

## Donnelly's Supreme 'September surprise'

Allegations set in motion political minefield for incumbent, both parties

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – An obscure college professor, one Christine Blasey Ford, has provided the 2018 version of the political lightning bolt. In 2016 the "October surprise" by FBI Director James Comey led to the

presidential upset of the century. Last Friday, Ford provided the "September surprise" when she accused Supreme Court nominee Brett

Kavanaugh of sexual assault at a drunken high school bash 35 years ago.

Watching all of this on the fulcrum is U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, who a week ago was a plausible yes vote for what appeared to be a fait accompli nominee. Kavanaugh had asserted enough respect for case precedent on *Roe v. Wade* to keep Republican



Sens. Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski in the fold, and his resume and life story seemed a movie screenplay for his ultimate job on the high court.

**Continued on page 3**

## Walorski's bellwether

By **JACK COLWELL**

SOUTH BEND – Congresswoman Jackie Walorski predicts that national TV will focus first on Indiana's 2nd District on election night.

"We're a bellwether for the country," Walorski told supporters at the grand opening of her campaign headquarters in Mishawaka last week.

The Republican incumbent, seeking a fourth term, said that results in her race with Democratic challenger Mel Hall "will dictate what happens the rest of the night. And they'll dictate that Republicans have swept. There was no Democratic wave."

Her enthusiastic supporters cheered those predictions.

One of the predictions



**"I think we're gonna do much better than anyone thinks because the economy is so good, and people do like the job I'm doing."**

*- President Trump, telling Hill.TV there will be a 'red wave' in November*





**Howey Politics Indiana**  
**WHowey 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  
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 email: HoweyInfo@gmail.com

### Contact HPI

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

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wouldn't be disputed by Hall. He also sees the district as a bellwether.

With Indiana results in early – we are often the first state declared by the networks in presidential elections – it's likely that the 2nd District will be in national focus soon after the polls close.

Democrats, however, are predicting and counting on a wave to color the network maps with a lot of blue and to designate enough Democratic victories to capture control of the House.

**If one of the first** projections is that Walorski has won handily, as she did in her two prior reelection races, it could indeed signal that the blue wave was just a trickle.

If the projection is that Walorski has lost in a Republican-flavored district where President Trump won big, it could signal instead that the wave was a tsunami. Also possible, perhaps likely, is that the race will be too close to call quickly. Because of that possibility, Walorski and Hall both are concentrating on trying to get out the vote, or at least their votes.

Walorski urged her supporters at the headquarters, many of whom have been involved in making phone calls or knocking on doors, to work even harder because of the stakes in the election.

"We're talking about monumental, mountainous issues," she said. "We're talking about Hoosier values, right? We're talking about patriotism. We're talking about moving our country forward economically."

During her speech, Walorski mentioned neither Hall, her opponent, nor President Trump by name.

**But she hailed** the Trump agenda, particularly on the Republican tax bill, saying, "You got a president who led the way and signed it."

She checked off a "we did it" list: "Roll back regulations. Check. Tax reform. Check. Take care of veterans. Check."

Also, Walorski said, "We have a commander-in-chief who is serious about our nation leading globally again and to minimize the threats. To stand up and not be ashamed that we

are the United States of America."

Citing key campaign themes, Walorski stressed her legislative support of measures for veterans and her joining in bipartisan introduction of legislation, now approved in the House, to help seniors to continue to live at home.

While not mentioning Hall, she warned of what Democratic gains in Congress could mean, saying there is a "progressive Left in this country that is operating and growing expeditiously, taking a message of pure, 100 percent socialism in this country."

That message should be hammered home, she told her supporters,



when they encounter anyone thinking, "How can this possibly matter?"

**She praised** campaign volunteers, saying they have made "a record number of phone calls already, and [they] just got through Labor Day."

And it's a GOP team effort, Walorski said, "making sure that Mike Braun is our next senator," defeating Sen. Joe Donnelly, the Democratic incumbent. On the other side, too, it's a team effort, with the Donnelly and Hall campaigns working together.

Election night? "It's going to start here and roll through the rest of the country," Walorski predicted.

Maybe it will. And the TV networks will focus early on the 2nd Congressional District of Indiana as they seek to project which way it's rolling. ❖

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



## Kavanaugh, from page 1

Kavanaugh's nomination came in early summer, and yet here Donnelly and fellow vulnerable Democrats Heidi Heitkamp, and Joe Manchin seemed poised to go with the flow, confirm Kavanaugh as they had with Justice Neil Gorsuch. There was a minor risk of alienating the leftward wing of their bases, but even the most progressive liberal knows that Donnelly retiring back to Granger and Sen. Mike Braun in Washington would do nothing to help future causes.

At this writing, Capitol Hill and the nation watch in suspense at a potential Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill redux next Monday. This past Monday, Ford's attorney told the "Today Show" she would testify. Some 24 hours later, that had morphed into her call for an FBI investigation as opposed to what would be a classic "he said/she said" with not a whiff of validation. Chairman Chuck Grassley gave Ford a Friday deadline today. President Trump urged her to testify on Wednesday. Ford has not said she won't testify. CNN reported today an FBI probe of Anita Hill 23 years ago took three days. So an FBI probe isn't likely to push the Kavanaugh confirmation vote into the lame duck session of Congress, which would collide with a potential majority change in January, depending on the verdict of voters in a referendum on President Trump on Nov. 6.

In the wake of Ford's allegations that failed to surface after several FBI background checks as Kavanaugh's career coursed through the Bush43 White House and then the D.C. District court, Donnelly's conundrum was how seriously to take an 11th hour breach.

On Tuesday, Donnelly sought time, saying, "The allegations made against Judge Kavanaugh are serious and merit further review. Given the nature of these allegations, and the number of outstanding questions, I believe the Judiciary Committee should hold off on Thursday's scheduled votes." He found Braun on a similar page, agreeing that dual testimony from Kavanaugh and Ford was prudent, given the lifetime appointment at stake. Braun went on to praise Kavanaugh, saying, "I support Senator Grassley's decision to have these 11th hour allegations

thoroughly reviewed by the Senate Judiciary Committee, and weighed against Judge Kavanaugh's decades of public service, sterling record on the bench, outstanding personal reputation, and his unequivocal denial of the allegations." This morning on WIBC's Tony Katz Show, Braun called for a confirmation vote next week, but he did not reaffirm his support for the nominee.

Over the next week or so, danger lurks everywhere for Donnelly, Democrats and Republicans and President Trump, who seemed remarkably cool on Monday when he suggested a "full process" to air Ford's allegation was in order, though the president called his nominee "as high a quality individual as you'll ever see." Missing were incendiary Trump tweets when he feels aggrieved, suggesting to some that Kavanaugh might be as disposable as Bush43's bizarre appointment of Harriet Miers 13 years ago. Miers gave way to reliably conservative Justice Samuel Alito (with Dan Coats as his sherpa), and the talk was that Kavanaugh's demise could give way to another conservative darling, 7th Circuit Judge Amy Comey Barrett, like Donnelly a Notre Dame graduate.

Kavanaugh stands on a trap door with time ticking away. Within minutes or hours of this writing, he could easily be toast without the jam.

But if Trump and the wily Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell don't fold, then ol' "Sleepin' Joe" could be facing Ambien nights.

Jim Manley, a former Democratic Senate leadership aide, told Reuters that Ford allegations could give Donnelly & Company a reprieve: "For those Democrats up for re-election from states that Trump carried, they now have absolutely no reason to vote for Kavanaugh. Period. End of story. They have all the cover they need."

Michael Tomasky of the Daily Beast thinks otherwise: "I'm not sure it's that simple. Assuming Judge Kavanaugh's nomination is not withdrawn and the Republicans continue to fight for him, these three Democrats and possibly one or two others will still find themselves in a tough position. In fact, if a couple of Republicans defect from Judge Kavanaugh, these Democrats will be in an even tougher spot than before. Imagine this hypothetical. Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski, the two Republican senators



who are under the most pressure to oppose confirmation, decide to do so. That takes Judge Kavanaugh down to 49 votes. Game over. Except maybe not. At that point, Republicans, far from accepting defeat, will surely start aiming fire at the three Democrats."

In this scenario, McConnell doubles down, the right-wing money pours into Indiana (and there may be \$10 million to \$20 million already aimed at Donnelly in what will be wall-to-wall assaults through Nov. 6), and McConnell schedules a Halloween vote.

Tomasky picks up his narrative: "That will constitute enormous pressure on the red-state Democrats. If they sense their opponents are gaining steam, they may well think, 'Why should I cast a vote that's going to cost me my seat? Especially when even if we defeat Judge Kavanaugh, we're just going to get someone else who's every bit as conservative?' If one of them moves to a pro-Kavanaugh position, it's likely that all three will move. Here's why. There is a standing agreement among minority parties in the Senate that in such situations, no one wants to be the 50th vote. The lone senator who provides the 50th vote can be blamed and reviled. But if all three move together, then one of them can't be singled out as having cast the dreaded 50th vote."

This all comes with conventional wisdom revealing (via tossup NBC/Marist and Fox News polls) that thus far Donnelly has weathered Hurricane Mike. He's in a similar polling situation to his 2012 race against Richard Mourdock. The difference is that GOP babysitters were keeping Mourdock's crazy speak in the back of his mind, until it crawled through his lips during the final debate. Braun is far more disciplined, suggesting a tossup race to the end.

At this point a Kavanaugh/Ford session of sworn testimony next Monday brings other dangers for everyone. It would be a complete mid-term wild card. Republicans risk fueling the "pink wave," with a record number of congressional, Senate, gubernatorial and legislative female candidates nationwide and here in Indiana. But Republicans tend to win cultural wars, right Mike Dukakis? So these allegations have become the "September surprise." Wonder what October will bring?

A reliable HPI source observes: This is not typical of situations we have seen recently. So far, no additional women have come forward suggesting serial predatory behavior from Kavanaugh. That doesn't mean a single incident, or even several in high school, might not have occurred. But if no one else surfaces, if no one comes forward saying he was at this party or that this was typical behavior for him then Ford might not be believed, especially if she does not testify. And Kavanaugh seems like the kind of guy who has been planning a big career for himself for quite some time. Guys like that sometimes feel entitled as I am sure many students at his school did. That argues for, "it happened." Or sometimes guys like that are incredibly careful and avoid any kind of compromising situation like crazy high school parties. His mom was a judge which causes me to further question whether he would put him-

self in a bad spot, but on the other hand, he was 17 so he may not have been thinking at all."

If Ford's story becomes believable (but ultimately unvalidated unless the FBI starts probing), then the Kavanaugh trap door opens and he spends the rest of his career on the D.C. circuit. Donnelly escapes a tough situation. But if Ford stumbles, or it somehow becomes clear that her charge against Kavanaugh is not true, then Donnelly is in a tough spot. Democrats will look like they're pulling the proverbial fast one, a legendary stall for time.

Of course, where have seen that stunt before? (We're looking at you, Sen. McConnell).

So this is a volatile, unpredictable, wing-to-wing event, with tailwinds easily turning to head, the final chapters unknown at this writing. Stay tuned.

### Donnelly runs Jacob Sexton ad

In the Republican primary, Braun had one of the most effective ads in modern Indiana politics, his "twin cardboard cutouts" that sent Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita to the dustbin. Donnelly's campaign is airing the [most effective ad](#) of the general cycle thus far. It highlights his authoring the Jacob Sexton Military Suicide Prevention Act. The ad features Sexton's salt-of-the-earth parents Jeff and Barb Sexton of Farmland. He's a truck driver, she's a Gold Star mom. They lost their son, Army Spc. Jacob Sexton, in 2009 when he shot himself in a Muncie movie theater during a 15-day leave from his Indiana National Guard unit in Afghanistan. He had also been deployed in Iraq. Sexton's father talks in the ad about his son's death and praises Donnelly for the legislation that requires the



U.S. military to keep mental health records of soldiers. Jeff Sexton said, "To lose a son because of the war is one thing, but to lose a son to the war is another." Barb Sexton can be seen saying that she wears her Gold Star "above the heart." The couple and a sibling appear arm in arm with Donnelly. Jeff Sexton says near the end of the ad, "Joe Donnelly is a lifesaver." If you're one of those suburban female voters, this ad is effective.

### NRSC up with 3 ads v. Donnelly

The NRSC is up with its first ads of 2018 in In-

diana, debuting two new TV ads and a radio ad. TV and radio versions of “No to Joe” feature President Trump calling out Donnelly for constantly voting against the Trump-Pence agenda at his recent rally in Evansville. The President highlights Donnelly’s votes against the GOP tax cuts, repeal and replace of Obamacare and enhanced vetting for refugees and reminds Hoosiers that a vote for Mike Braun is a vote to Make America Great Again. A second TV ad, “Fire Drill” brings to attention to what the NRSC calls Donnelly’s “do-nothing” record in Congress.

### Donnelly endorsed by Jewish Council

Donnelly was endorsed last week by the Jewish Democratic Council of America. “JDCA stands with candidates who align with the Jewish community on a range of domestic and foreign policy issues,” said Halie Soifer, JDCA executive director. “The margin of victory in any of these races will be razor thin, and the Jewish vote could serve as the decisive factor in the outcome of the race.”

### Braun campaign underwhelming GOP

As Democrat Joe Donnelly barnstorms the state in a used RV, it is Republican Mike Braun’s own sleepy campaign that’s leaving Republicans underwhelmed — and

worried (Slodysko, Associated Press). Groups that typically back GOP candidates, such as the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, are sitting on the sidelines. Braun’s recent three-stop “solutions” tour — spread out across three days — was ridiculed by Democrats, who pointed to Donnelly’s seven-day, 40-stop trek in August. And while Braun, a multimillionaire businessman, took out \$6.4 million in loans to fund his primary campaign, he also publicly groused about the cost. Now, with less than two months until the election, he has yet to purchase air time for October, while Donnelly has outspent him by almost double on TV and radio since June, records show. That’s cause for concern, according to a half-dozen GOP officials, operatives and commentators familiar with the race, most of whom spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to offer candid assessments of the contest. They say Braun appears to be coasting at a time when he ought to be investing more of his own money and rallying the base.

### FiveThirtyEight gives Donnelly 75% chance

[FiveThirtyEight](#) gives Sen. Donnelly a 76.1% chance of winning, projecting Donnelly with 51.5% of the vote, Braun with 46.1% and Libertarian Lucy Brenten with 2.4%. **Horse Race Status:** Tossup. ❖

# The politicization of sexual assault

By CHRISTINA HALE

INDIANAPOLIS – Bad things happen when underage kids drink to excess without supervision. Perhaps you’ve seen it yourself or parented a teen who learned the hard way that gathering your friends to slam dad’s vodka when he’s on vacation is a good way to get expelled. Or for today’s youth, your phone confiscated.



A few years ago, I collaborated with Sen. Jim Merritt to amend the Lifeline Law to include assault. This law is in place for exactly these kinds of parties, where teenagers drink and possibly take drugs to

excess, and injuries result. No one wants to call the police, and young people have died from a variety of injuries over the years, from fisticuffs at beach parties on the shores of Lake Michigan to falling down the stairs in Central Indiana.

**Sometimes assaults** of a sexual nature happen at these parties as well. Republicans and Democrats all voted unanimously to pass a law that now essentially

says, “Hey kids! If you drink underage and are assaulted at a party, and afraid to report the crime as your friends may get in trouble for drinking, don’t worry! If you report or call an ambulance, you are all are indemnified from the drinking offenses.” Now, your parent or guardian very well may punish you, but you cannot be punished by the government for underage drinking in this instance.

We passed this law because it was truly needed, right here in happy, wholesome Indiana where binge drinking parties and assaults and injuries happen somewhere every day.

**Teens do not report** these crimes for a variety of reasons. It can take years for victims of assault to feel emotionally prepared to report a crime, particularly if it is likely to be very public and controversial, and especially if it has the potential to be politicized.

Many adults, perhaps even you, can relate to the experiences described by Judge Kavanaugh’s high school classmate Mike Judge, who wrote a book called “Wasted: Tales of a Gen X Drunk,” detailing his life of parties and binge drinking while attending Georgetown Preparatory School.

Of course, Mike Judge is also now cited by Dr. Christine Blasey Ford as a witness to an alleged assault by Kavanaugh at such a party. There were a lot of those kinds of parties in the 80’s. And there were a lot of cases like this one we will never hear about. It is our collective responsibility to create an atmosphere where victims feel safe to report without negative consequences.

Just because you find her report to be politicized

does not render it untrue. You may disagree with the timing, how it was reported, or the implications for the appointment process, but that does not excuse an alleged assault. Such allegations need to be worked through the criminal justice system, rather than the court of public opinion. And reports should not be leaked without the express permission of those involved. Just ask the victims involved in the Curtis Hill case.

We need victims reporting alleged assaults when they happen so they can access the services they need

in a timely manner, and so law enforcement can properly intervene.

Will these events change the vote for Judge Kavanaugh? Doubtful. However, the less than gracious way the victim has been treated could also have negative lasting effects. ❖

**Hale is a former state representative from Indianapolis and was the 2016 Democratic lieutenant governor nominee.**

## Walorski, Banks evade the ‘debate dodge’

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS – There’s still a debate dodge by Republicans, and not just in Northern Indiana. Both Reps. Jim Banks and Jackie Walorski have agreed to debates with Democrats Courtney Tritch and Mel Hall.



But in Southern Indiana, Greg Pence in the 6th CD and U.S. Reps. Larry Bucshon and Trey Hollingsworth are rebuffing Democratic challengers Jeanine

Lee Lake, William Tanoos and Liz Watson. From the Pence perspective, Vice President Mike Pence built the foundation of his political career on his ability to debate. For brother Pence, not so much.

Walorski and Hall will debate on live television at the WSBT-TV and WNDU-TV studios without in-person audiences, said Max Harris, Hall’s campaign manager. Walorski told the South Bend Tribune’s Editorial Board Monday that she also would agree to a live televised debate at WNIT-TV, the South Bend-based public television station. Harris said the two debates will be in October, but the dates weren’t confirmed yet on Monday.

Banks will debate Tritch on WANE-TV on Nov. 1.

But the Watson campaign said that Hollingsworth isn’t even responding to debate invitations. “Hollingsworth couldn’t even be bothered to respond to a group of students who want to participate in the process,” said Brian Peters, Watson’s campaign manager.

Bucshon was criticized by the Terre Haute Tribune-Star editorial board, which wrote: “Debates between candi-

dates for offices chosen by the people have long been a staple of American democracy. The give-and-take before real people informs and enlightens the citizens watching and listening. Challengers can question an incumbent’s stances. Incumbents can rebut wild assertions and explain their votes. Those exchanges inform the audience — the voters. Those voters could raise plenty of questions for Bucshon. His stances on issues simmering right now would be enlightening. Does he favor another round of tax cuts proposed by House Republicans, known as Tax Reform 2.0, which would add \$627 billion to the federal deficit? Does he agree with Trump that a possible government shutdown would be “great” if Congress fails to fund federal operations by the end of this month? Does he favor another stop-gap funding measure? Does he support House resolutions that would implement independent citizen commissions to determine political districts instead of the current party gerrymandering practice?

The Tribune-Star editorial concluded: “His an-

swers, and those by Tanoos, would make for a lively, informative debate. Instead, the people of the 8th District have lost that opportunity. That is so, unless Bucshon reconsiders and decides to debate — as he should.”

Indiana Democrats describes it as a “debate dodge” and noted that it extends to General Assembly races. The party cited Sen. Jim Tomes, Sen. Andy Zay, Rep. Sally Siegrist, Rep. Bob Heaton, Rep. Peggy Mayfield, Rep. Jeff Ellington, Rep. Chris May and Rep. Cindy Kirchhofer as refusing to debate. Chairman John Zody said, “It’s just the beginning.



Reps. Larry Bucshon, Trey Hollingsworth and Greg Pence (top) are refusing to debate Democrats William Tanoos, Liz Watson and Jeannine Lee Lake.

I'm positive more Indiana Republicans will come down with Debate Dodge Fever. It's about showing up to work and Republicans seem to think they aren't accountable to Hoosier taxpayers. Until they believe they are, they'll do everything they can to hide from Hoosier voters."

**Congress**

**9th CD: Watson assails Trey on PACs**

Democrat Liz Watson launched her first general election [campaign ad](#) in the Indianapolis market, assailing U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth for reneging on a 2016 stance of not taking PAC money. "It was all a lie," Watson says, looking into the camera. "Over 80% of Trey's money came from Wall Street, insurance and corporate special interests. And then Trey voted to take away health care for millions and he wrote a bill to protect payday lenders." She said, "I don't take corporate money. When I vote, you'll know it's for you." **Horse Race Status:** Likely Hollingsworth.



**Pences raise \$450K at DC fundraiser**

Vice President Mike Pence and his brother, Indiana congressional candidate Greg Pence, raised about \$450,000 at a political fundraiser in Washington, a campaign adviser said (Sikich, IndyStar). The event was hosted at the offices of the National Restaurant Association, a powerful lobbying group that supports tax deductions for restaurants and opposes certain labor initiatives such as increasing the minimum wage. About 75 people attended the luncheon, including Congressman Luke Messer. The fundraiser benefits Greg Pence's campaign and his political action committee, as well as the Great American Committee, which is Mike Pence's political action committee, and the National Republican Congressional Committee, according to Marty Obst, senior political adviser to the vice president and director of the Great America Committee.

**Simon sisters give \$12 million to Dems**

A pair of shopping-mall scions from Indiana might seem like unlikely champions of the Democratic resistance. But sisters Deborah Simon and Cynthia Simon-Skjodt, who have for years

opposed Mike Pence in Indiana over abortion and religious freedom laws, have poured \$12 million into backing Democrats, making their combined contributions the seventh largest chunk of cash donated to either party this cycle (Politico). The Simon sisters, as these members of Indiana's most famous business family are called around Indianapolis, are still relatively unknown figures on the national stage. But their turn to big-league giving, mostly to help Democrats retake the Senate, comes after years of donations to progressive nonprofits such as Planned Parenthood and the Anti-Defamation League, and as Democratic donors have gone into hyperdrive after the election of President Donald Trump.

**Trump predicts GOP will hold Congress**

President Trump doubled down on his confidence about the midterm elections, saying in an exclusive interview with Hill.TV on Tuesday that he liked his party's chances given the growing economy. "I think we're gonna do much better than anyone thinks because the economy is so good, and people do like the job I'm doing," Trump, who has talked about the possibility of a "red wave" for the GOP this fall, told Hill.TV in the Oval Office interview. Trump also noted his triumph in a crowded GOP primary, which few in politics saw coming. "I had just beaten 17 people, including the Bush dynasty. I then beat the Hillary Clinton dynasty. You can give me credit for Bernie Sanders and all, because I was — 'cause I was part of it, but you know. So, I beat the Bush dynasty, the Clinton dynasty, 17 people, and I never left center stage once, you can check. I never left center stage, meaning I had the lead in Republican primaries from day one," he said.

**Statewides**

**Lawson schedules 'candidate schools'**

With Russian election assaults continuing on the U.S. election process, Secretary of State Connie Lawson announced this morning she will be hosting "candidate schools" in Terre Haute, Evansville, Jeffersonville, Fort Wayne, Elkhart, Valparaiso, Lafayette and Indianapolis from Sept. 20-27. "Candidate Schools help new candidates

understand the basics of cybersecurity and campaign finance, while providing a refresher to veteran candidates," Lawson said. It will also bring about scads of earned media in every market as she wages a reelection campaign against Democrat Jim Harper. We would not be surprised if Harper enrolls in every session.

### Harper hopes to end GOP hold

It has been almost three decades since a Democrat has been elected Indiana secretary of state, but Jim Harper hopes to reverse that trend. The last Democrat to win the statewide office was Joe Hogsett in 1990 (de la Bastide, Anderson Herald-Bulletin). Harper, 35, is a lawyer in Valparaiso working in a law firm with his father and two brothers. His mother and stepfather are judges in Porter County. His mother is a Republican and his stepfather is a Democrat. In 2016, Harper lost to incumbent Republican Ed Charbonneau for the 5th District seat in the Indiana Senate, 60 to 40% margin. This year, Harper is running against incumbent Republican Connie Lawson, who was

appointed to the position in 2012 and then won reelection in 2014. "We need new leadership in state government," Harper said during a telephone interview with The Herald Bulletin on Thursday. "I'm tired of one party controlling state government and we need someone in leadership from my generation." **Horse Race Status:** Safe Lawson.

### Nation

#### Bloomberg ponders run as Democrat

Michael R. Bloomberg is actively considering a campaign for president as a Democrat in 2020, concluding that it would be his only path to the White House even as he voices stark disagreements with progressives on defining issues including bank regulation, stop-and-frisk police tactics and the #MeToo movement (New York Times). Bloomberg, 76, a billionaire media executive and former New York City mayor, has already aligned himself with Democrats in the midterm elections. ❖

# When candidates fear the people

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

NASHVILLE, Ind. – If you envision a career in Congress, there are several aspects of the job you have to accept: You work 15 to 16 hour days and weekends, you have to raise big bucks, and, once upon a time, you had to meet with your constituents.

Even when they're angry, fearful or contrarian.



There used to be another part of the job description in the TV age of politics: You should be willing to debate your opponent, and show up to various forums sponsored by civic groups like the League of Women Voters, schools, or the Rotary Club.

But here in the 2018 midterms, we find a number of Republican incumbents or nominees ducking the debates.

Democratic 8th Congressional District nominee William Tanoos became the latest to find an incumbent Republican congressman unwilling to match ideas and wit on a public stage, in front of TV cameras and radio mics. He joins 6th CD nominee Jeannine Lee Lake and 9th CD nominee Liz Watson in alleging that U.S. Reps. Larry Bucshon, and Trey Hollingsworth won't debate along with 6th CD nominee Greg Pence.

Tanoos said that WNIN and the Evansville Cou-

rier & Press offered three dates for debate: Oct. 22, Oct. 24, and Nov. 1. "This is a basic part of the democratic process," said Tanoos about his disappointment that Dr. Bucshon declined.

**Bucshon spokesman** Andrew Hansen told the Courier & Press, "Based on his ongoing direct engagement with Hoosiers and deep public record, voters in the 8th District are familiar with Dr. Bucshon's strong record of accomplishments on their behalf and where he stands on the issues, and he does not see the utility in debates leading up to the election."

To Bucshon's credit, he's conducted several town hall sessions over the past year and has found angry, agitated and contrarian constituents. But while his town halls could be emotional, the folks were testy but peaceful. Hoosiers tend to be that way.

Watson campaign manager Brian Peters told me that Rep. Hollingsworth "has turned down about a dozen groups now. He has turned down two city chambers of commerce, local newspapers, community groups, college students, the list goes on and on. It would be comical if this election wasn't so important. They aren't even pretending to consider invites now, they are just flat out ignoring everyone." Peters said Hollingsworth skipped an Indianapolis health forum, but was seen heading into a nearby Ruth's Chris Steakhouse.

**Hollingsworth did schedule** one town hall session in Scottsburg last winter and Watson decided to show up with supporters. The freshman Republican abruptly cancelled, citing a "security concern."

"My opponent hasn't held a single town hall and, in fact, cancelled the one and only town hall he was supposed to hold when I announced I was going," Watson said. Was there a threat? "I worked very hard to run that



down. I certainly wasn't going to show up with my supporters if that was the case because I wouldn't want to put anyone in harm's way. I could find no evidence."

Pence, the brother of the vice president, isn't doing town halls, debates or even media interviews. Apparently he believes the name is as good as a punched ticket.

**Why would these Republicans** duck debates and town halls? Because their political consultants are advising them not to expose themselves. Hoosier Republicans drew the maps in 2011, and in my latest election forecast, seven of the nine Republicans are in my "safe" category. They're essentially cinches for reelection mostly by the way the maps were drawn. Hollingsworth and Rep. Jackie Walorski are heavy favorites.

So a savvy political consultant will say: Endure a couple of news cycles of bad headlines as opposed to making the kind of blunder 2012 Republican Senate candidate Richard Mourdock did in his race against Joe Donnelly that cost him any chance of winning.

The consultants will point to a Bloomington town hall U.S. Rep. Baron Hill conducted in 2009 when he



banned audio recorders, at one point telling a high school student, "No one tells me how to run my office." He lost to Todd Young a year later.

I was with then U.S. Rep. Joe Donnelly at a Kokomo town hall on a sultry night in 2009 as the Tea Party gained steam. It was moved outside to accommodate an angry, agitated

and contrarian crowd. I even loaned Donnelly my shades, but the real political pros know how to explain, commiserate, console and deflect. Donnelly survived the night and won reelection the following year despite his vote for Obamacare.

**Not all Republicans are fearful.** Walorski is going to debate Democratic challenger Mel Hall. Rep. Jim Banks will debate Courtney Tritch on Nov. 1. Republican Mike Braun will do two statewide televised debates with Sen. Donnelly in October.

They must realize that one of the saddest aspects of participatory democracy is when a public servant or wannabe becomes fearful of and, in the final analysis, disrespectful of the people they want to lead. ❖

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

# Merritt joins Delph, Ford on vulnerable list, but super majority safe

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – When the primary election dust settled in May, our long-term forecast for Indiana Senate races was that Democrats would need the kind of tidal wave akin to 1964 or 1974 to claw back into power.



With less than 50 days before the general election, we find three Republicans – Mike Delph, Jim Merritt and Jon Ford – truly vulnerable. Factor in the so-called “suburban female vote” that characterizes Delph’s Marion/Hamilton County

district and the Merritt district in Indianapolis and the twin SDs 45 and 46 in the Jeffersonville/Clark County area within the Louisville suburbs where Sens. Ron Grooms and Jim Smith both won tight races in 2014, there doesn’t appear to be enough races in play for Democrats to make meaningful gains.

Sen. Smith is retiring, and joins another open seat, SD26 being vacated by State Sen. Doug Eckerty, in the handful of districts that appear to be in play. In that race, Anderson Fire Chief Dave Cravens appears to have a shot at a pickup for the super minority party.

Delph told HPI on Wednesday morning, “I think we’re in pretty good shape quite honestly. Went up on digital. We’re preparing to go up on TV real soon,” he said. “We have an aggressive direct mail plan. We continue to go door-to-door. The response has been real good. The only reason this seat is in play is the president and our Senate candidate are under-performing in this district.”

That reference was obviously to President Trump, where national polls show him underwater with independents, moderates and educated female voters. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s PAC has been doubling down on Mike Braun appearing with Trump at the MAGA rally in Evansville, evidence that he is still trying to turn out the Republican base. As our analysis said last week, that could be pushing away the suburban voters that Delph and Merritt need.

Sources tell HPI that President Trump is also extremely unpopular in Merritt’s district. And that could be a factor in the Louisville suburb races in SD 45-46, though Republican sources seem less animated about losing those seats than the two Indianapolis/Carmel seats.

J.D. Ford and Chris Gambill in SD38 are running on issues like providing living wages, redistricting reform,

improved infrastructure and funding early education.

The “Democratic wave” is hard to gauge at this point. Having surveyed a handful of polls in last week’s edition that suggested President Trump is losing independent and moderate voters, it might be easy to read that as translating into potential Democratic gains in Indiana. Trump’s approval in Indiana was 47% in a recent NBC/Marist Poll.

But while Trump may be a referendum in congressional level races, and certainly in the U.S. Senate race here, there isn’t a lot of evidence that will translate to down ballot races, which occurred during the LBJ landslide in 1964 and the 1974 Republican debacle stemming from President Nixon’s Watergate scandal and subsequent resignation.

Gov. Eric Holcomb’s approval has been 20 points higher than his negatives, the jobless rate at 3.4% is at a near historic low, and wages have finally begun to perk up, while employers find it hard to find enough of the workers they need.



Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. campaigning with SD31 Democrat Derek Camp in his race against State Sen. Jim Merritt.

Holcomb raised some controversy with his call for Attorney General Curtis Hill to resign in early July, and his decision to raise trucking tolls on the Indiana Toll Road. But the open Joe Zakas seat in Elkhart/St. Joseph County appears to be a Republican lock with businesswoman Linda Rogers, and we don’t see any other northern Indiana race in play.

So on the whole, Republicans in Indiana appear to be solidly on the “right track,” and that may be enough to

withstand the impacts of a Trump referendum.

Senate Republicans have a 41-9 super majority. At this writing, we believe Democrats have an opportunity to pick up between two and five seats, depending on whether a Democratic wave develops and the GOP base is suppressed. There aren't enough races in play to suggest Democrats can break the GOP's super majority hold.

Worth keeping an eye on in the context of Indiana Senate races is the high school sexual assault controversy surrounding Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. A blow-up of dueling testimony and President Trump's response could bring about what Delph calls the "silent majority" that is subterranean at this point (as it was in the home stretch of the 2016 campaign). Delph believes many Trump voters aren't actively engaged in social media and are under-sampled in polling. So the Kavanaugh "September surprise" could yield a twin in October.

So here is our second forecast for the Indiana Senate, subject to evolution and change in the coming six weeks. These include races in the "Likely" to "Tossup" range. All others are deemed "Safe" for the incumbent.

**SD11: Republican:** Linda Rogers. **Democrat:** Ed Liptrap. **Analysis:** Rogers upset State Sen. Joe Zakas 66-33% on May 8. In 2014, Zakas ran unopposed, carrying 19,924 votes. Rogers, 66, who owns Juday Creek Golf Course and Nugent Builders in Granger appears to be in good shape to retain this seat. She faces Liptrap, a South Bend cabinet-maker and a U.S. Navy veteran. He is for the legalization of medicinal marijuana and decriminalization, and is a public school advocate. We've included this seat because it is open, but this is a very Republican district and should hold for the majority caucus. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Rogers.

**SD15: Republican:** Sen. Liz Brown. **Democrat:** Kathy Zoucha. **Analysis:** Sen. Brown defeated Jack Morris 15,101 to 10,482 four years ago. She faces Zoucha, a Fort Wayne special education teacher with a bachelor's degree from IPFW. She ran for a House district seat in 2016, but lost to Republican Rep. Dave Heine, R-New Haven. Zoucha picked up the FOP endorsement this week, but we still believe Sen. Brown is a strong favorite. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Brown.

**SD17: Republican:** Sen. Andy Zay. **Democrat:** Gary Snyder. **Analysis:** Republican State Sen. Jim Banks ran unopposed in 2014 with 20,013 votes in what is a very Republican district. Upon Banks' election to Congress, Zay won a caucus to replace him and faces former Libertarian Snyder of Huntington. Zay received some negative publicity about Facebook postings and is refusing to debate Snyder. The former Libertarian has tried to capitalize on the alcohol reform and marijuana legalization issues, but there is little evidence he is finding any kind of traction to make this a competitive race. We've included this race because this is Zay's first Senate race before the broader electorate. Without an emphatic Democratic wave, there is virtually no chance this seat will flip and even if there is such a wave,

the Republican nature of this district should hold for the majority caucus. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Zay.

**SD22: Republican:** Sen. Ron Alting. **Democrat:** Sheryl Shipley. **Analysis:** In 2014 Alting ran unopposed with 16,051 votes. Indiana Democratic Chairman John Zody told Lafayette Journal & Courier columnist Dave Bangert that Alting's seat is "winnable." Bangert explained, "This definitely will be Alting's biggest challenge in a long time. Sherry Shipley is serious about her campaign, which was born out of frustration with Rep. Todd Rokita and the post-Trump election days." But local sources tell HPI that while Shipley is working hard, there isn't much evidence at this point that Indiana Democrats are active here. "She is going to be hard-pressed to beat Ron Alting," Bangert told HPI on Wednesday. "I know you've asked about things like cold beer and other things that have been in Alting's control, but I don't think those will really drive this election. Alting remains a popular and present guy around his district." Alting and Shipley won't have a traditional debate at this point, but they did do a joint interview with WBAA radio at a miniature golf place in Lafayette." **Horse Race Status:** Likely Alting.

**SD25: Democrat:** Senate Minority Leader Tim Lanane. **Republican:** Zaki Ali. **Analysis:** There are still rumblings that Lanane has gotten sideways with African-Americans on the west side of Anderson after defeating Anderson Councilwoman Tami Dixon-Tatum with 65% in the primary, including 64% in the city of Anderson. "I'm absolutely pleased with the outcome," Lanane told the Anderson Herald-Bulletin. Dixon-Tatum told the Herald-Bulletin she will support Lanane in the fall. But Herald-Bulletin political reporter Ken de la Bastide said that there are signs of a revolt on Anderson's west side, with some African-Americans talking about backing Ali. "That will make it a little tougher," de la Bastide said. In 2014, Lanane easily defeated Libertarian Robert Jozwiak, 15,560 to 5,458. This time he faces African-American attorney Ali, who brings some name ID into this race with past advertising for his law practice. This is a Democratic district, but Lanane faces a more prominent Republican, so while he enters as a heavy favorite, this is one district we'll keep an eye on. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Lanane.

**SD26:** Open (Sen. Doug Eckerty retiring). **Republican:** Madison County Councilman Mike Gaskill. **Democrat:** Anderson Fire Chief Dave Cravens. **Analysis:** Cravens defeated Muncie businessman Dave Ring 66-33%, while Councilman Gaskill topped Commissioner Owens in the GOP primary 56-44%. Eckerty was unopposed in 2014, drawing 22,329 votes. Craven will have a money advantage heading into this race, but the key question is whether Gaskill will get support from the Madison County GOP. It's been a somewhat tortured relationship, with Gaskill appointed to the county council in 2014, only to be defeated that November. He returned to the council in the 2016 election. There's been a long-running feud between Gaskill and Republican Chairman Russ Willis, who backed Owens

in the primary. Willis did not have a good primary with most of the candidates he backed losing. Most observers believe this is a potential pickup for Democrats, but it will not be easy. So this is one race where a Democratic wave, or Republican vote suppression, could have an impact.

**Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

**SD29: Republican:** Sen. Mike Delph. **Democrat:** J.D. Ford. **Analysis:** Delph seems to be the most vulnerable Republican, with a Democratic poll last month showing Ford up by 9%.

Delph acknowledged he is in a fight for his political life, telling HPI on Wednesday, "We have a slight lead in this district. At the end of the day it's going to be about turnout and who can turn out their base vote." He expressed concerns that the GOP chairs in Hamilton and Marion Counties don't have a plan for "turning out the Republican vote." Complicating Delph's challenge is that Marion County Chairman Merritt is in an intense reelection campaign. Ford has already begun running TV ads. His first is a bio ad, that talks about how he is the first in his family to go to college. Ford says in a voiceover: "There's nothing more rewarding than working for my community.

I'm running for the Senate to bring good paying jobs to our state, fix our roads and bridges, and strengthen early education so our young people can build a bright future right here in Indiana." This is a rematch from 2014 when Delph won 15,140 to 12,744. Delph just won a bruising primary battle over Corrie Meyer, 58-42%. Delph withstood more than \$200,000 in an advertising blitz that included \$100,000 in late money from some heavy-hitting individual donors and business groups, as well as an array of influential district mayors and former officeholders conspicuously backing Meyer. Delph has had to host several fundraisers, suggesting he spent most of his \$250,000 war chest in the primary. "We had nearly \$300,000 in negative advertising dropped on us," Delph said. "We went back to my base donors. There is no question the fundraising in the fall has been a bit slower. It's starting to pick up. I've got a couple of big donors I haven't closed the deal on, but I will. The Senate Majority Caucus has made it very clear this will be

the top targeted race." One fundraiser included Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard, suggesting that Delph has been able to close ranks. But one observer believes that could have been prompted by what has been described as the "Carmel/Fishers rivalry" and we've not seen other mayors who backed Meyer coming on board with Delph. Delph told HPI that he helped Brainard in a option income tax battle with Fishers. "I helped him out," Delph said, saying the mayor once joked he was so grateful he would build a statue of

the senator in one of Carmel's many roundabouts. This is the lone Republican-held district that Hillary Clinton carried over Donald Trump in 2016 and Delph said that both President Trump and Senate nominee Mike Braun are under-performing in his district. Delph has a wide grassroots network and he hasn't lost a race since the 2002 convention floor secretary of state race. Delph hasn't taken a position on hate crimes that Gov. Eric Holcomb is advocating and that could help Ford turn out the more friendly suburban vote. This is another race where any semblance of a Democratic wave and/or GOP vote suppression could bring about a flip. **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

**SD31: Republican:** State Sen. Jim Merritt. **Democrat:** Derek Camp. **Analysis:** Several

knowledgeable sources are telling HPI that this has turned into a tossup race, with Merritt holding a "low single digit" poll lead. This is reflective of the suburban vote that President Trump has alienated, giving Democrats like Camp a shot at winning independent and female votes. Several sources tell HPI that Trump's approval in SD31 is well below the 47% statewide. Merritt told HPI Wednesday afternoon, "We polled about a month ago. What we found is if you know Jim Merritt you're going to vote for him in the 60%. If you don't know him, you're open to another candidate. Our hard reelect was good, but not excellent. We're on our second mail piece today and we're going to have seven. We're working hard. I've asked people to put out yard signs. I'm really confident we're going to do OK and win. I haven't seen any TV buys by my opponent and I haven't seen any direct mail." Camp lives in Lawrence, is a Purdue graduate as well as a small businessman who has worked at an Indianapolis law firm "to help strug-



gling families get back on their feet and become financially stable." He leads a state-wide youth civic organization that has seen record growth in membership throughout Indiana. Merritt was unopposed for reelection four years ago, getting 18,414 votes. But this is a Democratic county, and this is a district where a Democratic wave and angry suburban female voters could turn out. Camp is campaigning on reforming legislative maps to prevent gerrymandering and creating living wages for workers. Merritt is Marion County Republican chairman and is preparing a 2019 Indianapolis mayoral run against Mayor Joe Hogsett, so Democrats have incentive to turn out and, potentially, defend Hogsett from his most credible challenger. Hogsett has yet to declare for reelection, but we are not detecting other Democrats preparing campaigns in his absence. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Merritt.

**SD38: Republican:** State Sen. Jon Ford.

**Democrat:** Chris Gambill. **Analysis:** Sen. Ford pulled off one of the big upsets in 2014, defeating Sen. Timothy Skinner 13,585 to 12,580. It was the closest Senate race of the cycle and one of the true battleground districts.

Gambill, who won a three-way Democratic primary with 71% of the vote, has decades of experience in law enforcement, as legal advisor to the Terre Haute Police Department, as a drug forfeiture attorney, and as a special trial deputy for the



Clay County prosecutor. Gambill raised \$18,626, while his two primary opponents raised no money. Local sources say the general perception is that Ford has been an effective senator, but, like Delph, he represents a district with considerable Democratic constituencies, in Gambill's case in Terre Haute. Gambill must turn out the Democratic vote and hope that it trumps Ford's strong support in Clay County precincts. Gambill is running a [TV ad](#) with him saying in a voiceover: "Around here people don't want to know about your politics, they want to know you can get things done. As an attorney, I've helped working families search for solutions to life crises. I'm running for state senate because it's time for Indianapolis to invest in communities like ours with better jobs and higher wages." **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

**SD45: Republican:** Chris Garten. **Democrat:**

Jeffersonville Councilman John Perkins. **Analysis:** This is an open seat, vacated by the retiring State Sen. Jim Smith, who defeated Democrat Julie Berry 19,827 to 16,994. Garten is a Scott County native from Lexington, a former

Marine who did two tours of combat duty in Iraq, enlisting in December 2001 after the Sept. 11 terror attacks. Garten is a small businessman. Perkins is a retired teacher and served 20 years on the Jeffersonville City Council prior to being appointed to fill the Clark County Commissioners seat vacated by Mike Moore after Moore became Jeffersonville mayor in 2012. This is another district where that female suburban vote could help a Democrat like Perkins win. He might need a wave in order get this seat to flip to the Democrats. **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

**SD46: Republican:** Sen. Ron Grooms. **Democrat:** Anna Murray. **Analysis:** Sen. Grooms won reelection in 2014 with a 16,950 to 13,168 win over Chuck Freiberger in a rematch. Murray is a Jeffersonville attorney running for office for the first time. She is running on workforce and infrastructure issues. Sen. Grooms is a pharmacist with a degree from Butler University and has served two stints on the Jeffersonville City Council between 1984 and 2010, the year he was first elected to the Senate. This is a competitive district in a region of the state that has gradually gone from Democrat to Republican. But like

several other suburban seats we've described above, this could be a district impacted by a Democratic wave or if Republicans decide to sit this one out. The overlaying 9th CD race could also have an impact, as will Sen. Donnelly, who might help create more Democratic turnout. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Grooms.

**SD47: Republican:**

Sen. Erin Houchin. **Democrat:** Nicholas Siler. **Analysis:** Houchin pulled off the most emphatic upset of 2014, defeating former Senate Minority Leader Richard Young 21,395

to 15,419. This is a district that has rapidly evolved from a Democratic river country stronghold to the GOP. Houchin is ambitious, waging a campaign for the 9th CD in 2016, losing to U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth. She is considered a party rising star and her husband, Dustin, is Washington County prosecutor. Siler of Leavenworth is an attorney with a private practice in West Baden Springs. He has been in private practice since 2005 and previously served as counsel for the Indiana Department of Child Services, representing the department in all counties of the 47th Senate District. This is another outlier district we're watching in case a strong Democratic wave develops. Siler's history with DCS is also interesting. Gov. Holcomb released the DCS report in June, and we've seen little evidence that legislative races are going to turn on DCS issues. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Houchin. ❖

**Publisher's Note:** Next week, we'll update our Indiana House forecasts. Howey Politics Indiana is your most comprehensive source of district-by-district congressional and General Assembly analysis.

# USDA shielding farms from tariff impacts

By **LINDA CHEZEM**

MARTINSVILLE – Recent developments out of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) contained good news on several issues. Secretary Perdue announced more details of how the USDA plans to assist farmers in response to trade damage from unjustified retaliation by foreign nations.



In his comments, Secretary Perdue summarized the reasons why the President should be given some negotiating space. "President Trump has been standing up to China and other nations, sending the clear message that the United States will no longer tolerate their un-

fair trade practices, which include non-tariff trade barriers and the theft of intellectual property." Despite the naysayers in the Washington, D.C. area, the outcomes might benefit all sectors of the US economy, both consumers and producers. Our trade principles should be balanced, free and fair.

For years, from Argentina's default to World Trade Organization decisions, I had questions about United States and our bland acceptance of grossly unfair trade practices from other countries. China has been outrageously open in stealing our intellectual property, but certainly not alone in those activities. Anyone who has paid attention to university research knows of "thumb drive" incidents in cutting edge laboratories and, for agriculture at least, stolen samples from the research fields.

Surely, anyone who purchases consumer goods is aware of foreign counterfeit goods of popular brands and the knockoffs of other products that are imported in the U.S. If someone doubts the preceding sentence, they can just go stand on about any street corner in Washington, D.C., and buy their Gucci or Hermès handbag. For men there are ties and shoes and watches, etc.

**The general aims** for the use of the \$12 billion by USDA programs, consistent with our World Trade Organization requirements, are outlined below. This announcement does not violate rules of trade by unfair trade practices and it helps get food in the hands of those who need it here in the U.S. It harkens back to the purpose of other programs in years past.

Even better is news that the payout from the USDA funds will benefit Indiana agriculture. Soy appears to be a big winner. I hope to see good payouts for pork producers who work hard to be good neighbors. The pork people are enduring unfair attacks around Indiana from

activists who see pork as a fundraising target.

The Market Facilitation Program (MFP) will allow the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to provide payments to corn, cotton, dairy, hog, sorghum, soybean, and wheat producers starting Sept. 4. For anyone who is not a farmer or a lender to the farmer, the MFP is the least interesting part of the announcement.

**The Food Purchase and** Distribution Program will purchase up to \$1.2 billion in commodities unfairly targeted by unjustified retaliation in a reboot of an old program to place food in the hands of the hungry. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will administer the purchase program. The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) will distribute the purchased food through nutrition assistance programs such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and child nutrition programs. For those who have been critical of the misuse and fraud involving "food stamp" programs, the food purchase and distribution program may offer some safeguards and allow the food to feed children and those who need it. Feeding kids food seems like a good idea for a government program. What would be a really great result is to couple the food with nutrition and preparation education, but one should not get too optimistic.

The part of the announcement that provides hope for increased trade growth is an adaptation of the Foreign Agricultural Service's (FAS) Agricultural Trade Promotion Program (ATP). Some \$200 million in additional funds will be used to develop foreign markets for U.S. agricultural products. Again, optimistically, this part of the program will help U.S. agricultural exporters identify and access markets new to their exports. The adverse effects of other countries' restrictions on U.S. exporters can be mitigated by expanding agricultural markets to a wide swath of the globe, so that there is not an unhealthy dependency on any specific country. When an exporting country is focused on one or a few countries as markets, its bargaining power may be compromised easily. Free trade should and can include fair trade for producers in the United States.

**As the USDA's response** to the trade issues was being announced, a lesser known and less critiqued USDA agency supported by tax dollars, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), turned its attention to broader domestic needs, by seeking direction from the American "stakeholders." NIFA wants to become informed about the emerging needs and opportunities in food and agricultural sciences through the "NIFA Listens: Investing in Science to Transform Lives" initiative. The use of the condescending term "stakeholder" is irritating because few federal-income taxpaying members of the public who really comprise the stakeholders will actually voice their thoughts. Nevertheless, undaunted, NIFA Acting Director Tom Shanower stated, "We invite our stakeholders, scientists, and organizations from across the U.S. agriculture system and beyond to provide their input," And, however optimistically, he added, "These sessions provide a chance for any inter-

ested party to help ensure NIFA's research, education, and extension investments effectively and efficiently support the long-term prosperity and global preeminence of U.S. agriculture."

So dear taxpayers, these listening sessions are your opportunity to provide feedback on these questions:

"In your field, what is the most-needed breakthrough in science/technology that would advance your agricultural enterprise?"

"When considering all of agriculture, what is the greatest challenge that should be addressed through NIFA's research, education, and extension?"

"What is your top priority in food and agricultural research, extension, or education that NIFA should address?"

If, after consulting with one's accountant, one learns that there are business reasons that may make the expenses of an in-person trip tax deductible, here are the four regional in-person listening sessions sites and dates:

Oct. 11, Hartford, Connecticut (RSVP by Thursday, Oct. 4); Oct. 18, New Orleans, Louisiana (RSVP by Thursday, Oct. 11); Oct. 25, Minneapolis, Minnesota (RSVP by Thursday, Oct. 18); Nov. 1, Albuquerque, New Mexico (RSVP by Wednesday, Oct. 25)

It is rather irksome that there are no in-person sites close to Hoosiers but we can wield the mighty keyboard if we pay attention. NIFA Listens website is a one-stop informational hub that is promised to keep you up to date on the sessions. Each session is scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m. and end no later than 5 p.m. Live webcast will be available for each session, transcribed, and made available for playback. Session attendees must register via NIFA Listens website. In addition, written comments may be provided electronically through the stakeholder input form on the website or emailed by NIFAlistens@nifa.usda.gov (link sends e-mail) until Nov. 30. Feedback is welcome through any of the provided submission methods and will be gathered throughout the initiative.

**I am going to** send some "feedback." I sure hope that I am not the only Hoosier who does. My feedback is made with the hope that NIFA and the rest of the users of words like "feedback" and "stakeholder" get a sense of how frustrating the bureaucratic and academic babble is to those of us are paying income taxes and property taxes to support the babble factor.

We need to value more the research that meets real needs. Rigorous bench science is

a critical, compelling need because it is high risk and therefore, the type of research work where the use of tax dollars is legitimate. Surveys, focus groups, and some epidemiology – not so much. Correlation doesn't equal causation. It is the babble gobble (not just in research) that eats up our tax dollars. Research that does not even produce as much common sense as the Farmer's Almanac is not worth the swap of tax dollars. We can stop funding it at no loss. When voodoo science is funded and touted as though it is science that creates new knowledge, it is time to give "feedback."

Aren't you struck with curiosity about the research failings and why policy and law cannot rely on one or two studies? A review of the Social Sciences Replication Project by the nonprofit Center for Open Science (COS) in Charlottesville, Virginia is attention-grabbing. In this effort, many collaborators came together to check published scientific literature. They found that a large fraction of published studies do not yield the same results when done a second time. A good explanation is available at <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/08/generous-approach-replication-confirms-many-high-profile-social-science-findings>.

**No, the world,** let alone the United States, does not need more social science surveys asking loaded questions about things that are designed to get the researcher more study money. How many studies have you read that conclude saying more research is needed?

Yeah, send me money. ❖

**Chezem is a former Indiana Appeals Court judge and is a Purdue and Indiana University faculty member. She writes on agriculture and legal issues.**

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

# Business tax climate meets reality

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Recently, the Northwest Indiana Economic Forum presented an introduction to its five-year strategic plan. Most folks will tell you the seven NWI counties — Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Newton, Jasper, Pulaski and Starke — have had some tough years.

Some will say it's been rough going since the mid-70s. But history and its residue was cast aside as the audience of nearly 500 in Hobart was regaled with an impressive list of new investments made recently by relocating and existing businesses. No mention was made of jobs lost, ongoing pollution, or wage gains for existing jobs.



Instead there was a flourishing of optimism, a recognition of a turning point, and declaration that now is the time to "Ignite the Region." Only the pompoms and

the boys' band with 76 trombones were missing during the finale, as business leaders rose to pledge funding for the next steps.

Setting the stage for this pep rally was Indiana's Secretary of Commerce, Jim Schellinger, who did a commendable job sounding the keynote. One fact he recited caught my attention: Indiana ranked ninth in the nation by the Tax Foundation in their 2018 State Business Tax Climate Index.

No neighboring state had a higher ranking. Michigan was 12th, Illinois 27th, Kentucky 33rd, Wisconsin 38th, and Ohio 45th. If you want to know how the Tax Foundation comes up with these rankings, look on-line for the 82-page report with its strong methodology section written to protect the Foundation from embarrassment.

The idea of this index is that a high score translates to a high ranking by firms considering new or expanding facilities. The methodology section makes it reasonably clear there is no uncontested, definitive proof of that relationship, but it is consistent with freshman economic theory. And do you need more?

**But does a relationship** exist between a state's ranking and its actual economic growth as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP)? From our primitive evaluation the answer is no.

The Tax Foundation's scores do not correlate with the average annual percent change in GDP over a comparable period (Quarter 3 of 2014 through Quarter 1 of 2018). Match up the Foundation's rankings with the rankings of GDP growth over the same period of time and the results are too weak statistically to be taken seriously.

Specifically, Indiana secured ninth place with an average score of 5.9 in the Foundation's index for fiscal years 2015 to 2018. But our average annual GDP growth (1.2%) was a middling 29th among the 50 states. New Jersey ranked last in business tax climate (its index value was 3.4), but the Garden State sat right behind Indiana in GDP growth in the 30th place.

**We should be thinking** about the actual effects of our tax climate, not the imagined possibilities put forward by business partisans. ❖

**Marcus is an economist. His views can be followed on "Who gets what?" wherever podcasts are available. Or reach him at [mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com](mailto:mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com)**

# Don't expect much on alcohol reform

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE – It took several lifetimes for Indiana to approve the sale of carryout liquor on Sunday. That was just earlier this year, so don't expect additional major changes to the state's liquor laws anytime soon.



The General Assembly's Alcohol Code Revision Commission will present its recommendations for changes on Sept. 28. But the early word is that nothing drastic will be recommended.

There is one hope, and that bright light is coming from Randall Woodruff, one of the four Alcohol and Tobacco commissioners ap-

pointed by the governor.

At issue is the alcohol permit system that is based on the population of each municipality. The quota system hurt Munster earlier this year when it attempted to receive three new permits for liquor consumption at Centennial Village restaurants.

**Nope. Munster already** had reached its quota for the issuance of alcohol sale permits.

Woodruff made all the sense in the world at the most recent state task force meeting when he suggested the state throw out the quota system. "It seems to me the evil is the quota system," Woodruff said. "I don't think it is necessary and I don't think it works."

Woodruff said ending the quota system would impact the 745 permits currently held in escrow by those planning to start a business or those hoarding permits so they don't face competition. He added that ending the quota system would allow the free market to dictate the



number of alcohol permits.

But Woodruff's plan faces stiff competition from people like Rep. Ben Smaltz, chairman of the House Public Policy Committee. Without providing any facts, Smaltz said it is undisputed that the outlet density of alcohol leads to more drunken driving, increased sexual assault and other societal ills. How do you fight that?

**The best that Munster** and other towns who have used up their quotas can hope for is small adjustments to the quota system. That's unfortunate.

What Indiana really needs to do is allow retailers other than package liquor stores to sell cold beer.

That's likely not going to happen given the conservative nature of Indiana. Heck, it took 85 years for the state to decide it would be OK to allow the purchase of carryout liquor on Sunday. ❖

**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.**

## White River is our next great project

By JAY RUCKLESHAUS

OXFORD, England – The White River flows between two unappealing banks. The first is neglect. We don't talk much about this largest waterway in Central Indiana, which indulges in serpentine bends on its south-westerly flow through farmland and suburb and city, in no hurry. The river is not so much Indy's best-kept secret as it's one we don't even know we're keeping.



The second is contempt. The butt of countless jokes, the White River is synonymous with pollution, and for good reason: pesticides, industrial runoff, and sewage have long flowed into it. And then there was the fish kill of 1999, when

millions of fish were killed by chemical discharge, their bloated bodies floating belly-up across 50 miles between Anderson and Indy.

Not a great reputation.

Thankfully, that is changing. An alliance among the City of Indianapolis, Visit Indy, and Hamilton County Tourism is spearheading a new effort called the White River Vision Plan. After holding community hearings, the group hopes to release a master plan next summer that will "chart a course for how to sustainably develop the river in support of attracting residents and visitors alike," Chris Gahl, Visit Indy's senior VP, told me.

**In parallel, legislators** have organized a White River Caucus in the General Assembly to consider river renewal. (And, per the Department of Natural Resources, the fish are back.)

We should celebrate these efforts, and we should push city and state leaders to think boldly about developing the White River. It's surely our most undervalued asset, and it's my wager that Indy's chances of reaching the next

tier of great cities depends on getting this right, for reasons of economic competitiveness, regional cooperation, and quality of life.

**When it comes to** strategic thinking about the natural environment, central Indiana is way behind the curve. American cities have entered a new era of competition for provision of public amenities, with nothing less than their economies' competitiveness at stake.

Public spaces have become "economic development magnets," notes Adrian Benepe, former commissioner of New York City Parks. As he told the New York Times, "there is a peacetime arms race as cities compete with each other" to develop their natural resources. Jobs and investment follow parks.

The roster of cities that have recently made serious, deliberative investments in their waterfronts includes Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago, and Buffalo. These cities, our rivals, understand the importance of their rivers, and their investments in waterfront parks, retail, and housing reflect a commitment to strategic thinking about the



underpinnings of long-term growth. Indiana can ill afford not to develop our natural resources.

Every year we leave our waterway idle is doubly detrimental: Our loss is another city's gain. That's why every business recruitment and economic development

plan for central Indiana must include the White River.

Another reason to think boldly about developing the White River stems from the question of regional cooperation.

Over the past few years, state leaders have begun paying more attention to the merits of thinking regionally than at any time since, perhaps, Mayor Lugar's Unigov scheme almost 40 years ago. One product is the Regional Cities Initiative (RCI), which matches funding given for regionally-conceived development projects. Like Unigov, the RCI was motivated in part by a recognition that the best community planning happens when all the players sit at the same table. Too often, the division of political authority into little fiefdoms stifles cross-jurisdictional innovation.

And the demand for regionalism will only grow, as the economic landscape rewards what urban experts Bruce Katz and Jeremy Nowak call "collaborative governance networks." As their term suggests, Katz and Nowak encourage us to broaden the scope of regional governance to include formalized collaborations with civic and philanthropic groups.

The White River illustrates well both the challenges and opportunities of this broad regionalism. Its watershed is vast and the needs of its various populations diverse. The project must be sensitive to these differences.

**In practice, what we need** is for every stakeholder to be on board from the beginning. The fact that the White River Vision Plan is a collaboration between Indianapolis and Hamilton County is an excellent start.

And the momentum from this initiative can be used to catalyze transformative regional cooperation on other initiatives (e.g., mass transit). There's something beautiful about using watershed rejuvenation as a template for regional thinking: A confluence of ideas makes us all stronger.

Of course, few who encounter the White River of tomorrow will marvel at its shores as a paradigm of economic development and innovative governance. The third reason to be visionary about the river stems from how it

makes people feel.

Just picture Hoosiers of all kinds communing with nature rather than their smartphones, as their sense of wonder and fun grounds a heightened civic pride for our city.

Talk of feelings may sound sentimental or whimsical for an urban planning project, but it's precisely those qualities that underlie something very serious, the ability of public spaces to manifest civic ideals. We must remember the contribution public spaces make to what political theorist Martha Nussbaum calls our "public emotion culture." The built environment structures the way we interact with fellow citizens, opening or foreclosing avenues of connection. As the Cultural Trail ably demonstrates, sometimes the only way to feel connected to different parts of the city is to actually knit them together.

**Done right, a new riverfront** with equality of access can help cultivate a renewed respect for Indy's diversity and help soften divisions.

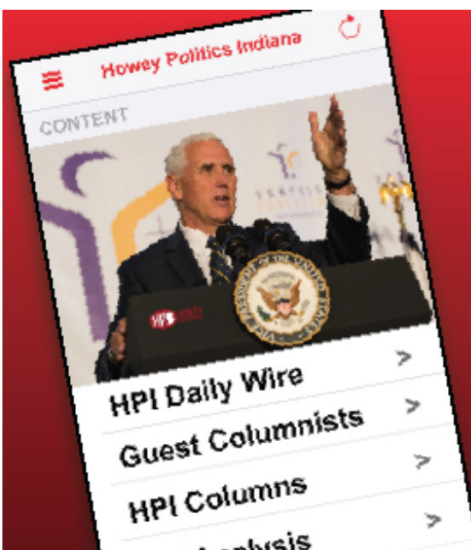
How public spaces make us feel and relate to our neighbors are key indicators in assessing cities, and they're a core reason to do something inspiring with the White River.

What exactly that "something" is will depend, as it should, on long-term planning and community engagement. The principles I've proposed suggest a mixed approach would be best – recreational, commercial, residential.

Overhauling our riverfront won't be easy. We'll likely need controversial zoning changes, intelligent development incentives, robust environmental safeguards, and an unshakeable commitment to inclusivity.

But we've been asleep at the helm for too long; now is the time. Let's make the White River our next great project. ❖

**Jay Ruckelshaus is a Rhodes Scholar from Indianapolis and a graduate student in politics at the University of Oxford.**



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**Mike Allen, Axios:** If Brett Kavanaugh's nomination sinks, Democrats would turn the midterms into a referendum not just on President Trump but also women's rights, abortion and the future of the Supreme Court, sources tell Axios CEO Jim VandeHei and me. In what Republicans believe is an increasingly unlikely scenario where Kavanaugh tanks ... Dems believe they can juice turnout — already hitting record levels — by playing off the huge public attention to the court, and *Roe v. Wade* in particular. They envision President Obama and Michelle Obama locking arms with the Clintons, the Bidens, and Democratic congressional leaders to crank up a presidential-election-sized campaign. They feel confident every rich liberal in America would help fund this effort. If Democrats downed Kavanaugh, the White House would be inclined to nominate someone at least as conservative, or even more vocally so — perhaps Judge Amy Coney Barrett of Chicago, a Catholic conservative. ❖



**Gary Truitt, Hoosier Ag Today:** I guess I should be getting used to this since it keeps happening, but it still really burns my buns when activist groups, political leaders, the media, and especially farm groups, use farmers to advance their agendas. One of the first I remember was Farm Aid, a movement that used the farm crisis of the 80s to advance its socialistic and environmental agenda. Then came PETA and HSUS who used modern animal husbandry practices as a springboard to advance their anti-meat agenda. The organic industry used the use of chemical crop protection products to increase their sales. Next there is the anti-science, GMO-free crowd that has been lying to the public for decades and reaping financial rewards. Now it is the anti-Trump, trade groups turn. When President Trump first slapped sanctions on China there was a good deal of well justified concern about the impact this would have on the farm economy. Much of the rhetoric focused on how farmers would be financially impacted and on the long term market price outlook. As we have moved closer to the mid-term elections, the focus has metamorphosed into a campaign against the President. One of the main contributors to this politicization of the trade debate is an organization known as Americans for Free Trade. This is a well-funded and well-financed, "broad coalition of American businesses, trade organizations, and workers united against tariffs" according to their web site. The listed members of this group include many agricultural trade groups, along with industry and service sector organizations, some of whom have been hurt by the illegal trade engaged in by China, which prompted the tariffs. This group has spun off a number of ag related groups including Farmers for Free Trade and, most recently, Tariffs Hurt the Heartland. These groups are focused exclusively on tariffs and ignore the reason the tariffs were imposed and the outcome of the current negotiations. Backed by a large PR agency, they are attempting to derail the Trump Admin-

istration's trade plan. It that really what we want? Do we really want the President to tweet "Oh sorry, I was only kidding on those tariffs, never mind, just buy our soybeans and we're all good" one day? This is not going to happen, in fact the President actually tweeted over the weekend that, "We are under no pressure to make a deal with China. They are under pressure to make a deal with us." What will and is happening is that with this issue tied to the fall elections, China is going to stall and wait to see what happens in November. It is important to keep in mind that the bad guy in this drama is China. China is the one stealing U.S. agricultural and industrial technology, refusing to obey international trading rules, and dumping surplus goods into the U.S. market. Trade is much too important to agriculture to be used simply as a way to get votes. ❖

**David Leonhardt, New York Times:** No other major democracy has lifetime appointments to its highest court. Only the United States does, and it creates all kinds of problems. For one, our system often does not respect the will of the people. Rather than the Supreme Court's makeup being determined by elections over many years, it's based on a combination of those elections and the randomness of how long justices live. Jimmy Carter was unable to make a single nomination to the court because no justice died or retired during his four-year presidency. Richard Nixon filled four seats during his five-and-a-half years as president. "The policy future of the country," Norm Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute has written, "depends as much on the actuarial tables and the luck of the draw for presidents as it does on the larger trends in politics and society." This unfairness born of randomness isn't the only problem. Given the deep partisan polarization in America, lifetime appointments have also turned confirmations into epic political battles. That's why the Brett Kavanaugh process feels so momentous. It's why the Merrick Garland process — or the lack of one — still enrages so many people. "It makes the stakes too high," the political scientist Lee Drutman wrote this summer in Vox. "So here's a simple idea to dial down some of the destructive warfare of the Supreme Court confirmation process: term limits for Supreme Court justices." It would take a constitutional amendment, but that's O.K. The United States has already amended its Constitution 27 times — or an average of about once every nine years. We are overdue for at least one more amendment. The most appealing idea to me is staggered 18-year terms on the court, with each four-year presidential term automatically bringing two appointments. Such a system would be more consistent with democratic principles. It would have several ancillary benefits, too. Aging justices would no longer hang on to their jobs past the point when they should (which has been a real problem in the past). And as Ornstein notes, highly qualified candidates in their late 50s and early 60s would be considered for the court. ❖

## NIPSCO to retire all coal-fired plants

HAMMOND – NIPSCO has a tentative plan to retire its entire coal-fired electricity generation fleet in the next decade, with the majority of its coal-fired generators to be retired in the next five years (Steele, [NWI Times](#)). The company made the announcement Wednesday at the fourth of five public meetings detailing the development of a new Integrated Resource Plan for the utility. "This creates a vision for the future that is better for our customers, and it's consistent with our goal to transition to the best cost, cleanest electric supply mix available while maintaining reliability, diversity and flexibility for technology and market changes," said NIPSCO President Violet Sistovaris. Renewable sources of energy, including wind and solar, along with battery storage, will likely replace its use of coal, according to the company. NIPSCO retired the two coal-fired generators at its Bailly Generating Station along Lake Michigan earlier this year, as part of a plan to reduce its coal-fired generation by half by 2023. That left five still in use. Four coal-fired units at the R.M. Schahfer Generating Station in Wheatfield will be retired no later than 2023, and the one unit at the Michigan City Generating Station by 2028, if the plan is carried out. "The move to retire its 1,800 megawatts of coal-fired generation "will significantly accelerate carbon reductions across the NIPSCO footprint," the company said in announcing the plan.



## 59 abused children died in 2016

WASHINGTON – The latest state report on the number of children determined to have died because of abuse or neglect details the deaths of 59 Hoosier children killed in 2016 (Sheridan, [WFYI](#)). There were 77 children who died in 2015. The report found children 3 years old and younger are at the highest risk for abuse and neglect, which is consistent across the U.S. Of the 59 deaths, 24

were from abuse and 35 were neglect. Vehicles were involved in most of the deaths attributed to neglect -- 12 of the 35 cases. The most common cause of death from abuse was head trauma. Marion County had the most fatalities at 14.

## FEMA's Long almost quit

WASHINGTON – With his home state flooded and the death toll rising, FEMA Administrator William 'Brock' Long was on the verge of quitting this week. On Sunday, his bitter feud with Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen seemed as though it would abate ([Washington Post](#)). The two agreed to a truce so that the Trump administration's response to Hurricane Florence would not be further overshadowed by the deepening acrimony between them since the disclosure of an internal investigation into Long's use of government vehicles to travel between Washington and his home in North Carolina. Nothing would happen to Long in the near term, Nielsen assured him, according to three senior government officials familiar with the conversation. "Let's just get through the storm, she said. About 24 hours later, as Long's plane landed in North Carolina, he learned that the DHS Office of Inspector General had referred his case to federal prosecutors for a possible criminal investigation. He felt devastated and betrayed, according to the three government officials, who had knowledge of Long's reaction. 'It was FEMA personnel who convinced him not to quit,' said one congressional aide briefed on the matter.

## State gets \$25M for opioid fight

INDIANAPOLIS – The Trump administration has awarded Indiana more than \$25 million to fight the opioid epidemic, largely by expanding access to treatment and recovery ser-

vices ([Associated Press](#)). Indiana's funding announced Wednesday by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services was among more than \$1 billion awarded to all 50 states to combat opioid abuse. Indiana is getting more than \$18 million to finance several initiatives, including two aimed at reducing drug overdose deaths and boosting access to FDA-approved medications for treating opioid abuse. Another \$7 million administered through the Health Resources and Services Administration will go to 26 HRSA-funded community health centers, academic institutions and rural organizations to expand access to integrated drug-treatment and mental health services.

## Rokita, Issa blast Chinese

CHICAGO – The increasingly bruising China-U.S. trade fight briefly fractured the usual decorous calm of a high-profile forum on globalization ([Wall Street Journal](#)). At a hastily arranged news conference during a World Economic Forum meeting in China on Wednesday, a pair of U.S. congressmen vigorously defended President Trump's policies and took issue with remarks made minutes before by China's premier. Todd Rokita and Darrell Issa, both Republicans, sparred with reporters and took up a key Trump administration criticism—that China doesn't protect foreign companies' trade secrets—dismissing as empty words a promise made by Premier Li Keqiang to improve intellectual-property protections. "I'm not sure what the Chinese adage is, but in the United States we say talk is cheap and actions are what matter," said Mr. Rokita, who represents an Indiana district. "If it's wrong to steal, if it's wrong to cheat, then why would we accept it?"