

# Mayor Buttigieg's Indiana angles

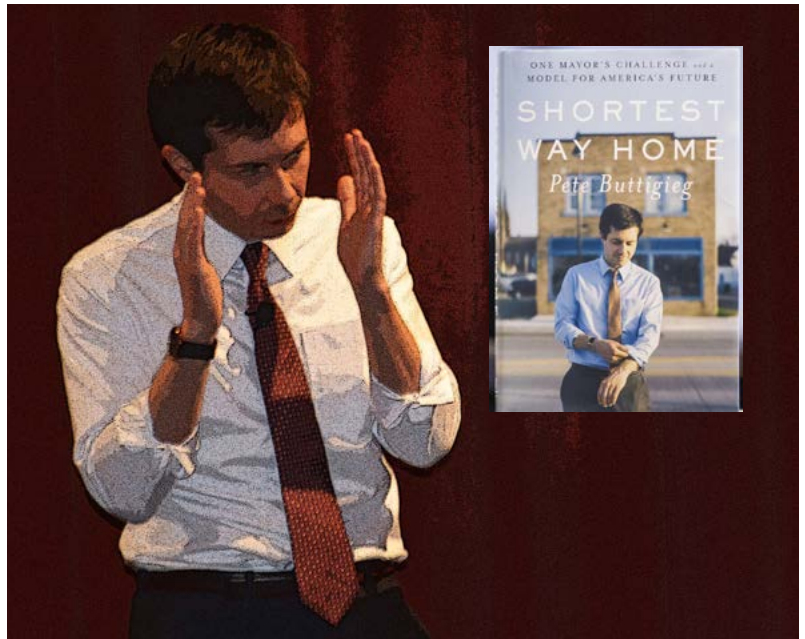
Mayor Pete's presidential exploration is a story that unfolds across the Hoosier state

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The next president of the United States from Indiana was supposed to be a man. He would have a name like Birch, or Richard, Dan, Evan, Mitch or Mike. He would have been at it for a long, long time, with every move over a conspicuous career progression aimed at that ultimate prize of 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

This proving ground would unfold in the chambers of Congress, or the West Wing, or even the Statehouse second floor.

There would be Christmas cards from the candidate with the wife and two or three kids. There would be convention keynote addresses at or near primetime, or a State of the Union rebuttal. There would be multiple appearances on "Meet The Press," "Face The Nation" and "Fox & Friends." We would be carrying the water



for this hopeful, gauging his political instincts, watching his ties to money, fame, Des Moines and Manchester.

In conjuring the next Hoosier to join William Henry

**Continued on page 5**

## Midway shiny objects

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**  
 and **JACOB CURRY**

INDIANAPOLIS – If there's a bright, shiny object in the General Assembly at the midway point, it is one that has been fashioned with red and black spray paint. It occurred at a Carmel synagogue last summer and resulted in the arrest of two western Indiana men.

But it changed the dynamic on whether Indiana should have a hate crimes law, prompting Gov. Eric Holcomb to make it a priority, as Indiana is one of only five states without one. "It's not only the right thing to do, it's long overdue," Holcomb said in December, vowing to be a vocal proponent. "I'm convinced the overwhelming



**“It was about the sanctions. Basically they wanted the sanctions lifted in their entirety, but we couldn't do that. Sometimes you have to walk.”**

*- President Trump, who abruptly left his summit in Hanoi with Kim Jong Un today.*



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majority of Hoosiers feel the same way.”

He’s correct on the “overwhelming majority of Hoosiers” aspect, with a Realtors Poll in December showing 73% back such a law. But that’s not the majority that matters; it’s the 40 Republicans in the Senate and 67 in the House, and they are balking at the so-called “list” that was deleted from SB12 last week. Of the 45 states with hate crime laws, only Utah has one sans a list.

**The Republican** governor now at odds with his legislative super majorities offered another way: Use federal code language and place it in the sentencing phase of hate crimes. Holcomb provided a history lesson: “There are folks that just are against a list. I disagree, respectfully. We have all kinds of lists. We just passed a lot of bills with lists. We have a list in the 1st Amendment.;

we have 27 amendments. We have a list in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. We have ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,’ and I will be happier when we have this list, as well.

“When I say that we’ve already got something that’s right in front of us, what I’m referring to is what’s already in federal law, and I will get you all the exact language and I will read it to you so that you have every word.

The governor then read: “Under federal law, criminal acts committed because of a person’s actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or because the person was engaged in a federally protected activity (voting, jury service, etc.) can be charged as hate crimes.’ This applies right now in the State of Indiana, and what I would suggest is that we take that exact language. And what is important about this is that where it is placed in state law; let’s say that we place this in the sentencing phase, not the reporting phase where we already have language, not in terms of the policing efforts, but

in terms of the sentencing, what is in front of a judge. And this, ladies and gentlemen, I would submit to you will get us off the list.”

How vocal will Gov. Holcomb get on this issue? That remains to be seen. Meeting with reporters Wednesday morning, Holcomb said, “I want a list. I want to get away from the vagueness. I’m going to spend the next two months encouraging the public... not to stop with me, not to just write me, they’ve got my vote, but they need to contact the legislators that vote.”

That suggests a good, old-fashioned barnstorming tour where a governor goes directly to the people to make the case, encouraging folks to call or write their legislators. Over the years, Hoosier governors have opted for an array of methods to move recalcitrant legislators. Gov. Robert Orr used to keep



a photo of a road grader in his desk drawer and would show it to stubborn legislators, asking something along the lines of “Do you want to see one of these in your district?” Gov. Evan Bayh vowed to stimulate the “white-hot heat of public opinion.” Gov. Mitch Daniels built a reputation in the halls of an alpha governor who could inflict pain, and he once branded House Democratic leader B. Patrick Bauer as a “car bomber” after the latter tried to deny a legislative quorum.

**Holcomb is in a** different spot from them all. He has Republican super majorities, whereas Bayh had a 50/50 House to deal with in several sessions and Daniels lost control of the House for four years in the middle of his two terms. So, Holcomb is writing new chapters as these super majorities extend into an unprecedented time span. During his first two sessions, the controversies were limited, allowing all to sing, “We are the world.” Does the governor now cajole? Threaten? Brandish both carrots and sticks? Seek that federal compromise?

With much of the rest of his agenda flowing nicely and with only



the teacher pay issue posing as a possible ointment insect, how he handles this spray-painted shiny object could be the story of the final two months of the session.

Would Holcomb use the veto? "It's too early for the v-word," he said. "We'll cross that bridge when we get to it." The problem there is that the super majorities can easily override a gubernatorial veto, and that would be embarrassing.

Senate President Pro Tem Rod Bray, steering through his first controversy at the helm, was asked about a veto. "We haven't had that conversation at all," Bray responded. Bray's reasoning was this: "To become a victim simply because of your race, your religion, your sexual orientation, is repugnant and it's wrong, and we need legislation that'll help to prevent that. That's the intent of Senate Bill 12."

What will the Senate do if the House somehow returns to the list?

"The bill's continuing to move, we're continuing to work on it, we'll continue to have these conversations and I fully expect that the bill will change as it goes over to the House," Bray said. "Like so much other legislation, when it comes back to us we'll begin to debate again. We're going to continue to listen to people and their concerns and what they think this bill ought to look like by the end of the session."

SB12 is in Speaker Brian Bosma's court beginning next month. Bosma explained, "I'm still in favor of Rep. (Greg) Steurwald's approach. The bill is coming to Rep. Steurwald and Rep. (Tony) Cook. Our leadership team will be working with them to try to formulate a position that is satisfactory to the majority of our caucus. And it's my goal to pass a bias crime statute to get us off the list without a list, and I think that can be done."

So, the House speaker thinks the list won't happen? "Well, I think the Senate made their desire in this regard abundantly clear by an overwhelming majority," Bosma explained. "So, I'd say it'd be very difficult to come back from here."

Do you think the governor will sign a bill with no list? "I have not asked him that question yet," Bosma said. "It's a little early for that kind of discussion. I've shared with him on numerous occasions the bill that our team put together and he has not spoken unfavorably about it, although I know he would prefer a list. So, we can see where the magic of the legislative process can help us land."

Bosma is not concerned that the hate crime show-down could result in a RFRA redux. "This is an entirely different circumstance," Bosma said. "This isn't taking an action that people can characterize as discriminatory. It's more of maintaining a status quo. I really don't see the same impact. We've also seen the growth in convention business here, which was one of the big concerns during the RFRA debate with conventions pulling out. We just

landed the longest and largest convention commitment of any state in the nation in history. So, we are a welcoming state, there are those who want to depict it otherwise, I think that's a mistake. But we'll see if we can solve this element and move forward."

No one hopes for this, no one wants it, but there's always the potential for a new hate crime so egregious that it reshapes public opinion and political will within hours or days, just as the Carmel incident did last summer. That's the risk for the conservative wings of the House and Senate. Another synagogue swastika, a fired church, or a beaten or murdered minority Hoosier can change the dynamic.

## Teacher pay

The other big issue is teacher pay. Gov. Holcomb is still banking on his team's innovative plan to pay off the Teacher Retirement Fund, which would free up money for local school boards no longer covering that payment. "I'd like to see 100% of that go to teachers," he said.

Just as he did last December, Holcomb wants time to fully study the issue and come up with a comprehensive and "systemic" solution. In unveiling his agenda late last year, he conjured a scenario where moving one part of the equation can have adverse impacts in other areas if not properly vetted. "We're looking at recommendations that systemically would address, really, cultural changes that would occur from the local level's authority," Holcomb explained. "Which I favor, by the way.

Short term, I put forward a 2-plus-2% increase to the schools with the authority, obviously, to get that to teacher paychecks."

While Holcomb engaged the Indiana State Teachers Association last summer, and its President Theresa Meredith seemed on board with the multi-cycle comprehensive approach, that changed in January when she suggested job actions and other pressure points. The problem for the ISTA and the tiny Democratic caucuses is that they have so little clout. That's why Holcomb has come up with the 2% sugar highs in the short term, while seeking a long-term solution and pushing it through in 2020, when he seeks a second term.

Bray is on board, explaining, "Having the legislature tell school districts exactly what you need to pay teachers has been problematic, so we're trying to come up with other creative ways to help. I think it's a good start. Absolutely, we're going to take a look at that. It helps make the whole conversation a little more transparent and it helps school boards and school districts kind of take a very close look at that."

Bray added, "We need to also continue to look here in state at things, responsibilities or obligations that we have put on schools over the years that we might be able to free up."



## Casino move

The Senate easily passed legislation that would allow sports betting while moving Gary's casinos to the Borman Expressway and, perhaps, Terre Haute. There is wide support for that which will free up Gary's Buffington Harbor for a lucrative intermodal port.

Bosma said he considered the legislation as a "major expansion of gaming," which is a warning sign. Bray seemed more comfortable, saying, "If you take the sports wagering this would have to be (an expansion)." As for the casino move, Bray said, "It technically is not. We're not putting out any new license and we're not saying there are extra tables that are going to be allowed for casinos to use."

As for Gov. Holcomb, he explained, "I'll need to take a deep dive into all the details because of how the conversation has expanded and what's included." On the



"expansion" concern, the governor said, "We need to be very mindful of that."

## Redistricting

The Senate demurred on redistricting reform that would include an independent commission, as Democrats have advocated. Bosma has favored that approach and even authored bills in past sessions to that effect, but he's not "Speaker Brian Sisyphus" and seems unwilling to haul that boulder across the rotunda only have to chase it down the hill. Gov. Holcomb was asked about the redistricting issue and said, "We need to hold those responsible for drawing the lines accountable, and they have been, to date." For the latent Hoosier Democrats, the GOP bullies are kicking beach sand in their faces. If they're going to get back in the game in 2022 or beyond, they're going to have to do it with Republican-forged maps. File this one under: Elections have consequences. So do super majorities. ❖

# Moving Gary casinos is a good endeavor

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – This isn't exactly what Gary legislators Earline Rogers and Charlie Brown envisioned when they introduced casino legislation almost 25 years ago.

But the casino legislation pending today may accomplish many of the same goals.

The casinos were intended to pull Gary out of a financial depression and employment crisis. But the two casinos at the city's far northwest side at Buffington Harbor never pulled in enough gamblers to achieve Gary's goals.

But the current proposal to move one of Gary's licenses to a land-based site – likely along the

Borman Expressway – and move the second to Terre Haute may accomplish some of the goals of the early 1990s.

A land-based casino along Indiana's busiest highway should bring in the kind of money the city of Gary needs to help get out of financial ruin.

**While it might result in** economic growth around the casino and hotel, it won't bring economic development to downtown Gary as originally hoped.

But it could bring tremendous economic development to Buffington Harbor on Lake Michigan with the creation of an intermodal operation involving rail, air, water and highway for the transportation of goods.



The value of such a development should not be overlooked. Few locations in the country have such a mixture of transportation modes in one location.

What is impressive about the casino proposal is that it is sponsored by Sen. Mark Messmer who lives in Jasper, far from Northwest Indiana.

**It is refreshing to see that a** legislator from southern Indiana cares enough about Gary to take a stand. While things have passed the Senate, they still must win the approval of the House.

Already, House Speaker Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, has said he is opposed because the legislation is an expansion of gambling. Bosma's stand reminds me of decades ago when downstate legislators were opposed to most things that would be a positive for Northwest Indiana.

Hopefully the House will go along with the proposal.

Messmer said, "It will help our existing casino operators be more competitive and will maximize our ability as a state to benefit from increased gaming revenues to our general fund, without increasing the number of licenses and staying within the caps that were established in 2013 for the number of positions at each facility."

**State Sen. Eddie Melton, D-Gary,** said the \$300 million land-based casino will provide 400 new jobs.

And, jobs were what Rogers and Brown were focused on when they launched the push for casinos. Making Indiana casinos more attractive should help ward off the coming competition from Illinois, Melton said. ❖

**Rich James has been writing about politics and government for 40 years. He is retired from the Post-Tribune, a newspaper born in Gary.**



## Buttigieg, from page 1

Harrison, Abraham Lincoln or Benjamin Harrison in the pantheon of political greatness, the point of transfixion wasn't supposed to be on a mayor of a medium-sized city, a gay man with a husband, toiling in an office high above snowy South Bend.

But that is where we are in this cold, blustery and endlessly unforgiving winter here in the Age of Trump, where I might remind you, anything is possible; anything can happen.

This is where we find Peter Paul Montgomery Buttigieg, the 32nd mayor of South Bend, the son of parents from Malta and Scott County, Ind., a Rhodes Scholar, a Naval Reserve intelligence officer, the former globe-trotting consultant for McKinsey & Company.

We've watched national commentators struggle to pronounce his last name, some opting for a simple "Mayor Pete." When he showed up for a reading of his book, "Shortest Way Home," at IUPUI last Sunday, a woman noted the soundbite dilemma and suggested a "JFK" or "LBJ" moniker might be more applicable than "Buttigieg."

To reduce Mayor Pete to "PPMB" might be flirting with peanut butter-and-jelly marketing that only Don Draper might solve with a simple "just say he's toasted" mentality, which carries considerable risk on a windswept night in the Hawkeye State.

"Shortest Way Home" is Mayor Pete's story in the requisite book needed for a presidential run. He is already defying gravity, forging to No. 11 on the New York Times bestseller list even before hitting the West Coast this week. For a low-tier candidate, Buttigieg is gaining outsized exposure on the network and cable talking head shows. But George, Chuck, Mika and Joe seem impressed, vowing to bring him back should he crack into the upper single digits in the next Register or Union-Leader poll.

"We were trying to keep our expectations low just because I'm not famous compared to most of the others," Buttigieg told Howey Politics Indi-

ana last Sunday a few minutes before he took the stage at IUPUI. The Hine Hall auditorium was packed and there was an overflow audience in an adjacent room listening to the audio. "A lot of these early states don't know me, but the events in these early states have exceeded my expectations in terms of attendance. As I watch the faces rise and fall and the groups I'm speaking to, I can tell a lot of my message, especially the generational message, seems to be resonating."

Buttigieg had been a political operative on Jill Long Thompson's 2008 gubernatorial campaign, then volunteered for U.S. Rep. Joe Donnelly. In 2010, Treasurer Richard Mourdock's attempts to thwart the Chrysler/Fiat merger that could have decimated Kokomo and the state's sprawling auto-supplier network prompted him to run a long-shot challenge he was destined to lose. A couple of months later, reacting to a Newsweek story that consigned his hometown of South Bend as a "dying city," he ran for mayor as a 29-year-old Democrat, but his appeal went beyond his Millennial category, something he's trying to replicate on the national stage today.

"Interestingly, the generational message is resonating with multiple generations, which is part of the idea," Buttigieg explained. "Not to pit one generation against

another, but to build an alliance. It's early. You can tell we are not one of the very famous candidates. We're definitely getting a lot of visibility over the last 10 days. Profile gets you a look. Once you've gotten that look, what keeps people paying attention to you is if you have interesting things to say. I'm hoping our account of what progressive vision of freedom, democracy and security looks like will gain traction. It seems

to be resonating well with the groups I'm speaking to. But we need more opportunities to get before more people. It's a race, literally."

### Hoosier origins

The Buttigieg political origins recounted in "Shortest Way Home" take shape across the Indiana landscape, from young Pete's days as a South Bend schoolboy in the shadows of hulking and crumbling Studebaker plants that were abandoned in 1963, to Mourdock's attempt to consign Kokomo's sprawling Chrysler complex to a similar fate, inspiring his decision to challenge him in 2010. There would be a weekend in 2009 at French Lick when Democratic operative Jeff Harris introduced this young, closeted



Hoosier with a "Meet Pete" placard invitation.

By the time Buttigieg entered the French Lick Springs Hotel lobby seeking an office he admitted had been a mystery to him until Mourdock attempted to kill off Chrysler, dozens of Democratic activists were asking, "Who in the hell is Pete?"

"While I may have been an unfamiliar figure, I convinced people that my business background and education would qualify me to challenge an opponent who had just made a name for himself in the worst way," Buttigieg writes. It rendered a campaign he embraced, taking him from Region union halls to Evansville's West Side Nut Club with an array of artery clogging festival food ranging from turkey testicles to cheesy fries to catfish nuggets. "If a dozen Ball State College Democrats were willing to meet, so was I. A church basement in Sullivan or a one-room Farm Bureau office among the mint fields of Starke County would do fine. Over rubber chicken, ham and beans, chili or sweet potato pie, I listened to stories in one town after another coming to terms with the kind of devastation that had ripped through my own city a generation before. It might be the hottest ever race for treasurer, if there was such a thing. All I had to do was quit my job."

## Describing the state

Buttigieg describes the Hoosier State: "There is an invisible line that goes on a northeasterly slant across the northern third of our state. North of it, the preferred fair food is pork burgers; south, it's chicken. Cross another line into the southern third of the state and the fare is typically schnitzel, only you call it a pork tenderloin."

Buttigieg's campaign calendar meshed with the evolution of the 2010 corn planting to harvest, where he channeled Hoosier poet James Whitcomb Riley: "The stubble in the furries – kindo' lonesome-like, but still. A-preachin' sermons to use of the barns they growed to fill."

And there were those uniquely Hoosier moments, like the filling of a canoe with chicken to break a world record in Brookville, or the man in a sandwich board from Paddy's Legal Beagle Pub in downtown Indy advertising a \$5.99 lunch "speacil," with the candidate introduction interrupted when the man said, "I'm not big on elections, I'm a monarchist myself." His preferred candidate was Jesus Christ.

Murdock would defeat Buttigieg, a prelude to his rise big enough to defeat U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar in the Republican primary two years later. "The very first time I put my name on the ballot for office, fully one million people had voted for the other guy," Buttigieg notes. "I had received a priceless if humbling course of education, a fitting conclusion to a decade of learning" that had taken



him from St. Josephs HS, to Harvard, to Oxford, the seaboard and places like Dubai, and back home again to Indiana.

Ten weeks later, Newsweek would name South Bend No. 8 in a story titled "[America's Dying Cities](#)," explaining: "What is particularly troubling for this small city is that the number of young people declined 2.5% during the previous decade, casting further doubt on whether this city will ever be able to recover." Buttigieg notes: "I had just

turned 29." The river city reaction on Facebook was one of doom and gloom, except for one classmate, who said, "If you live here, quit complaining and do something to fix this town."

## Running for mayor

Not long after that, four-term Mayor Steve Luecke announced he would retire. Buttigieg found a TV crew on his front door step asking if he would run. He begged off, but found support in boyhood friend Mike Schmuhl, who had run U.S. Rep. Joe Donnelly's tough reelection victory in 2010. With others encouraging a run, Buttigieg sought out two people for advice: Former Gov. Joe Kernan and St. Joseph County Democratic Chairman Butch Morgan.

Meeting Kernan at the gritty Joe's Tavern where we learn the former mayor and governor doesn't tolerate soggy green peppers on his pizza, Buttigieg writes, "After I worked up the nerve to ask him whether he thought it made sense for me to run for mayor, he stared at his basket of french fries in silence for several seconds before taking a breath and saying, 'So much, in politics, is outside of your control.' He didn't tell me I should or shouldn't, but described his love of the city and of the job. In fact he said, 'It's the best job I ever had.'"

As for Morgan, Buttigieg writes of this vetting: "Butch had been very encouraging during my race for treasurer. But now, from behind his heaped desk, Butch affably made it clear that he was not going to support me for mayor if I got in. 'I'm concerned about your age,' he began, before ticking off a number of other reasons why he didn't think I was the right pick. And Butch had done his homework on the local landscape to see where I might get support. At one point, I mistakenly told him I had a shot at earning the backing of Karl King, the influential author of the 'Benchmarking South Bend' study, whom I had come to think of as a mentor. Butch called Karl on the spot, and on that indestructible speakerphone, got Karl to make it clear he was backing (Mike) Hamann, while I looked on awkwardly."

Buttigieg quickly realized his dilemma, which was the potential of losing two races in the span of 12 months. "Lose twice in less than a year and you're probably done with politics, at least for awhile. But this was



home. I cared about this race even more than I had cared about Chrysler when I challenged Mourdock.”

He said the reason was clear: “The city’s needs matched what I had to offer. The city was fearful of losing its educated youth, and I was a young person who had chosen to come home and could encourage others to do the same. Its politics were mired in the struggle between two factions of the Democratic Party, each with its own candidate in the race. I belonged to no faction and could arrive without strings attached. And the administration struggled to generate economic growth and maintain confidence in the business community, I had a professional background in economic development and was fluent in the language of business – even while having fought and bled politically for organized labor in the auto industry. This didn’t just feel like an opportunity; it felt like a calling.

“On Saturday Jan. 29, 2011, about a week after



that Newsweek article said South Bend was dying, I officially announced I was a candidate for mayor. With neither the Dvorak family nor the local party organization behind us, it was vital that we pack the room in order to show that this was kicking off a serious campaign. By the time I took the podium, the windows facing Main Street were fogged up with the breath of over a hundred supporters.” Citing the News-

week article, Buttigieg declared, “This is not an occasion for denial, it is a call to action.”

It would essentially be a three-way race between State Rep. Ryan Dvorak and Mike Hamann along with two other obscure candidates. A poll weeks later showed the race tied with Buttigieg and Dvorak around 30%, and Hamann in low double-digits. “I watched the energy of my campaign change from that of a lonely project to something resembling a movement. By mid-April, there

An advertisement for the trucking industry. On the left, a young girl with blonde hair is sitting at a table, smiling and holding a cupcake. In the background, there are pink balloons and a window. On the right, a dark blue background features the text "Delivering Joy" in large white letters. Below this, it says "John Griswold Professional Truck Driver" and "#ThankATrucker" in a red banner. At the bottom right is a portrait of John Griswold wearing a black cap with "Logistics" on it. The "TRUCKING Moves America Forward" logo is also present.



[www.InTrucking.org](http://www.InTrucking.org)

Promoting Highway Safety. Providing Educational Programs. Fostering a Healthy Business Environment.

were a dozen staff members, mostly focused on organizing our volunteers." What followed was a TV attack ad from Dvorak, with the author noting, "My campaign staff was almost gleeful that we were doing well enough to be worth attacking on television. Rather than respond in kind, I decided to stick to our plan, focus on the economy and stay positive."

Just after the polls closed, Buttigieg went home, climbed out of an attic window "on to a small balcony overlooking the river, when the phone rang. Dvorak was politely conceding and pledged his help in the general election. Soon Hamann called to do the same." In seven months, after a general with just token GOP opposition, it would really be "Mayor Pete."

Four years later, Buttigieg would be reelected with 80% of the vote. The years 2012 through 2015 would be transformative: He would serve as a Naval Reserve intelligence officer in the Afghanistan war zone in 2014, sometimes conducting skyped meetings with South Bend officials from the other side of the globe. In 2015, he would become the highest-profile Hoosier politician to come out of the closet. By 2017, he would launch his national profile, running for Democratic National Committee chair, picking up support from the likes of former chairs Howard Dean and Ed Rendell and the accolades of people like David Axelrod. In 2018, he would marry his husband, Chasten, and then hold a meeting with former President Barack Obama about a 2020 presidential run.

He said the political change has been one where the "belief in our city is woven into the DNA. The chance to make impact in a city like ours is enormous. The way to our hearts is not nostalgia, but are we ready for the future?"

While critical of the current vice president, Buttigieg also lauded Gov. Mike Pence's Regional Cities Initiative. "What they did was they set up common goals. It was available to communities only if they partnered regionally," he explained. "They didn't even slice up the state in nine blocks. They said, 'You figure out what your region is and come up with a plan that shows you know how to share and then come to us. The reason this is so important is we have to get out of the model of old economic development where neighbors fought the next county over.'" He said South Bend shouldn't be stealing jobs from Elkhart, calling it "crazy," adding that South Bend and Elkhart need to be competing together against regions in China.

## Mayors and issues

Mayors face a pockmarked range of policy on

everything from homicide rates to filling potholes. Asked by an IUPUI student how he took on a murder rate that in 2015 was 29th highest in the nation, with 17 homicides (rating at 16.69 per 1,000 people). In 2016, it stood at 21 and in 2016, at 16. Buttigieg said it declined "into single digits" in 2018.

He explained at IUPUI, "Gun violence starts with a shockingly small group of people ... you can find connections with those people, almost all of them young, almost all of them men. With today's social network technology, you can literally figure out who is friends with who, who respects who, who listens to who. We can kind of predict who those 200 people are in a 100,000 (person) city, who are most likely to shoot somebody. We literally bring them into a room ... we basically we say we need you alive, safe and out of jail. Here's what will happen if you let us guide you to social services. Here's what will happen if you are associated with the next homicide in the city."

Buttigieg added that, "Let's be honest, I'm governing in a red state and while I believe in our strategy, it feels like I'm fighting with one hand tied behind my back." He noted a conversation with the mayor of New Haven, Conn., who also had seen a decline in murders, due in part "to common sense gun laws" passed by the state in the wake of the Sandy Hook school massacre. Buttigieg talked about "getting that

phone call" after each homicide, and "swearing in police officers with their spouse at their side," adding, "I don't want our officers out-gunned on the streets." He added that he carried "weapons of war" while serving in Afghanistan "on the orders of the U.S. president," concluding, "There are some weapons that do not have a place on American neighborhood streets."

Buttigieg was asked about mayoral leadership attributes. "I heard a comment once that leaders make themselves vulnerable. When I asked a little more about what motivated that comment, the person who said it, Martin O'Malley, the legendary mayor of Baltimore ... it wasn't talking about talking about your feelings, it was about data actually. You can share with the public how you're doing and when you do that it creates a healthy pressure on yourself.

"We had so many vacant houses in South Bend, nobody could tell me how many we had," he explained. "We started methodically analyzing data. There was a goal almost childlike in its simplicity: I went out there and said, 'We're going to (raze) a thousand houses in a thousand days.' To be honest, I didn't know completely how we were going to get it done. The moment I did that, I had a political sword dangling over my head. We put up a website where you could see how many houses we'd done. At Day





500, we're way behind. Everybody knows it. I know it. Everybody on my staff knows it. It created the political will and the propulsion to make it a priority. So when Day 1,000 did arrive, we were at 1,122."

"We don't know how we're going to get to those goals," Buttigieg said while noting the Green New Deal, which he supports as a concept. "What we do know is the best year to reach those goals was ... yesterday. We've got to have a plan, not enough time and then race to meet that goal."

He added that being mayor requires "humility," where a major initiative attracting national attention can be usurped by potholes. "We don't have 'alternative facts' in local government," Buttigieg said. He added that it is "important to have people in the office who have respect for that office."

On the national Democratic Medicare-for-all proposal, Buttigieg said it is important to define the framework of what that means, and explained, "The flavor I would prefer would be to take a version of Medicare and make it available on the exchanges for people to buy in as a sort of public option. If we did that right and use the purchasing power of CMS to drive down medical costs, it should be the most respected and preferred choice."

### Breaking the mold in the Trump era

Presidential candidacies have been mostly by straight, older, mostly male and white people who have been senators, governors or generals. Donald Trump ignited a new formula, showing that someone outside that scope could become president. Whether Trump completely shattered the mold of presidential origins remains to be seen. But you can make the case that President Trump may have made a serious presidential candidacy by someone named Pete Buttigieg fathomable, whereas four years ago he would have been relegated to the gadfly category occupied in the past by the Sam Yortys, Alan Keyes and Herman Cain of the world.

Mayor Pete's South Bend story will be the thrust of his candidacy. Should he gain traction, the fact that he is gay is a category that will eventually fade into subtext the way Obama's race or Hillary Clinton's gender did in 2008 or 2016, or even Donald Trump's lack of government pedigree. It will be policy, direction and rhetoric that will bring legitimacy.

He notes in "Shortest Way Home" that by the time South Bend celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2015, "progress was palpable," adding, "I could say with a straight face that our city was experiencing not just a comeback, but something akin to a



miracle."

Census numbers showed population increases after decades of contraction. He had once pondered blowing up the empty 25-story Chase Tower, but there's a new owner, \$30 million in investment and a new hotel there. There is a new owner of the vacated College Football Hall of Fame and another hotel going in there. Downtown investment is now at an estimated \$90 million and there's wi-fi across the city core. There's a new owner for the South Bend Cubs baseball franchise and a renovated stadium. There's a "smart streets" initiative. More than a thousand vacant homes have been razed. The Studebaker complex ruins are now occupied by data-hosting and analytics firms and a high-tech laboratory for turbomachinery research, drawing in aerospace companies.

Buttigieg said that his exploratory mode will take some time. "You'll probably see a longer runway for us than most," he told HPI. "It's because I want to make sure a launch event is done right. When you don't have the same kind of fundraiser base as say, a coastal senator, you have to really methodically put the resources together to do that. Certainly all signs are pointing to an early spring launch. But it's not going to be one of those 10 days of exploratory and then guns come out a-blazing."❖



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# Donnelly uninterested in Holcomb challenge

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

NOTRE DAME — Don't expect to see Joe Donnelly on the ballot any time soon. When we sat down with him at Rohr's tavern at the Morris Inn here, we asked about his political future.

Specifically, we asked about the 2020 gubernatorial race where there is no obvious Democratic candidate.

During the current General Assembly session with Republicans gutting a hate crimes bill and snuffing redistricting reform, only 2012 and 2016 nominee John Gregg is commenting (on Twitter), and he is not appearing to

be taking steps to make a third run.

Would Donnelly consider a challenge to Gov. Eric Holcomb?

"I am not looking at any other races," Donnelly responded. Asked if he would rule anything out, the former U.S. senator politely deflected, mentioning his immediate task would be to get his snow blower running again. So the answers were present tense, perhaps leaving the door open while time drains away. Perhaps.

In this Part II of our interview with Donnelly, we asked him to list the highlights of his dozen years in Congress, six both in the House and Senate. All four of his terms found him dealing with momentous change. He was instrumental in lobbying President Obama to rescue the domestic auto industry and, especially, the Chrysler complex in Kokomo that was part of his 2nd CD. He was a constant presence to Obama Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, and by mid-2009 Obama helped orchestrate the Chrysler/Fiat merger.

As fate would have it, Donnelly defeated Indiana Treasurer Richard Mourdock in the 2012 Senate race, with Mourdock's attempt to derail the merger and forcing a liquidation of Chrysler becoming a factor. Donnelly said that if Mourdock had succeeded, or Obama hadn't stepped in, Indiana would have faced a depression.

Donnelly's other major legislative accomplishments included the Jacob Sexton Military Suicide Act and the 2018 Right to Try Act that President Trump signed last fall, allowing people with lethal diseases to try experimental drugs.

As for the Indiana Democratic Party, Donnelly says he is keeping in touch with key people. But with last year's defeat, his status as titular head of the party has left a vacuum, with neither U.S. Reps. Andre Carson or Pete Visclosky, or any of the big city Democratic mayors filling that void at this point.

Finally, we asked Donnelly how Hoosiers should react to the coming report from Special Counsel Robert Mueller on the Russian collusion investigation. Donnelly was emphatic in his response, saying Americans "are entitled to see this report."

Here is Part II of the HPI Interview with Sen. Joe Donnelly that took place Jan. 18 at the University of Notre Dame:

**HPI:** Let's talk about your congressional career.

**Donnelly:** I look at how lucky I was to have the chance and I know it sounds like a broken record, but it's so true – how lucky I am and grateful I am that the people of the 2nd District gave me the chance and then the people of the state for giving me the chance. When I came into office, Iraq and Afghanistan were in flames. When I went there in late June or early July of 2007, we were sitting in a meeting with our U.S. ambassador as mortar shelling was going on into the Green Zone. I remember the U.S. ambassador telling us, "We're in the safest room in the place." You're sitting there talking to him and you're



hearing explosions as we talked about the path ahead. That was right when General Petraeus was beginning the surge and he was explaining it to us.

**HPI:** So you went through those corkscrew landings to fly into Baghdad to avoid the flak?

**Donnelly:** Yeah.

**HPI:** What was that like?

**Donnelly:** You didn't want to eat before you left.

**HPI:** What do the Air Force pilots advise – eat bananas because they taste the same going up or down?

**Donnelly:** (laughs). I was so privileged. I was in



Iraq about five times and Afghanistan about five times with the goal of trying to bring them to honorable conclusions, and we did that in Iraq and I hope we're doing that in Afghanistan. Almost all of our men and women are home. In my first eight months in office in the House, we lost eight young men, about four times the national average. And every one, you see the families and you see the little kids and dad's not coming home, not coming in the door to pick them up. It burned in me that we need to get these young men and women home and conclude this honorably. We were able to do that. It didn't end perfectly, but you felt in your heart what you had to do.



put a lot of time into that. But if you look at some of the books that were written, I would chase Rahm Emanuel all around Washington because he was President Obama's chief of staff. I said, "You have to keep Chrysler alive, you have to. I've got 5,000 people who are working there." It went down to about 100. There were 4,900 people who all had mortgages in the same town or just outside the county who had no alternative job opportunities that would have

been available in Kokomo. You have everybody saying, "Chrysler is done." Not only the auto industry, but Chrysler. I begged the president. I would laugh and say, "You know Mr. President, I am not too proud to tell you I am begging you to at least give them a shot. I am not asking you to give them a handout. I am asking you to give them a shot." Even a lot of the president's advisers were telling him to kill Chrysler. Rahm in one of the books that was written talks about Chrysler said, "That's Joe Donnelly's

**HPI:** With the auto rescue of 2009, what would have happened if Chrysler and GM had liquidated?

**Donnelly:** We would have been close to a depression economy in Indiana. There were a lot of people who

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district." And the economic adviser would go, "No, no, no, nooooo." And he said, "That's Joe Donnelly's district. No. 1, we owe it to the people there and No. 2, give Joe a shot to get this done." And the president stepped up. It was probably 50/50 at best from his own advisers in a Democratic administration to save Chrysler. And he put on tough restrictions and said "Everybody has to clean up their act, across the board, from management to unions, everyone had to clean up their acts. But I'll give it a shot." It went from over 5,000 employed, to 100, and today there are over 9,000 people working there in Kokomo. I am incredibly grateful to the president and his team for having the faith and taking a shot because I knew those people could do it because they are such hard workers and such good people. All they ever asked for was a chance, not a handout, but a chance.

**HPI:** Your Obamacare vote was a ballsy vote. But you ran three times after that vote, won reelection to the House, won a Senate seat, and you didn't lose last November because of Obamacare.

**Donnelly:** I did not. In fact, it was a significant net positive this last election.

**HPI:** Did it ever get approval of above 50% in Indiana? I know it did nationally in some of the Kaiser polling.

**Donnelly:** I don't know. But this last election, if three people told me they didn't like Obamacare, that would be a lot.

**HPI:** You were very passionate about addressing the military suicide issue.

**Donnelly:** My first piece of legislation in the Senate, and it was passed into law, was the Jacob Sexton Military Suicide Act – named after an Indiana National Guard member from Farmland, Indiana, who took his life while home on R&R from Afghanistan. The purpose of the legislation was to end military suicide, and the law provided that every service member could have an annual mental-health checkup without any punitive consequences. It is now law and being implemented by every service branch, and they are working very hard to get it right. We wanted every young man and woman in our military to get the help they deserve and might need. We were able to continue improving our veterans' services, which is a passion of mine. We opened new clinics around the state and saw the larger new VA Health Center in Northern Indiana open its doors to our vets. It is one of the most advanced vet health centers in the country. A similar center to that one will be opened in Terre Haute in the next few years, serving all our vets in West Central and Southwest Indiana. Our veterans' services covering health care, job training,

and other areas improved each year I was in the Senate. I am still bound and determined to do everything I can in the years ahead to end the scourge of veteran homelessness and suicide. As we all know, one vet struggling is one too many.

**HPI:** In the context of the 2018 Senate race, I mentioned President Trump signing the Right to Try Act. Will that be a key part of your legacy?

**Donnelly:** The Right to Try legislation was also special. Laura McLinn of Indianapolis, her son Jordan, and their family helped me drive that legislation. I had a great partner in Republican Ron Johnson from Wisconsin, and Marlin Stutzman was a great teammate in the House. All the experts told me we had no chance – where have I heard that before? Ron and I worked day and night to inform our Senate colleagues and pointedly ask for their vote. I also spoke to groups on the House side to try and make sure we had the votes there. Laura and Jordan worked their magic on television, in Washington, and back home in Indiana. When Right to Try was voted on in the Senate, it passed 100 – 0. That's what hard work and

the right cause can do. Today, due to that law, people all around the United States can finally get access to experimental drugs if they have a life threatening disease. It was a great team effort.

**HPI:** You served on both the House and Senate agriculture committees. Talk about that.

**Donnelly:** I was able to help write three great farm bills while on the ag committee and our nation had 72 consecutive months of job growth while I was in the Senate – more jobs during every single month I was there. I was blessed to have the best staff and team you could dream of. They worked every day to make the lives of Hoosiers better. I followed Senator Lugar in this seat, and he is one of my heroes. I felt an obligation every day to make sure he could be proud of our efforts. I was so lucky to represent the people of Indiana, and to work for this country that I love so much.

**HPI:** So, what's in your future? You're teaching here at Notre Dame. Is your political career over? How old are you now?

**Donnelly:** I am 63. I'm sure you feel as young as I do. I feel like I'm in my 40s. Life gets better every year. The way I try to look at this is, how lucky was I to have had the chance? I don't know what the future holds. I am very blessed that Notre Dame has given me the chance to teach here. I am working hard to hold my end of the deal up on that. I am cooking dinner occasionally now.

**HPI:** So, you're staying here, living in Granger. I





asked you last summer if you'd come back to Indiana after your career was over. Is the campaign RV for sale?

**Donnelly:** I've got to get it repaired, but it's not for sale.

**HPI:** Are you going to keep it?

**Donnelly:** Oh yeah, if I can. I make sure I do all the FEC stuff right.

**HPI:** Would you look at the 2020 governor's race? There's not an obvious candidate there.

**Donnelly:** I am not looking at any other races.

**HPI:** Would you rule anything out?

**Donnelly:** I'm just lucky to have a chance to teach here and I'm trying to get my snow blower going these days.

**HPI:** So you might have seven or eight more years if you work until you're 70 ...

**Donnelly:** I love to work. I hope I have the chance...

**HPI:** Are you getting business offers?

**Donnelly:** I am. I am trying to take it with reasonable time to make sure I make the right decision.

**HPI:** What is your message for Indiana Democrats? They are in worse shape than when Evan Bayh surfaced in 1984. I met him when he was campaigning for Wayne Townsend for governor and he was off and running by 1986, but the party still had a presence in many counties. Today, it is only thriving in the big urban counties and college towns. It has been decimated at the county level.

**Donnelly:** I am still in touch with a bunch of them. They are such good people. The party is in good financial shape. We always worked hard to make sure we had the party in a place where they didn't have to worry. All the T's were crossed and the I's were dotted. People were getting paid. John Zody is doing an amazing job. We worked hard to make sure it stayed that way. We were on the verge of winning the governorship in 2016. It didn't happen. We were on the verge of winning my Senate seat and it didn't happen. People will go, "But you lost." We did, but if the election were held a week out, we'd probably win both. People may go, "You weren't that close." Well, you know what, if we keep working hard, good things will happen. John Zody has helped set the table. We've got great leaders in Phil GiaQuinta and Tim Lanane. We've got wonderful folks across the state. I want to continue to help build the party.

**HPI:** We could talk for another two hours on President Trump and national security.

**Donnelly:** One of my great passions is national security. I taught a class on it today with about 47 students.

**HPI:** Did Dan Coats know what Presidents Trump and Putin talked about in Helsinki? You told me last August that he didn't. Then we saw the presidents hand signaling

each other at the G20 and they met alone again, which is bizarre and unprecedented.

**Donnelly:** I didn't ask Director Coats. I didn't have the chance. There's things I can talk about and things I can't. That obligation continues even after you leave office. I don't believe anybody knows what was discussed in Helsinki on the American side. Everybody on the Russian side knows.

**HPI:** That is stunning to me.

**Donnelly:** It's not only stunning, it's scary.



**HPI:** When I bring this up to folks down in Nashville, they don't really seem to care. Even when I say the Russians are not our friends. They are not allies. It doesn't bother a lot of Hoosiers, which is really troubling.

**Donnelly:** As we sit here today, one of our friends, Ukraine, is in a position where the Russians might be attacking their navy. The Russians turn it up all the time as far as they possibly can. They are not our friend, they are our enemy. They treat us that way. Something is sideways on what is going on in the administration right now with the Russians.

**HPI:** There is a lot of speculation on Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation. I hope Congress and the nation get a comprehensive accounting of what happened in 2016 and 2017. Sen. Young had advised me several times to wait for the report and don't speculate. What would you tell Hoosiers about the next couple of months?

**Donnelly:** I would tell them this: We're American citizens. We're entitled to see this report. We're entitled to see what's going on. I don't know what it's going to be. I said from the start, like Todd, he will do it. I don't know what it's going to show. It may show the president didn't do anything. It may show other things. Let him finish his investigation and once he finishes, we're entitled to see this. I think there's going to be an effort to try and prevent that from being seen by the American people.

**HPI:** If Attorney General Barr attempts to not disclose the report, the House Intelligence Committee can subpoena the report, right?

**Donnelly:** My expectation is they would. ❖

# Birch Bayh's challenge to the Electoral College

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Former Sen. Birch Bayh of Indiana, author of the 25th Amendment on presidential disability, an amendment now in the news, almost brought about another constitutional change that would have abolished the Electoral College. What a difference that would have made.



"In the future, the American people – rather than the faceless, undemocratic Electoral College – should choose the two highest officials in this land," said Bayh back in 1977 as he spoke at a Senate hearing on his proposed amendment to provide for the direct popular election of the president and vice president.

There was bipartisan support then. Bayh, a Democrat who came close at times in over a decade of trying to get the two-thirds vote in the Senate needed to send the proposal on for ratification by the states, had the backing then of such prominent Republicans as Bob Dole and Howard Baker.

But filibusters or the threat thereof, mostly by senators from small states and in particular southern states wanting to keep clout in the Electoral College, always halted the proposed amendment.

Some Democrats, including South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg, in his candidacy for the party's presidential nomination, now urge another try to replace the Electoral College with a direct popular vote. Buttigieg notes that Bayh came close, a sign that it's possible.

Chances of a bipartisan effort now, however, are remote. The reason is that the danger Bayh warned of in 1977 – "electoral roulette" bringing election of a president who actually lost in the total popular vote – has happened twice since then.

In 2000, Democrat Al Gore won by more than a half-million votes over Republican George W. Bush in nationwide voting, but Bush won the presidency in the Electoral College when Florida was found in a Supreme Court decision to have gone his way. In 2016, Democrat Hillary Clinton won more than five times bigger than Gore had in the popular vote, by 2,868,686 votes over Republican Donald Trump. As we know, Trump won "huge" in the Electoral College.

So, since that "electoral roulette" has spun twice in favor of a Republican, what are the chances of Republicans in Congress now joining in a bipartisan two-thirds vote in the House and Senate to send repeal of the Electoral College on to the states for ratification?

The reason for bipartisan support back when Bayh almost pushed through his amendment was that nobody knew then which party might win the most votes and still lose in the Electoral College, where each state has a number of electors equal to members in its congressional delegation.

After all, it had looked in 1960 as though Republican Richard Nixon might get the most votes and still lose to Democrat John Kennedy. Nixon finally fell short by just 112,827 votes nationally. So, Kennedy just barely won in both the popular vote and with electors.

Before the Electoral College became so defined now as a Republican institution, Donald Trump in 2012 labeled it as "a disaster for democracy." Trump mistakenly thought it would lead to President Barack Obama winning reelection unfairly in the Electoral College. The theory was that black voters would swing enough support to Obama in some big states to enable him to win, even though a vast majority of American voters had turned against him.

Partisan political advantages aside, one of the most persuasive reasons to abandon the Electoral College is that if no presidential candidate gets a majority of the electors, selection of the president goes to the House of Representatives. And each state has one vote.

A strong independent candidate winning a state or two could send the selection to the House in an era of crumbling congressional approval. Electoral roulette? That would be Russian roulette, playing with a gun pointed at democracy. ❖

**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?**



# It was Liars Day on Capitol Hill

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Perhaps we should make Feb. 27 a new U.S. holiday: Liars Day. It would be the perfect holiday here in the post-truth era. One could use it to golf or fish, do our taxes, or hit a strip club while the wife goes shopping, lying all the way.

Convicted liar Michael Cohen appeared before the House Oversight Committee. He's already lied under oath before Congress. He was President Trump's long-time fixer/attorney and, according to the Washington Post, Trump had lied or told half truths 8,158 times as of Jan. 21. President Trump surrounded himself with an array of people who have lied. Michael Flynn was axed because he lied to Vice President Pence. And Pence, playing the dutiful veep, repeats the Trumpian lies, like that faux "national emergency"



on the southern border that most of our U.S. House delegation has taken hook, line and political sinker.

House Oversight Committee Chairman Elijah Cummings acknowledged Cohen's problem with the truth. "I will be the first one to refer those untruthful statements to DOJ," the chairman warned. "He has a lot to lose if he lies."

Republican U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan lashed out before Cohen testified, telling Cummings, "The first announced witness of the 116th Congress is Michael Cohen, who lied to Congress. Certainly it's the first time a convicted perjurer has been brought back to be a star witness. You have stacked the deck against the truth. Mr. Chairman, we are better than this."

Cummings then swore Cohen in, asking if he would say "nothing but the truth, the whole truth?" Cohen answered in the affirmative.

**So help us, God.** I mean, really, God, we could use some help down here in Washington.

Rep. Jordan has his own truth obstacles, emanating from sexual abuse allegations in the Ohio State wrestling program where he was an assistant coach. He hired a PR firm, with his campaign famously saying, "When somebody is lying about you, you hire the best."

There are occasional white lies out here in flyover country, usually couched when political reality wanders into the rhetoric pit. But as I've noted so many times before, Gov. Eric Holcomb doesn't lie. Speaker Bosma doesn't lie. Mayors Winnecke, Daniel, McDermott, Meers and Bennett are not liars. We wouldn't tolerate it in Indy or Terre Haute, Columbia City or Jasper.

Cohen, who heads to federal prison for three years in May, used the hearing as a kind of confessional (and someone, somewhere, recently made the case the Senate is not a confessional). Republican partisans pounced on his duplicity, attacking the messenger, not the message with the whole world watching.

But Cohen isn't seeking a pardon from President Trump. He expressed remorse. He called himself a "fool" for doing Donald Trump's bidding. He painted our president as acting criminally while in office along with being an overt racist. He supplied a damning prop, a signed \$35,000 check as part of Trump's payoff to porn star Stormy Daniels. There wasn't a single follow up question.

**Cohen said, "I have lied,** but I am not a liar. I am ashamed that I chose to take part in concealing Mr. Trump's illicit acts rather than listening to my own conscience. I am ashamed because I know what Mr. Trump is." Cohen added of Trump, "He is a racist. He is a conman. He is a cheat. He was a presidential candidate who knew that Roger Stone was talking with Julian Assange about a WikiLeaks drop of Democratic National Committee emails." He warned the panel of following Trump blindly like he had.

Cohen said that President Trump told him to lie to the public about hush payments to the porn star. He presented life in "Trump world" as in what the New York Times called a "Faustian bargain" in which he and others sacrificed their integrity for the "intoxicating" whiff of power. He acknowledged that he lied under oath to Congress about a Trump Tower project in Moscow, adding, "I am not protecting Mr. Trump anymore."

Whew, whew and whew. Get the law firm Dewey Cheatem & Howe on the line.

**Beyond Cohen's attempt at** redemption before a live TV audience, the other intriguing aspect of all of this was the almost complete lack of Republican curiosity over the web woven by serial deception with all of the alleged porn star payments, the sexual harassment and assaults, the Trump Tower meeting with the Russians, Moscow investments, and the fact that Trump was attempting to do a real estate development with the Kremlin during the 2016 presidential campaign, something he (and Cohen) repeatedly denied in 2016 and 2017. While they took aim at Cohen, Republicans mounted no attempts to discredit facts of the Trump schemes.

The White House responded: "Michael Cohen is a felon, a disbarred lawyer, and a convicted perjurer, who lied to both Congress and the Special Counsel in a 'deliberate and premeditated' fashion according to the Special Counsel's Office," the spokeswoman, Kayleigh McEnany, wrote. "Now he offers what he says is evidence, but the only support for that is his own testimony, which has proven before to be worthless. This is the same Michael Cohen who has admitted that he lied to Congress previously. Why did they even bother to swear him in this time?"

What's that old phrase, you know, the pot calling the kettle black? Happy Liars Day! ❖

# Some unpleasant news on education spending

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE — Indiana's General Assembly is working through some details on the final education budget, and there are issues that merit discussion. Be warned, this column is likely to leave most folks a bit flustered. Facts are unfriendly to badly informed opinions.



I begin by noting that the State of Indiana does not pay teachers. The State of Indiana funds K-12 education, and school boards pay teachers. It is critical to be clear about this, and not submit to the temptation of silly retail politics. This is important because school boards make decisions that affect teacher pay. For example, almost four out of every 10 school corporations in Indiana are so small that overhead costs eat a disproportionate amount of state funding. In these places, con-

solidating corporations would free up money to keep local schools open and pay teachers better.

Most other teacher pay decisions are likewise part of a school board's job. Statewide, the data are clear; there is no teacher shortage. However, in many school corporations, finding and keeping the teachers those schools need is very difficult. Folks, if your school corporation is too small to attract the teachers you need, the problem isn't in Indianapolis, it is at your school board. That is the place to start the pay and budget discussion.

It is worth noting the overall issue of teacher pay. The best data I have seen concludes that Indiana teachers are paid less than the average in surrounding states. It is almost certain that some of this is erased after comparing teachers in similar communities, but it does raise some important questions. Most importantly, it is nearly impossible to compare salaries between public sector occupations. For example, an Army second lieutenant makes less than \$29,000 in a nine-month salary. That is about \$6,000 less than the starting wages for a teacher.

**Whether or not Indiana teacher** salaries are too high or too low is nearly impossible to determine. Moreover, I don't think it is the real issue. The real issue is how the state is allocating resources on developing human capital. Getting the state better aligned on these issues will have to wait until the next budget session, but it is worth reviewing some ugly budget issues that are coming to pass this year.

This biennium budget is designed for the 10th year of economic expansion, the longest on record. Yet, we seemingly have real budget struggles. How can that be? One possible answer is that we tax ourselves too little, but

I'll save that for another column. Another answer is that we are spending far too much remediating the ill effects of poor education, and too little preventing poor education.

To help figure this, I'll compare the budget for 2010 and 2017, which is after the changes to the tax laws that began in 2008, through the most recent year of data that is available. I adjust for inflation using the consumer price index. Over this time, per student spending on K-12 rose 0.45%. That amounts to about \$5.19 per student in extra spending each year. Per student spending on higher education declined by 11.4%, or roughly \$93.60 per year. Over the same time spending on the big three poverty programs, Medicaid, TANF and other cash assistance, rose by a whopping 42%. At the same time, the number of people in poverty declined by 67,000 people. On a per capita basis, these programs rose in cost by 52.7%, or \$183.8 per year.

**Moreover, the current budget** allocates large increases in funding to Department of Child Services, ostensibly to deal more effectively with the opioid crisis. There is also more funding for community and technical education based on little more than the dubious claim of a worker shortage, especially in low wage jobs. So here comes the indelicate revelation about this spending.

Nearly all spending on Medicaid, TANF (welfare), other cash assistance programs, DCS, FSSA and much of CTE training addresses some form of the same problem; too little basic education.

Spending more money on education will not be a panacea, as legislators well understand. Still, it is a lot cheaper to help fix the problems of poverty by better educating three- to eight-year-olds than it is to wait until they are adults and barrage them with public assistance and training programs designed for jobs, not careers.

In roughly four months from now, the US will be in its 10th year of economic expansion. This should be a time of innovative and forward-looking public policy. It should be a time when we tackle our most vexing problems with budgets full of tax revenues. This should be a time of investment in the very distant future where we have resources enough to make sure every kid can read, every high school graduate is college ready, and career opportunities (not simply job opportunities) are available to every adult.

This is my budget wish for the next biennium. ❖

**Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University.**



# The self-righteous can be wrong

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – I spend too much time with old folks like me, folks who interpret the world through fantasies born of their experiences. They and I have hardening of the intellect as a result of inadequate interactions with the diverse people of our communities.



Take the self-righteous conservatives and liberals with whom I associate and identify. They (we) think they (we) understand today's world because they (we) lived in yesterday's world.

Conservatives view the world through cataracts that cloud the subtleties of life. Liberals wear lenses that put halos around strangers. But

both "know" the truth and have inflexible remedies to cure all ailments.

Take the imbalance between the demand for labor and the supply of labor. In the 19th Century version of economics, an imbalance cannot exist; wages will adjust so that supply and demand come into balance and blessed equilibrium will prevail.

**If this holy state does not exist**, according to 20th Century economics, it is the result of "sticky wages." That is the failure of employers to raise wages and/or the failure of workers to lower their expectations.

More recent thinking of conservatives and liberals blames government. Governments fail to educate workers to the needs of business today. Public schools fail to

inculcate "business-friendly" values among students, such as punctuality, deference to authority, and good grooming. Public transit doesn't get low-paid workers to employment opportunities. Governments impose health, safety, and environmental rules that kill jobs. Simultaneously, governments fail to enforce health, safety, and environmental rules to protect workers and the general public.

In addition, government is weak in yielding to the demands of business/labor. Business subsidies are freely given under the fiction that business operates in the public interest. Labor subsidies are governmental payoffs for votes; how else can one explain a minimum wage?

**This mismatch between jobs** and workers could be solved by business accepting responsibility. Employers (public and private) do not offer much training for new hires. Our society operates on the premise workers are responsible for being "work-ready" at the time of employment.

Consider the teacher: He graduates with an education degree plus a few hours of classroom experience and is tossed into a teeming pot of teen hormones without any protection. Mentors are few, guidance is scarce. He is responsible for any further education or specialization.

Employers' expectations are often unrealistic. Most are unwilling to change how they recruit their workforce. Similarly, they decline to pay either the taxes for public education or the fees/wages to support private training. Unions and other collectives could provide such training in many fields, but organizational inertia dominates the dynamic labor market.

Fresh eyes connected to open minds are what we need for the many boards and committees operating under the name of workforce development. ❖

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# 2020 presidential race starts out as tossup

By **KYLE KONDIK**  
**Sabato's Crystal Ball**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Our initial Electoral College ratings reflect a 2020 presidential election that starts as a Toss-up.

■ We start with 248 electoral votes at least leaning Republican, 244 at least leaning Democratic, and 46 votes in the Toss-up category.

■ The omissions from the initial Toss-up category that readers may find most surprising are Florida and Michigan.

■ Much of the electoral map is easy to allocate far in advance: About 70% of the total electoral votes come from states and districts that have voted for the same party in at least the last five presidential elections.

## The 2020 battlefield

With an approval rating in the low-to-mid 40s -- and, perhaps more importantly, a disapproval rating consistently over 50% -- it would be easy to say that President Trump is an underdog for reelection. The president won only narrowly in 2016 and did so while losing the national popular vote, making his national coalition precarious. He has done little to appeal to people who did not vote for him, and a Democrat who can consolidate the votes of Trump disapprovers should be able to oust him unless the president can improve his approval numbers in a way he has demonstrably failed to do in the first half of his term.

At the same time, the president's base-first strategy could again deliver him the White House, thanks in large part to his strength in the nation's one remaining true swing region, the Midwest. He's an incumbent, and incumbents are historically harder to defeat (although it may be that incumbency means less up and down the ticket in an era defined by party polarization). Still, Crystal Ball Senior Columnist Alan Abramowitz's well-regarded presidential "Time for Change" model, which projects the two-party presidential vote, currently projects Trump with 51.4% of the vote based on the most recent measures of presidential approval and quarterly GDP growth (the model's official projection is based off those figures in the

summer of 2020). Arguably, the state of the economy is the most important factor: If perceptions of its strength remain decent, the president could win another term. If there is a recession, his odds likely drop precipitously.

As it stands, the state of the economy next year remains unknowable, as does the identity of Trump's challenger (Trump himself remains very likely to be the GOP nominee, although there's always the possibility that someone else may ultimately be the candidate). So what's there to say about the Electoral College right now?

A lot, actually.

Take a look at Map 1. Over the past five presidential elections, states and districts containing 374 of the nation's 538 electoral votes (70%) have voted the same way in each election. Map 1 shows the recent history of Electoral College voting, with places containing 195 electoral votes consistently voting Democratic this century and those containing 179 electoral votes consistently voting Republican. That may even understate the inelasticity of the current Electoral College alignment: For instance, it seems clear that Indiana's 2008 vote for Barack Obama was something of a fluke, powered by Obama's massive resource advantage there, John McCain's neglect of the state, and a very favorable Democratic national environment. No one is listing the Hoosier State, which otherwise

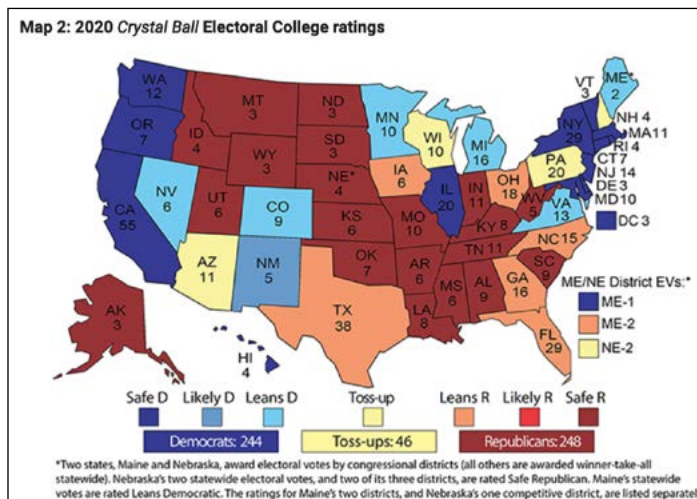
has voted Republican by double digits in the century's four other presidential races, as competitive in a close national election.

So if one adds Indiana to the GOP total, one can reasonably point to an electoral vote floor of 195 for the Democrats and 190 for the Republicans. At this early juncture, it would be surprising if either party fell below those tallies in November 2020.

## The Toss-ups (46)

We close with the final 46 electoral votes, the Toss-ups.

They come from four states -- Arizona, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin -- as well as one congressional district, Nebraska's Second, which is based in Omaha. Clinton carried New Hampshire by less than half a point in 2016; Trump won the rest, by less than a point in the case of Pennsylvania and Wisconsin and by 3.5 points in Arizona. If it seems like we're splitting hairs by rating Michigan as Leans Democratic and Pennsylvania and Wisconsin as Toss-ups, we have to admit that we are. But Trump's margin in the latter two were a tiny bit bigger than his margin in Michigan, and we think the Democrats' path to victory in Michigan is more solvable based just on slightly better turnout. Arizona, to us, is the best target for Democrats among the GOP Sun Belt states that have been becoming more competitive. ❖





**Karen Tumulty, Washington Post:** It is an understatement to say (Mayor Peter) Buttigieg — known as “Mayor Pete,” because his Maltese last name is practically unpronounceable — is a long shot. That does not mean he isn’t a serious candidate. He’s got a point when he notes that the rapidly growing field of 2020 Democratic contenders is thus far light on executive experience. He’s also got a good story to tell about his role in guiding the resurgence of a Rust Belt city. And Buttigieg has what could be a compelling message for Democrats, with a riff that seeks to reclaim one of the right’s favorite words. “‘Freedom’ means a lot to conservatives, but they have such a narrow sense of what it means. They think a lot about freedom from— freedom from government, freedom from regulation — and precious little about freedom to,” he said. “Freedom to is absolutely something that has to be safeguarded by good government, just as it could be impaired by bad government.” Among those freedoms he cited: being able to leave a job and start a business without losing health coverage; a woman’s ability to make her own reproductive choices “without a male politician or boss imposing their interpretation of their religion”; and the right to marry the person you love. ❖



**Mary Beth Schneider, IBJ:** The first column I wrote this year was about my concern that the Senate would hold its real debate about the proposed hate crimes legislation behind closed doors. I wish I’d been wrong. This week, a Senate committee held a lengthy hearing on Senate Bill 12, taking testimony from a few opponents and a slew of people who favored the bill because it explicitly spelled out that a criminal sentence could take into consideration whether the perpetrator meant to harm or intimidate based on a person’s race, religion, color, sex, gender identity, disability, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation or age. After hearing from people who described their own experiences with prejudice, as well as business, legal and university spokespersons who argued for a specific and clear bill spelling out hate crimes, the committee voted 9-1 to approve it. One day later, it was gutted by the full Senate. An amendment by Sen. Aaron Freeman, R-Indianapolis, erased virtually all of the bill, replacing it with a couple words saying bias could be considered by judges in sentencing. That amendment was voted on in public. But the true debate happened during about four hours of private discussions among the Senate’s 40 Republicans. What followed on the Senate floor was just the public show, as every Republican sitting there knew what the outcome was going to be. And all but three of them sat in their chairs, silent. We didn’t get to hear Alting or the bill’s author, Sen. Mike Bohacek, R-Michiana Shores, explain at that crucial juncture why it was wrong to erase the bill they’d passed in committee. We didn’t get to hear other senators who liked the change say why they didn’t want to include specific categories. Those words were kept in

caucus — a caucus that has no one who is gay, black or of a faith other than Christian. The chances are next to zero that there were personal experiences shared behind closed doors that could explain why the original bill mattered to so many. It all makes you ask: What are those lawmakers comfortable saying in private that they wouldn’t say in public on Tuesday? They say democracy dies in darkness.

It also can suffer in silence. ❖

**Jack Shafer, Politico:** The vice presidency demands a sublimation of ego so complete that the heart rates of some veeps decline to the point that they begin to resemble the residents of Statuary Hall. Mike Pence achieved the status of human mannequin within days of joining Donald Trump’s presidential campaign ticket. He projects absolute subservience to his master by sitting or standing as still as a lizard when in his presence. Two years into the Trump administration, Pence rarely speaks unless spoken to — or unless activated by his master to give “America First” speeches in foreign cities Trump wants to avoid. Trump has most recently retooled Pence into his overseas surrogate, assigning him the impossible job of selling his Iranian policy to European allies and waving the American flag down Venezuela way, despite his scant foreign policy experience. Pence works on a short tether. In the second or third paragraph of speeches given in Bogotá, Yokosuka City, Jakarta, Sydney, Seoul and elsewhere, Pence has announced in robotic fashion that he “brings greetings from the president of the United States.” In mid-February, he delivered a variation of the line in Munich, but the expected applause never came (cue the video). Undaunted, Pence paused for a full five seconds as if accepting a BIOS update, and then plowed on with his talk. The most enduring cliché of White House coverage is the piece that inflates the power and prominence of the current vice president by citing his unprecedented access to the president, the breadth of his policy portfolio, and the hundreds of thousands of miles he’s logged abroad in support of the president’s agenda. Pence wasn’t the beneficiary of such puffery until this week when Axios’ Jonathan Swan — who knows better — wrote a version of that piece. “The vice president has much more power than many people realize,” Swan wrote. If you thought Pence was a powerless automaton controlled by Trump, all Swan needed to do to flout your expectations was to prove that Pence possesses a nanogram of clout, which I suppose he does. “Nobody has had more influence over Trump’s Venezuela policy than Pence,” Swan continues. But the evidence Swan musters quickly is all small ball: Pence brought the wife of a Venezuelan political prisoner to meet Trump; he made the Trump administration’s first tour of Latin America; he telephoned Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó; and he’s given speeches calling for Nicolás Maduro’s ouster. Pence’s “influence” is directly proportional to his willingness to echo Trump. Swan’s examples are line items in the résumé of a high-profile water carrier. ❖

## Gov. Holcomb has smoked pot; open to reforms

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric Holcomb publicly admitted Wednesday he used marijuana while he was a student at Hanover College in southern Indiana (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Holcomb did not provide any details to reporters about the form of marijuana he consumed or the frequency of his marijuana use while studying history between 1986 and 1990 at the state's oldest private college.

But the Republican insisted his past drug use does not change his opposition to the legalization of either medicinal or recreational marijuana

in the Hoosier state, so long as the drug remains prohibited under federal law. "We're following the law, and I'm proud of that fact," Holcomb said. "I like to be in line with federal law."

Ten states have legalized recreational marijuana, including Michigan, and 33 allow medicinal marijuana use, including Illinois. Holcomb said if federal law concerning marijuana were changed by Congress, he'd be willing to "look at all the positive or adverse impacts it might have on our population." "This would require medical research and science to give us the true evidence on both the medicinal value and the efficacy of recreational use. That's not here yet," Holcomb said. "I'm not against that research being done. Quite frankly, just the opposite."

## Pew: Phone polling crisis continues

WASHINGTON — The percentage of Americans willing to participate in telephone polls has hit a new low, according to a new report, raising doubts about the continued viability of the phone surveys that have traditionally dominated politics and elections, both in the media and in campaigns (Politico). The Pew

Research Center reported Wednesday that the response rate for its phone polls last year fell to just 6%.

## Trump/Kim summit yields no deal

HANOI—President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un failed to reach an agreement at a second summit aimed at curbing North Korea's nuclear-weapons program, with Washington saying Pyongyang sought sanctions relief without offering enough in return ([Wall Street Journal](#)). "I am never afraid to walk from a deal," Mr. Trump told reporters after the summit ended abruptly on Thursday. But he didn't close the door to future negotiations between the two

sides, saying that "eventually we'll get there." Mr. Trump said Mr. Kim was prepared to dismantle the North's Yongbyon nuclear complex, the site of a reactor and plutonium-reprocessing plant, if the U.S. would agree to ease sanctions. But Washington wanted any deal to include other parts of the North's nuclear program, Mr. Trump said, including undeclared sites for producing highly enriched uranium. "Basically, they wanted the sanctions lifted in their entirety and we couldn't do that," Mr. Trump said. "I just felt it wasn't good enough," he said of the Yongbyon offer. "We had to have more."

## Cohen details payoff scheme

WASHINGTON — The man who once derived his identity from making President Trump's problems go away turned on his former boss in stunning fashion Wednesday, alleging to Congress that Trump manipulated financial records, paid to cover up extramarital affairs and reacted with glee upon learning the WikiLeaks anti-secrecy organization would release emails damaging to his political opponent ([Washington Post](#)). Michael Cohen, Trump's former fixer and

personal lawyer, cast the president as a mendacious and petty racist who enlisted those around him to propagate a culture of deceit, in business, during his campaign and after winning the White House. In testimony before the House Oversight Committee, Cohen revealed how, in his view, Trump broke the law even as president, and he suggested ominously that federal prosecutors remain interested in a case involving the president.

## McConnell unsure about declaration

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said Tuesday he isn't sure himself if President Trump's emergency declaration about the southern U.S. border is legal, even after a meeting with Vice President Mike Pence ([Washington Examiner](#)). "We are in the process of weighing that," McConnell said after the meeting. McConnell said he hasn't "reached a total conclusion" about whether the move is legal, although he backs the president's use of the declaration to build a border wall.

## Holcomb heads to Europe next week

INDIANAPOLIS— Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb will lead a trade mission to France, Belgium and Germany beginning next week. Holcomb will be accompanied by Indiana Secretary of Commerce Jim Schellinger, IEDC directors John Thompson and Mark Neal and IEDC staff. The trip will span March 6-14.

## Martinsville PD chief arrested

MARTINSVILLE — Martinsville Police Chief Matt Long was arrested Wednesday and booked into the Morgan County Jail on felony charges of theft and official misconduct ([Bloomington HeraldTimes](#)). His arrest follows the two felony charges that were filed last Friday by the special prosecutor.

