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Rusthoven to post double the money

Report to show $150,000 GOP fund-raising lead

Indianapolis attorney Peter Rusthoven is expected to post a $150,000 fund-raising advantage over his closest competitor, Fort Wayne Mayor Paul Helmke, in the 1998 GOP U.S. Senate race.

The Rusthoven campaign tells HPR that it will show nearly $250,000 raised in its 1997 year-end report with about $100,000 cash on hand. Helmke, who began raising money in August, will report just over $100,000 raised.

Campaign 1998 Special Report

The money information comes on the heels of a Mason-Dixon poll of 813 likely voters published by the *South Bend Tribune* in late December revealing that former Gov. Evan Bayh had a 57-15 percent favorable/unfavorable rating, compared to 22/8 for Helmke, 16/6 for Rusthoven, and 9/3 for John Price.

In the head-to-head horse race numbers, Bayh led Helmke 53-28 percent, Rusthoven 54-26 percent, and Price 55-24 percent.

Helmke led with a 21 percent statewide name recognition, compared to 17 percent for Rusthoven and 11 percent for Price. Bayh's name ID was 99 percent.

Everyone involved found good news. Helmke and Rusthoven both expressed surprise in the head-to-head numbers with Bayh. "It shows there is not the kind of overwhelming favorable rating or lead that many thought there would be," Rusthoven said. "I really thought the numbers would be in the 65-10 percent range. The first real early test of the horse race shows that this is not the kind of long shot that many people thought."

As for as his race with Helmke, Rusthoven said, "Without a dime of advertising there is no appreciable difference in name recognition between me and the gentleman who has run for office three times in the state's second largest city."

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"QUOTE" OF THE WEEK

"Sometimes a lawsuit is the quickest, most effective way to get a problem resolved...."

- Attorney Jacquelyn Bowie of the ICLU on pending challenges to Indiana welfare reform laws, to the Indianapolis Star

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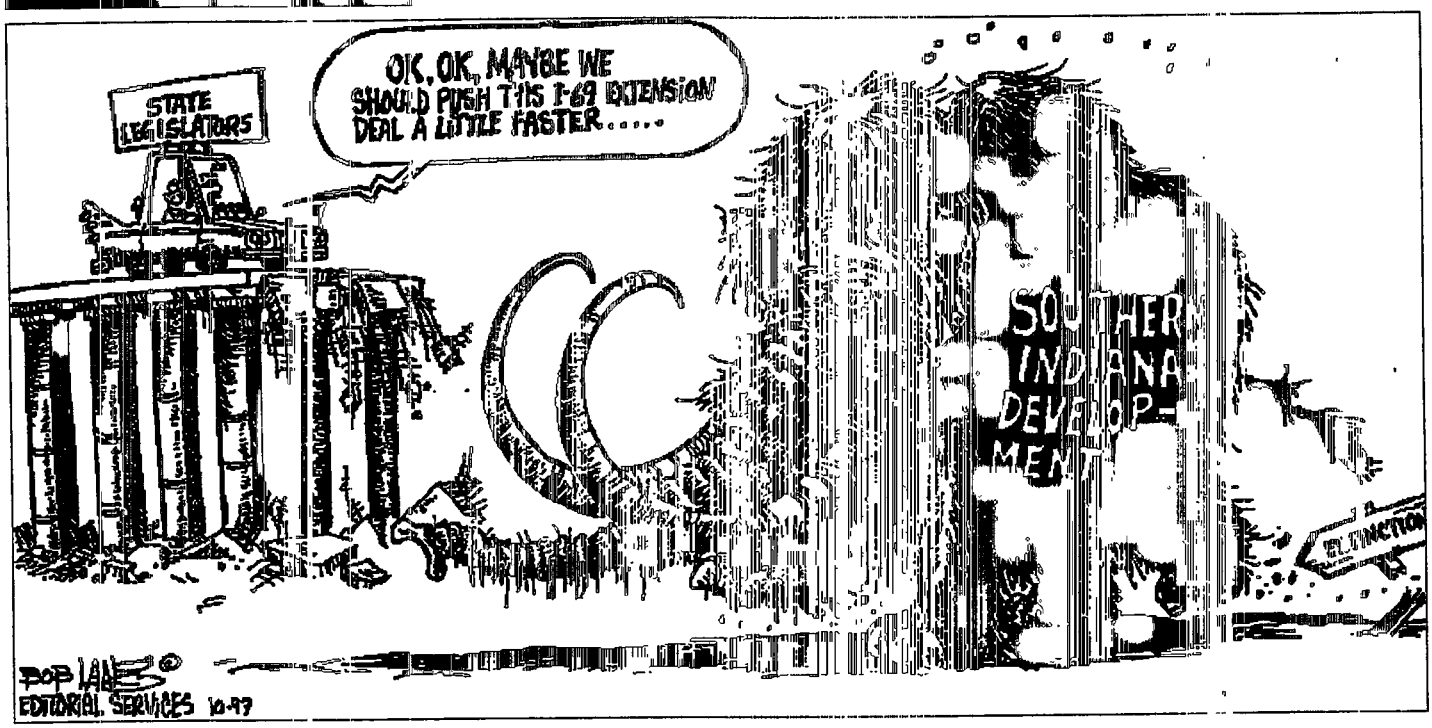
Bob Lang



TICKER TAPE

PLAY OF THE WEEK: This is a matter of HPR family pride. This play goes to Jack Howey, who copy edits HPR and was voted into the Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame. He served as a reporter and city editor for the Michigan City News-Dispatch, managing editor and publisher of the Peru Daily Tribune, and editorial director for Nixon Newspapers, Inc. He was instrumental in writing Indiana's Open Door Law. Without efforts of Jack Howey, there wouldn't be an HPR today.

■ ■ ■

Attorney General Jeff Modisett has been rumored to be in line for the Southern Indiana

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Senate, *from page 1*

Helmke, who is clearing his evening and weekend schedule to begin the Lincoln Dinner circuit that Rusthoven worked tirelessly last year, was also surprised by the head-to-head. "That was a lot better than what I thought they would be," Helmke said. "That was a lot closer than I was to Win Moses in May (1987). I was down 65-25 then."

Helmke bristled at recent assertions on the *Indiana Week in Review* television show, where the "pundits" tagged Rusthoven as the clear "front-runner" and Sen. Dan Coats' quotes of Rusthoven as "head and shoulders" above his candidacy.

"That's not what the poll shows," Helmke said.

HPR's analysis is that while the poll is a quick snapshot, it is virtually meaningless. The more important aspect of where this race stands now is the Jerry Maguire Element: Show Me the Money.

While Rusthoven is expected to post almost twice as much money as Helmke, he raised it in a period twice as long. Helmke is quick to point out that in Rusthoven's June 30, 1997 report, $17,000 of the $100,000 reported was from people who contributed $2,000, of which only half can be used in the primary.

Still, Helmke has a huge gap to catch up to in order to match Rusthoven's advertising potential in April and May.

And there is still the spectre of Coats endorsing Rusthoven sometime in the next month.

While Helmke plans to talk about his own qualifications and his goals for "completing the Reagan Revolution," Rusthoven is planning to attempt to smoke Bayh out on the issues.

"The campaign is about choices on key issues and how the next senator is going to vote," Rusthoven said. "I'm in favor of getting rid of the IRS and replacing it with a simple flat tax. Where is Evan Bayh on that issue? I think the global warming treaty is fatally flawed and will have a devastating impact on the Indiana economy and a vote will likely come after 1998. Where is Evan Bayh on that issue?"

Bayh is expected to announce his candidacy later this month. He is also expected to have close to $3 million raised when the year-end reports are made public.

That may seem like an awesome total for the Republican nominee to overcome. Yet, David McIntosh overcame a huge Joe Hogsett money advantage by the fall of 1994.

1998 House Racing Form

21 races will reshape the split 50/50 House

The 21 races listed below will be at the epicenter for the most compelling $4 million political Hoosier drama of 1998: which party controls the currently 50/50 split Indiana House of Representatives. Republicans have close to $400,000 cash on hand and expect to spend nearly $2 million to try to retake the House, compared to $1.6 million spent in 1996 and $800,000 in 1994, according to Brad Tracy of the HRCC. The House Democratic caucus anticipates spending $1.5 million this year, compared to $1.3 million in 1996 and $687,000 in 1994, according to Dan Parker.

HORSE RACE

"We're in much better position than other House caucuses because we've got Evan Bayh on the top of our ticket," Parker said. He notes that House Democrats picked up nine seats in 1986 when Bayh ran for secretary of state, three in 1988 that created the first 50/50 split when Bayh ran for governor, and three in 1992 during his re-election. "Bayh gives us Democratic voter turnout."

Horse Race will be following these races - including five primary battles that will likely decide who gets the seat - throughout Campaign '98. In our status report, **Toss-Up** means the race is within a statistical margin of error or we're on to something; **Leans** is just outside the margin of error and up to 9 percent; **Likely** is 10 to 15 points; and **Solid** means watch out for a landslide.

Hous District 9: **R Primary**: Open. **D Primary:** Scott Pelath, Derrick Lubs, Dennis Matheny. **Geography**: Michigan City, LaPorte County. **HPR General Forecast:** Pelath. **1994 results:** Alevizos (D) 11,202 (unopposed). **1996 Results:** Alevizos15,424 (unopposed). **1998 Forecast:** Scott Pelath, an aide to U.S. Rep. Tim Roemer, was thought to be the early frontrunner after Rep. Tom Alevizos bowed out, but two IBEW activists - Lubs and Matheny - have factionalized the primary. Roemer and his Indian casino controversy could hurt Pelath in Michigan City, home of the Blue Chip riverboat. **Status**: *Solid D.*

House District 10: **R Primary**: John Cannon. **D Primary:** Chuck Moseley. **Geography**: PorterCounty. **HPR General Forecast:** Cannon v. Moseley. **1994 results:** Wilson (D) 9,701 (unopposed). **1996 Results:** Wilson 15,672 (unopposed). **1998 Forecast:** Popular Rep. Esther Wilson retires. Dems coalesce around water company employee Moseley. Cannon has Portage union ties. O'Bannon carried the district in '96 with 63 percent. **Status**: *Solid D.*

House District 19: **R Primary**: Nick Gasparovic. **D Primary:** Rep. Bob Kuzman. **Geography**: central, south Lake County. **HPR General Forecast:** Kuzman v. Gasparovic. **1994 results:** Conlon (R) 8,850, McCall (D) 5,280. **1996 Results:** Kuzman (D) 12,236, Sparks (R) 10,453. **1998 Forecast:** Freshman Democrat Bob Kuzman won a tough battle for an open seat in 1996 and immediately established himself as a rising star. Republicans consider this seat in their top three priorities. Nick Gasparovic, who lives near Crown Point, will soon retire as a Prudential insurance agent and is considering his first political run. Kuzman will be tough to defeat, particularly with all the attention Gov. O'Bannon is giving Lake County. **Status**: *Leans D.*

House District 20: **R Primary:** Rep. Mary Kay Budak. **D Primary:** Donna Kavanaugh v. Tony Underly. **Geography:** LaPorte and St. Joseph counties. **HPR General Forecast:** Budak vs. Kavanaugh. **1994 Results:** Budak 12,688 (unopposed). **1996 Results:** Budak 12,672, Underly 8,313. **1998 Forecast:** Dems believe Budak is vulnerable representing two Democratic counties. Kavanaugh of Long Beach is an actress and an independent film-maker with good labor ties. Underly is from St. Joseph County. HPR expects Kavanaugh to emerge and give Budak an interesting race. **Status:** *Toss-Up.*

House District 22: **R Primary:** Rep. Bill Ruppel v. Wabash County Commission Chairman Brian Haupert. **D Primary:** Open. **Geography:** Wabash, Marshall, Kosciusko counties. **HPR General Forecast:** Ruppel. **1994 Results:** Ruppel 10,954 (unopposed). **1996 Results:** Ruppel 13,714 (unopposed). **1998 Forecast:** Desert Storm veteran Haupert is challenging Ruppel because he believes the legislature "isn't listening to what the majority of Hoosiers want." Republicans consider Haupert a credible challenge, but not much incumbent dissatisfaction. Democrats have no chance of winning this seat in the fall **Status:** *Leans Ruppel.*

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TICKER TAPE

District Attorney job if current DA Judy Stewart gets the Indiana Court of Appeals opening. The word in legal and political circles is that former Gov. Evan Bayh wants Modisett in the Southern Indiana DA office to keep a lid on investigations into the Argosy riverboat casino in Lawrenceburg that has already resulted in the indictment of former House Ways and Means Chairman Sam Turpin. A Bayh ally - Northern Indiana District Attorney Jon DeGuilio - took the unusual step of clearing Bayh in the Indiana Toll Road scandal that resulted in the indictment of General Manager John Piraccini. Many of the same players involved in the toll road scandal have ties to Argosy. Asked if such a notion existed, Modisett said, "Not to my knowledge. It sounds like people have a lot of time on their hands over the holiday."

Modisett was asked if there was a scenario where he would not finish his term as AG. "I certainly would not think so," he said, but added, "The fact that we get paid the same as a recent law school graduate speaks for itself. As long as my family can withstand it, I certainly have every intention of fulfilling my term." Modisett, who makes $59,000 as AG, did say "I did have to take on a second job to

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House District 24: **R Primary:** Rep. Rick McClain. **D Primary:** Logansport Councilman Mike Fincher. **Geography:** Cass, Carroll counties. **HPR General Forecast:** McClain v. Fincher. **1994 Results:** McClain 10,421, Frantz 7,686. **1996 Results:** McClain 15,536 (unopposed). **1998 Forecast:** GOP sees 24th as bedrock conversative, but Democrats note that AG Modisett carried this district in 1996. They think Fincher can give McClain a run and will ante up. Republicans think Dems are crazy. **Status:** *Leans R.*

House District 25: **R Primary:** Kyle Conrad **D Primary:** Rep. Claire Leuck. **Geography:** Newton, Benton, Warren, White and Carroll counties. **HPR General Forecast:** Conrad v. Leuck. **1994 Results:** Leuck 10,274, Boots 6,940. **1996 Results:** Leuck 13,159, Boots 9,105. **1998 Forecast:** Republicans will target Leuck in what is a 55/45 GOP district with Conrad, the Newton County Clerk. Leuck, however, is mighty popular and will be tough to unseat. **Status:** *Leans D.*

House District 30: **R Primary:** Rep. Karen Burkhart. **D Primary:** Ron Herrell, , Jim Brannon, Mildred Bertram. **Geography:** Kokomo, Howard County. **HPR General Forecast:** Burkhart v. Herrell. **1994 Results:** Padfield (R) 8,589, Howard 7,363. **1996 Results:** Padfield 10,775, Herrell 9,660. **1998 Forecast:** Karen Buyer Burkhart, sister of the congressman, takes over after Jon Padfield resignation. Democrats taking a long look at this seat include '96 nominee Ron Herrell, '95 mayoral candidate Jim Brannon who finished third, and perennial Millie. Herrell might have an edge in the primary, but will voters remember he went elk hunting in October 1996 instead of campaigning? This had been a Democratic seat, but Kokomo is voting Republican these days. **Status:** *Leans R.*

House District 33: **R Primary:** Sam Shoemaker. **D Primary:** Rep. Ron Liggett **Geography:** Redkey, Jay and Randolph counties. **HPR General Forecast:** Shoemaker v. Liggett. **1994 Results:** Liggett 10,161, Thornburg 7,701. **1996 Results:** Liggett 11,480, Shoemaker 9,325. **1998 Forecast:** Liggett ignited the post-budget worker's comp amendments that set up the stunning 1997 legislative victory for Gov. O'Bannon. Rs want to pay him back and will try a rematch with Shoemaker, an adult education teacher. We are told Shoemaker is hesitating. **Status:** *Leans D.*

House District 34: **R Primary:** James Vanleer. **D Primary:** Rep. Tiny Adams. **Geography:** Muncie, Delaware County. **HPR General Forecast:** Vanleer v. Adams. **1994 Results:** Vanleer 8,491, Elliott 7,522. **1996 Results:** Adams 9,630, Vanleer 9,241. **1998 Forecast:** Rematch between Adams and the man he unseated in 1996, Republican James Vanleer, in a campaign decided by 209 votes. Adams proved to be a hard-working freshman. He was able to deliver workers compensation reform to his union allies and that has helped him span the deep divides in the Delaware County Democratic organization. Adams also has credibility with minority voters, something that cut into Vanleer's totals last year. He has, however, experienced health problems. Vanleer will do better in the off-year sequence. If a national tide swings against the Democrats, Vanleer could return. Fasten your seatbelts. **Status:** *Toss-Up*

House District 35: **R Primary:** Rep. Bruce Munson. **D Primary:** Open. **Geography:** Muncie, Delaware County. **HPR General Forecast:** Munson vs. open. **1994 Results:** Munson 9,505, Eddy 7,694. **1996 Results:** Munson 10,827, Errington 9,493. **1998 Forecast:** Munson decides to return after flirting with retirement. He's as glib and interesting as they get in the House and will be tough to defeat. A female Ball State professor is exploring a Democratic challenge after '96 nominee Sue Errington begged off. **Status:** *Leans R.*

House District 37: **R Primary:** Steve Chapman v. Robert Steele. **D Primary:** Rep. Rolland Webber v. Sheriff Scott Mellenger. **Geography:** Anderson, Madison County. **HPR General Forecast:** Chapman v. Mellenger. **1994 Results:** Webber 8,700, Chapman 7,958. **1996 Results:** Webber 11,097, Chapman 9,346. **1998 Forecast:** Popular Madison County Sheriff Mellenger to challenge Webber, who was indicted on tax charges. Trial isn't until June, so watch for a Mellenger victory. If that happens, this will be impossible for GOP which is scrambling to find someone other than Chapman. Engineer Robert Steele is considering a run. If Webber wins primary, it's ripe for a Republican pickup. **Status:** *Leans D.*

House District 46: **R Primary:** David Lohr. **D Primary:** Rep. Vern Tincher. **Geography:** Vigo, Greene, Sullivan counties. **HPR General Forecast:** Lohr v. Tincher. **1994 Results:** Lohr 8,160, Tincher 8,034. **1996 Results:** Tincher 9,858, Lohr 9,759, Minx 5,241. **1998 Forecast:** Republican leadership and 25 colleagues joined former Republican Rep. David Lohr for his announcement, signaling GOP solidarity after he challenged Supt. Suellen Reed. Both Lohr and Tincher have bad favorable/unfavorable ratings and the 1996 race was not only a real donnybrook, but ended in a recount. Tincher has proposed spending limits and reviewing campaign advertisements. That is a sure sign this race will be a shin-kicker. **Status:** *Toss-Up.*

Open Seats

9th - Tom Alevizos
10th - Esther Wilson
73rd - Dennis Heeke

Rematches

33rd - Shoemaker v. Liggett

34th - Vanleer v. Adams

46th - Lohr v. Tincher

80th - Becker v. GiaQuinta

67th - Goble v. Duncan

94th - Hinman v. Marendt

Off the Hit List

52nd - Dale Sturtz

House District 54: **R Primary:** Rep. Tom Saunders. **D Primary:** Donnie Hamilton. **Geography:** Henry County. **HPR General Forecast:** Saunders v. Hamilton. **1994 Results:** Kinser (D) 9,176, Razor (R) 7,853. **1996 Results:** Saunders 11,298, Copenhaver 10,221. **1998 Forecast:** Most conspicuous incumbent loss for Ds in 1996. Hamilton is a New Castle HS teacher and author of *Hoosier Temples*. Uncle was a two-term Henry County sheriff. Dems want to test Saunders. Even popular Kinser didn't win by big margins. **Status:** *Toss-Up.*

House District 56: **R Primary:** Dick Hamm, Ken Paust, Chris Dixon. **D Primary:** Rep. Richard Bodiker. **Geography:** Richmond, Wayne County. **HPR General Forecast:** Bodiker v. Paust. **1994 Results:** Bodiker 7,142, Hamm 7,087. **1996 Results:** Bodiker 10,772, Hamm 8,159. **1998 Forecast:** Third rematch possible. Hamm coudn't win during GOP '94 tidal wave. Hot GOP primary possible with Wayne County Councilman Ken Paust a slight favorite. He's married to the county chairwoman. **Status:** *Leans D.*

House District 60: **R primary:** Rep. Jerry Bales v. Jeff Ellington. **D Primary:** Open. **Geography:** Bloomington, Monroe County. **HPR General Forecast:** Bales. **1994 results:** Bales 11,825, Anderson 5,210. **1996 Results:** Bales 15,743, Germann (L) 1,931. **1998 Forecast:** This one is here for pure humor. Conservative Monroe County Councilman Jeff Ellington is fed up with the maverick Bales, who advertises for re-election with neighboring Democratic Rep. Mark Kruzan. Some people say why .... **Status:** *Solid Bales.*

H use District 67: **R Primary:** Rep. Cleo Duncan. **D Primary:** Ed Goble. **Geography:** Decatur, Ripley, Switzerland counties. **HPR General Forecast:** Duncan v. Goble. **1994 Results:** Duncan 9,672, Goble 9,369. **1996 Results:** Duncan 12,598, Kellerman 9,474. **1998 Forecast:** Duncan swept in over Goble in the '94 Revolution then effectively staved off a credible challenge in '96. Goble seeks a rematch, but Duncan cuts into his Greensburg base. Mike Jones, 9th CD chairman, is considering a Democratic run. General could be close. **Status:** *Leans R.*

House District 73: **R Primary:** Open. **D Primary:** Tom Birk, Denny Oxley. **Geography:** Jasper and Southwestern Indiana. **HPR General Forecast:** Birk. **1994 Results:** Heeke (D) 9,629, Goodness 8,241. **1996 Results:** Heeke 12,371, Goodness 8,847. **1998 Forecast:** Rep. Dennis Heeke is retiring and Jasper attorney Tom Birk faces teacher Denny Cxley in sprawling 125-mile wide district. **Status:** *Solid D.*

H use District 80: **R Primary:** John Becker. **D Primary:** Rep. Ben GiaQuinta. **Geography:** Southern Fort Wayne. **HPR General Forecast:** Becker v. GiaQuinta. **1994 Results:** Becker 5,206, GiaQuinta 5,199. **1996 Results:** GiaQuinta 7,707, Becker 6,365. **1998 Forecast:** This is a third rematch and will be fully funded by each side. Democrats are confident they can keep the seat. **Status:** *Leans D.*

House District 94: **R Primary:** Rep. Candy (Morris) Marendt. **D Primary:** Martin Hinman. **Geography:** NW Indianapolis. **HPR General Forecast:** Marendt v. Hinman. **1994 Results:** Morris (Marendt) 7,838, Reasoner 5,537. **1996 Results:** Marendt 10,396, Hinman 9,586, Neal 422. **1998 Forecast:** Marendt narrowly won in 1996. She didn't really muster a vibrant campaign in her northwest Indianapolis district because she had never had to before. Dems will try to work with Martin Hinman after attempts to get attorney David Krahulik to run failed. Another Democrat, Jose Evans who works at the Dept. of Commerce, is considering. Republicans ready to spend $200,000 or more to protect this seat while Hinman wants to repeat his '96 campaign which did not accept contributions. Bill Clinton carried Pike Township portion of the district by 1,500 votes in '96. **Status:** *Leans R.*

House District 97: **R Primary:** Ray Schultz. **D Primary:** Rep. Ed Mahern. **Geography:** Southern Indianapolis. **HPR General Forecast:** Schultz v. Mahern. **1994 Results:** Heffley 4,782, Cantwell 4,037. **1996 Results:** Mahern 6,368, Heffley 5,372. **1998 Forecast:** Democratic Rep. Ed Mahern recaptured this seat for the Dems in 1996 following the '94 GOP tsunami. He is expected to get a vigorous challenge from Republican Ray Schultz, a former Manual High School football coach with a stadium named after him. That seat will sway with who can get the 10th CD vote out. **Status:** *Leans D.*

House District 100: **R Primary:** Jeff Parmelee. **D Primary:** Rep. John Day. **Geography:** Indianapolis. **HPR General Forecast:** Parmelee V. Day. **1994 Results:** Womacks 3,696, Day 3,818. **1996 Results:** Day 6,344, Womacks 4,331, Bogan 2,60. **1998 Forecast:** Another Indianapolis district that has changed hands twice in the last two cycles. Day returned in 1996 and could face unknown Parmelee. **Status:** *Leans D.*

✍ *Brian A. Howey*

HORSE RACE

TICKER TAPE

pay the bills." He is currently an adjunct professor at IUPUI.

The same Mason-Dixon poll that put the spotlight on the U.S. Senate race gave U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar a 64 percent approval rating, the highest in the state. That compares with a 57 percent favorable rating for former Gov. Evan Bayh and U.S. Sen. Dan Coats, and a 54 percent approval rating for Gov. Frank O'Bannon. Hoosiers gave rating President Clinton a 41 percent approval rating.

Gov. Frank O'Bannon is signaling to lawmakers to enact a half billion worth of tax cuts and one time spending (Kevin Corcoran, Munster Times). As for the coming recommendations from his Citizens' Commission on Taxes, O'Bannon said, "I think I put my neck on the line as a leader." The article quoted State Sen. Larry Borst as saying that O'Bannon will need to push for change. "It's going to take a lot of backbone," Borst said. "It's going to take a lot of leadership."

A recent Associated Press examination of election results over the last 10 years show that Hoosier women hold only 20 percent of the elected offices despite making up 51 percent of the population. Said State Rep. Susan

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TICKER TAPE

Crosby, "At the beginning of the 90s, there was a real advantage to being a woman (running for office). People were anti-government, and women didn't fall into the traditional political trappings." Crosby noted that by 1996, the novelty wore off and women lost five of the 19 seats in the state House. Currently, women hold 28 - or 18.7 percent - of the 150 legislative seats. "We took such a beating in 1996 that I think women are going to be a little more cautious in 1998. The advantage of being a woman no longer exists," Crosby said (Ashley Grant, AP).

Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith's 1998 State of the City address featured a plea to the Indiana General Assembly to ban gun permits to those under the age of 21, as well as other reforms. His initiative comes on the heels of the bloodiest year in the city's history. The murder count stopped at 160 for Marion County in 1997. By the time the local TV stations offered coverage of his speech, they were reporting the city's second 1998 homicide had occurred within a mile of the speech. Goldsmith is also pushing for legislation that would make possession of a handgun and any drugs a Class C felony, the establishment of a mandatory minimum sen-

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A curve at status quo elections

8th, 9th, 10th CDs and Senate race add to intrigue

By Mark Schoeff Jr.
Howey Political Report

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Conventional wisdom says a healthy economy and generally peaceful world will combine to make 1998 a banal election year.

The status quo, of course, is good news for incumbents. But the new year just arrived days ago, and election day is a millennium away in political terms, leaving plenty of time for surprises. What can be predicted now with some confidence is that Indiana may supply more than its fair share of intrigue to the campaign cycle.

With an open Senate seat, an open House seat in the 9th District, a traditionally competitive seat in the 8th District, and a rookie incumbent in the 10th District, Indiana provides plenty of rugged terrain on the political landscape.

The outcome of several House contests may depend on how the race for retiring Sen. Dan Coats' seat unfolds. Former Gov. Evan Bayh is the likely Democratic candidate, while Fort Wayne Mayor Paul Helmke and Indianapolis attorneys Peter Rusthoven and John Price vie for the GOP nomination. A recent poll shows that Bayh has a 57 percent favorable rating among Indiana voters. He has raised more than $2 million for his likely race. The same poll shows Helmke has a lead in the GOP primary race.

Indiana will be different

"The Senate race guarantees that Indiana will be different," said Larry Sabato, professor of political science at the University of Virginia. "What confuses matters in Indiana is the Bayh margin, which will be hard to predict. It's possible that the race may be closer than expected, but it would take an earthquake to deny it to Bayh. Of all the open seats in the country, this is the Democratic Party's best shot."

Republicans hold a 55-45 edge in the Senate and a an 11-seat majority in the House of Representatives.

The Bayh margin could secure a win in the 9th District for Democrat Baron Hill and may influence the outcome in the 8th District, said Sabato. In the 8th, incumbent Republican John Hostettler will likely face Evansville City Council Democrat Gail Riecken.

"Having someone as strong as Evan Bayh on top of the ticket will have an impact on the House races," said Amy Walter, House editor of the Cook Political Report.

At this point in the campaign season, Reps. Mark Souder (R), Steve Buyer (R), Pete Visclosky (D), Ed Pease (R), and Dan Burton (R) are generally considered to be safe incumbents. Hostettler and Rep. Julia Carson (D) are in more precarious positions. And the 9th District seat being vacated by Rep. Lee Hamilton is up for grabs.

In addition to the natural difficulty House freshmen encounter in trying to carve an identity for themselves, Carson has been slowed down by health problems. She may face former state legislator Virginia Blankenbaker in a rematch of the 1996 race, if Blankenbaker survives the GOP primary.

National recognition

In the 8th and 9th Districts, the Democratic challengers may benefit from recognition by the national party.

Most elections in the "Bloody Eighth" come down to nail-biters. The 1998 version most likely will be no different. Hostettler won with less than 51 percent of the vote in 1996, making him a target of the national Democratic Party.

In October, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) designated the 8th and 9th District contests as two of 50 nationwide that it will highlight. At the time, DCCC spokeswoman Stephanie Cohen said that the 8th District was targeted because Riecken is "a strong candidate against a vulnerable

Republican."

Indiana-based GOP strategist Kevin Shaw Kellems, however, said Hostettler will be a formidable competitor against Riecken, who is making her initial run for Congress. "People who think Hostettler is in dire straits underestimate his organizational strength and underestimate how difficult it will be for a first-time candidate to turn out voters," Kellems said.

Although the DCCC blessing will give Riecken a boost in her name identification among Washington fund-raisers, she will have to prove she can be self-sufficient. "It's really important for these candidates to raise money early and on their own," said Walter.

CONGRESS WATCH

In November, Riecken said her goal was to raise $100,000 by the next Federal Election Commission filing deadline, which was Dec. 31. The FEC reports should be released around the middle of January.

One factor contributing to the sink-or-swim money theme is the scandals swirling around the Democratic Party's fund-raising operations and the Democratic National Committee's (DNC) deep debt. "Democrats will have to rely on local resources," said Sabato. "That's not unusual, but there will be more of it than in recent cycles."

DNC financial troubles

Mike Berman, president of the Duberstein Group in Washington, said that the DNC's financial troubles may have little impact on candidates like Riecken and Hill. House races have not received national party support in the past. Although the DCCC has targeted 50 races nationally, the key is which races the party emphasizes as election day draws closer. "The issue is whether the Democrats will have money to focus on those races. It's not going to be 50 at the end of the day," Berman said.

Riecken and Hill have both benefitted from getting early starts on their campaigns. Walter also credits Hill with having a strong, professional campaign team and being able to raise money. In November, Hill said he had approximately $225,000 on hand. He likely will face a challenge from former State Sen. Jean Leising. Leising ran unsuccessfully against Hamilton in 1994 and 1996. Leising will first have to capture the GOP primary nod from conservative activist Michael Bailey.

Leising has had to defend herself against charges that her fund-raising is faltering. She has said she can match Hill's fund-raising prowess because of her strong contributor base in the district and because district voters agree with her on the issues.

The health of the national GOP compared to the Democrats may be beneficial for a candidate like Leising. The national party is "clearly stronger" than the Democrats and "will be better able to help local campaigns," said Mark Rozell, professor of political science at American University in Washington.

Lack of national issue

Although the national parties will pay attention to individual House and Senate races, most pundits don't foresee a strong national issue emerging to galvanize voter opinion in the 1998. They attribute the quiescence of the electorate to a strong economy and a peaceful world.

Without overarching national themes, each House race "will be a battle in and of itself," Walter said. "It will be hand-to-hand combat."

Rozell said, "It's going to take something like an unexpected event or a downturn in the economy to get people motivated to throw out the rascals.'"

Although the waters are calm at the moment, an issue may stir and become the political El Nino of 1998. "It's always possible," said Sabato. He cited tax and entitlement reform as two topics that may gain momentum and impact races across the country.

No matter the context, the Midwest will be a 1998 battleground, said Walter. In addition to the 8th and 9th Districts in Indiana, other pivotal races in the region include two seats in Wisconsin, and a seat in southern Illinois.

- Schoeff is HPR's Washington correspondent.

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tence for cocaine possession, and giving judges more authority to hand out determinate sentences to serious offenders.

Senate President Pro Tem Robert Garton told the Associated Press that the upcoming short session will be important. "This could be one of the most significant short sessions since they started in 1972," he said.

There could be light at the end of the tunnel for Indianapolis. Marion County Prosecutor Scott Newman reports that cocaine levels in incoming jail inmates were dropping dramatically. It may be the first sign that the homicide rate will come down. Crack cocaine, the biggest reason for the bloody year, came to Indianapolis almost seven years after it took its devastating grip on Fort Wayne in 1985. Fort Wayne's homicide rates peaked several years ago, as they did in places like New York and Philadelphia that had to deal with the crack crisis much earlier than Indianapolis did.

Homicide rates declined in the Michiana region. Elkhart County saw its homicide count drop from 18 in 1994, to 13 in 1995, six in 1996 and four in 1997. In nearby South Bend, the crime rate fell 8 percent, with homicides declining from 21 in 1996 to 17 in 1997. Yet

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last October, South Bend had six homicides involved in 16 different incidents.

U.S. Rep. Dan Burton will reconvene his House Government Oversight Committee hearings looking into White House campaign finance violations on Jan. 20, the same day as President Clinton's State of the Union address. Democrats allege that Burton is attempting to embarrass the President.

U.S. Sen. Dan Coats and U.S. Rep. Steve Buyer accompanied President Clinton on his Christmas trip to Bosnia where they greeted U.S. peacekeeping forces.

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