a constitutional amendment to do that."

He noted that many other states are facing shortfalls, special sessions and service cuts. "We are not in that category," Holcomb said. "We made sure we maintained and protected our healthy reserves, our credit rating, and it was announced recently Indiana had a 3.9% unemployment rate." He said that the "economy is poised for the future. We focused relentlessly on that next level."

Crouch called the session "the most collaborative and civil" in the 12 she's taken part in. She and Holcomb heralded the extra funding and expansion into rural counties for the pre-K pilot program that she originally sponsored as a member of the House in 2013. "We are thrilled to take that to the next level."

Asked about his style, Holcomb said he "made it a practice to over-communicate," though he asked Bosma and Long at one point, "Let me know if I become a pest."

Republican National Committeeman John Hammond III, who is an IceMiller lobbyist, said of Holcomb, "His sense of timing has been critical, when to decide,

staying in touch with the legislature, giving them just enough room to pass things. He has a very deft touch on when to step in and indicate his preference. He does it in a way that is personal, not public, and he is considerate of the legislative branch."

Both Long and Bosma praised Holcomb. "I really love the man," Long said. "He respected the process during the last few weeks and let us do our work." Bosma added, "The governor handled this session very well and will be a great executive." All leadership agreed that Gov. Holcomb's first session went better than his predecessors Mike Pence and Mitch Daniels, with Sen. Long calling it very smooth. Leadership was also happy with other legislation passed this session saying, "We hit every goal we set out to do." Long observed, "We hit all five of the main issues of a balanced budget, roads plan, opioid addiction, workforce development and education funding."

They lauded the roads deal calling it the largest and best investment in state history. Bosma went so far as to call it "the most important piece of legislation I've ever worked on in my time here." Bosma added, "This session's historic, transforming achievements include the passage of the largest state and local infrastructure investment in Indiana's history and a structurally balanced state budget. Fiscal responsibility was the cornerstone of our legislative agenda as we supported commonsense, pro-growth policies that will fuel our state's top-ranked economic engine."

House Minority Leader Scott Pelath and Senate Minority leader Tim Lanane both said that while they rate Gov. Holcomb's first session as a "solid B," they feel there are areas for improvement.

The emerging consensus of Holcomb is one where he is in sync with a leadership that may be in flux over the next year. On Wednesday, Senate Chief of Staff Jeff Papa announced he is leaving for Barnes & Thornberg, and in his sine die address, Long alluded to the fact that Senate Appropriations Chairman Luke Kenley and Budget Chairman Brandt Hershman may have crafted their last budget.

As of Tuesday, Holcomb said he had signed 161 bills into law and has decisions to make on 109 others between now and May 6. One of those is HB 1496, the controversial "Ricker's bill" that seeks to crimp cold beer sales at convenience stores in Columbus and Sheridan. While Holcomb acknowledged that he defended the Alcohol Tobacco Commission which approved the two licenses, he added, "We're still reviewing it. I will reserve all comments."



Gov. Holcomb with Chief of Staff Earl Goode, who served in the same position for Gov. Mitch Daniels. Goode's presence created instant credibility for the fledgling administration. Holcomb greets Sen. Brandt Hershman as Rep. Ed Soliday looks on. (HPI Photos by Brian A. Howey)

Bosma has said he has had conversations with Holcomb about a potential alcohol distribution and regulation revamp in 2018.

Holcomb also said he would sign bills that would allow state employees to carry guns in the Statehouse, saying many have to “walk blocks” to their cars, often after midnight during session. He said he would sign a parental abortion bill, as well as a medicinal canniboid or CBD oil bill, adding, “This does not put us on a slippery slope” toward recreational marijuana legalization. He signed SEA 404 which requires parental consent for an abortion sought by a minor. Holcomb called it a “common sense” parental rights issue.

Right To Life President Mike Fichter observed, “This law is the first of many pro-life advances we expect to see during Gov. Holcomb’s tenure.”

On the ILEARN test replacing ISTEP, Holcomb vowed to work with Supt. Jennifer McCormick and the Department of Education to implement the new plan. He called McCormick a “workaholic” with whom he has an “excellent relationship.” He said he was pleased that HB1005 passed that will allow “my successor” to select a secretary of education beginning in 2025. Holcomb had asked for that authority in 2021 in what would conceivably be his second term.

And Holcomb said he would be working with the Indiana Department of Transportation to prioritize maintenance projects that will begin in July, as well as identifying projects for the second decade of the plan.

Here are how other modern gubernatorial administrations have fared during their first legislative sessions:

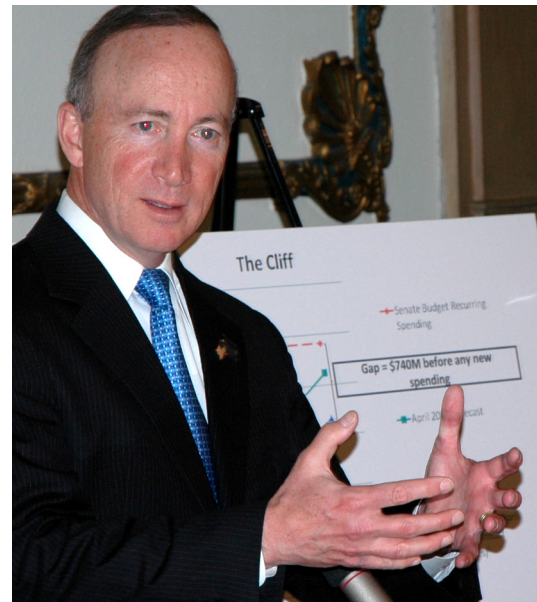
Gov. Mike Pence, 2013

From the April 30, 2013, edition of Howey Politics Indiana: A noteworthy first session, Gov. Pence was able to declare a “great victory” when the tax cut details were in place, he could also claim beyond the \$600 million in total tax relief, \$190 million in new K-12 funding, another \$100 million in new road funding. He was able to get unanimous votes on his regional work council and vocational education bills. Pence also cited \$35 million for school community foundations, \$70 million to meet the needs of the Department for Child Services, \$400 mil-

lion for a pre- kindergarten program, and \$25 million for research and development in life sciences.

He called it one of the “most civil, bipartisan and substantive session in recent memory. Members of both parties kept the focus where it should be, on jobs.”

Much of the attention of Pence’s first biennial budget centered on his proposed 10% income tax cut. But Bosma and Long, skeptical that it was part of a po-



Govs. Mike Pence and Mitch Daniels.
(HPI Photos by Brian A. Howey)

tential 2016 presidential campaign plank and fearing they might be faced with tax hikes if the economy tanked, pared it back to 5%. “We had some disagreements, some in public, more frequently in private,” Pence said. “But I think the good news for Hoosiers today is we came together to serve the best interests of Indiana. It was crafted in a spirit that I think would make every Hoosier proud.” Asked when the deal was struck, Pence paused for a considerable moment, then said, “I think it was the night before the deal was announced.”

He highlighted bigger job creation potential in the already passed cuts in the corporate income tax rate from 8.5% to 6.5% and the inheritance tax elimination, saying that small businesses and farms could now be passed on to subsequent generations and there would be fewer break-ups or sales to fund a tax liability. Pence delivered \$215 million in road funding for local governments.

Gov. Mitch Daniels, 2005

From the May 4, 2005, edition of Howey Politics Indiana: Daylight-saving time was merely the glitzy wrapper that cued in the short attention spans of TV news, with his economic “shovel ready” reforms something far

more substantive he believes will usher in a new era of growth. For the first time in Hoosier history, regional governance aimed at the state's two biggest population areas, Indianapolis and Northwest Indiana, brought stadiums, convention centers and mass transit projects that will become enduring economic cornerstones for the next several generations.

Daniels also sought and created the legislation for the Indiana Economic Development Corporation. "I think for the long haul, the incentives for small business, the modernization of our tax code for jobs in the new economy and the traditional economy, the ability to move quickly and to permit to be shovel-ready, to fill brownfields, energy incentives I think we'll see some very short term impact on, in clean coal, and investments in technology and biodiesel production," Gov. Daniels began. "I think some of this was obscured by some of the more newsworthy, I guess. I think for the long term this probably comes first; the reason to bring more economic growth to the state."

Joe Kernan, 2003

Gov. Kernan came to power in September 2003 with the death of Gov. Frank O'Bannon. Prior to that tragedy, Kernan stunned the Indiana political establishment by announcing in late 2002 he would not run for governor. He got off to a bold start when he named Kathy Davis as the first female lieutenant governor in state history. Kernan inherited a deficit, and found himself at loggerheads with powerful Republicans like Senate Finance Chairman Larry Borst, calling a special session in December.

House Speaker B. Patrick Bauer and Senate Republicans told Gov. Kernan that the state's \$1 billion budget deficit was his problem. To which the governor responded, "I have been told some members said, 'This is not my problem. It's Joe's problem.' I assume those members must be from some other state. This is our problem, our challenge."

Borst led the assault, after Kernan claimed the budget was balanced. "To call Indiana's budget 'balanced' and 'in the black' is misleading, at best," Borst said. Howey Politics Indiana observed: It was curious hearing that from Borst, who had more to do with crafting that troubled budget than anybody except for the late Gov. Frank O'Bannon, who allowed it to become law.

Kernan was also under attack during the session for the hemorrhaging of manufacturing jobs, and he was poised to face a challenge from former White House Budget Director Mitch Daniels.

The irony of 2004 was that Borst was upset in the May Republican primary and Gov. Kernan lost to Daniels that November, becoming the first sitting Indiana governor to lose an election.

Frank O'Bannon, 1997

In modern Indiana history, it was Democrats who ended up in special legislative sessions.

The key date for Gov. O'Bannon was May 27, 1997. It seems like an innocuous date today, but in reality it was the high point in the executive career of Gov. O'Bannon. This was the day the Indiana General Assembly reconvened in a special session, the fifth of the previous decade. It found the two 1996 gubernatorial opponents – O'Bannon and Republican Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith – tag teaming and speaking to House and Senate caucuses of the other party to forge an epic deal.

When the dust settled, the package had been hammered out on the new NBA arena for the Indiana Pac-



Gov. Frank O'Bannon forged stadium and workers compensation deals during his first session, while Gov. Joe Kernan's governorship began with a special session. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

ers and \$30 million in extensive renovations for the Indianapolis Colts at the RCA Dome. Both teams were threatening to leave the state, and within days of the final gavel there was an announcement that the NCAA was moving its national headquarters to the White River State Park, that there would be an 18% increase in workers compensation benefits, and a cut in the inheritance tax.

As the Howey Political Report observed in its June 6, 1997, edition, "Most critically, Indiana's stature in the eyes of the nation and its people not only dodged a potentially huge hit, but actually grew. From a psychological standpoint as we head into the next century, Indiana stands poised as a thriving manufacturing center with better protected workers and maintaining itself as a sports center."

On the day of the Indianapolis 500, it was O'Bannon who sought to move the splintered House and Senate leadership toward a deal. He not only had a Republican Senate still seething about his upset over Goldsmith the previous November, but House and Senate Republicans were engaged in bitter fratricide as Bob Garton and Larry Borst held court.

"You know my style of leadership and my legislative experience is to know the people and know the poli-

million. He had sought property tax relief, and ended up accepting a modified Republican plan that increased homestead credits. As part of a deal with Borst and House Ways and Means Chairman Pat Kiely, Bayh signed the "Taxpayer Bill of Rights," extending "safeguards" when Hoosiers have to deal with the Indiana Department of Revenue. Bayh had vetoed the bill during the regular session.

The session did have one success, the installation of the Hoosier Lottery, which voters had passed via refer-



Govs. Edgar Whitcomb and Evan Bayh at Gov. Frank O'Bannon's funeral in 2003; Govs. Robert Orr and Doc Bowen greet Gov. Evan Bayh. Below, Gov. Orr with a student.

cies involved and to try and put those together to make some sense," O'Bannon told me after the dust settled. "Then as I worked at it over the weekend, I decided what the five bills would be and they were the Pacers bill, innkeepers bill, workers comp bill, and the inheritance tax bill and the unemployment insurance bill. It gave a \$50 million break to business. I added that to the package in case they wanted to throw something off."

The 1997 session would be the high point of O'Bannon's two terms. He was dogged by a recession and a court challenge to Indiana's property tax system. And he always had a Republican Senate to deal with.

Evan Bayh, 1989

Gov. Bayh had to deal with a 50/50 House and alternating speakers and committee chairs. Thus, Senate Republicans like Borst and Garton had an out-sized influence on the process. But the fledgling Democrat had the veto and squelched the first biennial budget presented to him after 132 of the 150 legislators had voted for the measure.

Ultimately, Bayh was forced to draw down the state's surplus in the subsequent special session by more than \$193 million to just \$65.4

million in 1988 with 64% of the vote following a decade of Republican opposition. It created the Build Indiana Fund with access to \$85 million. It also passed pari-mutual betting.

Robert Orr, 1981

The Republican succeeded the popular Doc Bowen, but took office with the economy plunged into a deep recession created by the 1979 oil shock. Orr was able to forge a biennial budget, but the real mark of his first session occurred in 1982, when after the mid-term election, Orr had to call a December special session and pass a record tax increase.



Top aide John Hammond III told HPI, "For all new administrations and governors with new staff members, it was having the Republicans controlling the House and Senate becoming used to a new executive, even though he had been around for eight years as lieutenant governor and spend four years in the Senate. You would have thought he would have been one of the easiest folks to adjust to." But Hammond said the recession that began in 1979 and per-

sisted for three years was one of the worst since the Great Depression. "We came in with a lot of campaign promises we couldn't keep on education," Hammond recalled. "We saw the revenue dropping month after month."

Another top Orr aide, Mark Lubbers, noted, "The slowdown in the economy in 1980 went without saying. And with Ronald Reagan's election it was clear that Paul Voelker was going to get the full green light (and help on the fiscal side) for the ultimate monetary policy response to put the inflation fire out. So the revenue had already begun to contract and just over the horizon you could see that tight money was coming and with it a cliff of a decline in state revenue. You can imagine the effect of 18% interest rates on auto sales. This would be the final nail on the coffin of the post World War II-U.S. auto industry. OPEC had made gas mileage relevant in the 70s. Detroit's response was paltry and hamhanded.

"Now commences three years of financial meltdown and with it the economies of Kokomo, New Castle, Anderson, Richmond, Marion, Muncie, Connersville," Lubbers continued. "Then add to that the demise of the Lake and Porter County steel mills and the RV industry in the Elkhart pocket. This is when Hammond began losing his hair."



Gov. Doc Bowen forged property tax reforms in 1973, with Sen. Charles Bosma casting the decisive vote in the Senate.

Because of the severe recession, Orr was attacked by the ISTA and the education lobby, and the Indianapolis Star accused him of renegeing on his promises. "We got off to a difficult start with a powerful interest lobby," Hammond said. The revenue outcroppings of 1981 crushed Orr's first biennial budget, prompting him to call a special session in December 1982, passing the largest tax increase in state history. That it was called after the mid-term elections brought scathing criticism to Orr.

Orr was able to recover politically, winning reelection in 1984 with President Reagan providing landslide cover. Orr's true achievement came in 1987 when he pushed his epic A Plus education plan (that ironically, created ISTEP).

Doc Bowen, 1973

The House speaker used the 1972 campaign to pledge a comprehensive property tax reform. That came to be in the 1973 session, though the legendary tax reform legislation won by narrow votes in both the Senate and House, with a crucial and deciding vote coming from State Sen. Charles Bosma, father of Speaker Brian Bosma. ❖

Running for office?



PoliticalBank is the only resource candidates and elected officials need to move their campaigns forward.

PoliticalBank is a simple, interactive platform and a powerful, cost-effective alternative to the "old way" of online campaigning, without the hassle of designing your own campaign website or the expense of hiring web developers or consultants.

"Great job on a useful and innovative website. Your site empowers candidates and helps equip voters in a new & comprehensive way."

- Mayor Blair Milo, LaPorte, Indiana

- ✓ Raise money online
- ✓ Increase your Name ID
- ✓ Connect with voters
- ✓ Define your own campaign
- ✓ Clearly convey your stance on important issues

Get started in **less than 10 minutes** on a computer, tablet, or smartphone.

Campaigns start here. Visit www.PoliticalBank.com

Holcomb signs bills taking on opioid crisis

Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS – Gov. Eric Holcomb took decisive action Wednesday in combating the drug epidemic by signing his three legislative agenda bills into law as well as the bill to expand Indiana’s On My Way pre-k pilot program. These four bills were key items included in his Next Level legislative agenda.

Attacking the drug epidemic



“The opioid crisis is negatively impacting the lives of Hoosiers, their families, our communities, even our economy,” Gov. Holcomb said. “I commend lawmakers for supporting my initiatives and delivering a package of legislation that provides a holistic framework for us to attack this

epidemic.”

Since 2000, deaths from drug overdoses have increased 500 percent, and Indiana ranks 15th in the country in overdose fatalities. On his first day in office, Gov. Holcomb created a new position, the Executive Director for Drug Prevention, Treatment and Enforcement, and appointed Jim McClelland to lead the effort. His legislative agenda included three bills designed to address the crisis in a coordinated and comprehensive way, and he signed all three into law today:

SEA 226: Limits the amount of opioids that can be prescribed during a doctor’s first opioid prescription to a particular patient. This reduces the risk of addiction and reduces the phenomenon of “doctor shopping,” when drug addicted patients go to multiple doctors for opioid prescriptions.

HEA 1438: Allows local governments to approve and establish syringe exchange programs to stop the spread of dangerous infectious diseases.

HEA 1540: Elevates the level of felony that can be assessed for robbing a pharmacy or pharmacist under varying circumstances.

Prekindergarten

Gov. Holcomb also signed House Enrolled Act 1004 (HEA 1004) to expand Indiana’s On My Way pre-k pilot program from five to 20 counties and increase funding for early education programs by \$10 million per year. This bill is a key component of the governor’s Next Level agenda to prepare a skilled and ready 21st century workforce.

“My goal this session was to double the number of low-income students who have access to quality pre-kindergarten programs,” Gov. Holcomb said. “It’s a joy to

sign this bill that gives more students a great start to their educational journeys.”

Additionally, Holcomb signed 21 other bills. Visit the 2017 Bill Watch webpage to view these and other bills the governor has signed into law.

Holcomb signs lethal injection bill

Indiana plans to replenish its depleted stock of execution drugs by offering total anonymity to a drug maker, distributor or individual pharmacist who can supply the state with the chemicals needed to carry out a death sentence (Carden, NWI Times). A provision tucked in the two-year state budget that Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb is expected to sign today bars the release of information about any entity that provides execution drugs to the Department of Correction, including its name, location, employees, subcontractors or manufacturing process. House Speaker Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, said lawmakers agreed to insert the confidentiality clause into House Enrolled Act 1001 so Indiana would not be caught in the same situation as Arkansas, which is rushing this week to carry out executions before its lethal injection drugs expire. “The language requested by the governor just allows the state to access its death penalty drugs which will not be sold to states that do not have similar language,” Bosma said.

According to the Department of Correction, Indiana employs a three-drug protocol to execute death row inmates at the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City. The first drug induces unconsciousness, the second paralyzes the respiratory system and the third stops the heart. At least one of the three drugs is in short supply generally. Another no longer will be sold or exported by its manufacturer if the drug is to be used for an execution. The legislation approved last week by the Republican-controlled House, 68-30, and the Republican-controlled Senate, 42-8, aims to bypass those limitations by guaranteeing secrecy to any drug company willing to sell to the state. Failing that, it also extends the protection to any pharmacist, located anywhere in the world, who is willing to create facsimiles of the drugs out of their basic chemical components. The governor said he’s not sure even that will get Indiana the drugs it needs to carry out an execution, though he’s committed to doing whatever it takes to get them.

Holcomb order on ‘ban the box’

Holcomb has issued an Executive Order to ‘ban the box’ on job applications (Thayer, Eagle Country). The executive order bans the state’s executive office from including questions about prior arrests or criminal history on job applications. The announcement applies only to Indiana’s public sector jobs. The Indiana Institute for Working Families says the executive order will reduce barriers to employment for more than 1.12 million Hoosiers with records in the state’s criminal history file. Gov.

Holcomb has paired his executive order with the signing of Senate Bill 312, which will preempt cities and local governments from passing their own 'ban the box' and other 'fair chances' hiring ordinances.

Holcomb signs background check bill

Gov. Eric Holcomb signed into law State Rep. Jeff Thompson's (R-Lizton) bill strengthening background check requirements for Indiana school employees, according to the House Republican Caucus. State law requires expanded background checks be completed within three months of being hired. House Enrolled Act 1079 tightens the expanded background check requirement on new employees to before or within 30 days of their start date. Thompson said current school employees will now undergo background checks every five years. In addition, the new law requires Indiana schools to conduct a child protection index check on new employees before or within 60 days of their start date.

Pelath says casino bill breaks promises

Lawmakers representing Indiana's communities with casinos say legislation awaiting the governor's signature breaks promises and drains local budgets (Smith, Indiana Public Media). The legislation seeks to modernize Indiana's gaming tax system. But the measure could decrease how much money local communities get from their casinos. Under existing law, locals are guaranteed \$48 million a year; under the bill, if gaming revenues continue to fall, so will the money for those communities, beginning in 2022. Rep. Scott Pelath (D-Michigan City) says delaying the financial decrease doesn't make the bill better. "This is really one of those bills that got watered down some but I really hoped was going to drown before it crossed the river," Pelath says. Rep. Randy Frye (R-Greensburg), who represents gaming communities on the Ohio River, says taking the money away breaks a long-standing deal. "I don't believe this bill's gonna stay like this. I believe this isn't the endgame - this is the beginning of the end. We'll be back. We'll take more. We'll accelerate it and we'll do it to the poorest and smallest communities in our state," Frye says.

Holcomb tells Terre Haute to try again

Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb is telling us to try, try again (McClanahan, WTO-TV). The General Assembly

turned down a local food and beverage tax to help finance improvements to Hulman Center. Tom McClanahan asked the governor for his reaction to that denial and he says to go to the well again. "But I would just encourage folks there locally, your legislative delegation, to come back and make your case again because this isn't just a one-inning game," Holcomb said. "We have to take a long view here and with the local and state and national economy ever changing we have to meet the needs of the future. That'll take a long, a long view to make sure we realize that." Governor Holcomb says his office did not get everything it wanted from the legislature, but like he advises here, he will try again next year.

No funds for Indy Eleven stadium

The Indy Eleven's bid to join Major League Soccer appeared to take a serious blow last week when the Indiana General Assembly concluded its session without passing legislation that would help fund a downtown soccer stadium that the team's owner says is necessary to land a spot in the sport's top U.S. pro league (Schoettle, Indianapolis Business Journal). For those who were unaware the North American Soccer League franchise made a plea for help from state lawmakers during the recently concluded General Assembly: You probably weren't alone. The Eleven made an eleventh-hour pitch for aid with most of the presentations conducted privately and quietly. "Indy Eleven remains committed to continuing conversations with interested and supportive parties regarding a public-private partnership that can bring a new multipurpose stadium to downtown Indianapolis," said Eleven President Jeff Belskus in the statement. ❖

**Photography
With Punch**
Mark Curry On Indiana Politics
mark1tcphotography@gmail.com
<http://mark1tc.smugmug.com/Political/>

An unrelenting opioid crisis

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE – One of the biggest problems facing police officers in Northwest Indiana – and across the country for that matter – is that the flow of narcotics isn't going to stop. As hard as they try to catch the drug dealers and the mules who transport the narcotics, it isn't a winnable battle.



But you have to give the police credit for trying; they do take narcotics and drug dealers off the streets. But while police are making an impact, 91 people are dying every day from drug overdoses across the country.

It is an especially serious problem in Northwest Indiana. Lake County last year had 63 heroin deaths, while 20 died in Porter County from opioid overdoses. And those dying aren't the bad guys. They are the victims.

Schererville Police Chief David Dowling knows there need to be changes in law enforcement's approach to opioids. "We all understand the opioid epidemic has gotten so bad that this isn't a problem we can arrest our

way out of," Dowling said. "The goal is to reach people before the addiction leads them down the path of committing criminal acts in our community."

There were three deaths and five non-fatal heroin overdoses in Schererville last year.

What Dowling has done is partner with Heartland Recovery Center of Lowell to help stop the impact of opioids. The new partnership will allow Schererville police to help addicts who seek help without fear of prosecution. They can get help before being arrested or overdosing. And the help will be provided regardless of a person's financial status or whether they have insurance.

The program provides an individual a path for recovery without fear of arrest and prosecution.

It is one of the programs Dowling likely will talk about during his current campaign for Lake County sheriff. Dowling's vision in terms of the opioid problem is the kind of thing that has made him one of the favorites to be the county's next sheriff.

Sheriff John Buncich cannot seek a third term in 2018. He also faces the possibility of leaving office before his term ends if he is convicted on charges of soliciting bribes from tow truck operators.

His trial is slated for August. ❖

Rich James has been writing about state and local government and politics for more than 30 years. He is a columnist for The Times of Northwest Indiana.

HOOSIERS SMOKING = \$6 BILLION IN HEALTH CARE COSTS AND LOST PRODUCTIVITY

INDIANA CHAMBER
LEADING BUSINESS | ADVANCING INDIANA

It's time to change that. | www.indianachamber.com/grassroots

The ‘don’t mess this up session’ stays clean

By THOMAS CURRY

ATLANTA, Ga. – Despite a dominating 2016 election night for Indiana Republicans, there remained a thought not even the champagne and streamers helped them escape, “don’t mess this up.” Just two years prior, the Religious Freedom Act brought down golden boy Gov. Mike Pence to the point where reelection seemed improbable. Public outcry against the Republican Party and leadership severely upset business at the Statehouse.

From day one of the 2017 legislative session, it was clear it would be a well-crafted machine with the main task, after serving the state, to avoid a major gaffe again. Lawmakers shared focus with new Gov. Eric Holcomb on the budget, a comprehensive roads bill, pre-K expansion, workforce development and attacking the opioid epidemic. The majority party was driven and focused to tackle some of the state’s most pressing issues. It was a well-oiled machine, all levels of government working together toward common goals. They even got done one week early.

There were hiccups along the way, but they proved only minor. This came when a bill changing the superintendent of public instruction to an appointed position, a Holcomb priority, failed surprisingly in the Senate. But not even a month after the mix-up, the issue passed after some changes were made to the law.

The Ricker’s cold beer law provided an unexpected hurdle. While the issue didn’t end on a sunny note, it didn’t delay the close of session. Top lawmakers recognize that it’s something they have to go back to. Both Senate President David Long and Speaker Brian Bosma said they expect the issue to return next year, and that the entire alcohol law will be looked at. If they are able to deliver on the promise of fixing the state’s archaic alcohol system, it would quickly erase away the memories of the Ricker’s issue.

And for the first time in a long while, there was no

large social issue that controlled debate for weeks on end. An abortion reversal bill, which nearly the entire scientific community and some legislators called “junk science,” passed out of the House but died a quiet death in the Senate, where the bill wasn’t even picked up by committee.

The most important part of this well-oiled machine was Gov. Holcomb. He has something not seen in current government executives, the ability to keep quiet. Holcomb didn’t go to the press or openly interfere with the General Assembly’s work this session. But by all accounts, he was a firm hand behind closed doors, working to push his legislative agenda through. It was a resounding success, with nearly every item Holcomb requested



Scenes from sine die: The House adjourns, President Long, Speaker Bosma have press avails and House Transportation Chairman Ed Soliday celebrate. (HPI Photos by Thomas Curry)

being passed. Holcomb held but a few press conferences the entire session, but it wasn’t the runaway act seen by Mike Pence during the election cycle. Holcomb provided real answers to questions and a deep understanding and willingness to act on them, such as the East Chicago lead issue.

While it will be roads and the budget discussed from this session, the important milestone is moving on from Pence. If Gov. Holcomb, Speaker Bosma and Senate President Long can keep the focus and efficiency seen this year, the Republican golden age in Indiana will continue expanding. ❖

Rokita talks policy and President Trump

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – A week ago we conducted an HPI Interview with U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita on his probable 2018 U.S. Senate race. In this part of our interview, we talked with him about the policy and politics in Washington, ranging from Obamacare, North Korea and President Trump's temperament.

Here is Part II of our interview:

HPI: Let's talk about what happened in Washington this

year. RyanCare couldn't get 216 votes in the Republican House. State Sen. John Ruckleshaus suggests a bipartisan presidential commission on health care. What's wrong with that idea?

Rokita: I'm very intrigued by the Ruckleshaus idea. We've had commissions in the past. Maybe that works now. But a lot of times, commissions do the work, sometimes for years on end, and then legislators take up parts of it or any of it. I mean, look at the (Simpson-Bowles) debt commission. That's been done a couple of times. I really like the idea of us working this out. In fact, I've been on the phone daily these last two weeks working with individual legislators on different amendments and tweaks. The legislative process is still solid on this issue. I think this bill is coming back, as it should.

HPI: But in a partisan context, right?

Rokita: True. I'm hopeful we can get Democrats on, but these issues are partisan. I'll bring you back to the debt commission. How do you solve the debt problem? It's always more revenue vs. less spending. It never gets resolved.

HPI: Even Lee Hamilton said in retrospect of Obamacare, if you do that kind of social re-engineering on a partisan basis, it's going to create problems. And it did. And then you look at the creation of Medicare, Medicaid, the 1981 Reagan tax cuts, the Social Security Act of 1983 and the tax reform act of 1986 and they

all passed with bipartisan support. President Reagan and Speaker O'Neill were able to cut deals and find compromise. As a Hoosier, as a citizen, that's what I want to see. I think President Obama and the Democrats got sucked in and decided to go it alone, and here we are.

Rokita: I guess I would say to look at the bill. We kept two major pieces of Obamacare. We made a significant down payment on bipartisanship. We're keeping the pre-existing condition mandate and 26-year-olds can stay on the policy. We have reached out. I think the environment is going to be very difficult; we've shown we're willing to keep a good idea.

HPI: Let's talk about President Trump. I saw your supportive remarks of him up in Crawfordsville the other day. You're pretty much on board here and you're hearing that from many of your constituents. What do you see in this president?

Rokita: I'm very much on board and I have been since the day of the nomination. I started out supporting Marco Rubio, a good friend. We do a lot of legislation together. We're working on one of President Trump's major issues, tax credits for school choice. We're carrying a seminal piece of his agenda. But I am all in for President Trump. He has connected to the forgotten man. The Republicans are the party of the working man. We can't

forget that. If we run for the Senate, that's going to be a huge part that we talk about. There are candidates or potential candidates with the same old playbook, the same old people, many who were against Trump, many outright hostile. You're going to see that contrast in the Rokita camp, whatever form that campaign takes over the next 14 months. He is not your typical president, I will acknowledge, and I think ultimately that is going to be to his credit. Every day I hear constituents say, "Nobody is polling me and I'm for this man." These are small business owners, rank and file Republicans. These are just regular people. A man last fall put Trump signs up all over Putnam County along with my signs. He hadn't voted in 20 years. He's back engaged now. That's what Trump brings. That's one of the big reasons I'm behind him.

HPI: I asked Luke Messer and Todd Young about this, the loose treatment of the truth. Does that bother you?



Rokita: The loose treatment of the truth?

HPI: If you look at Politifact, Trump rated as one of the least truthful politicians ever. The guy lies a lot. Does that bother you?

Rokita: Look, Politifact said Obamacare is going to cost less and give you more choices. That was a big lie. I'm not going to take Politifact or any of those folks as the gospel; politics is politics. There is embellishment in politics. This president is a marketer for sure, but all presidents have been marketers. There is a cult of personality in the Oval Office. Like it or not, in presidential politics there are cults of personality. I wouldn't accuse the president of being a liar, just as I wouldn't accuse President Obama of outright lying. He clearly said if you like your doctor you can keep him. If you like your insurance policy you can keep it. That wasn't true. I'm not going to accuse him of being a liar.

HPI: Do you think he can get the repeal/replace done, and, subsequently, tax reform?

Rokita: I think we can get it done. I use the pronoun we. I hope Democrats come along. The tax code hasn't been effectively reformed since 1986. I think Democrats see that. Even President Obama wanted the corporate tax rate down. I think we need to get health reform done first, in order to have some of the savings to get tax reform that is revenue neutral. As a budgeteer, one of the main reasons I went to Congress and one of the main reasons I'll go to the Senate, is to help reduce the debt load for future generations. Tax cuts are one thing, but I would rather do tax reform in a revenue neutral way.

HPI: And then there's the Trump infrastructure plan, said to be \$1 trillion, with no apparent way to pay for it. We had a text exchange in which you took issue with that. That goes right into your wheelhouse. Is that putting you on a potential collision course with the administration?

Rokita: It could. I'm working on ways to make sure it is paid for. It may not be the government having to come up with the \$1 trillion. It depends on how many public/private partnerships are involved. As the only Hoosier on the transportation committee and the vice chair of the budget committee, you're right, that's going to be center. A lot of people in Washington haven't realized there's a new guy calling the tune in Washington and that's President Trump. I'm willing to recognize his leadership. I'm willing to move and dance to get what he wants done, so long as the band is paid for. That's to the extent that I might get off the Trump train. For six years I've been hawking on deficits. Because there's a new party in the Oval Office, that doesn't matter anymore? No, it still matters. That's my job as a leader to promise to future generations that that stays in the forefront.

HPI: North Korea, there's some saber-rattling going on. Your perspectives?

Rokita: I'm really proud of the vice president. Mike Pence is doing in Asia now and he's done in the recent past what he was born to do. He's excellent at it. He's helping President Trump show there's a new sheriff in

town. I think it ultimately will bring results, that it will be China which takes care of the problem and not us.

HPI: You think that's going to happen?

Rokita: I do. I think you're seeing a change in attitude right now with President Xi. That's all good.

HPI: The influence of the Mother of All Bombs and his Tomahawks into Syria are playing into that? Being a little unpredictable. During the campaign we were asking, is he crazy? Or is he crazy like a fox?

Rokita: That may be what they're thinking, but they are also seeing leadership they haven't seen in eight years. The response in Syria was measured

HPI: I think he should have gone further. Why is there no "no fly" zone in place?

Rokita: Perhaps we will and I'd be for that. It was a measured response to a specific action that helped the legitimacy of it. I think with regard to North Korea you're going to see a measured response.

HPI: There's a reason we haven't plunged bunker busters in Pyongyang in the past, because they could kill half a million people in Seoul. Do you think the administration understands that?

Rokita: I do. There are very good people. Look at the cabinet. He's got some very good human beings around him. I think he's going to have the chops our revered Sen. Lugar had in some areas. Sen. Lugar has had a critique here and there, but I think President Trump has the same goals and same wishes in his heart that Sen. Lugar has. They are just not articulated in the same fashion.

HPI: Any issues you want to touch on?

Rokita: My whole political life I've been a fighter, not a lover. I've always been independent. That's gotten me great grassroots and some establishment friends around the state. But it makes some of my establishment friends nervous. I get that. You can't do redistricting reform as secretary of state with Mitch Daniels cheerleading me on and not create some tension. But we have better lines because of it. That's what really attracts me to public service. We can effect change. I never come to you in the press with a blowup kind of thing. When you leave the kids every week to do this, you want to do big things. You want to move the dial.

HPI: Should Indiana have an independent redistricting commission? I believe that was a stance of yours as secretary of state.

Rokita: It wasn't my main stance. It was, you guys in the legislature have the constitutional authority to do this. You should do it with much better parameters, respecting boundaries, not using political data. That really teed 'em off. When you baldly use Republican and Democrat primary information to draw the lines, that's easily found out. I thought they could do that without a commission. The problem with unelected commissions is you lose that direct link to the voter. I worried about that as secretary of state. But if that's the only way to get that reform done, then fine.

HPI: I had a cover story a couple of weeks ago on the Cook Partisan Index. We don't have any competitive congressional districts left in this state. That's why politics is so polarized in Washington. Does that concern you?

Rokita: No. Indiana is a conservative state. It may not always be a Republican state but it will always be a conservative state. So your lines, your congressional delegation and the Statehouse are reflective of that, if not always reflecting. That needs to be taken into account. People say we don't have a 50/50 divided House any more in the General Assembly; in order for Pat Bauer or his predecessor to get that 50/50 House, you really had to gerrymander. If competition is your main goal, in Indiana you're really going to have to gerrymander to get there.

These boundaries are not perfect, but they're better than it was.

HPI: Is Sheridan in your district?

Rokita: About 50 yards outside of it.

HPI: Well, your old buddies in the Indiana Senate don't want to see cold beer being sold in convenience stores, though you can buy cold wine. Are you okay with that?

Rokita: Well, I think the time has come. Republicans pride themselves on being free market. The free market definitely demands this, and supply ought to meet the demand. The contortion to justify the current regime isn't justifiable any more. ❖

Gauging Indiana's population growth

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Last month we covered the basic population changes of Indiana and its 92 counties from 2010 through 2016. Now let's go deeper to look at the components of population changes – natural increase, domestic and international migration.



Populations grow because, usually, more babies are born than people die. We call that natural increase which accounted for 96% of Indiana's population growth in the years of 2011 to 2016. That means migration (domestic and international) was responsible for just 4% of our growth.

Economically, babies are important. They spur people to earn so they can spend on cribs, diapers, larger homes, and ultimately education and weddings. Deaths, although important to selected sectors, do not have the wide economic impact of births.

Marion led 70 counties in natural increase with 40,481 more births than deaths. In contrast, among the 22 counties experiencing natural decrease, Henry County (New Castle) led with 572 more deaths than births. The lowest ratios of deaths to births were in LaGrange (0.35) and Hamilton (0.38) counties, while the highest ratios were in Vermillion (1.32), Brown (1.30) and Fayette (1.27).

When we talk about nations, states, counties or other unnatural divisions of the globe, migration is a key factor in population change. Total migration accounted for only 5,232 persons in the growth of Indiana during the

years 2011 through 2016.

However, there was a dramatic difference between net domestic migration and net international migration for Indiana. In the years covered, 56,184 more persons left Indiana for other places in the U.S. than moved to Indiana. This substantial negative flow was counter-balanced by a net international inflow of 61,416 persons.

Only 13 Hoosier counties enjoyed positive net domestic migration totaling 51,587 persons, led by Hamilton County with 20,872. The remaining 79 counties lost a net total of 170,771.

While all these persons moving may seem like a lot, they do not reflect the total number of inter-county migrants because we do not have the detailed data on how many moved from where to where. The census data say there was net out-migration of more than 19,000 from each of Lake and Marion counties and nearly 6,000 from St. Joseph County. But, how many were just crossing a county line and how many left the state?

Although lacking detail, net international migration seems clearer. Indiana had 82 counties with positive sums of 61,466 persons and only 10 counties with 40 net out-migrants. In Daviess, Jefferson, Tippecanoe, Monroe, and Allen counties, positive international migration more than offset negative domestic migration.

In summary, natural increase was the population growth driver in 19 Indiana counties overcoming negative net migration. Only 13 counties were positive in all three components. Every county with natural decrease also had negative domestic migration to result in total population declines.

Now re-read this piece and ask yourself: Is this something we can and should do something about? ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist, writer, and speaker who may be reached at mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com.

Donnelly, Young hear North Korea briefing

Howey Politics Indiana

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sens. Joe Donnelly and Todd Young attended a briefing at the White House on the recent aggressive actions by North Korea, his office announced. Donnelly said, "Addressing the threat North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles pose to the United States and our allies needs to be a top national security priority for the President and Congress. As the Ranking Member of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, I have been to the DMZ and met with Hoosiers stationed there. I will continue to work with my colleagues on a bipartisan basis to increase sanctions against North Korea and those who enable them and ensure our military has the resources it needs to protect our homeland and our troops." Young said, "Today's briefing at the White House underscored that North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs represent an urgent and unacceptable threat to the United States and our allies. The administration must keep all options on the table. Furthermore, I support the Trump administration's strategy of coordinating closely with our allies, strengthening our military capabilities in the region, and making clear to Beijing that it is in China's interests to utilize all of their available diplomatic and economic leverage to change North Korea's behavior."

Messer, Rokita join Trump, DeVos

U.S. Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita joined President Donald Trump for the signing of an Executive Order calling on Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to review existing regulations on America's schools and teachers, and identify Education Department overreach during the Obama administration, his office announced in news release. "Our schools, teachers and administrators are buried under one-size-fits-all, federal regulations that in many cases do more harm than good," Messer said. "We need to identify outdated and overreaching rules that restrict local educators, stifle innovation in the classroom and ultimately hold our students back from success." Rokita said, "As the Chairman of the Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education subcommittee, I fight to restore local and state control of education. As a coauthor of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which the Wall Street Journal called the largest devolution of power in a quarter century, I worked to protect students from overreaching Washington mandates and the federal coercion to adopt national standards as a condition

of receiving taxpayer dollars. As we approach this administration's first 100 days, it is great to have partners in President Donald Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, both whom share my desire to get the federal government out of education and back to the states, where it rightly belongs."

Walorski sees 'key step' to tax reform

U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski (R-Ind.) released the following statement on the Trump administration's tax reform plan: "Tax reform is about jobs, economic growth, and prosperity. President Trump's outline is a key step as we work together toward our common goal of a simpler, fairer tax code built for growth. Fixing our broken tax code and lowering rates will mean individuals and families can



U.S. Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita join President Trump and Vice President Pence on Wednesday.

keep more of their hard-earned dollars, and businesses of all sizes can be more competitive on the global stage and create more jobs. I am more confident than ever that we will get this done for the American people."

Bucshon seeks 'simpler, fairer' tax code

U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon said of President Trump's proposed tax plan, "I consistently heard from Hoosier families and job creators about their frustration with a broken and burdensome tax code. By just about every measure, it's clear that the tax code needs significant overhaul. I am encouraged to see President Trump set broad goals for tax reform today that builds on the Better Way initiative House Republicans released last year."

Freedom Caucus endorses health plan

President Donald Trump inched closer to his elusive goal of transforming the health care system Wednesday as hard-line House conservatives in the Freedom Caucus — once the chief opponents of the GOP plan — embraced a new proposal to replace Obamacare. "It's only a matter of time now," Rep. Patrick McHenry, the House's chief deputy whip, declared after the House's arch-conservative Freedom Caucus endorsed the measure. ❖

The continuing erosion of transparency

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – Our representative democracy depends on voters developing discriminating judgments about policies and politicians. They can't do that if vital information is withheld from them. For the last few years, I've been keeping a file of clippings about the erosion of transparency and candor in government. I'm sorry to report that it's getting rather full.

This is not a good thing. Public officials should feel strongly obliged to do their business in an open and upfront manner. When you hold public office, the presumption ought always to be in favor of the people's right to know what's going on. If you don't want to be open to scrutiny, then the burden surely has to be on you to say specifically why that's necessary.

This doesn't seem to be a commonly held view in Washington these days, though the precedent for non-disclosure is bipartisan. News conferences have been rare for Mr. Obama and Mr. Trump. During the George W. Bush administration the NSA was wiretapping Americans' overseas communications based on legal justifications that were withheld from the public. Under the Obama administration, the Justice Department pushed to compromise a fundamental principle under which federal agencies made public their rationale for how they interpreted and administered the law.

The current administration has made policy-making more secretive than ever. President Trump refuses to release his tax returns, making it impossible for Americans to know whether his actions also happen to affect his financial bottom line. There have been constant attempts to draw a curtain over possible ties between Trump aides and Russia. The secretary of state talks about shifting policy toward North Korea, but gives no indication of what that policy is. The president has promised to rip up the Iran nuclear agreement, but has not done it and doesn't tell us what his policy toward Iran is.

Vice President Pence has said all options are on the table with regard to Syria and that its conduct "cannot be tolerated," but the administration is mum on what that actually means for strategy. Indeed, when asked his Syria intentions by reporters, President Trump

responded, "I'm not going to tell you."

This attitude is especially worrisome when it comes to foreign policy, where robust public debate over policy serves our national interests. Yet Secretary of State Rex Tillerson traveled to Beijing, Seoul and Tokyo for key meetings without a press accompaniment, went for weeks without holding a press conference, and has yet to deliver a speech outlining U.S. policy in any detail. He says, "I'm not a big media press access person." Yet, he is officially our face both at home and abroad on relations with allies and rivals, and we don't actually know what policies he's pursuing.

There are legitimate secrets and reasons for non-disclosure, of course, and I'm confident that most Americans understand that they're sometimes necessary. When public officials state occasionally that they cannot speak to a given question and lay out the reasons why, people tend to accept it.

All too often, though, classification and obfuscation are used to avoid debate and scrutiny for political reasons, or to protect bureaucrats or public officials whose actions simply could not hold up under the light of rigorous scrutiny. That's why leaks, as much as presidents and cabinet members decry them, can be so important; that's how we learned about the Watergate scandal, about the sale of weapons to Iran in Iran-Contra, about the torture we conducted at Abu Ghraib, about the NSA's spying. And it's why financial disclosure at every level, from the presidency to city hall, matters.

For in the end, people need to know what policymakers are doing and why. And policy makers need to respect the interest and the intelligence of the voters, and heed their obligation to the voter for candor and disclosure. Our representative democracy depends on voters developing discriminating judgments about policies and politicians, and they can't do it if vital information is withheld from them. In a democracy like ours, it's the height of disrespect for public officials to keep their actions and thinking cloaked.

There's no reason for the public to brook such disrespect. We need to demand open communication, straight talk, and more complete disclosure of information. We need to expect that our public officials will do their

business in public – and that if they can't, they'll explain clearly to us why not. This is our democracy. Let's treat it that way. ❖

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar, IU. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.



ANTELOPE CLUB

615 N. DELAWARE ST. - DOWNTOWN INDY
antelopeclub@hotmail.com



>> Lunch & dinner 6 days a week

>> Cigar lounge

>> Beautiful view of Downtown from our 2nd floor patio

YOUR FRIENDS ALL HANG OUT HERE... DO YOU?

Knute Rockne's first interview in 86 years

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – For only the second time in 86 years, Knute Rockne, legendary University of Notre Dame football coach, has granted an interview.



Ever since all the reader reaction to my 2014 interview with Mr. Rockne, who was hopeful then about Notre Dame football and changes in "the house that Rockne built," I've been requesting that he speak again. And he did, on the eve of Saturday's Blue-Gold Game in the house that he built.

Q. Mr. Rockne, you liked those past changes in the stadium, adding 21,000 seats, bigger concourse, permanent lights. Do you like the sta-

dium's new look today?

A. Not sure. Can't see it with those monstrous buildings blocking the view on three sides.

Q. It's called the Campus Crossroads Project, Mr. Rockne. They're connected with the stadium and will bring in lots of new revenue with luxury seating. Weren't you always seeking ways to make money from football?

A. Yep. For Notre Dame and myself. If it wasn't for the money I brought in from football and the prestige football brought for that little Catholic college, it never would have become the great university it is today.

Q. Those buildings will provide lots of space for student activities and academic purposes. Does that make you regard them as more than just something blocking a stadium view?

A. I guess. I'm for expansion of academic facilities. We got that started with football revenue.

Q. How about that big video board at the south end?

A. Fine. Would have wanted one if they had 'em back when I designed the place. When I finally convinced the Fathers to finance a stadium, after threatening to resign if they didn't, we had a great stadium. It would be considered a dinky stadium now if they never expanded it.

Q. Did you see they moved the press box to the east side of the stadium?

A. Smart. The sports writers gotta look into the sun on afternoon games. Won't see all those missed tackles.

Q. That brings us to coach Brian Kelly. You said in our interview during the 2014 season that he was better than a lot of the coaches they picked since you left. Still think so?

A. I do. Kelly had one bad season. My 1928 season wasn't so hot either. Kelly's no Parseghian. But he's no Faust. He's better than that big pro guy they fired and paid off with millions not to coach. Paid him more than it cost to build my stadium.

Q. What about Saturday's Blue-Gold Game?

A. Notre Dame will win.

Q. Hard to lose when scrimmaging yourself. But how many games will the Irish win during the season?

A. Lot more than last season.

Q. Why?

A. I think they'll have a defense this year.

Q. Should Kelly give pep talks like you did?

A. Win one for the Gipper? Doesn't work with players today. They'd want me to play what I recorded from Gipp on my cellphone.

Q. Well, what should Kelly do?

A. Promote his players. Look at how I promoted the Four Horsemen. Kelly, if they lost, would throw them under the horses.



Q. Do you like that they didn't block the north end of the stadium with another monstrous building?

A. Yes, you can actually see the stadium from the north. And they didn't dare to block out Touchdown Jesus.

Q. Seating space now will be wider. Why did you build it with such small seat width?

A. To get capacity up to what the Fathers demanded. The backsides of fans have expanded since then.

Q. What do you think about Vice President Pence delivering the commencement speech in your stadium?

A. No politics. Just football. It's not as brutal.

Q. So, Mr. Rockne, how many wins this season?

A. At least eight, maybe nine, and then a good bowl game win. Otherwise I'll have another interview after the season. ❖

Colwell has covered politics over five decades for the South Bend Tribune.

Dave Bangert, Lafayette Journal & Courier:

U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita's unwavering conviction on climate change isn't particularly new. The Brownsburg Republican will tell you as much. In fact, he once again told a legislative forum as much – "We've had this discussion a number of times, publicly," Rokita said – a little over a week ago, when constituents grilled him on the topic April 15 in Crawfordsville. Rokita's defiance is just getting a fresh airing at a time when scientists take to the street to defend their work – not to mention that the 4th District congressman is positioning himself among fellow Republicans for a shot at Joe Donnelly, Indiana's first term senator, in 2018. Over the weekend, as mop-up work continued behind various March for Science events – including one that drew 400 people to Lafayette's Riehle Plaza – a handful of Indiana bloggers picked up on the Cliff's Notes version of Rokita's comments the week before at Wabash College, letting them loose across social media over the weekend. What those paraphrased references might have lacked in word-for-word transcription, they picked up the essence of what Rokita has touted through his years in Congress when it comes to the science chasing climate change and the financial price dealing with it could create. Here's a baseline reference point: Bjorn Lomborg, president of an economic think tank called the Copenhagen Consensus Center and controversial author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World," raised hackles when Purdue President Mitch Daniels invited him to campus in March. But even Lomborg doesn't deny that climate change is a thing. A vast majority of scientists, Lomborg agreed, had shown proof of that. His point is that climate change isn't the most pressing issue or best use of global effort and cash to fix.

Rokita's point, by comparison: He's open to science. Just not that liberal science. And anything that suggests climate change is liberal science. "I'll summarize, using actually one of your sentences from your opening remarks, and that is, 'We trust the scientists to do the research.' In science, there is no trust. That's why it's called science. We use scientific methodology to review any question. And there's all kind of questions in regard to the liberal scientists who come up with their research. I do not. "I do not take any kind of preliminary conclusion as a reason to change our entire economy and put thousands and thousands of people out of work, based on someone's hunches. ... There is all kinds of discrepancy in the science that you quote. I'm not going to vote for policies that could disrupt our entire economy and do things just because of someone's liberal hunches." ❖

David Nather, Axios: For all of the talk that this might finally be House Republicans' chance to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, the big picture is that there still is a bitter divide within the party — though it's now separating the moderates from everyone else — and

the whole effort continues to be wildly unpopular. They're closer to the goal of fulfilling a campaign promise, but they're about to take a vote that will be perceived, rightly or wrongly, as abandoning sick people. These are the realities they're grappling with: The new amendment by Rep. Tom MacArthur, a leader of the moderate Tuesday Group, has shifted the health care bill substantially to the right. It's not everything conservatives wanted on loosening the ACA's insurance mandates, but there's more in it for them than for moderates. The endorsement of the conservative Freedom Caucus was big step forward for Republicans, since they were some of the main holdouts. That may be bringing Republicans closer to 216 votes. "Making progress," one leadership aide said last night. But it's not bringing any moderate Republicans on board. It may even be losing some. If the House schedules a vote soon, it's not going to have any analysis from the Congressional Budget Office to examine. So it won't have any idea how many states might apply for waivers from the required benefits or the ban on charging higher rates to sick people, or how many people might be affected. ❖



Matt Tully, IndyStar: It struck me the other day that Indiana has done something remarkable: It has elected to its three highest statewide offices, those being the posts of governor and U.S. senator, a trio of rather impressive politicians. Seriously, is anyone other than the most partisan among us complaining about Gov. Eric Holcomb or Sens. Todd Young and Joe Donnelly? I don't think so. A recent series of polls showed all three with solid net approval ratings. At a time of bitter politics and so much dissatisfaction among the American public, the lack of grumbling is quite a feat. There are clear reasons for the trio's success. Befitting their state, all three are pragmatic, serious-minded politicians who avoid bomb-throwing and emptyheaded partisanship. ❖

Stephen Moore, Wall Street Journal: The Congressional Budget Office's latest report on the nation's fiscal future is full of doom and gloom. The national debt will double in the next 30 years to 150% of gross domestic product—which is Greece territory. Interest payments may become the largest budget line, eclipsing national defense. Federal spending is expected to soar over 20 years from 22% of GDP to 28%. Never outside of wartime has Washington's burden been so heavy on the economy. But the report's most troubling forecast, by far, is for decades of sluggish economic growth. The CBO projects that America will limp along at an average 1.9% annual growth over the next 30 years. This is a sharp downgrade from historical performance. Between 1974 and 2001, average growth was 3.3%. An extra percentage point makes a world of difference. If weak growth persists, there is almost no combination of plausible spending cuts and tax increases that will get Washington anywhere near a balanced budget. ❖

Trump issues brief tax plan

WASHINGTON — President Trump's call for a dramatic overhaul of the tax code sets in motion his most ambitious legislative initiative to date, testing whether he can cut the deal of his life on an issue that has long bedeviled Washington (Washington Post). On Wednesday, Trump issued a one-page outline for changes to the tax code, pinpointing numerous changes he would make that would affect almost every American. He wants to replace the seven income tax brackets with three new ones, cut the corporate tax rate by more than 50 percent, abolish the alternative-minimum tax and estate tax, and create new incentives to simplify filing returns. But the White House stopped short of answering key questions that could decide the plan's fate. For example, Trump administration officials didn't address how much the plan would reduce federal revenue or grow the debt. They also didn't specify what income levels would trigger inclusion in each of the three new tax brackets. The goal, White House officials said, was to cut taxes so much and so fast that it led to immediate economic growth, creating more jobs and producing trillions of dollars in new revenue and wealth over the next decade. Despite its brevity — it was less than 200 words and contained just seven numbers — the document marked the most pointed blueprint Trump has presented Congress on any matter. "This is about economic growth, job creation, America first, and that's what [Trump] cares about," White House National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn said.

Anthem warns of higher rates

INDIANAPOLIS — Health insurer Anthem Inc. threatened to

raise rates for its Obamacare plans next year if the U.S. government stops funding subsidies for lower-income customers, putting pressure on the administration and Republicans to support a key piece of the health law (Bloomberg). CEO Joseph Swedish said on a conference call Wednesday that the Indianapolis-based insurer would raise its rates by 20 percent if the subsidies aren't paid to insurers. The subsidies are currently the subject of a political debate in Washington, D.C., and it's unclear whether President Donald Trump's administration will continue to fund them. The insurer is also considering exiting some Affordable Care Act markets altogether, as many of its rivals have already done. Swedish said Anthem is "assessing our market footprint in 2018." "We expect to provide additional clarity on our 2018 market footprint during our second-quarter earnings call, if not sooner," he said.



ISU's Bradley to retire

TERRE HAUTE — Daniel J. Bradley, Indiana State University's 11th president, announced this afternoon he plans to step down in January (Loughlin, Terre Haute Tribune-Star). Bradley, 67, has been president since summer 2008. "The past nine years have been amazing and rewarding. As has often been said, however, there is a time for everything. Now is our time to reflect, to enjoy our grandkids, and to plan our next great adventure," said Bradley of himself and his wife, Cheri. "Seventeen years as a university president and a first lady on two campuses is undoubtedly enough." Prior to ISU, he served as president for about eight years at Fairmont State University in West Virginia. In March 2014, Indiana State trustees approved a contract extension for Bradley through June 2019, so he is stepping down 18 months early. In an interview, he and Cheri said the decision is not an abrupt one — they've been talking with trustees for the past

few months. Bradley said he wanted to get through the legislative session — and he also wanted to minimize his "lame duck period."

Trump won't pull out of NAFTA

WASHINGTON — President Trump told the leaders of Canada and Mexico on Wednesday that the United States would not be pulling out of the North American Free Trade Agreement "at this time," opening the door to future negotiations on the same day that Trump was considering signaling a strong intent to withdraw as a potential way of bringing the parties together at the deal-making table (Washington Post). Trump spoke with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau late Wednesday afternoon after reports circulated during the day that the president was contemplating withdrawing from NAFTA. "President Trump agreed not to terminate NAFTA at this time and the leaders agreed to proceed swiftly, according to their required internal procedures, to enable the renegotiation of the NAFTA deal to the benefit of all three countries," the White House said in a statement late Wednesday.

GOP stop-gap to prevent shutdown

WASHINGTON — House Republicans introduced a stop-gap spending bill late Wednesday night to allow negotiations on a spending agreement to continue through May 5 without the threat of a government shutdown (Washington Post). The short-term spending measure, which would extend current funding levels beyond the end of this week, comes as negotiators are nearing an agreement on a budget to increase military spending and border security and keep the government open through the end of September. The decision to begin work on a very short extension comes as no surprise, the final steps of a spending deal could drag on beyond the current April 28 deadline.