



An utterly fluid GOP INSen race unfolds

Braun perceived as having nominal advantage, but undecideds still dominate



By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The Republican U.S. Senate primary heads into its final fortnight as a “tossup,” mostly because the scant polling available signals a large pool, between 30 and 40%, of undecided voters.

Anecdotally, we see a light turnout, in part because of the lack of enthusiasm for President Trump while Luke Messer, Mike Braun and Todd Rokita continue to emphatically embrace him. This should be the homestretch

of the campaign where they burnish key talking points, like Todd Young did in his race against Marlin Stutzman in 2016. Young repeatedly mentioned he was a Marine in his final debates to the point of some ridicule. But news coverage picked up this angle, achieving audience saturation of that portion of Young’s resume.

Of the current field, Braun appears to have a slight edge because his “outsider businessman” branding comes as close to Young’s consistent Marine Corps branding effort. In first quarter FEC filings, Braun has loaned his campaign an unprecedented (for Indiana) \$5.5 million, has \$2.42 million cash on hand, and has the ability to write

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Legislators via caucus

By **TREVOR FOUGHTY**
CapitolandWashington.com

INDIANAPOLIS – Back in October of 2013, Niki Kelly wrote an article for the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette analyzing the number of state legislators who first came into the General Assembly by way of a partisan caucus, rather than through a general election. It speaks to the thoroughness of her reporting (and the impact of the analysis) that five years later it’s still common to hear hallway denizens at the Statehouse quote her finding that nearly one in five legislators first arrived there by bypassing the ballot box.

But that 19% statistic was in the context of the legislature



“For the good of all involved, we need to put the ‘college’ back in college basketball.”

- Condoleezza Rice, unveiling NCAA basketball reforms that includes ending the one and done NBA scheme. Rice headed a Commission on College Basketball



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as constituted in 2013. It was the first time such an analysis had been widely published, and—probably because it was difficult to track down the numbers just for that specific group of 150 legislators, according to Kelly’s own account to me – also the last. And so, as people learn about how robust my database is at CapitolAndWashington.com, it’s perhaps not surprising that the most oft-asked question I get is about updated numbers on caucus-elected legislators.

But before we dive into those numbers, a bit of history: Indiana’s 1851 Constitution gave the governor the ability to call for a special election to fill legislative vacancies as needed. But because the legislature only met for about two months every other year under that document, vacancies generally weren’t noticed, and there was little perceived need to fill them. If a vacant Senate seat had more than two years left on the term, it would likely be filled at a special election held during the next general election; by contrast, House vacancies generally weren’t filled unless there was a pressing need for votes in a special session.

If we set aside the mass resignation of 51 Democrats in the March 1869 attempt to block ratification of the 15th Amendment (and subsequent special elections in which every member won reelection), under Indiana’s 1851 Constitution we have 216 legislative vacancies from 1852-1972. Of those, 92 were in the House and only 23 were filled via special election (just 25%).

Of the 124 Senate vacancies, 93 were filled via special election (75%). Across both chambers, there were about 3.6 vacancies per biennium, and the average length of a vacancy was right around 11 months (336 days in the House, and 355 days

in the Senate).

When voters approved a Constitutional amendment in 1970 that allowed the General Assembly to begin meeting annually, filling legislative vacancies suddenly became a pressing concern. Waiting until the next general election to hold a special election could mean two sessions might pass before a vacancy was filled in the Senate (and would never be filled in the House) thus robbing constituents of representation; but holding one-off special elections in relatively small districts could incur substantial costs in what would likely be low-turnout affairs.

So, Hoosier voters approved another Constitutional amendment in 1972 that allowed the General Assembly to sort through the issue and legislatively set the method for filling vacancies.

Ultimately, the method that was selected was the caucus process we’re familiar with today, which requires a seat be filled within 30 days, and has led to the average time of vacancy plummeting to just 20 days in both chambers. Since that law took effect, the

caucus process has been utilized 108 times (the 109th will come Thursday evening in the HD82 caucus to replace Dave Ober).

That translates into roughly 4.8 vacancies per biennium, a 33% increase over the pre-caucus period. The reason for that increase, though, might be a bit surprising. To illustrate this, I’ve come up with four reasons for vacancies: A legislator has resigned for ostensibly non-political reasons; a legislator has died; a legislator assumed another elected office and had to vacate their seat in order to serve; the legislator left for other political reasons, such as being appointed to a non-elected post by the governor (either a state agency job or judicial appointment).



Rep. David Ober is the latest to resign a seat, opening up a caucus in HD82 tonight where David Abbott of Rome City is the only candidate filed.

Most probably assume (as do some of the people interviewed in Kelly's 2013 piece) that the caucus process incentivizes partisans to leave their seat early to ensure someone of the same party replaces them as an incumbent at the next election. If that were the case, though, you would expect the number of ostensibly non-political resignations to increase along with the overall vacancy rate.

But the data doesn't bear that out and in fact shows the exact opposite trend: In the pre-caucus era, there were about 2.26 resignations of this sort per biennium, but only 1.73 since (a 23% decrease). Similarly, I've noted in past pieces that the average length of service has dramatically increased since 1970, so it might be reasonable to assume that more legislators are dying in office as they are serving longer. But again, the data doesn't bear that out; legislative deaths barely rose at all, going from 1.13 to 1.28 per biennium.

What has changed, however, is an explosion in the number of legislators assuming other elected offices. Prior to 1972, vacancies for this reason happened an average of .05 times per biennium (once every 40 years) to 1.2 per biennium. While less exaggerated, the number of gubernatorial appointments to non-elected posts has driven up vacancies for other political reasons from .15 per biennium to .58 per biennium.

It's worth noting, however, that those numbers can be slightly misleading. While 27 vacancies have been created by a member assuming another elected office, 12 of those were from House members winning caucuses for Senate vacancies (and 10 of those 12 first came into the General Assembly at the ballot box; only Sens. Dennis Kruse and Vanetta Becker have gone into both chambers initially by caucus).

So rather than members leaving the General Assembly for greener pastures, members simply switching chambers is the most common reason for this sort of vacancy. Only six were vacated by members heading to

Congress; five from members winning local elections; two from members being elected lieutenant governor; and two from members being appointed to statewide office.

And so with all of that background out of the way, here's where things stand today: When the special session convenes on May 14, there will be 29 legislators serving who first came into their current office via caucus (19.3%), essentially identical to the numbers Kelly found five years ago.

But while eight in 2013 won caucuses as a result of death, only three are serving today after a death-related caucus. Additionally, three more had to win a general election before serving in a legislative session, and another three had previously won general elections in the House before moving to their current seat in the Senate. That leaves 20 seats (about 13%) that were vacated by resignation and initially filled by someone who hadn't yet faced voters in a legislative election.

In opting for caucuses instead of special elections 45 years ago, the General Assembly essentially determined that expediency was the most important factor in determining how vacancies were filled. From that perspective, they achieved their goal; the average length of vacancy has been cut down more than ten-fold, and it isn't clear that we'd have that many fewer vacancies under a special elections system.

For instance, the 4.8 seats per biennium that are currently vacated translates into a 3.2% vacancy rate; the U.S. House, which does require special elections to fill vacancies, is in roughly the same spot with a 2.5% vacancy rate over the last six Congresses. Ultimately, then, this becomes a question of governing philosophy that I'll leave you to determine for yourself. ❖

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more checks to protect his already seismic investment.

Rokita reported \$425,532 during the first quarter and \$1.865 million cash on hand, while Messer reported \$389,000 with \$1.86 million cash on hand. But the two congressmen can't spend all of that, as some of it is general election money. Of the two, Rokita's late media buys have been light, suggesting he faces a real cash crunch. Braun is likely to up his totals even further in the final week. The notion that he's

already invested \$5.5 million means he's likely to protect that investment with another \$1 million or \$2 million to achieve victory. Messer and Rokita simply don't have the same deep pockets.

In the latest competitive TV ad buy data set, Messer has purchased 306 gross rating points in Fort Wayne broadcast (\$26,045), 674 points in Indianapolis (\$151,005), 302 points in Louisville (\$36,220); and 276 in South Bend/Elkhart (\$20,680) for the week of April 24-30. For the final week, Messer has 467 points in Fort Wayne (\$39,725), 674 points in Indianapolis (\$155,005), 302 points in Louisville



(\$36,220) and 467 in South Bend/Elkhart (\$36,035.

Rokita has purchased 5,967 gross rating points in broadcast TV this week, including 919 points in Indianapolis (\$117,754), 670 points in South Bend/Elkhart (\$26,886), 1,275 in Fort Wayne (\$47,574) and 730 in Terre Haute (\$12,068). For the final week, Rokita's buy dwindles to just 612 GRP, with 185 points in Fort Wayne (\$6,939), 136 in Indianapolis (\$17,286) and less than \$10,000 in three other markets. Rokita has purchased no radio in the final two weeks. Clearly, Rokita's campaign is running on fumes.

However, the Rokita campaign released a [children's book](#) aimed at Messer on Wednesday.

Braun's final week is far off from previous weeks. He has purchased just 786 points in seven markets, with the biggest \$13,000 in Indianapolis broadcast and \$5,000 in Fort Wayne.

Worth noting is that the campaigns may be buying by the day in the final weeks, keeping their cards close to the vest. The fact that Braun's buy is currently light may be because he realizes people are deciding late, and could be poised to bury the C-Men with a late buy, perhaps day by day.

So why isn't this "Leans Braun" in HPI Horse Race parlance? Because while Braun will be traveling with his Messer and Rokita cardboard cutouts across the state in the final days, building on the most successful TV ad of the 2018 cycle nationwide, he doesn't appear to have a corresponding ground game. We believe that both Messer and Rokita have more ground resources.

Messer has gotten aggressive with his TV ads against Braun, trying to portray the Jasper businessman as a tax-hiker and career politician. While Braun may have far more financial resources, we're not sure how durable his key attributes will be when they come under fire. The perceptions of him are likely soft and potentially could pop under a withering line of attack.

And what is Messer's closing argument? During Monday night's debate, the refrain that kept popping up was a mealy-mouthed "I am who I say I am." That is not nearly as convincing an argument as Todd Young's "Semper Fi" Marine persona.

The final weeks of the campaign have thrown curve balls at both the C-men. For Messer, it was the IndyStar's reporting of his two DUIs coming before he replaced State Rep. Roland Stine, who was killed by a drunk driver. That's a messy story line. Rokita attempted to make this an issue at the Fort Wayne debate, while Messer's retort was, "So many attacks and so little time."

Messer denied that he kept his DUI arrests quiet. "We're going to continue to be clear about what occurred. Again, I'm very sorry about what occurred 23 and 28 years ago," Messer told WIBC, saying that information of his arrests was made public in the Shelbyville News nearly a decade ago. "Other campaigns have tried to use this



unsuccessfully in the past and I think this is going to be unsuccessful, too. Clearly, the folks I'm running against would rather talk about my past than talk about our state's future."

Having to go there is not a good way to enter the homestretch.

Rokita's embarrassment was the rebuke from President Trump's reelection campaign to cease and desist using yard signs proclaiming the endorsement of "Trump/Pence 2016 leadership team" (See related article on page 7). Messer giggered Rokita on Monday night for that the controversy, saying, "Mr. Rokita runs around the state in a MAGA hat and the Trump campaign has asked him to take his yard signs down." But a light TV audience watched that debate and it hardly resulted in headlines that can secure votes.

Rokita may have other troubles brewing. WIBC talk host Rob Kendall has been relentless of his criticism of Rokita after the congressman initially said he would duck two debates. Kendall, who appears on several WIBC shows, is suggesting that Rokita may have been using congressional office personnel on his campaign. Kendall tweeted, "Odd that Nathan Brand, the very terrible spokesperson for @ToddRokitaIN CAMPAIGN was on the GOVERNMENT payroll as of December 31. Interesting, considering I was getting CAMPAIGN emails with his name on them during this time."

Kendall pointed out that Brand was receiving \$2,666 in salary during the pay period of Dec. 11-31, 2017. Over the weekend, Kendall tweeted: "Will someone please tell this moron that actual 'Hoosier Trumpers' want nothing to do with @ToddRokitaIN because a.) he's a disingenuous windbag and b.) we don't want Trump having to work with @SenDonnelly for 6 more years! "

That's the kind of coverage Rokita is getting on conservative talk radio down the homestretch.

The \$5 million Braun has loaned his campaign along with his paid media advantage suggests he's in the best position to pull this off. A highly informed and reliable 3rd CD source tells HPI that Braun had a lead in polling in State Sen. Travis Holdman's SD19. The source added, "I've got to think that's indicative of the 3rd District."

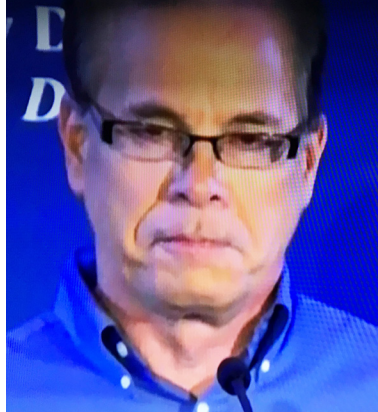
The notion that Braun is running strong in Northeast Indiana corresponds with the 8,043 gross rating points he had in the Fort Wayne broadcast market as of last week, compared to 1,905 for Messer and 1,824 for Rokita. Braun has also spent \$74,185 on Fort Wayne radio compared to \$26,565 for Rokita and \$4,375 for Messer.

When you add up the money advantage, the access to more resources that Messer and Rokita don't have, a more consistent brand message, and his clear advantage in gross rating points, the tell tales suggest Braun is in the best position to win this primary.

However, his lack of a ground game, light early voting and the large pool of undecided voters suggest that Braun is still away off from locking this up. **Republican Primary Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

Rokita, Messer diverge in Lugar Index

Messer and Rokita, once virtual mirror images of each other when it comes to votes, have parted ways, according to the new Lugar Center Bipartisan Index. In past Congresses, Messer and Rokita have tracked pretty close to one another. But in 2017 Messer jumped from 309 in the House to 137, earning a score above 0.00 (which is considered to be bipartisan). Rokita, meanwhile, fell from 278 to 350. Sen. Joe Donnelly ranks fourth. His score is similar to last time, but a couple of Republicans jumped over him.



all available tools. We need a Secretary of State who will give the president an honest assessment on critical issues, including Russia, Syria, and the defeat of ISIS. I believe Director Pompeo is capable of advancing U.S. interests and leading the State Department, and I will support his nomination."

Donnelly met with Pompeo on April 10 to discuss the confirmation. He follows Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, both of whom are facing tough reelection battles, in backing Pompeo, who was expected to lose a Foreign Relations Committee vote for confirmation. The confirmation is crucial as Pompeo met with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to help President Trump prepare for his summit.

Donnelly OKs Pompeo

Sen. Donnelly will be one of at least three Democrats to vote to confirm CIA Director Mike Pompeo as secretary of state (Howey Politics Indiana). "When I met with Director Pompeo, we had a productive conversation about the complex security challenges we face, including the dangerous threat posed by North Korea's nuclear missile program," Donnelly said in a statement on Monday. "I strongly believe that a successful, peaceful outcome will require a comprehensive strategy and a full team on the field, including an effective State Department, to leverage

Donnelly critical of Dem lawsuit

Donnelly criticized Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez for a lawsuit alleging a grand Russia-WikiLeaks-Trump conspiracy. "When Joe travels around the state to listen to Hoosiers' concerns, he hears about the need for more good-paying jobs, protecting access to affordable healthcare and addressing the opioid crisis," Joe for Indiana communications director, Will Baskin-Gerwitz, tells the Washington Examiner. "He doesn't hear about the DNC suing Russia and the Trump campaign." ❖

A choice between two cardboard cutouts and a Democrat

By MARK SOUDER

FORT WAYNE – The intense, bitter Indiana Republican primary for the United States Senate nomination has apparently come down to a choice between one of the cardboard cutouts or a Democrat.



Or perhaps one of the Swamp Brothers.

Given these choices, combined with Trump successfully dominating everyone's daily lives and general lack of interest in any other politics, it is not surprising that in spite of being inundated with advertising of all types, an extraordinary number of likely voters remain undecided. Furthermore, I personally

think the undecided vote is understated. There is a new type of undecided – the weekly switcher. From people I talk to, and as indicated by erratic polling, voters are still going back and forth among the options.

One reason is that voters believe that politicians won't tell the truth about themselves and the media is so biased that it is untrustworthy. Only the negative ads tell the truth and thus everybody must be terrible.

First let's discuss the cardboard cutouts. Unfortunately for them, the two congressmen are about the same age, look vaguely similar, went to Wabash College, have blonde wives and nice families, and nearly identical voting records. It is no shock that Braun's cardboard cutouts ad worked as a concept.

The two congressmen have reinforced that image, not with their votes in Congress, but by the behavior of their campaigns. They made it personal, not policy-based. The leaks about Rokita possibly misusing the Republican database, presumably from Messer supporters, should have been resolved or dropped long before now. The charges perhaps give some insight into character the of both campaigns, as does the attempt to smear Rokita with a leaked memo about his tendency to control details.

Similarly, debating Luke Messer's long ago DUIs,

and his allegedly concealing one before a nominating caucus that put him in office for the first time, also potentially gives an insight into the character of both campaigns. "These guys," as Mike Braun personally calls them, are far too often acting like the cardboard cutouts or swamp creatures they are alleged to be.

Then there is the dust-up about Rokita's Trump-Pence signs. They are designed to look like an endorsement by Trump-Pence though they correctly say the endorsement is by his Indiana campaign leaders, though in small print that you may or may not notice. Trump's campaign, for a variety of reasons that certainly included some strong-arming from the other campaigns, said they should be removed. Rokita's campaign responded with a television ad that attempted to clarify who actually made the endorsement. That ad has been reinforced by Messer's highlighting it. The more they complain, to this point, the more it reminds voters that the Indiana Trump leaders back Rokita.

While it was not appropriate to mislead that deliberately, that tactic is being used by Messer as well. In the debate, for example, Messer slyly said that he coached his son's basketball team like other Hoosier dads. Except he's a Virginia dad coaching Virginia players, which is a deliberate attempt to mislead. And it is so much like Evan Bayh shooting hoops with his Virginia boys that it is an eerie Indiana reminder of a losing campaign. The point here is that Messer often does exactly the same things as Rokita, only in a more polished way. Rokita uses boxing gloves and "Make America Great Again" baseball caps when he does it.

Every sign indicates that Braun is taking away votes from both of them. The larger the turnout, the better for Braun. Braun, in fact, has the best chance for a sizeable victory. But then there is the Democrat thing.

Braun has offered no compelling reason for his party switch. It wasn't about Donald Trump because Braun switched parties to run for the state legislature. He won't answer whether he voted for Obama or Hillary. He associated himself with the gun control, pro-abortion, big government party for his entire life before he ran for the General Assembly. Thus, many Republicans decide to vote for Braun, then pause. When



Mike Braun will be touring the state with his cardboard opponents.

Braun says that Rokita and Messer vote the same way 95% of the time, as if that is bad, is he saying that his support of conservative Republican principles would be less than 95%? Is he saying that he will break ranks in a potentially 50-50 split Senate more often? On what issues will he defy the president, who has been supported on almost every vote by Rokita and Messer?

Braun's gimmick, equally as deceptive as anything Rokita or Messer has done or said, is to act like any one individual is going to change the fundamental votes. And picking a couple of issues such as fast track (which actually is what gives the president the authority to do what Braun says he wants to give the president, which apparently Braun doesn't understand) or the budget (which Trump supported and then gave himself political cover by whining about it, something that apparently Braun doesn't understand either) is not the point.

There are at least 300 votes per year. Will Braun support the president and the GOP 95% of the time and become, by his definition, a Swamp Brother or a cardboard twin, or not? If we want a bipartisan senator who votes with Democrats, we already have Joe Donnelly.

This dilemma – "I want change but not another Democrat who says he agrees with me but doesn't" – is why this race is likely to remain fluid until the end. ❖

Souder is a former Republican congressman from Indiana



CONTENT BY CARTER
strategic content creation and deployment

Early and Samuel say Rokita was steadfast

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The rebuke had a sting to it. Here was President Trump’s reelection campaign telling Todd Rokita’s U.S. Senate team to pull yard signs highlighting the “Trump/Pence 2016 Leadership Team” endorsement.”

“We gave them a heads up,” said Tony Samuel, vice chair of the 2016 Trump Indiana campaign, as Rex Early sat across the table Tuesday at the Antelope Club. They had endorsed Rokita, but not as the Trump campaign. “We were speaking only for us as private citizens,” Samuel said. “We made it clear we were not speaking for the president. We didn’t get any push back.”

So, what happened? How did the Trump reelection campaign, headed by John Pence, nephew of the vice president, demand that the signs be pulled?

That would be pressure from the Luke Messer Senate campaign. “It’s the Messer folks who put on the heat,” Samuel said.

The dust-up resulted in an IndyStar story and then a line in Monday night’s debate in Fort Wayne, with Messer saying, “Mr. Rokita runs around the state with a MAGA hat on and the Trump campaign has asked him to take his yard signs down.”

All of which galls both Samuel and Early. “Luke called both of us asking for our support,” Early said.

Samuel said the pair decided to back Rokita. “Todd was the guy who called us and did what we asked him to do.”

In the race to be Trumpiest, Early and Samuel say that Messer disqualified himself on a number of occasions when it looked like Donald Trump would lose the 2016 presidential race. There was the “Behind Closed Doors” quote from June 12, 2016, when Messer talked of the presumptive nominee, saying, “I think one of the real unknowns of the upcoming campaign is, does Donald Trump really have some sort of strange personal tic where he can’t control his comments? Or is he an adult? Is he a leader? Is he somebody who can control his tongue and focus on the real challenges of the American people?”

There was a May 7, 2016, IndyStar article where Messer said, “As a husband, a father of two daughters, and the son of a single-parent mother, I’m offended by much of Trump’s rhetoric on women. As an American, I am offended by much of his rhetoric on race.”

When the Access Hollywood tape surfaced, Messer told the Muncie Star Press on Oct. 9, 2016, that Trump had a whole lot of explaining to do. “Donald Trump’s words were wrong. Period. He must know they were

wrong because he quickly apologized ... a rare occurrence in Trump world. My hope is he will do more to explain how he may have changed in the 10 years since these disturbing and disrespectful comments were made.”

On Oct. 27, 2016, Messer told the Connersville News-Examiner, “There are a whole lot of things Mr. Trump has said I can’t defend. I won’t even try to defend them.”

Messer’s take on Trump might play better in a general election race against Sen. Joe Donnelly, but all three GOP Senate campaigns are attempting to woo the Trump voter and their devotion to the president is complete these days.

The Rokita campaign also claims that Mike Braun was late to the Trump show, though the Braun campaign produced a photo of the candidate attending one of the Early/Samuel town hall meetings in 2016. Early and Samuel didn’t recall Braun being there.

Early and Samuel point to Rokita, who origi-



nally backed Sen. Marco Rubio for president, for being a staunch defender of Trump once he secured the nomination. After his first debate with Hillary Clinton, Rokita called Trump “a change agent” on WIBC on Sept. 27, 2016. “Everywhere I’m going around Indiana, we’re ready for a change agent and that was Donald Trump last night,” Rokita said.

Rokita added, “What impressed me the most about last night is that Donald Trump took command of the stage and I think the American people saw his leadership qualities and I think that’s why you’re going to see momentum continue to grow in this campaign.”

Of course, Rokita told Fox59 that he felt candidate Trump was “vulgar and profane.” But that was well before Trump won the nomination, then chose Gov. Mike Pence as his running mate. Since the Trump/Pence ticket emerged, Rokita, Samuel says, became a believer.

In the minds of the Trump/Pence leadership team in Indiana, Messer has long been a critic; Rokita the defender. ❖

The 'It's 1955 again' debate

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – Few people realized in advance that the Indiana GOP Senate debate was going to be “retro” and not in a good way. If you did not realize that the seven participants questioning the candidates were all white males in suits interviewing three white males in suits, then you have a male chauvinism problem. That includes women who weren’t immediately jarred by the scene.

It was 1955 all over again. Somehow two Fort Wayne television stations, two Indianapolis television stations, two Fort Wayne daily newspapers and the largest radio station in Fort Wayne all managed to send males to represent their media outlet.

The first debate featured few questions of interests to voters who were actually planning to vote in the Republican primary and thus resulted in uniform policy answers interspersed with personal sniping. But at least it was clear WISH-TV was in charge. Who was in charge in Fort Wayne? It was held at the Allen County Lincoln Day Dinner with contributions to the Republican Party a requirement for voters to attend the debate. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as you acknowledge it is a Republican held and sponsored debate.

WPTA-TV was the “host” television station and carried the first hour of the debate live. They carried the last hour online. So, did they select the panelists, perhaps by sending a memo “men only”? Likely not, it is hard to imagine GM Merry Ewing ever clearing such a fiasco.

Pat Miller, host of WOWO radio’s afternoon drive talk show, was the referee who moderated the debate. It’s doubtful he chose the panelists even though WOWO aired the debate.

The publisher and owner of the Journal-Gazette is Julie Inskip. The editor is Sherry Skufca and the editorial page editor is Karen Francisco. It is doubtful they said “let’s go back to when women weren’t allowed on television” without a puppet (in 1955 they weren’t yet even up to cooking shows).

Helene Foellinger was the power that built the News-Sentinel. It deserves a pass for joining in the exclusive male club for two reasons: They don’t have much

staff anymore and Kevin Leininger was the only person in either debate to consistently ask good questions that Republicans, who are the constituency in a Republican primary, cared about. That is important. Seriously, a question about whether Mexico was going to pay for the wall? I heard there might be one Republican in LaPorte County who cares about that. Or, do you believe teachers should be allowed to carry a gun in school? Was that the 96th or 97th time they each gave exactly the same answer. They should have brought a tape recorder and just played previous answers for many of the questions. It could have preserved their vocal chords. So Leininger gets a pass.

WANE-TV television has numerous experienced female anchors, and presumably so do the two Indianapolis television stations.

Was the media deliberately trying to embarrass



the Republican Party by sending all males? Did they assume only males cared?

Conspiracy theories require organization. Frankly, I don’t think the press is that organized.

Presumably the Allen County Republican Party saw the list of journalists since its banners were displayed behind the candidates and it was the financial beneficiary. Steve Shine had to have delegated it because he has, wisely, been obsessed with showing diversity in the Republican Party.

Ultimately, I presume that nobody was actually in charge. It was embarrassing to this state’s reputation with many national journalists here, it was embarrassing for this state’s media organizations, embarrassing for Fort Wayne, and certainly embarrassing for the Allen County Republican Party upon whom it reflects.

The fact that all the media, every one of them, chose a male and no one who saw the list objected is a sad commentary. Not malicious, but still troubling especially since there is nothing even remotely like an argument on merit being the criterion that can be made. ❖

Greg Pence's business dealings scrutinized

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – National reporters are beginning to examine the Pence family finances. Mike Tackett of the New York Times (and an Indiana University grad) was the first to take a look at 6th CD Republican Greg Pence, who has been running an air war, but does not engage on other key levels. At least two books are in the works about Vice President Mike Pence, one by Associated Press reporter Tom LoBianco and another by Pulitzer Prize winner Michael D'Antonio, who has also written a biography on Donald Trump prior to his presidency.

Greg Pence is seeking to take over the 6th CD that his brother represented for 12 years prior to his run for governor in 2012. Greg Pence won't debate or release a public schedule and he doesn't like to talk to the press. On the day HPI was to travel with Pence and Luke Messer, Pence abruptly couldn't make it.

The New York Times delved into the Pence finances: "Mr. Pence signed ... a guarantee in 2001, records show, promising to repay any outstanding debts from his personal assets if the need arose. Three years later, it did; the company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, facing \$100 million in claims from creditors. At the next regular board meeting of the bank, with the officials seated around a wooden conference table, Mr. Pence told them about the bankruptcy and said he would not be able to honor his personal guarantee to repay company loans." The NYT reports that Pence was president of a convenience store chain that went bankrupt due to environmental damage caused by leaky underground storage tanks. A local bank, where he also served on the board of directors, was forced to sue him to recover \$3.8 million in debts that he had personally guaranteed, only to have to settle for pennies on the dollar."

Primary opponent Jonathan Lamb, the Muncie businessman who is mostly self-funding his campaign, is picking up on the Pence business controversies. In a fundraising appeal on Monday, Lamb explained, "Rich

donors, special interest groups, lobbyists and PACs from outside of OUR District are pouring money in this race to support my opponent. Just take a look at these articles in the New York Times and Newsweek that shed light on my opponent's 'thorny past' business dealings, which led to \$8.4 million in penalties by the State of Indiana. He sat on a board of directors at a local bank that later sued him to recover \$3.8 million after his company left creditors with more than \$100 million in debt. Is this really who we need in Washington? I refuse to believe the status quo is good enough."

Pence was late to enter this race, essentially freezing out State Sen. Jean Leising. State Sen. Mike Crider did enter the race, but withdrew after Pence froze his fundraising ability. Our 6th CD intel tells us that in the district's population heavyweight of Hancock County, a number of Republicans and Crider supporters are not enthusiastic about Pence's clandestine (other than TV ads) candidacy. They believe that Pence is taking advantage of his brother's status. A number of them are taking a hard look at Lamb, a Muncie businessman, several sources tell HPI.

Last month when we traveled with Senate candidate Mike Braun, Lamb teamed up and their event in Greenfield drew Crider and State Rep. Bob Cherry, who did not endorse. But the fact that they were there was interesting.

Pence released his third TV ad called "Keeping My Oath." The campaign said, "Greg Pence will fight alongside President Trump and the administration to take care of our military members, both during and after their service." Pence served as a Marine Corps officer during the Beirut conflict.

A Lamb upset of Pence would be a true stunner. We still expect Pence to prevail, in large part because the Pence brand is so strong in the 6th CD, particularly outside of Hancock County. But there are cracks in his business facade and campaign MO that were not evident a couple months ago. **Republican Primary Horse Race Status:** Leans Pence.

2nd CD: Hall has money lead

As the May 8 Primary Election nears, candidates are gearing up for the final push to get their names and messages out to voters (Parrott, South Bend Tribune). Cash on hand typically makes that mission easier, especially for the purchase of TV ads. And in the Democratic primary for the 2nd Congressional District, Mel Hall as of March 31 had nearly \$445,000 in cash, after spending was subtracted from receipts, according to the most recent campaign finance reports. That was compared to roughly \$88,300 for Yatish Joshi and \$25,000 for Pat Hackett. The three candidates are vying for the right to battle Republican incumbent Jackie Walorski in the fall. Despite trailing in total cash, Hackett urged Democratic voters to take a deeper look at the numbers. **Democratic Primary Horse Race Status:** Likely Hall.



3rd CD: Ellis, Hickman endorse Tritch

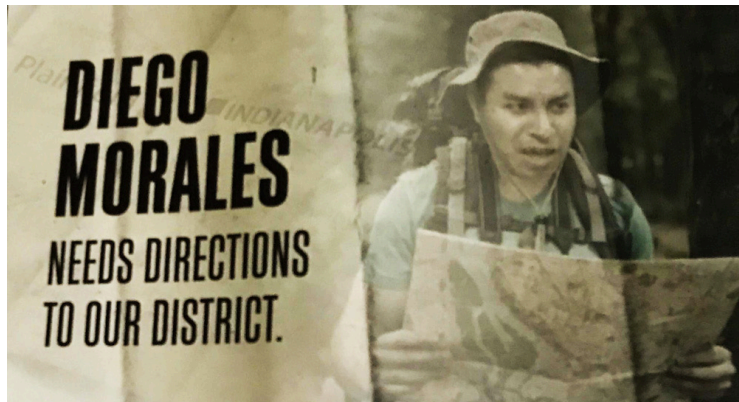
Angola Mayor Richard Hickman endorsed Courtney Tritch for Congress. "I've known Courtney for several years, and I've always been impressed by her intelligence, work ethic and drive to bring people together," said Hickman. "She will bring a fresh and much-needed perspective to the U.S. House of Representatives. I look forward to working with her to strengthen and grow Angola and all of northeast Indiana." Bluffton Mayor Ted Ellis endorsed Tritch, a candidate for the Democratic nomination in northeast. Ellis, a Democrat, said in a statement that Tritch "is known throughout the region for her tenacity, knowledge, and ability to work with all people." **Democratic Primary Horse Race Status:** Safe Tritch.

4th CD: Redlining Diego Morales

A PAC mailer is taking aim at 4th CD Republican candidate Diego Morales with a portrayal some might interpret as an "illegal immigrant." Except that Morales emigrated from Guatemala legally. The Citizens for a Strong America PAC shows a photo of Morales reading a map, with the headline reading, "Diego Morales needs directions to our district." It claims he lives in "a house on the other side of Indianapolis."

The irony here is that Steve Braun, thought to be the source of the information, also lives outside the 4th CD in Zionsville. So, maps for all! The press has been sent paperwork emanating from Secretary of State Todd Rokita's office in 2008-09 and Secretary of State Charlie White in 2011

revealing disciplinary action for Morales, citing "performance deficiencies" and letters of "disciplinary action" that resulted in Morales departing twice. So, the 4th CD GOP campaign has gotten... ugly. The Farm Bureau Elect PAC endorsed Morales and Democrat Tobi Beck. **Republican Primary Horse Race Status:** Leans Braun. **Democratic Primary Horse Race Status:** Likely Beck.



8th CD: Moss calls Bucshon a 'liberal'

U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon supports President Donald Trump 98.6 percent of the time, says an analysis of congressional votes by FiveThirtyEight (Langhorne, Evansville Courier & Press). Bucshon says that makes him a conservative. But Republican primary opponent Richard Moss uses other numerical analyses of Bucshon's votes to call him "Liberal Larry" – and liberals don't like Trump, well, at all. Bucshon "isn't really Pro Trump," a recent Moss mailer declared. Bucshon counters by trumpeting the FiveThirtyEight analysis. Larry Bucshon – Trump acolyte

or Liberal Larry? They can't both be true. Welcome to the highly selective, super-subjective, entirely arbitrary world of congressional scorekeeping by political advocacy groups. **Republican Primary Horse Race Status:** Safe Bucshon.

9th CD: Watson begins TV ads

The Liz Watson for Indiana Campaign has released the first ad of the 2018 cycle, entitled '5', which references Liz Watson being a 5th generation Hoosier. The ad, which begins airing Monday night, will run until May 8 and is being aired in the Indianapolis broadcast market and cable across the district. Additional TV/digital spending is possible. She faces New Albany attorney Dan Canon. "Liz has a great story to tell, and this ad not only tells that story but contrasts her experience fighting for Hoosier Families to Trey Hollingsworth's embarrassing record of catering only to the one percent," said Brian Peters, the Liz for Indiana campaign manager. Liz Watson again out-raised Congressman Hollingsworth in the first three months of the year, for the third quarter in a row, reflecting a groundswell of support for her insurgent campaign. **Democratic Primary Horse Race Status:** Likely Watson.

Billboards assail Hollingsworth

An advocacy group called Not One Penny has unveiled billboards in 30 congressional districts criticizing Republican lawmakers, including U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks, R-Carmel, and U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth, R-Jeffersonville, for their support of tax cut legislation passed late last year (Fitzgerald, Statehouse

File). "There are a lot of different moving pieces about the bill that we find really bad," said Tim Hogan, spokesperson for Not One Penny. "For one, members of Congress who promoted and voted for President Donald Trump's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act stand to benefit substantially from the pass-through tax break, according to a new analysis by the Center for American Progress Action Fund.

General Assembly

Legislative financial data lagging

Howey Politics Indiana wanted to bring you updated pre-primary campaign finance data this week, but the Secretary of State's Elections Division tells us the data won't be posted until May 4, just four days prior to the primary. That's a significant delay ... in the digital age.

HD3: Hatcher, Renslow at forum

The two young women contesting the 3rd District state representative seat both offered their progressive

Democratic credentials on Wednesday for the predominately Miller Community residents at a candidate forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters of the Calumet Area ([NWI Times](#)). Ragen Hatcher and Jessica Renslow offered their support for public education, protecting undocumented immigrants, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer, or LGBTQ, community, equal pay for women, tough environmental regulations and medical marijuana. One question from the audience was, "You are both strong, committed women, why should I support you over your opponent?" They were hard pressed to define the differences between them, beyond those of different career paths leading them to Temple Israel to discuss their goals. **Democratic primary Status:** Likely Hatcher.

HD82: Abbott only caucus candidate

One candidate, David Abbott of Rome City, has filed to fill the remainder of former State Representative David Ober's term, according to the Indiana Republican Party. The caucus will be held at 7 p.m. today at Blessed Sacrament Church located at 2290 N. State Road 9, Albion. Doors open at 6 p.m. ET. A Facebook live stream will be available for members of the public.

HD26: Siegrist announces reelection

State Rep. Sally Siegrist announced her run for

reelection on Monday (WLFI). She replaced Randy Truitt in 2016 and since then she has focused on passing bills in support of students. If reelected, she plans to focus on the prevention of human trafficking.



SD29: Meyer v. Delph profiled

Republican challenger Corrie Meyer has begun running attack ads against State Sen. Mike Delph. WRTV profiles the race, which you can watch by [clicking here](#). It's also one of the few districts in the state where

Hillary Clinton out-pollled President Trump. **Republican Primary Horse Race Status:** Likely Delph.

Local

Fort Wayne Mayor: Crawford announces

Fort Wayne has its first official candidate for mayor in next year's city elections (Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). City Councilman John Crawford said he'll reveal more about his campaign during a news conference May 15 at Republican Headquarters. Crawford is the first candidate to officially throw his hat in the ring in next year's elections. Another Republican, Tim Smith, is also considering a run. ❖

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Walorski will be no easy blue wave target

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – A blue wave is forecast for November. That’s a safe political prediction – kind of like forecasting that it will snow in South Bend in December.

But we don’t know for sure the accumulated inches of early-winter December snow. Nor do we know if that Democratic wave will be strong enough to sweep away Republican control of the U.S. House when voters go to the polls in November.



Enthusiastic supporters of the three candidates with serious bids for the Democratic congressional nomination in Indiana’s 2nd District talk confidently of a powerful wave, set in motion by an unpopular President Trump, sweeping away Republican Congresswoman Jackie Walorski.

And if Walorski, who won so big in 2016 in the 2nd, a district Trump carried by 20 percentage points, is upset? It would be part of a blue wave nationally likely to bring Democratic control of the House.

Those enthusiastic Democrats of course talk mainly to each other. They’re not a majority of the voters in the 2nd District, drawn in Republican-controlled redistricting with a strong GOP advantage. Walorski in ‘16 carried nine of the 10 counties in the district and came very close in St. Joseph County, the most Democratic county.

The eventual Democratic nominee is likely to be Mel Hall, who has a superior organization and effective TV messages and districtwide mailings. But Pat Hackett challenges from the party’s progressive wing and counts on dedicated volunteers. And Yatish Joshi challenges with clever wit and by more than matching Hall’s own personal campaign contributions.

The Democratic primary winner will need in the general election to make inroads with Republicans and convince a large percentage of independents in order to take advantage of any wave and win.

After winning three terms, the last one so impressively, Walorski is no easy target. She has developed a softened, more pleasing image for voters from when she first ran. Democrats in St. Joseph County may still describe her with derogatory nicknames from her time in the state legislature and recall her self-proclaimed “pit-bull”

political style. But many voters in the district now think of her as “that nice lady who cares so much for veterans.”

The Democratic nominee will need to focus on votes by Walorski on dismantling the Affordable Care Act and on the Republican tax plan, a sure fall issue everywhere, with Democrats criticizing and Republicans defending its provisions for middle-class Americans.

President Trump, though not on the ballot, still will be a huge presence. The Democratic congressional challenger will be advised by party strategists to avoid basing the campaign on attacking Trump. Democratic winners in recent special elections have avoided personal attacks on the president and stressed issues important in their areas. That advice seems especially relevant in the 2nd District.

One of the campaigns found in polling that approval/disapproval for Trump in the district was about 50-50 in mid-February. Since then, national polls show Trump edging up from his worst approval ratings and prospects for a powerful blue wave declining.

A Washington Post-ABC News poll released last week showed Trump’s approval at 40%, low but up 4 percentage points since January. It also found only a 4% margin for Democrats over Republicans for Congress, a drop from the 12-point advantage in January.

Republican strategists advise GOP nominees in districts that Trump carried to portray the election as a referendum on impeachment, claim that the Democratic opponent would seek to impeach Trump to void their votes in 2016.

Nobody can predict what startling events could come before Nov. 6, Election Day. Will the president’s approval rating continue to tick up or plummet?

There will be a blue wave. How big? While polls show narrowing of the Democratic advantage in preference for congressional control, they also show Democrats far more enthusiastic about voting. After primary nomination battles, however, will Democrats really be united and determined to vote in the fall? Enthusiasm in November, like total December snowfall, is hard to predict.

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





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Most voters exhausted by juvenile tactics

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO – I don't know about you but I'm good and ready for this Republican primary season to be over. Most voters are now exhausted from the juvenile tactics and back-and-forth playground name-calling of some of our illustrious federal candidates.



I suppose we should have expected it after candidate Donald Trump decimated a 17-candidate Republican primary field to take the GOP nomination for president back in 2016. Like chimps in a zoo playing monkey see, monkey do, the Indiana U.S. Senate race has devolved into a mess of ugly shenanigans and uglier rhetoric with the monkeys throwing poo at anyone who cares to watch.

Don't get me wrong. It is perfectly reasonable and helpful to the political process for Republican candidates to point out the philosophical policy differences and, in some cases, the personal flaws of their opponents. However, the temperature of the U.S. Senate race has risen to unreasonable levels in the waning days of the season.

This race was bound to get nasty from the start. Two congressmen, Luke Messer and Todd Rokita, were willing to cast their fortunes to the wind and gamble their political careers on a high stakes roll of the dice. They were joined by a legislative neophyte with a big ego and an even bigger net worth. For those of you who long for the days of gladiator battles in the Coliseum, well you could grab your popcorn and wait for the blood to freely flow. Joe Donnelly and the Indiana Democrats grabbed all of the good front row seats to see who might eventually emerge from battle and limp into the general election contest.

To say the Senate primary has been ugly would be an understatement. First, operatives of Todd Rokita floated stories through the AP that, horror of horrors, Luke Messer's wife, Jennifer, did highly compensated legal work for the City of Fishers. No big deal here. Hourly pay in line with the industry standards, successfully completed. That being said, by the time the AP breathlessly reported the story, it looked to Joe Sixpack like there was some nefarious milking of the Fishers' taxpayers.

Then followed the inevitable Rokita-planted story that Luke Messer didn't even live in Indiana. Tar him with

the Dick Lugar brush! Never mind that Messer bought a home and titled it in his and his mother's name right here in the Hoosier State and that Luke's favorite pair of PJs are sitting on the nightstand for when he makes his frequent trips back home.

Shortly after this barrage of mud was launched, the attack on Mike Braun began. This attack was not without some merit, but not for the reasons that it was aimed at Braun. Braun was painted as someone who had voted for either Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama in 2008. How do we know this? Primary voting records show that Braun pulled a Democrat ballot in 2008 and the assumption is that he did it to either vote for Clinton or Obama. What we really know for sure is that he pulled a Democrat ballot. That's it. My best guess is that Mr. Braun fell victim to the siren song of Rush Limbaugh and voted in the Democrat primary in order to vote for Barack Obama and upend Clinton's inevitable march to the White House. How'd that work out for you, Mike?

I'm not particularly troubled by Braun pulling a Democrat ballot. I know from personal experience that hundreds of loyal Republicans pulled a Democrat ballot in the 2008 primary at the urging of Limbaugh. The GOP from the county organizations to the state party still wrestle with the aftereffects of that naughty crossover vote. No, I'm not concerned about pulling the Democrat ballot. I'm concerned about the report that Braun failed to vote from 2002 to 2008. What kind of patriotic American, in a time that saw our soldiers fighting around the world, would fail to exercise their patriotic duty? I do have a problem with that.

Braun didn't choose to use his surplus millions on explaining why he didn't vote from 2002 to 2008 or why he pulled the Democrat ballot. He spent his considerable personal bankroll on the beginning of a juvenile ad campaign that persists to this very day. I admit that I like a witty political ad as much as the next guy, but Braun attacking two public servants as being impure while pouring millions into an ad campaign that glosses over the fact that his political dreams married-up a single term in the Indiana legislature and a personal fortune is just a little hard to swallow. Come on now, give me five million dollars and I'll convince you that I'm skinny and have a full head of hair!

Luke Messer has chosen to run as the nice guy in this campaign. Perhaps it is because he is in the leadership of the

House of Representatives and knows that there are no simple fixes to our nation's problems. I'm sure he'd like to grab some easy votes by pandering to the voters' base instincts, but I believe that Messer knows that governing is a lot tougher than spewing absurd political messages and that governing is made infinitely more difficult by a chamber filled with those elected via simplistic thirty-second sound-bites. Despite undisputable conservative creden-



tials, Messer has oddly found himself declared a RINO by the Name-Caller-In-Chief Todd Rokita. Time will tell whether Messer's strategy of staying out of the mud will prove successful or not.

The bad boy of this political cycle has certainly been Todd Rokita. Like an underweight, short-armed boxer, Rokita has come out swinging at anything and anyone from the first bell. One can almost smell an odor of desperation coming from the Rokita camp.

While I've personally been disgusted with the personal attacks on Messer and Braun launched by Rokita, it is the overall theme of the Rokita campaign that troubles me the most. I've always been inspired by those people in government who appeal to our better angels. Inspired people accomplish much in life and in government while those who aim their messages at the demons amongst us tend to fail. History has brought us one despot after another who appealed to our inner fears and prejudices in an effort to achieve their political goals.

It may score you a significant number of primary votes to put on the "Make America Great Again" hat, tote

your assault rifle, pledge your undying allegiance to Donald Trump and promise to build the highest wall ever built after you've thrown all of the undocumented immigrants out of our country, but there is something unseemly and nasty about that message. Where are the thousand points of light and the shining city on a hill?

This Republican Senate primary will be over soon. We'll know the answer to several questions at the conclusion of the first Tuesday in May. Can a mega-rich neophyte essentially buy a nomination? Will the darker vision and politics of personal destruction as practiced by Todd Rokita prevail? Can a capable, nice-guy conservative like Luke Messer succeed in the Trump era? Can Braun, Rokita or Messer survive in the November general election after swimming in the toxic pool that characterized this primary?

Here's one Republican who can't wait for the fratricidal bloodletting to end. Gosh, I sure miss Ronald Reagan! ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County and 4th CD Republican chairman.

Rendering the Gary School Board powerless

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – I tend to agree with state Sen. Eddie Melton, D-Gary, and other city officials that it would be unfair to strip elected Gary school board members of their power. That's what is about to happen when legislators meet in special session May 14 to take up matters that weren't called for a vote on the final day of the regular session that ended in March. The legislation essentially would render the elected school board powerless.



While I feel for Melton and others, Gary school officials have pretty much forced the state to take over. The Gary school board over the last three decades has been the most inept in the state and the election of new board members over the years hasn't resulted in any real positive changes.

The various Gary school boards have run the school system into the ground. Debt has risen to more than \$100 million while school buildings have fallen into disrepair, some without hope of being saved. While debt and disrepair are bad enough, the real problem is the number of personnel employed by the school system. When the city had some 185,000 residents, the school system was admired by others across the county. But as the population plummeted, the number of teachers and staff

hired to run the schools remained virtually the same while the debt mounted. As income dwindled and the payroll stayed the same, less money was put into maintenance.

The common denominator over the years was a succession of school boards unable to make the tough decisions to keep the schools in the black.

After years of warnings and a lack of action on Gary's part, the state hired emergency manager Peggy Hinckley to take over the operation of the schools. She has done a commendable job, and in order to continue the progress, the state doesn't want the school board getting in the way.

Melton and others can call it taxation without representation, but they have no one to blame but themselves. ❖

Rich James has been writing about state and local government and politics for more than 30 years.

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Raising the ceiling on Dem House takeover

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

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – Rep.-elect Debbie Lesko (R, AZ-8)'s victory in a special election Tuesday night fit into the pattern we've seen in other special elections this cycle. In a clearly Republican-leaning seat, Lesko won but ran significantly behind Donald Trump's 2016 presidential performance. Trump won the district by 21 percentage points, whereas Lesko only won by about five points, based on unofficial results. Given the district's strong Republican lineage, we thought any result in the single digits would be bad for Republicans. Lesko should be fine in the fall as an incumbent – and we're moving her district to Safe Republican – but we now have had eight federal special elections this cycle in Trump-won, Republican-held seats (including the Alabama Senate election), and while Republicans have retained six of them, only one of those was an easy hold (UT-3).

Granted, these specials all took place in open seats, and as a general rule open seats are harder to hold than ones held by incumbents. But Republicans are going to be on the defensive all over the country as they try to hold the House this year.

This week, we're adding 10 new districts to our list of competitive seats. We're also making four other ratings changes that make some races already listed in our ratings more competitive.

The most important one of these changes when assessing the likelihood of a House flip comes in New Jersey, where Rep. Leonard Lance (R, NJ-7) is now in a Toss-up race against likely Democratic nominee Tom Malinowski, a former State Department official. Lance represents a very affluent and highly educated district -- NJ-7 is fifth among all 435 districts in median income and is one of the relatively few districts nationally where a majority of residents 25 and older hold at least a four-year college degree. Given Donald Trump's poor performance in similar districts across the country, it is probably no surprise that NJ-7 voted for Hillary Clinton by a point after Mitt Romney won it by six in 2012. In the context of generally strong GOP House results across the country in 2016, Lance's 11-point win over an unheralded challenger was somewhat weak, and Malinowski will be well-funded. The Garden State is a key to Democratic House hopes: NJ-7 joins NJ-11 in the Toss-up column, and the open NJ-2 already Leans Democratic in our ratings. Democrats have seemingly strong candidates in all three districts and they have a good chance to net at least two and quite possibly more seats from the state.

Three other districts move from Likely Republican

to Leans Republican:

- In VA-7, Rep. Dave Brat (R) sprung one of the great upsets in primary history in 2014 when he defeated then-House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R). But Brat's district probably is not as hard right as he is (he's a member of the very conservative House Freedom Caucus), although the district includes rural parts of Central Virginia that in most years would outvote the more Democratic parts of the district in Greater Richmond. Like other suburban districts with higher-than-average education levels, Trump underperformed there, winning by 6.5 points, a few points down from Romney in 2012. In the recent Virginia gubernatorial race, the GOP edge was cut further, as Ed Gillespie (R) carried it by a little under four points. Democrats seem likely to have a credible nominee, either former CIA agent Abigail Spanberger or Marine veteran Dan Ward.

- Staten Island, one of the most conservative urban areas in the country, would seem like the capital of Trump country, and Trump ran close to 15 points ahead of Romney's margin in NY-11, which covers

Staten Island and Brooklyn neighborhoods like Bay Ridge and Bensonhurst. The district's current congressman, Rep. Dan Donovan (R), is a former Richmond County (Staten Island) district attorney, and he is hardly a Trump-like figure in terms of style. But Michael Grimm (R), Donovan's predecessor, is, and he wants his seat back after he pled guilty to a tax fraud charge and resigned in January 2015. Grimm has attacked Donovan for not being sufficiently loyal to the president, and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee gleefully released a poll recently showing Grimm leading by 10 points in the primary. Even if the poll isn't accurate -- the DCCC has an agenda here and would prefer Grimm to be the nominee -- Grimm seems likely to push Donovan, and Democrats have another well-heeled candidate with a military background, Max Rose, waiting to face the eventual primary winner in a district that the party has held in the past.

- Finally, a recent nonpartisan poll showed Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R, WA-5), the no. 4 House Republican in leadership, up only single digits on Lisa Brown (D), a former state Senate majority leader and university chancellor. Eastern Washington is definitely a Republican area -- Trump won this district by 13 points -- but Brown is probably the strongest opponent McMorris Rodgers has faced.

Of the 10 previously Safe Republican members who we are moving to Likely Republican, the majority of them were elected in 2010 or after, meaning that they've never had to run in a Democratic-leaning national environment. The midterms of 2010 and 2014 were Republican wave environments, and 2012 and 2016 were effectively neutral years in the House despite big shifts at the presidential level in nearly half of all districts in 2016. This year should feature the best Democratic environment since 2008. The size of that Democratic lean is yet to be de-



terminated, but certainly there are signs (such as election results so far this cycle and national House polling) that it could be pronounced.

Even before Lesko's underwhelming victory in AZ-8, Republicans were starting to sound the alarm on another typically Republican suburban Phoenix seat, held by Rep. David Schweikert (R, AZ-6). Schweikert was first elected in 2010, when he beat Rep. Harry Mitchell (D), and he then defeated Rep. Ben Quayle (R) after redistricting forced them into a member vs. member primary in 2012. Schweikert's district is heavily Republican, but Trump only won it by 10 points after Romney won it by 21. If AZ-8 could be competitive, AZ-6 could be as well.

In Ohio, Reps. Bob Gibbs (R, OH-7) and Mike Turner (R, OH-10) may be pushed this year. Gibbs' challenger, veteran Ken Harbaugh (D), has proven to be an excellent fundraiser, and there are some whispers that

Gibbs may be more endangered than one might expect in a northeastern Ohio district that Trump carried by nearly 30 points. One added wrinkle in this race is that, in what seems to be an increasingly common tactic nationally, Gibbs and Ohio Republicans seem to be trying to play in the Democratic primary by boosting Harbaugh's little-known opponent. Turner, a former Dayton mayor who has been a very strong electoral performer -- his district clearly leans Republican but it is more competitive than his easy reelection margins indicate -- has had to deal with an ugly recent divorce, and businesswoman Theresa Gasper (D) outraised him last quarter.

Other suburban Republicans who may have harder-than-usual races include Reps. Ann Wagner (R, MO-2) and Rob Woodall (R, GA-7), who represent suburban St. Louis and Atlanta, respectively. ❖

Feds financing fantasies

By MORTON MARCUS

INDIANAPOLIS – A few introductory thoughts. First, I am not in the pocket of any automobile company. Second, I am very conflicted about the subject of this column, urban transportation.



Third, for years I have argued that the private automobile is the greatest mass transit system ever developed. Uber, Lyft, and self-driving vehicles are reinforcing that argument.

Fourth, while autos have been blamed for urban sprawl, congested routes, and the deterioration of civility, family and community, they are not the sole villains of contemporary life. Air conditioning must take part of the blame.

Finally, the interstate highways have been a powerful and fundamentally positive force in America, where they have been allowed to be integrated into our cities.

Let's start with this last point. Which city in Indiana has the most successful downtown? Easy, Indianapolis. No other Indiana city has its interstates built to channel traffic into its downtown. Terre Haute, Evansville, South Bend, Fort Wayne, Richmond, Muncie, Lafayette, Anderson, Columbus, Michigan City and now Bloomington are like Kokomo, where a bypass was not therapeutic to the heart of the city.

Indianapolis alone has seen its downtown saved by two crossing interstates. Ironically, those who benefited

most from those interstates are now posting signs in their yards demanding that we rethink the I-65 and I-70 intersection. They urge INDOT to rebuild it right this time. Some even suggest ripping the interstates out of downtown and replacing them with a boulevard system from an earlier era.

The idea is as bizarre as the extension of the South Shore rail line from Hammond to Dyer in Lake County. These fantasies are stimulated by the belief we can resurrect 1925 or 1955 with large injections of federal funds. Projects that the communities cannot and will not support are deemed desirable, if the feds will fund them.

The Indianapolis Red Line, an electric bus, which will come into being only if the feds cough up about \$75 million, is another example of getting others to pay for our flights of fancy.

As with the interstates in the 1950s and '60s, local residents resist intrusive technologies that change land use. There is no popular demand for the Red Line or the South Shore extension. They are seen as future assets by real estate developers (speculators and government officials) and by ideologues who want revenge on the automobile through a return to pre-WWII urban life.

Self-driving vehicles are the next step in the emancipation of millions of people. The elderly, the infirm, the young, the vulnerable and the busy will all benefit. Our cities will benefit by having a more efficient use of those resources which lie idle waiting for the few moments each day when they are employed by commuters.

With scant evidence, many of these transit-oriented developments are offered as the means to attract young technocrats, the current holy grail of economic developers. ❖

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

Banks says RSC budget unites fiscal hawks

Howey Politics Indiana

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Jim Banks (R-IN), a member of the Republican Study Committee's (RSC) Steering Committee, released the following statement in support of the RSC's 2019 budget proposal (Howey Politics Indiana): "For too long, Congress has operated under the



misguided notion that defense spending must be matched by non-defense spending, and the RSC's budget shows there is a better way forward. The American people expect Congress to responsibly address our growing debt while also strengthening our national security. The

RSC budget is the only proposal in Congress that can unite both fiscal and defense hawks." According to a news release, the Republican Study Committee's 2019 budget proposal delivers on key conservative policy priorities by: Fully funding our military at the Trump administration's proposed \$716 billion level; Balancing in under 10 years; Cutting non-defense spending; Making individual tax cuts permanent; Repealing Obamacare; and Implementing work requirements for able-bodied citizens receiving welfare.

Carson statement on Muslim ban case

U.S. Rep. André Carson (D-IN) released in an email the following statement after the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Hawaii v. Trump* – a case to decide whether President Trump's latest Muslim Ban violates federal law and our Constitution (Howey Politics Indiana). "Every American should be concerned about the impacts of President Trump's Muslim ban. It weakens our nation's security by degrading our relationships across the Muslim world, and with many of our allies. It cheapens our values and makes it harder for our country to act with moral authority - undermining our international influence. And, it sends a message that we no longer welcome entire groups of people to our shores. Frankly, it's just plain wrong. This is not who we are as a country: The United States is a nation of immigrants and for decades we have had a long-standing principle of accepting individuals from around the globe. Returning to a more racist immigration policy is no way to build a brighter future for our country. Discriminatory government policies threaten to undercut the rule of law —whether directly or in a roundabout way intended to evade the courts. As a country, we are simply better than this. Muslim Americans, who are our neighbors and long-time members of our communities, are suffering unique harm. It's time for the Supreme Court to say what the American public already knows: This is unjust and uncon-

stitutional. It goes against the values we strive to uphold as country."

Brooks co-chairs women's caucus

A news release stated the bipartisan Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues hosted a hearing about sexual harassment in male-dominated jobs entitled, "From Silicon Valley to the Factory Floor: Time's Up for Sexual Harassment in Male-Dominated Jobs." (Howey Politics Indiana) Caucus members heard from survivors of sexual harassment in fields where women are often outnumbered, as well as from other experts on the issue, to discuss ways to change the culture in the workplace. The hearing was hosted by Reps. Susan Brooks (R-IN), Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, Lois Frankel (D-FL), Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, Brenda Lawrence (D-MI), Vice Chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, Mimi Walters (R-CA), Vice Chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, and Barbara Comstock (R-VA). "Historically, the manufacturing, construction and technology industries have been dominated by men and yesterday, the Women's Caucus heard the stories from victims of harassment in these fields," said Brooks.

Senate GOP wants Jackson to withdraw

Senate Republicans are hoping that President Trump's pick to head the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) withdraws his name and spares them a messy confirmation fight ([The Hill](#)). While some GOP lawmakers are characterizing the allegations of improper conduct against Navy Rear Adm. Ronny Jackson as "cheap shots," they have serious concerns about his lack of management experience. "He's totally unqualified," said one Republican senator who expressed disbelief that Trump picked his personal physician, who now oversees a staff of 70, to head the federal government's second-largest agency. The lawmaker expressed hope that Jackson would pull out, or that a few GOP colleagues would publicly announce their opposition, making it clear the nominee can't win a confirmation vote. Republican senators say they aren't eager to spill blood defending a nominee against a barrage of allegations of unprofessional conduct when they already have serious questions about his ability to manage a vast and complicated federal bureaucracy.

GOP advances proposal on Senate rules

Republicans are advancing a proposal to change the Senate's rules to speed up consideration of President Trump's nominees ([The Hill](#)). The Senate Rules and Administration Committee on a party-line 10-9 vote passed a resolution on Wednesday from Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) that would substantially cut down on the amount of debate time needed for hundreds of nominations. Because Republicans have a one-seat advantage on the committee, they were able to pass the proposal without any

support from Democrats. Republicans say the change is necessary because Democrats are using the Senate’s rule-book to slow-walk Trump’s picks. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), a member of the committee, said Democrats are “wasting the Senate’s time” by dragging out debate time even as lawmakers aren’t actively debating. “At some point the question is what is a constructive use of the Senate’s time,” he said ahead of the vote. The proposal is similar to a resolution that passed with bipartisan support in 2013, but only governed the 113th Congress. Democrats were in control of the chamber at the time.

Young calls for private pensions

U.S. Senators Todd Young (R-Ind.) and Cory Booker (D-N.J.) announced in a news release legislation to establish a federal commission charged with reviewing private retirement benefit programs and submitting a report to Congress on how to improve private retirement security in the United States (Howey Politics Indiana). The commission would not review the Social Security program, as it is outside of its scope. America’s private retirement system faces major challenges in the modern economy, and research shows that far too many households are unprepared for retirement. The Employee Benefit Research Institute predicts that over 40 percent of Gen X-ers will run short of money in retirement, and just under half of all private-sector workers aren’t participating in a retire-

ment savings plan through their employer, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. This legislation follows a report last year by the Government Accountability Office that recommended the creation of an independent panel of experts to assess our current system and make recommendations to improve the nation’s collective retirement security. It has been nearly 40 years since a federal commission has conducted a survey of this scope.

Young rallies White County GOP

At the annual Lincoln Day Dinner on Friday, the White County Republicans and guest speaker U.S. Sen. Todd Young (R-IN) used the evening to energize their party and set goals (Wolf, Jr., [Monticello Herald Journal](#)). “We will capture every seat in White County,” White County Republican Chairman Shannon Mattix said in the evening’s closing remarks. He included the position held by Sen. Joe Donnelly (D-IN), which he asked for help in defeating. Young also spoke to the audience about getting the party message out there. He said, “2016 was a year in which promises were made. (And) 2017 was a year where promises were kept.” He told the crowd that the Republican Party is rebuilding the court system from top to bottom and said some Supreme Court vacancies could happen this summer. ❖

Photography With Punch
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The collage includes: a man at a podium with a 'TRUMP' sign; a man in a suit; a man in a suit; a man in a suit; a woman with red glasses; a woman with glasses; a man with a mustache; a man in a red shirt holding a 'LEGALIZE SUNDAY' sign; a woman in a blue jacket; two men in suits; a man in a suit; and a man in a suit.

Chris Deaton, [Weekly Standard](#): Conventional wisdom suggested that the well-connected Rep. Luke Messer was the favorite to win the three-way Republican primary in Indiana's Senate race, coming up May 8. A strong campaign from relative outsider Mike Braun, a businessman and former state lawmaker, has contradicted that narrative. And then there's Rep. Todd Rokita: The only one of the trio to have bankable statewide name recognition as a former Indiana secretary of state, and the most Trump-like candidate running. It seems like a tossup — emphasis on "seems." "I could not find a media or corporate polling partner for the primary, which is amazing, given all the money that's spilling into this race," says Brian Howey, more or less a dean of Indiana political reporting. Howey runs the subscriber-based Howey Politics Indiana, a must-read for Hoosier politicians, and often has partnered with firms to survey statewide campaigns. But not this time, with less than two weeks until the ugliest, most drawn-out Senate primary in the country concludes. Indiana is one of the few GOP pickup opportunities in 2018, with Democrat Joe Donnelly trying to win over an electorate that supported Donald Trump by nearly 20 percentage points in 2016. The Republican field was positioned to be a who's who of the state's House delegation, but Messer and Rokita were the two who declared: College schoolmates and temperamental opposites whose political ascensions have paralleled each other. Local journalists wrote about their rivalry as far back as last summer. All the while, the third wheel, Braun, threatens to finish first place. Such a race, given the intrigue and stakes, would stand to beckon the attention of election handicappers and pollsters — and it may well yet. Nationally recognized names like Marist (which conducts the NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll) and Angus Reid Global published surveys just before the Hoosier state presidential primary two Mays ago. The one independent survey of the Indiana Senate primary, from Gravis Marketing, has a sample of 280 likely Republican primary voters and a 5.9-percent margin of error. Braun led the field with 26 percent, to Rokita's 16 and Messer's 13. But 45 percent said they were still undecided. In lieu of hard numbers, the country's hottest primary also appears to be its most uncertain. ❖



the values, mores and conventions of the present day are used to judge, almost always harshly and sanctimoniously, our predecessors. Will Durant wrote of the tendency for humankind, at each point of the modern era, to imagine that history is a straight line upward, leading to the "us" of the current day. We seem especially vulnerable to this conceit these days. The European peoples of a century ago fell hard for the errors of presentism. They were riding the tide of a century of stunning economic improvement and technological advances, every bit as transformational as those of the past few decades. Between 1815 and 1914, Britain's per capita gross domestic product grew nearly three times as fast as it had in the preceding century. The steam engine, the sewing machine, the railroad, electricity, the telegraph, the telephone, the airplane and so many more breakthroughs convinced the people of 1914 that a Golden Age had arrived, in which a benevolent science was on its way to conquering distance, want and the tedium of daily work. A few years later, 20 million were dead, most at the hands of machine guns, aerial bombs and other recent products of scientific progress, and perhaps 50 million more by a war-spawned influenza their "modern" medicine proved powerless to stop. Even worse, the collapse of their golden age ushered in a new dark age over much of the globe, in which totalitarians such as Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot murdered tens of millions and enslaved the survivors within their reach. It is presentism's smug folly to assume that we in the present day are superior intellectually and morally and that the past has nothing to teach us. Presentism's principal tributaries are a lack of knowledge and a deficient capacity for empathy. One of today's premier historians has written that "historical illiteracy is the new normal." How dismally true that is. ❖

Mitch Daniels, [Washington Post](#): At the first meeting of a class I teach about the causes and consequences of World War I, each student is assigned a seat at a table with the flag of one of the combatant countries in the center. I explain that, during the semester, they will be asked to speak about and defend the actions of "their country" from the perspective of a citizen of that time and place. Hindsight is not permitted; they are to put themselves as much as they can into the position and the mindset of the French, British, Germans, Austrians, Russians or Turks of a century ago. We spend a part of the first class discussing the fallacy of "presentism," through which

Richard Lugar & Sam Nunn, [Washington Post](#): As the United States prepares for historic discussions between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, the Trump administration and its international partners have a lot of work ahead of them. A successful summit, if it can be achieved, will be only the start of a long and complicated process. Eliminating the nuclear threat and achieving stability and security on the Korean Peninsula will require unconventional thinking and steps that are much broader than denuclearization. Just as we should prepare for the summit to go wrong, we should also prepare for it to "go right." The stakes are high. The Korean Peninsula is the most militarized region in the world. Even if the two leaders reach an agreement, achieving security and stability and reducing catastrophic risks on the peninsula will require intensive, expert-level negotiations and comprehensive, step-by-step implementation over many months, or perhaps years. This cannot be viewed as a bilateral U.S.-North Korean discussion — it must also include China, South Korea, Japan and Russia, and it must address regional security. ❖

Jackson withdraws as VA nominee

INDIANAPOLIS – Rear Adm. Ronny Jackson has withdrawn his nomination to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs amid damaging allegations that he created a toxic work environment, drunkenly wrecked a car and maintained poor prescription records while serving in the federal government ([Politico](#)). “While I will forever be grateful for the trust and confidence President Trump has placed in me by giving me this opportunity, I am regretfully withdrawing my nomination to be Secretary for the Department of Veterans Affairs,” Jackson said in a statement. He added, “The allegations against me are completely false and fabricated. If they had any merit, I would not have been selected, promoted and entrusted to serve in such a sensitive and important role as physician to three presidents over the past 12 years.” Jackson, who served as White House physician under Barack Obama and now Donald Trump, was tapped last month to replace Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, who left the Trump administration after clashing with officials.



Holcomb backs BSU takeover of schools

INDIANAPOLIS – Governor Holcomb’s special session agenda didn’t include a proposed takeover of the Muncie schools by Ball State ([Berman, WIBC](#)). But legislators are pushing forward with it, and Holcomb says he’ll support it. Holcomb’s announcement of a special session called for an emergency loan to the Muncie schools -- he said then the session should focus on issues which have broad support, and put off the more controversial takeover plan till next year. He repeated the loan proposal when he officially summoned legislators back into session last week. But legislative Republicans have been adamant that Muncie’s problems can’t wait, and House Speaker Brian Bosma (R-Indianapolis) and Senate President Pro Tem David Long (R-Fort

Wayne) said last week they’d gotten personal assurances of Holcomb’s support. In his first public comments since, Holcomb confirms he’ll support the more dramatic step. He says the loan proposal was the “minimum threshold” for legislators to address a dire emergency in the school district. He says he believes legislators were “on the right road” in seeking new management for the district.

Hoops commission urges reforms

WASHINGTON – The Commission on College Basketball sharply directed the Indianapolis-based NCAA to take control of the sport, calling for sweeping reforms to separate pro and college tracks, permit players to return to school after going undrafted by the NBA and ban cheating coaches for life ([Associated Press](#)). The independent commission, led by former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, released a detailed 60-page report Wednesday, seven months after the group was formed by the NCAA in response to a federal corruption investigation that rocked college basketball. Ten people, including some assistant coaches, have been charged in a bribery and kickback scheme, and high-profile college programs such as Arizona, Louisville and Kansas have been tied to possible NCAA violations. “The members of this commission come from a wide variety of backgrounds, but the one thing that they share in common is that they believe the college basketball enterprise is worth saving,” Rice said Tuesday night before addressing NCAA leaders on Wednesday morning. “We believe there’s a lot of work to do in that regard. That the state of the game is not very strong. “We had to be bold in our recommendations.” The [Associated Press](#) obtained a copy of the report ahead of Rice presenting its findings to top NCAA officials. It’s not yet clear how the governing body would pay for some of the proposals, and some

of the panel’s key recommendations would require cooperation from the NBA, its players union and USA Basketball.

Ellington upset HB1104 dead

BLOOMINGTON – After several bills failed to get back to the floor for a final vote before the session deadline, State Rep. Jeff Ellington, R-Bloomington, said lawmakers initially proposed bringing all those bills back for the special session on May 14 ([Bloomington Herald-Times](#)). Despite this initial plan, Ellington said House Bill 1104, which included language to address property owners’ concerns about annexation remonstrance waivers — agreements that in exchange for city services, property owners waive the right to legally object to future annexation attempts — was dropped from the schedule. “As much as I hate to say, it is bleak right now ... for 1104,” Ellington said to those gathered at an informational meeting on Wednesday. “I am really disappointed.”

Cohen pleads the 5th

NEW YORK – Michael Cohen, President Donald Trump’s longtime personal attorney, indicated on Wednesday that he planned to assert his Fifth Amendment rights not to testify in connection with a pending civil lawsuit brought by a porn star that seeks to void a \$130,000 “hush money” deal Cohen allegedly cut to try to suppress her story in advance of the 2016 presidential election ([Politico](#)). Cohen said in a declaration filed in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles that he planned to stay mum in that case because of a series of raids the FBI carried out at his home, office and hotel room in New York earlier this month. Executing