



HPI Interview: Braun recounts his victory

Senate nominee says early strategy, late-breaking undecideds validated his statewide strategy

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Less than a month ago, Mike Braun won a fascinating three-way U.S. Senate primary over two established congressmen, setting up what will be a marquee race that could determine control of the upper chamber.



The Jasper businessman took his corporate acumen, the early mechanics of his General Assembly races, and applied them to his first statewide campaign. A huge pool of undecided voters broke his way, validating a strategy that he executed with uncanny precision.

In an HPI Interview Wednesday morning, Braun



was asked about the optics of his “two cardboard cutouts” ads he aimed at Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita during the final debates of the primary. “I don’t know if I ever told you, but I had a blue blazer and a red tie that I was

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Awake with the what ifs?

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

FREMONT, Ind. – We’ve all had that feeling of veering in heavy traffic and just missing a major collision. If your family was strapped in behind you, it’s the kind of memory that gnaws at you late at night.

What if? What if there had been a cement truck coming up on the lane I swerved to? What if one of the kids had unstrapped a seatbelt unbeknownst to me?

That’s the feeling Hoosier leaders and citizens should be feeling in the wake of the West Middle School shooting in Noblesville last Friday. A typical 13-year-old girl named Ella Whistler went to school and ended up at



“I am even more convinced that the FBI did exactly what my fellow citizens would want them to do when they got the information they got, and that it has nothing to do with Donald Trump.”

- U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy, on Fox News, refuting the ‘spygate’ claim by Trump



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Riley Hospital after suffering gunshot wounds.

Since 2011, she's the third Hoosier student to go to school in the morning only to be shot and taken away later that day in an ambulance. The other two shootings happened at Lawrence North High School and Martinsville High School, in districts represented by Speaker Brian Bosma and incoming Senate President Pro Tem Rodric Bray, respectively.

Ella's teacher, former Southern Illinois University defensive end Jason Seaman, was shot three times while tackling the teenage shooter. The shooter brought guns from his home to school. Police had been called to his residence several times prior to the shooting on reports he had guns.

There are many questions: How did this teenager have access to the guns he brought to school? Did the parents have them secured? Did police inform school officials the shooter had been investigated for having guns?

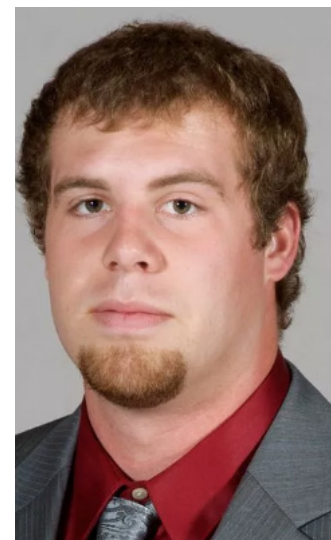
Gov. Eric Holcomb returned Friday from Europe and said Indiana is on the "right path" for secure schools, coming after he signed legislation earlier this month making \$5 million available to secure schools. "The training and practice that you hope you never need kicked into place," Holcomb said, praising educators, students and first responders. "Because of it, lives were saved, and we can be a model for our nation. I just want you to know the State of Indiana and all of our resources are here every step of the way."

Hoosier parents are now demanding "hardened" schools, which will come at a big cost to taxpayers. Consider it a payment to protect unfettered gun rights in a nation awash

in firearms. There are more guns in the United States than people. There have been 23 school shootings in the first 21 weeks of this year to date, resulting in at least 34 deaths. Dozens more have been wounded.

The \$5 million for school safety the General Assembly and Gov. Holcomb finalized earlier this month is a tiny down payment to confront the reality of regular school shootings in America. Noblesville students described the scene on Friday as sheer "chaos." A parent told WTHR-TV, "This is a war on our kids."

But to "harden" a single Indiana high school could cost a fifth



of that \$5 million. Without more state funding, Hoosier property taxpayers need to gird for higher taxes as more school districts seek security referendums.

And there are more complex questions that should keep Hoosier policy makers awake at night: What if the teenage shooter had chosen a classroom with a petite 5-foot-1 teacher as opposed to one with a 6-foot-6 former Division I defensive end?

We would be talking about West Middle School in the same sentences with schools in Parkland, Fla., and Santa Fe, Tex., where 27 teachers and students were murdered and dozens others injured over the last three months. We came very close to that kind of tragedy, and that reality seems

very far from the "right path."

Hoosier leaders have much work to do in the coming months.

I spent the weekend up in Northeastern Indiana lake country and talked with a dozen or so students from Fort Wayne Northrop, Carroll, Leo and Huntington high schools and middle schools. Do they believe a shooting is possible in their school? The unanimous answer was yes.

They talked about monthly "active shooter" drills, like today's adult leaders practiced fire or tornado drills back in a more innocent time. Now when there's a fire alarm at school, students wonder if it's a prelude to massacre.

And solutions? Some suggested metal detectors at school entryways. They noted that judges and lawmakers are protected and wondered why students aren't. They were incredulous that shooters could enter buildings with guns and knives. Others said parents of shooters gaining access to guns at homes should face the same charges as the perps.

Asked if they had faith in leaders restoring security confidence in their schools and that brought a painful laugh.

The 21st-century political culture is partly to blame. Our leaders have been paralyzed in their response out of fidelity to the National Rifle Association.

In the wake of the shooting, U.S. Rep. Susan

Brooks tweeted that the shootings are "something no one should ever have to go through, especially children." Following last week's Texas school massacre, Brooks said, "I am working with my colleagues in Congress to do more, because more must be done to prevent the loss of innocent lives." The preamble to the U.S. Constitution, written before the 2nd Amendment, promises "domestic tranquility." More must be done. Yes, Congresswoman, how true that is.

Our classrooms are targets of lethal violence. Following the Parkland, Fla., shooting on Feb. 14, I watched with incredulity as some 30 Hoosier students and adults were arrested for making threats to schools over the next two weeks. Nothing like that had occurred following other school massacres. It was as if a contagion had been released.

I suggested to friends and colleagues we'd be witnessing another massacre within a month. It took two months for Santa Fe to be seared into the national consciousness. The West Middle School shooting barely made a ripple in national coverage, because, apparently two innocents wounded in a school isn't enough blood to lead on the network news or break into constant cable coverage.

Yes, folks, we dodged bullets and body bags last week in Indiana. Solutions will be illusive, complicated, controversial and expensive. And the "what ifs?" should be keeping all Hoosier stewards awake at night. ❖

Mike Braun, from page 1

instructed to wear and I decided not to put it on," Braun said. "That was my own decision without checking with my team before I went on stage for that first debate. If one thing symbolized the difference between my campaign and theirs, and I think even Joe Donnelly's here in the general, I'm coming from the practical lane of living conservatism in the trenches, building a business and all the lessons that come along with that."

Braun said that he expected the undecided voters to break along the lines of internal polling, and was pleasantly surprised that more broke his way during the final days.

As for uniting the GOP after an intensely fought primary race, Braun said that much of the Rokita and Messer campaigns are linking up with his.

Here is our first post-primary interview with Republican Mike Braun.

HPI: We were watching the TV and radio buys

during the final five weeks of the primary campaign. What was your strategy for that period?

Braun: Early on, the strategy was to get out early when it looked like the competition was dismissing my chances. I made an executive decision to start advertising in November, December, January and February.

HPI: Yes, you laid that all out when we traveled in March.

Braun: You know that. Through the stretch, I wanted to make sure we had the resources to continue the message when it was clear in early to mid-April when both of my opponents were turning their attention to me, and I think we did that. That message of a business guy/outsider was a resonating one and we kind of stayed within our budget, planned it out and executed it according to plan. That's the way it went through the finish.

I was pleased we won with a little more margin than what we thought we would after taking a pretty hard pounding from them during that critical period, those last three weeks.

HPI: You were obviously watching the Q1 FEC



Mike Braun at his victory rally in Whitestown on primary night. (HPI Photos by Mark Curry)

reports. I don't think either one of us was surprised at what they reported. How did that shape your homestretch strategy?

Braun: What was clear there was a lot of people were having trouble deciding between the two of them, and even the ones who were straddling, knowing they would go one way or the other, had to kind of think twice. That impacted their ability to finance the campaigns like they had hoped for, and that enabled us to stay within budget. All that stuff kind of played together and it was what we had in mind. When I look at the whole thing from kicking the tires a year ago through declaration in August, to starting to execute the plan in September and October, and going on air in November and December, I don't think there is anything we'd do much differently. The debates worked well in a sense there was a clear contrast between me and them. For a guy like me who started with basically nothing and built a case with that kind of increase of the crescendo at the right time, I was tickled pink.

HPI: The debates where Reps. Rokita and Messer were in suits burnished your basic two-cardboard-cutout message, particularly when they were at podiums next to each other. Were you pretty happy with those optics?

Braun: I don't know if I ever told you but I had a blue blazer and a red tie that I was instructed to wear and I decided not to put it on. That was my own decision without checking with my team before I went on stage for that first debate. If one thing symbolized the difference between my campaign and theirs, and I think even Joe Donnelly's here in the general, I'm coming from the practical lane of living conservatism in the trenches, building a business and all the lessons that come along with that. It contrasts with anybody who makes a career out of politics because they've got a record and they have to stand behind it. It was difficult on policy because we were all so similar. There will be no difficulty in the general between differentiating my vision and Joe's.

HPI: Were you surprised that neither Rokita or Messer did much talk radio advertising? You dominated that category. I was amazed by that.

Braun: That was probably when their resources became limited, something had to give. In a Senate campaign, everybody I spoke with said 75% to low 80% would have to be spent on TV advertising. I think I had the benefit of doing that early. We were on radio really from the get-go along with TV, and doing it in a way at that point



we weren't spending a ton because we had the airwaves to ourselves. I think it's a very effective medium. My campaign proves that. The people who listen there, almost 100% of them are going to vote. It's a way to take the talk portion, if you're there interviewing along with your commercials you can really flesh out your plan in more detail. That's what we accomplished using radio.

HPI: You're running statewide for the first time. When I talk to rookie candidates doing that, they always say "Indiana is a big state. It may look small on a national map but it's a big state." Anything surprise you about running statewide?

Braun: I had a couple of blessings in terms of something to draw upon when it comes to the magnitude of that. No. 1, I had run state rep campaigns that gave me the mechanics of what you needed to do. Where that was door-to-door and a lot of yard signs, this was different. We were never going to reach enough people using those.

This was TV, digital, radio and direct mail. I had gone back in 2014, when I had a primary opponent and I did two things. I found out the angles it takes to win and then I put a ton of energy into doing it. I was out this time in the northern part of the state, in congressional districts 1, 2 and 3, where all of us were unknown. It was like the state rep race ... I spent most of my time in Daviess County and Washington, Ind., because I was not known there. Here, I spent a disproportionate amount of time even though it was wearing me out, driving five hours up and

five hours back in 1, 2 and 3. I think we won almost every county and we almost won Lake County, Todd's home county where he grew up. Taking the hardest and doing it first was something I always practiced in business. Don't save the toughest job for the tail end. You may not have resources to do it. I concentrated there because I was well known in the south. The ending came in counties I spent a lot of time because it was easier. I stayed in Zionsville with my sister during my entire campaign. I knew logistics. I had customers in almost every town across the state so I knew the layout. Doing it is one thing, seeing it on a map is another.

HPI: We reported on the large pool of undecided voters. How big was that pool in the final week? And was this one of those elections where people broke for you in the final week, or maybe even the final weekend or hours? Maybe even after they entered the voting booth?

Braun: There were a lot of them. In the last poll,

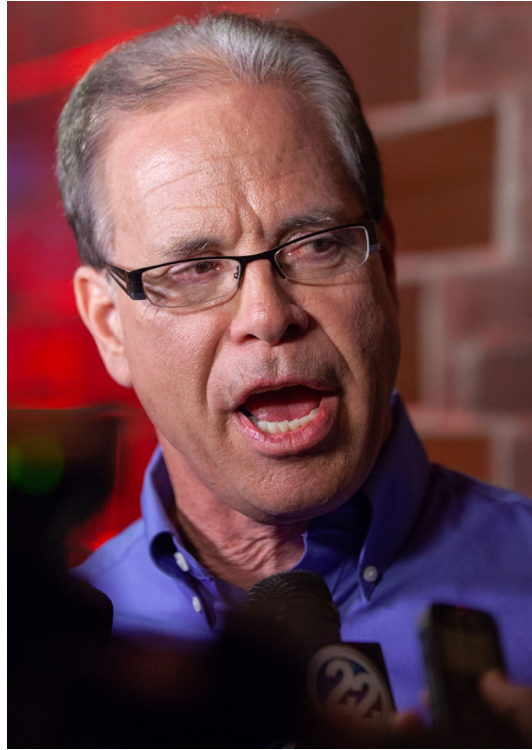
I was roughly 30%, Rokita was 21% and Luke 20%. That's a lot of undecideds. We knew that if they truly couldn't make their mind up, they didn't vote. We also figured that they'd probably break similarly to what they did up to that point. You get an uneasy feeling because it was such a huge block, but they actually broke a little more my way in those final days. We felt confident of that because a lot of those undecideds were in places like congressional districts 1, 2 and 3. The number of phone calls people said they got because there are a lot of businesses in Jasper that do business across the state, they'd say, "What do you know about Mike Braun? Is he a good guy? Is he the best guy to beat Joe Donnelly?" I was getting great recommendations and there were a few people who said they were getting a lot of calls they were getting hit with and that helped. None of us was well known across the state. The original layout was Todd had a 27% name recognition, Luke was 21% and I was 1 or 2%. That's why we came out early. By early February we actually had a better name recognition than my two opponents who had been around for a while.

HPI: So two days after your victory, you go to Elkhart and meet President Trump and appear with Vice President Pence. They are both indicating they are coming back to the state multiple times on your behalf. How will Trump and Pence help you moving forward?

Braun: I have been getting support across the board. Of course at the rally President Trump said he is going to be back to Indiana to help. He's got eight or nine other races that are doable to bring back into the red column. Vice President Pence, I've been with him several times. A week ago Friday he was back in Indiana. Clearly it is a top priority. Todd Young is helping out so he can become the senior senator from Indiana. The amount of support I'm getting from the Messer camp, from the Rokita camp and across the state has been overwhelming. We're coalescing out of this primary and it is happening much quicker than I thought it would. The attention Indiana has across the country is equivalent to all the support we have within the state. All hands are going to be on deck. You're going to see this as the one or two that will be featured all across the country. I can't wait to get going because here I can talk about the things I'm going to do from my experience and to be able to talk about Joe Donnelly's voting record.

HPI: Is there a chance you, Rokita and Messer will appear together in Evansville at the Republican convention?

Braun: I am definitely going to be down there. I was with Todd Rokita that Thursday up at the Trump rally in Elkhart and we had a great conversation. He's a hard worker, a hard fighter and he will bounce back in some fashion. Luke Messer I spoke to on the eve of the primary and a lot of their team is coming over to help me. That's happened a few days after the primary and that's great. So



I'm hoping they'll be there. We all said we would back the winner even though it was a spirited primary.

HPI: What should we expect from you, taking on Joe Donnelly between now and November?

Braun: Joe is going to try to hit me in areas unrelated to the issues. I think he'll have a tough time doing it. When you move back to your hometown and build a business from scratch and you have several generations of family who work for you, I got 85% of the vote in my home county, already they are trying to go nitpicking, making mountains out of molehills. I think people are fed up with that. I can't wait to go toe-to-toe, talking about tax reform, about he voted against it, or why he originally voted for Obamacare, which was so poorly put together. We as conservatives need to figure what we're going to

do about it. I hope it's about who has the better vision and who can do a better job of the federal government living within its means and dealing with two or three problems are paramount everyone. I feel good about where I'm coming from and I hope Joe engages in that debate. It's going to be an interesting one and I think I have the best case to make.

HPI: The Republican senatorial committee is going after Donnelly with the "Mexico Joe" thing and American Bridge is attacking Meyer Distribution, your company. You responded with that ad featuring your employees. Is that fair game to go after personal business portfolios?

Braun: When you're doing that, that tells me they are really bad on the issues. What they're going to find is that game, we've got things within this company, sure you can find this case or that. I've had thousands of employees over the years. When it comes down to it, they're going to have egg on their face because we are in the top strand of any measurement in terms of a great place to work. They don't mention we pay the highest starting wage in the lowest unemployment county in the state, and that's all stuff we will bring out if they try to generalize and make their campaign about my company and my hometown. We've got a great company and we're going to show how we've done things in the real world to make this a good place to work and how I applied that as a state legislator. ❖

Trump signs two Donnelly bills

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – President Trump praised U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly on Wednesday while signing the “Right to Try” legislation that the Hoosier Democrat had championed.

“I also want to thank Sen. Donnelly,” Trump said while flanked by Vice President Mike Pence on stage while the senator sat in the audience. “Sen. Donnelly, that’s really great. Appreciate it. Thank you.”

Pence added, “To these courageous families, to a presi-

dent who keeps his promise, let me say with a prayer on my lips: Thank you for giving a hope and a future to these and other American families.”

Eight-year-old Jordan McLinn of Indianapolis, who suffers from muscular dystrophy, joined the ceremony. President Trump hugged McLinn and kissed him on the forehead. “He’s going to be fantastic,” the president told McLinn’s mother.

It was a far cry from his rally in Elkhart earlier this month when Trump referred to Donnelly as “Sleepin’ Joe” and vowed to work for his defeat to Republican nominee Mike Braun this November.

The signing was another legislative win for the Democratic senator. Last week he successfully passed legislation that would reform the Dodd-Frank law, exempting many small banks. The bill, which originated in the Senate, frees local and community banks from unnecessary regulations to help grow local economies while protecting consumers.

Some campaign veterans doubt that the senators’ support for the law will be a difference-maker in November. Stuart Roy, a GOP strategist and former aide to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, told The Hill, “Endangered Democrats will find this vote as helpful as a parachute that opens after the second bounce.”

Republican nominee Mike Braun tried to criticize Donnelly over it hours later. “In the Senate, I would proudly support the MISSION Act. That’s why it troubles me that Senator Donnelly has been silent on the issue thus far,” Braun said in a statement. “Today, I’m calling on him to do the right thing and get behind this legislation.” In effect, Donnelly already had, Roll Call reported.

The bill was one of two led by Donnelly which the President praised last week morning, alongside Donnelly’s

‘Right to Try’ legislation, which is also headed to the White House to be signed into law. Donnelly’s bipartisan ‘Right to Try’ legislation passed the House of Representatives Wednesday. The bill previously passed the Senate unanimously in August 2017 and now heads to President Trump’s desk to be signed into law. Donnelly introduced the Trickett Wendler, Frank Mongiello, Jordan McLinn, and Matthew Bellina Right to Try Act with Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI) in January 2017.

President Trump expressed support for ‘Right to Try’ legislation during his State of the Union earlier this year, and Donnelly brought up and talked with Vice President Pence about the importance of Congress passing his bipartisan ‘Right to Try’ bill during a meeting last month.

Donnelly said last week, “Today’s vote in the House moves us one big step closer to getting my bipartisan ‘Right to Try’ legislation across the finish line. I look forward to President Trump signing it into law as soon as possible. Families in Indiana and across the country deserve the right to try and access potentially life-saving, clinically tested medical treatment to treat terminally ill loved ones before time runs out.”

Braun disclosure coming

Indiana Democrats say that Braun missed a deadline in filing his personal financial disclosure. The Senate Ethics Committee requires all 2018 Senate candidates to file their initial financial disclosure forms by May 15. But yesterday, the National Journal reported that Rep. Braun still has yet to file his PFD, and his campaign ignored questions about its status. “After funding his campaign with his personal wealth, Hoosiers need to know what’s in Rep. Braun’s PFD if they’re to believe in his campaign’s integrity, yet once again it appears that he has decided the truth is too big of a risk to show Hoosiers,” said Michael Feldman, spokesman for the Indiana Democratic Party. “Rep. Braun hasn’t just failed to meet a legally required deadline, he’s eroding the trust Hoosiers have in him with each passing day as voters wonder what he’s hiding from them this time.” Braun campaign manager Joshua Kelley told HPI that page 126 of the Senate Ethics Manual gives nominees a 30-day grace period, which would be June 14. “Mike will file within that time frame,” Kelley told HPI.

Braun backs NFL anthem policy

Braun, who is challenging Democrat Joe Donnelly, said in a statement that “The NFL did the right thing by requiring their players to stand for the National Anthem. The anthem honors our veterans and those who fought for our freedoms, and is not an appropriate time for civil disobedience” (NBC News). Braun also called for Donnelly to take a stance on the issue.

Braun comments on summit cancellation

Mike Braun released the following statement



today on President Trump's decision to cancel the planned summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un: "President Trump's strong leadership on the international scene has crushed Kim Jong-un's resolve and it must continue. Unlike Senator Donnelly, I will oppose bad deals like the Iran nuclear deal, and will work to support President Trump's foreign policy."

Libertarians reveal Senate nominee, slate

The Indiana Libertarian Party recently had a state convention to select candidates for the Nov. 6 general election ([Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). The party announced this week it nominated Lucy Brenton of Indianapolis for the U.S. Senate seat held by Democratic Sen. Joe Donnelly. In 2016, Brenton, a finance professional, received 5.4% of the vote in the election for the state's other Senate seat, which was won by Republican Todd Young. Libertarians nominated just one candidate for Indiana's nine seats in the U.S. House: Tom Ferkinhoff in east-central and southeastern Indiana's 6th District, an open seat being vacated by Rep. Luke Messer, who sought the Republican Senate nomination won by Mike Braun in the May 8 GOP primary election. Libertarians nominated Mark Rutherford of Carmel for Indiana secretary of state and John Schick of Chesterton for state auditor. Schick ran for auditor in 2014, receiving 4.4 % of the vote. The party chose candidates for nine seats in the Indiana House and one seat in the state Senate. None of those seats is in northeast Indiana.

Congress

9th CD: Watson wants to debate

Liz Watson, candidate for Congress in Indiana's 9th CD, has officially challenged Trey Hollingsworth to 13 debates in all 13 counties. "I am writing to invite you to join me for a series of debates in each of the 13 counties in the 9th Congressional District," Watson said in her letter. "This is a critical moment. Hoosiers want to elect a member of Congress who is going to fight for every single one of us."

Statewides

Harper kicks off SoS campaign

If Valparaiso's Jim Harper wins the Democratic Party nomination next month, and ultimately is elected Indiana secretary of state in November, he's not planning to simply disappear into his Statehouse office (Carden, NWI Times). The 35-year-old attorney last week promised, in an interview with The Times, that he will be far more active in promoting voting, halting gerrymandering and encouraging business development than his expected opponent, incumbent Republican Connie Lawson. "We just need some

new energy in state government," Harper said. "Every statewide elected official is of the same (political) party; they've been involved in state government for a long time, so I think it's important that we have a new perspective."

National

Obst, Lotter talk about Pence, Trump

Indy Politics' Abdul interviewed Vice President Pence aides and affiliates Marty Obst and Marc Lotter, who addressed the Indiana GOP spring dinner May 21. Obst notes that INSen Republican nominee Mike Braun "was up 2 points in our internal polling." As for support for Braun, Obst said, "You're going to see the president and vice president multiple times around the state." On Trump's statewide approve/disapprove in the 48/49%, Obst said, "The numbers track similar to 2016 and we won by close to 20 points." And on the mid-terms, Obst said, "The vice president will be the tip of the spear." On the veep's relationship with President Trump, Lotter explained, "I think they play well off each other. They bring different skills and backgrounds and that makes it a good partnership. There is no question it's the president we work for." Lotter compared this "odd couple" (as described by Abdul) to President Reagan and Vice President Bush, the upstart insurgent and the DC insider. Obst: "The vice president's role is a complementary part to sell the president's agenda ... support him and provide an advisory role. They couldn't get along better. It couldn't be a more perfect match."

Bad numbers for Trump in 2020

The 2020 presidential election is still two and a half years away, but President Donald Trump's path to a second term is littered with roadblocks, according to a new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll. Just 36% of voters say they would vote for Trump over a generic Democratic candidate in 2020, compared with 44% who would pick the Democrat, the poll shows. One in five voters, 20%, are undecided. Trump has trouble on the homefront, too. Despite the conventional wisdom that the president is wildly popular with the GOP base, the poll also shows a desire among a healthy slice of Republicans, though a distinct minority, for a challenger to run against Trump. ❖



CONTENT BY CARTER
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27 seats make initial House forecast list

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Howey Politics Indiana’s Horse Race begins the Indiana House general election cycle tracking 27 races (22 in the Republican column), giving the woebegone Democrats a chance to carve into the 70-seat Republican super majority.

Several of these seats, including those held by Republican incumbents Ed Soliday, Julie Olthoff, Hal Slager, and Alan Morrison, benefited from Donald Trump’s wave election in 2016. There is much speculation surrounding a “blue wave” election in 2018 and Democrats have



responded with a recruiting class filled with women, teachers, and union officials. It is an indicator that the party is ready to chart an independent course as opposed to a “conservative lite” approach, while seeking to roll back some of

the GOP policy gains over the past decade.

Our sources in both parties see Democratic voters as more motivated this cycle than in the previous midterm election in 2014. While there has been much speculation nationally about a Democratic wave, the environment in Indiana is different. Gov. Eric Holcomb is popular and polling shows Hoosiers think their government is on the right track. President Trump and Vice President Pence are more popular here than in other parts of the nation and because of the competitive U.S. Senate race, both are expected to appear in the state multiple times in their attempt to boost Republican Mike Braun over Sen. Joe Donnelly.

Thus, Republican legislative candidates will seek to localize their races, while Democrats will try to take advantage of a more unsettled national environment.

President Trump is a complete wild card, just as he was in 2016. If the economy stays on track, if his tariffs don’t hammer Hoosier farmers and manufacturers and he comes up with a diplomatic victory in his talks with North Korea, that could mitigate or neutralize a Democratic wave in the state.

Conversely, if Special Counsel Mueller releases a damning Russia collusion investigation report, or if Trump is embarrassed by Kim Jong Un or China’s President Xi, or if he scuttles NAFTA and his tariffs prove to be a debacle, a wave election could give Hoosier Democrats a tailwind. If things come completely apart for Trump and the GOP in Washington, there is still an outside chance of a big wave, perhaps approaching the high water marks of 1964 and 1974 when Democrats actually seized control of the General Assembly.

At this point polling is interesting, but it can’t reveal the curve balls to come with President Trump, whose modus operandi is to wing it. General elections can provide

tipping points, though. In 2006, a congressional intern scandal and worsening conditions in the Iraq War caused polling to turn against the GOP suddenly and profoundly that October. Republicans in the 1998 cycle believed they would rally their base around the impeachment of President Clinton, but Indiana Democrats actually ran the table in House races that cycle when voters rejected the impeachment arguments.

This will also be a legacy election, as the daughter of a legendary civil rights mayor (Ragen Hatcher), the son of a congressman (Matt Hostettler), the son of a legislator (Beau Baird), and wife of another congressman (Christy Stutzman) are all poised to win open seats easily in the fall.

Our initial list includes 11 open seats, four Democratic and seven Republican, and they are included, though most look like that will stay in their party’s column. Those with the most potential to flip include the Democratic seat in play after the retirement of Rep. Steve Stemler and the Republican seat opening after the departure of Rep. Greg Beumer.

As in 2016, there are a cluster of Republican seats in the Region that will be in play, with Reps. Mike Aylesworth, Soliday, Olthoff and Slager fighting to keep their seats.

Here is our first general election House forecast, with Horse Race statuses subject to change as the fall cycle begins to take definition. The other 74 districts not listed are considered “safe” for incumbents.

HD3: Open (Rep. Charlie Brown (D) is retiring). **Democrat:** Gary Councilwoman Ragen Hatcher. **Republican:** Open. **2016 results:** Brown (D) 8,898. **Analysis:** This is one of the most Democratic seats in the General Assembly and Hatcher, daughter of former Gary mayor Richard Hatcher, will keep this in the Democratic column. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Hatcher.

HD4: Republican: Rep. Ed Soliday. **Democrat:** Frank Szczepanski. **2016 Results:** Soliday 17,272, Fish (D) 14,311. **Analysis:** This district, particularly in the Valparaiso area, is trending Democratic. Soliday is chairman of the House Transportation Committee and was one of the key driving forces behind HEA1002 in 2017, the two-decade infrastructure plan that included gas and diesel fuel taxes. With rising gas prices, that is becoming a hot button issue for Democrats, both here in Indiana and nationally. But Soliday has high name ID, his early reelect poll numbers are healthy and he has



prevailed in competitive races before. Szczepanski graduated with a bachelor’s degree in industrial management and master’s degree in finance from Purdue. After graduating, he went to Detroit to work in corporate finance for Burroughs Corporation, and then years later moved to New Jersey to manage a manufacturing engineering

plant. From being in a senior level management position to working for international companies in the U.S., Canada, Sweden and western Europe, Szczepanski is the Founder and CEO of an innovative biotech company called IVDiagnostics based here in Indiana that is revolutionizing the way we diagnose cancer using virtually pain-free technology. He vows to end the school voucher program and says that health care is a "guarantee not a privilege." Should a wave election materialize, this could be a Democratic pickup opportunity. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Soliday.

HD5: Republican: Rep. Dale DeVon. **Democrat:** Donald R. Westerhausen. **2016 Results:** DeVon 19,177. **Analysis:** Westerhausen is a well-known heart surgeon and is actively campaigning to the point that



State Rep. DeVon (left) and Dr. Westerhausen.

DeVon knows he has a potential race on his hands after running unopposed in 2016. DeVon has not had a highly contested election in several cycles and the GOP has a field manager in place. The Donnelly Senate campaign will be trying to squeeze every possible vote from the

St. Joe County area. **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

HD9: Open (Rep. Scott Pelath (D) retiring). **Republican:** Dan Granquist. **Democrat:** Michigan City Councilwoman Patricia Boy. **2016 results:** Pelath: 19,302. **Analysis:** Granquist is the LaPorte County Republican Party secretary. Boy defeated former LaPorte County deputy coroner Sean Fitzpatrick in the primary. Democrats should retain this open seat. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Boy.

HD11: Republican: Rep. Michael Aylesworth. **Democrat:** Delano Scaife. **2016 results:** Aylesworth 18,163, Metro (D) 11,852. **Analysis:** Aylesworth easily dispatched James Metro two years ago in a race some thought might be competitive. He is popular in Porter



County and works Lake County well. Scaife (pictured) is a deputy with the Lake County Sheriff's Department, a Purdue graduate in business marketing and is in a graduate studies program at DePaul University. He was involved in a hit-and-run incident which claimed the life of one of his coworkers, leaving Delano and two of his coworkers severely injured. Scaife is a member of Lake County Right to Life, Work-

ing Families United for Tradition Values, The Share Group, Lake County Young Democrats and Planted Seed Ministries Inc. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Aylesworth.

HD15: Republican: Rep. Hal Slager. **Democrat:** Chris Chying. **2016 Results:** Slager 16,152,

O'Donnell 13,581. **Analysis:** Rep. Slager defeated union official O'Donnell by a more comfortable margin than many expected, due in part to the Donald Trump wave that pulled in significant union support. Early GOP polling shows Slager with a decent lead at this point. Chying is a Munster HS graduate who lives in Dyer. He is a volunteer with Humanity Restore, the Welcome Network, and is a court-appointed child advocate. He opposes charter schools, is against the Lake County precinct closures, supports college tuition reform and seeks to expand telehealth options for veterans. Chying looks to be a progressive Democrat and there are areas in this district that are very conservative. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Slager.

HD19: Republican: Rep. Julie Olthoff. **Democrat:** Lisa Beck. **2016 results:** Olthoff 15,236, VanDenburgh (D) 14,895, Demaree (L) 1,288. **Analysis:** Olthoff won a rematch with Chelle VanDenburgh, but just barely. This race will be a pure tossup all the way. Olthoff was another Region beneficiary of the Donald Trump wave, with union voters switching sides. With the recent tariff controversies, it will be interesting to see if union Democrats stick with Trump or head back to Democrats down ballot in a district that is trending Democratic. Beck is from Crown Point and attended St. Mary's School. Her father was a "proud member of the UAW while working at the Ford Assembly Plant in Chicago Heights." Beck's husband, Vernon, is president of United Steelworkers Local 12775 repre-



State Rep. Olthoff (left) and Lisa Beck.

senting NIPSCO workers. Beck is a Purdue graduate and earned her law degree from Valparaiso University. She supports living wages including raising the minimum wage. On education,

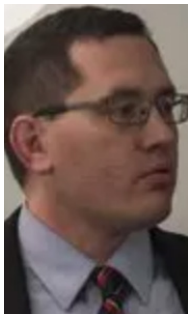
she said, "Indiana cannot be competitive unless we can ensure that the next generation is equipped with the tools to take on an increasingly complex, interconnected and globalized economy. The quality of our schools has been chipped away from a decade-long pattern of defunding our public schools, privatization through charters, and excessive standardized testing." **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

HD26: Republican: Rep. Sally Siegrist. **Democrat:** Open. **2016 Results:** Siegrist 11,067, Woeste (D) 9,980. **Analysis:** This is another district where the Trump wave helped Republicans win. Democrats are expected to name a nominee by the June 30 slating deadline. It's curious the party could not find a candidate for the primary given the tight outcome in 2016. Siegrist is a hard-working candidate seeking a second term, winning the open seat when State Rep. Randy Triutt retired. Once a Democrat nominee is named, we'll reassess this race. A Democratic candidate seemed to be lined up but that person had sec-

ond thoughts. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Siegrist.

HD29: Open (Rep. Kathy Kreag Richardson (R) retiring). **Republican:** Chuck Goodrich. **Democrat:** Tracy Roberts. **2016 results:** Richardson 27,460. **Analysis:** We've included this race here because it is an open seat. Rep. Richardson won this unopposed in 2016 and it is a reliable GOP district. Goodrich won in impressive fashion in a multiple candidate Republican primary, raising more than \$150,000 while running a broadcast TV campaign. The businessman should easily prevail over Roberts, a Ball State graduate from Noblesville who works local fabrication shop. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Goodrich.

HD33: Open (Rep. Greg Beumer (R) is retiring). **Republican:** John Prescott. **Democrat:** Winchester Mayor Shon Byrum. **2016 results:** Beumer (R) 21,446. **Analysis:** This is another pickup possibility for Democrats. Prescott describes himself as a "Christian farmer." He easily won the Republican primary. Byrum lost to Rep.



Winchester Mayor Byrum (left) and John Prescott.

Beumer in 2014 with the incumbent getting 60%. He finds an open seat now and told the Richmond Palladium-Item, "We have an opportunity to advocate for more equitable opportunities for folks that may not always have the same opportunities as others to be heard.

It's always been a passion of mine to be a public servant and to help folks reach their goals and find resources that they need." Byrum earned praise from Gov. Eric Holcomb for establishing a drug treatment facility for women in Winchester. Prior to winning the 2015 mayoral election, Byrum was a teacher at Muncie Burriss HS. Prescott commented on the school shooting in Noblesville last Friday, saying, "School security is of the highest priority for us as a state, remember the problem is not the gun, it is the person pulling the trigger. It seems as though more and more people are losing their morals daily and until we can figure out how to restore basic morals." A Libertarian candidate is expected to emerge. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Prescott.

HD42: Republican: Rep. Alan Morrison. **Democrat:** Evelyn Brown. **2016 Results:** Morrison 14,901, Skinner (D) 11,434. **Analysis:** Morrison benefited from the Donald Trump wave, defeating former state senator Timothy Skinner in a race that many believed would go down to the wire. This is heavy Trump country and Morrison's early polling looks good for his reelection. Brown is a graduate of St. Mary of the Woods with a bachelor's degree in psychology. She wrote and received a government grant for Clay County's first Victim's Advocate Program. Brown has worked in sales and marketing at WTWO-TV in Terre

Haute and was marketing director for a long-term care facility in Greencastle. Morrison, an alarms system salesman, found himself in controversy when he took a job with vaping firm Mulhaupt's after legislation gave that Lafayette firm a monopoly over supplying vape shops. "Without a doubt I would" recuse myself, Morrison told the IJB on how he would handle future vaping legislation. "I would expect anybody, whether they work for whatever company, if there was a bill being discussed that directly related to that organization, that legislator is expected to recuse (him or herself)." Unless there is a revival of the Trump wave, this race has all the markings of being competitive. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Morrison.

HD43: Open (Rep. Clyde Kersey (D) retiring). **Republican:** Darrell Felling. **Democrat:** Tonya Pfaff. **2016 results:** Kersey 16,454. **Analysis:** This is a Democratic-leaning open seat. Pfaff is the daughter of Fred Nation, former press secretary to Gov. Evan Bayh and a former Terre Haute mayor nominee. Pfaff easily won a crowded primary while raising almost \$14,000. Felling is the long-time Terre Haute city attorney who easily won his primary. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Pfaff.

HD44: Open (Rep. Jim Baird (R) is running for the 4th CD). **Republican:** Beau Baird. **Democrat:** Putnam County Democratic Chairwoman Kimberly Anne Fidler. **2016 results:** Jim Baird Sr. 17,927, Fidler 8,073. **Analysis:** This is an exceedingly Republican district. Baird is the son of 4th CD nominee Jim Baird. Fidler was a high school Spanish teacher at South Putnam for 16 years before working with the Indiana State Teachers Association for the past 11 years. So this is a bit of a rematch with Fidler facing her second Baird in two election cycles. Fidler also heads the Putnam County League of Women Voters. She told the Greencastle Banner-Graphic, "Over the past year alone, Indiana saw 45 new taxes and fees, in spite of an alleged surplus. In the face of an ongoing opioid epidemic, our rural hospitals are suffering from budget cuts. Our current legislative delegation has supported these tax increases and are not planning to address the opioid epidemic until 2019." The younger Baird should keep this seat in the GOP column unless a district Democratic blue wave emerges. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Baird.

HD45: Republican: Rep. Bruce Borders. **Democrat:** Jim Exline. **2016 results:** Borders 19,193.



State Rep. Borders (left) and Jim Exline.

Analysis: This seat has flipped back and forth and could be competitive if Exline, who publishes the Sullivan Times, proves to be a strong first-time legislative candidate. Exline is

a graduate of Indiana University with a bachelor's degree in finance. In 1981 he started work at Indiana National Bank before coming a vice president at Old National Bank. In 1997 he co-founded Wabash Capital, where he now serves as co-owner and an independent financial adviser. Exline serves on the Sullivan Plan Commission and the Sullivan Redevelopment Commission. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1974 to 1978. Borders is the former Jasonville mayor who followed Speaker John Gregg into this seat in 2002. He lost a bid in 2012 after he was drawn into a district with State Rep. Kreg Battles, then came back to defeat Battles. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Borders.

HD46: Republican: Rep. Bob Heaton. **Democrat:** Thomasina Marsili. **2016 results:** Heaton 17,333, Breedon (D) 9,369. **Analysis:** The once competitive HD46 has been voting heavily Republican since these maps were drawn in 2011. Heaton faces Marsili, owner of The Broom Tree LLC of Spencer, a company she formed in 2012, working as a certified life coach/public speaker. Marsili also works as EMT for Star Ambulance Services and is studying to become a registered nurse, according to the Terre Haute Tribune-Star). Marsili, 42, said a diminishing voice among Hoosier workers sparked her decision to run for the office. "Right-to-Work must go," she said. The law, Marsili said, "allows corporations to walk into a work place and say everyone is fired. That is what Carrier [in Indianapolis] did without repercussion," she said. "Unions are the stron-

gest things we have and unions support people with more than just jobs, but gives them a family. They are the pulse inside a community." Unions can offer people work through training, something Marsili said, "could be a cure to the opioid epidemic" by providing work. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Heaton.

HD49: Open (Rep. Wes Culver (R) retiring). **Republican:** Christy Stutzman. **Democrat:** Joseph Lehman. **2016 results:** Culver 16,525. **Analysis:** This is an extremely Republican district with Stutzman, wife of former congressman Marlin Stutzman, cruised to an easy primary win despite Chamber funding for her opponent. She is a businesswoman, is seen as very ambitious and played critical behind-the-scenes roles in her husband's congressional campaigns and office. She should be able to keep this seat in the GOP column. Reports are that Lehman is going to drop out. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Stutzman.



HD56: Open (Rep. Dick Hamm (R) in the Republican primary). **Republican:** Bradford Barrett. **Democrat:** Richmond Councilman Jeffrey S. Locke. **2016 results:** Hamm 14,463, Chasteen (D) 9,125. **Analysis:** Rep. Hamm ran for this seat several times before defeat-

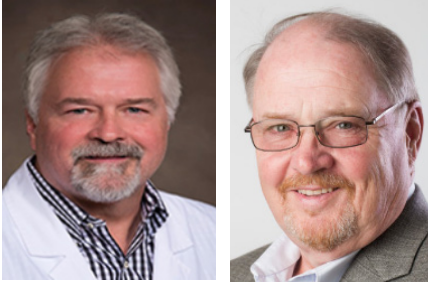
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Dr. Barrett (left) and Councilman Locke.

ing Democrat Rep. Phil Pflum six years ago. The 2011 maps made this far more Republican. Dr. Barrett is a recently retired surgeon and Republicans believe he has crossover appeal. He is currently secretary-treasurer

of the American College of Surgeons and serves on the Commission on Legislation of the Indiana State Medical Association. "That has provided me with multiple opportunities to testify in front of health care and insurance committees as well as the Medical Licensing Board," Barrett explained. "It is during this time that I developed a passion for state politics. Health care issues dominate the state political scene including the provision of care to the state's indigent population, tackling the opioid epidemic and dealing with increasing rates of trauma and child abuse state wide." He faces Locke, who served 24 years on the Connersville Police Department, including time as chief. Locke spent another combined 15 years in security at Visteon and on the Indiana University East Police Department. He has been elected to the Fayette County Council, Fayette County Commission, and Connersville City Council. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Barrett.

HD59: Open (Rep. Milo Smith (R) retiring).

Republican: Ryan Lauer. **Democrat:** Dale Nowlin. **2016 results:** Smith 16,118, Pitman (D) 10,205. **Analysis:** Lauer is the former Bartholomew County Council president who challenged and lost to Rep. Smith in 2016. He won a six-way primary, topping Chamber-backed JoAnne Flohr, who raised a decent amount of late money. Nowlin is a Columbus North HS teacher who defeated community activist Mary Kohen. This is a Republican district and should hold in the GOP column unless a sizable Democratic wave develops. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Lauer.

HD62: Republican: Rep. Jeff Ellington. **Democrat:** Amy Swain. **2016 Results:** Ellington 16,724, Lindsey (D) 11,589. **Analysis:** Swain, Springville, is a former



Indian Creek Township official who voted to establish fire protection and EMT services. "By taking necessary steps to join with neighboring townships in a fire district, the town-

ship will be better staffed, including full-time protection for fire and emergency services, and will be able to purchase newer equipment to protect its citizens," Swain said. She is a graduate of Indiana University's Kelley School of Busi-

ness. Her husband, Brad, is Monroe County sheriff. Ellington is a former Bloomington firefighter, Monroe County councilman, and Monroe County recorder. He attended Indiana University before starting his successful small business, J.R. Ellington Tree Experts. He expanded his business operations over the years to Phoenix Demolition and Ellington Stables. This was a competitive district before the 2011 maps and has the potential to be so this year. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Ellington.

HD64: Open (Rep. Thomas Washburne (R) is retiring). **Republican:** Matt Hostettler. **Democrat:** Open. **2016 results:** Washburne 25,522. **Analysis:** Hostettler is the son of former congressman John Hostettler and should have no problem holding this seat for the Republican Party. It is unclear whether Democrats will field a candidate by the June 30 slating deadline. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Hostettler.

HD66: Democrat: House Minority Leader Terry Goodin. **Republican:** Mike Bowling. **2016 Results:** Goodin 10,822. Shadday (R) 7,566. **Analysis:** This is a district that is trending Republican and President Trump won this district with 65%. Bowling with the Clark County Sheriff Department and Republicans have placed a field manager in the district. The Goodin name is a popular political brand in this Scott and Jackson county district and Goodin's brother is running for Scott County sheriff, which should help him. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Goodin.

HD71: Open (Rep. Steve Stemler (D) is retiring). **Republican:** Matt Owen. **Democrat:** Rita Fleming. **2016 results:** Stemler 18,728, Keister (L) 4,578. **Analysis:** Republicans didn't even run a candidate against Rep. Stemler, who was influential enough to draw a commit-



Matt Owen (left) and Dr. Rita Fleming.

tee chair from Speaker Bosma. Democrats need to hold on to this seat. Fleming is an OB-GYN doctor, practicing largely in Louisville, but she owns several key properties in downtown Jeffersonville and is popular and fairly well known. Owen is has worked in emergency medical services and defeated Kevin Burke who headed the Clark County opioid response during the HIV/heroin crisis. Owen has the backing of Gov. Holcomb and other prominent local GOP leaders. This will be a key race to watch in the fall. **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

HD72: Republican: Rep. Ed Clere. **Democrat:** Sam Charbonneau. **2016 results:** Clere 18,092, Bonifer (D), 13,511. **Analysis:** This is a Democrat-leaning seat but Clere has done a good job of getting support from all

quarters including Democrats and independents. Charbonneau, New Albany, is a family case manager supervisor for the Department of Child Services. He is running to make drug treatment more affordable, saying, "Indiana residents pay \$1.5 billion dollars annually as result of the effects of the opioid addiction. The barrier to treatment in Indiana is that medical treatment and mental health treatment are more expensive for our people than the drugs they are buying. The needle exchange has helped to decrease the spread of HIV, however, it has done very little in addressing heroin and methamphetamine use. We need to eliminate the stigma of opioid addiction as our population of grandparents raising their grandchildren as result of the opioid epidemic is at an all-time high. I will seek protections for those elderly whom have financially suffered or been exploited as result of the opioid crisis." Charbonneau has also called for a transportation reduction plan for Hoosiers who work in Louisville and must pay bridge tolls. He also backs a tax credits for Indiana college graduates who stay in the state. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Clere.

HD81: Republican: Rep. Martin Carbaugh. **Democrat:** Kyle R. Miller. **2016 results:** Carbaugh 13,925, Haddadd (D) 8,938. **Analysis:** Carbaugh was elected to the seat in 2012 but hasn't had a competitive race since 2014. This is a marginally Republican seat, so this could come in play if there is a Democratic wave. Miller has been very active. He told the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, "It's been five years since voters elected Martin Carbaugh in the 81st district. Since that time, we've really seen nothing of substance come from his three terms. Our wages are still stagnant, we're actively destroying public education, and we're consistently rated one of the poorest and unhealthiest states in the nation. We must do better," Miller said on the crowdfunding page. Miller supports raising the minimum wage, funneling more incentives to small businesses, fully funding public education and legalizing medical marijuana. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Carbaugh.

HD89: Republican: Rep. Cindy Kirchhofer. **Democrat:** John F. Barnes. **2016 Results:** Kirchhofer 13,683, Burke (D) 11,367. **Analysis:** This is a rematch from 2010 when Kirchhofer upset Barnes, a social studies teacher. In 2012, Barnes unsuccessfully sought SD32. This Marion County district is competitive but is trending Democratic and Barnes has high name ID. Kirchhofer is working hard and has good name ID. This could be a wave barometer district. **Horse Race Status:** Leans

Kirchhofer

HD90: Republican: Rep. Mike Speedy. **Democrat:** Tim Jeffers. **2016 results:** Speedy 19,019, Hollings (D) 9,515, McNaughton (L) 1,348. **Analysis:** This seat is a Republican stronghold, and Jeffers, who was the 1994 Democratic nominee for secretary of state, is Speedy's first



credible general election candidate. "I'm concerned about the American system and the need for competitive elections," Jeffers (pictured) told HPI after he filed in February. "Sadly because we don't have districts where both a R and a D having a fighting chance and in the end, voters don't have a choice. I just really wanted to give voters in HD90 a choice and to bring up this whole need for an independent redistricting process. I

feel very, very strongly about that." **Horse Race Status:** Likely Speedy.

HD91: Republican: Rep. Robert Behning. **Democrat:** Kevin Leineweber. **2016 results:** Behning 17,393. **Analysis:** Leineweber is a teacher and coach, an IU graduate who has done additional graduate work in counseling (Appalachian State University), energy (University of Illinois), mining engineering (Michigan Technological University), geography (Purdue University), and physics (Ball State University). He said the voucher program "is creating financial issues for public schools." He wants to address climate change issues and backs LGBT civil rights. Behning chairs the House Education Committee and this is a very heavy GOP district. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Behning. ❖

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Experience is valued, except in politics

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – In almost any field other than politics, experience is valued. Would people facing surgery choose an experienced surgeon or one who never before operated? Would people facing a day in court choose an experienced attorney or one who never before handled a case? Would people facing a flood in their home choose an experienced plumber or a guy down the street who never had done plumbing work but promised to give it a darn good try?



Many American voters these days seem to regard experience in politics and government as something negative in evaluating candidates. Even though seeing the difficulties

encountered by newcomers unprepared for handling the tasks of government, often with disastrous results, the concept lingers that ignorance of government is smart, that boasting of not being a politician is a keen qualification for political office and that experience in public service is a disqualification. How this plays out in political campaigns today is shown in the race for U.S. Senate in Indiana.

Mike Braun, the Republican nominee, served for three years as a state representative, winning elections to the Indiana House in 2014 and 2016 and resigning near the end of 2017 to make his U.S. Senate run. Does Braun cite this experience as he seeks the Senate seat? No. He hides it, stressing instead that he is a political “outsider,” a businessman, not a politician.

Do backers of Sen. Joe Donnelly, the Democratic incumbent, try to ignore Braun’s political experience? No. They cite it as proof that he is a politician. The Indiana Democratic Party refers to him in every mention as “Rep. Braun.”

Braun spent \$4.5 million of his own money to run a skillful Republican primary campaign with consultants producing a killer TV ad portraying his two opponents, both congressmen, as cardboard cutouts of Washington insiders. So, does Braun brag about being a smart politician? You know the answer.

Donnelly doesn’t cite his political skill either, even though he has defeated an incumbent Republican House member and won what was regarded as a sure Republican seat in the U.S. Senate.

Nobody cites political skill. Consultants say it’s better to play dumb about politics when seeking a political office. Candidates for legislative posts

don’t cite years of valuable legislative experience. Having legislative experience of course means having a record on key issues. That’s good for voters; it lets them know what to expect in the future on those issues. The opposition of course will find votes to hammer at in a negative way.

President Trump came to Elkhart to denounce Donnelly for voting against the Republican tax plan. Voters can evaluate that plan, whether it helps or hurts the middle class. Democrats denounce Braun for voting in the legislature to hike Indiana’s gas tax, citing its impact in the state being tied with California for the nation’s largest gas price increase. Voters can evaluate the tax and the street and road work it finances.

The legislative record of bills supported sometimes can get in the way of opposition attacks. Just before the Memorial Day recess, Congress passed and President Trump hailed two measures Donnelly championed. One is the “Right to Try” bill he co-authored in the Senate. It was inspired by the plight of a 9-year-old Indianapolis boy with a terminal ailment. It lets families exhaust all possible options for treatment for the terminally ill.

The other measure for which Donnelly worked to craft bipartisan support provides changes in Dodd-Frank banking regulations sought by smaller banks and credit unions. Their passage was cited by the Washington publication Roll Call as among “big legislative victories” for Donnelly and other vulnerable senators in states carried by Trump.

Why? Trump portrays Donnelly as a left-wing Democrat who doesn’t really deliver on promises of bipartisanship. Then Trump signs and praises measures in which Donnelly and other vulnerable Democratic moderates played key roles. Their experience showed. Voters can decide if it showed what they want. ❖

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

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Dissecting Indiana's congressional districts

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – We now know the major party candidates for Indiana's nine congressional seats. Few of us, however, know the diversity/similarity of those districts and the cities and counties they include. To refresh your memory of the geography of Indiana's congressional districts, go to Stats.Indiana.edu to find a map.



The latest (2016) data for Indiana indicate our most populous district, the 5th (northern Marion County, all of Hamilton, Tipton, Madison and Grant counties plus slices of Blackford, Boone and Howard) had 768,400 persons. The least populated district was the

1st (Lake and Porter counties with a slice of LaPorte County including Michigan City) with 712,000.

The 6th District (Muncie, Richmond, Columbus and down our eastern border to the Ohio River) had a median age of 40.1 years with 17% 65 or older. The youngest population was in the 7th District (central and southern Marion County) with a median age of 33.8 years and only 11% 65 or older.

Far greater differences are found in the racial, ethnic, and economic characteristics of the districts. In the 6th District, 93% identified as being white and 2.7% as black. Next door, in District 7, it was 58% white and 30.6% black.

The Hispanic or Latino population in District 1 accounted for 15.6%, while in District 8 (Evansville, Jasper, and Terre Haute) the figure was 2.3%. In addition, District 8 had the highest percentage of persons born in Indiana (75%) while the 1st District had 60% native born.

The 2nd District (LaPorte, South Bend, Elkhart, Peru and Wabash) had the highest share of population (87%) living in the same house as a year earlier. By contrast, in the 4th District (Lafayette, Kokomo and Logansport, southeast to Hendricks County and northwest to Newton County) 81% resided in the same house as they did in the previous year.

Persons moving from a different state in the past year accounted for 3.1% in District 1, but only 1.6% in District 7.

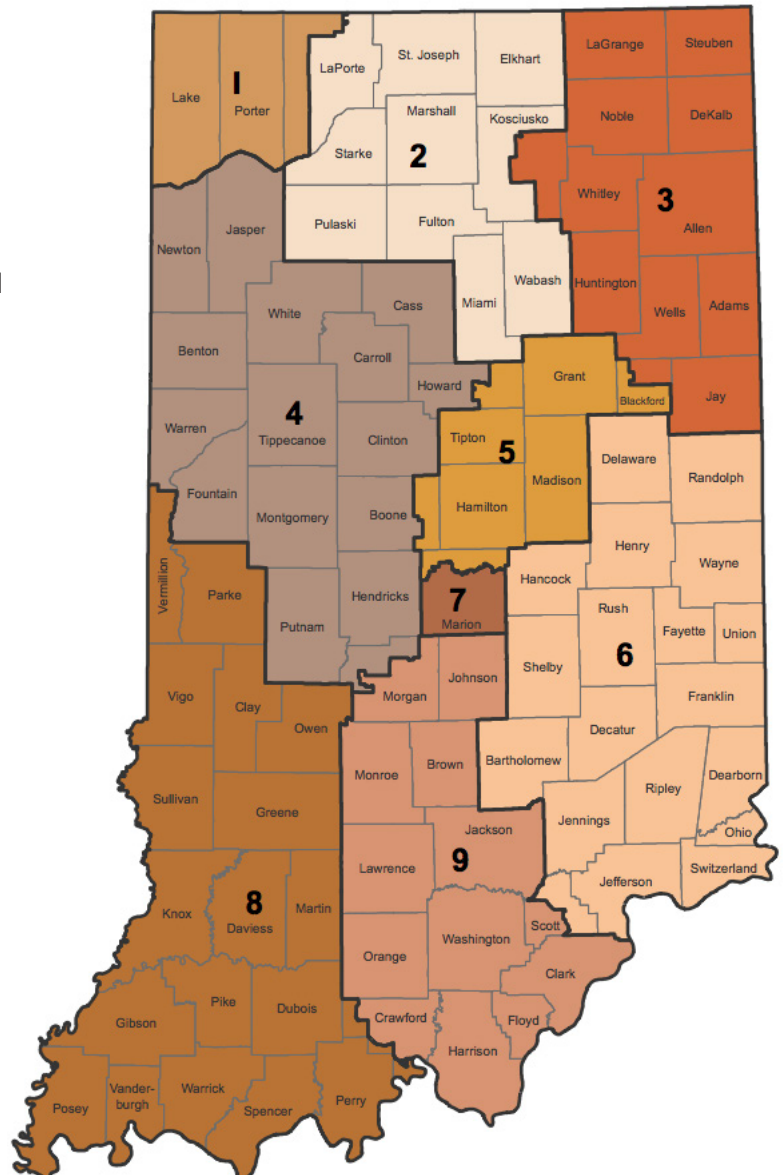
The 5th District had the highest levels of educational attainment and median household income. High school graduates were 93.4% of the population age 25 and older, with 45% having received a bachelor's degree or higher. This translated into a median

household income of \$67,461.

The lowest level of high school completion (8%) was in the 2nd District with the lowest levels of college completion (21%) in Districts 2 and 6. However, the lowest median household income (\$41,429) was found in District 7.

We've just scratched the surface of the diversity/similarity of Indiana's congressional districts, yet within most districts even greater diversity will be found. Good candidates know these differences when they hit the road and remind their constituents that diversity in our population must be respected and represented. ❖

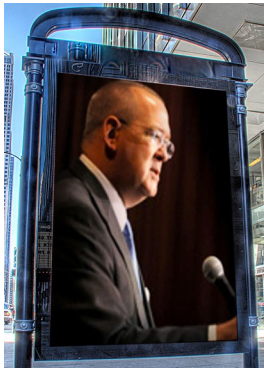
Mr. Marcus is an economist. His views can be followed on a [weekly podcast](#) or reached at Whogetswhat4@gmail.com



Workforce issues are deeper than they seem

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – Last month I attended a Federal Reserve Bank and Upjohn Institute conference on expanding opportunity within workforce development programs.



It isn't possible to review the breadth of the research or programs I heard about within the confines of this column, but I think many readers will appreciate one issue that raised its ugly head throughout the conference. That is the role of state departments of labor in distorting labor markets and poorly projecting skill needs. These issues offer a great deal to write about, so let me just focus on two matters, education and

'labor shortages.'

Since 1990, the United States has not created a single net new job for workers who have not been to college. Worse still, wages for non-college attendees are now lower than they were in 2000. So, even at full employment, labor market outcomes for workers who have not been to college are, on average, terribly poor.

The situation in Indiana is about the same. We haven't created a single new job for high school graduates in 20 years, which is as long as we have reliable data. Though high school dropouts have seen some job growth in recent years, it is only enough to account for 1.8% of jobs. Here, too, wages are collapsing, and now sits at less than 75% of the 1979 level after adjusting for inflation.

In the face of these U.S. Department of Labor data, Indiana's Division of Workforce Development tells us that between 2014 and 2024 Indiana will have to fill one million jobs, most of which will require only a high school diploma. With three years of a booming recovery behind us, it is safe to conclude that these predictions are profoundly mistaken in both magnitude and composition of new jobs.

To be fair, all forecasts are wrong, mine included. The real question is whether they are right enough to be useful. Here also, the answer is a resounding no. I'll use one of our more popular training programs to illustrate why.

Trucking companies nationwide complain of a truck driver shortage. Looking at employment data, you'd be inclined to agree with them. Total employed truck drivers have just now returned to their pre-recession level, at a time when they should probably be 15 percent higher based on the flow of goods. However, employment alone does not tell us if there is really an excess demand for truck drivers. To determine if demand is growing faster

than supply we'd have to look at wage data.

As it turns out, inflation-adjusted wages for truck drivers throughout 2017 grew slowly and were lower than they were in 2001. So, despite all the teeth gnashing and crying, there cannot be a real excess demand for truck drivers. If there were, wages for truck drivers would be much higher and rising.

Now, these aren't my facts, they belong to the Department of Labor. What they state clearly is that the labor shortage in truck drivers is just like the Lamborghini shortage I face at home. I want a Lamborghini, and my teenage sons want me to have a Lamborghini, but I don't want to pay the price for a Lamborghini. Instead, I drive a 10-year-old pickup truck and face a terrible shortage of Lamborghinis in my garage. This, I am quick to note, is not a public policy problem.

So, one might ask, why does Indiana pay so much to train new truck drivers, and list truck drivers as a "Hot 50 Job?" In terms of job growth, truck drivers ranked 187th and 191st out of roughly 500 Hoosier occupations since 2014. In terms of wage growth, they ranked 130th and 395th statewide. Again, these are U.S. Department of Labor data, drawn right off their website this week.

These shocking facts ought to motivate a statewide policy debate. After all, we are allocating a significant amount of state resources into training truck drivers, and telling young Hoosiers that these are "hot jobs." But, there's an even more unpleasant problem. I believe there is evidence that our training programs are actually suppressing wage growth. Since 2014, fewer than a quarter of all "Hot 50 Jobs" requiring only a certification in Indiana have had inflation adjusted wage increases. I don't know if this is simply the result of wretchedly poor occupational projections or if we've pushed so many young adults into these careers that it is quelling wage growth. Either way, our Workforce Development efforts are cruelly failing a number of Hoosiers.

There is more to worry about, like a complete lack of focus on automation-related job risk. But, if we cannot even get our 'Hot 50 Jobs' anywhere near right, preparing for the labor market effects of artificial intelligence is a pipe dream. The long-term fix to this problem isn't going to come out of a committee meeting or employer focus group, but out of solid, uncompromisingly honest data analysis. Our workforce development system has fallen well short of that goal. ❖

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A post-Memorial Day election status report

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

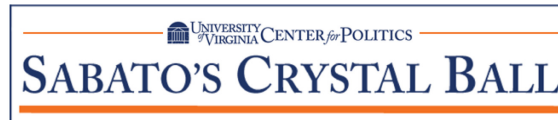
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA. — In a bygone political era, the symbolic end of summer -- Labor Day -- denoted the unofficial start of the campaign season. In our current era, one might be tempted to say that the symbolic start of summer -- Memorial Day -- now represents the campaign season kickoff, though American politics is in a state of perpetual campaigning. As soon as one campaign concludes with an election, candidates for the next election start to emerge. That will be the case after this November's election, when one would expect the battle for the Democratic presidential nomination to begin in earnest.

Still, the effective start of summer offers an opportunity to assess where the races for the House, Senate, and governorships stand. So we thought we'd offer brief updates on the state of play.

The race for the House

We have written a lot about the House recently, so those interested in a more in-depth assessment can check out some of our past pieces. But we've held at roughly 50-50 odds of a House flip for months. In a nutshell, Democrats have historical advantages: Since the Civil War, the president's party has lost ground in 36 of 39 midterms, with an average loss of 33 seats. In the shorter timeframe of the post-World War II era, the president's party has lost an average of 26 seats per midterm. The Democrats need to net 23 seats to win the House.

That said, the Republicans have advantages of their own. While some of the Republicans' gerrymandering advantages have been reduced through court-ordered maps in Florida, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, the overall House map still leans Republican -- the median House seat measured by 2016 presidential margin, NE-2, is about four percentage points to the right of the national margin. Republican gerrymanders in states like Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin endure (though a court order forced a modification in the Tar Heel State), making it challenging for Democrats to net House seats in these competitive states.



Democrats do benefit, on balance, from an unusually large number of open seats. At least 59 districts -- 39 held by Republicans, 20 held by Democrats -- will not feature an incumbent running for reelection, the second-highest total of open seats in the postwar era. Democrats will need to net a substantial number of seats from the open districts, probably a third or more of the 23 seats they need to flip the House.

The Democratic lead in the House generic ballot polling average probably will need to be in the high single digits for Democrats to really feel good about their chances in the fall. The Democrats' edge is currently short of that, but it has been in that range for much of the rest of the cycle.

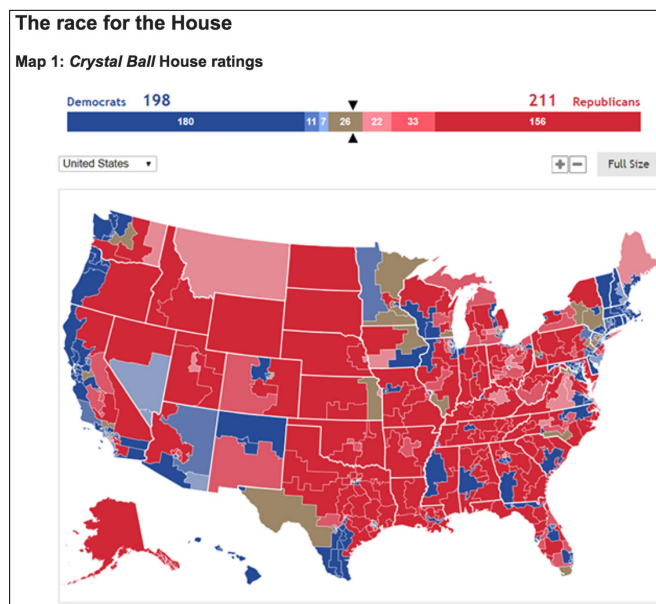
Overall, our ratings show 211 House seats at least leaning to the Republicans, 198 at least leaning to the Democrats, and 26 Toss-ups (24 held by Republicans, just two held by Democrats). Splitting the Toss-ups evenly would produce a 224-211 Republican House majority, or a net gain of 17 for the Democrats from the 194 seats they won in 2016. But if the election breaks toward the Democrats, as midterms often (but not always) do for the opposition party, one would expect their gains to be north of that.

The race for the Senate

Could Democrats win the Senate? Yes. Is the race for control a Toss-up? No. Republicans remain substantial favorites to retain the Senate majority.

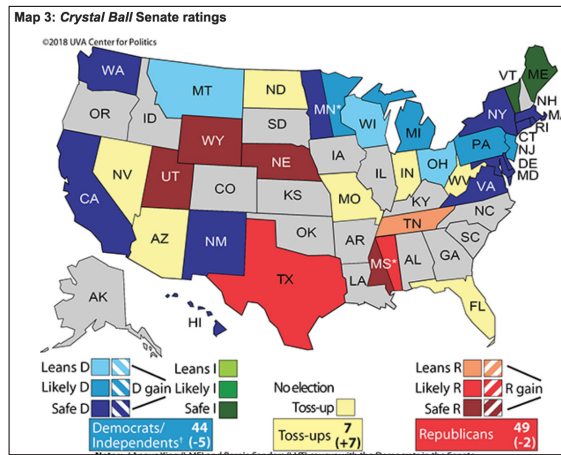
The reason is that the Senate map is so bad for Democrats. Even though the party that doesn't hold the White House typically makes up ground in the Senate, just like in the House, the non-presidential party has arguably never been so disadvantaged on a midterm Senate map as the Democrats are on this one. That's particularly true if one counts the two independents running

for reelection this year as Democrats, which is reasonable considering that Sens. Angus King of Maine and Bernie Sanders of Vermont caucus with the minority party. Thus, Democrats are defending 26 of the 35 Senate seats being contested this year, including 10 seats in states that President Donald Trump won in the last presidential election. If one uses such seats as a proxy for the most vulnerable Democratic-held Senate seats -- a reasonable metric -- then almost all of the most vulnerable Senate



Democrats are on the ballot this year. The only two Trump-state Senate Democrats who are not on the ballot this year are Sens. Doug Jones (D-AL) and Gary Peters (D-MI). Peters convincingly won even in the bad Democratic year of 2014; Jones should have a very difficult race for a full term in 2020 after winning a special election last December. Meanwhile, there are only three Republican senators that hold seats in states Hillary Clinton won, and of those, only one -- highly vulnerable Sen. Dean Heller (R-NV) -- is on the ballot.

The other two are Sens. Cory Gardner (R-CO) and Susan Collins (R-ME), both of whom are up for reelection in 2020. That Democrats can hold a 12-3 edge in "crossover" state senators and not hold the majority speaks to the Republican lean of the Senate: The median Senate seat by presidential performance would be the av-



erage of Arizona and North Carolina, or a seat that Trump won by about 3.5 points, so about 5.5 points to the right of the nation in terms of the most recent presidential results.

Jones' special election victory at the end of last year got the Democrats within range of the Senate majority by narrowing the GOP's Senate edge to 51-49. So the clearest path for the Democrats is to hold everything they have and net two additional seats, most likely the Toss-up seats in Arizona and Nevada.

Our ratings put 11 Senate seats in the Toss-up and Leans columns. Democrats need to win 10 to take control, in addition to holding all of the other seats we currently rate as Likely or Safe Democratic.

That remains a heavy lift for Democrats. At the same time, none of the Democratic Senate incumbents have worse than 50-50 odds. ❖

Trump on the Tippecanoe

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – I went away over the holiday weekend thinking I would get away from it all—whatever "it all" is. You know. No cell phones. No television. No distractions. Man, was I in for a surprise.

We headed to a campsite along the Tippecanoe River. We were there a year ago and the river was beautiful and rolling along at a hefty pace. It was a force. It was a very different looking river this time. A kid could walk across it without getting his head wet or worry about drowning. Motorized boats traversed the river with caution. And because it was so shallow, there was hardly a fisherman casting a lure.



And talk about hot. It seemed like the middle of July, not a day in late May. It was too hot to have much fun. Cooking on a hot fire added to the intense heat. And when the sun went down, not much of the heat went with it. Sleeping was a challenge. But, at least there was no communication with the outside world, no word about the daily lies and antics of Donald Trump.

Or so I thought. And then Tennessee Trump wandered into our campsite.

"I'm a working man," the guy said about his support of Trump.

"If you're a working man, you shouldn't like Trump," I told him.

"Trump is for the working man," Tennessee fired back.

"Trump only cares about the people who run the companies," I told him. "He just wants the rich to get richer."

"I'm a working man," Tennessee repeated as if he were programmed.

"So what kind of work do you do?" I asked. And bingo, he walked right into it.

"I'm assistant superintendent of a construction company," he said.

"So you aren't a working man," I said.

"I see to it that the workers get the job done," he retorted.

"So, you're management," I said.

"I'm a working man," he said, obviously wanting to avoid a logical exchange.

"Well, you and Trump have a good time back in Tennessee," I said, adding a litany of things I thought was wrong with Trump.

"We'll get your boy in 2020," I said before we departed.

I could only hope that what I said was true. I can only hope that Democrats pick the right person to do it. Maybe by then the river will have risen. ❖

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

Tim Swarens, IndyStar: As authorities continue to investigate the shooting of a student and a teacher at Noblesville West Middle School on Friday, many key facts remain unknown. But we can at this point identify at least three important lessons from the attack.

1. Teachers are first-responders: The U.S. First Responders Association defines a first responder as any individual who turns toward an emergency rather than away. Jason Seaman certainly fit that definition on Friday. The science teacher and football coach was shot three times, but still had the courage and strength to take down a student armed with two handguns. 2. It could have been worse: I don't write that lightly. I stood with parents outside Noblesville High School on Friday as they waited to comfort their children. I saw the strain on their faces. And heard the concern in their voices. It was a traumatic day for all who were involved. But thankfully the shooter had two pistols and not an AR-15. Because the carnage, as we've seen in multiple attacks around the country, almost certainly would have been much worse if he had packed more firepower. I also don't write that to play a morbid game of "what if?". The point rather is to ask people to think about the strength of the weapon they're bringing into their homes and neighborhoods, and perhaps inadvertently a school, when they purchase a semi-automatic rifle. 3. Lock up your guns: U.S. Attorney Josh Minkler, in a recent meeting with IndyStar's Editorial Board, noted the alarming frequency with which guns are stolen from their owners and then used to commit violence in Indianapolis. In 2016, researchers at Harvard and Northeastern universities found that at least 300,000 guns are stolen each year in the United States. Many are later used in other crimes. ❖

Bob Kravitz, WTHR-TV: It's more than a T-shirt that supports the Noblesville community after the recent horror at a middle school there. For so many of us, for so many Colts who wore those shirts Wednesday during OTA's, it hits close to home, and not just in a physical sense. Many of these players are fathers of school-aged children, sending their little ones off to school every day with a whispered prayer that they will be spared the madness that has descended upon our country. Cornerback Pierre Desir, a father of three children, two of them school-aged children, knows the fear and the anger, the confusion of why this keeps happening in a country that should be doing so much better by its kids. Just this week, Desir pulled aside his 11-year-old and his 7-year-old, both of them fearful of returning to school after the Noblesville West shooting, and he had "the conversation." "It's an unfortunate conversation but it's one that has to be had," Desir said. "Just to let them know what they can do if they see some kid being bullied, or if they see something at school to speak up and know that the teachers, the principal, the school staff are all there to help them. We've all got to have that dialogue. It's sad that it's necessary,



but it is." I had that conversation with my kids, too, except it happened back in 1999, when nearby Columbine High School in Littleton, Co. was shot up by two twisted young gunmen. We were living in Littleton at the time, less than five miles from Columbine, and I was working out at a health club just a mile or two from the high school when the shooting began. My daughters, who were seven and six at the time, remained in lockdown in their grade schools long into the afternoon and early into the evening. And they were terrified. Confused,

as little ones are when things like this happen, but terrified, too. As parents, we do all we can to keep our kids safe, but the last thing on our minds, at least back then, was the notion that school could go from being a safe space for learning into a killing ground. Now, it seems to happen every week or two, and a certain myopic segment of our country acts like it has absolutely no idea why it's happening. It's violent video games! It's pornography! yells one of our dimmer local politicians. Right. It's violent lyrics in songs! Again, they listen to the same music in Canada and Great Britain and Germany and elsewhere, and their schools aren't becoming Ground Zero. I hear people asking, "Why does this keep happening?" This is like me asking myself, "Why don't you lose weight?" Um, because you eat badly, drink too much beer and have forgotten the directions to the health club? Put two and two together, people. We are the most violent advanced nation on earth, a nation in love with its guns. But common sense gun control will not be enacted as long as politicians have sold themselves lock, stock and barrel to the NRA. ❖

Jonathan V. Last, Weekly Standard: So by now you know that ABC's Roseanne revival has been canceled after nine episodes following a Twitter outburst by the titular star in which she said of former Obama Whisperer Valerie Jarrett, "Muslim brotherhood & planet of the apes had a baby=vj." First off, let's dispense with the liberal-MSM conspiracy stuff. Yes, Roseanne was the highest-rated show on network TV for half of this season, but the show's trajectory was heading in the wrong direction, from 27.3 million viewers at the show's debut to a season average of 19 million viewers. Did Roseanne make money for ABC/Disney? Sure. But this isn't like Fox killing American Idol in 2003. Roseanne was a novelty act and no one thought it would be running at a high clip two seasons from now. And even if they had wanted to keep it, Disney/ABC had to cancel the show because the show was already getting out of the Roseanne business. It was a sitcom that got people to pay attention because it treated Red America Trump voters as normal (-ish) human beings. They should have known better, because Roseanne isn't just "not any sort of conservative." She is, at best, a vulgarian and, at worst, a cretin. ❖

Trump to impose tariffs on EU

WASHINGTON—The Trump administration, unable to win concessions from European Union counterparts ahead of a Friday deadline, is planning to make good on its threat to impose tariffs on European steel and aluminum, people familiar with the matter said ([Wall Street Journal](#)). The administration is expected to make an announcement as early as Thursday. The move, which has been threatened for months, is almost certain to draw a response from the EU, which has threatened to retaliate with its own tariffs on such American products as motorcycles, jeans and bourbon. President Donald Trump announced in March global tariffs of 25% on imported steel, and 10% on aluminum, based on national security concerns. The White House delayed implementation for some countries, giving those trading partners a chance to offer concessions to avoid the tariffs.

West MS students return to class

NOBLESVILLE – Students are back at Noblesville West Middle School five days after officials say a male student shot and wounded a fellow student and a teacher ([Indiana Public Media](#)). At least three police vehicles are positioned on the school's campus. Nicole Green's daughter is a student at Noblesville West. Green says she's still in shock, but she's focused on supporting her daughter and her friends. "I'm just trying to stay positive for them because I don't want them to see my fear," Green says. "But I am 100 percent positive that Noblesville Schools are keeping my children safe and did everything that they could." The school is operating on a reduced schedule the rest of the week; the last day of the school year is Friday. "I think it was just really emotionally healthy for everybody to be able to bond together," says Noblesville Schools spokesperson Marnie Cooke. "And you know we can provide

all of these resources to kids and just leave this school year on a good note."

Portage chief lays out safety plans

PORTAGE – Police Chief Troy Williams said the city and his department is taking what he feels is an "out-of-the box" approach to keep schools safe (Russell, [NWI Times](#)). A



10-point initiative released by Williams on Tuesday is emphasizing building relationships with students, mentoring those seemingly headed for trouble, increasing the sharing of information

and increasing opportunities for education for parents and students on issues ranging from bullying to active shooter survival skills. Many of the ideas, he said, have been "kicking around" for awhile, but felt it was time to begin their implementation following the most recent school shootings in Santa Fe, Texas, and Noblesville, Indiana. "We want to be proactive. Nationally, this has become a crisis," said Williams, who already announced two parts of the plan last week, including adding two more school resource officers to the high school and middle schools and having patrol officers adopt elementary schools, including the two in South Haven, which are located outside the city limits..

Sanders considering 2020 campaign

WASHINGTON – Sen. Bernie Sanders' former presidential campaign manager said the Vermont independent is considering another presidential run (Roll Call). "Nationally, he is considering another run for the presidency. When the time comes, I think we'll have an answer to that. But right now he's still considering it," said Jeff Weaver, who managed Sanders' 2016 campaign. Weaver appeared on C-SPAN's "Washington Journal" to promote his book "How Bernie Won."

His comments come as Sanders announced he would seek re-election to the Senate. "The 2018 midterm elections will be a pivotal moment in our country's history and we must fight for an agenda that works for working people," Sanders said in a statement last week. Weaver said Sanders' motivation "is the desire to have a new president in the White House and a heavy consideration is, who is the best person to beat [President Donald] Trump in 2020."

Ryan campaigns for Banks today

FORT WAYNE – U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan will be in Fort Wayne this morning to campaign for Rep. Jim Banks, R-3rd (Francisco, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Ryan, R-Wis., is scheduled to speak at a 9 a.m.

Holcomb tours auto plant

MISHAWAKA – Inside the building that once churned out Mercedes-Benz SUVs and Hummer H2s, work is beginning to retool the former AM General Commercial Assembly plant to produce cutting-edge electric vehicles ([South Bend Tribune](#)). SF Motors revealed further details Wednesday about plans to invest \$160 million here to produce electric SF5 and SF7 models. CEO John Zhang, said the company's goal is to become the world's leading "global intelligent electric vehicle brand." He was joined at the plant Wednesday by Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb, Indiana Commerce Secretary Jim Schellinger and Chinese Consul General of China to Chicago Hong Lei. "Since the founding of SF Motors in 2016," Zhang said, "we have been working tirelessly to achieve our vision in stealth mode." But in March, the company unveiled its new concept cars that may rival Tesla.