

THE HOWEY POLITICAL REPORT



Helmke campaign kicks off in D.C.

GOP Senate victor searches the capitol for money

By Mark Schoeff Jr.

Howey Political Report

WASHINGTON - Although some Indiana Republicans criticized Fort Wayne Mayor Paul Helmke for coming to Washington last week fresh off his GOP primary victory to attend a meeting at the White House, his visit launched his uphill battle to defeat former Gov. Evan Bayh for Indiana's open Senate seat.

Part of Helmke's trip to Washington centered on a U.S. Conference of Mayors education meeting at the White House. Helmke, president of the 600-member group, introduced President Clinton to the gathering. The mayor was tweaked by one prominent Hoosier Republican, Sen. Dan Coats, for participating in an event with the president instead of defining differences with the president on the Senate campaign trail.

For Helmke, however, Washington was more than the U.S. Conference of Mayors event. He spent two days meeting with GOP members of Congress and fund-raising organizations to begin mapping his strategy for taking on Bayh. Helmke visited for an hour with Sen. Richard Lugar. He also met with Coats, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Sen. Dirk Kempthorne (R-Idaho), former GOP chairman Haley Barbour, and officials at the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC).

McCain, a widely known GOP leader, agreed to be the headliner at a future Helmke fund-raiser. In another slight uptick, *Roll Call*, the Capitol Hill newspaper, last week declared that the Bayh-Helmke race "leans D." Worse for Helmke would have been a "likely D" or "safe D." In addition, the *Washington Post* featured a picture of Helmke tracking election returns in its May 7 edition.

"The mayor has all summer to perform," said Mary Anne Carter, director of Senate relations at the conservative Heritage

Continued on page 2

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"QUOTE" OF THE WEEK

"Mistakes were made...."

- **U.S. Rep. Dan Burton, addressing the House of Representatives Tuesday on how several paragraphs were edited out of the Webster Hubbell prison tape transcripts**

INSIDE FEATURES

- **Ticker Tape: Burton saga continues** page 2
- **Horse Race: GOP leads in the House battle** pages 4-6
- **Bob Lang looks at campaign finance reform** page 6
- **Perhaps We Wander: Price, Rusthoven talk** page 7
- **A special offer to HPR subscribers** page 8

TICKER

T A P E

HPR was told by the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's office that preliminary legislative primary results would be available by May 11 and we had hoped to have them for you in this edition. They were not ready by HPR's deadline, so we hope to have them for you in our May 21 edition.

Rep. Dan Burton has had one of the worst weeks a Hoosier congressman has ever had, finally taking the House floor on Tuesday and telling colleagues, "mistakes were made" in the way the Webster Hubbell prison phone call tapes were released. Newsweek reported that House Speaker Newt Gingrich at one point said, "I'm sure Dan is embarrassed by what happened." At that point, Burton proclaimed, "I'm not embarrassed." Gingrich's retort was, "Well, you should be."

If that exchange wasn't bizarre enough, Burton's 6th CD opponent, Bobby Hildago Kern, will hold a press conference in the near future and fess up to all of his felonies and misdemeanors convictions and arrests, including forgery, assault and prostitution.

U.S. Rep. Steve Buyer defended Burton, telling WTHR-TV on Tuesday, "The closer Dan

Continued on page 3

Foundation. "Come mid-September, if his numbers haven't moved, I suspect interest will drain quickly."

HPR Publisher Brian Howey believes Helmke has much less time to convince the Indiana news media and the state donor base that the race is winnable. Two weeks ago Fort Wayne Journal Gazette columnist Sylvia Smith all but declared the race was over and that Bayh would win. "If Mayor Helmke doesn't do earned media, try to smoke Gov. Bayh out on the issues, and post some decent numbers at the June 30 FEC reporting deadline, his campaign could be as vibrant as Joe Hogsett's 1992 blowout against Coats," Howey said.

Helmke lags far behind Bayh in name identification and fund-raising. As of the latest Federal Election Commission filing, Bayh had more than \$3 million on hand while Helmke had \$17,126.

Hit the ground running

Last week's mayor's conference meeting helped Helmke hit the ground running after his primary victory over Peter Rusthoven and John Price. The White House meeting gave him a chance to lead a national discussion on education, an issue that is important in to his city and may be high on the fall campaign agenda, he said. In addition, he conducted city business, lobbying Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater for Fort Wayne airport funding and talking to the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for help in shoring up Fort Wayne flood plains.

The conference also allowed him to continue to network with mayor colleagues around the country and from the Hoosier state. "The relationship with the mayors has some real political clout to it," said Mark Helmke, a Washington consultant who is an adviser to his brother's campaign. "Not only has Paul raised a fair amount of money nationwide from his relationship with mayors, but in Indiana the endorsement of more than two dozen mayors made a significant difference statewide. Everybody always focuses on county chairmen as being important, but mayors may be more important."

Paul Helmke attributed his wins in Tippecanoe, Scott, and Dubois counties to

strong support from mayors in those areas. In Washington, he continued to work the circuit. "Even at this conference, I talked to Indiana mayors who are Democrats," he said. "They're not enthused with the job the former governor did."

Next few months crucial

The next few months will be crucial for Helmke. He must demonstrate his viability in an election in which his opponent is already being declared the winner by some pundits.

He didn't waste any time beginning his quest for money. It was the focus of several meetings in Washington last week, including one at the NRSC, which funds GOP Senate races. Helmke said he is putting together a fund-raising plan, but hasn't set a money benchmark for himself.

"Obviously, (Bayh) has a \$3 million head start," said Helmke. "We have to raise enough to be competitive, but dollars alone won't make the difference." He noted that Rusthoven spent the most money in the Senate primary, but came in third. Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith out spent then-Lt. Gov. Frank O'Bannon but lost the 1996 gubernatorial race.

The NRSC hasn't made a decision on what level of support it will give to candidates this year. "I think those kinds of questions are enormously important, but it's too early to ask them," said Mike Russell, the NRSC spokesman. "Sen. (Mitch) McConnell hasn't made a decision on how much incumbents will get." McConnell is NRSC chairman.

Competitive races for open seats in Arkansas and Kentucky as factors that will affect GOP funds distribution, Russell said. The priority is to defend incumbents and traditional GOP seats. Next, the committee looks for opportunities in open-seat races. So far, the NRSC has raised \$9.4 million for 1998 races.

Carter said the North Carolina and New York Senate races will be the top national GOP priorities, with Indiana falling into the second tier.

Russell's counterpart said that Bayh is one of the brightest stars in this year's Democratic firmament. "He's at the top of our list of Democratic challengers," said Andy

Howes, spokesman for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. "No one in this organization doubts he'll win this year." Bayh's prodigious fund-raising and name identification make him unique among this cycle's Democratic candidates.

"Democrats are touting Bayh as their best candidate this cycle," said Russell. "And Indiana, according to their spin, is the best opportunity for a pick up. If the election were held today, that would probably be the case. We (GOP) have a candidate who is experience. We need to let the dust settle and take a look at it at the end of the summer."

Finding a silver bullet vs. Bayh

Finding a silver bullet issue would give Helmke a breakthrough, said Carter. She cited last year's Virginia gubernatorial race. Former Attorney General James Gilmore focused almost exclusively on eliminating the state's car tax to cruise to a victory at the polls. New Jersey Gov. Christine Todd Whitman won re-election thanks largely to her strong advocacy of auto insurance reform.

In his race, Helmke will focus on defining Bayh. He said that despite eight years in the Statehouse, Bayh is an amorphous political figure. "We don't know him," said Helmke. "When you think back, what did he do? He looks good. He left a good feeling. He has a very attractive wife and cute kids."

That kind of tack "indicates that Paul Helmke hasn't studied Evan Bayh's record," said Bayh spokesman Tom Sugar. Among Bayh's accomplishments he cited: providing the largest tax cut and largest budget surplus in state history; and leading the country in reducing welfare caseloads by moving recipients into the workforce.

Questions about Bayh extend to the huge political money war chest he has amassed, Helmke said. He wonders how Bayh could have gone directly from the Statehouse to an extraordinarily lucrative law practice. "Did they know he hadn't really practiced law before? What were they paying for? Did they know he was going to run for senator? Those are legitimate questions." Bayh set up a federal campaign committee while he was governor, Sugar said.

Helmke, however, questions Bayh's political stances. "He's trying to run as if he's the incumbent and he's the Republican. When you get to issues like a balanced budget, the flat tax, eliminating capital gains and estate taxes, and (supporting) the pro-life position as well as other standard Republican approaches to government, clearly he's on the wrong side of what most Hoosiers believe in and what I believe in. We're not talking about (whether Hoosiers) liked him as governor. We're talking about what he's going to be doing in the U.S. Senate and how does that fit in with what Senator Lugar is doing and what Senators Quayle and Coats have done for the last 18 years. He's a lot more liberal than those guys and me."

Sugar dismisses any attempt to categorize Bayh. "There are many who characterize Evan's achievements as conservative." Bayh's principles include fiscal and personal responsibility as well as devotion to children. "We call them Hoosier values, and they're the same values he hopes to take to Washington."

In another issue area, Helmke will try to make the case that government is best when it is centered on the local level. Bayh "doesn't know what's happening in the streets and neighborhoods," said Helmke.

Bayh's step ahead

Sugar pointed to Indiana's Step Ahead program as an example of Bayh's "strong record of empowering local communities to make decisions that are best for themselves." The program has become a national model for efficiently managing social service programs, such as child care and welfare, at the local level.

It's too early to tell what issues will become prominent in the fall election, but Sugar guarantees Bayh will be fully engaged. The former governor won't let his big poll and fund-raising leads to lull him into complacency. "Evan will be working hard on the hustings to demonstrate that he wants to earn Hoosiers' support," said Sugar. On the other side, Helmke doesn't intend to listen to the conventional wisdom that says Bayh is a lock, according to his brother. "Those same pundits said Paul would come in third in the primary," said Mark Helmke. *Schoeff is HPR's Washington correspondent*

TICKER T A P E

Burton is getting to the truth, the more they want to turn the heat up on Dan Burton."

Both the Chicago Tribune and the New York Times urged Burton to step down from his House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. The Tribune wrote, "Rep. Dan Burton, the Republican loose cannon who runs the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee, has no way of knowing what will happen. But Burton is behaving as if he does know, and in the process is embarrassing his party and debasing even further our already profoundly debased politics." It concluded, "Removing Burton from his positions of leadership would not, by itself, restore dignity to our political process. But it would start that process."

Numerous Republicans were mystified at U.S. Sen. Dan Coats' criticism of Senate nominee Paul Helmke's trip to the White House and another introduction of President Clinton before the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Coats suggested to the Indianapolis Star that Helmke call in sick. A number of Republicans are still wondering why Coats didn't endorse Peter Rusthoven, as some expected him to do.

Crawford County Sheriff Estel

continued on page 5

1998 Racing Form

Republicans will target

19th - Gasparovic v. Kuzman

34th - Vanleer v. Adams

46th - Lohr v. Tincher

56th - Paust v. Bodiker

80th - Becker v. GiaQuinta

97th - Schultz v. Mahern

Democrats will target

20th - Underly v. Budak

30th - Herrell v. Burkhardt

54th - Hamilton v. Saunders

60th - ?????? v. Ellington

94th - Bardon v. Marendt

Republicans get the early lead in race for the House

HPR counts 14 competitive Indiana House races. Of those, six are in our Toss-Up category, six are either leaning or likely Republican and only two are leaning or likely Democrat.

Thus, our earliest forecast of the fall 1998 campaign season gives the Republicans a better than even chance to break the 50/50 deadlock House and take control. The GOP's chances will increase if Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr produces a "smoking gun" scenario for President Clinton and he and the First Lady decide to fight to the last man.

Conversely, Congressional Republicans have acted like idiots taking target practice at their feet. If Speaker Newt Gingrich and Rep. Dan Burton are the point men in all of this, there could be a considerable backlash against the GOP.

Another element to all of this is the Wyeth-Helmke Senate race. If Helmke can make a credible run at Bayh, that could bolster GOP chances to win the House. If he can't and Bayh rolls to a landslide, he could help the Democrats by bringing along three to six Democrats, as he has in his previous three statewide campaigns.

Our best guess is that when the dust settles on Nov. 3, the winning party will have no more than a 52-48 lead, and there are scenarios where it could end up as it is now.

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.

HORSE RACE

Indiana House Races

House District 9: Republican: Fred Allamong. **Democrat:** Scott Pelath. **Geography:** Michigan City, LaPorte and St. Joseph counties. **1994 results:** Alevizos (D) 11,202 (unopposed). **1996 Results:** Alevizos 15,424 (unopposed). **1998 Forecast:** Key question is whether Rep. Tom Alevizos decides to run as an independent. If he does, this is a new ballgame. If he doesn't, Pelath should prevail. Allamong did not run well in Michigan City during the 1996 3rd CD primary. **Status: LIKELY D.**

House District 10: Republican: John Cannon. **Democrat:** Duane Cheney. **Geography:** Valparaiso, Portage, Porter County. **1994 results:** Wilson (D) 9,701 (unopposed). **1996 Results:** Wilson 15,672 (unopposed). **1998 Forecast:** Duane Cheney just simply out-worked his primary opponent to win. Republican John Cannon is from Portage, which gives him a slim chance of positioning himself for a win if the national dynamic favors Republicans. But this district should remain Democratic, with Gov. O'Bannon winning it with 63 percent in 1996. We'll watch it if the Clinton scandals get severe. **Status: LIKELY D.**

House District 19: R Primary: Nick Gasparovic. **D Primary:** Rep. Bob Kuzman. **Geography:** Crown Point, south Lake County. **HPR General Forecast:** Kuzman v. Gasparovic. **1994 results:** Conlon (R) 8,850, McCall (D) 5,280. **1996 Results:** Kuzman (D) 11,236, Sparks (R) 10,453. **1998 Forecast:** In 1992, Suellen Reed won this district with 60 percent and AG candidate Tim Bookwalter with 57 percent. That's why the Republicans will target this seat. But it will be very difficult to defeat the freshman Bob Kuzman, a real rising star in the House running in a county that Gov. O'Bannon has lavished attention on. **Status: Leans D.**

House District 20: Republican: Rep. Mary Kay Budak. **Democrat:** Tony Underly. **Geography:** LaPorte and St. Joseph counties. **1994 Results:** Budak 12,588 (unopposed). **1996 Results:** Budak 12,672, Underly 8,313. **1998 Forecast:** Republicans are jubilant over Underly's primary victory, despite allegations that he used \$6,000 in campaign funds for personal use. Democrats believe they can win this, but we're skeptical. Budak beat him with 60 percent two years ago even though Goldsmith took just 44 percent in that district. **Status: LIKELY R.**

House District 24: Republican: Rep. Rick McClain. **Democrat:** Logansport Councilman Mike Fincher. **Geography:** Logansport, Cass, Carroll counties. **1994 Results:** McClain 10,421, Frantz 7,686. **1996 Results:** McClain 15,538 (unopposed). **1998 Forecast:** Democrats will attempt to portray McClain as a do-nothing rep. They believe Fincher, who has won two Logansport council races, can give him a race. We are unconvinced. **Status:** *LIKELY R.*

House District 30: Republican: Rep. Karen Burkhardt. **Democrat:** Ron Herrell. **Geography:** Kokomo, Howard County. **1994 Results:** Padfield (R) 8,589, Howard 7,363. **1996 Results:** Padfield 10,775, Herrell 9,660. **1998 Forecast:** Democrats will target this race. They will use Burkhardt votes against the child health care initiative and resolution to save Social Security as a way to pull the wayward Kokomo autoworkers back into the Democratic column. In the last four years, Kokomo has become a Republican city. We see Burkhardt as a good fund-raiser, personable, who could benefit from her brother, U.S. Rep. Steve Buyer. But Democrats question how popular Buyer is in Kokomo. **Status:** *Leans R.*

House District 34: Republican: James Vanleer. **Democrat:** Rep. Tiny Adams. **Geography:** Muncie, Delaware County. **1994 Results:** Vanleer 8,491, Elliott 7,522. **1996 Results:** Adams 9,630, Vanleer 9,241. **1998 Forecast:** This race has the potential to go down to the wire. Adams upset Vanleer in 1996 in large part because he won the black vote in Muncie. Democrats say Adams is working to ensure he doesn't lose that support. Republicans say this race is all about who can get out their vote. Muncie is a city in transition with Ball Corp. and several other big companies leaving town. The Delaware County Democratic organization is still deeply divided. Of virtually all the legislative races shaping up, Vanleer and Adams have already engaged on the issues. This should be a stellar race. **Status:** *Toss-Up.*

House District 46: Republican: David Lohr. **Democrat:** Rep. Vern Tincher. **Geography:** Vigo, Greene, Brown, Monroe, Sullivan counties. **1994 Results:** Lohr 8,160, Tincher 8,034. **1996 Results:** Tincher 9,858, Lohr 9,759, Minx 531. **1998 Forecast:** The fireworks have started. Tincher questions Lohr about his status as a school teacher at an education forum in Bean Blossom, charging that he hasn't taught since 1994. Lohr abruptly left the meeting. That is how the rest of this campaign should go - kind of like a Souther Indiana version of Jerry Springer. This will be a race that could decide the outcome of who controls the 50/50 split House. The searing question is whether the winner can do it by more than 100 votes. **Status:** *Toss-Up.*

House District 54: Republican: Rep. Tom Saunders. **Democrat:** Donnie Hamilton. **Geography:** New Castle, Henry County. **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 Chrysler HS teacher and author of *Hoosier Temples*, a book about basketball gyms. His uncle was a two-term Henry County sheriff. Dems want to test Saunders and suggest they might be able to pull "Bayh Republicans" in New Castle. Even popular Kinser didn't win by big margins. Saunders, however, is personable and savvy. This could be an excellent race. **Status:** *Toss-Up.*

House District 56: Republican: Ken Paust. **Democrat:** Rep. Richard Bodiker. **Geography:** Richmond, Wayne County. **1994 Results:** Bodiker 7,142, Hamm 7,087. **1996 Results:** Bodiker 10,772, Hamm 8,159. **1998 Forecast:** This could be an exciting race. Bodiker has defeated Paust before in council races. Since then, he has gone on to win several legislative races by razor thin margins. In Paust, Bodiker finds an opponent with a vivid record, unlike his previous opponents. He may well try to portray Paust as a tax-happy Republican. Having said that, Paust has spent the last 30 years helping rebuild Richmond from the 1968 explosion that devastated the downtown, and then grappled with the wrenching economic changes. We see Paust as a much more credible challenger than Bodiker has faced in the past and could very well end up as one of the classic confrontations. If the Clinton scandals turn the national dynamic against the Democrats this fall, Paust will be better positioned than Richard Hamm was in '94 to take advantage. **Status:** *TOSS-UP.*

House District 60: Republican: Jeff Ellington. **Democrat:** Open. **Geography:** Bloomington, Bloomfield, Lawrence. Greene and Monroe Counties. **1994 results:** Bales 11,825, Anderson 5,210. **1996 Results:** Bales 15,743, Germann (L) 1,931. **1998 Forecast:** Ellington still has to win a recount after his 18-vote victory over Rep. Jerry Bales. That could be an interesting vote for Secretary of State Sue Anne Gilroy if there isn't a clear-cut winner after a recount. Democrats promise a "moderate" will be slated to challenge Ellington if he survives. Several are considering seeking that nomination. This district is Republican, but would a credible, moderate Democrat be able to woo Bales supporters, many who see Ellington as a "right-winger"? **Status:** *LIKELY R.*

TICKER

T A P E

Eastridge was arrested by Indiana State Police Tuesday on four felony counts of unauthorized ballot handling, forgery and attempting to influence voting. Crawford County Prosecutor Keith Henderson began investigating 1,300 requests for absentee ballots in an election that had only 4,270 votes (Evansville Courier).

"Compared to other counties, it was out of the ballpark," Henderson said. Eastridge is retiring after two terms as sheriff. He is a Democrat. It has been a busy year for investigating vote fraud with similar probes also occurring in Evansville and Anderson.

Rumors in Northwest Indiana are that Republican Milt Tiltges may withdraw from the 1st House District race, which would give Democrat Linda Lawson a free ride into the legislature. Lawson defeated former Rep. Peter Katic by 1,100 votes.

Meanwhile, Hofmeister campaign manager Mike Young responded to Carson's WIBC-AM quote on Election Night that she hoped that "choice" on the abortion issue wouldn't become an issue. Young told NUVO Newsweekly that Carson was the only member of the Indiana Congressional delegation to vote against overturn-

from page 5

TICKER T A P E

ing President Clinton's veto on a ban of partial birth abortion. Young said that vote will not go down well with "conservative, Catholic Democrats. They'll be appalled by that vote."

Young told HPR that Hofmeister worked "two simple strategies" against Blankenkaker. One was to point out her positions on taxes and abortion "in a nice way," Young said. The second was to target 70 precincts out of 603 where Blankenkaker had done well in past elections. In those 70 precincts, past Blankenkaker supporters received two early direct mail pieces and two follow-up phone calls, a post-card and a phone call when Hofmeister went door-to-door in the precinct, an invitation to a coffee, followed by another phone call. "We wanted to cut the margins," Young said. "But we won over half." He said Blankenkaker won by only 463 votes in her home precinct.

Jeff Lewis of TeleResearch Corp. said that every campaign that used recorded phone messages by the candidate to voters won in the May 5 primary.

GOP sources tell HPR that Virginia Blankenkaker is quite angry over the photo

continued on page 7

House District 67: **Republican:** Rep. Cleo Duncan. **Democrat:** Ed Goble. **Geography:** Decatur, Ripley, Switzerland counties. **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. Democrats note that every rematch after the '94 GOP tsunami has been won by the Democrat. We believe Duncan will be tough to beat, but this district is worth watching. **Status:** *Leans R.*

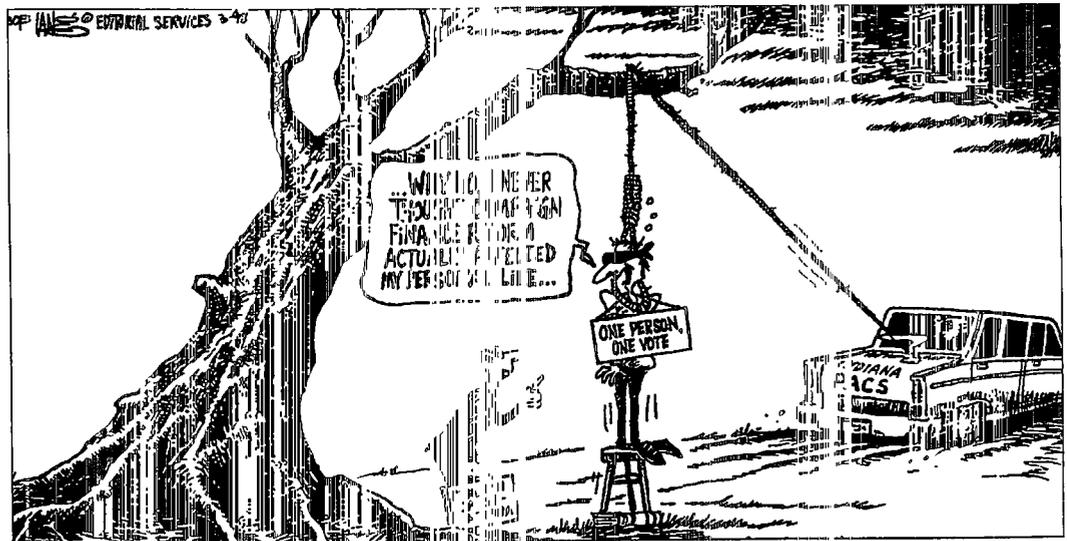
House District 80: **Republican:** John Becker. **Democrat:** Rep. Ben GiaQuinta. **Geography:** Southern Fort Wayne. **1994 Results:** Becker 5,206, GiaQuinta 5,199. **1996 Results:** GiaQuinta 7,707, Becker 6,365. **1998 Forecast:** This is a second rematch and will be fully funded by each side. Democrats are confident they can keep the seat. Republicans see an opportunity to cash in, particularly if the Clinton scandals change the national dynamic and keep Democrats at home. Another factor is that Becker has long championed the opposition to the Adams Center Landfill between Fort Wayne and New Haven. Expansion has been stopped and it will close soon after reaching capacity. Will that be perceived as a Becker triumph? Or will the issue and his credit slip off the radar screen. **Status:** *TOSS-UP.*

House District 94: **Republican:** Rep. Candy (Morris) Marendt. **Democrat:** Jeb Bardon. **Geography:** NW Indianapolis. **1994 Results:** Morris (Marendt) 7,838, Reasoner 5,537. **1996 Results:** Marendt 10,396, Hinman 9,586, Neal 422. **1998 Forecast:** In 1995 Marendt spent time, money and energy helping the Marion County ticket and came uncomfortably close to an upset no one saw coming. This time she is fully energized and the caucus will do what it takes to defend this seat. Democrats had slate Ricky Hence, but Bardon, a 25-year-old Subway Shop owner who hails from a long line of Democratic precinct activists (and his grandfather once ran for Congress) simply out-bushted Hence and won the nomination. The backdrop to this is U.S. Rep. Julia Carson. If Bardon uses his savvy, he could generate his own enthusiasm and pick up considerable support from Carson's high-performance organization. But Marendt is an attractive, hard-working legislator who will be able to campaign on children and family issues. She will be extremely tough to beat. **Status:** *Leans R.*

House District 97: **Republican:** Ray Schultz. **Democrat:** Rep. Ed Mahern. **Geography:** Southern Indianapolis. **1994 Results:** Heffley 4,732, 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 who has deep roots in the district and plenty of friends willing to help. Democrats acknowledge this could be a dog fight. That seat will go with who can get the 10th CD vote out. **Status:** *TOSS-UP.*

Brian A. Howey

HORSE RACE



PERHAPS WE WANDER

By Brian Howey

Price, Rusthoven reflect on what might have been

INDIANAPOLIS - My pager buzzed me late Monday afternoon. It was John Price. We had talked earlier on that Monday after Election Day, reflecting on his campaign that provided quite a charge to the cliff-hanger Republican primary. A rainy day, \$50,000 in TV and he would have won it going away.

"I can't argue," Price had said about HPR's act of God scenario. He admitted to a serious miscalculation: "If I had spent more time in the 4th District." He was wistful.

Paul Helmke, Price said, "Had come out of that area with a margin of 26,000 to 27,000. He had name ID and he was first on the ballot. I should have been in the 4th District with our people. I didn't get there and that's my fault. If I had been about to organize the coalition, that would have made a difference. When you look at the six congressional districts and 49 counties I won, we made it happen with the coalition."

Price doesn't believe his 34 percent represents the ceiling for a Hoosier evangelical candidate. "A number of them voted for Peter Rusthoven," he explained. "They just committed to him early."

Why didn't Price attempt to go on TV? "We did. The plan was to have \$50,000, but we never got it. When I was first in the polls in April, that's when it should have happened. But it didn't." Was it due to a reason Rex Early believes: that the Republican donor base is exhausted and contemptful of Congressional inaction on campaign finance reform? "That is a very small part of it. The main reason was this notion that Evan Bayh cannot be beat. People who should have given \$1,000 gave \$100. That hurt all three of us. We should have all been really well-funded."

Peter Rusthoven seemed sanguine later that sunny Monday afternoon. He had stayed home with his kids the day before, watching the Pacers dump the Knicks.

"Price did a hell of a job," Rusthoven began. "And I suspect that I was the second choice for virtually everybody who voted for Paul and John."

Finishing at 31 percent, he was just four points off Helmke's lead. "It was hard to start from ground zero," Rusthoven said. "In Marion County, we won big, but we couldn't carry the doughnut by the kind of margins that we did in Marion County. We just couldn't get well-known." That's similar to presidential candidate Dick Lugar simply acknowledging, "I wasn't famous enough."

Like Price and Helmke, Rusthoven heard plenty of this type of comment: "It makes no difference."

"How many just stayed home?" he asked of the GOP party organization and folks who have ceded the Senate seat to Evan Bayh. Yet, Rusthoven added, "I have no quarrel with the effort people put out on my behalf. Politics has changed over the last 20 to 30 years. The capacity of any traditional party organization, particularly in a primary election is different than it was a couple of decades ago."

Some observers believe Rusthoven's forte is his intellect. They believe he should have worked the issues for earned media. "I don't quarrel with that analysis," Rusthoven said, but added, "It was difficult to get media to focus on this race. It was tough to get the media to pay attention. They wanted to write a story about Evan Bayh being the next U.S. senator." He was surprised with media availabilities for William Bennett and Peggy Noonan - eight days before the election - that were lightly attended by the media. "I don't know what we could have done."

Rusthoven will keep his future political options open, although that was not his intention for entering in '98. As for Price, he will consider running again, but earlier in the day, said, "I have no desire in being a candidate for governor." When he paged me late that afternoon, he had amended that to be, "You should never say never." 

TICKER TAPE

Hofmeister's campaign used of Blankenbaker in its TV ad.

How will evangelical voters respond to Paul Helmke's upcoming Senate campaign. Jim Quinn of the Indiana Christian Coalition tells HPR, "I don't know. I think you have to ask Paul. He's the one who is going to decide." Quinn said that in 1994, 43 percent of Republicans who voted in Congressional elections identified themselves as evangelicals, and more than 9 million people participated than had in the last mid-term election of 1990. He said that when 1996 GOP presidential nominee Bob Dole repudiated the Republican platform that contained a pro-life plank, only 29 percent of those voting for him identified themselves as evangelical Christians. Said Quinn, "Helmke is the one who will tell us what he thinks about Planned Parenthood."

Roll Call reports that casino magnate Steve Wynn contributed \$250,000 to the National Republican Senatorial Committee on March 24. Three days later, Sen Dan Coats introduced legislation that would have eliminated the tax deduction for gambling losses. While Coats was forced to withdraw his amendment, he has vowed to bring it back soon and push for separate legislation that

continued on page 8

Thursday, May 14, 1998

TICKER T A P E

would ban gambling on the Internet." Roll Call said that juxtaposition of Coats taking aim at the gaming industry while it was anteing up campaign money "signifies a growing rift among Republicans."

Marion County Democrats realized that Joe Champion might be vulnerable to an upset in his prosecutor's race against Mary Jean Barton just two weeks before the primary. There were fears that the Barton name might carry a lot of weight and indicators that the primary race was going to be close. That prompted an ad campaign in the final two weeks. It was just enough and just in time as Champion defeated Barton by just a few hundred votes. ☞

♣ A message to HPR readers:

In our Feb. 19, 1996, *The Howey Political Report* informed you that John Price's U.S. Senate campaign was going to be a real factor in the Republican primary. It was fully six weeks before anyone else had any inkling that this would be the case. As we know now, Price finished second on May 5 losing by just 1 percent and our readers were way ahead of the curve.

In October 1996, *HPR* informed you that there was an excellent chance the Indiana House of Representatives would end up in a 50/50 split - well before anyone else picked up on that trend. And we were right on target.

Lately, we run into all sorts of people who talk about *HPR* and have read it, but we know they don't subscribe. They get illegally copied or faxed versions of *HPR*, unfortunately, from our subscribers. While this is flattering, the lack of revenue hurts *HPR* and, well, it's an infringement of our copyright and in violation of federal law.

If you enjoy *HPR* and find it useful, then please recommend us to a friend or colleague. While we are fully committed to reporting on Hoosier politics from across the state and in Washington and expect to do so for years to come, it would be helpful if our vital customers respect our business rights. If any current customer gets a friend or colleague to subscribe, we'll give you the next year's subscription at half price.

In the meantime, happy politicking!

Brian A. Howey
publisher



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