

Trump struggles in polls despite impacts

President is revamping taxes, Obamacare, regs, but he's not getting credit from wary voters

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – President Trump was on the cusp of signing his first major congressional victory with the final tax reform vote on Wednesday, but he has not convinced Americans of his leadership qualities. The NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll on Tuesday showed



that only 36% would vote to reelect the president, down from the 46% of the vote he won in 2016's epic upset.

The poll found that just 18% of those surveyed believe that they will "definitely" support Trump if he runs in the next presidential election, with another 18% saying that they'll "probably" choose him. "But a significant



chunk, 38 percent, say they're dead set on voting against the GOP commander-in-chief, with an additional 14% saying that they'll probably vote for the Democrat on the

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Speaker Ryan and Messer

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – Over the last week, rumors began to surface that House Speaker Paul Ryan might retire. In Politico, the suggestion wasn't subtle. Their featured magazine piece was headlined: "Paul Ryan Sees His Wild Washington Journey Coming to An End." The piece did not leave any wiggle room. "Ryan has made it known to some of his closest confidants that this will be his final term as speaker." Before discussing the impact further, let me unpack that statement:



1.) An assertion that bold (i.e. no "might be" or "possibly"), in the middle of contentious Washington, can discredit



"There were 116 women learning how to run for office, if they choose to do so. At the end of the day we trained over 1,000 people."

- Indiana Democrat Chairman John Zody, in the HPI Interview, page 12



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a publication if not rooted in any truth. In other words, Politico is fairly certain of its source(s).

2.) It means they likely have several sources which could be anything from overhearing people in the restroom or at a restaurant to a staffer, member, or lobbyist. The assertion doesn't claim to be a direct source.

3.) It could have been a trial balloon leaked by the speaker's office as a "head's up people, at some point this is going to happen" or even as a threat to get people in line for the tax and appropriations debates. In other words, he's getting tired of political Groundhog Day.

Then, in the tangled world of media and politics, Speaker Ryan more or less confirmed that it could be his last term. (Note I used "could be.") He did that with the strong denial of an assertion not made. The Hill, another influential political newspaper read by political insiders, this past Tuesday carried a headline: "Paul Ryan refutes rumors of early retirement from House."

A "dismissive" Ryan told reporters at a news conference after a closed-door meeting with House Republicans that "I'm not going anywhere anytime soon." It was the extraordinarily political useful "partial denial" complete with the wonderful word "soon."

Synonyms for "soon" include shortly, presently, in the near future, in a moment, in an instant, any minute, any day, and "in the twinkling of an eye." Personally, I don't think he was using "soon" like the Bible does about the second coming of Christ.

I have known Paul Ryan since we were both staffers in the Senate. He's always been too focused on issues to obsess over his political future, personal life and other such mundane things, but, that said, of course he thinks about all those things especially if, as the Politico article

stated, both tax and welfare reform pass before the end of 2018.

Speaker Ryan is only 47 years old. He certainly is a potential future president of the United States. While hardly poor, enhanced by the relative wealth of his wife's family, means that he doesn't need to make a big salary lobbying, but some extra cash is always nice. The Ryans' children are 15, 14 and 12. Having more time to enjoy their high school years has probably crossed his mind, as it does every elected official. If you want a normal family life, don't run for Congress. It is like being in the military or other jobs that require sacrifice for the greater good.

I believe it was somewhere between a trial balloon and a threat. But if he does retire before or after the elections of 2018, it could potentially have a major impact on Hoosiers



Mike Pence and Luke Messer. It also could further cause Republican chaos. It is not like President Trump or Sen. Mitch McConnell provide leadership with specific issue detail. They like to modify the initial proposals of the House Republicans (i.e. Ryan).

In other words, further inertia and conflict only would help Sen. Joe Donnelly and the challengers to incumbent Indiana Republican congressmen. This is how trends become tsunamis. Paul Ryan is savvy politician. He knows the resignation talk complicates things. If he goes ahead, he may have already concluded that in the current situation a tsunami is inevitable. Or more likely, he has now publicly stated that if the present erratic nature of the Trump administration continues combined with the

internal House divides and senatorial inertia, that he is leaving because he's tired of being the fireman and getting blamed for the fires.

A departure by Ryan would likely help him in a future race for the presidency. He converted the policies of the Trump administration, or the "Trump-Pence administration" which is what it will be in future politics as Mike Pence becomes a top presidential contender, as best he could. If the Trump-Pence administration is viewed positively by Republicans in the future, Speaker Ryan helped its start. If it blows up, Ryan got out perhaps in time.



Since Ryan is only 47 (Pence is 58), after 2018 Ryan could wait out six more years of Trump and eight years of Pence (2032), and still be only 62. Vice President Pence will be 61 when Trump-Pence runs for a second term.

The more direct impact could be on Conference Chairman Luke Messer. The two elected leaders above him, Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Whip Steve Scalise, are already internally scrambling to secure moving up one slot. The wild card is Patrick McHenry, the chief deputy whip. That position is always under-estimated in leadership fights. For example, Denny Hastert was chief deputy whip. Eric Cantor was chief deputy whip. Often the chief deputy is the best headcounter in the caucus.

I sought to have McHenry as my subcommittee vice chairman when he was a rambunctious freshman congressman. He remains a tremendous, though more nuanced, in-fighter. McCarthy and Scalise would want him running the whip organization. So, likely, would the Republican members.

In other words, the only route up the ladder for Congressman Messer would likely be to run directly for speaker. He is a plausible compromise candidate, and clearly liked by members. He is not, however, known for

any particular "idea" leadership and the Republican leadership has an intellectual vacuum if Ryan leaves. So, while this could be a problem if Messer sought the post, if his opponent was McCarthy, it would not be crippling. Majority Leader McCarthy is a listener, a solid and thoughtful guy, but so far hasn't demonstrated that he is a Ryan type.

Conference Chairman Messer could also run into a "Trump" problem, as Congressman Rokita likes to raise. Trump, and Steve Bannon, viewed Ryan negatively, so likely would prefer someone who is more a part of the Trump cheer-leading squad. The conference likely does not favor such a person, but might accept someone who hasn't mused aloud about Trump's shortcomings. In other words Rokita, unlike Messer, is not even in any internal speaker discussion. McCarthy has been more discreet about the president. Furthermore, Ryan's statement that it wouldn't be "soon" suggests that it won't occur before Senate filing deadlines in Indiana.

Messer's calculations would have so many variables – when does Ryan leave, what are my chances of moving up the leadership ladder, can I at least win the Senate primary, is Donnelly beatable – that unless he just wants out of the Senate race, he likely will not reverse course on the race. One can also get the feeling that we have some sort of Wabash College "king-of-the-hill" match going on between Rokita and Messer. Or, in political parlance, same fight only now with real political bullets. I think Messer stays in.

As for Speaker Ryan, I think he will not seek reelection if he thinks the continuing disorder is going to rip apart the party and cost the Republicans the majority no matter what he does. I think the divisions are nearly impossible to fix. And if men like Paul Ryan and Mike Pence cannot do it, I don't know of anyone who can. ❖

Souder is a former Republican Member of Congress from Indiana.

President Trump, from page 1

ballot," NBC's Carrie Dann reported. "If 2016 was a year Democrats couldn't wait to see end, 2017 is a year for the Republican Party that cannot end soon enough," said Fred Yang, a Democratic pollster who co-conducted the NBC/WSJ survey with the GOP firm Public Opinion Strategies.

Some 64% rate the economy excellent or good, but by 55-44% margin, Americans disapprove Trump's handling of the economy. Only 24% support the tax reforms. Trump's approval rating stands at 41%, the lowest for any modern president ending his first year in office. The GOP's fav/unfav rating went from 35/38% in December 2016 to 27/49% this month, a decrease of 18%.

Democrats hold an 11-point advantage in congressional preference – their biggest since 2008. The right/wrong track number in that poll stood at a dismal 29/63%.

In celebrating passage of the reforms on Wednesday surrounded by congressional Republicans, President Trump said, "I don't think the market has even begun to realize how good these are," adding it's "a tremendous amount of relief for the middle class. It's really, above all else, it's a jobs bill."

But Trump also noted the corporate tax rate would be cut from 35 percent to 21%, saying, "That's probably the biggest factor in our plan." That contradicted the notion that this was all about middle class tax cuts.

The NBC-WSJ poll finds that only 53% of Republicans and 57% of Trump general election voters currently

back the tax bill. Even worse, just 28% of rural Americans and 29% of whites without a college degree think it is a good idea right now. Trump's overall popularity may be at a record low in the survey, but these are constituencies he can persuade. "You start with the base," Americans for Prosperity president Tim Phillips told the Washington Post. "We're going to make sure the base understands that the Republican Congress has accomplished something [big]."

Earlier this week, Marc Lotter, former spokesman for Vice President Mike Pence, tallied up Trump's first year achievements:

Crush ISIS; lowest unemployment in decades; highest biz/consumer confidence in decades; 69 new stock records; reform VA; biggest military investment since Reagan; and cut illegal immigration."

On so-called pocketbook issues, Trump can boast that the Dow Jones is up nearly 5,000 points since Jan. 20; the unemployment rate is down to 4.1%; and more than 1.9 million jobs have been created.

But this isn't the first time there's been a disconnect between the fatness of wallets and a president. In 2012, President Barack Obama became the first to be reelected with the jobless rate above 7.5% and there were an array of other economic factors that should have resulted in his defeat.

In the current context, these are the comparisons between Obama and Trump: Dow Jones under Trump (19,827 on Jan 20; 24,755 now): 25% increase; Dow Jones under Obama (7,949 on Jan 20, 2009; 19,827 when he left office in 2017): 150%. Jobs created in first 11 months of 2017 (under Trump): 1.9 million; jobs created in first 11 months of 2016 (under Obama): 2.1 million. What has been better in 2017 than in 2016 has been the GDP – at least so far: GDP in 2017: Q1 1.2%, Q2 3.1%, Q3 3.3%; GDP in 2016: Q1 0.6%, Q2 2.2%, Q3 2.8%, Q4 1.8%.

Mike Allen of Axios explains, "President Trump takes a beating in the media, but he's ending 2017 on the high note of his presidency. You might not like his words or actions, but measured in terms of what Republican voters want and expected, he's winning on consequential and lasting fronts."

In addition to tax reform, Trump has appointed conservative Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch, along with a dozen new U.S. circuit court judges and eight ap-

pellate judges, the most since President Nixon. Trump has revoked 67 regulations and delayed 1,500 others.

And he's ended the Obamacare individual mandate. As Sam Baker of Axios notes, "The smaller administrative steps Trump has taken – an executive order, cuts to enrollment outreach, ending a critical stream of funding for insurers – [are cumulatively] weakening the ACA's insurance exchanges and prompting some insurers to question whether those markets are worth the trouble." But these moves come as Obamacare has reached its apex nation-

Wednesday, December 20

Race/Topic (Click to Sort)	Poll	Results	Spread
President Trump Job Approval	Gallup	Approve 35, Disapprove 59	Disapprove +24
President Trump Job Approval	Rasmussen Reports	Approve 44, Disapprove 54	Disapprove +10
President Trump Job Approval	Economist/YouGov	Approve 41, Disapprove 55	Disapprove +14
Congressional Job Approval	Economist/YouGov	Approve 12, Disapprove 68	Disapprove +56
2018 Generic Congressional Vote	CNN	Democrats 56, Republicans 38	Democrats +18
2018 Generic Congressional Vote	Economist/YouGov	Democrats 44, Republicans 35	Democrats +9
Direction of Country	Economist/YouGov	Right Direction 36, Wrong Track 55	Wrong Track +19

Tuesday, December 19

Race/Topic (Click to Sort)	Poll	Results	Spread
President Trump Job Approval	CNN	Approve 36, Disapprove 59	Disapprove +23
President Trump Job Approval	Quinnipiac	Approve 37, Disapprove 59	Disapprove +22
Congressional Job Approval	Quinnipiac	Approve 13, Disapprove 79	Disapprove +66
2018 Generic Congressional Vote	Quinnipiac	Democrats 52, Republicans 37	Democrats +15
Direction of Country	NBC News/Wall St. Jnl	Right Direction 29, Wrong Track 63	Wrong Track +34

ally in approval, and Democrats are responding by saying Trump has "sabotaged" the system.

So why doesn't all this translate into a more popular President Trump?

National Journal's Josh Kraushaar writes, "Americans are voting their values, not their pocketbooks. And that's alarming news for Republicans looking to hold their increasingly tenuous congressional majorities." That was the opposite of 2016 when Americans were voting pocketbook issues, or as POS pollster Gene Ulm said of WTHR/HPI Polling last year, "People wonder why their adult children are living in their basement."

In the NBC/WSJ Poll, Democrats had a 50-39 congressional generic advantage. "A double-digit margin here is an important indicator of Democratic intensity," said Republican pollster Bill McInturff of Public Opinion Strategies.

MSNBC host Joe Scarborough tweeted on Tuesday what he called "horrific Trump numbers" in a recent Quinnipiac Poll: 62-37% say that he does not care about average Americans; 62-34% say that he's not honest; 62-35% say that he does not have good leadership skills; 70-28% say that he is not level headed; and 65-32% that he does not share their values.

Trump draws criticism even from some of his most loyal supporters for his tweeting. In fact, you can trace just about every problem pelting President Trump these days, including a good portion of the Russia collusion

investigation, to his tweets. Trump views this as a mechanism to communicate with 40 million Americans while bypassing traditional media. But the tweets are mostly unvetted, the media covers them with increasing intensity, and these tweets catch allies from the West Wing, to the Pentagon, to the halls of Congress and in foreign capitals, off guard.

Based on traditional economic markers, Trump should be wildly popular. But the truth still matters. And as Gov. Holcomb pointed out this week, so does civility, and President Trump fails miserably on both of those fronts and it's impacting his standing with the American people.

Senate

Donnelly airs first radio ad

Joe for Indiana released its first radio ad of the 2018 cycle, focusing on how Joe Donnelly has fought for Hoosiers during his first term in the Senate. U.S. Rep. André Carson narrates the minute-long spot and praises Joe for putting Hoosiers first in the Senate when it comes to a fairer tax code or health care for working families. The spot will air in the Indianapolis market as part of a five-figure initial ad buy.

"These days it seems like we're constantly under attack: Our healthcare, our jobs, our schools. So it's even more important that the people we send to Washington are fighting for us," Carson says in the ad. "I'm André Carson, and I'm proud to say that my friend Joe Donnelly is one of those guys who always has our back."



Sen. Donnelly with Rep. Andre Carson and 2016 2nd CD nominee Lynn Coleman (right) at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala.

In 2016, Democratic gubernatorial nominee John Gregg polled 82% of the black vote, while Gov. Eric Holcomb won 16%. In 2008, with Barack Obama on the presidential ballot, Democrat Jill Long Thompson won 75% of the black vote with Gov. Mitch Daniels polling 20%, while Obama won 90%. So the Donnelly campaign needs to make a pitch to African-American voters, as well as suburbanites.

The Trump/Pence team has made a number of appearances before black groups in 2017, with Vice President Mike Pence and Attorney General Jeff Sessions speaking to the Ten Point Coalition in Indianapolis.

"Hoosiers support Joe Donnelly because he's looking out for them in the Senate, protecting their health care, fighting for good-paying jobs, and working to create

a fairer tax code," said Peter Hanscom, campaign manager for Joe for Indiana. "As he runs for reelection, he's not taking a single vote for granted and plans on reaching every Hoosier that he can. Joe has a record he can be proud of, and he's pleased to be able to count on Congressman Carson and Hoosiers like him who can vouch for Joe in every corner of the state."

Rokita attacks Messer over Trump

"Luke Messer Is Not With Trump" is the title of a new digital ad posted by the Todd Rokita for U.S. Senate campaign. Both Republican camps have staked a bigger claim to Trump's credentials in marketing their candidates. The latest Rokita ad points viewers to various TV interview clips of Messer criticizing candidate Trump before the 2016 election. "Luke Messer: DC Elite" flashes across the screen in the final seconds, fading into "Not with Trump. Not with us." Ramesh Ponnuru of National Review noted, "It will be interesting to see how many Indiana Republican voters are swayed by this line of attack. Most of them support Trump. But some Trump supporters have been known to express exasperation, or worse, about some of the things Trump has said, while also supporting him on most legislative issues, just as Messer has." The Rokita ad is in response to a spot last week from Messer's campaign where he highlights his support for the agenda of Trump and Vice President Pence, the former governor of Indiana, The Hill stated.

Messer responds to Donnelly tax vote

"Hoosiers deserve a pay raise. But, Sen. Donnelly voted against Indiana's working families when he opposed President Trump's tax cut plan," Messer said. "Sen. Donnelly says he works for Indiana, but time and again, he votes with Washington liberals to block the president's agenda. Thankfully, tax cuts will pass without Sen. Donnelly's help, but Hoosiers deserve better."

Zody assails Messer, Rokita

Indiana Democratic Party Chairman John Zody assailed U.S. Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita for their vote on the tax reforms passed on Wednesday. "Congressmen Messer and Rokita and their Republican allies could have reached across the aisle and worked with Democrats to create a fairer tax code. Instead, they've ignored bipartisan opposition and rammed through the McConnell bill, raising taxes on millions of middle class Americans to fund tax breaks for the wealthiest of us and corporations who ship jobs to other countries," Zody said. "Under the McConnell tax bill, the top 1% of Americans would receive 83% of the benefits, while taxes 10 years from now would rise for a majority of taxpayers. And the cost for this bill, written by the same Republicans who have spent years beating their chests about fiscal discipline? When all is said and done, it could be as high as \$2.2 trillion. Republicans like Congressman Messer and

Congressman Rokita have convinced themselves to look past the bill's stark unpopularity and the numerous economists who have panned it."

Hupfer criticizes Donnelly

Republican Party State Chairman Kyle Hupfer blasted Donnelly, saying, "Hoosiers will benefit from historic tax cuts that were supported by every one of their federally elected Republican representatives, but received a big no vote from Democrat Joe Donnelly" who "sided with his Washington party bosses – and against working Hoosiers – again on this historic, job-creating reform. Democrat Donnelly could have voted to cut taxes for Hoosiers and eliminate tax loopholes that just benefit the wealthy, but he voted no. Democrat Donnelly had the opportunity to level the playing field for Hoosier workers and companies to help them win in our global economy, but he voted no. Democrat Donnelly could have brought jobs back to America, but again he voted no."

Congress

2nd CD: Hall critical of Walorski on taxes

Second CD Democrat candidate Mel Hall condemned the passage of the GOP tax reform bill, or the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act: "The bill repeals the individual mandate of the Affordable Care Act, kicking over 26,000 Hoosiers

off health care right here in the 2nd District." Hall says he is committed to working with all members of Congress to pass a tax reform bill that would boost the middle class and give hardworking Hoosiers a fair shot. "As a former CEO, I know what it takes to create jobs and raise wages,"



Hall said. "This bill does neither. Instead, Republicans in Congress would rather kick folks off health care so the rich can get richer. This bill is a case study in inequality. The bill lowers the tax rate for the richest Americans and repeals the

Corporate AMT, showing once again that Jackie Walorski and her fellow Republicans in Congress would rather give tax breaks to corporations and the wealthy instead of growing and strengthening the middle class."

Walorski lauds reforms

U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski (R-Ind.) voted for the conference report to accompany HR 1, the final version of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which passed the House by



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a vote of 227 to 203, her office announced. Ahead of the vote, Congresswoman Walorski spoke on the House floor in support of this historic tax reform bill. "If you believe the rhetoric you hear, you may think this bill means the world is ending," the congresswoman said. "I guarantee you, it's not. The truth is this tax cut bill means a brighter future for the hardworking Americans who will have more money in their pockets and a better shot at the American Dream... Mr. Speaker, this isn't just a good bill, this is a great bill. This isn't the apocalypse, it's a new day in America."

4th CD

Baird backs Trump on national security

State Rep. Jim Baird, seeking the GOP 4th CD nomination, is backing President Trump's new national security statement. "A strong and ready military fueled by economic prosperity will make us safer at home and promote peace around the globe," Baird said. "President Trump's national security strategy puts American safety and prosperity first. Our country faces grave threats from terrorists and rogue nations who seek to end our way of life and weaken our standing as the leader of the free world. Over the last eight years, we watched our leaders weaken our military's readiness and strengthen our enemies through bad deals and corrupt bargains like the Iran nuclear deal. I am proud to stand with our president as he commits to rebuilding our military."

6th CD

Siekman bashes tax reforms

Democrat Lane Siekman criticized the tax reforms that passed on Wednesday, saying the bill written by over 6,000 Washington lobbyists provides deep, permanent cuts to the corporate tax rate, which drops from 35% to 21%, but delivers more modest, temporary cuts to individual tax rates. The proposal also does away with or limits many tax breaks, including the state and local tax deduction. He called it "a dangerous tax plan written by multinational corporations for multinational corporations. This legislation will disproportionately benefit the wealthiest Americans, while in the long run ballooning the deficit and failing to spur the kind of growth that supporters claim it will."

8th CD

Bucshon calls tax reform a 'big, big deal'

Compromise tax reform voted on Wednesday by the U.S. House and Senate will be good for the country, 8th District Rep. Larry Bucshon said (Martin, Evansville Courier & Press). Criticized by opponents as being weighted heavily toward big corporations, Bucshon said the legislation – the first of its kind in 31 years – will benefit a variety of income earners. "This is a big, big deal today,"

the Newburgh Republican said shortly before voting on the bill, which is viewed as a major legislative victory for President Donald Trump. "I don't think it's going to have a substantial impact on the national debt," Bucshon said. "The reality is they are not factoring in the dramatic growth that's going to happen in our economy... If we continue to have anemic economic growth, our deficits are going to be greater than if we don't have this tax cut bill."

9th CD: Hollingsworth cancels town hall

Republican U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth canceled a town hall meeting to discuss the tax reform bill with constituents Monday (Haggerty, Indiana Public Media). The meeting, set for 8 a.m. in Scott County, was supposed to cover how the national tax reform would impact Hoosiers. Katie Webster, head of communications for Hollingsworth's office, said they canceled the meeting due to safety concerns. "Our office received information about planned violence for the Scott County Chamber event," Webster said in a statement. "The threat was relayed to Capitol Po-



lice, and a decision was made not to participate for the safety and security of all attendees, staff, and Rep. Hollingsworth. This information was communicated to the event organizers last night as soon as a decision was made. As emotions run high, we are not able to take security threats lightly." A protest took place outside of the event space. Democratic challenger Liz Watson showed up to the planned event with a petition opposing the tax plan. She is planning a town hall to talk about tax reform on January 11.

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Hollingsworth supports tax bill

A news item published on the congressman's official website stated Hollingsworth supported the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. "I consistently hear from Hoosiers that we need a tax code that empowers businesses to thrive, grow, create more jobs, increase paychecks, and invest in our communities," the news item stated. "Today's vote was a vote for bigger paychecks, more jobs, and a simpler tax code, bettering the lives of all Hoosiers, enabling everyone to keep more of their hard-earned paychecks, and empowering all to build better futures."

Canan blasts tax reform

Democratic 9th CD candidate Dan Canon, civil rights attorney and congressional candidate, offered the following statement (Howey Politics Indiana): "It's incredible that Rep. Hollingsworth [the incumbent representative of IN-09] voted for this bill after a year of hand-wringing over deficit spending; he even voted against hurricane relief supposedly because of 'fiscal responsibility' and now

this? This is a transparent sellout to big-dollar donors and giant corporations on the backs of working families." Canon said. "If Trey ever showed up to speak with his constituents he'd see what I see every day; ordinary Hoosiers are struggling. We won't be silent while he uses us to line the pockets of the 1%." Canon has received the endorsement of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), a nonpartisan membership organization representing nearly 60,000 board-certified ob-gyns around the country.

General Assembly

SD22: Shipley shifts from 4th CD race

Democrat Sherry Shipley is leaving the 4th CD race and will seek the SD22 seat in a challenge to State Sen. Ron Alting, who ran unopposed in 2014. "I have said from the beginning of this process that I wanted to be a leader for the greater good. During the past nine months on the campaign trail, I met some amazing Hoosiers and I worked hard to understand issues from many perspectives," Shipley said. "The past nine months have also taught me that now more than ever, Hoosiers deserve more from their government and elected officials. Therefore, I am announcing today that I will be running to represent Indiana State Senate District 22, serving Tippecanoe County. While I know many of my supporters in U.S. District 4 may be surprised at this decision, my team and I believe that this is the best path forward for Indiana and Tippecanoe County. With so many critical issues facing us at the state level, I believe I can make an immediate and positive impact in public education, workforce training, tech, health care, equality, and the environment." In 2010, Alting easily defeated Democrat Michael Oxenrider, 20,418 to 8,926.



HD43: Bird eyes run as Kersey retires

The race for the District 43 seat in the Indiana General Assembly is likely to generate several candidates in the 2018 election (Greninger, Terre Haute Tribune-Star). Incumbent Rep. Clyde Kersey, D-Terre Haute, announced last week he would serve out the remainder of his term, through November 2018, but will not seek reelection to a seat he has held since 1996. "There will probably be a contested primary because a number of people are talking about it," Democratic Chairman Joe Etling said. "No one has said they want to officially declare, but there are people who are interested in running. A number of people have expressed interest if Clyde ever stepped aside, but they didn't have interest in running against him." Former County Councilman Mark Bird said he plans to reenter

the electoral process in 2018 and is considering the state representative seat. Bird, a Democrat, said Friday he is "weighing my options" for either a run for Vigo County commissioner or as a candidate for state representative. While Bird said he has been strongly considering a run at county commissioner, with Kersey's decision not to seek reelection, Bird said he is also considering the state office. "I want to get some feedback from some people. I have said in years past that if Clyde ever didn't run I would consider it," Bird said. Additionally, Bird said he has had long-term plans to seek election for Vigo County commissioner.

Gentry says Republicans will seek HD43

Randy Gentry, chair of the Vigo County Republican Party, said there will be interest in the race (Terre Haute Tribune-Star). "Several people continue to weigh their options, some more seriously than others," Gentry said. "I have had several contacts already, but no announcements yet. I am confident that we will have even a few more folks take a strong look at this over the coming weeks. It is an opportunity, but the district lines are drawn in a manner that makes it a tough race for the GOP," he said.

HD27: Klinker to see reelection

In a press release about the candidacy of Sheila Klinker for her House District 27 seat, the news is characterized as "dog-bites-man." Klinker said she will run for her House seat again (Bangert, Lafayette Journal & Courier). "At least one more time," Klinker said. "What? Did you hear someone say I wouldn't? Or I shouldn't? I hope not." "There will be a time, sure, when I've had enough," Klinker, 78, said about the prospects of a 19th run for her House seat. "Somebody may tell me it's time, but I'm very fortunate in that I'm healthy and have a lot of energy. I like to help people as much as I can, I really do. So I'm going to hang in there." Tracy Brown, chairman of the Tippecanoe County Republican Party, said he expected a candidate to file to run against Klinker, but he said details were still being worked out, and he wasn't ready to offer a name.

HD29: Councilman O'Connor to run

Noblesville Councilman Greg O'Connor will seek HD29 after State Rep. Kathy Kreg Richardson announced she was going to run for Hamilton County clerk. "I have worked diligently over the last 10 years for the citizens of Noblesville as a city councilman," O'Connor said. "I intend to take the experience and knowledge I've developed over the last decade and apply it to effectively represent the citizens of District 29. Hamilton County is a driver of the economic success of our state and I intend to work closely with local and county government to ensure ongoing job creation, economic development, and workforce development." ❖

President Trump's huge year

By **TONY SAMUEL**

INDIANAPOLIS – For fans of President Trump, it's great to have a huge win and a beautiful tax cut Christmas present, just like he promised. For everyone else, it should feel the same – great, as in Making America Great Again.



Whether you've been critical or half-hearted in support or a true enthusiast like me, we can all be pleased with this tax reform and give some credit where due, at least during the holidays.

I could say that "only time will tell" if the president is right or not about tax cuts spurring the economy and putting more in our pocketbooks, but really it's already telling with major employers like AT&T, Boeing and Comcast announcing bonuses

for their employees because of what just happened. We know how well the stock market has done in the last year because of Trump's regulatory rollbacks and anticipation of this historic tax cut. This will only continue as the economy starts to really roll after gaining steam this year with two and probably three consecutive quarters of GDP growth over 3%.

So I'd say it's time for all of us to take a pause as we reflect on the year that was and in our minds set aside the nasty attacks from the far left and the affect they have on poll numbers. I'd like to suggest that all of the Trump haters and the half-hearted supporters and those that secretly or not so secretly take joy in what they perceive as missteps, make a New Year's resolution to give Trump a chance. That's all I'm saying.

We elected President Trump to shake things up and we knew he had a different style. Those of us that believed he was the best candidate did so because we knew he was a guy that has accomplished big things in his previous careers and that he was going to bring the same passion and urgency to the presidency – and he has.

Yes, it's easy to complain about the tweets. I get it. I've heard from so many people that they wish he would stop tweeting. I look at it this way: A month ago and two months ago and four months ago and eight months ago, there was a tweet that the media got worked up about and a lot of people rolled their eyes and wrote him off over it. I don't remember what any of those tweets were – none of them come to mind. Trump haters might be able to tell you, but the average person can't.

However, we can all remember the economy getting better and ISIS being defeated and the Veterans Administration being reformed and our borders and our

national security being strengthened. If we've paid a little more attention, we'd remember that the president has had extremely successful overseas trips, strengthening our relationships and improving trade in Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

If we were news junkies we'd remember not only that the president saved the careers of the three UCLA basketball players and kept them out of years in a Chinese jail after they were caught shoplifting, but we would also remember that back in April the president and his team secured the release of Aya Hijazi, an Egyptian American charity worker, her husband and four other humanitarian workers imprisoned in Egypt for three years.

This happened because the president had quickly developed a warm relationship with Egyptian President Sisi, an ally to the U.S. that President Obama had shunned. I can also guarantee that the President's relationship with President Xi Jinping of China helped save those UCLA players, no matter what LaVar Ball tells you.

The list of accomplishments really does go on and on but not if you're watching the wrong news channels. We know that the major news networks supply negative stories on Trump 90% of the time. A lot of this has been from the fake – yes, I'll also call it fake – Russian collusion story that is finally unraveling. When you have a year of such negative coverage – most of it driven by a false narrative – and you have a segment of the population paying more attention to tweets than deeds, you end up with low numbers.

I'm convinced that the tens of millions of social media followers appreciate the unfiltered messages and do so because they know they're getting a bias against him from the traditional media. I'm also convinced that over just a short period of time, those poll numbers are going to change.

But here's what has hurt him and what's needed, if you're a Republican wanting to be successful in 2018 and 2020. Start sharing your support. List any of the reasons stated above or any of the many reasons I haven't mentioned whenever you get a chance. If you don't, you are letting the far left take away our strongest point for winning in 2018 and 2020. You are also losing the opportunity to keep winning the votes of all of those true Trump supporters who voted for Trump and other Republicans.

So that's my suggestion for your New Year's resolution. If you hate our president, set that resentment aside for just a while and think about this: Has your life really gotten worse in the last year, or is it better? If you are a Republican and were critical during the campaign because you supported one of the 16 others and you secretly can't get over it, that's not helping for 2018. Try saying something good about the President. These are simple resolutions that could secure the America that Trump is trying to make great again.

Samuel was vice chair of the 2016 Trump campaign in Indiana.

An open letter to President Trump

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

BLOOMINGTON – This is an open letter to President Trump.

Dear Mr. President:

You da man. I mean, you DA MAN!

You have achieved historic tax reform. You, Mr. President, have achieved something no other POTUS has forged since Ronald Reagan in 1986. Clinton and Carter and Obama and those wretched Bushes never even had a clue.



And like Ol' Blue Eyes always put it, you did it your way. You insulted Jeff Flakey, and those miserable Mississippians, and they came around. They actually ignored your insults and voted for the thing. As for Liddle Bob Corker, you didn't need his volunteer ass anyway and even

he came around. He can drag his butt back to Tennessee where he besmirches the honor and integrity of President Andrew Jackson, who did things his way, too.

You know what I'm going to tell you next, Mr. President; you and Andy Jackson are winners. You won! Who knew that that tax reform could be so easy? Add this to Justice Gorsuch despite his whiney defense of the concept of justice, and the rolling back of all those pesky EPA regulations, the six-nation travel ban that keeps all those radical Islamacists out of America, and the fact that we're all celebrating a truly Merry Christmas that never would have occurred without you.

You've done more in 11 months than some monarchs and despots do in a lifetime.

You should spend the next month doing a Red State victory lap, maybe get the old gang together (except for Liddle Bob and that indicted Paul Manafort, and Mike Flynn and son who are all fun-suckers) and have Jeff Sessions, Bob Knight, Gene Keady and Lou Holtz come along for laughs. Hell, maybe you could even do a pervnado benefit concert in Chappaqua, because you really showed Crooked Hillary and her husband with all his crooked appendages what it means to be a winner.

I'm mean, Mr. President, they're losers who never achieved tax reform and barely intimidated Little Rocket Man.



No, Mr. President, you da man. Perhaps the most successful president of the 21st Century, a guy with big hands, big cajones and a unique capacity to reach out and grab what you truly want, because you're rich, and famous, and popular, you're a winner and when you're all those things, they'll let ya do it. Anything.

And then think about the weather this time of year at Mar-a-Lago and the cruddy, sloppy winters in Washington in that drafty dump that everybody says you have to live in.

As you know, winter is for golf in Florida, now that all the Hurricane Irma damage has been cleaned up. Wouldn't it be perfect to just play golf and do some regular deals instead of all this high pressure crap in Washington?

You see, Mr. President, true winners know when they've reached the mother lode and when to sell while the price is right. You've given Wall Street a 24,000 Dow, your billionaire buddies the best Merry Christmas gift they could ever have dreamed of, and the jobless rate way down there on Main Street is south of 5% and can probably never get better. You've scared the crap out of Little Rocket Man, you've already shown President Xi you know how to fire off a missile in the desert, and your bromance is still salvageable with Vlad Putin.

If you go out a winner, Bob Mueller might just fold up his sordid shop and you can link up with Vlad down in Sochi, tell some jokes, have some laughs at the expense of Crooked Hillary, that Muslim Hussein Obama, and that stuffy Angela Merkel. You can blow off all those asshole reporters like Bob Costa, Brian Ross and that evil-looking Kristen Welker and certainly all of those CNN fools. You

can tell Theresa May where she can stick her Brexit, knock some CARE packages in the swimming pool with your polo mallet and, as the Lampoon crowd would put it, have a good laugh at their expense.

No, Mr. President, why not go out on top? Why soil your stunning tax reform deal with tens of millions of bloody corpses

in Pyongyang, Seoul and Tokyo, and a protracted peninsula campaign. War has the potential of creating sleepless nights as it did for Lincoln, Grant, Truman and Eisenhower. Who needs that? Not you, Mr. President. You're a winner. Why screw it all up with a nuclear war and getting sideways with Xi and Vlad and the gang?

On Jan. 20, you can call it a wrap – the best year a president has ever had – and ride off into the sunset. Nixon resigned, and it wasn't the worst thing that happened to him. You can turn the keys to the dump over to Mike, Karen and Marlon Bundo and bring in the geologists and engineers to figure out a way to give Rushmore

a yuuuuge facelift.

Here's to a job well done, Mr. President. Destiny called, you answered, you won. You can follow Reagan, John Elway and Peyton Manning into the sunset without

a thought of another loss because of those assholes on Capitol Hill.

As ol' Eddie Stanton might put it, you now should belong to the ages. ❖

Does Alabama impact Indiana races?

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – The question was this: At a time of bitter partisan division, would a decisive number of voters in solidly Republican Alabama vote for a Democrat rather than a pedophile? The answer in Alabama was “yes.”

So, what does the stunning election of a Democrat in a state President Trump carried by 28 percentage points mean for Indiana? Potentially a lot. But exactly what, a year from the crucial 2018 elections for the Senate and House, is far from certain.



First of all, no pedophile, no horrible choice like Roy Moore, is likely to be the GOP nominee for the U.S. Senate in Indiana. Sen. Joe Donnelly, the Democrat seeking reelection, still will face a formidable Republican challenge.

But neither Donnelly nor Democratic nominees in Hoosier congressional districts need now to shudder at the prospect of Trump coming to campaign against them as very weak, very sad, so dishonest. They might welcome it if Trump continues with low approval ratings and the lack of political clout that he had in Alabama.

The Alabama results, however, don't mean that a 2018 political tsunami is sure to sweep Democrats to victories all around the nation. Tsunamis are hard to predict. Especially a year in advance, and when so many unpredictable events seem to happen so often these days. Also, what happened in Alabama could be viewed as a victory for Republicans as well as for Democrats.

If Moore had won, Republicans everywhere would have been tainted by his presence in their ranks. Democrats would have sought to define GOP as standing shamefully for Grand Old Pedophile. If Moore had won, Steve Bannon, once the official Trump advisor and still an influential voice in his ear, would have claimed

responsibility and moved with greater influence to propel other anti-party insurgents to nomination victories and general election doom.

If Moore had won, the president would have boasted of a victory and resisted any efforts to curb his insulting tweets and act presidential. Maybe he won't change, can't change. But maybe he will try, faced with such a flip of fortunes in Alabama and the proof that Bannon is not leading him to presidential greatness or a second term or even necessarily to completion of a first term.

What happened was of course a big Democratic win, a win of just one Senate seat, but in Alabama. If they can win it there, they can win it anywhere. Or so Democrats think. They found a formula for victory. It included a large turnout of African-American voters and other potential Democratic voters who stayed home in droves in the presidential election. They won impressive support from many of those who voted Republican in 2016, particularly white suburban women. They did very well among college-educated voters.

The turnaround was large and decisive in college communities. In Tuscaloosa County, home of the University of Alabama, there was a 36% change between margins for Trump for president and Democrat Doug Jones for senator. Trump won there by 20 points. Jones won by 16. Roll Tide!

Alabama football coach Nick Saban, whose name was written in by thousands, appears to have come in third. Write-ins were a key factor as various names were written in by Republicans not wanting to vote for a Democrat and also not wanting Moore to go off to the Senate to deal with issues and interns. The flip in Lee County, where Auburn University is located, was even bigger, 40 points.

Jones was a good candidate, a part of the winning formula that was essential. He had credentials and ties to Alabama, where he was born and graduated from the University of Alabama. He is a moderate, no left-wing

partisan, despite “fake news” to the contrary from President Trump.

The formula was complete. Will it work for Democrats elsewhere? It could. But elsewhere it will not be complete, not as effective, unless Republicans somewhere nominate somebody else as bad as Roy Moore. ❖

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

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

Zody spent 2017 trying to rebuild his party

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana Democrats are facing two of the most critical election cycles in their history. Mired in super minority status for the past two election cycles, and with the next reapportionment just three years away, Chairman John Zody has had to pull the party up from its stunning defeat in the Trump wave in 2016, reconnect disparate wings, find new blood and prepare for a very uncertain future.



Zody has spent the past year listening in 15 town hall sessions, has forged a series of training seminars, and is hoping the groundwork laid since the 2015 municipal elections position Democrats to take advantage of what looks to be an anti-Trump wave taking shape for the 2018 mid-terms. Zody knows the party must begin to make inroads in the House and Senate next November.

“We’re going after the super majorities, especially in the House,” Zody told Howey Politics Indiana last week. “When you look at 2012, when Sen. Donnelly was on the ballot, he won 49 House districts. Can we pick up some seats? Absolutely. At this point I feel good about being able to pick up some seats. We’ve got candidates running in competitive districts and we’ve still got some holes to fill.”

He is heartened that more than 100 female candidates attended a recent training session and believes the party is positioned to feed off an anti-Trump movement that is taking root in suburban areas across the nation. “But we’re not going to win by being just anti-Donald Trump,” Zody said. “We’ve got to talk about what Democrats are for, which is wages, education, health care, fairness.”

Here is our HPI Interview with Zody:

HPI: In Indiana in 2018, you have several female congressional candidates running.

Zody: We have Liz Watson in the 9th and Courtney Tritch in the 3rd and there are two in the 2nd District, including Pat Hackett. In the 6th, we have Jeanine LeLake running in the primary. In the 4th we have a primary between Toby Beck and Sherry Shipley (Editor’s note: Shipley pulled out of the race earlier this week to run in SD22 against Sen. Ron Alting). In the 5th District there are two women who are thinking about running and they haven’t publicly announced yet. There are a lot of women candidates running.

HPI: In three of those districts, it’s going to be

tough for a Democrat to win. Do you see a scenario where a wave like in 1964 or 1974 can pull the 5th or 4th into the Democratic column?

Zody: The three seats that are always looked at each cycle, Districts 2, 8 and 9, as the political climate develops, are generally on the map. There are people nationally who believe the 2nd is a winnable district and the 9th is also. There are good strong candidates running in all three of those districts. We’ll look at their year-end fundraising numbers and the campaigns they’ve put together. They are all active and hard working. In all districts we’ve got great candidates running. The numbers are tough, for sure. Courtney Tritch is running in a very tough district, but she is an amazing candidate, is working very hard and has a good team around her. She’s going to hold Jim Banks accountable. I’m not prepared to say we’re going to have a wave yet, but we’re on a good track.

HPI: I thought there was going to be a wave last year and it went the other way.

Zody: You never know.

HPI: How have you built the party?

Zody: We had very low turnout in 2014. That was



very instructive for us on what we need to do differently for turnout. There was no governor or Senate race and that affects turnout. In the 2015 municipal elections, we held our own with Democratic mayors. There are actually more people living under Democratic mayors than in 2014. Certainly Indianapolis helps that. We knew we needed to focus on turnout. In 2016, a lot of good work was done. Our candidates were good and they ran good campaigns. They did everything they needed to do, but there was a wave that went the other way, as you indicated. It was a bad year, but we did not have bad candidates who ran bad campaigns. We had good candidates who ran good campaigns and a lot of people did a lot of work and they built a base where we are now. In 2017, we spent the year from day one; from Nov. 9 (2016) when we started getting

emails: "What can I do?" "I want to run." "I don't think I did enough." Literally that morning after the election. People were obviously shocked at the results. But that started a trend of activity.

HPI: Describe what you did in 2017.

Zody: I started talking to candidates for the General Assembly in December of last year. It just started rolling from there: The president's inauguration, the rallies, the marches, all the demonstrations which started channeling actions. We started registering voters, we signed up volunteers. We formed relationships with allied groups around the state. We started an organization program, Days of Action, in which we started organizing voters, training volunteers. I've done 15 town hall meetings last year and 600 people attended. We went through a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). The state party went through a SWOT analysis after the first of the year. We reorganized to see what we could do better and people were actively involved. And this fall we trained. We did



a dozen training sessions. No one had to drive more than 50 miles to attend one. We talked about messaging, we talked about social media. Then last Saturday we had more than 100 women attend a training with the national party, Emerge America. There were 116 women learning how to run for office if they choose to do so. We're going to do training after the first of the year with another national group, with 100 people RSVP'd for that. So at the end of the day we trained over 1,000 people, we recruited more volunteers, there were tens of thousands of new registered voters in Indiana. Our fundraising kept up. We increased our social media presence. This was the year to organize.

HPI: A couple of sources tell me there's going to be a Democratic version of the Lugar Series.

Zody: You're going to be hearing more about that very soon. We've had a lot of activity around training. We have the Emerging Leaders, which trains 40 people under 40 in leadership development and politics. We're in the fourth year of that partnership. We started our own leadership series and over 200 people applied for that program this year.

HPI: Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer made a big deal with me about the GOP's finance, with \$2.7 million raised in the various committees. What can you say about Democratic finance?

Zody: Our fundraising has kept pace. We may be out-raised by our counterparts, but our fundraising has kept pace. We have an extremely loyal donor base here.

When I show them here's how it helped candidates ... that is a return on investment. Wins at the ballot box are important, but you have to sustain an organization and I think we've done that pretty well. Electorally, in the Big 10 there were two states that picked up seats in the General Assembly, us and Michigan.

HPI: Is the Bernie Sanders wing of the party represented on the Central Committee?

Zody: I'm going to speak to the group Our Revolution. We started at the first of the year looking at who was supported in the primary, Hillary Clinton or Bernie Sanders, and where are the areas agreed on? We agree on issues like health care and want to see the Affordable Care Act maintained and not repealed. This tax bill, (President Trump's) issue concerning the travel ban, there are all these issues where we have common areas of agreement. Are there still people upset? Yes. But for the most part those divisions have healed. It's not going to change overnight but it's a process of increased improvement of people coming together and finding common areas to be united.

HPI: Were you surprised that Sanders won the Indiana primary?

Zody: No. He brought in a lot of new people. It was close.

HPI: I know Hillary didn't invest here and I think that was a big mistake. It prolonged the primary season.

Zody: Yes. I've always given Bernie Sanders credit for bringing new people to the party. Our job is to keep them involved. He talked about issues like health affordability and talking about the issue of wages. We have a wage problem in this state. Bernie Sanders talked about that. At the national committee level, as part of the healing process, the Unity Reform Commission will issue recommendations on the nominating process nationally. I'm on the bylaws committee and that is the next group it comes to. I look forward to seeing those recommendations.

HPI: Where do you think Sen. Donnelly stands on his reelection campaign? Hupfer cited internal polling that had the race tied at 40% against a generic Republican.

Zody: People like Joe Donnelly, Republicans and Democrats alike. This organization has been in 57 counties this year; Donnelly has been to all of them. He works harder than anybody I've ever seen. He's in a good position. He outpaced Messer and Rokita last quarter. He's willing to work across the aisle. I think he's in a great position for 2018. All the indicators are there.

HPI: My analysis has it leans Donnelly. I actually believe that Mike Braun might be the tougher candidate for Donnelly because Congress is so unpopular. Rokita and Messer have that millstone.

Zody: Kyle mentioned a generic. My question for Rep. Braun is, who did you vote for, Hillary or Obama?

HPI: So Rep. Rokita would have been comfortable

with Roy Moore in the Senate. Is that an opening for Donnelly if he wins the Republican nomination?

Zody: His and Messer's voting records are about the same. Rokita said he would be comfortable with serving with Roy Moore, which is terrible. I think he takes cues from the vice president that he's willing to sacrifice all principle for political ambition. We've seen that in Mike Pence and we're seeing that in Todd Rokita. With Congressman Messer, living in Washington, D.C., and having a voting record like he does – they have both voted for a tax bill that is completely hypocritical on the deficit. They spent time talking about how terrible the national debt is, and they both voted for a bill that will increase it by \$1.5 trillion.

HPI: I don't think either Messer or Rokita can talk with any credibility about the deficit.

Zody: No doubt. Absolutely. We will call them on it repeatedly because if you believe it's a problem, you vote accordingly, and they voted the exact opposite.

HPI: The tax plan has an approval in the 25-30% range. The Republicans say that 60% of Hoosiers still oppose Obamacare. Do you buy that?

Zody: No. The Affordable Care Act has been sabotaged by this administration; they cut the open enrollment period in half, they reduced the number of navigators. They cut the marketing promotions by 90%. They suspended the cost-sharing reductions. They made it more difficult for insurers to be on the marketplace. We had

two pull out who specifically said it is not secure. (They didn't) have the certainty to stay in. There has been active sabotage by the Trump administration. People have to tell their story, whether you're one of those 400,000 Hoosiers who benefit from HIP 2.0, which is a direct byproduct of the ACA. If the ACA is repealed, HIP 2.0 goes away. That's something everyone ought to remember when Gov. Holcomb talks about how the ACA should be repealed. Vice President Pence talked about it lock stock and barrel, and HIP 2.0 would go away.

HPI: But there was that provision in HEA 1002 that would allow the state to divert gas tax money into health programs.

Zody: Is that going to pay for the billions of dollars that are paid for now? Are you going to be able to make up those billions and billions of dollars the state would be on the hook for if the ACA was repealed? That's my question. They haven't been able to answer it. Republicans in Congress haven't been able to get it repealed despite their promises for seven years, and that shows it works.

HPI: Where do you stand on candidates for the three statewide races? Will you field a full ticket?

Zody: Yes.

HPI: Any names you can share?

Zody: Not trying to be coy, but we're in conversations with a couple of people now who are not ready to go

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public yet.

HPI: Credible candidates?

Zody: Yes. They are able to compete. When you look at people like Secretary Lawson, who is a member of the president's commission on alleged voter fraud, there is so much energy around voting rights and ending gerrymandering and the issues that allow people to vote. There are restrictive voting rights now and the secretary of state's race is relevant. Secretary Lawson was sponsor of the bill for the voter ID law. There's a narrative there for our party to be competitive in that race and we will be.

HPI: I've seen your Indiana Senate candidate list. Do you have one for the Indiana House?

Zody: Yes. I think we're in about 60 districts. There are 10 or 15 more that aren't public yet. We're working to fill as many seats as we can. Both caucuses have done a great job recruiting. We feel great about where we are with recruitment all around.

HPI: Can you give me any background on some of these emerging candidates?

Zody: We've got some retirements, with Carolyn Jackson running for Linda Lawson's seat. District 5, Don Westerhausen is a cardiologist from Elkhart. He's been running for quite some time. He's putting an organization together that will be competitive against Rep. Devon. One of the good things about this list is you see a lot of good young people. In District 81, Kyle Miller is running against Martin Carbaugh; he's a young guy with a young family and he's out there working already. He's energized to run this year. He's one of these guys who said, "I want to get involved" and decided to run for the legislature. Whether they're young or not, we've got people who are running in districts that have never been challenged before, up in Hamilton County. In District 24, Naomi Bechtold has been running for more than a year now against (Rep.) Donna Schaibley. That's a tough district for us but she's already been out door to door. We've got these folks running in competitive districts and challenging districts. We don't

have a filing deadline for two months and these people are already out there running. We also have to protect our incumbents like Melanie Wright and Joe Taylor. We've got to maintain our numbers and pick up some and I think we're in a great position to do that.

HPI: These next two election cycles are probably the most consequential for Indiana Democrats since 1986 and 1988 when Evan Bayh emerged. Do you agree with that? You need to pick up 10 seats in the House and five in the Senate if you're going to be competitive in 2020 and prepare for redistricting in 2021.

Zody: Well, in 2018 there is so much at stake. We have a wage problem in this state. We have to do better with education. We still have people who are not protected equally under the law. We have people who do not have access to have adequate health care. In rural Indiana there are lives at stake. It has been categorically ignored in the Statehouse. Look at the southern part of the state where we had the HIV outbreak and opioid crisis. You drive across rural Indiana – you've got a place in Brown County and you know that – schools have been hurt. This General Assembly has ignored rural Indiana and it's got to stop.

HPI: Republicans represent almost all of rural Indiana. Democrats have been relegated to Lake, Marion, St. Joe counties and the college towns. Are you going to make a statewide case, thematically?

Zody: Yes. Sure. I've known Terry Goodin for 18 years and he represents a rural district and he knows how to win in rural places. He knows the issues. I think people like Terry Goodin are appropriate to be talking to candidates all over the state.

HPI: Robin Winston has been using Rep. Goodin as an example of someone who can bring the party back into rural Indiana.

Zody: He's a good leader. If they listen to Terry on issues like education funding and things that are impacting his district, the state will be better off. Those issues at the



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Statehouse, wages and education and fairness, equality and health care, and now we have a new administration in Washington and the stakes couldn't be higher relative national and economic security. President Trump has created insecurity in both ways. We believe the tax bill that has passed both houses harms the middle class. Our reputation internationally is all over the place. We don't know what's going to happen with North Korea. So the stakes couldn't be higher. Relative to redistricting, we have to pick up more seats so we have more of a voice in 2021 when reapportionment comes around for the 2022 elections. Picking up seats in 2018 and 2020 is absolutely critical for us.

HPI: Usually in that first presidential mid-term, the party in the White House loses seats in the General Assembly. Do you have any data on that?

Zody: In 2002, we held our ground. We held majority in the House. We kept our members of Congress. We lost the majority in 2004, but we got it back in 2006. In '06 was a watershed year for Democrats. We picked up three congressional seats, we got the House back here. Our candidates for statewide office got in the high 40s. We went from 46 to almost 49% in statewide races. In mid-terms with a Republican president, Democrats do very well. That's going to create some wind at our backs. We're in a different era with a different president.

HPI: In 1990, Joe Hogsett defeats Mayor Hudnut for secretary of state.

Zody: In 1988 was the year the House was tied.

HPI: Yes.

Zody: So in 1990 we took the majority back. During the Reagan years we steadily picked up seats.

HPI: I believe 1982 and 1986 were decent Democratic years. In 1982 that was at the depth of the recession and before morning in America.

Zody: In 1986, Evan Bayh was elected secretary of state. We started climbing back in the House.

HPI: Do you have specific seat goals in 2018?

Zody: We're going after the super majorities, especially in the House. In 2012, when Sen. Donnelly was on the ballot, he won in 49 House districts. Can we pick up some seats? Absolutely. It comes back to turnout and turnout is going to be impacted by a number of things. We've got the institutional things over here with voting rights and laws, and we will continue to push for more access to people voting. At this point I feel good about being able to pick up some seats. We've got candidates running in competitive districts and we've still got some holes to fill.



HPI: EMILY's List says they've been contacted by a thousand potential candidates. Are you hearing from women, particularly with Roy Moore and all the sexual harassment allegations? Axios is reporting a record number of female candidates.

Zody: We are. Last Saturday we had 116 women at the Carpenter's Hall in Greenwood to be trained. At the beginning we asked, "How many are running for office?" and more than a dozen stood up. We had township, judge, county and state legislature and Congress. It was all up and down the ticket which is what we need to be seeing. We've seen a huge surge in that.

HPI: President Trump says he will campaign against Sen. Donnelly after the tax vote. Is that a good thing for Joe?

Zody: The president and vice president can do what they want, and Joe Donnelly is going to ...

HPI: But I wonder if that might backfire? Trump's job approval in Indiana stood at 47/51% in the POS Poll.

Zody: I don't know. We're just going to concentrate on Joe's campaign. President Trump came here to get Joe's vote on tax reform and doing so, threatened him.

HPI: What impact does Vice President Pence have on 2018?

Zody: He ignites energy here. People believe he has sacrificed every piece of principle he has to be vice president of the United States. He has been absolutely 100% complicit in everything Donald Trump does because he stands right behind him and blindly supports everything he does. He is just as accountable as Donald Trump. Mike Pence has the ability to ignite people's desires to see things change. He helps to get people energized to seek change.

HPI: I've said that Gov. Holcomb is off to about as good start as we've seen (this was conducted before Mary Beth Bonaventura resigned from Department of Child Services). Is that a fair assessment?

Zody: The question is whether the governor is going to take bold steps or whether he's going to be a caretaker. He hasn't come out of the gate as ideological and divisive as Gov. Pence was, for sure. You can't argue with that. But he has continued to advocate for things like the tax bill, which we believe will harm the middle class. He believes the ACA should be repealed, which takes health care away from 400,000 Hoosiers. Words and actions are very different. We're seeing some major things in Congress and how he reacts to these will be important. How he responds to voting rights, when Democrats talk about the end to gerrymandering, where is the governor going to be on issues like that. He took positive action on family leave for state employees. Will he take that a statewide initiative for employers? There are a lot of questions about what kind of governor he will be.

HPI: It's 2017 right now and in a gubernatorial context that's way early. But 2018 won't be. Who should we be watching in that realm? Are there candidates starting to poke around?

Zody: No. No one has come to me and said I'm running for governor. I think people will look at some of the younger elected officials and some who have talked about it in the past. I'm not going to list names, but you know who I'm talking about.

HPI: My short list for 2020 I hear Peter Buttigieg, Jonathan Weinzapfel, Tom McDermott ... he gave me a tour of Hammond and a lot has happened there.

Zody: He's been a great mayor and a huge burst of energy for Hammond. He just does cool stuff. He does a concert series in the summer but he gives kids free tuition from the casino money. He does things that are cool but also very practical.

HPI: Does John Gregg take another look at it?

Zody: You'll have to talk to John about that. He was a great candidate last year and ran a great campaign. His message was still very relevant. He's still a leader in the party.

HPI: Christina Hale?

Zody: Same, she's taken on a new role as a rising star and someone people looked to last year and will look

to in the future. She's young and exciting and energetic.

HPI: Anybody else?

Zody: You just talked through the list. Maybe there will be somebody brand new.

HPI: I always thought that Woody Myers would be a very credible candidate, with his health care background, his role in the Ryan White story, his corporate background.

Zody: Dr. Myers is great. We communicate very regularly. I point to our mayors. We have very good, young mayors I hope will do more.

HPI: Anything you want to add?

Zody: I'm just really proud of the party organization in a non-election year. This is hard work. Some 99.9% of people who do the work are not paid, they are volunteers. I want to thank them for their work and say I'm extremely proud of them, some people who have been around for awhile and some new people.

HPI: Who do you want to see run against Trump? Any sentiment there?

Zody: No. I don't even know. Anybody who is going to run in 2020 needs to be out there in 2018 helping. People will ask, what did you do to help turn this around in 2018? You got to be a leader, in a lot of ways, but that will be one of them. ❖

Photography With Punch

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Time to weigh in on HPI Power 50 List

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – It’s time for our readers to ponder and weigh in on the 2018 Howey Politics Indiana Power 50 list which will be published on Jan. 4.

We’ve been compiling this list annually since 1999, gauging who will likely influence the events of the upcoming year.

The 2017 list focus was on the two incoming federal and state administrations of President Trump and Gov. Eric Holcomb, as well as the biennial budget and the historic highway funding program that is now law.

In 2018, we’ve seen a number of Hoosiers take key roles in the Trump administration and the list will reflect that. We also have crucial mid-term elections, with Indiana’s U.S. Senate race potentially determining who controls the upper chamber.

Some of our readers will nominate individuals. Others create and send along their own entire lists. Either way, HPI subscriber input is a critical part of creating this list.

Please send your thoughts and lists to me at bhowey2@gmail.com.

29. Mike O’Brien
30. U.S. Rep Jim Banks
31. U.S. Rep Trey Hollingsworth
32. Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard
33. Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight
34. State Rep. Robert Behning and State Sen. Dennis Kruse
35. Brian Burdick, Bob Grand and Rod Ratcliff
36. Brian Burton, President and CEO, Indiana Manufacturers Association
38. Kevin Brinegar, President and CEO, Indiana Chamber of Commerce
39. Dennis Faulkenberg and Gary Langston of the Indiana Motor Truck Association
40. Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness
41. U.S. Rep. André Carson
42. U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky
43. Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr.
44. Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry
45. Rep. Scott Pelath
46. Sen. Tim Lanane
47. Democratic Chairman John Zody
48. Matt Greller, Accelerating Indiana Municipalities
49. Danny Lopez and Jane Jankowski, Holcomb deputy chiefs of staff
50. Chuck Jones ❖

2017 HPI Power 50 List

1. Gov. Eric Holcomb
2. Vice President Mike Pence
3. U.S. Senator Todd Young
4. House Speaker Brian Bosma
5. Senate President David Long
6. Earle Goode, Holcomb chief of staff
7. U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly
8. U.S. Rep. Luke Messer
9. U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks
10. Sen. Luke Kenley
11. Ways & Means Chairman Tim Brown
12. State Rep. Ed Soliday
13. U.S. Rep Todd Rokita
14. Marc Short
15. Josh Pitcock
16. South Bend Mayor Peter Buttigieg
17. Christina Hale
18. Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett
19. Sen. Brandt Hershman
20. Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer
21. State Rep. Ben Smaltz
22. Purdue President Mitch Daniels
23. CMS Commissioner Seema Verma
24. FSSA Commissioner Jennifer Walthall
25. U.S. Rep Jackie Walorski
26. U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon
27. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch
28. Evansville Mayor Lloyd Winnecke

V22, N19



Thursday, Jan. 5, 2017

Power 50: Tandem administrations unfold

Trump/Pence and Holcomb teams, biennial budget forge the annual power list

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS – After a year of what had been unfathomable events and improbable ascendancies, after a year where political alignments fell off the rails between the people and their political leaders, after a year where long-held beliefs were ditched for current expediency, this is where we are: 2017 promises to be, perhaps, a bipolar year. If 2016 was sensational and unprecedented, 2017 could bring a new dawn or a reckless interlude.

There are voices tweeting things beyond our immediate comprehension. There are photo ops no one ever expected. The political world is shaking at an 8.2 Richter



President-elect Donald Trump with Vice President-elect Mike Pence and Governor-elect Eric Holcomb at the Carrier plant in Indianapolis.

scale level, and the populist uprising that installed two administrations leans in to see what can be delivered, what can't and at what price. There are deals to be made,

Continued on page 3

Participation, not party

By CHRISTINA HALE

INDIANAPOLIS – I just have to thank Donald Trump from the bottom of my heart.

When winning presidential candidates talk about "bleeding from the whatever," and grabbing p*****s, women sit up and take notice. They listen, too, when that same candidate's empowered daughter talks about increasing access for parents to quality daycare options.

Understandably pundits and the public continue to gape, agog and astounded by this past election, glued to the continuous news cycle that is our incoming president. For me, I am grateful for one





QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“The first order of business is repeal and replace Obamacare.”

- Vice President-elect Mike Pence after addressing Capitol Hill Republicans on Wednesday. He offered little detail on what will replace the ACA.



Santa's forgotten gifts

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – When Santa makes the rounds Sunday night and Monday, he undoubtedly will have forgotten the following gifts:

President Donald Trump: Truth serum.

Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott: Something bigger and better.

State Rep. Scott Pelath: A run for governor.

State Rep. Charlie Brown: A seat on the Lake County Council.

Gov. Eric Holcomb: Unlike former Govs. Mike Pence and Mitch Daniels, the ability to see that Lake County highways are plowed.

The city of Valparaiso: A mayor who cares as much as retiring Mayor Jon Costas.



The State of Indiana: Gallons of blue paint and a one-way ticket to the 21st Century.

Hoosier grocery stores: The ability to sell cold beer.

Republican legislative leadership: A fair redistricting following the 2020 Census.

Lake County: Respect.

U.S. Sen. Todd Young: The ability to say a complete sentence without mentioning that he was in the Marines.

Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson: A city without an abandoned house.

Northwest Indiana: Greatly expanded bus service.

U.S. Rep. Peter Visclosky: A lifetime achievement award.

Crown Point Mayor David Uran: Recognition for all he has done for his city.

Vice President Mike Pence: A better memory.

Whiting Mayor Joe Stahura: Praise for doing so much for his tiny city.

Interstate 94: Twenty-four hours without a traffic jam.

Schererville Police Chief David Dowling: A victory in the 2018 Lake County Democratic primary for sheriff.

Lake County Republican Chairman Dan Der-nulc: A party with a pulse.

U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly: Another term.

The city of East Chicago: A new Cline Avenue Bridge.

The state of Illinois: A governor who wants to build the Illiana Expressway.

Indiana's teachers: A Legislature that appreciates what they do.

IU basketball coach Archie Miller: A national

championship.

The Chicago White Sox: A return to prominence.

The Indiana Republican Party: An admission that it made a grave mistake in booting U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar out of office.

The Indiana Democratic Party: A rebirth. ❖

Rich James has been writing about state and local government and politics for more than 30 years. He is retired from the Post-Tribune.

I'm not tech pioneer

By MORTON MARCUS

INDIANAPOLIS – Without shame, I admit I am not a pioneer on the frontier of consumer technology. Evidence: Last week I bought a watch to replace one bought 20 or more years ago. The old one kept great time, but I often confused the minute hand with the second hand. Not



enough for the family to consign me to assisted living, but frequently I ran too early or too late for appointments.

Sadly, when my watch gave out, it could not be repaired by my neighborhood jewelry store. They would have sent it home to Scandinavia for a healthy fee. The new watch on my wrist cost a mere \$20 and does more than I need it to do. It tells me the month, the day, and the

date, all on one screen. If I wish, it will wake me with a buzz, keep me informed every time the hour changes, and I know not what else. Nor do I care.

For a few weeks I fished in my shirt pocket for my cell phone whenever I wanted to know the time. It was inconvenient and not as inconspicuous as a casual turn of my wrist. Anyone I was talking to was distracted, assumed I had a text or a call that needed immediate response, and lost his/her chain of thought.

The cell phone is a device that puts its user in a cell, separated from direct interaction with others. This is a lonely place filled with distractions of questionable value, offering limited views for eyes and brains capable of broader inquiry.

Once upon a time, I used a paper calendar, the week-at-a-time variety. It served me well for several decades. Then I was informed by my CDIO (chief domestic information officer) that my cell phone incorporated a calendar as well as a camera, a compass, a flashlight, and other wonders. Now I have a calendar that syncs with the cloud but fails to influence the weather. ❖

Ramesh Ponnuru, National Review: Todd Rokita and Luke Messer, two House Republicans from Indiana, are competing in the primary to take on Senator Joe Donnelly. Rokita has a new digital ad that goes after Messer over statements he made about Donald Trump during the 2016 campaign. Messer endorsed Trump, but in the ad he is shown twice asking whether Trump has “some odd personal tick where he can’t control his tongue and says all kinds of crazy things,” and once saying that Trump had not yet shown that he knows how to be presidential. It will be interesting to see how many Indiana Republican voters are swayed by this line of attack. Most of them support Trump. But some Trump supporters have been known to express exasperation, or worse, about some of the things Trump has said, while also supporting him on most legislative issues—just as Messer has. ❖



Jon Webb, Evansville Courier & Press: Education in Indiana is a mess. And that’s a nice way to put it. I initially was going to call it “a gasoline tanker jack-knifing into a Black Cats factory.” But that may be a slight exaggeration. We all know about the state’s consistent bungling of ISTEP and any replacement standardized test. Then there are teacher shortages, a problematic school grading system and a law limiting the collective bargaining powers of teacher unions. And now we find out the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corp. is suing about 500 families over paltry textbook, netbook and lunch fees. Many parents who landed in small claims saw their bill multiply thanks to court costs making it even harder for them to pay and the school corporation to collect its money. One woman I talked to, who asked to remain anonymous, said she paid \$600 for a \$275 bill because the corporation sent the notices to an old address and never attempted to contact her any other way. At the same time, EVSC has attempted to work with families by setting up payment plans. “We’ll take a dollar a week,” EVSC spokesman Jason Woebkenberg told the Courier & Press. It’s easy to leap on EVSC after a story like that. After all, it doesn’t make them look good. But the true villain is the state system that allowed it to happen. And while the problem is complicated, a partial solution is simple. Stop charging families for textbooks. School Board member Mike Duckworth told the Courier & Press he’d like to see the state foot the bill for textbooks, reminding everyone that Indiana currently squats atop a \$2 billion surplus. ❖

Robert Samuelson, Washington Post: What I most dislike about the Trump/Republican tax plan is the shameless cynicism with which it has been peddled. Recall how it works: The government borrows \$1.5 trillion over a decade and instantly uses that money to cut taxes for major constituencies — workers, families, small businesses and big companies. The handouts aim to buy votes. This is borrowing to bribe. It’s not subtle. If it’s not cynical, what

would be? Democrats can scream all they want about inequality, but the Republicans will have plenty of money to distribute. The nonpartisan Tax Policy Center (TPC) estimates that all income classes will receive cuts and that, in 2018, only 5 percent of taxpayers will experience higher taxes compared with present law. The figure rises to 9 percent in 2025. It’s true that the biggest cuts go to the richest taxpayers, but the main reason for that is that these people pay most of the taxes. In 2018, taxpayers with \$200,000 to \$500,000 of income would represent 6.6 percent of taxpayers, pay 24.1 percent of all federal taxes and would receive a \$6,560 tax cut, equal to 2.9 percent of their after-tax income, according to the TPC. By contrast, taxpayers with incomes from \$50,000 to \$75,000 represent 13.9 percent of taxpayers, pay 6.3 percent of all federal taxes and would receive a \$870 tax cut, equal to 1.6 percent of after-tax income. But what’s unusual about the Republicans’ plan is the heavy reliance on borrowed money. Scott Greenberg of the nonpartisan Tax Foundation estimates that 27 percent of the Republicans’ tax cuts are financed by more debt. ❖

Tony Katz, WIBC: The tax bill is far from perfect, but it’s a start. It also put moderate Democrats in a pickle: Vote for tax cuts and defy their Progressive party leadership or stick with party and vote against their tax-paying constituents. In Indiana, Sen. Joe Donnelly threw in with Bernie Sanders, and threw out Hoosiers. The myth of Donnelly as a moderate has existed since he came to the Senate in 2012. In the Senate, he’s been a mixed bag of priorities and legislation. When the moment comes to be courageous, and to put Hoosiers before party, Donnelly has been anything but. ❖

Wendy Levenfeld, NWI Times: Could the whole “Me Too Movement” also be approaching out-of-control blaze status? Before you text or email me about my insensibility, let me explain. This movement — directed at holding individuals accountable for sexual misconduct — is long overdue. I have written of my own experiences being a woman in an “ole boy’s club” industry and the humiliating treatment I often had to endure. Recently, I wrote of the pervasive climate of sexual misconduct on Capitol Hill and the despicable way complaints are handled. I am not minimizing the problem, but I think there is a risk of overreaction in two areas. I heard Stephanie Ruhle ask the question, “Should a grab, a tickle and a nip be justification to be run out of town?” The reaction throughout the nation is sending the message, yes it should, and I think it has been too long in coming. But I worry the airing of every sleazy comment or inappropriate action having taken place a decade or more ago diminishes the truly abusive, sometimes illegal actions coming to light. We can become numb to the often traumatic occurrences simply by the deluge of minor grievances. ❖

Advocates say DCS is broken system

INDIANAPOLIS — Several people in Indiana's child welfare system — including Marion Juvenile Court Judge Marilyn Moores — told IndyStar the state is in the middle of a crisis, and "this system is drowning." (Kwiatowski, IndyStar). The comments came amid virtual silence from Gov. Eric Holcomb's administration on several issues raised in a strongly worded letter of resignation from the director of the Indiana Department of Child Services. DCS Director Mary Beth Bonaventura, who submitted her resignation last week but remains in charge of the agency until Dec. 27, said cuts to DCS' funding and services are systematically putting children at risk. The director warned Holcomb that a continuation of his office's policies will "all but ensure children will die." Meanwhile, officials in the system say they are being swamped by a 65 percent increase in the number of court cases that allege a child has suffered abuse or neglect since 2010. Moores said the system is "drowning. Literally drowning."



Ex/import bank a loss for Pence

WASHINGTON — The decision by a bipartisan group of senators to block President Donald Trump's pick to lead the Export-Import Bank marked a stinging defeat for Vice President Mike Pence, who worked for months to boost the nomination despite doubts from some administration officials (Politico). Pence continued to push senators to support former New Jersey Republican Rep. Scott Garrett's nomination to lead the bank until the final hours before the Senate Banking Committee met for a vote Tuesday morning, according to lawmakers and others briefed on the issue. But Pence's entreaties on behalf of his old conservative congressional ally

weren't enough to mollify lawmakers after major manufacturers and trade groups raised concerns about Garrett's ability to oversee an agency he once tried to shut down. U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds told POLITICO he spoke with Pence about the nomination several times and that the vice president reached out to him Monday night before the vote. "He made it very clear his interest in having the nomination go forward," Rounds said. "I expressed to him my concerns with the nomination and hope that we could find some other alternative."

Companies give raises due to reform

INDIANAPOLIS — In response to the newly passed tax legislation, several national corporations are raising minimum wages and offering bonuses to their employees (Cox, WRTV). Fifth Third Bankcorp announced plans Wednesday to raise their minimum hourly wage for all employees to \$15 per hour and give a one-time \$1,000 bonus to more than 13,500 employees. AT&T also announced Wednesday that they would be paying a "special \$1,000 bonus" to more than 200,000 U.S. employees due to the passage of the tax reform. Comcast joined the trend Wednesday afternoon, announcing they, too, would offer \$1,000 bonuses to more than 100,000 eligible employees. The company also plans to invest more than \$50 billion in the next five years on infrastructure to improve their broadband plant and capacity.

Dems say reform will hit bonding

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Democratic Party say "an obscure provision tucked into the McConnell tax bill governing municipal bonds will make it significantly harder for states and cities to raise money to build new roads and bridges just as Indiana continues to grapple with funding massive infrastructure improvements."

(Howey Politics Indiana) "The use of advance refunding is widespread and critical for Indiana, as well as many other state and local governments who issue long-term municipal bonds to minimize their debt load and issue new tax-exempt bonds to fund infrastructure projects. The current municipal bond market is worth \$3.8 trillion nationwide, and the procedure saves state and local governments billions of dollars a year; the City of South Bend has saved roughly \$10 million on its own. Without advance refunding, the use of tax-exempt bonds to fund major infrastructure projects is expected to drop significantly."

State smoking rate remains high

INDIANAPOLIS — Nearly a quarter of all Indiana residents smoke, according to a new report (Tamborello, IndyStar). According to a report by 24/7 Wall Street, 21.1 percent of Hoosiers are smokers. Compare that to the national average of 17.1 percent. That number lands Indiana as the state with the 10th-highest number of smokers.

Rural schools fret grad pathways

INDIANAPOLIS — The State Board of Education approved a sweeping new plan for high school graduation pathways this month, but the recent decision has caused some concern for schools, and major questions remain (Lindsay, WFYI). But Indiana Small and Rural Schools Association director Christopher Lagoni says there are still important, unanswered questions. "We're wanting to know how we'll be able to track this, how we'll be able to afford it, what are the transportation costs," Lagoni says. Lagoni says many rural schools already have some career-oriented options, but a major challenge is to figure out how schools can offer those to all students, and match those larger programs with available resources.