



## Donnelly says Kochs seek to 'buy' seat

Incumbent Democrat defends his vote on tax reform, sees Trump tariffs as reckless

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – In five weeks, U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly will finally have a Republican challenger. Asked if he preferred facing Luke Messer, Todd Rokita or Mike Braun, Donnelly said, "No."

"Even my political job is to do the best I can and put my credentials out there," he said at Cup's Coffee in downtown Indianapolis Wednesday afternoon. "I'm more than happy to have Hoosiers make a judgment. Hoosiers are common sense. We don't spend our time trying to be the flashiest, we spend our time trying to be the most solid. That's what I've tried to do in the Senate."

Donnelly spent the morning at a freezing, wind-swept ceremony celebrating Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's speech a half-century ago announcing the death of Rev. Martin Luther King. His pants were splattered with mud

and he joked about the warm sweater he was still wearing. Donnelly is often called the most vulnerable Senate Democrat. He says the Koch Brothers have already spent more than \$6 million to "buy the Indiana Senate seat." And he characterized the tax reforms of late 2017

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## News and propaganda

By **CAMERON CARTER**

INDIANAPOLIS – It will surprise no semi-sentient being that the state of our politics is, well, unwell.

Abroad, the seven-decade run of Pax Americana is ending with tensions between global rivals over territory, trade and fundamental governing philosophies dangerously rising. Nationally, the conversation – such as it is at 140 characters – can be summed up as, "You don't think like me, so you suck, etc., etc.," and a culture of seemingly helpless victimhood pervades. Closer to home, elected state officials can't run a legislative session to successful conclusion without getting in their own way and at least one aspirant to higher office is worried about political bias



**"Fifty years ago this city was peaceful. It was so quiet. The message of love and peace, you have a story to tell. So I say to you, go in peace."**

*- U.S. Rep. John Lewis, at the 50th anniversary of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's speech on MLK's death*



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from debate sponsors and moderators to the point of self-exclusion.

In the immortal words of Oliver Hardy, once he began speaking words on film, “This is another fine mess you’ve gotten us in.” Only the “you” is actually “we” (usually so in the Laurel & Hardy franchise) and WE need to do something about it before the bones of our body politic fracture further.

**Many trends** converged to bring our politics to this point, but as a writer who simply must insist that words have meaning, one clearly is the hyperventilating use of hyperbole in our political discourse. Another is the rise of social media which, when it comes to politics, is downright anti-social. Finally, another trend is the increasing bias in political journalism, which in the Trump Era seems to have simultaneously accelerated and degraded to the point of farce.

Take for example the current controversy over the following statement, which is worth reprinting and contemplating at length with minimal, contextual changes to the original (indicated here by parentheses):

“Hi, (we’re journalists). Our greatest responsibility is to serve our (local) community. We are extremely proud of the quality, balanced journalism that we produce. But we’re concerned about the troubling trend of irresponsible, one-sided news stories plaguing our country.

“The sharing of biased and false news has become all too common on social media. More alarming, some media outlets publish these same fake stories – stories that just aren’t true, without checking facts first.

“Unfortunately, some members of the media use their platforms to push their own personal bias and

agenda to control ‘exactly what people think’... This is extremely dangerous to a democracy. It’s our responsibility to pursue and report the truth. We understand truth is neither politically ‘left nor right.’

“Our commitment to factual reporting is the foundation of our credibility, now more than ever. But we are human and sometimes our reporting might fall short. If you believe our coverage is unfair, please reach out to us by going to (our website) and clicking on (local news source link).

“We value your comments. We will respond back to you. We work very hard to seek the truth and strive to be fair, balanced and factual. We



consider it our honor, our privilege to responsibly deliver the news every day. Thank you for watching and we appreciate your feedback.”

**Now ask yourself**, what is wrong with this statement? In effect, it is saying that good journalism should be unbiased and fact-based, determined to get at the objective truth of any given matter. And when journalism falls short of such ideals, journalists need to be held accountable and here’s a tool to do so. Further, it acknowledges what is plain to anyone who follows news and politics: Bias is omnipresent in today’s political journalism and often leads to misreporting of facts (several corrections having been issued by national news outlets just this year).

Again, what is wrong with this statement and the ideals it expresses?

Sounds pretty much like the whole point of good journalism, right?

Well, it was issued by Sinclair Broadcast Group, the largest owner of local news stations in the country, and required to be aired on each of their stations in a common, "must run" editorial practice. However, Sinclair just happens to have conservative and pro-Trump (not the same) political leanings and the statement was immediately labeled by critics as propaganda. Some oblivious to irony even called it "Orwellian."

**By "critics" I mean of course** any left-of-center media outlet whose own biases conflict with those of Sinclair and by "propaganda" I mean anything you disagree with politically from any source, which is the problem and point of this exercise.

The definition of the word propaganda is "information, ideas or rumors deliberately spread widely to help or harm a person, group, movement, institution, nation, etc." (Poetically, it has its origins in the 17th Century Roman Catholic Church where it referred to a group of cardinals charged by Pope Gregory XV to train and send priests abroad for the literal propagation of the faith.)

Reconsider the Sinclair statement. Would it qualify as propaganda if, say, CNN had issued it and delivered it directly to TV screens in numerous airports and homes across the country?

**Again, the answer** probably depends on your political point of view, i.e. bias, which is again the point. In our modern discourse, "propaganda" has become a lazy, catch-all word misused to mean anything politically disagreeable and therein lies the true, Orwellian danger.

For there is actual propaganda afoot in American

politics. That is the crux of Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election. And, it is infecting journalism more and more across the board, including Sinclair some of whose personnel are reportedly alumni of Russia Today (RT), the English-language arm of Russian state-sponsored television.

I'll go out on a limb (having addressed the issue in a recent column) and say that propaganda was the entire point of CNN's national townhall-style meeting on gun violence after the school shooting in Parkland, Fla. That spectacle was no exercise in informative journalism or even-handed debate on guns in America; it was a tightly controlled exercise in pro-gun control messaging sponsored by one of the biggest brands in cable television news. The bias was palpable, it furthered a point of view to the detriment of opponents to that view and, therefore, perfectly fits the dictionary definition of propaganda.

**And, to what end?** What was the result? The CNN chorus responded, the Fox News tribe rebelled, everyone went back to their corners. Polarization 1, Progress 0. An undesirable outcome. Same with the Sinclair statement and other media outlets' coverage of it.

As Americans, we should expect political factions to act in such a manner and to engage in propaganda, whether based upon objective facts or even rumor and falsehood. It is as it has ever been. However, we should demand better from journalists and news organizations.

Across all media, journalism needs to heal itself. It is too important an institution to our faltering democracy.

❖

**Carter is president of ContentByCarter**

## Donnelly, from page 1

as a "return on investment" for the Wichita brothers who invested \$30 million but will see \$1 billion in tax cuts annually. The Granger Democrat said he would have been easier to vote for the tax reforms, but claims he will do what's best for the people who elected him.

HPI has reached out to the four active U.S. Senate campaigns, having traveled with Republicans Messer and Braun in recent weeks. A similar invitation to the Rokita campaign has not been acknowledged. Our sitdown with Donnelly is part of the series, as we ask questions and watch the candidates interact with Hoosier voters.

Here is our Howey Politics Indiana Interview with Sen. Donnelly:

**HPI:** Give us an overview of where you think you stand politically.

**Donnelly:** I work for the state and I work for the country. That's what Sen. Lugar did and there's a history to this seat that I feel an obligation toward and that's what I'm going to do for my country, just focus on what's right

for the country. When the Lugar Center did their rankings, they ranked me as No. 1 most bipartisan legislator in both the House or the Senate who's still serving over the last 25 years.

**HPI:** The Republicans are saying that you talk one way in Indiana and another way in Washington and that you vote 85% of the time with Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi. How will you respond to that?

**Donnelly:** The biggest problem with that is I vote with President Trump 62% of the time. And I do what I think is right for the state. I'll be with President Trump when he's right, as I was with Justice Gorsuch and a number of the nominees. I worked with him on the Law Enforcement Mental Health Act, along with a number of other pieces of legislation. But when he's not, I'll pass. I'll try and encourage him and the administration to take another path because I don't work for President Trump. I didn't work for President Obama and I didn't work for President Bush. I work for the people of the State of Indiana. What these candidates on the other side want to be is a fax machine or a puppet. My job is to review

legislation, review policy, do what's right and to focus on our country. It's not to work for anybody else but the people of our state.

**HPI:** On tariffs, you have not made a definition of where you are and your potential Republican challenger. I know the Steelworkers back you and the tariffs might help that union and then you hear Rep. Walorski sounding the alarms on the impacts on agriculture, manufacturing and RVs.

**Donnelly:** The steelworkers, U.S. Steel, Arcelor Mittal, all of our mills up there have gotten a bum deal for years because the Chinese have dumped steel at a low cost. So, there's an injury. We've worked with the trade courts in Washington to get that right. If the Chinese were putting it in below cost, I would support a tariff that would adjust the cost. But that's surgical. That's precise and it's done well. If you do it that way, you also protect agriculture. What we've needed is a surgeon's scalpel and a smart, precise way to deal with this. I've always stood with the steelworkers on this, and, I don't think their goals and the goals of agriculture in this state are separated from one another. Both want fair access to markets. Neither one wants an edge. They just want to be able to compete fairly. So, I am very concerned on the agricultural sector. I serve on the Agricultural Committee. I was with farmers in Rensselaer yesterday. We had already heard about the pork and ethanol tariffs and I told them I was very concerned that soybeans may be next. About 12 hours later it was. Do I think we need to have fair trade? I do. Do I think that fair trade can be done to make sure that steel competes fairly and agriculture competes fairly? I do. So that are markets are open. Our markets are open to Chinese steel, but we need it to be done fairly.

**HPI:** In 2015 and 2016, a lot of people raised the temperament issue with Donald Trump, including a number of Republicans. In this tariff chapter, he was upset that Hope Hicks was leaving the White House and he surprised Gary Cohn and his own staff by abruptly calling for the 25% steel tariff and 10% on aluminum. It seemed like it was almost ...

**Donnelly:** Pulled off the table ...

**HPI:** Yes. Talk about that within the temperament context.

**Donnelly:** They are tied to one another. I want to be there to help this president because I want him to be a success. When the president is a success, so is our country. I tried to do the same for Obama and Bush. What I would recommend is ... stability and continuity. You talk about someone like H.R. McMaster, who is an extraordinary servant to this country. I wrote up legislation in the last defense bill that required the administration to give



us their North Korea strategy by March 12 almost a month ago. This was required by law. It was done in a very, very reasonable way. My amendment required that strategy to be given to us. I was not going into specific and classified intelligence. This was requiring them to do the exercise and the homework detailing to Congress how this is going work. I worked with H.R. McMaster on this. He said to me, "Look, we're not going to make the date of March 12." Now, it's required by law that they do. I came to him and said, "I just want to make sure that we get it so we can focus on this policy being done right. This is about as important as it gets." He

said, "I think we're going to be able to get it around the middle of April. and we'll keep you up to date on what's going on." I said, "OK. We're working together." I said, "I know there's a date, but we're willing to be flexible." My goal is to make it a success, that we have a good plan. So, the fella I've been working with, he's gone now. That's where some of these challenges come in. McMaster was central and integral in our efforts to prepare for this North Korean summit, to prepare the strategy for North Korea and that's why stability and continuity can be so important because it affects our economy and our national security as well.

**HPI:** My first reaction to President Trump's surprise announcement of a summit with Kim Jong Un is it's better to talk than to compare nuclear button sizes. The danger is they go into the summit, they don't do the kind of groundwork you have to do for something as complex as this and then everybody leaves mad and then what are the alternatives after that?

**Donnelly:** This is not a seat of the pants deal. If you saw a week ago, Kim Jong Un headed to China. Took his train over, met with Xi. That was about preparing for this summit. It wasn't detailed, but it was pretty clear to me. I serve on the Armed Services Committee and the ranking Democrat on the strategic forces subcommittee and what it means is missile defense, missile development, nuclear warheads, nuclear weapons, nuclear carriers, nuclear submarines, so everything is integrated into that effort. So, Kim Jong Un and Xi and Chinese leadership were meeting to coordinate strategy for the summit. We need to be doing the same thing. We need to have planned out in advance. There should be lower-level meetings with North Korean officials as to what to expect, what the agenda will be, where to take this and how it will succeed. I'm glad they're talking, but it's a lot like planting a crop. There's a lot of advance work that goes in to ensure it is successful.

**HPI:** Is that planning happening?

**Donnelly:** I have not seen it yet. I have had

meetings regarding this specific topic.

**HPI:** And President Trump has also proposed a White House summit with President Putin. The optics of that are going to be potentially sensational. Choose an adjective.

**Donnelly:** We have really huge challenges with regard to Russia and we need to be all-in working with our friends and allies to send a clear message that Russia's aggressive actions and aggressive conduct isn't going to get them anywhere. I saw just coming over here about an hour ago the president has indicated that in Syria, he simply wants to make sure ISIS is gone. That's it. I have real significant concerns in Syria about the Iranian presence, about the Russian presence, about Iranian efforts to coordinate with Lebanon and Hezbollah, increasing the danger to Israel. These are real serious issues and Syria is a critical threat. I want to make sure policy works.

**HPI:** Are you confident that the 2018 midterm elections are going to be conducted without foreign meddling or influence?

**Donnelly:** I have met with our secretary of state, Connie Lawson, who is working very hard on this. We have a great relationship. I know she is focused like a laser to make sure that Indiana is protected. But I also know this, the Russians are clearly focused on disrupting our elections this year. I've told her I will do anything to help.



**HPI:** Does it concern you the White House has done virtually nothing on this front other than President Trump suggesting we go to using paper ballots?

**Donnelly:** I think the White House assistance in this would create a better safety and security around our elections.

**HPI:** And by inviting Vladimir Putin to the White House - isn't that rewarding bad behavior? He wants this.

**Donnelly:** This invitation to Putin is something you have to be concerned about because he invaded and annexed Crimea. He invaded eastern Ukraine. He has repeatedly caused international incidents regarding our military, flying close to - taking other actions. Vladimir Putin has made it very clear he is not our friend. I do know he would not be the person I would be meeting with at this time.

**HPI:** On DACA, there were the January and February scenarios where Majority Leader Mitch McConnell promised a full debate on the Dreamers. It didn't seem like that happened.

**Donnelly:** Sure.

**HPI:** And then on Easter Sunday he tweets "No DACA" and he blamed you and the Democrats for not reaching a deal.

**Donnelly:** In good faith, I was part of the group

- the president said to members of the Senate, "If you come up with an agreement, I will sign it." We said, "Look, we'll take up that challenge." We wanted to give him a work product and that's what the people of Indiana elected me to do, which is to work with others. It was about 10 Democrats and 10 Republicans, some meetings less, some meetings more, we met over about a month-and-a-half period. It was pretty tough negotiations. Susan Collins was the leader of our group. We met maybe ... 15 meetings. And, at the end of it, we came up with a deal. The deal met two critical needs: It strengthened our border security and I have voted repeatedly on border security ideas. It would have provided over a 10-year period approximately \$25 billion for the president to use for wall construction. In addition, it provided for these young people who came here when they were 2, 3, 4 years-old would have a path to citizenship over a 12-year period. If they keep their nose clean, have a good job, keep studying, keep moving forward, being a really good American. Those were the key elements of it. In my estimation, when we put that deal together, we would have had 60 (votes) to beat the filibuster. We had met the president's request because he said, "If you put this together, I'll sign it." Later that evening he met with some of his advisors and sat down with him, lobbied against the deal and by the next day we were short a few votes. So, I think I've tried to meet the president's requirements to create border security. And, what we really need on DACA is for the president to take "yes" for an answer.

**HPI:** He has always portrayed himself as the great deal-maker. The Republicans like Luke Messer and Mike Braun tell me that Trump likes to throw concepts on the wall, gauge reaction and after a couple of days, he'll settle into a position and then that's where we know where we stand. That's tough negotiation. That's like a moving target.

**Donnelly:** Our job is not to be a puppet which does whatever is requested. Our job is to help Indiana. That's the clear difference between me and the others. They attack me for not being with the president 100% of the time when I vote with him 62% of the time. My job isn't to be with him 100% of the time. It's to be with the people of Indiana 100% of the time. I'll be with him 100% of the time if he's with Hoosiers 100% of the time. Anything that details being with the president 100% is a clear misunderstanding of what the function of a United States senator is. We don't work for any president. We work with a president and we are part of the legislative branch trying to make him a success in that office. But, part of that is telling them when they have an idea that it doesn't make much sense.

**HPI:** One of the thing I've been asking your Republican rivals is whether people are getting a bump in the paychecks from the tax reform that passed in December.

The TV ad running on your behalf featuring the gentleman from Mooresville says it's not benefitting the middle class. What are your thoughts?

**Donnelly:** In regard to the ads, they are all paid for by the Koch Brothers. They've put in \$7 million already.

**HPI:** Against you and Sen. McCaskill? Or just you.

**Donnelly:** Against me. Between \$6 million and \$7 million. Two brothers from Wichita trying to buy the Indiana Senate seat. Part of the reason they are so focused on this tax bill is these two brothers put together what is in effect a buying group. They got their millionaire and billionaire friends together and they raised \$400 million. And the Koch Brothers, I don't know what their share was, but say \$30 million. But with that \$400 million, they went to Ryan and McConnell and said, "If you don't pass this tax bill, you'll see none of this." And so, any question of good policy went out the window when they were blackmailed. And one of the biggest beneficiaries is the Koch Brothers. They each see every year, this is by conservative estimates, a billion dollars a year in lower tax payments. So, for an investment for \$30 million, they get a billion dollars a year. That's what this is about. It's about return on investment. They say, "We are not campaign donors. We are campaign investors." These are the reverse Kennedy brothers. Whereas John Kennedy says, "Ask not what you can do for your country," this is the reverse proposition.

**HPI:** You've met with the president and his team on this several times.

**Donnelly:** I met with the president numerous times to discuss this bill. I flew out with him to Indianapolis. I had dinner with him at the White House. I had subsequent meetings with Gary Cohn on numerous occasions. The dinner at the White House included Mike Pence, Gary Cohn, Steve Mnuchin and the whole crew. I said to the president, "Look, I want to be for your tax bill. But there are certain things that need to happen. No. 1, it needs to include the out-sourcing act. What that says is if you're out-sourcing jobs and it's a federal contract, the contract goes to the company keeping jobs in America." He said, "I want that." He said, "Put it in, I want that. I love that." I said, "No. 2, it has to be focused on the middle class." I said, "With all due respect, Mr. President, it shouldn't be for you, it should be for the people who leave home in the dark and come home in the dark." And he said, "That's 100% what we're doing." He said, "Look, I'm actually looking at increasing the highest bracket to 39%." I said, "I'm not looking for that. I'm not looking to raise it to 39%. I'm just looking for any money that flows through this, flows to regular families." That is not where we are. And third, I said, "Look, this can't increase the deficit. We're already in a tough spot." And I said, "If this is unpaid for, it's going to make it much worse." And he said, "We're going to take care of that." I said, "If you do those three things, you'll get a whole bunch of Democratic votes. Nobody is looking to make this a partisan deal." At the end of the dinner, he said, "That's the plan." And a couple days

later, it's the complete reverse of that. I laid out for him what needed to be laid out in the tax bill, he said that's where the bill was going to go and we got something completely different. And, not to go on ad nauseam about it, but the other part about this is any increase people are getting is going to be completely wiped out by the increase in health care premiums that's coming because of the sabotage by the administration on the individual requirements, on the cost-sharing payments that have been made and by not including reinsurance. All of these steps would have caused dramatic reduced health care premiums. None of those have been done. They will eat up any decrease. The day after the bill passed, Paul Ryan came out and said, "We've got a deficit problem." I said, "Yeah. Guess why?" And he said, "We have to reduce now,



Medicare and Social Security." That's been the game. They are going after Medicare and Social Security while giving tax breaks to the very wealthiest in the country. This is going to result in an additional deficit of \$2.5 trillion.

**HPI:** Are average folks paying attention? We've seen Hoosier farmers overwhelmingly support President Trump and now his tariffs are going to hurt them. I'm seeing a disconnect. I'm getting hammered on Obamacare and others are, too. It will wipe out any tax savings.

**Donnelly:** I go to all 92 counties every single year. I try to get to police and fire stations and union halls. To fish fries, try to get to all of our towns. My job is to follow their ideas and let them know what's going on. I don't get paid to do what this group told me or that group told me. I took one oath. When I reviewed the tax plan, would life have been easier on the campaign trail had I voted yes? Sure. But that's not why I'm there. I'm trying to make our country strong and our state stronger. There is only a finite amount of money. If we can help our rural communities, that's a plus that will help year, after year, after year. I have yet to meet the first person in that top 1% who said they felt that tax break was critical. They all said, "Joe, invest it in the country." That's what I'm trying to do.

**HPI:** Messer and Rokita have been long-time deficit hawks until this. Are you going to hold them responsible if one of them ends up as your challenger?

**Donnelly:** It's certainly a point of concern for the nation. To say you've been concerned about the deficit and then vote for this is like saying you like baseball and showing up with a soccer ball.

**HPI:** Do you like where you stand politically? A number of polls showed Trump's approve/disapprove in the 47/51% range until that Axios/Survey Monkey poll late last month that had Trump rebounding and wide support



for the tax reform. It had you trailing the generic GOP nominee by 6%.

**Donnelly:** I do. We have our own polling and comfortable where we're at. My job is to do what is right. That's the best campaign.

**HPI:** Would you rather face Rokita, Messer or Braun? Or does it matter?

**Donnelly:** No. Even my political job is to do the best I can and put my credentials out there. I'm more than happy to have

Hoosiers make a judgment. Hoosiers are common sense. We don't spend our time trying to be the flashiest, we spend our time trying to be the most solid. That's what I've tried to do in the Senate. ❖

## What justifies a governmental unit?

By **MORTON MARCUS**

MERIDIAN HILLS – A few weeks ago, I wrote about a bill (HB 1005) to force township consolidation. That bill never got a hearing by the Indiana House. Despite support from the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, it died, as did many other good and bad bills.



The governor wants the senators and the representatives back for a command performance. Yet, most Hoosiers see little merit in reassembling this ensemble unless they return motivated to serve the interests of Hoosiers rather than lobbyists. In addition, they should be tested to make sure they are not LUI (legislating under the influence of alcohol or drugs).

Even if most members of our General Assembly are good, sensible and thoughtful persons, they do not have the collective courage to overturn generations of subservience to the past. Townships are a remnant of the past. I am not against townships nor am I opposed to retaining elements of the past. However, the arbitrary requirement of consolidating those with fewer than 1,200 persons seems senseless.

**Let's apply that same** thinking to cities and towns: Of the 567 Indiana cities and towns, more than half (290) have populations below that magic number of 1,200. Of all those 290 places, 70 percent lost population between 2010 and 2016.

Goodbye to Nashville and Shoals, the county seats

of Brown and Martin counties. Goodbye to Advance and Economy, to Harmony, New Harmony and Onward. And fare-thee-well Swazyee, the only Swazyee in the world.

Why should we require that places with fewer than 1,200 persons dissolve and allow the county (or township) to take over its functions? For the same reason township consolidation was supported: To save taxpayers money and to improve services.

**But where's the** evidence other units of government could assume the services of those small places at a lower cost than currently incurred? And if so, shouldn't the money saved be used to raise the low wages of remaining local government employees?

Let's ask: What function do these small towns serve in their communities? Is there a donut shop or a bar that is a traditional gathering place? Does a small grocery, attached to a gas station, provide vital victuals?

Does the presence of these commercial establishments demand services above and beyond what the county (or township) could provide?

The town where I live, Meridian Hills (population 1,686 in 2016), is without any retail services, but it still collects property taxes to support itself. This fictional place does have an invisible town board, a constabulary, cemetery-quality entry monuments, plus street signs and lights poles differentiated from those of surrounding Indianapolis. Meridian Hills claims to maintain streets, but, again, where's the evidence? The potholes here are as dreadful as on adjacent Indianapolis streets.

What gives justification to a governmental unit? Is it the number of people within its boundaries or the services it provides to those residents and business who pay the supporting taxes? ❖

**Mr. Marcus is an economist. His views can be followed on a [weekly podcast](#) or reached at [Whogetswhat4@gmail.com](mailto:Whogetswhat4@gmail.com)**

# Braun's brilliant two cardboard cutout ad

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – Mike Braun may have won this primary with his “[cardboard twins](#)” television ad. If he does win, it is likely to go down as one of the best ads in Indiana political history. I say if, because there is still a month to go for the others to pull it out or Braun to blow it. But here are some of the reasons it is a terrific ad, perfect for these times.

**1.)** The cardboard twins concept. Congressmen Rokita and Messer do look a lot alike. Both are congressmen. They went to Wabash College together. Their voting records are nearly identical. Both have run for office many times. They are both ambitious. There are many more examples, but you get the point.



**2.)** The cardboard captures the image of Washington politicians. Most voters believe that everyone in Washington is about the same, that the Establishment (i.e. anyone who governs) practices groupthink as soon as they drink the water, and that all they do is spin things to win elections.

**3.)** The twins idea. Similar but slightly different from the cardboard point. Braun is wise to lump Rokita in with Messer, even though Rokita doesn't quite fit the mold. Rokita may have more name identification, but his name is not so well-defined as to separate himself much from Messer at this point. Braun is attacking both as opposed to having to devise unique attack ads to fight them separately. Rokita and Messer cannot lump Braun into a double-attack as easily.

**4.)** The concept is simple and easy to understand. Rokita is trying to combine an attack on Braun and Messer by using the tax issue. While not totally wrong, it is a bit misleading. Insufficient funding for services that consumers have become accustomed to when combined with local option tax alternatives is, of course, likely to result in tax increases. Governors make the same complaint about Washington. But the argument requires some assumptions and is complicated, so opponents can make believable denials. Many simply won't believe him, resulting, for example, in a side-fight about Mitch Daniels. Braun's ad is decisive, clear-cut and rings true.

**5.)** It is funny. Done correctly, humor is by far the most effective way to deliver an attack that doesn't look like an attack.

**6.)** It makes some ideological points. The ideologi-

cal points are simplistic and inaccurate ones mostly, such as on the debt limit, but fit the general opinion of the electorate right now. “Unbelievable” a “voter” in the ad responds to the congressional vote to expand the debt. On the other hand, if the debt limit wasn't expanded and the biggest items in the budget – entitlements, with the largest being Social Security and Medicare – were suspended, the same voter would have said “unbelievable” to that as well. Attacking is easy; governing is hard.

**7.)** The cardboard twins aren't even real lawyers, they're just politicians. Braun is simultaneously calling them the second-most dreaded “L” word but then, in effect, calling them fake lawyers at that.

**8.)** The ad holds one's attention throughout. Among other things, it has lots of cuts resulting in a fast pace, the cardboard figures appear multiple times, and real people (who at least appear to be non-actors) are utilized. As a result, the ad has more staying power than typical political ads.

**9.)** It has a laugh-line finish with bite. Braun turns over his shoulder to address a cardboard Rokita, sitting in an adjacent booth at a coffee shop, and says, “You're awfully quiet.” Had it been done before the apparent tagline finish, it wouldn't have been as effective. Had he said Todd's name, it also wouldn't have been as effective. But it is unexpected – even after seeing it many times – because your brain thinks the ad is over and then there's a punchline that implies that his opponents have no reply. Braun also raised the buzz about Rokita talking too much or saying things he shouldn't without ever actually making



that charge.

Congressman Messer's ads continue to look like Dan Coats ads from the 1980s and 1990s. In other words, nice but tired. Furthermore, even when talking about coaching his son's basketball team, Messer just looks more like he's modeling clothes. Donnelly looked like a real coach, or at least a fan, when he did his basketball gym ad – six years ago. Perhaps in a three-way race there is a third of voters who prefer this style, but it doesn't seem like much of a strategy to defeat a relatively popular incumbent in a year when turnout could be challenging.

Todd Rokita's campaign seems unfocused at this point. He sees enemies to every side, partly because he has enemies on every side. This was true, however, in every race he's won. He is the only candidate Republicans statewide have voted for, twice, and he had statewide goodwill. He is a fighter, so losing to Braun would still be an upset.

**If the Braun campaign** can come up with additional variations of the cardboard twins - just as Mitch Daniels capitalized on the amazing initial traveling RV concept which transformed him into a mini-cult hero - then the congressmen are in deep trouble. The cardboard twins looking for their law offices, holding town meetings, touring monuments or shopping in Washington, visiting a

factory together, or appearing to vote the same way are just a few potential variations. Sustaining his momentum will be Braun's challenge.

Political campaigns are ultimately marketing campaigns. Brand marketing is essential. Capturing voter's attention is key. It is not the same as governing, but it is not clear how much that matters to voters. This has always been true, so no one should run for higher office without knowing this as a fact. If you want to govern, you also must be able to sell yourself and your ideas to the voters. It is the premise of our American system. ❖

**Souder is a former Republican congressman from Indiana**

## Rokita leads in Delph's suburban/urban state Senate district

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – There has been much speculation about how suburban/urban Republicans will behave in the 2018 cycle and whether female voters will be turned

off by President Trump. But a Senate Majority Caucus poll on behalf of State Sen. Mike Delph's reelection bid gives a fascinating glimpse into what's happening in the U.S. Senate race. The poll, taken about 10 days ago in SD29

that includes Carmel and Pike Township in Indianapolis, shows Todd Rokita leading with 28%, followed by Mike Braun at 23% and Luke Messer at 12.7, with 36.3% undecided.

The poll was conducted after it was announced that Fishers was renewing a \$240,000 annual contract with attorney Jennifer Messer. The timing of that story's release is one of the more peculiar developments in this race. The Associated Press broke the initial story last summer, giving Rokita a campaign attack that will almost certainly surface in the homestretch of the primary. It also impacts the rivalries between Fishers, Carmel and Noblesville Republicans.

Rokita is running as an unabashed supporter of President Trump, unveiling a "MAGA" ad earlier this week in which he wears the signature red baseball cap. While all

three candidates are embracing Trump's primary voters, Rokita's backing of the president has been specific.

Asked about whether he is picking up suburban/urban anti-Trump sentiment, Delph, who endorsed Rokita but is not actively campaigning for him, said that in the last 50 door-to-door stops, he's had only one woman be openly critical of the president. It matches polling that shows Hoosier Republicans are emphatically backing the president.

But SD29 is a true swing district, with Hillary Clinton defeating Trump in 2016 and Barack Obama besting John McCain in 2008 (Mitt Romney prevailed over President Obama in 2012). Delph told HPI on Tuesday that his contact has been solely with likely Republican primary voters. "It will be different in the fall," he said of his contact with voters in a general race with Democrat J.D. Ford.

This comes as the U.S. Senate primary race goes full-throttle with all three campaigns launching new TV ads this week. Both Messer and Rokita began airing their third ads of the cycle, while Braun is airing his seventh.

Messer's new ad is titled, "Forgotten Men and Women." The ad centers around President Trump's promise to deliver for "the forgotten men and women of this country." It's this message that resonated with Messer's blue-collar upbringing and led him to vote for Donald Trump in the Indiana Primary. Luke Messer was raised by a single mom, Chris Messer, who supported her two sons by working at the Delta Faucet Factory in Greensburg. The steady job was a staple for the family. When he was old enough, Luke started working to help out the family with jobs like collecting garbage, de-tasseling corn, bailing hay and umpiring baseball games. The 30-second spot

opens with a clip of President Trump saying, "The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer," then pans to the candidate and his mom at their



Greensburg home.

Rokita's ad is titled "MAGA" and shows Rokita wearing the Make America Great Again baseball cap that he wore at the Congress of Counties last January. He characterizes Braun as a "lifelong Democrat" and Messer as a "never Trumper."

In the script, Rokita says, "I'm Todd Rokita and here's the truth: We're not going to beat Joe Donnelly with a RINO. Mike Braun? He is a lifelong Democrat. He voted for Obama or Hillary. Wow! Luke Messer? He plotted with the Never Trumppers to steal the nomination from President Trump. You've gotta be kidding me! I'm Todd Rokita and I will proudly stand with our President and Mike Pence to drain the swamp."

Braun said that he had voted in Democratic primaries in DuBois County because most of the local and county races occurred in those primaries. He said the county has gradually become Republican following the 2012, 2014 and 2016 elections.

Braun's seventh ad is titled "Trust," which showcases his "lifelong values and strong pro-life beliefs that Hoosiers can trust." The ad is running statewide on broadcast television.

Braun says in the ad, "I've lived my values in the trenches of conservatism, and I want folks to know that they can count on me to stand up for Hoosiers in the Senate. Too many people go to Washington and lose their way, forgetting where they came from and who they were elected to represent," said Braun. "Hoosiers can rest assured that in the Senate I'll stay as grounded as I have while building a national company headquartered in my hometown. I will fight tirelessly for our shared values."



## Rokita criticism hits GOP governors

Republican U.S. Senate candidate Todd Rokita is criticizing Luke Messer and Mike Braun for votes they made in the Indiana General Assembly that purportedly raised taxes. Some of these votes were priorities of Republican Govs. Mitch Daniels and Eric Holcomb. Rokita claims that Messer voted for HB1001 in 2005 that he said included a "\$1 billion property tax increase." That was a priority of Gov. Daniels in his first legislative session. Rokita has also been critical of Senate candidate Mike Braun's vote for the 2017 Next Level road and infrastructure program that was a top priority of Gov. Holcomb.

## Rokita called Trump 'profane' in 2016

Rokita called President Trump in a 2016 interview "vulgar, if not profane." (Savransky, [The Hill](#)). Rokita —

who has worn a "Make America Great Again" hat in a TV ad and has brought a cardboard cutout of the president to campaign rallies — made the comments during a February 2016 interview with Indianapolis-based WXIN TV, according to the Associated Press. He was talking during the interview about his support for Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), who was a presidential candidate at the time. "When you see Marco contrasted with Donald Trump — I mean someone who is vulgar, if not profane," Rokita said in the 2016 interview. "At some point you have to be presidential. People expect that and you see that in Marco Rubio." Spokesman Nathan Brand told the AP in a statement that Rokita was still "the only Republican who steadfastly supported Donald Trump against Hillary Clinton." "This is why the 2016 Trump-Pence Indiana team has expressed support for Todd," the spokesman said.

## Messer, Rokita voting records identical

Messer and Rokita have been trying to out-do each other in showing support for President Donald Trump as they campaign for the Republican nomination for a Senate seat from Indiana (Francisco, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Messer said last month that Trump should win the Nobel Peace Prize if North Korea were to give up its nuclear weapons. On Tuesday, Rokita released a campaign advertisement in which he wears Trump's signature red cap instructing to "Make America Great Again." The data analysis website FiveThirtyEight found that Messer has voted with Trump's position on 64 out of 69 bills, or 92.8 percent, and he missed a vote. Rokita has voted with Trump on 63 of 70 bills, or 90 percent. But four other House members from Indiana — Republican Reps. Jim Banks, Jackie Walorski, Susan Brooks and Larry Bucshon — each voted more often with Trump than Messer and Rokita did. Brooks and Bucshon were at 98.6 percent.

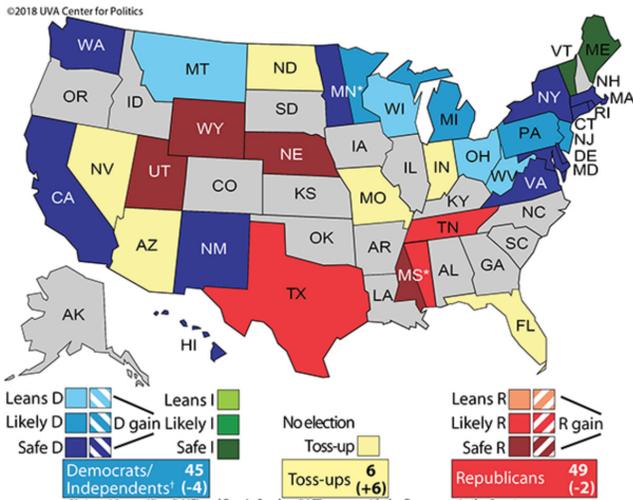
## Worries of GOP fratricide

In many parts of the country, Republican candidates are trying to put distance between themselves and President Trump (Tackett, New York Times). In the Indiana Senate primary, the bruising fight is over which candidate is the more authentically Trumpian. As the May 8 primary election approaches, the race here has taken a nasty turn, with candidates attacking one another as insufficiently aligned with the president, or way too late to Team Trump. Some Republicans worry that the tenor has the potential to bloody the winner so badly that he will be weakened in the general election contest against Senator Joe Donnelly, one of this election year's most vulnerable Democrats. "Of course, it helps Donnelly," said Robert T. Grand, a lawyer and powerful figure in state politics for decades. "Any division in the Republican Party helps Donnelly."

## Right to Life endorses all GOP candidates

Indiana Right to Life has endorsed all three candidates seeking the Republican nomination for a U.S. Senate

Map 1: Crystal Ball Senate ratings



# Morales, Braun claim 4th CD momentum

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Republican Diego Morales 4th CD campaign has been running TV ads since January, and the candidate says that meeting his fundraising targets and a grassroots campaign have positioned him to prevail in the



May 8 primary. But Steve Braun, who has been on the air since February, also sees a clear path to victory in the race to replace U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita and might be benefitting residually from the U.S. Senate race advertising of his

brother, Mike. Morales and Braun are facing State Rep. Jim Baird, Jared Thomas, Kevin Grant, James Nease and Tim Radice in the May 8 primary.

On the 4th quarter FEC reports, Morales outraced Braun \$413,852 to Braun's \$323,435 and had a \$355,251 to \$153,760 advantage. Baird raised just \$6,400, but loaned his campaign \$200,000. Informed and reliable GOP



sources tell HPI Baird is preparing to self-fund the home-stretch. That could create a three-way race in the final month.

"We are the front-runners," Morales (pictured) declared. "We are leading, we have the momentum and we are going to win this race. I am the only candidate

going to county fairs, hog roasts, parades and doing the hard work when it comes to the grassroots."

Braun told HPI on Wednesday morning that internal polling shows him with a comfortable lead. "Based on our recent polling, along with the cable TV we ran in February and broadcast TV in March, we feel very comfortable with what we need to do over the next five weeks," he said. "The polling is very positive."

As for the coming first quarter FEC report, Braun added, "We need to make sure we have the resources to make sure we stay up on the air."

Matt Humm, campaign manager for Steve Braun, also feels good about where the campaign stands. "We're in a really strong position. With just a short time left, it is clear, the feedback we get on the ground, these messages are resonating. It is a clear choice in their minds. He's going to go to Congress and do what he did for 25 years in the private sector which is to create jobs, secure the

seat representing the Hoosier State (Fort Wayne Journal Gazette).

## GOP debate schedule

The Republican candidates for U.S. Senate have three debates on the schedule between now and the primary election on May 8 (Erdody, IBJ).

The first televised statewide debate is slated for 7 p.m. April 15 to be hosted by WISH-TV Channel 8. All three GOP candidates—U.S. Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita and former state Rep. Mike Braun—have agreed to participate. WISH-TV anchor Brooke Martin will moderate

On April 23, the Allen County Republican Party will host a debate at the Ramada Plaza Hotel and Conference Center in Fort Wayne. It will be moderated by conservative radio host Pat Miller of WOWO-FM 107.5. That debate will be broadcast on at least six TV stations and three radio stations, reaching markets in Fort Wayne, South Bend, Merrillville, Lafayette, Indianapolis, Muncie and Evansville. Braun, Messer and Rokita are all confirmed to participate in that debate, as well.

But the televised statewide debate scheduled for April 30 by the nonpartisan Indiana Debate Commission is still only expected to feature Braun and Messer. The debate is scheduled to be at 7 p.m. in a WFYI-TV Channel 20 studio. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Tossup.❖

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border and work with Mike Pence.”

Humm points to endorsements of Braun, which include Indiana Right to Life, State Rep. Sharon Negele, State Sen. Randy Head, and former legislators Randy Truitt, Tom Weatherwax, Rich McClain and Brandt Hershman. Also endorsing are Tippecanoe County Commissioner Tom Murtaugh, West Lafayette City Councilor Jon Jones, Hendricks County Commissioner Matt Whetstone, Hendricks County Sheriff Brett Clark, Brownsville Town Councilor Brian Jessen, Hendricks County Councilor Caleb Brown, and Hendricks County Councilor Jay Puckett.



Rep. Baird has been less conspicuous in this campaign with virtually no press activity and has yet to advertise on TV.

The wildcard in this race may be U.S. Senate candidate Mike Braun, who has more than 3,000 gross rating points through seven TV ads he’s been running since November. Some believe Mike Braun’s statewide exposure along with that in the Indianapolis and Lafayette TV markets will benefit his brother, Steve.

“It is unprecedented,” Steve Braun said of siblings running simultaneously for Congress. He also noted that the Braun brothers were only the second siblings to serve in the General Assembly at the same time, though for only two hours before he resigned to accept the workforce position from Gov. Pence. Braun said he began discussing the 4th CD race in the spring of 2017, while Mike Braun didn’t begin his Senate deliberations until summer. “I felt his race running statewide was very different from what I’m doing in the 4th,” he said.

Both Braun and Morales have faced resume scrutiny. The Associated Press reported that Morales had been fired as an aide to then-Secretary of State Rokita and had been reprimanded by Gov. Mike Pence, where he also served as an aide. Morales has been endorsed by former Pence chief of staff Bill Smith. The vice president is not expected to make an endorsement.

Braun acknowledged at a debate in Lafayette in March that he doesn’t reside in the 4th CD. “I live two miles out of the district,” said Braun, who lives in Zionsville. “I’ve been a taxpayer for many years” in the 4th CD. Rokita was elected to the seat while also living outside the district, as had former U.S. Rep. Chris Chocola in the old 2nd CD.

Morales says his relationship with Vice President Pence should bolster his campaign. “I am the only one

who can reach out to the vice president,” Morales said. “I can call him.”

Braun explained, “Our general approach of strategy has been build off differentiating my experiences and record. My business experiences created many jobs in an information technology space. I took it public and sold it. It was not only a great experience from a business standpoint, but we used data to solve complex problems.”

Braun points to his appointment by Gov. Pence to head Indiana Workforce Development allowing him to spend “three years laying out an approach” to Indiana’s workforce dilemma. “We both agreed it was a challenge,” Braun said of Pence. “Gov. Holcomb is using that as a foundation for his approach as well.”

While Morales campaigns as a potential loyal ally of President Trump, he signaled his willingness to break with the administration on policy. On President Trump’s steel and aluminum tariffs that have resulted in retaliation from China on soybeans, pork and steel pipe, Morales said, “I am supporting President Trump. I am for lower taxes and free trade. We cannot have the Chinese walk all over us.”

But Morales said that 4th CD farmers oppose the tariffs, even though many supported Trump, who campaigned on the promise that he might go that route. “The farmers in the 4th District are telling me the tariffs are not good.”

On Trump’s position tweeted on Sunday that a deal for the Dreamers is dead, Morales said, “The president is right, this was an issue that Obama did not fix. He did not do the right thing to work with Congress to get this done. I will work with Congress to find a solution.” He notes that he and his family immigrated from Guatemala the “right way” and said, “Dreamers want a shot at the American dream. They can go to the end of the line behind those who applied legally. I do not believe in chain immigration.”

The candidates will meet at two upcoming forums: One next Tuesday evening in Crawfordsville and a second April 12 in Hendricks County. **Republican Primary Horse Race Status:** Leans Braun.

### 4th CD: Beck tours all counties

Democrat Tobi Beck toured every county in the 4th Congressional District last week, while visiting highlights in each area. To ‘walk a mile’ in each community’s shoes, Beck laced up the combat boots she wore while serving in Somalia and marched in all 16 counties.

“When I joined the Army, I took an oath to protect and serve the country that I love. I intend to keep that oath, whether it’s as a service member or serving my country in office. Last week, I strapped on my boots to serve my country again. I toured 16 counties, making 60 stops in just six days, and had the opportunity to speak with residents and voters in each and every community,” said Tobi Beck, candidate for the 4th Congressional District.

## Congress

### The coming soybean drag

China's threats of retaliation are scaring farmers in the GOP's rural base and across Trump country, creating a potential drag for Republicans in November's midterms. Bloomberg's Josh Green: "Trump won eight of the 10 states with the largest soybean acreage, all of them in the Midwest. Many of those same states are now host to some of the country's closest races for Senate (Missouri, Indiana, North Dakota) and governor (Ohio, Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota)."

### 2nd CD: Hall begins TV ads

The Mel Hall for Congress campaign began airing "Difference" today, a 60-second TV ad. The ad highlights Hall's life of service as well as his message of growing good-paying jobs, protecting health care, and his push for accountable representation. "I knew I wanted my life to make a difference," Hall said. "I'm running for Congress because people across the Second District deserve a representative who fights for them. Every day I travel the District talking to voters about the issues that matter most to them and their families."

### 2nd CD: Dems look to PA18

When Democrat Conor Lamb won a House special election last month in a Pennsylvania district that Donald Trump won by nearly 20 points in 2016, political operatives began musing about dozens of other Republican seats that could suddenly be at risk come November (DeBonis, Washington Post). Perhaps no race has been more clearly transformed by the implications of Lamb's win than the one in Indiana's 2nd Congressional District, whose demographics and political sensibility closely mirror Pennsylvania's 18th District but whose recent GOP-friendly history has kept it on the margins of the House battlefield. Now, with three Democrats aggressively competing to become their party's standard-bearer in the May 8 primary, the promise and peril of the Pennsylvania race is on display as party factions do battle in an increasingly sharp-edged primary. Where Democrats see a prime opportunity to oust three-term Rep. Jackie Walorski (R), Republicans argue that, come November, not every GOP district will have a Conor Lamb on the ballot — a young, moderate former prosecutor with a political pedigree tailor-made for his Rust Belt constituency.

### Walorski addresses Dyngus Day

At Republican headquarters in Mishawaka, GOP candidates and their backers gathered early in the day over sausage and pancakes (South Bend Tribune). There weren't speeches. But Walorski spoke individually with those in attendance, saying she felt "a great sense of optimism." "There's a lot of Trump fans, so they're talking about tax relief," she said. Walorski chatted about her role

on the House Ways and Means Committee and how she's been "engaging with" President Trump over his move toward blanket tariffs. She's proud of tweaks to the tariffs that she helped to secure, including a measure to soften the financial blow to U.S. manufacturers.

### 8th CD: Bucshon to skip debate

Declining an opportunity to debate opponents on local television, 8th District Rep. Larry Bucshon said Thursday he'll go to a Sullivan County Republican dinner instead. But that declaration was preceded — and accompanied — by confusion. Would Bucshon appear at the May 2 dinner? Or the debate? The veteran congressman hinted Monday that he might accept the debate invitation, which came his way weeks ago. But on Thursday, he said through a spokesman, it's final: He'll be at the dinner in Sullivan County (Langhorne, Evansville Courier & Press). The confusion left one of Bucshon's opponents in a May 8 GOP primary election claiming the congressman is trying to duck him — and missing an important opportunity in the process. "He definitely is dodging me — and I don't blame him," said Richard Moss, a Jasper-based surgeon and Bucshon's opponent. The 7 p.m. debate on May 2, planned in partnership between the Courier & Press, WNIN FM and WNIN TV, is set to be locally televised at WNIN's new location in Downtown Evansville. Bucshon's GOP primary challengers, Moss and Rachel Covington, have already accepted.

### 9th CD: Democrats debate

The three Democrats vying for Indiana's 9th Congressional District nomination answered questions appropriate to their venue at a candidate forum Wednesday evening (Bavis, [Bloomington Herald-Times](#)). Dan Canon, Rob Chatlos and Liz Watson discussed their views on education-related issues such as school choice and school safety at the Ninth District Young People's Candidate Forum, hosted by the Indiana Young Democrats of Monroe County in the Bloomington High School South media center. The candidates agreed that federal funding should remain in public schools, and that funding schools needs to be a government priority. They were asked multiple times how they would accomplish that with a conservative, Republican administration and appointed officials such as U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos in office. "You don't. You hold them accountable," said Canon, a civil rights attorney from New Albany. "And that is what this congress is not doing." Chatlos, a truck driver from Bloomington, said charter school programs and voucher systems that take dollars away from public schools should be used only when public schools cannot meet a community's needs. "Any time you use public funds for anything, there needs to be public oversight," he said. Watson, an attorney from Bloomington, added that schools should end "high-stakes testing," instead "allowing teachers to teach and students to learn."

**General Assembly**

**HD82: Caucus set to replace Ober**

Indiana Republican Party State Chairman Kyle Hupfer officially called a caucus of eligible precinct committee members to fill the vacancy in the office of House District 82, the seat most recently held by former State Representative David Ober. The caucus will be held at 7 p.m. ET on Thursday, April 26, 2018, at Blessed Sacrament Church located at 2290 N. State Road 9, Albion. On Tuesday, March 20, Chairman Hupfer received official communication from House Speaker Brian Bosma that State Rep. David Ober planned to resign his seat in the Indiana House of Representatives effective April 1, 2018. The individual selected at the April 26 caucus will fill the remainder of former Rep. Ober's term. "David Ober's work at the Statehouse over the last six years has been a credit to the Hoosiers he's served in Northeast Indiana," said Chairman Hupfer. "From his work on the state's budget committee to his efforts on important utility issues, Ober's time in the House has helped further the future of our state, and I look forward to witnessing the next chapter of his continued public service." Individuals interested in running in the caucus should contact the State Party Secretary at secretary@indiana.gov to ensure they file the proper forms prior to the deadline, which is 72 hours prior to the vote. The caucus will be open to credentialed media who

pre-register to Holly Gillham at hgillham@indiana.gop prior to 5:00pm ET on Wednesday, April 25, 2018.

**SD11: Zakas, Rogers stump at Dyngus**

Republican candidates took turns at high-profile spots in GOP headquarters, flipping pancakes, including Linda Rogers, who is vying for the Indiana Senate District 11 seat with incumbent Joe Zakas, who's held the seat since 1982. They'll face off for the GOP nod in the May primary (South Bend Tribune). Rogers, a former teacher who's owned Juday Creek Golf Course with her husband for 45 years, touts her experience lobbying on Capitol Hill as president of the National Golf Owners Association and in Indianapolis as president of the Indiana Builders Association. She said she was mostly listening on Monday. Zakas touted how Indiana is in "good fiscal condition," with prudent use of resources and "the best business tax climate in the Midwest." "We get things done," Zakas said, adding the state has "common sense and responsibility" that isn't reflected in the deficit at the federal level. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Leans Zakas.

**SD19: Orr has IFI support v. Holdman**

State Sen. Travis Holdman is attempting to ward off a challenge from Adams County Councilman Eric Orr. The Berne attorney has the support of the Indiana Family

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Institute. When Orr kicked off his campaign by saying, "It seems that many of our legislators who campaigned on conservative principles have, upon stepping foot inside the State House, forgotten those same principles. I think many voters are disappointed with the legislative priorities of the current assembly." Orr has pointed to Holdman's 2016 attempt to build a compromise on LGBT civil rights legislation. If he wins, Holdman is expected to actively seek the open Senate president pro tempore position vacated by the retiring Sen. David Long. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Likely Holdman

**SD29: Delph maintains big poll lead**

State Sen. Mike Delph told HPI that a Senate Majority Caucus Poll 10 days ago showed him leading primary challenger Corrie Meyer 56 to 9%. "We're confident we're doing all the things we need to do from a position of strength," Delph said. "I'm on TV throughout the district with the ad 'Burn the Midnight Oil.'" Meyer is expected to have access to funds as a number of wealthy donors, including Mickey Mauer, are expected to contribute to her campaign. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Safe Delph.

**SD31: Merritt responds to criticism**

State Sen. Jim Merritt responded to a recent mailer sent by his primary opponent, Crystal LaMotte, in which she makes a variety of false claims about his record in the Indiana General Assembly related to issues including abortion, welfare, fiscal responsibility, and the opioid crisis. LaMotte (pictured) is director of Pro-Life Affairs for the Indiana Family Institute and is spokesperson for Right to Life of Indianapolis and the Central Indiana Crisis Pregnancy Center. "My opponent, Jim Merritt, has been our State Senator for three decades!" LaMotte said. "Festering in the swamp of politics for this amount of time should be an outrage to each and every one of us. My entire adult life has been devoted to eliminating the barbarity of abortion."

LaMotte added, "My opponent misled you when he spearheaded the successful effort to mandate that your tax dollars be used to buy and distribute free needles to drug abusers (HB 1438). While this legislation is called the Needle Exchange program, needles are not being "exchanged" -- we are simply handing out free needles. We have watched the rate of deaths due to intravenous drug overdoses skyrocket in the aftermath of this legislation. Senator Merritt's misrepresentation of this legislation, and numerous others like it, must be held to accountability."

Merritt issued a statement on Tuesday refuting LaMotte's criticism

and underscoring his pro-life support. "To put it simply, my opponent's claims are blatantly false," Merritt said. "I have always been honest about my stance on the issues, I am proud of my conservative record in the Indiana State Senate, and I stand by it 100 percent. I understand criticism is part of being a public servant, but I cannot stay silent when my record is tarnished with blatant falsehoods."

Merritt said he is pro-life and has a 100% pro-life voting record with Indiana Right to Life, which has endorsed him in this year's Republican Primary against Crystal LaMotte, just as they did when she ran against him in 2014. He is also the author of the first Safe Haven bill. Merritt has a record of providing tax relief to Hoosiers by cutting personal income taxes (2013), eliminating the death tax (2013), and capping property taxes for homeowners (2010). He also voted to reduce regulations and taxes on businesses to attract new businesses and more jobs to Indiana (2011 and 2014).

Merritt is a supporter of Indiana's Healthy Indiana Plan which has become the national model for a state-led, consumer-driven healthcare program. He's been one of THE leaders in addressing Indiana's opioid epidemic. In addition to cracking down on drug dealers, he's been focused on prevention, treatment and the over-prescribing of opioids.

"I am someone who strives to stay positive in a negatively-charged political environment. I am disappointed Crystal LaMotte has chosen to take this road," Merritt said. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Likely Merritt.



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

# A half century passes after RFK's speech

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The breaking news around 7 p.m. April 4, 1968 hit our household like a stab. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. had been gunned down on a Memphis hotel balcony. The civil rights leader and pioneer was dead.

We didn't know it at the time, but this was only the middle act of a tumultuous year. The Tet Offensive, Sen. Eugene McCarthy's surprising New Hampshire primary campaign, President Lyndon Johnson's stunning announcement he wouldn't run again, and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's entry into the Democratic race and the Indiana primary set the stage for the King assassination.



Two months hence, it was Kennedy lying in a pool of blood dying, and further, the riotous Democratic National Convention with a police mob in Chicago's Grant Park and, finally, Richard Nixon's razor thin victory over Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey in November that laid bare the cornerstone of western civilization convulsing in turmoil.

Absorbing the King assassination that April night a half century ago, we immediately fixated on what was to come. Just weeks before, King's initial foray into the Memphis sanitation strike had spun out of control, with chaos besmirching the movement's non-violent approach to civil rights that was steadily morphing from bus rides and lunch counters to a lack of economic opportunity.

We had witnessed the Watts riots of 1965 and Detroit burn in 1967 on the nightly news. You could sense a time bomb that would quickly turn into a national conflagration on that April night in 1968 as dozens of American cities went up in flames that night.

**As we all know**, and were reminded Tuesday night when the Indiana Historical Society replayed the documentary "A Ripple of Hope," Indianapolis remained calm after Kennedy's courageous decision to give a speech at 17th and Broadway. The crowd was a mix of white RFK supporters and blacks from the surrounding neighborhoods. Indianapolis Mayor Richard Lugar had only been on the job for three months and warned Kennedy not to continue the rally. He was not alone, as Indianapolis police and most of RFK's own campaign team urged the senator not to go. The exception was John Lewis, a more radical civil rights pioneer who had joined the campaign.

Kennedy would inform the volatile crowd of the tragedy. "I have some very sad news for all of you, sad news for all of our fellow citizens, and people who love

peace all over the world, and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and was killed tonight in Memphis, Tennessee," Kennedy said. "Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice between fellow human beings, and he died in the cause of that effort.

**"For those of you** who are black and are tempted to be filled with hatred and distrust of the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I would only say that I can also feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling," Kennedy said, who then talked publicly for the first time about the death of his brother, President John F. Kennedy five years before. "I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a white man. But we have to make an effort in the United States, we have to make an effort to understand, to go beyond these rather difficult times."

And then came the lines that created what is considered the greatest extemporaneous speech in American history: "My favorite poet was Aeschylus. He once wrote, 'Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.'"

"How do you quote Aeschylus to black people?" asked Frank A. Thomas, director of preaching and celebration at the Christian Theological Seminary.

Many in the crowd had never heard of Aeschylus. Former State Sen. Billie Breaux explained the impact to Indianapolis Monthly: "He seemed to speak to us as human beings and not as people in the ghetto. His sincerity just came through loud and clear."

Thomas acknowledged the uneasy confluence of Kennedy and King, with historian Ray Boomhower noting that there had been a "a great barrier between them, systemic racial." Thomas explained further, "Both of them had moral imagination. People with moral imagination get killed. When people are tribal, they don't get killed. When I say how to preach a dangerous sermon, it's the ones that build bridges across people. They threaten people and call people out of their tribe. With the death of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, I don't think we've recovered yet."

Kerry Kennedy, who was 10 years old when her father gave the speech, explained at the commemoration Wednesday morning, "Daddy spoke from his heart. He said we needed love for those who are suffering whether they were white or black." She acknowledged that while forever paired as historical martyrs, Kennedy and King "were not close."

**And Kennedy noted** that after President Kennedy's assassination, "When Jack died, a lot of people said to my father when your brother died, 'I lost all hope.' And Daddy was always moved by that but he didn't agree with it. He would always say, 'If you really loved Jack, you need to learn a lesson of his life and apply it going forward.' I think what Daddy and Martin Luther King had in common ... courage, love, compassion for people who were suffering, healing division, it was about peace and

think.”

Lewis returned to the scene for the first time Wednesday morning, a day before President Trump signed a bill commemorating it as a historic site. “This is hard. This is tough for me to come back here,” the Georgia congressman said. “I have not been back to this park. Coming back here 50 years later, to be here where Robert F. Kennedy, a man who I loved, our country would be a better country if he had been elected president and maybe we’d

be a little closer to building a beloved world. To be here in the park the night of April 4 1968 when he announced that Dr. King had been assassinated, I cried. I lost a friend. I lost a brother. I lost my leader. If it hadn’t been for Martin Luther King, I don’t know what would have happened to our nation.”

Lewis added, “Fifty years ago this city was peaceful. It was so quiet. The message of love and peace, you have a story to tell. So I say to you, go in peace.” ❖

## When RFK came to Dyngus Day

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – When Bobby Kennedy came to South Bend on Dyngus Day 50 years ago, a highlight was his appearance at the packed West Side Democratic & Civic Club in the heart of a large, vote-vital Polish-American area. But that wasn’t the only highlight of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy’s South Bend campaigning in 1968.

Kennedy faced a tough, nationally-watched contest, a must-win test for him. Could he capture the Kennedy “magic,” the charisma of President John F. Kennedy, his slain brother? Could he win in a Midwest state like Indiana? Could he defeat another anti-war candidate, Sen. Gene McCarthy, who had a head start in seeking the presidential nomination? Could he also in a three-candidate race defeat Indiana Gov. Roger Branigin, a stand-in



for Hubert Humphrey endorsed by the state Democratic organization and The Indianapolis Star, both then powerful politically?

In stories ever since about Dyngus Day, the Monday-after-Easter event that spreads now far beyond Polish-American neighborhoods, accounts focus on Kennedy swaying the crowd at the West Side Club. He spoke greetings in Polish, sang a Polish song, hailed Revolutionary War contributions of Polish patriots and even brought along a genuine Polish prince.

**Indeed, a highlight.** But not the only highlight. Other highlights are discussed in a podcast with Tribune writer Margaret Fosmoe, featuring the famed Dyngus Day of April 15, 1968. It posts Monday at [www.southbendtribune.com](http://www.southbendtribune.com). Margaret expressed surprise that researching in old newspaper files showed that Kennedy campaigned four different times in South Bend. Four times! Four visits within a month.

And not just short airport appearances either. He

rode in an open convertible in long motorcades through South Bend and Mishawaka and on to Elkhart. He made appearances twice at Notre Dame. He spoke to a crowd estimated at 6,000 at the courthouse. He made numerous stops, one for dental repair after an admirer shaking hands held on too long and pulled Kennedy from the convertible.

**Kennedy drew** the largest, most enthusiastic crowds I have ever seen for a political candidate. And I’ve seen lots of candidates and campaigns since then. I experienced first-hand the wild enthusiasm while riding with Kennedy from the courthouse speech to the West Side Club. Sen. Vance Hartke, also to ride in the convertible, and I found a cheering crowd surrounding the car as Kennedy got in. Hartke and I were obstacles in the way as hands reached out to touch Kennedy, shake his hand or thrust pens and pencils and items for autographs. Hartke lost his glasses. We both hit the floorboard for safety.

Along the route through the West Side, people lined the streets - people of all ages, waving, cheering, holding signs and flags. Kennedy appealed to diverse sections of the population. To African-Americans energized by the growing civil rights movement. To members of the white working class, not all really enthused about civil rights protests. To flag wavers and Vietnam war protesters. He won over college students, even though he told them flatly that he opposed student draft deferments because they discriminated against those unable to afford college.

**On another ride** with Kennedy, he said: “Well, you’ve asked me a lot of questions on these rides. Could I ask you one?” I agreed, of course, and he wanted to know candidly if I thought he had a chance to win in Indiana. He noted that reporters in Indianapolis said he had no chance, that Gov. Branigin, popular and with organization support, had the race won. I told him he would win big in this part of the state, with Branigin, not really that popular, coming in third, and that he would win statewide over both McCarthy and Branigin.

That was not some brilliant prognostication. After seeing the reception for Kennedy on those visits, I had no doubt. He did, of course, win – and then lost his life to an assassin’s bullet a month later in California. ❖

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

# Mrs. Dominguez roils the Lake Co. sheriff race

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – If Betty Dominguez wins the Democratic nomination for Lake County sheriff, she has Sheriff Oscar Martinez to thank. Martinez is helping Dominguez make a name for herself. But, hey, that’s how it works in Lake County.



Dominguez stunned the Democratic Party when she filed for sheriff at the 11th hour. She doesn’t have a law enforcement background, but she is married to former Sheriff Roy Dominguez, who many thought would run himself. While few are giving Dominguez much of a chance of winning,

they think her candidacy will split the Hispanic vote and help someone like recently retired Schererville Police Chief David Dowling win the nomination.

**One has to think** Martinez is spending a good deal of time thinking about Dominguez. For one, it’s impossible to drive around the county and not see a full-color

billboard with the Dominguez name emblazoned across the front. One easily could think the billboard was promoting Roy Dominguez, who was known to use the large lettering when he was running.

**Martinez is spending** large amounts of money on his own billboards and full-page newspaper ads. Because his ads say “re-elect,” Betty Dominguez filed a complaint with the county election board saying that Martinez never was elected, but instead was selected in a precinct caucus to replace John Buncich. Martinez agreed to replace “re-elect” with “retain” and Dominguez withdrew her complaint.

There are those who think the primary winner will do so with a small percentage of the vote because of racial and ethnic splits. Adding to Martinez’s Hispanic problem is the candidacy of Maria (Garcia) Trajkovich, who is a county police officer. The same holds true with the black vote as prominent African-Americans Mike Brown and former candidate Richard Ligon are expected to split the vote.

That all leaves Dowling, who is the lone major white candidate, smiling. ❖

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

**Photography With Punch**  
 Mark Curry On Indiana Politics  
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**Mike Allen, Axios:** To White House insiders, this is the most dangerous phase of Donald Trump's presidency so far, from the brewing trade war with China that he denies is a trade war, to the perilously spontaneous summit with North Korea. Checks are being ignored or have been eliminated, and critics purged. The president is filling time by watching Fox, and by eating dinner with people who feed his ego and conspiracy theories, and who drink in his rants. Both sides are getting more polarized and dug in — making the daily reality more absurd, and the potential consequences less urgent and able to grab people's serious attention. Trump's closest confidants speak with an unusual level of concern, even alarm, and admit to being confused about what the president will do next — and why. This is different than a few months ago, when they were more bemused and supportive. ❖



**Bob Zaltsberg, Bloomington Herald-Times:** Don't blame Donald Trump for creating the great divide in the nation. The gulf, multiple gulfs actually, were growing before his MAGA rhetoric ushered him into the White House. You can blame him for widening the gaps, however. You can blame him for making the divisions more distinct. Those are conclusions drawn by Dan Balz, the author of four books and a political reporter and editor for the Washington Post for four decades. Now the Post's chief correspondent, he was in Bloomington last week as part of the IU Media School Speaker Series and to receive the Lee H. Hamilton Fellowship in Public Service. His presentation was called "America in Red and Blue: The Roots of Political Polarization." In it, he dissected the various political divisions in this country, which are considerably more than Republicans versus Democrats. "Political polarization has been a growing fact in politics for a long time," he said, with two "broken political parties" and huge mistrust on both sides. President Trump inherited a divided nation, he said, basing his belief on deep dives into data collected over time. But Trump has added to the problems by going to war with institutions and challenging the legitimacy of fact-based reporting. All in all, he's the most polarizing president in recent U.S. history. According to Gallup Polls, he has 87 percent approval from people who identify with his party, and just 7 percent approval from those in the other party, a gap of 80 points. That's 10 points more than Barack Obama, 19 more points than George W. Bush, 25 more points than Bill Clinton and 28 more points than Ronald Reagan. The divide continues to widen in terms of party politics. Ideology is increasingly a deciding factor, with so-called liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats declining. The political middle, what former astronaut and Sen. John Glenn called "the sensible center," has almost disappeared, Balz said. "We have been moving steadily in this direction for some time," he said. "The reason is the way we have been sorting ourselves out." ❖

**John Graham, NWI Times:** There isn't much agreement in Washington, D.C., these days. Our national political debate has been hijacked by partisanship, breeding a reluctance to work together to solve our nation's problems. Yet Democrats and Republicans have an opportunity to come together to simplify and modernize the complex web of regulations that govern daily life. Doing so will lower the cost of doing business in Indiana and stimulate the economy just as effectively as a tax cut — putting dollars back in the accounts of entrepreneurs who want to invest in their community and create new job opportunities for their neighbors. But unlike a tax cut or other economic stimulus, reforming the regulatory process will not put our nation's deficit further into the red! There are several promising bipartisan collaborations in Congress on regulatory reform. Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., are sponsoring complementary bills that would improve the ability of federal agencies to measure the effectiveness of programs. Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., and Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, D-N.D., are co-sponsoring the Early Participation in Regulations Act of 2017 which will improve regulatory transparency by increasing opportunities for public participation and scientific evidence in rulemaking. Indiana is considered the No. 1 state in the Midwest for conducting business. Our state's economic growth in 2018 is forecasted to outpace the national trends, and businesses in neighboring states frequently relocate here to benefit from our economic and regulatory climate. Many of the key sectors of the Indiana economy need to be regulated by the federal government for the public good: pharmaceuticals, medical devices, autos, agriculture and biofuels. But federal regulations also need to be grounded in sound science and based on a careful comparison of regulatory alternatives. ❖

**Danny Westneat, Seattle Times:** I see that the reality carnival show that is this presidency is now said to be "obsessed" with our hometown company Amazon and its founder, Jeff Bezos. Every day the president twitter-barrages all manner of ALL-CAPS attacks on Amazon, apparently in service of finding a way, any way, to "(bleep) with" Bezos and his superstar company (and more likely, his other company, The Washington Post). "He's off the hook on this. It's war," a source close to the White House said of President Donald Trump, according to the magazine Vanity Fair. Hmm. Perhaps I could be of some small assistance in this squabble? By stating: Trump, you're bashing Amazon all wrong. For starters, it's been well-established by fact checkers that the president's anti-Amazon harangues have been mostly off the mark. No, the company isn't bleeding the Post Office to death on package deliveries. No, the company isn't paying zero state and local taxes (at least not anymore). But I would humbly suggest there is something fundamentally off-kilter about the company's relationship with its home country. ❖

## Tariffs already costing IN farmers

INDIANAPOLIS – David Hardin is a third generation farmer in rural Hendricks County (Brosher, [WFYI](#)). He grows corn and soybeans, but his primary income comes from hogs. “Since the original, the idea or the notion of putting tariffs on imported steel and aluminum were introduced, we’ve seen such a large drop in pork prices, it equates to about a \$3,000 per week drop in our income here on our farm,” Hardin says. Hardin’s farm is one of more than 3,000 family-owned pig farms in Indiana. And, they aren’t the only ones who could see losses because of tariffs. The threat of tariffs on U.S. soybeans is coming when farmers are on pace to plant more soybeans than corn for the first time in more than two decades. The USDA says the largest increase will be in Indiana, where farmers will plant more than six million acres of soybeans this year. And experts say the timing couldn’t be worse. “Because we’re in a down economy for agriculture,” says Robert White, director of national government relations for the Indiana Farm Bureau. “And, we’re about 50 percent lower than we were in ag income than we were about four years ago. So, that doesn’t bare well.” White says it could be enough to put some people out of business.

## Walorski says tariffs ‘all talk’ now

WASHINGTON – China’s latest tariff announcement dominated a roundtable discussion in Elkhart hosted by U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski, (R) Indiana’s Second District and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (Peterson, WNDU-TV). Rep. Walorski stressed that it’s all just talk now. The proposed tariffs are still in the discussion stage and have no effective date. Meantime, she’s a member of the House Ways and Means Committee that has jurisdiction over trade. “I agree with this concept of tariffs. I get the trade imbalance. I get weeding out the bad

guys and I get going after China but you’ve got to do that, there’s got to be a balance making sure that at the same time that we’re going and punishing bad actors like China but we’re not hurting U.S. manufacturers at the same time,” Rep Walorski said. “We won that battle. We just won that battle, and there’s a lot more little battles to come until we get this right and I’m going to continue fighting being very visible and very vocal.”



## Hathaway disputes women policy grade

INDIANAPOLIS – An Indiana Republican leader says a recent report giving Indiana a failing grade for policies aimed at helping women isn’t fair (Smith, [WFYI](#)). The study looks at data that includes the gender pay gap, women’s health measures, paid leave policies, and child care efforts. Erin Macey with the Indiana Institute for Working Families says there was legislation to address many of those issues last session – but it wasn’t considered. But Indiana Republican Party National Committeewoman Anne Hathaway says the report doesn’t provide the whole picture. Hathaway is the executive director of the Lugar Series, which boosts Republican women in public service. And she’s on the board of the National Association of Women Business Owners-Indianapolis. She says the study looks for legislation in each state to create its grades. “I’m not sure that legislative solutions are – I think there are good things happening we don’t do legislatively,” Hathaway says. Hathaway says that includes a coding education program for offenders at the Indiana Women’s Prison and further expansion of the state’s pre-K program. “The governor’s new parent leave policy for moms and dads, providing up to four weeks of paid leave for new parents, including those who adopt,” Hathaway says. “The growing number of women stepping up for public service in Indiana.”

## Holcomb signs several bills

INDIANAPOLIS – Gov. Eric Holcomb [signed a bill](#) that is meant to ensure people who want to adopt will be able to get information and ask questions they need to ask. “Ensuring children have a safe and loving place to call home is an issue near and dear to my heart,” said state Rep. Woody Burton. “The Department of Child Services says there are nearly 150 children up for adoption in Indiana at any given time. It is my hope more Hoosiers will consider opening their home to a child in need.” Holcomb signed state Rep. Bob Heaton’s bill into law Tuesday enhancing employment opportunities for Hoosier workers with disabilities ([Terre Haute Tribune-Star](#)). The state is closer to a rape kit database thanks to a bill Gov. Holcomb signed into law (Williams, [WISH-TV](#)). A statewide audit done late last year found thousands of rape kits were sitting in evidence storage.

## Bosma seeks ‘completed job’

KOKOMO. – Speaker of the Indiana House of Representatives Brian Bosma authored commentary appearing in the Kokomo Tribune under the headline “Legislature will complete its job.” “President Dwight Eisenhower once said farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you’re a thousand miles from a cornfield,” Bosma wrote. “That quote leapt to mind when I read recent articles featuring sharp criticism of this year’s General Assembly. In defense of all 150 members of the Legislature, I felt the record had to be set straight... A one-day special session — I’m certainly not happy about it and wish it could have been avoided. But we will make it right for Hoosiers, complete the job of adopting a few important bills.”