

‘Outsider’ Braun completes his coup

Rokita, Messer couldn't overcome businessman's assault on Congress; takes aim at Donnelly

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – More than a year ago, when U.S. Reps. Todd Rokita and Luke Messer began angling for the 2018 U.S. Senate nomination just as President Trump commenced a fitful start, there was the big question:

Are you sure you want to give up safe House seats to run in a first



Trump mid-term? MSNBC's Steve Kornacke provided the grist: Since 1998, incumbent senators in "hostile states" (which went for the

current White House occupant) were 21-3. The questions increased by mid-summer when Jasper businessman Mike Braun began exploring a run. With congressional approval



at an anemic to torpid sub-20% approval, this would be a run through razor wire, minefields and shooting galleries.

Both Rokita and Messer let their ambitions rule, though credible sources say that the latter was conflicted

Continued on page 4

Trump wins primary

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – In a contest in which two candidates were jockeying to prove who liked Trump best and a third who is actually like Trump, it is not surprising that Donald Trump again won an Indiana primary.



The battle of the three Wabash College grads was not pretty. On the Tuesday night, I was watching the five o'clock news on WANE-TV and something dramatic seemed to be missing. Then I realized what when an ad for a colonoscopy came on and it seemed almost refreshing. Here are initial observations on the Tuesday results of the Republican Sen-



“Our administration has provided over a million documents, we’ve fully cooperated in it and in the interest of this country, I think it’s time to wrap it up.”

- Vice President Mike Pence urging the end to the Mueller investigation on the “Today Show” today.



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

Brian A. Howey, Publisher
Mark Schoeff Jr., Washington
Cameron Carter, Editor
Joel Weyrauch, Editor
Mary Lou Howey, Editor
Mark Curry, Daily Wire, photo
Jack E. Howey, Editor
 Emeritus

Subscriptions

HPI, HPI Daily Wire \$599
 HPI Weekly, \$350
 HPI Mobile, \$5.95 monthly
 Ray Volpe, Account Manager
317.602.3620
 email: HoweyInfo@gmail.com

Contact HPI

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

© 2018, **Howey Politics Indiana**. All rights reserved. Photocopying, Internet forwarding, faxing or reproducing in any form, whole or part, is a violation of federal law without permission from the publisher.



ate primary.

The Basics

1. Having a geographical home base still matters in a competitive race, though not as much as it once did. Congressman Messer did very well in his congressional district but fared poorly elsewhere. Congressman Rokita's best areas were in his congressional district and Lake County, his county of birth. He didn't do as well as Messer did in his home base, but he competed closely with Braun across northern Indiana (where Messer was swamped) and competed well in southwest Indiana. Braun won by large margins in southwest Indiana, winning his home county of Dubois with 84% of the vote. He showed more hometown strength than either of the congressmen. He also won 2/3 of the counties in the state and finished second where he didn't win. Most importantly, Braun won all of the big counties except Lake.

2. Issues still matter, but not like they once did. You can buy support with well-funded claims. Rokita and Messer had records on pro-life and pro-gun issues. It didn't matter. Braun bought proof by asserting it.

3. The Indianapolis region establishment is frayed if it even exists anymore. Party control is gone; the people choose. Messer, the presumptive establishment favorite, was crushed by Braun in Hamilton and Marion counties. Rokita was even close to Messer in those areas. That was not supposed to happen.

The Ads

1. A single defining ad can set the entire tone for a race. The Braun cardboard cutouts ad captured the dual theme that the two congressmen

were alike and both part of Washington. His early ads set it up by framing Mike Braun as a conservative and a businessman. Then, while at times his campaign seemed to get distracted as opposed to hammering versions of that clear theme, he did enough similar variations that anybody with a television set, radio, phone, computer or any other device understood his core message.

2. This defining ad is especially effective if the intended target – in this case, two targets – behave precisely as portrayed. Congressmen Rokita and Messer looked the part, acted the part and lived the roles since they were competitors in college. It is incredible that as 20-year-



olds, both were even pulled over by police the same year (1990). During much of the evening, both had 29% of the vote. Not even the best ad firm available could have dreamed that the cardboard cutouts would become that real during the campaign. Usually you don't get to write your opponents' scripts.

3. A candidate needs to explain – clearly – why they seek the job and what they offer. Braun did, the others didn't.

4. Messer is a competent, nice guy, but 70% of the voters weren't looking for a competent nice guy. They wanted somebody who could fight and defeat an incumbent senator.

5. If you are too negative or perceived as rude, it backfires except maybe in Lake County. Rokita, who

started in the best position, struggled with this in the debates (i.e., don't interrupt) and his ads offended many people. He still finished second, which showed the potential he had to win and a reservoir of good will. He worked incredibly hard and talked issues. But his pugnacious style was the most common complaint against him. So, fight, but be reasonably nice in the process of punching your opponent.

6. A single counterpoint charge, if presented clearly, can undermine a well-conceived campaign plan. In this campaign, as Braun seemed on the verge of obliterating his competition by 20 points or more, the charge that he was actually a Democrat became prominent. Braun was a lifelong Democrat in the only factual way to determine it. That fact caused a significant percentage of the people who backed him to have doubts. His response in advertising was not defensive; he claimed that he was actually a lifelong Republican. But his opponents, behaving precisely like the cutout twins they were charged with being, simply were too focused on besting each other to develop a creative or effective attack on Braun. Generally, they continued to attack each other, as if either was ever ahead, and then bashed Braun as a Democrat. But their attacks on each other overshadowed assertions against Braun. It undoubtedly tightened the race, but many Republicans were so turned off or wanted someone they perceived as a real change agent, that they decided to vote for Braun even if they believed he was a Democrat. They wanted to believe Braun and they did. It is an interesting insight into people's minds and how advertising works.

Mike Braun going forward

- 1.** Mike Braun proved that he is the strongest candidate to defeat Sen. Joe Donnelly.
- 2.** The gas tax issue ran on empty, though it did aggravate state legislators across the state. Quietly, that made some difference – and Donnelly certainly can't use it while wandering around on Indiana roads in an RV.
- 3.** Whether you live in Indiana still matters, though the issue was not fully exploited. Donnelly would have done so, had Messer been the nominee. His RV approach was a mix of Mitch Daniels and preparing for Messer. Braun is what he says he is, a Hoosier.
- 4.** Will Braun be prepared to invest at least another \$6 million, or make peace with the people he said

were part of the swamp, in order to raise funds?

5. Mike Braun is an impressive guy. He is not inexperienced. He was on a local school board for over a decade (probably key to understanding why he voted in Democrat primaries, combined with his focus on his Jasper business) and he served as a state representative. No allegations of his being a bomb thrower in those political



Republican U.S. Senate nominee Mike Braun talks to the press after his victory speech in Whitestown Tuesday night. (HPI Photos by Mark Curry)

experiences emerged. By all accounts, public and private, he seemed like a serious person who tried to learn how things work and fix them in practical, business-like ways. In other words, a Harvard MBA who came back to Indiana and built a successful national business.

6. Because Braun is not part of Washington, he starts with a huge advantage in opposing an incumbent – Swamp Part Two. But Joe Donnelly has already begun defining who he is: A non-partisan guy, a typical Hoosier who wanders around Indiana in an RV and cares about you. He will let the attack dogs of the Democrat National Committee and independent groups try to rip Braun to shreds. The Republican attack dogs will do the same to Donnelly.

Come election night in November, colonoscopy ads might again seem refreshing. Unless, seeing how well negative ads work in Indiana, the colonoscopy companies start savaging each other as well. (Don't dwell on that analogy too long.)❖

Souder is a former Republican Member of Congress from Indiana.

Braun, from page 1

until just days before his mid-summer entry at a Morristown barbecue. When the primary dust settled around 8:45 p.m. Tuesday, there was Braun, a winner by more than 50,000 votes at 41%, poised to take on U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly.

"This started happening about a year ago; all along I sensed that people thought it could not be done," Braun told a small but enthusiastic victory party at a Whitestown brewery minutes after his victory had been sealed. "When you tackle something of this size in the normal format which I was pursuing, there was just a lot of doubt. Many friends in Jasper said, 'Do you need to have your head examined?' and I said, 'Maybe I do.'"

Braun then said, "Someone from the private sector, maybe that's the kind of new dynamic we need in Washington. When it comes to Luke Messer and Todd Rokita, it was a difficult decision for many because we were all good conservatives. It can get intense and it can get harsh. I hope they join me just as I would them. Our common goal was to retire Joe Donnelly."

So Rokita and Messer join Marlin Stutzman this century, and past names like Floyd Fithian and Jim Jontz whose congressional careers end, at least temporarily, in an attempt to reach for the upper chamber. Few are characterizing Braun's victory as an upset. Outside of an incumbent's safely drawn district boundaries, the barnacles and ballast associated with a congressional career are now well documented. Rokita and Messer find themselves in the dustbin.

Braun presents the most credible and dangerous challenge to Donnelly.

The HPI Horse Race starts the Braun v. Donnelly race as "Leans" Democrat. Morning Consult has put Trump's approve/disapprove at 47/48% in Indiana and he is -14% with Hoosier independent voters; the U.S. right/wrong track is at 37/55%. But Braun appears to present the best GOP matchup against Donnelly. He has claimed the outside-the-swamp mantle of President Trump. Braun said that Trump's "outsider" campaign of 2016 inspired him to run, though he has been careful to distance himself from some of the president's more controversial antics.

"I saw Trump signs showing up in yards and behind these signs they were into being into something different," said Braun, who took a call from Trump around 10:30 Tuesday. "When he was up against a slate of 15 or 16 competitors and he cleared the field, that was something different. He was a disruptor. I really believe if you get 10 or 12 of us in the Senate, who live through conservatism, you will actually start to see things change."

He has no congressional voting record to defend and, as a self-funder, enters the showdown with Donnelly

with the ability to compete in what will likely be a \$100 million race by the time the dust settles this November. Yes, Braun will have to defend General Assembly votes that include a tax increase to fund the state's festering two-decade infrastructure needs which was ardently backed by Gov. Eric Holcomb and Republican General Assembly leaders. He enters the November showdown well-heeled, having spent \$6 million on the primary and becomes the second non-member of Congress to win



U.S. Rep. Luke Messer outside the Toast Cafe in Anderson, and U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita giving a concession speech Tuesday night. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

the nomination in the last three Senate cycles. (In 2012, Indiana Treasurer Richard Mourdock defeated U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar.)

Donnelly is girding for a \$100 million race. "The Koch Brothers have already spent \$7 million and maybe more in Indiana," Donnelly said in a conference call with reporters just before the race was declared for Braun. "The Republican Party will have almost unlimited funding. Our focus has been that we will work hard in every county, like the miners in Oakland City or the auto workers in Fort Wayne. My focus will be on their families. I have never been under the impression we wouldn't be out-spent."

As Donnelly headed to Terre Haute Wednesday morning to attend the funeral of a police officer, he told HPI that he figured early on that Braun would be the nominee. It was a similar calculation that he made in 2011

when he figured a challenge to U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar was a better option than running for reelection in the 2nd CD. "Actually, I saw this months ago," Donnelly said after he was asked if he anticipated Braun's emergence.

Asked whether Braun poses a tougher challenge than Rokita or Messer, Donnelly answered, "It doesn't matter to me one way or the other. I'm focused on going to all 92 counties. I will stand against the McConnell tax plan. I didn't worry who was going to come out of it."

Tonight, Donnelly finds President Trump and Vice President Pence staging a rally in his old congressional district at Elkhart's Northside Gym. They will make the case for their tax cuts. It appears to be one of two key issues on which Donnelly is prepared to wage his reelection bid.

"I welcome the president and vice president, but in terms of the McConnell tax plan, it explodes the deficit," Donnelly said. "We have a tax cut that benefits the very wealthy and our children and grandchildren will be paying for it for decades. We're looking at \$2 trillion deficits."

On Tuesday night, Donnelly also took aim at the GOP's botched Obamacare repeal and replace efforts. He accused Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of sabotaging the health care pools. "It will significantly cost more for health care premiums," Donnelly insisted. "It will wipe out any gains of the tax cuts."

"I look forward to the campaign," Donnelly said to reporters on Tuesday. "It's going to be a choice. Who's going to support affordable health care? Who's going to be an independent voice? If President Trump is right, I will support him every time. But my job is not to be a cheerleader for the president. My job is to work non-stop for Hoosiers."

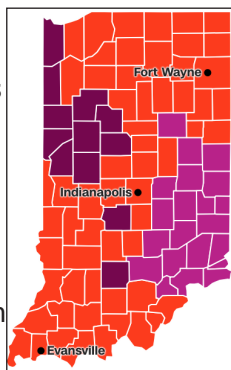
For his part, Braun characterized Donnelly's Senate career as "a fluke," and is prepared to defend the tax cuts and exploit Donnelly's vote for Obamacare. "We've got to prove to the people across the country that free enterprise works," Braun said. "We have to not only repeal, but replace, Obamacare. Remember, Joe Donnelly voted for Obamacare and against tax reform. His record is going to be easy to flush out. We're going to send Joe Donnelly to an early retirement."

"His record lines up with Pelosi and Schumer across the board and he has disguised himself from real Hoosier values," Braun said. "Hoosiers do not look to government to solve the problem. We live within our means and we still accomplish great things and that's the difference. Joe Donnelly is going to have a tough time. I think his record is going to be flushed out and I think that's

what is going to carry us to victory."

Donnelly has heard such rhetoric before. Just months after his vote for Obamacare in the House, he narrowly fended off a challenge from then State Rep. Jackie Walorski, then defeated Richard Mourdock for the Senate seat in 2012. Like Braun, Mourdock had hoped the Hoosier aversion to Obamacare was his path to victory. It wasn't, though Mourdock self-inflicted his defeat, while Braun displayed steely resolve on the issues and conducted himself with a no-nonsense air, interjecting into one of his TV ads an impertinent "I'm busy!" as the voice-over invaded his office.

His campaign has displayed a cunning sense of humor. His best-of-cycle TV ads had him carrying thumbs-up



candidate	%	votes
● Braun	41.2%	208,451
● Rokita	30.0%	151,931
● Messer	28.8%	145,991

cardboard cutouts of Rokita and Messer wearing identical suit-and-tie combos, while Braun wore blue work shirts and rolled-up sleeves. Braun effectively defined his opponents as ineffectual twins with former congressman Mark Souder calling it "one of the most effective ads in Indiana political history." At one point he turned to cutout Rokita and quipped, "You're awfully quiet."

Braun's punishing assault on Rokita and Messer set him up for unique company with U.S. Sen. Todd Young, another incumbent and Member slayer. Young won his House seat in 2010 by defeating former congressman Mike Sodrel and then U.S. Rep. Baron Hill that fall. In 2016, he sidelined Rep. Stutzman during the primary and then slew the biggest opponent of them all, former governor and senator Evan Bayh.

This race began with Rokita declaring war on the GOP establishment that loathed him with the odd "Defeat the Elite" slogan despite nearly two decades in office, while Messer was the GOP golden boy who would prevail with his prowess in and around the Indianapolis doughnut.

It wasn't to be. Braun carried Hamilton and Boone counties in the doughnut by roughly the same margin he won statewide. It's notable that Rokita's home counties of Boone and Marion went to Braun. He tied Rokita in Hendricks County, and carried GOP strongholds in Allen, Elkhart, Porter as well as Vigo (55-25% over Rokita) while rolling up 54% in Vanderburgh. He won most counties and finished second in all others. In Rokita's boyhood home county of Lake, Braun lost to the regional favorite, but just barely, 44-41%. Braun was the only candidate to advertise



Baird pulls off 4th CD upset after super PAC mailer backfires

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – There was one major upset in Hoosier congressional races on Tuesday, with State Rep. Jim Baird shocking Steve Braun on the heels of a direct mail blunder that emerged late last week.

on Chicago cable market; he was virtually the only one to advertise on conservative talk radio.

And Braun's decision to go up on the air in November 2017 – made possible through self-funding – created a three-month, statewide broadcast TV monopoly while Rokita and Messer scraped for money, allowing him to bur-nish an indelible message that persisted through Tuesday night's victory. Souder observes the new "green wave" of self-funders, saying, "If you are a newcomer and want to win statewide, first put in \$6 million of your own money."

Donnelly is wasting no time, beginning to air a second TV ad titled "Bridge" today in which he states he's worked in a bipartisan fashion on issues like veteran suicides, opioid addition and HIP 2.0.

Rokita conceded shortly after 8:30 p.m., saying, "Not every fight is fair. That's life. The result tonight was different than we had hoped. I want to congratulate Mike Braun on his victory. We need to beat Joe Donnelly. I know being around this entire state that Republicans and most Hoosiers are united in that effort. We must win that fight. We need to beat Joe Donnelly."

Messer thanked his family and brigade of college student volunteers. "We are very confident that God has great plans for our state and the Messer family. We are all blessed to live in the greatest country. Work hard and stay focused and anything is possible. I just want all of you not to be discouraged by all this. This is an amazing country. Of course, we're disappointed by the results tonight, but beyond that, onward and upward. We'll look forward to the future and whatever it brings."

Braun hopes the immediate future for the two out-going congressman is stage time tonight in Elkhart with President Trump, Vice President Pence and himself. One of Mourdock's early blunders was not doing whatever it took to woo the Lugar wing of the GOP and unite the party for the fall contest. If there is unity tonight, Donnelly may find his mid-term, "blue wave" tailwind ebb a bit. Yes, there is the Mueller investigation and the Trump tariffs that are poised to hammer Hoosier farmers and manufacturers. But if you're a Republican, the Braun nomination is an early tonic. It's the GOP's best-case scenario after a snotty, cafeteria food fight that Sen. Bluntarski (I-Delta House) would have relished.

Now the real, epic battle commences. This will be a sensational Senate showdown. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Donnelly ❖

The two 4th CD candidates were self-funders, but Braun had a big money and spending advantage. Baird didn't mount a TV campaign until the final weekend yet forged a 6% plurality to dispatch the former state rep and Workforce Development commissioner. And Steve Braun had a branding tailwind as



his brother, Mike, won a U.S. Senate nomination.

The question here is whether Baird will be the lone upset in this unsettled mid-term cycle. Other favored candidates – Mel Hall in the Democratic 2nd CD, Greg Pence in the open Republican 6th CD, and Democrat Liz Watson in the 9th – all emerged victors as expected.

Now we await the wave. If the legal hounds continue to dog President Trump, his tariffs backfire on Hoosier farmers and manufacturers, and his acerbic leadership style is rejected, we could see U.S. Reps. Jackie Walorski in the 2nd and Trey Hollingsworth in the 9th face intense challenges. Hall is a potential self-funder



and Watson has the backing of EMILY's List and raised a very credible amount of money as she breezed to a primary victory.

Having said that, what if President Trump cuts an amazing, beautiful deal with North Korea's Kim Jong Un and averts a nuclear showdown? What if his renewed

sanctions after pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal bring Tehran to its knees? What if the economy continues to hum with historic low unemployment? What if the Mueller probe doesn't have the goods on the POTUS? What if Stormy Daniels is just another political weather front that yields to fair, blue skies? We can discount a Democratic wipe-out if Trump proves there's a method to his mad-

ness.

Here is HPI's rundown of Indiana's congressional races after Tuesday's election and our first fall forecasts.

CD1: Visclosky will return

Democrat: U.S. Rep. Peter J. Visclosky, Larry Chubb, Antonio (Tony) Daggett Sr. **Republican:** Jeremy D. Belko, David Dopp, Roseann P. Ivanovich, Mark Leyva, John Meyer, Nicholas Pappas. **Cook Partisan Index:** +8 Democratic. **Analysis:** Rep. Visclosky won the Democratic nomination with 81%, while Mark Leyva wins another futile GOP nomination with 27% in a six-man scrum. This will be a slam dunk for Visclosky in November. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Visclosky.

CD2: Hall waits for the wave

Republican: U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski, Mark Summe. **Democrat:** Douglas Carpenter, Pat Hackett, Mel Hall, Yatish Joshi, Roland E. Leech, John H. Petroff. **Cook Partisan Index:** +11 Republican. **Analysis:** Hall breezed to the Democratic nomination with 47%, defeating Hackett with 32%, Joshi with 12% and the other three candidates combined for 9%. Hall carried all 10 district counties. Walorski was sitting on \$1 million on March 31, while Hall had \$236,745 cash. If a Democratic wave materializes, this showdown could find some traction. That Walorski was writing Commerce Sec. Wilbur Ross earlier this week continuing to press him on steel and aluminum tariff waivers is an indicator that tariffs could be a major issue this fall. To Walorski's credit, she has been diligent in trying to get the Trump administration to use the "scalpel" as opposed to an Uzi. China has cut off U.S. soybean imports, which will continue to unnerve 2nd CD farmers; manufacturers are also expressing deep concern. Democrats will try to portray her as out of step with the district and they are already noting that Walorski hasn't held a district town hall meeting since 2013. Tonight, President Trump and Vice President Mike Pence will be in Elkhart with Walorski and U.S. Senate nominee Mike Braun at their sides. You could see those optics showing up in either the Hall or Walorski campaigns as things evolve. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Walorski.

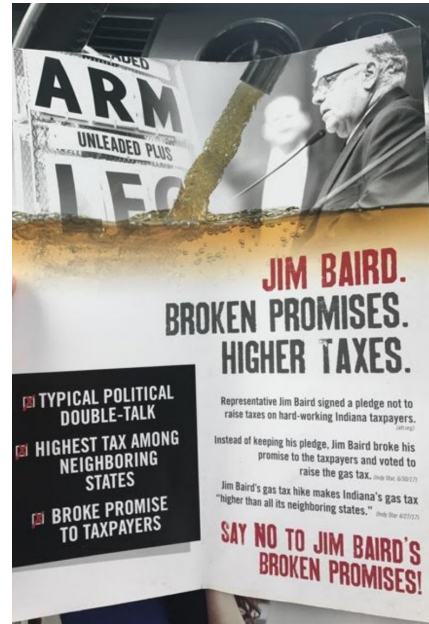
CD3: Tritch faces steep contours

Republican: U.S. Rep. Jim Banks. **Democrat:** John F. Roberson, Tommy A. Schrader, Courtney Tritch. **Cook Partisan Index:** +18 Republican. **Analysis:** Tritch cruised to a primary victory with 79% of the vote, or 15,813 votes, compared to homeless 2016 nominee Tommy Schrader who polled 15,267 in that primary. Banks pulled 52,198 votes in his primary, which reveals the steep contours Tritch will have to climb in order to be competitive in this very red district. Banks is taking no chances, hosting a fundraising breakfast with Speaker Paul Ryan in the district later this month. Banks posted \$591,391, has spent \$312,836 and has \$422,814 cash. Tritch has raised

\$325,300, spent \$121,488 and has \$203,812 cash on hand, all robust figures for a Democrat in the 3rd. But she faces a daunting challenge against Banks this fall, requiring a historic Democratic wave to be competitive. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Banks.

CD4: Baird exploits crude mailer

Republican: State Rep. Jim Baird, Steve Braun, Kevin J. Grant, Diego Morales, James Nease, Tim Radice, Jared Guy Thomas. **Democrat:** Tobi Beck, Roger D. Day, Roland Ellis, Darin Patrick Griesey, Joseph W. Mackey, Veronikka M Ziol.



Cook Partisan Index: +17 Republican. **Analysis:** This was the upset of the night as Baird stunned Braun 36% to 30% and by more than 5,000 votes. This despite Braun's \$919,494 to \$215,000 money advantage. Two mailers by the Citizens for a Strong America PAC attacking Morales by depicting him as an illegal alien and the epic blunder, the "ARM/LEG" mailer

late last week aimed at Baird (who lost an arm in combat in the Vietnam War), probably cost Braun the nomination and the safe GOP seat. Baird called the mailer "disrespectful to veterans." The Braun campaign denied involvement with the PAC, but the fact that it was only active in the 4th CD and attacked Braun's two main opponents was a "c'mon man" moment. Those mailers will be Exhibit A in future lessons on direct mail blunders and blowback. Baird injected a somewhat bizarre twist Wednesday when Lafayette Journal & Courier columnist Dave Bangert asked whether he might yield the seat to Rep. Rokita (you can read the excerpted column on page 19). If Rokita decided he'd like to keep his seat in Congress, would Baird be willing to let that happen? "I haven't heard that," Baird responded. "But if he gets back on the ballot, that's OK." Even if that means Baird would have to step aside? "I understand that, If he gets back on, that's OK. I'll put it this way: I'd certainly be willing to talk to him. He's always been willing to talk to me, and I'd be willing to talk to him." As morning broke Wednesday, the Baird camp was walking that back, calling the question and the response a false narrative. "We absolutely would not put out the time and energy it takes to win a congressional campaign to step aside for somebody else," said Beau Baird, Jim Baird's son, primary campaign manager and candidate for

the Indiana House seat his father has. Democrat Beck won the crowded Democrat primary with just 34% of the vote, or 6,371 compared to 28,753 for Baird. Beck raised just \$36,000 in her first quarter FEC report. It's hard to see how the Democrat gets competitive here short of an epic, once-in-a-millennium wave. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Baird.

CD5: Brooks a heavy favorite

Republican: U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks. **Democrat:** Jennifer Christie, Dion Douglas, Sean Dugdale, Eshel Faraggi, Kyle Brenden, Aaron Schaler, Dee Thornton. **Cook Partisan Index:** +9 Republican. **Analysis:** Brooks was effortlessly renominated and sits on \$1.5 million cash. Thornton won a five-way primary with 53% of the vote, but didn't even post an FEC report. This is another slam dunk for the GOP. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Brooks.

CD6: The Pence brand holds

Republican: Mike Campbell, Thomas G. Ferkinhoff, Bill Frazier, Jonathan M. Lamb, Stephen M. MacKenzie, Greg Pence, Jeff Smith. **Democrat:** George T. Holland, Jeanine Lee Lake, K. (Jasen) Lave, Jim Pruet, Lane Siekman, Joshua Williamson. **Cook Partisan Index:** +18 Republican. **Analysis:** The Pence brand is durable here with the veep's bro winning the nomination handily with 65% while Lamb drew just 24%. Pence raised \$1,189,282, spent \$990,093 and has \$199,189 cash. He will face virtually unknown Democrat Jeannine Lake, who won with 38% in a six-person field. Pence will join Vice President Mike Pence in Washington come November. Perhaps there's an extra room at the Naval Observatory. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Pence.



CD7: Carson will prevail

Democrat: U.S. Rep. Andre Carson, Curtis D. Godfrey, Bob Kern, Pierre Quincy Pullins, Sue Spicer. **Republican:** John L. Couch, J. Jason Davis, Donald Eason Jr., Wayne "Gunny" Harmon, J.D. Miniear, Tony "Big Dog" Van Pelt. **Cook Partisan Index:** +11 Democrat. **Analysis:** Rep. Carson was renominated with 88%. He will face a Republican sacrificial lamb, Wayne Harmon, who won a six-man GOP primary with around 30%. Carson will be reelected easily. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Carson.

CD8: Bucshon wins nasty primary

Republican: U.S. Rep. Larry D. Bucshon, Rachael Covington, Richard Moss. **Democrat:** William Tanoos. **Cook Partisan Index:** +15 Republican. **Analysis:** Rep. Bucshon gobsnacked Dr. Moss with 60%, though the incumbent's two rivals combined for 40% of the vote. That should be a little concerning to the Bucshon camp. But unless Democrat nominee Tanoos can ignite his fundraising (he raised a mere \$131,000), it's hard to see the 8th getting bloody again. Bucshon had \$392,296 cash on hand on March 31. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Bucshon.

CD9: Another potential fall battleground

Republican: U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth, James Dean Alspach. **Democrat:** Dan Canon, Rob Chatlos, Liz Watson. **Cook Partisan Index:** +13 Republican. **Analysis:** Watson won the Democratic nomination with 66% against her two opponents and will face Hollingsworth, who was renominated with 78%. Hollingsworth sits on \$432,344 cash and can self-fund if a Democratic wave rises. Watson raised a very credible \$585,706, spent \$287,752 and had \$297,954 cash on hand. The 9th could come into play even with a modest Democratic wave. Some observers wonder if Hollingsworth has ingrained himself with the district GOP. It will be interesting to see the degree of GOP intensity for Hollingsworth in the fall. Watson is the kind of challenger who brings out intensity among her supporters, but she will need a wave to stage an upset. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Hollingsworth.

CNN poll shows Dem advantage narrowed

The generic congressional ballot has continued to tighten, according to a new CNN poll conducted by SSRS, with the Democrats' edge over Republicans within the poll's margin of sampling error for the first time this cycle. About six months out from Election Day, 47% of registered voters say they back the Democratic candidate in their district, 44% back the Republican. Voters also are divided almost evenly over whether the country would be better off with the Democrats in control of Congress (31%) or with the GOP in charge (30%). A sizable 34% -- including nearly half of independent voters (48%) -- say it doesn't matter which party controls Congress. ❖



CONTENT BY CARTER
strategic content creation and deployment

Hall will make 2nd CD a fall battleground

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Indiana’s 2nd District will be a battleground this fall, certain to be targeted by Democrats nationally in the quest to capture enough Republican-held congressional seats to gain control of the House.

Democratic congressional nominee Mel Hall, who won impressively in the primary election Tuesday, now challenges Republican Congresswoman Jackie Walorski, who seeks a fourth term. She won by a ton in 2016 in a district solidly for Donald Trump. She will be difficult to upset. But Hall, a former corporate CEO with a moderate Democratic approach similar to that of Sen. Joe Donnelly, who once represented the district in the House, is an ideal challenger for a Republican-flavored area. He demonstrated fundraising ability and campaign skill in warding off two determined opponents in the primary and winning in all 10 counties of the district.



The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) is certain now to focus top targeting on the 2nd in its “Red to Blue” effort to flip enough Republican seats to Democratic challengers to gain control of the House. Targeting is significant. The DCCC will provide organizational and fundraising support, signaling to Democrats nationally that Hall is a candidate to back. Donnelly, when he first ran for the House, didn’t get a cent from the DCCC and was clobbered. Two years later, he was targeted for all-out DCCC support and handily upset the Republican incumbent, Chris Chocola. DCCC support certainly didn’t do it all, but it helped a lot in a sprawling district where getting an effective TV message districtwide is vital.

Hall, former CEO of Press Ganey, South Bend-based collector of patient satisfaction data for hospitals nationally, relied on effective TV ads to reach the entire district, even buying time on cable TV from Chicago and Indianapolis to reach its edges. He faced determined challenges in the primary from Pat Hackett, South Bend attorney who appealed to the progressive wing of the party and contended that Hall wasn’t a true-blue Democrat, and Yatish Joshi, a wealthy South Bend businessman who poured over half-a-million dollars of his own money into his campaign.

In seeking to set goals for the candidates before the election, I wrote that Hall, for an impressive win, needed to carry a majority of the counties and get over 40

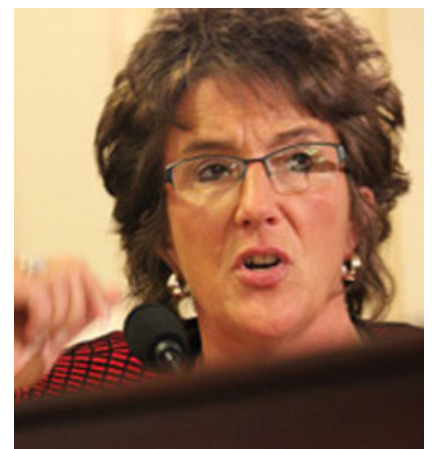
percent of the vote in the six-candidate race. He reached that goal.

Hall captured every county and 42% of the district vote. Hackett had 28%. Joshi, whose extensive TV seemed to hurt rather than help his cause, got only 12%.

On the Republican side, Walorski had only a token opponent, a Notre Dame graduate student who neither campaigned nor sought to communicate. I wrote that a token opponent getting only 10% or so wouldn’t mean anything, but that getting into the 20% range would signal some Republican voter dissatisfaction with Walorski. The unknown Mark Summe got 21.4%, a little more than one out of five Republican voters.

Still, the Republican flavor of the district was shown by the districtwide totals. Walorski, in final but still unofficial tabulations, had 42,888 votes. Hall, with the smaller Democratic turnout in the district, won with 15,383. Also showing the relative vote strength in the primaries, the unknown Summe, who didn’t campaign, got 11,647 votes in the larger GOP turnout, while Hackett, who campaigned relentlessly, got 10,420 in the Democratic contest.

There’s no secret about the issues for the fall. Hall campaigned on health care, criticizing Walorski’s many votes to repeal the Affordable Care Act and contending that the Republican-controlled Congress sabotaged the act, curtailing care rather than providing a better alternative. Walorski has championed the Republican tax plan for which she voted, contending that it will bring jobs and tax breaks for the middle class. Hall has denounced the plan as helping the rich at the expense of the middle class.



Hall contends that Walorski “doesn’t show up,” citing her lack of town hall meetings, news conferences and debate participation. He predicts that she will have to debate in a battleground situation this time. ❖

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

Plenty of challenges, but only Zakas, Hamm fall in upsets

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The social conservative challenges to Senate and House leadership? Thud. The black challengers to Anderson area Democrats? Splat.

But there were two upsets, with State Sen. Joe Zakas denied a rendezvous with history as the longest serving senator by his landslide loss to businesswoman Linda Rogers. It will be Democrat Sen. Frank Mrvan poised to take the mantle of Indiana's most tenured senator after cruising to a 77% victory over two challengers. Currently former Sen. Joe Harrison holds the tenure record, accord-

ing to Trevor Foughty who publishes the Capitolandwashington.com blog and contributes to HPI. Harrison served 10 terms. If Sen. Mrvan wins and finishes out a 10th full term, he would edge out Harrison's record because he served at least a few months in 1994-95.

Zakas was denied a shot at a 10th full term Tuesday night, losing to Rogers, 65% to 35%.

"I appreciate all the voters of the district having confidence in me to take their problems to Indianapolis and be their voice," the 66-year-old businesswoman told the South Bend Tribune. "I worked really hard and had tremendous community support. So many people stepped up to help because they believed in the campaign."

In other significant developments, State Sens. Travis Holdman and Jim Merritt both fended off social conservative challenges to retain their leadership posts in the Senate; so did Senate Minority Leader Tim Lanane and House Public Policy Chairman Ben Smaltz.

Two females with legacy names also won primaries. Ragen Hatcher, daughter of former Gary Mayor Richard Hatcher, and Christy Stutzman, wife of former congressman Marlin Stutzman, won their races. And in

Southwest Indiana, Matt Hostettler, son of former congressman John Hostettler won the HD64 GOP primary.

Here is how HPI's primary prognostication fared.

Indiana Senate Republican primaries

SD19: State Sen. Travis Holdman, Eric Orr.

Analysis: Holdman routed Orr 76-24%. **Analysis:** His primary victory over this social conservative funded by the various family groups sets him up to pursue the Senate president pro tem position.

SD26: Open (Sen. Doug Eckerty retiring). Mike Gaskill, Steffanie Owens. **Analysis:** Madison County Councilman Mike Gaskill defeated Madison County Commissioner Steffanie Owens 56-44%. Gaskill is an ally of the retiring Sen. Eckerty. We had this race listed as a tossup.

SD29: Republican: State Sen. Mike Delph, Corrie Meyer. **Analysis:** Delph fended off a well-financed challenge from Meyer, winning nearly 60% of the vote. Meyer had seen an influx of \$100,000 come into her campaign since April 14, receiving contributions from community notables Mickey Maurer, Paul Estridge, Michael Browning, Doug Rose, Angela Braly, Azher Khan, Deborah Daniels, and John Mutz. Meyer unveiled the endorsements of Zionsville Mayor Tim Haak, Carmel's Jim Brainard, Noblesville's John Ditslear, Fishers' Scott Fadness, and former mayors Greg Ballard of Indianapolis and Jane Reiman of Carmel. It wasn't enough. Delph now faces a rematch with Democrat J.D. Ford, who said Tuesday night, "My campaign is focused on serving the people while Mike Delph has been focused on serving himself. The people of Senate District 29 are ready for change. While my opponent has focused on in-party fighting and political grandstanding, I've been out in the district talking to voters about the issues that matter most to them. My opponent has decided to prioritize his extreme antics over doing his job and it's time that we elect a state senator who prioritizes the people." **Horse Race Status:** Likely Delph.

SD31: State Sen. James W. Merritt Jr., Crystal D. LaMotte. **Analysis:** Merritt easily won this rematch with close to 70% of the vote over the social conservative LaMotte. **Horse Race** listed this race as "likely" Merritt.

Indiana Senate Democrat primaries

SD25: State Sen. Tim Lanane, Tamala Dixon-Tatum. **Analysis:** Lanane won this showdown with 65%. Horse Race had listed this race as "Safe Lanane."

SD26: Open (Sen. Doug Eckerty retiring). **Analysis:** Anderson Fire Department Chief Dave Cravens won this with 67%. We listed this race as "Likely Cravens."

SD38: Maria David, David Allan Fuchs II, Chris Gambill. **Analysis:** Gambill prevailed here with 71% of the vote in a race we listed as "Safe Gambill."

Indiana House Republican primaries

HD17: Rep. Jack Jordan, Jesse Bohannon. **Anal-**



Businesswoman Linda Rogers defeated State Sen. Joe Zakas on Tuesday.

sis: In a rematch from 2016, Jordan dispatched Bremen School Board trustee Bohannon 61-39%. We listed this as "Likely Jordan."

HD18: Rep. David A. Wolkins, Russell Reahard.

Analysis: Rep. Wolkins defeated the social conservative Reahard 62-38%. We listed this race as "Likely Wolkins."

HD22: State Rep. Curt Nisly, Kimberly Cates.

Analysis: Rep. Nisly fended off a challenge from Kosciusko County Councilwoman Kimberly Cates of Syracuse 65-35%. We listed this race as "Likely Nisly."

HD29: Open (Rep. Kathy Kreag Richardson retiring). Brandon (Brad) Beaver, Garen T. Bragg, Chuck Goodrich, Noblesville Councilman Gregory P. O'Connor.

Analysis: Businessman Goodrich raised an eye-popping \$186,000, ran a TV ad campaign and drubbed O'Connor, the early favorite, 47-24% with Beaver coming in third at 20%. We listed this race as "Leans Goodrich."

HD33: Open: (State Rep. Greg Beumer retiring). Jenae Horn Blasdel, John (J.D.) Prescott. **Analysis:** Prescott defeated Blasdel 61-39%. He will face Winchester Mayor Shon Byrum. We listed this race as "Leans Blasdel."

HD39: State Rep. Jerry Torr, Tom Linkmeyer.

Analysis: Rep. Torr had an easier rematch with Linkmeyer, winning 57-43% compared with a 52-48% close call in 2016. We listed this race as "Likely Torr."

HD43: Open (State Rep. Clyde Kersey retiring) Isaac Deal, Darrell (Eddie) Felling. **Analysis:** Felling is Terre Haute's city attorney and defeated Deal 69-31%. We listed this race as "Safe Felling."

HD44: Open (Rep. Jim Baird running for Congress). Beau Baird, Jess L. Norton. **Analysis:** Beau Baird is the son of the retiring legislator who won the 4th CD nomination; Baird the younger won 65-35%. We listed the race as "Likely Baird."

HD47: State Rep. John T. Young, Scott Horvath.

Analysis: Young defeated Horvath 62-38%. We listed this race as "Likely Young."

HD49: Open (Rep. Wes Culver retiring). Kevin Gipson, Christy Stutzman. **Analysis:** The wife of former congressman Marlin Stutzman defeated Gipson 56-44%, despite his receiving \$33,000 from the Indiana Chamber PAC late in the campaign. We listed this race as a tossup.

HD52: State Rep. Ben Smaltz, William Carlin. **Analysis:** Smaltz used his Indiana Right to Life endorsement over social conservative Carlin to cruise to a 66-34% win. We listed this race as "Likely Smaltz."

HD54: State Rep. Thomas E. (Tom) Saunders, Jeffrey D. Embry. **Analysis:** Saunders was renominated 68-32% over Embry. We listed this race as "Safe Saunders."

HD55: State Rep. Cindy Meyer Ziemke, Mark Bacon. **Analysis:** Rep. Ziemke used a big

money advantage to win 58-42% over the Indiana Farm Bureau's District 8 director. We listed this race as "Leans Ziemke."

HD56: State Rep. Dick Hamm, Bradford J. Barrett. **Analysis:** This was an under the radar upset with Barrett defeating Hamm 67-33%. The defeat may have been exacerbated by a controversial mailer. "It's the culmination of many months of hard work in the campaign and the roller-coaster ride that you go through with the highs and the lows and the positivity and the negativity," Barrett told the Richmond Palladium-Item. "I feel like I've learned so much. I went into this just very green and unknowing of the process, and now I feel like I'm starting to get a little better of a feel for it." The campaign was shaken up in the final week when a mailer taking aim at Barrett began arriving in mailboxes. The piece came from Indiana Business for Responsive Government (IBRG) and accused Barrett of inviting his "Democrat friends" to "invad(e) the Republican Party." Hamm disavowed the mailer, saying he was caught off-guard when he first saw it. We listed this race as "Safe Hamm." Our bad.



HD57: State Rep. Sean Eberhart, Luke Campbell. **Analysis:** Rep. Eberhart defeated Campbell 64-36%. We listed this race as "Safe Eberhart."

HD59: Open (State Rep. Milo Smith retiring). Benjamin C. Chastain, John D. Counciller, JoAnne Flohr, Ryan Lauer, Allen K. Smith II, Bartholomew County Assessor Lew Wilson. **Analysis:** Former Bartholomew County Council president Lauer won this race with 36%, defeating

ANTELOPE CLUB

615 N. DELAWARE ST. - DOWNTOWN INDY

antelopeclub@hotmail.com



>> Lunch & dinner 6 days a week

>> Cigar lounge

>> Beautiful view of Downtown from our 2nd floor patio

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

Flohr with 25%. She had received \$12,000 in late money from the Indiana Chamber of Commerce PAC. Retiring Rep. Milo Smith had defeated Lauer in the 2016 primary, 47-39%. We listed this race as a tossup.

HD64: Open (Rep. Thomas Washburne (R) is retiring). Ken A. Beckerman, Matt Hostettler, Vanderburgh County Commissioner Bruce W. Ungethiem. **Analysis:** Mark Hostettler, son of former congressman John Hostettler, won with 52%, while Beckerman polled 35% and Ungethiem finished third with 13%. "He watched it as a spectator," Matt Hostettler said of his father. "I know his reputation had a lot to do with the outcome, and I hope to live up to his standard." We listed this race as a tossup.

HD66: Mike Bowling, Joseph Van Wye Sr. **Analysis:** Bowling, an employee of the Clark County Jail and protege of Sheriff Jamie Noel, won the right to challenge House Minority Leader Terry Goodin by winning with 82%. Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer suggested the GOP may target Goodin, but we couldn't find much information on Bowling,. We listed this one as a tossup.

HD69: State Rep. Jim Lucas, Nancy L. Franke, Charles Johnson. **Analysis:** Rep. Lucas won this rematch 61-34%. We listed this race as "Likely Lucas."

HD71: Open (State Rep. Steve Stemler is retiring). Kevin R. Burke, Jeffersonville Councilman Matt Owen. **Analysis:** The House Republican Campaign Committee

bet heavily on Owen to win the GOP primary, contributing nearly \$25,000 to him, allowing him to defeat Burke 59-41%. Owen worked in emergency medical services and Burke helped establish Clark County's needle exchange program to combat the opioid crisis. We listed this race as "Leans Owen."

HD73: State Rep. Steve Davisson, Buford L. Dewart. **Analysis:** Rep. Davisson prevailed 73-27%. We listed this as "Safe Davisson."

House Democrat primaries

HD2: State Rep. Earl L. Harris Jr., Jayson H. Reeves, Rosa Maria Rodriguez. **Analysis:** Rep. Harris was renominated with 69%. We listed this race as "Likely Harris."

HD3: Open (State Rep. Charlie Brown retiring). Ragen H. Hatcher, Jessica Renslow. **Analysis:** Gary Councilwoman Regan Hatcher is the daughter of former Gary Mayor Richard G. Hatcher and she won 59-41%. We listed this race as "Safe Hatcher."

HD9: Open (State Rep. Scott Pelath retiring). Michigan City Councilwoman Patricia Boy, Sean Fitzpatrick. **Analysis:** In the race to succeed retiring House Minority Leader Scott Pelath, Boy dispatched Fitzpatrick 48-31%. We listed this race as "Leans Fitzpatrick."

HD12: State Rep. Mara Candelaria Reardon,

Made in the U.S.A. Printed in Milroy, IN.

HARCOURT INDUSTRIES, INC.

WINNING POLITICAL PRODUCTS

- ★ Yard Signs
- ★ Bumper Strips
- ★ Lapel Stickers
- ★ Pencils / Pens
- ★ Rally Signs
- ★ Direct Mail
- ★ Business Cards
- ★ Memo Pads
- ★ Door Hangers
- ★ Magnets

WBE Certified

1.800.428.6584
www.harcourtpolitical.com

Pamela R. Eanes. **Analysis:** Reardon was renominated by a 71-29% margin. We called this race as "Safe Reardon."

HD16: Joshua Bolen, Christina L. Zacny. **Analysis:** Zacny defeated Bolen 54-46% and will challenge the charmingly cantankerous State Rep. Doug Gutwein. We had this primary race as a tossup, but Gutwein will be a prohibitive favorite in November.

HD25: Maurice Oakel Fuller, Justin P. Notoras. **Analysis:** This is a primary rematch from 2016 with Fuller defeating Notoras 2,153 to 1,605. It was the closest race on Tuesday with Fuller winning 51-49%. He faces State Rep. Don Lehe, who will be a prohibitive favorite. We listed this race as "Leans Fuller."

HD36: State Rep. Terri Jo Austin, Anderson Councilwoman Rebecca Crumes. **Analysis:** House Minority Whip Austin defeated Crumes 69-31%. We listed this race as "Safe Austin."

HD43: Open (State Rep. Clyde Kersey retiring). Mark Bird, Sylvester "Coach" Edwards, Norman E. (Norm) Loudermilk II. Chad Overton. Tonya Pfaff. **Analysis:** Pfaff, daughter of Fred Nation, a longtime aide-de-camp to former Gov. Evan Bayh, won a convincing primary with 46%, with Overton second at 18%, Loudermilk and Bird at 16% each. We listed this race as a tossup. Pfaff faces Terre Haute city attorney Darrell Felling in November.

HD59: Open (State Rep. Milo Smith retiring). Mary Kohen, Dale Nowlin. **Analysis:** Nowlin is a Columbus

North HS educator; Kohen is a community activist, according to the Columbus Republic, and Nowlin won 62-38% and will face Republican Ryan Lauer in November.

HD63: Joseph Lannan, Dennis Tedrow. **Analysis:** Little information was available on the two Democrats seeking the seat of former Rep. Mike Braun, who is now running for the U.S. Senate. Lannan won the primary 77-23% in a race we had as a tossup.

HD71: Open (State Rep. Steve Stemler (D) is retiring). Rita A. Fleming, Jason Schlatter. **Analysis:** Dr. Fleming practices in Clark County and Schlatter is considered a political newcomer. Fleming won the nomination by a 70-30% margin. We had this as "Safe Fleming."

HD72: Sam Charbonneau, Christopher FitzGerald. **Analysis:** The winner will challenge State Rep. Ed Clere. There is little information on either Democrat. Charbonneau won the nomination 56-44%. We rated this race as a tossup.

HD80: State Rep. Phil GiaQuinta, Linda Brooks. **Analysis:** Rep. GiaQuinta defeated Brooks 66-34%. We had this race as "Safe GiaQuinta."

HD98: State Rep. Robin Shackelford, Nichole M. Thomas. **Analysis:** Rep. Shackelford won this primary 87-13%. We listed it as "Safe Shackelford." ❖

Photography With Punch
 Mark Curry On Indiana Politics
 mark1tcphotography@gmail.com
<http://mark1tc.smugmug.com/Political/>

The endless probe of Robert Mueller

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – I don't know about you, but to me the Robert Mueller investigation of Donald Trump and associates is beginning to feel like a Meryl Streep movie: boring, too long and bound to have a disappointing ending.

Don't get me wrong. I believe that a special prosecutor investigation of Russian interference and possible collusion in the 2016 presidential election was justified and in the best interests of our nation. We simply cannot tolerate foreign interference in our elections and if Russia or any foreign nationals interjected themselves into our political process, then they need to be rooted out before 2020. In addition, if either political party or their candidates knowingly colluded with a foreign power to gain political advantage, they must pay the price.



Given the politically charged, high stakes nature of the 2016 election, an investigation conducted by a presidential appointee, such as Attorney General Jeff Sessions, would have been completely inappropriate. However, leaving an investigation to the appointees and justice apparatus of the Obama Administration is just as inappropriate. Or, as comedian Jeff Foxworthy might say, "If you believe that either Trump or Obama appointees are interested in justice, you may be clueless."

So, we are mired in a seemingly endless investigation that was ordered because of alleged Russian collusion in the 2016 election and has now morphed into a giant playground version of "he said, she said," "they did it, no they didn't." The special prosecutor investigation that began in May 2017 has yielded fruit, but not anything related to direct collusion with the Trump campaign in the 2016 election.

A few Trump associates of dubious character have been nailed in the process for telling lies and 13 Russian oligarchs have been indicted for attempting to interfere with the election. That being said, the primary stated purpose of the special prosecutor marching orders was to investigate Russian collusion with the Trump campaign. To that end, the special prosecutor has turned up zilch, nada, zero!

We have endured more than a year of Senate investigations, House investigations, FBI investigations and Mueller's investigations – all looking to bust Donald J. Trump for playing footsie with Vladimir Putin in the 2016 election. Here is what has been revealed to this point:

The House Committee charged with investigating

Russian collusion recently ended its investigation and said that there was no evidence of collusion. Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper says there was no evidence of collusion. On Meet the Press, Clapper said, "We did not include any evidence in our report, and I say, 'our,' that's NSA, FBI and CIA, with my office, the Director of National Intelligence, that had anything, that had any reflection of collusion between members of the Trump campaign and the Russians. There was no evidence of that included in our report."

Democrats Rep. Maxine Waters and Sen.

Dianne Feinstein each have publicly stated that there is no evidence of collusion. Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr has stated that there has been no evidence of collusion.

I understand perfectly well the toxic political atmosphere amongst Democrats, the liberal media and enemies of Donald Trump who just can't countenance that Hillary Clinton lost in 2016 and that Trump must be destroyed for any reason, good or bad, constitutional or not. Although I understand their blind rage and hate of the man, this is not now, nor has it ever been, a reason to destroy our justice system for a political end.

It is my belief that Robert Mueller has four ongoing objectives in the continuation of his investigation. The first objective is to prosecute as many little fish as possible and try and get them to turn, honestly or not, on Donald Trump for any past transgressions. The second objective is to take a page out of Kenneth Starr's playbook and use any potential Trump lie as grounds for a perjury charge. In our current Bizarro World, perjury charges are just about as good as perjury convictions. The next objective is to stretch this investigation out as long as possible so that the mid-term elections and possibly even the 2020 election process may be affected. Finally, and possibly above all else, I believe that Mueller will do everything in his power to protect the Department of Justice and FBI embedded dark state.

So, here is my challenge to Robert Mueller:

Interview Donald Trump, Jr., Jared Kushner, Ivanka Trump, Tiffany Trump, Barron Trump, Eric Trump, 100 porn stars, 50 Playboy bunnies, the doorman at Trump Tower, Joy Behar and Marlon Bundo. Get them all on the record about something, anything. Then, interview President Trump. Better yet, interview President Trump on live television and ask your questions about whatever you are fishing for and then either indict them all or none. But for gosh darn sake, get this investigation concluded.

The world we live in is an extremely dangerous place. We need a president who can focus one-hundred percent on the best interests of our country and not one who is continually distracted by a never-ending witch hunt. End the witch hunt or burn the witch! Which will it be? ❖

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

Federal 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

Oscar wins the Lake Sheriff race

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE – Lake County Democrats didn't help erase the county's reputation for political corruption during Tuesday's primary election. In fact, they made things worse.

The Democrats nominated Oscar Martinez as their candidate for sheriff. In Lake County, that is tantamount to victory in the fall.



Martinez has been sheriff since last fall when the precinct organization selected him to replace John Buncich, who was convicted of extorting money for towing contracts. The problem is that Martinez has a dirty past as well.

Martinez worked a side job doing security at one of the casino boats in Lake County. His wife, Melissa did payroll for the boat and inflated the number of hours Oscar worked – and thus increased his paycheck by \$10,000. That wrongdoing was pointed out in an election eve mailer sent by candidate David Dowling, who was considered Martinez's biggest challenge.

While Dowling, a 34-year cop and former Schererville police chief, was the most qualified candidate in the field, he lacked the fire-in-the-belly needed to energize his supporters. So, neither Dowling nor his backers caught fire.

It is obvious that not enough Democratic voters thought Martinez had done something serious enough to

bar him from being elected. Only in Lake County. Another thing that Dowling hoped would get him elected was the candidacy of Betty Dominguez. She is married to Roy Dominguez, who, like Martinez, is of Mexican descent.

Roy, who is a former Lake County sheriff and thus was once Martinez's boss, has no love for the current sheriff. It was Roy's hope that his wife's candidacy – because of her last name – would take Hispanic votes from Martinez. It didn't happen enough to hurt Martinez. Betty received 3,375 votes with 428 of 527 precincts reporting. Martinez had 15,176 votes.

While Martinez won handily, it would be wrong to call his margin a landslide. With eight candidates in the race, Martinez won just 40% of the vote cast. That isn't much given the turnout was somewhere in the area

of 10% of the registered voters.

Nevertheless, Martinez won and should do so in the fall as well.

Also coming out a winner in the sheriff's primary was Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., who was the sheriff's biggest backer. And, while Martinez won, you can't say the same for the people of Lake County who continue to have the pall of corruption hanging over their heads. ❖

Rich James has been writing about politics and government for almost 40 years. He is retired from the Post-Tribune, a newspaper born in Gary.

Crystal Ball leaves INSen race tossup

By KYLE KONDIK and GEOFFREY SKELLEY
Sabato's Crystal Ball

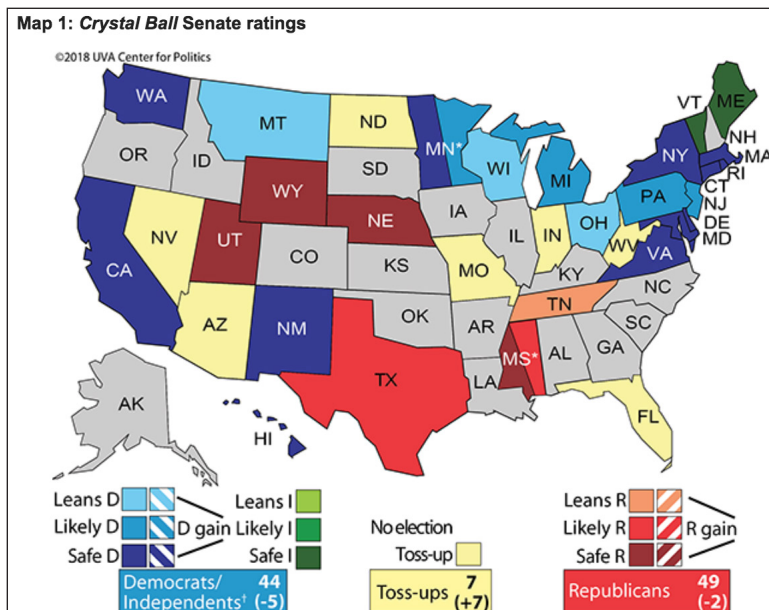
CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – Tuesday night's marquee primary came in West Virginia, where rumors based on internal polls suggested that Don Blankenship (R), a disgraced former coal company executive who had recently served jail time for ignoring federal mine safety laws in connection with a mining disaster that killed 29 in 2010, was poised to win the Republican Senate nomination in the Mountain State. Blankenship ended up finishing in third. The anti-Blankenship bubble may have been a way for national Republicans to cajole President Donald Trump into weighing in against Blankenship, which he did on Monday. As it turned out, Blankenship probably was never as serious a contender for the nomination as he might have seemed.

In any event, Republican primary voters in West Virginia avoided making a silly decision Tuesday. They ultimately picked state Attorney General Patrick Morrisey (R) over second-place finisher Rep. Evan Jenkins (R, WV-3) to face Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV) in November. We thought

Jenkins might be a better choice for Republicans: He is from the southern part of the state where Manchin will need to do well, and Jenkin's party switch prior to his initial 2014 House victory would not have been a liability in a state where changing party allegiance from Democrat to Republican is a common experience for many voters (in 1988, Michael Dukakis carried West Virginia; by 2016, Trump was carrying it by 42 points). Democrats apparently agreed with our assessment of Jenkins' strength

because they meddled in the Republican primary, with the seeming intention of trying to get Blankenship nominated or, at the very least, to prevent Jenkins' nomination. Still, Morrisey is perfectly capable of beating Manchin, and we're moving the West Virginia Senate race from Leans Democratic to Toss-up.

In Indiana, we saw the latest iteration of a familiar story in Republican primaries. A long-expected and nasty two-way battle for a nomination, in this case between Reps. Todd Rokita (R, IN-4) and Luke Messer (R, IN-6), provided an opening for a third candidate, self-funding former state Rep. Mike Braun (R). Braun provided something of a breath of fresh air to voters, and he easily won the nomination to face Sen. Joe Donnelly (D-IN) in the fall. Similar kinds of primaries helped lead to the nominations of some prominent Republicans, like Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE) and



Gov. Matt Bevin (R-KY), who did not start their respective nomination battles as favorites but ended up capitalizing on battles among their competitors in multi-candidate fields. To be honest, Messer and Rokita did not impress us all that much in this campaign, and Indiana Republicans may have made a shrewd move in picking Braun, a relative newcomer. That said, Braun also is less vetted than Messer and Rokita, so while he might have a high ceiling as a candidate, he may also have a low floor if Democratic opposition researchers can find holes in his resume. That said, this was a Toss-up before and is a Toss-up now, and we were not planning on changing our rating in Indiana no matter which of the three Republicans got nominated. Donnelly is one of the most vulnerable Senate Democrats in a state that Trump won by 19 points, but he also is a well-liked incumbent who will not be a pushover.

Tuesday's one other Senate primary came in Ohio, where Rep. Jim Renacci (R, OH-16) won his primary over businessman Mike Gibbons (R) and others, although Renacci got less than 50% of the vote and perhaps needed a little boost from the president, which he has been getting. Incumbent Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) remains a favorite in the fall.

We have one other ratings change in the Senate, which is unrelated to Tuesday's primaries. We're downgrading Republican odds in Tennessee, although the GOP remains favored there. As a part of our determination on Tennessee, we also pondered a similar change in Texas, but we decided to leave our rating in the Lone Star State unchanged.

In Tennessee, there is more and more evidence that Democrats might have a real chance of winning the open seat of outgoing Sen. Bob Corker (R), who is retiring. A late March poll from Middle Tennessee State University tested the likely general election matchup, finding former Gov. Phil Bredesen (D) ahead of Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R, TN-7) by 10 percentage points, 45%-35%. We were cautious about over-interpreting that result because Tennessee has become a much more Republican state since the mid-2000s. Based on two-party presidential voting, Tennessee's lean in presidential elections relative to the

national popular vote margin shifted nearly 18 points toward the GOP from 2004 to 2016. That is, it went from being a state that was 11.9 points more Republican in margin than the country as a whole in the contest between George W. Bush and John Kerry to 29.5 points more Republican in Donald Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton. Only West Virginia (36 points more Republican) and Arkansas (23 points) moved more to the right than Tennessee in that period. Bredesen last ran for office in 2006, when he won a sweeping reelection victory, but

that race was in a state far closer to 2004-era Tennessee than the 2016-era Volunteer State.

The very stable House generic ballot

By ALAN I. ABRAMOWITZ

The House generic ballot, a national polling question that gauges voter intentions in the House vote, often fluctuates a lot from poll to poll. For instance, a poll

that is highly rated by FiveThirtyEight's pollster ratings, Monmouth University, fluctuated from a 15-point Democratic lead in December 2017 to a two-point Democratic lead in January back up to an eight-point Democratic lead most recently.

That said, the overall average of these polls has told a relatively consistent story.

Over the past 12 months (May 2017 to April 2018), there were a total of 279 generic ballot polls included in FiveThirtyEight's database. I used the raw, unadjusted poll results (in other words, I used the actual poll results as opposed to the adjusted numbers FiveThirtyEight uses in its average). The

number of polls ranged from 18 to 32 per month.

On average, Democrats led by 7.1 points over the past year, and Democrats have led in almost every individual poll. The monthly average ranged from 6.2 points in February 2018 to 10.1 points in December 2017. The December result was clearly an outlier, however, and may have led to a misinterpretation of more recent results as indicating a significant decline in the Democratic lead. Except for the December results, the monthly averages have fallen within a fairly narrow range of 6.2 to 7.8 points. December 2017 was also generally the weakest time for President Donald Trump's approval rating, so the Republican brand as a whole just seemed weaker in December than before or since. ❖

Month	Polls	Avg. Dem lead	Min. Dem lead	Max. Dem lead
May 2017	18	6.5	0	16
June 2017	19	6.8	2	14
July 2017	19	6.5	0	14
Aug. 2017	22	7.2	0	14
Sept. 2017	18	6.8	0	12
Oct. 2017	25	7	-3	16
Nov. 2017	22	7.8	-1	15
Dec. 2017	23	10.1	1	18
Jan. 2018	32	7.2	2	17
Feb. 2018	27	6.2	-1	16
March 2018	29	6.7	1	11
April 2018	25	6.7	3	11
Total	279	7.1	-3	18

Republican Ballot Margin	Predicted Republican Seat Loss
4	9
2	12
0	16
-2	19
-4	23
-6	27
-8	30
-10	34

Donnelly, Young are undecided on Haspel

Howey Politics Indiana

WASHINGTON – Indiana’s U.S. senators reportedly remain undecided after Gina Haspel appeared before the Senate Intelligence Committee on Wednesday to make her case as to why she should be the next CIA director ([CNN](#)). Haspel’s role in the George W. Bush administration’s interrogation program was front-and-center for her confirmation hearing, where she faced pointed questions about her views on interrogation of detainees and her role in the destruction of CIA tapes. Republicans hold a very slim -- 51 to 49 -- majority in the Senate, and with Kentucky Republican Sen. Rand Paul saying he’ll vote against Haspel and Sen. John McCain recovering from brain cancer treatment in Arizona, Haspel’s supporters are expected to need the votes of at least a few Democrats in order to get her confirmed, though that exact number depends largely on if any additional Republicans choose to buck their party’s President. So far, only one Democrat -- Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia -- has said he’ll back Haspel.

Young panel warned of China impact

U.S. lawmakers used the threat of China’s increasing military acumen to push for the passage of a new national security act and other legislation meant to boost American leadership in Asia on Wednesday, as they face Beijing’s growing geopolitical influence and technological competitiveness ([South China Morning Post](#)). A panel of experts called before a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee chaired by Todd Young, a Republican, and Jeff Merkley, a Democrat, endorsed the National Economic Security Strategy Act of 2018 introduced to Congress last month. America’s national security rests largely on an economic foundation and ... predatory economic practices by China and others have undermined that foundation for years,” Young said in the hearing Wednesday in Washington. “If left unaddressed, these predatory practices will further endanger not only the prosperity of Americans but also our security. Through a variety of means including outright and systematic theft, China’s predatory practices have eroded and continue to erode our military’s technological superiority.”

Carson critical of Iran decision

U.S. Rep. André Carson (D-IN), released the following statement after President Trump announced he would pull the United States out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action: “President Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal is illogical, shortsighted, and extremely dangerous. It is unclear what exactly President Trump is hoping to accomplish by disregarding repeated intelligence assessments about Iran’s compliance and instead choosing to withdraw. It is unreasonable to

think that less transparency and oversight into the Iranian nuclear program will make the United States safer. If other members of the P5+1 remain in the deal, it is unlikely that this will give us additional leverage to negotiate new concessions. If the deal collapses and nuclear activities recommence, intelligence assessments indicate that Iran can achieve a nuclear weapon in a very short timeframe.”

Bucshon discusses aluminum tariffs

Co-Chairs of the Congressional Aluminum Caucus, Rep. Larry Bucshon, M.D. (R-IN-08), Rep. Suzan DelBene (D-WA-01), Rep. Bill Johnson (R-OH-06), and Rep. Dave Loebsack (D-IA-02) and other members of the Congressional Aluminum Caucus met with U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross to discuss the Section 232 on aluminum, according to a news release (Howey Politics Indiana). In this meeting, the Co-Chairs cautioned Secretary Ross against a blanket, one-size-fits-all approach, on aluminum tariffs. “Chinese aluminum overcapacity has had a negative impact on the global aluminum market – forcing U.S. companies to scale back their operations or even close their doors. I applaud the Trump Administration for working to address China’s unfair trade practices, but I urge the Administration to take a comprehensive look at a targeted approach when it comes to aluminum tariffs. It is imperative to address this issue without harming our integrated aluminum supply chain, which is why I support permanent exemptions, without quotas for our responsible trading partners,” said Bucshon.

Walorski authors opioid legislation

Indiana Rep. Jackie Walorski introduced legislation Wednesday to combat the opioid epidemic ([WNDU-TV](#)). The legislation is named the Dr. Todd Graham Pain Management Improvement Act after the South Bend doctor who was shot and killed after refusing to write an opioid prescription. California Democratic Rep. Judy Chu joined Walorski in introducing the bill, according to a release issued Wednesday afternoon. The bill is aimed to reduce overprescribing opioids “by examining the ways to expand the use of non-opioid alternatives to Medicare.”

Brooks co-authors ‘red flag’ gun bill

Federal legislation - named after Indiana police officer Jake Laird - would encourage all states to enact laws similar to Florida’s new statute that allows the government to seize firearms of people deemed dangerous to themselves or others ([Sun-Sentinel](#)). Laird was an Indiana police officer killed in the line of duty in 2004 by a man who was mentally ill. Indiana passed its law the following year, and it’s the model for the legislation introduced Wednesday by U.S. Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL) and U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks (R-IN). The Deutch-Brooks legislation allows law enforcement to seize weapons first and go to court within 21 days. Brooks said it still requires “probable cause” for police to seize weapons. ❖

Dave Bangert, Lafayette Journal & Courier:

Jim Baird won the GOP nomination and is poised to be the 4th District's next congressman. But what if Rep. Rokita, defeated in the GOP Senate race, says he still wants the job? A few seconds into a post-election victory phone call late Tuesday night, state Rep. Jim Baird excused himself and said he'd need to call back in a few minutes. Right on cue, he returned the call and apologized again. "The vice president of the United States was calling, so I thought I ought to talk to him," Baird said, after accepting congratulations and encouragement from Mike Pence after topping six other Republicans looking for the party's nomination in the Indiana's 4th Congressional District. Fair enough. Baird, a former Putnam County commissioner and farmer with two Purdue University degrees, then talked about his reason to run for Congress, once Rep. Todd Rokita decided to run for U.S. Senate: "I really respected some of the things we'd done at the Statehouse and didn't see why that wouldn't work at the federal level. We need to keep the momentum going in what I consider at more appropriate direction." And he said he was just getting a feel for Tobi Beck, the Avon Democrat who won handily Tuesday in a field of six candidates. Baird said he'd met her during the campaign during meet-the-candidate events but not much more than that. Strategy was something he said he'd get to soon enough in a campaign Beck promised would be rigorous, given Democrats' desire to stand against an era ushered in with the 2016 election of President Donald Trump. So, one more question, given the speculation — especially, given Rokita's loss to businessman and former state Rep. Mike Braun in the Republican primary for U.S. Senate. If Rokita decided he'd like to keep his seat in Congress, would Baird be willing to let that happen? "I haven't heard that," Baird said about the would he/wouldn't he parlor games about Rokita's next move if the Senate window closed on him before he could get a clear shot at Sen. Joe Donnelly in November. "But if he gets back on the ballot," Baird said, "that's OK." Even if that means Baird would have to step aside? "I understand that," Baird said. "If he gets back on, that's OK. "I haven't even thought about that," Baird said. "I'll put it this way: I'd certainly be willing to talk to him. He's always been willing to talk to me, and I'd be willing to talk to him." As morning broke Wednesday, the Baird camp was walking that back, calling the question and the response a false narrative. "We absolutely would not put out the time and energy it takes to win a congressional campaign to step aside for somebody else," said Beau Baird, Jim Baird's son, primary campaign manager and candidate for the Indiana House seat his father has. ❖



few splotches on his ubiquitous blue shirt. But Braun emerges from the Republican primary in a good position to unite the party as he heads into a November showdown with Democratic incumbent Joe Donnelly. An early indicator of how soon Republicans will move past the bitter primary will come Thursday in Elkhart when President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence drop into the state to throw their support behind Braun. Will all three Republican candidates — not just Braun but Rep. Luke Messer and Rep. Todd Rokita as well — stand together on stage? Can Mike Braun climb out of a mud a winner again in November? Don't bet against him. ❖

George Will, Washington Post: Donald Trump, with his feral cunning, knew. The oleaginous Mike Pence, with his talent for toadyism and appetite for obsequiousness, could, Trump knew, become America's most repulsive public figure. And Pence, who has reached this pinnacle by dethroning his benefactor, is augmenting the public stock of useful knowledge. Because his is the authentic voice of today's lickspittle Republican Party, he clarifies this year's elections: Vote Republican to ratify groveling as governing. Last June, a Trump Cabinet meeting featured testimonials offered to Dear Leader by his forelock-tugging colleagues. His chief of staff, Reince Priebus, caught the spirit of the worship service by thanking Trump for the "blessing" of being allowed to serve him. The hosannas poured forth from around the table, unredeemed by even a scintilla of insincerity. The vice president chimed in but saved his best riff for a December Cabinet meeting when, as The Post's Aaron Blake calculated, Pence praised Trump once every 12 seconds for three minutes: "I'm deeply humbled. . . ." Judging by the number of times Pence announces himself "humbled," he might seem proud of his humility, but that is impossible because he is conspicuously devout and pride is a sin. Between those two Cabinet meetings, Pence and his retinue flew to Indiana for the purpose of walking out of an Indianapolis Colts football game, thereby demonstrating that football players kneeling during the national anthem are intolerable to someone of Pence's refined sense of right and wrong. Which brings us to his Arizona salute last week to Joe Arpaio, who was sheriff of Maricopa County until in 2016 voters wearied of his act. Noting that Arpaio was in his Tempe audience, Pence, oozing unctuousness from every pore, called Arpaio "another favorite," professed himself "honored" by Arpaio's presence, and praised him as "a tireless champion of . . . the rule of law." Arpaio, a grandstanding, camera-chasing bully and darling of the thuggish right, is also a criminal, convicted of contempt of court for ignoring a federal judge's order to desist from certain illegal law enforcement practices. Pence's performance occurred eight miles from the home of Sen. John McCain, who could teach Pence — or perhaps not — something about honor. ❖

Tim Swarens, Indystar: Give Mike Braun credit. A relative newcomer to high-stakes politics, he waded into a mud bog, wrestled two experienced congressmen in the nation's nastiest U.S. Senate primary, and stepped out Tuesday night as the decisive winner. Yes, he's left with a

Pence says time for Mueller to ‘wrap up’

WASHINGTON – Vice President Pence on Thursday urged special counsel Robert Mueller to conclude his investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, saying that doing so would be in the “interest of the country.”

“What I think is that it’s been about a year since this investigation began,” Pence said in an interview on NBC’s “Today” show ([The Hill](#)). “Our administration has provided over a million documents, we’ve fully cooperated in it and in the interest of the country, I think it’s time to wrap it up.”

“And I would very respectfully encourage the special counsel and his team to bring their work to completion,” he added.

Pence said that the Trump administration has so far been fully cooperative with Mueller’s probe, and that it would continue to be.



this fall (CNBC). Particularly in Senate races in Ohio, West Virginia and Indiana, where Democrats are playing defense, incumbents maintained a healthy edge in cash on hand. Yet despite the financial advantages, the political headwinds are largely against Democrats since all three states voted for President Donald Trump by sizable margins in 2016. Indiana’s Democratic incumbent senator, Joe Donnelly, was sitting on more than \$6.2 million heading into Tuesday’s primary, more than four times as much as the winner of the GOP nomination, Mike Braun. But Tuesday’s turnout, where Republicans outvoted Democrats by nearly 2-to-1, doesn’t bode well for Donnelly. The state also voted for Trump in 2016 by 15 points..

Pruitt controversy in Indiana

WASHINGTON – Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt used a Black Hawk helicopter to visit an Indiana coal mine last year, according to newly released EPA records highlighted by The New Republic ([The Hill](#)). Pruitt flew with aides and staffers for Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb (R) in the tactical transport helicopter to Booneville, Indiana’s Liberty coal mine last August, according to the report. Once there, he discussed “methods to improve environmental conditions, while also safeguarding critical coal mining jobs,” according to an EPA press release that did not mention the use of the Black Hawk helicopter. While the EPA has not responded to requests into the cost or purpose of the trip, the director of the state’s National Guard, which owns the helicopter used by Pruitt, told The New Republic that the military helicopter is never used for unserious purposes.

Several school referendums pass

ANDERSON – The sounds of

victory resonated throughout the Anderson Federation of Teachers headquarters when unofficial election returns showed more than 60% voting in favor of Anderson Community Schools’ \$41 million facilities improvement plan (Bibbs, [Anderson Herald Bulletin](#)). More than 60% of voters also gave the thumbs up to the district’s request for a \$1.8 million bond for operations. “The community is coming together for our schools locally,” said AFT President G. Randall Harrison. “There’s a lot of happy volunteers back there. They deserve this moment and should be proud of themselves.”

Warren Township officials sought a 21-cent property-tax hike per \$100 of assessed home value to generate \$5 million each year for the next eight years ([IBJ](#)). About 65% of voters approved the measure. The extra cash will help cover transportation costs, teacher recruitment and retention, and an expansion of technology initiatives and school safety programs. Voters in Avon Community School Corp. approved a plan to raise \$9.5 million to fund the hiring of about 100 staff members, including 50 teachers ([IBJ](#)). School officials said they want to reduce class size, attract and retain teaching staff and “increase instructional support and opportunities for students.” More than 55% of almost 10,500 voters approved a tax hike of 35.4 cents on each \$100 of assessed value. Lake Central and Crown Point voters approved two school referendums on Tuesday night, according to unofficial election totals (Colias-Pete, [Post-Tribune](#)). At Lake Central, voters were considering a \$55 million budget referendum that would give teachers a pay boost and allow schools to hire additional staff. Unofficial Lake County election results showed it narrowly passed with 53% of the vote. Voters in the Crown Point kept that district’s existing seven-year, \$35 million referendum.

Trump greets freed American prisoners

ANDREWS AFB - In the wee hours on live global television, President Trump greeted three American prisoners freed from North Korea as they landed at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., and engaged a returnee and his translator in brief banter. AP: “The White House pulled out all the stops for the event, hoisting a giant American flag between two fire trucks on the tarmac.”

Trump, who loves to think of his presidency as episodes in a reality show, reveled in the diplomatic achievement as he left the tarmac: “I think you probably broke the all-time in history television rating for 3 o’clock in the morning.”

Democrats have big cash advantage

WASHINGTON – Tuesday’s primaries in four predominantly Republican states left Democrats with a big cash advantage and a handful of new openings as they work to defend vulnerable Senate seats and try to flip House districts