

Crouch joins the Holcomb ticket

GOP confident some Pence funds will flow to ticket as Gregg begins airing response ad

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The easy part for the new Holcomb/Crouch ticket came and went Monday morning with smiles and cheers.

Suzanne Crouch was formally ratified by the Indiana Republican Central Committee three days after Republican gubernatorial nominee

Eric Holcomb nominated her for lieutenant governor. She was presented to the public and press Monday morning, capping nearly six months of unprecedented change that has roiled the party.

"She brings it all," Holcomb said as he was flanked by the same 22 committee members who gave him the

gubernatorial nomination six days ago. Holcomb cited Crouch's background as a Vanderburgh County commissioner and auditor, state representative and state auditor, as well as her successful statewide election in 2014. "She's held four important positions. She has legislative and executive experience. Most importantly, she can assume the



Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb with his running mate, Auditor Suzanne Crouch, who was confirmed by the Indiana Republican Central Committee on Monday. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

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The Pence adventure

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The drunken uncle is down in the basement, droning on and on about walls and Russian dictators and shooting people on Fifth Avenue and vicious Gold Star moms.



Floating above these sounds is a faint Mozartian oboe of a voice ... "I'm a Christian, a conservative and a Republican in that order ..."

Indiana Gov. Mike Pence grew up a Catholic, evolved into an evangelical, and has now converted to the Trumpian Church of Ambition. This conversion is uncomfortable for those who know him and care about him.



"I cannot emphasize enough how deeply I disagree with Mr. Trump's statement. I hope Americans understand that the remarks do not represent the views of our Republican Party, its officers or candidates."

- U.S. Sen. John McCain



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

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

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

email: HoweyInfo@gmail.com

Contact HPI

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

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The emerging reality is that Pence has reordered his life priorities. He has become a Republican first. At a time when dozens of Republicans spent months sizing up Donald Trump, many decided no way, unsheathed their 10-foot poles, and wouldn't go anywhere near Cleveland, Ohio, in July.

Pence not only signed up for the veepstakes, he won the derby. The photos continue to be revealing. Trump comes off as the wolf, the viper with these sly smirks. Pence beams like a cheerleader. There's a bounce in his step. He and Karen Pence seem like Hansel and Gretel, heading to the Gingerbread House.

The hope was that the Christian and conservative in Pence would tug Trump into a more mainstream axis, or as RNC Chairman Reince Priebus observed, "He knows the pivot is important. He has been better and I think he's going to be great moving forward."

But as Stephen Hayes of the Weekly Standard observed, "Instead, Trump has been more volatile, more bizarre, more mendacious, and more reckless. In the time since he accepted the nomination Trump has, among other things: Revived a crackpot theory on Ted Cruz's father and the JFK assassination; suggested his adopted party is filled with people who don't want to help others; invited Russia to influence the U.S. presidential election; smeared the parents of a fallen U.S. Army captain; trashed a retired four-star general; and appeared not to know that Russia had annexed the Crimean peninsula in 2014. Some of this is merely aggravating. Some of it is outlandish. Some of it is insulting. And some of it is frightening."

The Rev. Cruz/Oswald assassination revival by Trump came at a press conference on the day after the Republican Convention, with Pence standing by having a series of good

laughs as Trump rambled on. It was a truly strange moment and not a huge stretch from Patty Hearst becoming Tanya in the SLA. Pence had endorsed Sen. Ted Cruz, cut a TV ad for him in the Indiana primary, then watched Trump on Election Day morning make the assassination link. It left Cruz fuming in Evansville that morning and Trump would mow him down despite the Pence endorsement. The Cruz payback came just before Pence's sa-



Republican vice presidential nominee Mike Pence with Donald Trump at the Republican National Convention. (HPI Photo by Randy Gentry)

lutatorian acceptance speech in Cleveland. Cruz swiped some of Pence's thunder.

In linking up with Trump, Inc., Pence is now coming under intense scorn for a principled conservative who sold out to pure ambition. New York Times columnist David Brooks wrote, "This week I left the arena here each night burning with indignation at Mike Pence. I almost don't blame Trump. He is a morally untethered, spiritually vacuous man who appears haunted by multiple personality disorders. It is the 'sane' and 'reasonable' Republicans who deserve the shame – the ones who stood silently by, or worse, while Donald Trump gave away their party's sacred inheritance."

Jennifer Rubin, the conservative voice for the Washington Post, added, "Pence's silence and continued presence on the ticket suggest he considers Trump within the bounds of normal political discourse. If Pence had a modicum of dignity or decency, he would tell the American people, 'I made a terrible mistake. Mr. Trump is so morally bankrupt and of such shabby character that I could not possibly serve with him.' Failing to do so, the same should be said of Pence."

Pence is shifting on core principles, now backing Trump's lunatic Muslim ban, which he once called "offensive and unconstitutional." On free trade, a long principled stance of Gov. and Rep. Pence, the Indiana governor told Laura Ingraham last Thursday, "I believe you can be convinced. You're absolutely right, I think throughout my career I've strongly supported free trade in measures that have come before the Congress. When I was asked to support free trade initiatives as governor of Indiana, I supported them. But frankly, we're on the verge of electing one of the best negotiators in the world. As Donald and I sat down and talked earlier on, he talked to me about questioning the wisdom of these multi-country trade agreements that then, when they're not working out, the way that clearly NAFTA is not any longer, it's very difficult to unwind."

Hoosier Republicans act like they're watching a car wreck in slow motion. They see Pence gulping down the Trump Kool-Aid.

There are limits. When Trump seemed to invite the Putin Regime to hack the computers of the Hillary Clinton campaign, Pence stepped in with his own late night statement under the Trump banner, saying, "The FBI will get to the bottom of who is behind the hacking. If it is Russia and they are interfering in our elections, I can assure you both parties and the United States government will ensure there are serious consequences."

And then when things didn't seem they could get any more bizarre, Trump did the incomprehensible, blasting Gold Star mother Ghazala Khan. "If you look at his wife, she was standing there. She had nothing to say. She probably, maybe she wasn't allowed to have anything to say. You tell me," Trump said, in an interview with ABC's "This Week." Trump also disputed Khizr Khan's criticism that the billionaire businessman has "sacrificed nothing and no one" for his country.

"I've made a lot of sacrifices," Trump said. "I work very, very hard. I've created thousands and thousands of jobs, tens of thousands of jobs, built great structures," Trump said. Trump then suggested Khan lacked 1st Amendment free speech rights, saying, "While I feel deeply for the loss of his son, Mr. Khan who has never met me, has no right to stand in front of millions of people and claim I have never read the Constitution, and say many other inaccurate things."

By the end of the weekend, Gold Star families were expressing outrage and repugnance. "When you question a mother's pain, by implying that her religion, not

her grief, kept her from addressing an arena of people, you are attacking us," a letter from 11 Gold Star families read. "When you say your job building buildings is akin to our sacrifice, you are attacking our sacrifice."

Sen. John McCain, the war hero and former POW dissed by Trump, adding, "In recent days, Donald Trump disparaged a fallen soldier's parents. He has suggested that the likes of their son should not be allowed in the United States – to say nothing of entering its service. I cannot emphasize enough how deeply I disagree with Mr. Trump's statement. I hope Americans understand that the remarks do not represent the views of our Republican Party, its officers, or candidates."

Enter Pence, who released a statement Sunday



Ghazala and Khizr Kahn at the Democratic National Convention with their son, the late U.S. Army Capt. Humayan Khan's photo displayed behind them.

evening, saying, "Donald Trump and I believe that Captain Humayun Khan is an American hero and his family, like all Gold Star families, should be cherished by every American. Captain Khan gave his life to defend our country in the global war on terror."

Pence, who voted for the 2002 Iraq War Resolution while serving in Congress, continued, "Due to the disastrous decisions of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, a once stable Middle East has now been overrun by ISIS. This must not stand. By suspending immigration from countries that have been compromised by terrorism, rebuilding our military, defeating ISIS at its source and projecting strength on the global stage, we will reduce the likelihood that other American families will face the enduring heartbreak of the Khan family."

Trump didn't get the throbbing Pence hint, tweeting at 7 a.m. Monday, "Mr. Khan, who does not know me, viciously attacked me from the stage of the DNC and is now all over T.V. doing the same – Nice!"

There are mixed emotions back home here in Indiana. Many Hoosier Republicans are proud of Pence making the federal cut. They are steamed that as he scooted away without the door smacking his rear, he forgot to transfer his \$7.4 million campaign war chest for his successor. And now we all watch Mike Pence's excellent adventure veer far off into Donald in Wonderland. ❖

Holcomb/Crouch, from page 1

duties as governor," Holcomb said.

Holcomb said that as he began his search for a running mate, Crouch's name "came up again and again, and not just from people in Southeastern Indiana."

But the ticket faces a daunting challenge of funding and ginning up name ID, after it was revealed just minutes after Holcomb secured the nomination that much of Gov. Mike Pence's campaign war chest can't be transferred to the new nominee. Pence was officially nominated on July 20 as the Republican vice presidential candidate, and when he became a federal candidate, FEC rules limit how his campaign funds can be used, even for a state race.

The funding blunder could have been prevented had the Pence campaign transferred the funds to Holcomb, whom Pence endorsed on July 22, to the Indiana Republican Party, or the Republican Governors Association prior to Pence's official vice presidential nomination. A key part of Holcomb's case against U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks and Todd Rokita before the Central Committee was his access to the Pence funds.

Asked where the Pence funds stand, Holcomb said, "You'll have to ask him." Holcomb vowed that the new ticket will be "financially resourced," though he provided no details. It's a critical question because both he and Crouch enter a 99-day sprint to Nov. 8 with name ID under 20%. Crouch's campaign committee has \$282,000 as of the June 30 reporting deadline, while Holcomb's committee had around \$20,000. The GOP ticket faces Gregg, who has raised more than \$10 million, with another \$2 million to \$3 million in the Democratic Governors Association pipeline. Gregg also has name ID north of 60%.

Marc Lotter, formerly deputy campaign manager for Pence who is now on the Trump campaign, has not responded to questions from HPI on the status of the Pence funds. But sources close to the Holcomb campaign believe that a significant part of the Pence war chest will be available to them in the next day or so.

This drama plays out after Evan Bayh, the last Hoosier presidential aspirant, former Democratic governor and senator, dropped out of a Senate reelection bid in February 2010 with a \$10 million war chest. Bayh's campaign committee held on to those funds for six years, allowing him to make an equally abrupt comeback in July to reclaim his old Senate seat in a race against U.S. Rep. Todd Young.

The Trump/Pence ticket faces a difficult Electoral

College path to victory, in addition to the volatile Trump controversial outbursts that could limit Pence's national path and exposure to just a few months.

Last week, Bob Grand, who is working on behalf of the Holcomb campaign, told HPI, "It's all going to get worked out. It's not a problem and it's not going to be a problem. Eric Holcomb is going to have plenty of money to run this race. A fair amount of it will come from the Mike Pence campaign. The other piece is there's a lot of money being raised and people are really energized about the race." On Monday, HPI asked Grand how much of the Pence money would flow to Holcomb and he said, "Unknown yet. Watch the (\$10,000 plus filings."

GOP sources tell HPI that a number of high-dollar fundraisers for the new ticket are in the works, but details are scant and time is of the essence.

Crouch a popular choice

Holcomb's selection of Crouch is a popular one within the party. She was part of the "all female" ticket of 2014 in an attempt to thwart a Democratic narrative of the GOP's "war on women." Pence elevated Crouch from the Indiana House to auditor after his first selection, Dwayne Sawyer, resigned after just a couple of months in office due to a personal issue that was never disclosed.

Crouch had earned a reputation as working in a bipartisan manner in the House, a Republican representing heavily Democratic Evansville, Vanderburgh and Warrick counties.

Her most distinguished moment came in 2008-09 when Rep. Crouch questioned Indiana's new welfare system that it had contracted with IBM. In October 2009 Gov. Mitch Daniels cancelled a \$1.34 billion deal after its

rollout in Vanderburgh County was rife with problems that Crouch and other legislators flagged.

The Evansville Courier & Press reported "a maelstrom of complaints highlighted inadequacies that made it difficult for some, especially the elderly and disabled, to navigate the system. Since caseworkers were done away with, applicants didn't know who to turn to for help."

Asked about it Monday, Crouch said, "There was clear evidence it wasn't working," also citing elderly, disabled and poor Hoosiers who couldn't cope with the system. She added, "At the end of the day, Gov. Daniels had the courage to step away" and build a new hybrid system that is now working well.

Crouch said in 2009 that it takes "a lot of political courage for the governor to say, 'You know, this is what we thought would work, and it's not working.'

"The biggest mistake would have been if he'd continued down the road of defending a system that wasn't



The Holcomb/Crouch ticket is unveiled at Republican Headquarters Monday morning. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

delivering the services it should," she said in 2009.

Crouch also pushed for legislation that made Indiana statutes and codes gender neutral. She rose to vice chair of the influential Ways & Means Committee before Pence tabbed her for state auditor.

Crouch told reporters, "I didn't grow up in a political family" but said her upbringing gave her the values that have led her to serve at state and local government levels. "I understand local government," she said of a key tension point between the Indiana General Assembly and counties, cities and towns. "I've walked in their shoes."

In her 2014 campaign, Crouch visited all 92 counties, something Holcomb did as state chairman, deputy chief of staff to Gov. Mitch Daniels, and as state director for Sen. Dan Coats.

Crouch gets a chance to provide a contrast to State Rep. Christina Hale, the Democratic LG nominee, next week when the two debate agricultural issues at the Indiana State Fair.

Asked about the civil rights expansion issue, Crouch didn't answer directly, but cited her ability to listen and gather input from citizens. Holcomb has said that he will weigh any legislation sent to his desk from the General Assembly if elected. Asked if he would try to separate himself from the socially divisive Pence record, Holcomb said, "I'll run on his record. I'll run on the last 12 years. I don't want to return to the 12 years before that."

House Speaker Brian Bosma applauded Crouch's nomination. "Suzanne is a longtime friend and relentless advocate for responsible, responsive government and taxpayer protection," Bosma said. "From her experience as county auditor and commissioner to her service in the Indiana House, I cannot imagine a more well-rounded and qualified running mate for our governor candidate Eric Holcomb."

Indiana Democrats criticized the nominee. "The Indiana Republican Party had their chance to turn the page on Mike Pence and his ideological agenda, but instead, they chose to go 'all in' with the governor's failed record by placing Eric Holcomb and Suzanne Crouch at the top of the ticket," said Chairman John Zody. "Both Holcomb and Crouch were handpicked by Mike Pence for their current positions, and both were witness to Mike Pence's out-of-touch record. They chose to remain silent while Indiana's economy and reputations were placed in jeopardy. The Republican Party reaffirmed their support for this failed economic agenda, one which Hoosiers were already planning to dismiss this November. The names on the ballot may have changed, but sadly Holcomb and Crouch are just more of the same."

Gregg campaign spokesman Jeff Harris told HPI, "We don't see Suzanne Crouch as a significant change. They have a ticket of two political appointees by Gov. Pence. They are going to double down on the divisive politics of Mike Pence."

Ticket prospects

Never before in Hoosier political history has a major party ticket faced more funding and ID challenges than the Holcomb/Crouch ticket faces today. This is the latest start for a ticket, by far, that as of this writing has just about \$300,000 in funds if the Crouch money is pooled with Holcomb's.

Certainly the GOP funding engines will kick into high gear, but there's a huge difference between starting a race with access to \$7.4 million and one with \$2 million to \$3 million. It comes as Todd Young's U.S. Senate campaign is scrambling to make up an \$8 million deficit to



Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb informs Republican Chairman Jeff Cardwell (right) that Auditor Suzanne Crouch will join his ticket on Friday.

Evan Bayh.

The real dilemma is the classic who defines whom first? The Gregg campaign has more resources at this writing and that process could begin quickly for the mostly unknown Holcomb. A response ad to the RGA's coal ad began this morning.

HPI moved this race into "Leans Gregg," last week. It's the first time this cycle that this hasn't been a "tossup" race. At this writing, Gregg has money and ID advantages.

Having said that, Holcomb has managed a gubernatorial campaign (Daniels' reelection in 2008) and knows the process. In that race, he was able to navigate the crosswinds in a state where Barack Obama won, while helping Daniels to a 58% landslide win, where he has yet establish his cred in fundraising.

The Holcomb and what's left of the Pence campaigns can be coy and opaque about the current process, but in a relatively short period, we'll know what kind of mojo the new ticket has. **HPI Horse Race Status:** Leans Gregg. ❖

Suzanne Crouch knows how to govern

By **JOSHUA CLAYBOURN**

EVANSVILLE – Most Hoosiers know little or nothing of Republican lieutenant governor candidate Suzanne Crouch. She hasn't spent decades on the talk radio circuit like Mike Pence, she doesn't have a family pedigree like



Evan Bayh, and she hasn't spent a lifetime building a statewide political network like Eric Holcomb. But she is good at one thing in particular: Governing.

Policy wonks have long admired Crouch. She served for many years as vice chairwoman of the House Ways and Means Committee, quietly toiling away at the nittygritty work of budgets and appropriations. As

a state representative Crouch also advocated for legislation creating a new Transparency Portal which offers data and links for anyone to review state spending, revenues, salaries, contracts, and performance and accountability measures.

In 2013, after the resignation of Dwayne Sawyer, Crouch was appointed state auditor and immediately set to work improving the transparency portal. Its success exploded and a number of government watchdog groups ranked Indiana's portal as one of the best in the nation.

Transparency is a consistent theme for Ms. Crouch throughout her political career, which she began as county auditor in 1995, county commissioner in 2003, state representative in 2005, and most recently as state auditor. As she told the Chicago Tribune, transparency "is what people want. It's what they expect from government."

Many Hoosiers in the GOP have begun placing their fellow Republicans in one of two camps. You're either a Lugar/Daniels Republican, focused most on the mechanics of government efficiency and budgets, or a Pence Republican, which is more ideological and likely to embrace the social and culture wars. There is no doubt Ms. Crouch falls in the former camp, but the camp is less clear for her running mate at the top of the ticket and the legislature which would send them bills.

How will Crouch react when the legislature considers a bill to expand civil rights laws or tinkers further with abortion legislation? Will she and Holcomb embrace Donald Trump's offensive and disastrous campaign, now joined by Holcomb's current boss? Could Crouch and Holcomb dictate a pragmatic vision the legislature would follow, or will they succumb to many of their Republican cohorts in the legislature who insist on jumping in the trenches of ideological warfare? Those are questions many Hoosiers will be asking over the coming months.

Ms. Crouch's brand and campaign style should help Holcomb make the case to suburban Hoosiers disaffected by the Pence years. Spend even just a few minutes with her and she'll ooze the aura of someone focused on policy more than politics, but that belies Crouch's strong track record as a tireless campaigner and fundraiser.

Since being selected as state auditor she's become a regular on the statewide Lincoln Day dinner circuit, so even if they know nothing of her policies, many Indiana Republican insiders have long been familiar with Crouch's trademark red-rimmed glasses.

As a state representative Crouch held a relatively safe seat, but unlike many others in that situation she did not rest on the demographics of her district. Instead, using her position as vice chair of the ways and means committee, she would fundraise for the state party, which in turn rewarded her with even more authority and access.

Districts made safe by demographics can conceal a subtle political strength. Suzanne Crouch understands



effective campaigns and, more important, effective governance. In his first major act as the Republican candidate for governor, Eric Holcomb made the right choice by picking Suzanne Crouch as his running mate. ❖

Claybourn is an Evansville attorney practicing at Jackson Kelly PLLC.

The female LG trend continues

By MAUREEN HAYDEN
CNHI Statehouse Bureau

INDIANAPOLIS – No matter who wins the governor’s race in November, one outcome seems certain: The lieutenant governor’s office will be held by a woman.

The decision, formalized Monday, to add state Auditor Suzanne Crouch to the Republican ticket revives what’s becoming a new tradition in Indiana politics with gender balance.

Since 2003, with one brief exception, there’s been one male and one female on every major party ticket for the state’s top two offices, in a state where gubernatorial candidates pick their running mates.

“It’s not just a tradition, it’s an expectation now,” said Democrat Kathy Davis, who became Indiana’s first lieutenant governor 13 years ago. “It’s just a sign of something way overdue, given 51 percent of voters are women,” she added.

On Monday, in the latest development of political musical chairs, Crouch was picked for the number two spot by the Republican State Central Committee at the urging of GOP gubernatorial nominee, Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb.

Crouch, 64, from Evansville, brings with her a political resume fuller than Holcomb, who moved up to the top of the ticket late last month after Gov. Mike Pence dropped out of his reelection to run for vice president, with GOP candidate Donald Trump.

A political science major at Purdue University, Crouch is a former county commissioner, county auditor, county party chairman, and a 10-year state legislator who served as vice chair of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee.

While in the legislature, she fought to pause a welfare modernization program that had been badly bungled in its roll-out and advocated for better services for people with disabilities.

Appointed to state auditor in 2012, she earned more votes than any statewide candidate when elected to the office in 2014. “I had people from all over calling me, urging me to pick her,” Holcomb said Monday.

For Crouch, there was a nice bit of irony to her selection, one she talked about at Monday’s announcement. Earlier this year, she championed legislation that gender-neutralized the state constitution, which for decades used only the male pronouns of he and his to describe the du-

ties of statewide office-holders. It was a symbolic gesture, but one she hopes will inspire young women to enter politics. “What words say mean something,” said Crouch.

Holcomb had been a temporary blip on the new gender-balance streak. He was appointed by Pence to his current office in March to take over departing Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann. He moved up a spot on the ticket when Gov. Mike Pence was picked last month to run with GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump.

Now Holcomb and Crouch are running against Democrat John Gregg and his running mate, state Rep. Christina Hale. That means Hale or Crouch will become only the fourth female lieutenant governor in Indiana history.

It’s significant, but not remarkable.

According to political data analyst Eric Ostermeier, founder of Smart Politics at the University of Minnesota,



Gov. Joe Kernan names Kathy Davis the first female lieutenant governor in October 2003 (top left) followed by Mitch Daniels naming State Sen. Becky Skillman in 2004. In 2012, Mike Pence chose State Rep. Sue Ellspermann for his ticket. (HPI Photos)

Indiana will become the sixth of 12 Midwestern states to have a woman in the number two spot.

It reflects an accelerating trend, he said, that started back in 1982 when Minnesota elected the Marlene Johnson the nation’s first lieutenant governor.

“It’s an expectation now, especially in states where gubernatorial candidates get to pick their running mates: Women are seen as complementing and balancing out the ticket,” Ostermeier said.

Republican State Sen. Vaneta Becker says she’s glad to see the gender-balance streak resume in Indiana. She recruited Crouch to run for her House seat in 2005 when she ran for her current Senate seat. “I wanted to make sure a woman replaced me,” Becker said. “We need more women’s voices in the Statehouse.”

The first mixed-gender gubernatorial ticket in

Indiana was in 1984. That's when Democrat Wayne Townsend picked Ann Delaney as his running mate in the same year Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro were running at the top of the Democrats' national ticket.

They all lost.

Davis became the first female lieutenant governor through misfortune. She was appointed in 2003, to fill a hole created with the death of Gov. Frank O'Bannon, and the elevation of his replacement, then Lt. Gov. Joe Kernan.

Kernan and Davis lost to the Republican gubernatorial ticket of Mitch Daniels and Becky Skillman in 2004. That Daniels-Skillman duo went on to beat Jill Long Thompson and Dennie Oxley in 2008.

In 2012, Pence and Ellspermann squeaked out a narrow victory over Gregg and his female running mate, then state Sen. Vi Simpson.

That Indiana voters will now have their pick of ei-



Democrat John Gregg's two tickets with Rep. Christina Hale (left) and Sen. Vi Simpson in 2012. (HPI Photos)

ther Hale and Crouch isn't a surprise to political observers.

"Women have come a long way in a short time in Indiana," said retired political scientist Ray Scheele of the Bowen Center for Public Affairs at Ball State University.

But maybe not far enough. No woman has held the Indiana governor's office – yet.

Scheele thinks time will change that, as more women hold elected office and move up with the party structure as political strategists.

"I think it will be part of the normal evolution," he said. ❖

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This election is Clinton's to lose

By CHRIS SAUTTER

WASHINGTON – With the conventions over and three months to go, the dynamics of the 2016 campaign appear set. The presidential race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump is now Clinton's to lose.

Granted, there are potential land mines and unforeseen circumstances that could shake things up, such as more embarrassing e-mails, even more incidents of terror, or a serious misstep on the campaign trail. But for now, certain facts are clear that point to a likely Clinton victory:



1. Democrats have been able to reframe the election as a referendum on Donald Trump's values rather than a referendum on Hillary Clinton.

At their convention, Democrats turned Donald Trump's slogan "Make America Great Again" on its head, arguing that America already is great and that to suggest otherwise is a smear on the country and its citizens. Trump's dark themes of fear and resentment gave Democrats the opportunity to embrace positive themes of family values, American exceptionalism, and patriotism. Michelle Obama's brilliant speech, in particular, focused on family values, emphasizing that they are about setting a good example and providing opportunity for your kids. President Obama's speech was replete with praises of American democracy. Vice President Joe Biden used the message of American greatness to pitch the Democratic Party's progressive agenda to working-class families. The relentless attacks on Trump have seemingly stripped Trump of his Teflon. Unless Trump can turn the election into a referendum on Clinton, Democrats will be fighting on their turf.

2. The successful Democratic Convention erased Trump's lead as post-convention polls show Clinton now with a clear advantage. According to a CBS poll released Monday, the Democratic nominee leads the Republican 47%-41% including leaning voters. The new CBS survey showed Clinton with a 46-39 lead without leaners. When third-party candidates are added to the horse race question, Clinton polls at 43%, Trump at 38%, and Libertarian Gary Johnson at 10%. Trump led 44% to 43% in the CBS poll released immediately after the Republican convention in Cleveland. Clinton's convention bump is

reflected in several other polls released since the convention. A Morning Consult poll released Sunday also showed Clinton ahead of Trump post-Democratic convention by a margin of 43% to 40%. The poll reversed Trump's four-point lead following the Republican convention. A CNN/ORC poll released late Monday shows Clinton with a 7-point post-convention bounce. These polls, though obviously subject to changes, bode well for Clinton, who has mostly led the race, except immediately following the Republican convention when Trump briefly jumped ahead.

3. The Electoral College map gives Clinton a clear advantage. Hillary Clinton begins the general election with a clear Electoral College advantage over Donald Trump based on how states have voted in recent presidential elections. The 18 states that have voted Democratic the past six elections yield 242 electoral votes out of 272 needed. Clinton only needs to win those 18 states plus 30 more votes to win. Even if Trump were to win every state Romney won, he would still have to carry Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Florida to prevail in the Electoral College. Polls show Ohio is currently a toss-up. But Florida's heavily Latino population makes the state a difficult catch for Trump. Pennsylvania has long been fools gold for Republicans and polling shows Clinton currently with a lead. Meanwhile, Trump is losing in North Carolina (won by Mitt Romney in 2012) and even in the normally reliable Republican states

Georgia and Utah. Despite the unforgiving reality of the Electoral College, Trump supporters point to a "rust belt" strategy that has Trump winning Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Only Ohio among those currently offers realistic hope for Trump. Trump, of course, leads comfortably in the South and Plains states. Overall, however, the Republican nominee currently faces a seemingly insurmountable Electoral College deficit.

4. Trump's personal feuds feed the narrative that he is too unstable to be President.

Donald Trump's penchant for picking personal fights is not only preventing his message from getting through to voters. Trump's personal feuds also underscore the Democratic argument that he lacks the temperament to be president. The most lasting line of Hillary Clinton's convention speech was the devastating "A man you can bait with a tweet is not a man we can trust with nuclear weapons." Trump's public denigration of Khizr and Ghazala Khan, the parents of a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq who have criticized Trump for "smears of Muslims," has been so damaging that it has generated sharp rebukes by prominent Republicans, including John McCain who issued a blistering statement Monday. The Veterans of Foreign Wars, which warmly welcomed Trump to its convention last year, also scolded Trump Monday. The intense backlash raises questions about whether this controversy — unlike others

RealClearPolitics Election 2016			
President	Senate		House
Election 2016	Clinton	Trump	Spread
RCP Poll Average	44.6	45.7	Trump +1.1▲
Favorability Ratings	-17.2	-21.1	Clinton +3.9
Betting Odds	68.0	32.0	
Electoral College	Clinton	Trump	Spread
RCP Electoral Map	202	164	Clinton +38
No Toss Up States	322	216	
Battlegrounds ●○	Clinton	Trump	Spread
Pennsylvania	45.5	42.3	Clinton +3.2
Michigan	41.0	35.8	Clinton +5.2
Ohio	42.6	41.8	Clinton +0.8
Florida	43.5	43.8	Trump +0.3
Iowa	41.3	40.8	Clinton +0.5
Wisconsin	44.3	38.7	Clinton +5.6
New Hampshire	43.0	39.3	Clinton +3.7

— has become a turning point in the election and will have lasting impact on the outcome of the election.

5. Clinton’s voter turnout advantage could be critical. With so few truly undecided voters, turning out committed supporters will again be as critical as persuading those still wavering. It is indisputable that Clinton has a vastly superior get-out-the-vote operation to Trump’s when it comes to field operations in key battleground states. Trump has devoted very little attention or resources to building a ground game. Even GOP insiders concede that Clinton is far better positioned on the ground. In a close election, Clinton’s ability to turn out her supporters could make the difference.

6. Debates favor Clinton and Trump knows it. During the Republican primaries, Trump proved to be an unsteady debater, at times appearing unprepared or uninterested. His statement Sunday that the Russians were not going into the Ukraine raises questions about how much of a grasp he has on critical issues the nation faces. No one has similar questions about Hillary Clinton’s command of issues. Trump’s recent attacks on the Commission on Presidential Debates, which has run debates in every presidential year beginning 1988, suggest he might be trying to avoid them all together. Trump took heat for skipping a Republican debate. Before long, he may conclude he needs these debates to have a chance to win.

7. The mood of the country still favors

Trump and his message. In spite of the above, Trump retains a real shot to win the election. Trump has the winds of change at his back while Clinton epitomizes the status quo. Americans worry about the future amid fears of terror and an economy that ignores the middle class. Resentment against the political establishment fuels intense voter anger. Trump hopes a Brexit-esque surge will propel him to victory. And it could if Trump would focus purely on security and economic issues. ❖

Clinton lead grows in CNN, NBC Polls

WASHINGTON – Hillary Clinton emerges from her party’s convention in Philadelphia with a restored lead over Donald Trump, having earned a 7-point convention bounce, according to a new CNN/ORC Poll. In a two-way head-to-head matchup, Clinton tops Trump 52% to 43%, and in a four-way matchup including third party candidates Gary Johnson and Jill Stein, Clinton leads 45% to 37% with Johnson at 9% and Stein at 5%.

Clinton now leads Donald Trump by 8 points — 50 percent to 42 percent — up from a single-point difference last week, according to the latest NBC News|SurveyMonkey poll. Clinton also saw a bounce in a four-way general election match-up against Trump, Libertarian Gary Johnson and Green Party candidate Stein. Clinton now leads Trump by 4 points — 42- 38%.

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Questions remain after the DNC

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – The Democratic National Convention is over. Just as at the conclusion of the rival Republican event a week earlier, questions remain.

Q. Was the Democratic convention a success for Hillary Clinton?

A. Success is in the bounce of the beholders. The beholders who count are the voters. Despite the critics that found the Republican convention too negative, too dark and gloomy, too disorganized and too divisive, Donald Trump got a significant bounce in the polls, not just catching up but pulling ahead in some samplings of American opinion. Negative works. Whether the optimistic view of America in the Democratic convention worked for Clinton will be shown



now in new polls. Did she bounce back? Big? Barely? Or not at all?

Q. How was Clinton's acceptance speech?

A. Good, especially in drawing a contrast with Trump in qualifications for commander in chief and leader of the free world. But, as was to be expected, she didn't approach the soaring oratory of convention speakers on the night before. She also seemed to be concerned more with appealing to the sometimes hostile portion of Bernie Sanders supporters in the hall than to the wider audience on television, perhaps losing a chance to sway more of the wavering Republicans and independents watching on TV. Sanders and the vast majority of his supporters nationally are with her, even if that strident portion in the hall was at times disruptive. She moved way to the progressive left, not toward political middle ground that's up for grabs.

Q. Did Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia deliver as a better vice presidential choice than Indiana Gov. Mike Pence for the Republicans?

A. No. Kaine delivered a solid speech, doing what he was supposed to do to help Clinton. But Pence also was solid in doing what he was supposed to do to help Trump. For the campaign, Kaine has more potential. He and Clinton are together on the same message. He will be used extensively. Pence will have limited impact if Trump continues as a one-man show, pushing Pence from the spotlight and saying things with which Pence can't possibly agree.

Q. Anybody hit it out of the park with a speech to be cited for years to come for stirring convention oratory?

A. Yes. First Michelle Obama. Then President Obama. They drew wildly enthusiastic responses with soaring passage after passage, performing beyond what other speakers at either convention achieved. More significantly, they spoke directly and clearly to the millions of TV viewers, not shouting or pouting or glaring, and won widespread acclaim far beyond the convention hall.

Q. Did Obama & Obama swing a big percentage of voters to Hillary?

A. Probably not. The president now enjoys some of his highest approval ratings. Michelle is even more popular. But it's hard to transfer popularity in politics. They helped to define Hillary in a positive way, disputing the "crooked Hillary" caricature drawn of her at the Republican convention. It's hard, however, to brush away negative perceptions from decades of political attacks.

Q. Will that stuff with Trump praising Vladimir Putin's leadership and urging Russians to hack into any Clinton emails when she was secretary of state hurt Trump?

A. As Trump famously boasted, even if he shot somebody in the middle of New York's 5th Avenue, he wouldn't lose his voters. No matter what he says – often outrageous, wrong and politically suicidal for any other candidate – he doesn't suffer in the polls. So why would calling for Russian espionage be different?

Q. Does Putin really want Trump to win?

A. Yes. They both dislike NATO and Hillary and agree on leadership style.

Q. Could there be release of more Russian-hacked material?

A. Sure. How about the day before the first presidential debate?

Q. Best one-liner of the convention?

A. By President Obama. When delegates booed Trump, Obama responded with three words: "Don't boo. Vote." ❖

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



O'Brien leads Holcomb Crouch campaign team

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – One day after officially becoming a ticket, the Holcomb/Crouch campaign today announced its senior leadership team of Mike O'Brien, campaign manager; Pete Seat, communications director; Brian McGrath, finance director; Mindy Colbert, deputy finance director;

Matt Huckleby, political director; Joe Elsener, coalitions director; and Ethan Lawson, deputy political director.

"This senior campaign team brings unparalleled experience in developing strategy, delivering a message, raising

money and executing a ground game," said Holcomb. "Between them, they are an all-star team with experience working on campaigns ranging from the township level to the presidential level, and serving public officials from State Auditor to president of the United States. Suzanne and I are excited to welcome them to our growing team."

Mike O'Brien, Campaign Manager – Mike O'Brien was most recently a senior public policy advisor in Barnes & Thornburg LLP's Indianapolis office and a member of the firm's Governmental Services and Finance Department. Prior to joining Barnes & Thornburg, he was a vice president with Bose Public Affairs Group in Indianapolis. He has also served as legislative director for Governor Mitch Daniels during which he was the primary liaison between the governor and the General Assembly on all legislative matters. O'Brien's previous political experience includes working on the Mitch for Governor Campaign in 2004 and 2008. In 2006, he managed Todd Rokita's successful election as Secretary of State. In 2009, he was elected chairman of the Hendricks County Republican Party.

Pete Seat, Communications Director - Pete Seat was most recently the senior project manager at Hathaway Strategies, an innovative grassroots public affairs firm located in Indianapolis, Indiana. Prior to that, he was Communications Director for the Indiana Republican Party under then-State Chairman Eric Holcomb and prior to that served in the same capacity on the campaign of former and current U.S. Senator Dan Coats. From June 2005 to January 20, 2009, he served on President George W. Bush's White House staff, including a two-year stint in the Press Office under Tony Snow and Dana Perino.

Brian McGrath, Finance Director - Brian McGrath most recently served as vice president of external relations for EdChoice. In that capacity, Brian developed resources and partnerships that supported EdChoice's nationwide efforts to promote educational choice for all children.



Previously, McGrath worked for Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels as finance director of his 2008 reelection campaign, which raised a record amount of support and won the most votes ever for a statewide candidate in Indiana. Following the campaign, he served as executive director of Aiming Higher Inc. and Aiming Higher PAC, two organizations that supported Governor Daniels's political and policy goals, among them the passage of the landmark 2011 education agenda.

Mindy Colbert, Deputy Finance Director -

Mindy Colbert is the President and Owner of Colbert Consulting, LLC. Prior to starting Colbert Consulting, Mindy gained over 10 years of political and non-profit fundraising experience. She served as the Executive Director of an Indiana education reform organization, Finance Director for the Indiana Republican Party, and Director of Political Fundraising for the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, where she raised funds for both the state and federal political action committees. She has worked in both the Indiana House of Representatives and Indiana Senate.

Joe Elsener, Coalitions Director –

Joe Elsener most recently was a Special Assistant in the office of Lt. Governor Eric Holcomb. Prior to that he was the Political Director for Eric Holcomb's U.S. Senate campaign where he coordinated an all-volunteer ballot signature gathering effort in all 92 counties. He also previously served as the Special Assistant to then-State Chairman Eric Holcomb and the Fourth Congressional District Field Representative for Mike Pence's 2012 campaign for governor.

Ethan Lawson, Deputy Political Director –

Ethan Lawson was most recently the Communications and Legislative Director for Auditor of State Suzanne Crouch. Prior to that role, he was the Auditor's Executive Assistant. Ethan has also served in various capacities for the Indiana Professional Licensing Agency, the Indiana Education Savings Authority and in the district office of U.S. Congressman Todd Rokita. He is currently the executive director of the Indiana Federation of Young Republicans and formerly the chairman of the Hendricks County Young Republicans.

New Gregg ad responds to RGA

The Gregg campaign is responding to an RGA TV ad assailing the candidate on coal with a TV ad this morning saying the Democratic nominee has been a long time



advocate of coal. Gregg says his opponent is "confused" by linking him to Hillary Clinton.

The RGA ad released last week said, "John Gregg chooses Hillary over Hoosiers every time" in reference to her comments promising to put

a lot of coal miners and coal companies out of business. Gregg served as honorary campaign chairman for Clinton in Indiana in 2008. But he has distanced himself a bit this year -- not appearing at any of events or rallies -- and saying he would support whomever the Democratic Party nominates. "John Gregg is one of Hillary Clinton's most dedicated supporters," said RGA Communications Director Jon Thompson. "When Hillary vowed to put Indiana coal miners out of work and Indiana coal companies out of business, Gregg stayed silent, making it abundantly clear that he will fight for Hillary's liberal policies, not Hoosier families." Jeff Harris, spokesman for Gregg, said a simple internet search produces ample evidence of Gregg's position on this issue, his support for coal miners, coal jobs and his disagreements with those in his own party. He has worked for two coal companies in Indiana in the past. Harris also made clear that Gregg supports Clinton (Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). "While he doesn't agree with anyone 100 percent of the time, he can work with people of differing views," Harris said. "He'll be casting his ballot for the first female President of the United States."

Gregg advocates LGBT rights

Through a glass side door, gubernatorial Democratic candidate John Gregg stepped into Greyhouse Coffee & Supply Co. He took a right, approached the line and began to mingle with the crowd (Bangert, Lafayette Journal & Courier). On Wednesday, Gregg met with members of the farming associations and visited Purdue University before stopping by Greyhouse for an informal meet-and-greet with members of the public and media. Gregg has been campaigning for months now. In contrast, Republican candidate Eric Holcomb was officially nominated only Tuesday to replace outgoing Gov. Mike Pence. At a recent campaign stop at Poynter Sheet Metal, Gregg said his focus is on economic matters and "not on divisive social issues." Republican insiders like Rick Martin presented Holcomb as a reconciliatory voice on social issues, recently telling the Indy Star that "Eric, having worked for both Daniels and Pence, can serve as a bridge to bring back people who may have been put off by the whole RFRA thing." But Gregg isn't buying it. "(Holcomb) thought the place the Pence-Holcomb administration had us on RFRA was the right place to be," Gregg said. "He reaffirmed that position of discrimination." Seat, contested Gregg's assessment. "Eric believes there is no place for discrimination — at all," Seat wrote in an email. "He has zero tolerance for it. Our opponent knows that. But he can't help but play politics with everything these days."

U.S. Senate

Millions flowing into Senate race

Hoosier television viewers are about to get a double dose of advertisements from candidates and interest groups hoping to influence the outcome of Indiana's sud-

denly competitive U.S. Senate race (Carden, NWI Times). Former U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh, the Democratic nominee, has the only all-positive commercial message, recapping his balanced budgets, state surpluses and tax-cutting prowess as Indiana's governor from 1989 to 1997. In the 30-second commercial, which is airing on cable television in Northwest Indiana and broadcast channels elsewhere in the state, Bayh also touts his bipartisan work to prevent China



from harming Hoosier manufacturing and make college more affordable through Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program. "I'm about results over partisanship. Washington needs

Hoosier common sense more than ever," Bayh says at the end, as the tagline "Fiscal Conservative; Hoosier Values" hovers over his left shoulder. A sharply different Bayh portrait is presented in an ad by Freedom Partners Action Fund, a conservative organization supported in part by billionaire businessmen brothers Charles and David Koch. It claims that after leaving the Senate in 2011, Bayh personally benefited from his vote for the 2008 federal bank bailout by joining the board of directors of a bank that received bailout funds and earning nearly \$1 million for his board service. "Evan Bayh has a long track record of putting himself and special interests ahead of Indiana families, and supporting the Wall Street bailout is just the beginning," said Bill Riggs, spokesman for Freedom Partners Action Fund. Riggs said the group is spending \$1 million to spread that message on television and online. Bayh campaign manager Paul Tencher said the ad is "misleading" and another example of the Koch brothers "trying to buy another Senate seat for their radical agenda."

Bayh hires Donnelly aides

Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Evan Bayh has hired two top campaign aides who helped Joe Donnelly win election to Indiana's other Senate seat in 2012 (Francisco, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Paul Tencher is managing Bayh's campaign, and Benjamin Ray is communications director. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Bayh.

Congress

Orentlicher says recount gains coming

Eighth CD Democratic candidate David Orentlicher says he is picking up votes in the Democratic recount. "The recount has been underway for two weeks now, and we have been steadily chipping away at our ballot shortfall," said Orentlicher, who trailed Ron Drake following the May 3 primary by 50 votes. "There is a sufficient rate to ultimately turn the race around." ❖

Bad news for both political parties

By LEE HAMILTON

BLOOMINGTON – So far, this election has put a premium on sound and fury at the cost of true engagement with the issues confronting the country.

The next few weeks in politics are a little like the All-Star break in baseball. With the Republican and Democratic national conventions upon us, it's a good time to step back and assess this year's election. Which carries bad news for both parties.

The Republicans face a steep electoral challenge.

If Hillary Clinton carries Florida (where polling shows a very close race) plus the District of Columbia and the 19 states that have voted Democratic in each of the last six presidential elections, she wins.

Yet victory for Donald Trump is hardly out of the question. He'll have to retain the support he already has from white voters, especially working-class whites in swing states, and try

to make some inroads among non-white voters. He'll also need to hope that third-party candidates take more votes away from Clinton than from him.

Trump floated through the Republican primaries by tackling the anger and discontent that course through this year's electorate. His talk about a broken system and his emphatic, brash style appeal to a lot of people. His ability to dominate news coverage without spending much on advertising has been extraordinary. And even though he's passed through a difficult period for his campaign, the polls have grown quite close.

On the other hand, the Republican Party is splintered and off its game. Its leaders are having a difficult time with a Trump candidacy. A sizable number of GOP stars found excuses not to attend the convention, which is remarkable. Conventions are where parties fire up the faithful and gird for the general election; to find elected officials staying away is clearly a problem. And any revolt at the convention will be messy – though fortunately for the GOP, the months from August to November are an eternity in politics.

Yet the Democrats should take no comfort from this state of affairs. For starters, below the presidential level the party is struggling. Since 2008, Democrats have lost 69 seats in the U.S. House, 13 Senate seats, 12 governorships, and over 900 seats in state legislatures. Nor do they have much of a bench. The two most prominent Democrats this year, Clinton and Sen. Bernie Sanders, are both senior citizens; Clinton is 68, Sanders 74. Despite



President Obama's relative youth, his years in office did not usher in a new generation of national Democratic leadership.

And while Clinton's path to the presidency may be wider than Trump's, that doesn't mean she's a strong candidate, at least, not for this particular year. She's put out carefully thought-through, even impressive, position papers on a wide variety of current issues that get very little attention in the press. At a moment when voters clearly want change, she appears to favor incrementalism as the way to get things done in Washington.

And despite the FBI's decision that it wouldn't bring criminal charges on her handling of emails when she was secretary of state, the issue is clearly dogging her. She went into this election facing a lot of voters who simply didn't trust her, and that has only gotten worse. In politics, you cannot talk someone into trusting you; you have to earn it, inch by inch.

Moreover, if Trump faces tough arithmetic in the electoral college, Clinton faces her own difficult equation. It is extremely hard for a political party to win a third consecutive term in the White House. It happened 28 years ago, when George H.W. Bush succeeded Ronald Reagan. The last candidate before that was Franklin Roosevelt, in 1940.

The British vote on Brexit is a reminder that resentments and anger can fly under the radar. And Washington, where there's money everywhere you turn, is a ripe target for "take-our-country-back" populism. The anti-establishment, anti-Washington mood captured by both Sanders and Trump should make both parties uneasy.

But then, so should the course of this election, which has put a premium on sound and fury at the cost of true engagement with the issues confronting the country. On that score, we all lose. ❖

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar, IU School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice, IU School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

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

David Brooks, New York Times: Donald Trump has found an ingenious way to save the Democratic Party. Basically, he's abandoned the great patriotic themes that used to fire up the G.O.P. and he's allowed the Democrats to seize that ground. If you visited the two conventions this year you would have come away thinking that the Democrats are the more patriotic of the two parties — and the more culturally conservative. Trump has abandoned the Judeo-Christian aspirations that have always represented America's highest moral ideals: toward love, charity, humility, goodness, faith, temperance and gentleness. He left the ground open for Joe Biden to remind us that decent people don't enjoy firing other human beings. Trump has abandoned the basic modesty code that has always ennobled the American middle class: Don't brag, don't let your life be defined by gilded luxuries. Trump has also abandoned the American ideal of popular self-rule. He left the ground open for Barack Obama to remind us that our founders wanted active engaged citizens, not a government run by a solipsistic and self-appointed savior who wants everything his way. Trump has abandoned the deep and pervasive optimism that has always energized the American nation. For decades the Republican Party has embraced America's open, future-oriented nationalism. But when you nominate a Silvio Berlusconi you give up a piece of that. When you nominate a blood-and-soil nationalist you're no longer speaking in the voice of Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and every Republican nominee from Reagan to McCain to Romney. This week I left the arena here each night burning with indignation at Mike Pence. I almost don't blame Trump. He is a morally untethered, spiritually vacuous man who appears haunted by multiple personality disorders. It is the "sane" and "reasonable" Republicans who deserve the shame — the ones who stood silently by, or worse, while Donald Trump gave away their party's sacred inheritance. ❖



Dave Bangert, Lafayette Journal & Courier: Hillary Clinton's acceptance speech — a historic moment as the first woman nominated by a major party — picked at Trump for being a thin-skinned, self-consumed, impetuous man, ill-suited — less than ill-suited, even — for the nuanced pressures of the job. Trump counted 22 times he was mentioned in Clinton's "very long and very boring speech." His conclusion, in a Friday morning tweet: "Many of her statements were lies and fabrications!" Clinton said she had just used Trump's own words against him. But that's never been enough to take down Trump. Not yet, anyway. The guy can call out Sen. John McCain as a loser, not a military hero, because of his time as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. ("I like people that weren't captured.") The guy can brag, "I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose voters." The guy can go on during a nationally televised debate

about hand size in relation to his private parts. ("I guarantee you there's no problem," he smirked. "I guarantee.") The guy can give each day's news cycle fresh meat without breaking a sweat. And still, he can wind up with Gov. Mike Pence on his ticket and the man the Indiana GOP hopes is the heir apparent, Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb, calling Trump an asset, not a liability, heading into November. ❖

Jennifer Rubin, Washington Post: House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.), Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and vice-presidential nominee Gov. Mike Pence of Indiana (R) knew what they were getting into when they climbed aboard the Donald Trump bandwagon. They had watched him insult minorities, POWs, the disabled and women. They had seen for themselves how utterly ignorant he was about basic policy concepts. They knew he lied about big and small things (e.g., falsely saying he opposed the Iraq War, reneging on charity pledges until shamed by The Post). They knew he'd stiffed and swindled Trump U students. They never should have backed him; they were abetting a vile individual attaining the country's most powerful office, for which he was patently unfit. Pence went a step further in agreeing to be his running mate, and now travels around the country cheerleading for Trump. Now Trump demeans two Gold Star parents. When slammed, he does not apologize or retract the remarks. He insists he has read the Constitution but then claims Gold Star father Khizr Khan has "no right" to criticize him. In a pathetic statement trying to paper over his egregious remarks, he does not apologize to the Khans nor retract his insults. The world-class narcissist claims to be worthy of the same sympathy (I sacrificed too!) as the parents who lost their son. (As an aside, it would a spectacular instance of political karma if after smearing all Muslims and attacking their patriotism, Trump would see two patriotic Muslim parents hammer the final nails in his campaign coffin.) What does Pence, father of Marine 2nd Lt. Michael J. Pence, do? He directs the press wanting comment to Trump. Really, that's it? One wonders how 2nd Lt. Pence — and all the other Americans risking their lives — feel about that. Pence's silence and continued presence on the ticket suggest he considers Trump within the bounds of normal political discourse. If Pence had a modicum of dignity or decency, he would tell the American people, "I made a terrible mistake. Mr Trump is so morally bankrupt and of such shabby character that I could not possibly serve with him." Failing to do so, the same should be said of Pence. It's no longer sufficient for Republicans to rebuke Trump's loony positions or foul statements. There are too many of both. The problem is not one of policy but of the nominee himself. Republicans must rebuke Trump himself and cease supporting him. Silence is consent. And consent is disqualifying for high office. ❖

Gold Star family seeks apology

INDIANAPOLIS — The relatives of a fallen soldier from Northern Indiana joined other Gold Star Families on Monday in demanding an apology from Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump for his comments about the Muslim parents of a slain American soldier (IndyStar). The family of Army PFC Steven F. Sirko, who was born in Northwest

Indiana and lived in Portage during his high school years, were among 23 families to sign a letter published at votevets.org in response to Trump's comments about the family of Army Capt. Humayun Khan, who was killed in Iraq in 2004. "Your recent comments regarding the Khan family were repugnant, and personally offensive to us," the letter said. The Khans appeared on stage at the final night of the Democratic National Convention. Khizr Khan, the soldier's father, took Trump to task for his "smears" of Muslims. He said Trump had espoused policies that would have denied the Khan family entrance to America. Waving his pocket copy of the U.S. Constitution, Khan offered to lend it to Trump and said: "You have sacrificed nothing, and no one." Steven Sirko, died of non-combat related injuries in 2005, according to the Military Times and the Post-Tribune in Gary. He was 20.

Candidates join Merritt on bill

INDIANAPOLIS — Republican State Senate Candidates Aaron Freeman (District 32) and Jack Sandlin (District 36) joined State Senator Jim Merritt (R-District 31) and members of law enforcement to announce plans for legislation to increase protections for Indiana public safety officers and their families. If elected this coming November, both Freeman and Sandlin

plan to join Merritt in filing this legislation during the upcoming 2017 session of the Indiana General Assembly. Current law only provides enhanced penalties for public safety officers if they are harmed while acting in their official capacity. This new legislation would expand those penalties so they apply when a public safety officer, or his or her family, is harmed just because they are identified as a public safety officer. "The recent deadly attacks on law enforcement throughout the country are deeply troubling, heartbreaking, and absolutely unacceptable," Freeman said.

"It is clear from recent events that members of law enforcement are being targeted - including one recently right here in Indianapolis when 17 shots were fired at an off-duty officer's car and home. Fortunately no one was harmed. As a former deputy prosecutor, I have worked on many cases involving threats and injury to public safety officers and I intend to make this legislation a priority if elected in November."

Trump received 5 military deferments

WASHINGTON — Back in 1968, at the age of 22, Donald J. Trump seemed the picture of health (New York Times). He stood 6 feet 2 inches with an athletic build; had played football, tennis and squash; and was taking up golf. His medical history was unblemished, aside from a routine appendectomy when he was 10. But after he graduated from college in the spring of 1968, making him eligible to be drafted and sent to Vietnam, he received a diagnosis that would change his path: bone spurs in his heels. The diagnosis resulted in a coveted 1-Y medical deferment that fall, exempting him from military service as the United States was undertaking huge troop deployments to Southeast Asia, inducting about 300,000 men into the military that year. The deferment was one of five Mr. Trump received during Vietnam.

The others were for education.

Military mom booed at Pence rally

CARSON CITY, Nevada — The woman, in a quiet voice, stood before the crowd of hundreds at a town hall-style event here with Indiana Gov. Mike Pence and announced that her son serves in the Air Force. The crowd applauded (Politico). But then the woman said, "Time and time again, [Donald] Trump has disrespected our nation's armed forces and veterans. And his disrespect for Mr. Khan ... " The reaction of the crowd was immediate and fierce, drowning out her words. The crowd began to boo as she tried to get through her question. The woman, who was subsequently identified as Catherine Byrne of Carson City, continued to speak through the jeers. "Why are you here?" one woman shouted as the boos rained down. But, over the boos and taunts, Byrne continued to speak. "You've got a son in the military, how do you tolerate this disrespect?" she asked Pence. Finally, after allowing the boos to continue for about 10 seconds, Pence moved to quiet the crowd. "That's OK," he said. Trump's running mate then repeated a line he deployed when confronted by protesters in Ohio last week: "That's what freedom looks like, and that's what freedom sounds like."

Priebus says Khan family off limits

WASHINGTON — The Khan family is off limits, Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus said Monday, hours after Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump accused the Gold Star father of "viciously" attacking him. Speaking to CNN's Wolf Blitzer, Priebus said the family was off limits but suggested Trump was right to defend himself. The Republican Party, he said, believes that Gold Star families are "precious" families who are to "be honored and loved and cherished."

