

VP Pence's most arduous task

Abruptly handed the coronavirus challenge, vice president faces his toughest assignment

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — A friend of mine who possesses a cunning wit texted me after President Trump suddenly chose Vice President Mike Pence to head up the White House response to the coronavirus pandemic last week: "Hi Mike. You're in charge of this epidemiological tsunami. Good luck and I have Nikki Haley on speed dial."

That sums up the political stakes facing Mike Pence, who along with HHS Sec. Alex Azar, Centers for Medicaid/Medicare Director Seema Verma and Dr. Tony Fauci of the National Institutes of Health has become the face of the pandemic's federal government response.



Vice President Mike Pence with CMS Director Seema Verma and HHS Sec. Alex Azar, who have become the face of the Trump administration's coronavirus pandemic response.

Or as former speaker Newt Gingrich told Politico of Pence, "If he does this well, he comes out of this as a very

Continued on page 3

Capitol Hill sans IN press

By **MARK SCHOEFF JR.**

WASHINGTON — George Stuteville used to wake up in the morning worrying about what the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette was reporting from Washington. When he was covering Capitol Hill for the Indianapolis Star from 1992 through 2001, Stuteville competed against the Journal Gazette's Washington correspondent, Sylvia Smith.



An aggressive and thorough reporter, Smith kept close tabs on the Hoosier congressional delegation. If her readers were getting a story before the Star's readers, it would make Stuteville's life more difficult. "That would ruin my day," he said.

Today, no Washington-



"Three months ago I entered the race for president to defeat Donald Trump. Today I am leaving the race for the same reason, because it is clear to me that staying in would make achieving that goal more difficult."

- Michael Bloomberg, endorsing Joe Biden for president.



Howey Politics Indiana
WWWHowey Media, LLC
c/o Business Office
PO Box 6553
Kokomo, IN, 46904
www.howeypolitics.com

Brian A. Howey, Publisher
Mark Schoeff Jr., Washington
Mary Lou Howey, Editor
Susan E. Joiner, Editor

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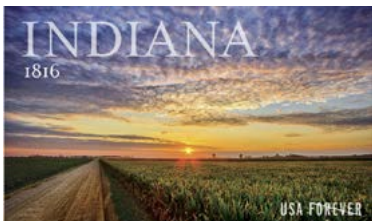
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Lisa Houchell, Account Manager
 (765) 452-3936 telephone
 (765) 452-3973 fax
 HPI.Business.Office@howeypolitics.com

Contact HPI

bhowey2@gmail.com
 Howey's cell: 317.506.0883
 Washington: 202.256.5822
 Business Office: 765.452.3936

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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



based journalist is worried about what the competition is digging up on Hoosier lawmakers. That's because there are no longer any full-time reporters based in the capital reporting for Indiana audiences.

The Indianapolis Star lost its Washington reporter when Maureen Groppe transferred to the national desk of USA Today last year. She had been the lone holdover from a vibrant era of Indiana regional journalism.

Groppe was one of several Indiana reporters who covered Sen. Richard Lugar when I was the senator's press secretary in the mid-1990s. At that time, in addition to Stuteville, Smith and Groppe, who then reported for Gannett News Service, there were several other reporters for Indiana newspapers, television and radio stations.

Indianapolis was served by Stuteville, David Haase of the Indianapolis News, and Monique Conrad, who covered Washington for Indianapolis and Lafayette television stations. There also was a reporter for the Evansville Courier and a reporter for a group of small Indiana papers. The correspondent for Knight-Ridder chain wrote for papers in northwest Indiana as well as the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel, the city's afternoon paper.

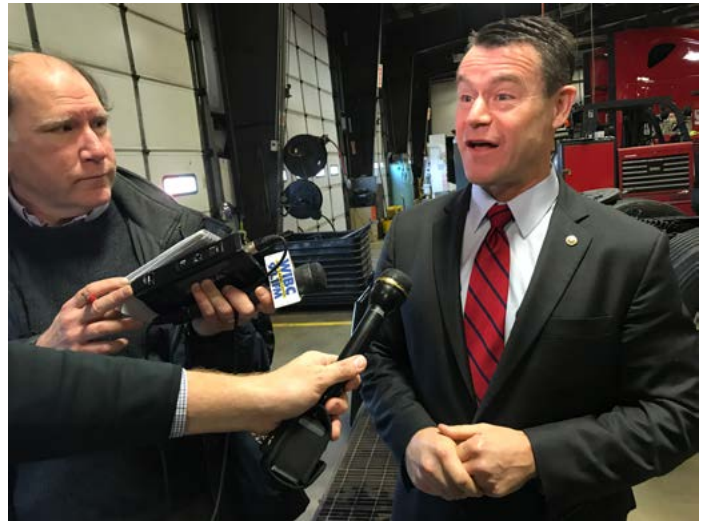
The reporters were scrutinizing two Indiana senators and 10 House members.

"We were all competing against one another," Stuteville said. "You always wanted to have an angle your competition didn't have. The thing that underpinned the competitiveness is we all thought that what we covered mattered – that it was vitally important. This was an implicit value."

Journalistic tension that kept the congressional delegation

responsive doesn't exist today. It's much easier for Sen. Todd Young to dispense with his vote on acquitting President Donald Trump simply by issuing a statement and then refusing to conduct follow-up interviews, as was the case when Howey Politics Indiana sought to follow up after the Senate acquittal of President Trump last month.

"That interaction [among reporters and lawmakers] created some degree of accountability that someone like Todd Young doesn't have to face today," Stuteville said. That tension can't be replicated by local reporters who catch up with



Young whenever he visits their town or area. They see him a couple of times a year, not a couple of times a week.

Even when Washington reporters weren't filing dispatches, they were observing lawmakers every day, Stuteville said. They were taking mental notes on everything from their legislative strategy and relationships with other legislators to their non-verbal expressions, such as the inflection of their voices or their body language. "It resulted in a lot more context for stories that did get published," he said.

Context also came from research. "I spent several hours each week covering rote bills and legislation," Stuteville said. "We considered the paper as part of the public record, the journal of a society. The

longer you covered D.C., the more you understood the process, the role of our legislators as a vote in committee and in the whole. In other words, context.”

Today, what is missing in coverage of Washington is perspective. “There is no context anymore,” Stuteville said. “Everything screams at just about the same level. Social media has enabled politicians to go directly to their base. In the golden days, mass media was the

conduit to a politician’s voting base.”

With the dominant trend in the journalism industry toward job cuts and publication closures, it’s not likely that Young and other Hoosier lawmakers will see hometown reporters in the halls of Congress. ❖

Schoeff is HPI’s Washington correspondent.



Pence, from page 1

big national figure. If he does this badly, he comes out as a dramatically diminished figure. He knows that. His team knows that.”

The underpinnings to this pandemic are that President Trump has sliced away key personnel in what should be a continual warfare against the microbes. And the president doesn’t understand or comprehend the science involved.

On Monday when Trump, Pence, Azar and Fauci met with pharma execs, this became apparent when Trump pressed them for a vaccine timeline. “I don’t think they know what the time will be,” Trump said. “I’ve heard very quick numbers – a matter of months – and I’ve heard pretty much a year would be an outside number.”

Fauci had consistently said a vaccine would take a year to 18 months and he reiterated that timeline. “But if you’re talking about three to four months, in a couple of cases, and a year in other cases – wouldn’t you say, doctor, would that be about right?” Trump asked.

The Washington Post reported: “When a reporter pressed on whether Trump really thought the months-long timetable was viable for a vaccine, Fauci cut in. And he actually asked that the president be educated on the timetable, despite it having been told to him repeatedly. ‘Would

you make sure you get the president the information that a vaccine that you make and start testing in a year is not a vaccine that’s deployable,’ Fauci said. ‘So he’s asking when is it going to be deployable, and that is going to be, at the earliest, a year to a year and a half, no matter how fast you go.’”

Wednesday night Trump appeared on Fox News Sean Hannity show and said he had a “hunch” that the World Health Organization’s 3.4% virus mortality rate was wrong.

NBC News reported that in 2018, Trump fired Tom Bossert, whose job as homeland security adviser on the National Security Council included coordinating the response to global pandemics. Bossert was not replaced. Last year, Rear Adm. Tim Ziemer, the NSC’s senior director for global health security and biodefense, left the council and was not replaced. Dr. Luciana Borio, the NSC’s director for medical and biodefense preparedness, left in May 2018 and was also not replaced.

ABC News reported that Trump introduced his fiscal year 2021 budget proposal on Feb. 10, just 11 days after the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency of international concerns. The spending plan included a 16% reduction in CDC funding from the 2020 spending levels. In fact, all of Trump’s budget proposals have called for cuts to CDC

funding, but Congress has intervened each time by passing spending bills with year-over-year increases for the CDC that Trump then signed into law.

Last Thursday, Trump became a beacon of wishful thinking as Wall Street took the worst nose dive since 2008, saying of the pandemic, "It's going to disappear. One day it's like a miracle, it will disappear." The president warned that things could "get worse before it gets better," but he added it could "maybe go away. We'll see what happens. Nobody really knows."

Last Friday at a MAGA rally in Charleston, Trump claimed the pandemic to be a "hoax," though he said on Saturday that was in reference to Democrats and the news media seeking to parlay the pandemic into political gain at the expense of his reelection.

Axios reported that Trump replaced Azar with Pence abruptly a week ago, announcing the change at a presser in the White House briefing room that caught aides off guard. Earlier this week, Politico reported on the career stakes facing Pence and Azar's removal and shortcomings. "This was a management failure," said one administration official, charging that Azar didn't adequately plan for a worst-case coronavirus scenario after the potential pandemic became evident in December, prompting Trump to impose travel restrictions to and from China. "The administration's response has been reactive, not proactive," added a former HHS official.

Mixed signals were still evident when Pence attended both Senate caucus lunches on Capitol Hill on Tuesday. "We're issuing clear guidance that subject to doctors' orders, any American can be tested," Pence said at one point. Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell of Washington state – which appears to be the pandemic's American epicenter with nine deaths reported by Tuesday – led the questioning at the closed-door lunch, demanding to know when more test kits would become available. "People are calling their doctors, and they're not being able to get a test," Cantwell said after the lunch.

In a briefing on Wednesday, Pence vowed to deal with complaints from health care providers and state and local authorities that they lack sufficient testing capacity to check the virus's spread, CNN reported. He said 1.5 million testing kits were on their way to health care providers and university labs and other locations. And he assured Americans that the administration had acted to make tests available for free on private health plans, Medicare and



Medicaid.

Complicating things is the feud between Azar and Verma, which caused Pence to intervene last December at the president's behest. Verma was the architect of Gov. Mitch Daniels' Healthy Indiana Plan and Gov. Pence's HIP 2.0, while Azar is a former Eli Lilly executive.

Verma spent months developing an alternative to the ACA, only to have Azar kill the plan. "Azar believed Verma's plan would actually strengthen Obamacare, not kill it," reported Politico. The already tense relationship blew up last

summer after Verma, in an Oval Office meeting with senior administration officials, including Azar and Trump, criticized Azar's drug pricing proposals. Politico reported that Verma sided with White House officials, including top domestic policy adviser Joe Grogan, an Azar foe in several policy debates. This fall, Azar kept Verma from traveling with President Trump on Air Force One to make an announcement in Florida about a Medicare initiative championed by her folks at CMS. Laura Ingraham, the influential Fox host, is an Azar ally. In a tweet she called Verma "a debilitating weak link at HHS." Jared Kushner and First Lady Melania Trump are also reportedly on Team Azar. Pence is the most important member of Team Verma."

Pence has a spotty record when it comes to major assignments. He was handed the Obama-to-Trump transition team portfolio after New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie was fired the day after the election, later claiming that scores of staffing binders ended up in the Trump Tower "dumpster." The seeds of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe were sown during that transition. What has followed has been more staff turnover than any other administration and a series of "acting" cabinet officials.

Pence has received bad press for his handling of the 2014-15 Scott County HIV epidemic when he was governor of Indiana. Critics say a three-month delay on approving a CDC-recommended needle exchange resulted in dozens of infections.

Pence was asked about how he dealt with health outbreaks when he was governor on Saturday. "I learned the invaluable role that local health officials play in dealing with the spread of infectious disease," Pence said. Speaking of the first MERS case in the U.S., Pence said, "I'm proud to say the State of Indiana secured that first patient, found out everyone who had been in contact, and that patient recovered."

Pence added that in 2015 he dealt with the HIV outbreak in Scott County. "Health officials came to me, we immediately deployed resources," Pence said, contradicting recent news report that he waited a number of weeks before acting. "The state of Indiana did not allow that needle exchange. But the CDC came in, made a recommendation and I declared a public health emergency and made, for 30 days, a needle exchange available. I'm proud to say that every one of those patients was treated. We ended the spread of HIV in that community.



"As the president and I have discussed, my experience as a governor in dealing with two different infectious diseases and seeing the vital role that local health care providers play, federal officials play, has really informed me," Pence said. "That's why I have spent a lot of time talking with governors. I am proud of the work we did in the State of Indiana."

In 2014, with Verma as the policy architect, Gov. Pence expanded Medicaid in Indiana with the Healthy Indiana Plan 2.0, which he said was developed to require Hoosiers to make nominal payments which he called "skin in the game." It resulted in the expansion of Medicaid to some 400,000 Hoosiers when other "red state" governors and legislatures rejected the concept in opposition to Obamacare. It became one of the most conspicuous policy achievements of the Pence era.

"HIP 2.0 is not intended to be a long-term entitlement program," Gov. Pence declared. "It's intended to be a safety net that aligns incentives with human aspirations." He sought and won a hard-earned waiver from President Obama's Department of Health and Human Services.

How this current pandemic will turn out is purely speculative at this point, but the World Health Organization upped the ante, saying on Tuesday that the global mortality rate is 3.4%. And Dr. Fauci told NBC's Richard Engel that coronavirus has be-

come "an evolving situation."

"We're dealing with clearly an emerging infectious disease that has now reached outbreak proportions and likely pandemic proportions," he said. Fauci warned of the infection's alarming mortality rate. "If you look at the people who have just come to the attention of the health authorities, that's 2 to 2-and-a-half percent," Fauci said. "But even if it goes down to 1%, that's still very, very serious." "So if it went from 2% to 1%, [it is] still 10 times more lethal than the standard influenza that we get on a seasonal basis."

With so much at stake, Vice President Pence is facing his most arduous assignment which could have far-reaching consequences for not only his career, but the lives of thousands of Americans. ❖

Trump doubts virus death rate

Sean Hannity interviewed President Trump on Wednesday night on Fox News: **Hannity:** "We have a report today the global death rate at 3.4%, and a report that the Olympics could be delayed. Your reaction to that?"

Trump: "Well, I think the 3.4% is really a false number. Now, this is just my hunch, and – but based on a lot of conversations with a lot of people that do this, because a lot of people will have this, and it's very mild. They will get better very rapidly. They don't even see a doctor. They don't even call a doctor."

11 virus deaths in U.S.

The Coast Guard rushed testing kits to a cruise ship quarantined off the coast of California on Thursday as

the number of new cases and deaths related to the coronavirus in the United States continued to rise. California joined the list of states declaring emergencies as the virus spreads. So far, 11 deaths have been linked to the virus, with 150 confirmed cases across the country. The authorities in the Seattle area stepped up their efforts to contain an outbreak there, the worst so far in the country, closing a school district that serves 20,000 students — part of a global disruption that has affected roughly 300 million students.

As the sense of urgency grew, lawmakers in Congress said they would devote \$8.3 billion to fighting the virus. However, even as the federal authorities promised to step up testing and relaxed guidelines so that anyone could be tested with a doctor's approval, there were concerns that the demand could overwhelm the health care system.

❖

Mayor Pete exits where it all began

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Pete Buttigieg ended his improbable but impressive presidential campaign where it began, in South Bend, the city he served as mayor and put on the national political map.



Cheers, not tears, predominated in the crowd at South Bend's Century Center, when Buttigieg announced Sunday night that he was suspending his campaign for the Democratic nomination for president. Cheers were for the man who was highly popular in two terms as mayor and who went on to become a

top-tier candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination. Cheers included: "2024! 2024!" Cheers for the future. Tears were scarce. After all, Buttigieg went farther in the presidential quest than most in the crowd could have imagined when he announced his candidacy in South Bend early last year.

He actually won the most delegates in the Iowa caucuses, a monumental achievement obscured by the long tabulation delay that deprived him of the news coverage that should have been his on election night. He came within a small margin of defeating Bernie Sanders in the New Hampshire primary, a margin that deprived him of an upset of Sanders in a state Sanders was supposed to win easily.

But when Buttigieg did so poorly in South Carolina Saturday, as Joe Biden did so well, it was obvious that he had no momentum and not enough funding to compete effectively in the Super Tuesday contests across the nation.

So, in politics, he took the advice that Kenny Rogers sang about in card playing: "You've got to know when to hold 'em. Know when to fold 'em. Know when to walk away. Know when to run."

He could not run effectively now. There was no sense of holding on, suffering defeats to tarnish such amazing achievements. It was time to walk away, especially when staying on in the cluttered "moderate" lane toward the nomination would only help Sanders, the candidate whose supporters

savaged Buttigieg and are threatening to swerve the party so far to the left that chances of President Trump's reelection would be enhanced. Buttigieg stressed again Sunday that his goal in his presidential campaign has always been to bring about defeat of Trump and unification of the nation.

"We were never supposed to go anywhere at all," Buttigieg told his supporters. He credited then with helping him get somewhere, farther than pundits thought possible. "You made me proud," he told them. And they responded with applause showing pride in him.

He didn't get to the nomination. But he got to somewhere a lot farther toward that objective than, say, the mayor of a bit larger city, New York, and such highly publicized early contenders as Julian Castro, Beto O'Rourke, Cory Booker and Kamala Harris.

Since it looks after South Carolina as though it is becoming a two-candidate race for the nomination, Sanders and Biden, it was time to fold 'em, fold the Buttigieg campaign, and get out of the way and out of contending while still regarded as having done so well. ❖

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



Pete Buttigieg and his husband, Chasten, Sunday night when he abruptly ended his presidential campaign.

Clyburn, Buttigieg kick off Joe Biden's historic comeback

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — President Trump was tweeting presciently Sunday night: "Pete Buttigieg is OUT. All of his SuperTuesday votes will go to Sleepy Joe Biden. Great timing. This is the REAL beginning of the Dems taking Bernie out of play – NO NOMINATION, AGAIN!"



And then came the stunning, out-of-the-blue Super Tuesday results. Instead of trailing Democratic socialist Sen. Bernie Sanders by 250 to 350 delegates as prognosticators had expected, Biden won 343 delegates to Sanders' 296 (at this writing), while Biden leads Sanders, 513 to 461 delegates overall.

Michael Bloomberg, who spent close to a half billion dollars in Super Tuesday, won American Samoa.

A week ago the mass speculation was that Sanders was the runaway freight train. Today, Democrats appear to have stepped away from the ledge, perhaps nominating Biden who is more in the mold of a John McCain or Mitt Romney. His appeal to Republicans exhausted by President Trump's antics and mass chaos places the Democratic presidential race and the showdown with the incumbent president on a vastly different trajectory.

It also could impact the May 5 Indiana presidential primary. Depending on what happens in next Tuesday's Michigan primary, Hoosiers could find another two-candidate slugfest between Sanders and Biden. It could present a platform for Pete Buttigieg to crisscross his home state supporting the former vice president.

Buttigieg's abrupt withdrawal from the race Sunday night, and his endorsement of Biden in Dallas on Monday, added to the former vice president's epic momentum reversal that began on Feb. 26 when South Carolina U.S. Rep. James Clyburn endorsed. Clyburn not only spoke to his Palmetto State constituency, he spoke to African-Americans throughout the deep South, paving the way for Biden to rack up primary wins in Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee and, most unexpectedly and conspicuously, Texas.

Sanders led the early vote in Texas 29-22% as the ballots cast prior to Biden's resurgence were counted.

Biden ended up with a 33% to 30% victory (as of this writing).

Following Buttigieg's decision to be the first moderate-lane Democrat to coalesce around Biden were arch-rival Sen. Amy Klobuchar and former Texas congressman Beto O'Rourke. Buttigieg's embrace of Biden was special and signals a vivid role for the former South Bend mayor should the former vice president be nominated and defeat President Trump.

"There was a goal that was always much bigger than me being president," Buttigieg said as Biden looked on in Dallas. "It is in the name of that very same goal that I am delighted to endorse Joe Biden for president. I do it with great pleasure in knowing what we need to do to win, not just win back the White House, but to win the House and Senate. And we've got to do it in a way that changes the toxic divisive nature of our politics. We can't go on like this.

"We need a politics that is about decency," Buttigieg continued. "That brings back dignity. That's what we sought to practice in my campaign and that's what Joe Biden has been practicing his whole life. What we see in that opportunity is not just to meet that imperative to getting a new and better president, but of doing with a leader that will bring people together with ideas big enough to unite the American people."



A visibly moved Biden then invoked the memory of his son, the late Delaware Attorney General Beau Biden. "I'll tell you what, folks, I can't tell you how much I appreciate Pete's endorsement. This is also a bitter-sweet moment. There hasn't been a harsh word between us. This is a man who is decent. I don't think I've ever done this before,

but he reminds me of my son Beau," Biden said. "To me that's the highest compliment I can pay. Like Beau, he has a backbone like a ramrod."

Biden observed that both he and Buttigieg had been elected for the first time at age 29, Biden to the U.S. Senate and Buttigieg as mayor of South Bend. "Pete knows why he got engaged and why he's there. I am absolutely confident he will stay engaged. I warned Pete that if I were to get the nomination, I would be asking him to join, to be involved in this process. There are a generation of leaders Pete's age and my son Beau, who had unlimited potential."

Biden added that if this happened in "another six years, I wouldn't be standing here; Pete would be standing here and I would be endorsing Pete. Pete knows the role

of the president is not just to fight, not just to win, but to heal.”

On Wednesday, Bloomberg pulled out. “Three months ago, I entered the race for President to defeat Donald Trump. Today, I am leaving the race for the same reason: To defeat Donald Trump – because it is clear to me that staying in would make achieving that goal more difficult,” Bloomberg said. “I’m a believer in using data to inform decisions. After yesterday’s results, the delegate math has become virtually impossible – and a viable path to the nomination no longer exists. But I remain clear-eyed about my overriding objective: Victory in November. Not for me, but for our country. And so while I will not be the nominee, I will not walk away from the most important political fight of my life. I’ve always believed that defeating Donald Trump starts with uniting behind the candidate with the best shot to do it.”

The former New York City mayor then endorsed Biden. “After yesterday’s vote, it is clear that candidate is my friend and a great American, Joe Biden. I’ve known Joe for a very long time. I know his decency, his honesty, and his commitment to the issues that are so important to our country – including gun safety, health care, climate change, and good jobs. I’ve had the chance to work with

Joe on those issues over the years, and Joe has fought for working people his whole life. Today I am glad to endorse him – and I will work to make him the next president of the United States.”

Whether this turns into a prolonged Biden/Sanders slugfest could hinge on Michigan next Tuesday. Sanders upset Hillary Clinton 49.8% to 48.3% in 2016, setting in motion a prolonged nomination fight that weakened the former First Lady and help set up the perfect storm that resulting in Donald Trump’s historic upset. By the time of the Indiana primary (where Trump clinched the GOP nomination), Sanders won 53-47% without a single endorsement from the Hoosier political establishment.

Hoosier Democrats can be expected to coalesce around Biden, with all but certain endorsements from former senators Joe Donnelly and Evan Bayh, whose son interned with the former vice president. If Biden hasn’t secured the nomination by May 5, it will provide Mayor Pete a platform to campaign in his home state, which was not seen as a lock for Buttigieg had he stayed in the race.

Clyburn’s endorsement lit the black voter fuse for Biden. As Politico’s Ryan Lizza observed on Tuesday, “It was Biden’s landslide victory in South Carolina that pushed party leaders around the country to back Biden in the 48



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hours after the Saturday primary there. The Democratic establishment was divided and feckless before South Carolina. After African-Americans weighed in, party leaders rallied around Biden. It's the opposite of what political scientists often argue happens in a primary, when party leaders coalesce around a candidate early and voters follow along."

What Clyburn and Buttigieg ended up doing was resetting the Democrat Party's resistance to President Trump. Should Democrats nominate the socialist Sanders, the party stands to gain "Bernie's Army" of activists dedicated to him, but not down-ballot candidates. It would lose moderate Republicans and independents turned off by President Trump but who in no way could have voted for an avowed socialist.

Biden won in states where he had no campaign infrastructure and didn't advertise, such as Massachusetts, Minnesota and swing-state Virginia by a whopping 52-21% margin. Meanwhile Sanders is not expanding beyond his base. He won New Hampshire last month with 26%, had 20% in South Carolina, 25% in Massachusetts, 25% in Oklahoma, 24% in North Carolina, 23% in Virginia, 22% in Arkansas and 16% in Alabama. He won 36% in Colorado and 33% in California (so far) in states that had massive early voting and missed the Biden resurgence.

Exit polls from the 14 states revealed that by a 21% margin, Biden carried voters who preferred the candidate who can beat Donald Trump. Biden carried the black vote by 41%, moderate to conservatives by 28%, those who oppose a single payer health plan by 31%, women voters by 11%, 65 and older by 29% and Democrats by 15%. Sanders won the 18- to 29-year-olds by 41%.

Washington Post columnist Dana Milbank noted on Wednesday: "On Super Tuesday, voters across 14 states collectively delivered an emphatic message on the single biggest day of the primary season. They don't want a revolution. They just want to oust Donald Trump."

Or as J. Miles Coleman of Sabato's Crystal Ball tweeted, "Political science junkies are gonna be studying these last few days for years."

Buttigieg's career options

There was almost a comical reflex in some Indiana media quarters of Pete Buttigieg shoving Woody Myers aside to make a run for governor this year. Buttigieg announced he was dropping out of the Democratic presidential race Sunday night, but other than vowing to "do everything in my power to ensure that we have a new Democratic president come January," when announcing his endorsement of Joe Biden. Buttigieg has long disdained the notion of serving in Congress. He passed multiple times of challenging U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski and we would be shocked if he decided to challenge U.S. Sen. Todd Young in 2022. As far as taking the nomination from Myers to challenge Gov. Holcomb, that's just a silly notion that

backfired in 2016 when Evan Bayh shoved aside Baron Hill in the U.S. Senate race. Young easily defeated Bayh. Buttigieg passed on what would have been a natural progression of running statewide for governor in 2018, opting for the presidential race. He would have had to work hard at carrying Indiana in the May presidential primary, and this gay Democrat almost certainly won't take on Holcomb with an \$8 million money lead this year. The notion of retraining his sights on Holcomb after dropping out of the White House race is absurd. Buttigieg would seem to be a lock for a Democratic cabinet post for any nominee not named Bernie Sanders. He established enough cred to vividly be in the 2024 or 2028 presidential race conversation, depending on what happens this November. That's why his supporters began chanting "2024!" at the Century Center.

Democratic strategist David Axelrod said "the Pete Buttigieg story isn't over" (AP). "He's 38 years old," the former Obama strategist said. "He's vaulted himself into the national conversation. He obviously has work to do on some things that — some weaknesses we've seen in this election — but whenever there is a conversation again about Democratic candidates, he'll be in that conversation. And that's a remarkable achievement, given where he started a year ago."


Indiana Democratic Party Chairman John Zody added, "Mayor Pete Buttigieg outpaced every expectation when he entered this race last year, and Hoosier Democrats expected nothing less from him. His contributions to our state, to South Bend and to our country have been trailblazing, and we know we haven't seen the last of him in public service. To say we are proud doesn't do justice to the effort he and his team made. He has our everlasting gratitude for a race well run, and for the way he represented Hoosiers on the campaign trail."

Buttigieg shuts down South Bend HQ

Eighteen hours after Pete Buttigieg announced at the Century Center that he was ending his presidential

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

bid, volunteers at the campaign's public-facing office a few blocks away, on Sycamore Street, had already begun the painful process of moving out (Mazurek, South Bend Tribune). They spent Monday packing up, or giving away, blue and yellow "Pete for American" signs and pins. They took posters off the walls. Giant letters spelling out "Boot-Edge-Edge" sat stacked in a corner. An old "Pete Buttigieg, Democrat for Mayor" sign was to be returned to the basement of the Clay Township Democratic and Civic Club. "I'm feeling surreal," Teresa Sheppard said while cleaning up. "Last night at the Century Center, I don't think it hit me yet. It wasn't supposed to be this soon."

Congress

Mitchell applauds Pence on virus response

Fifth CD Republican candidate Kelly Mitchell applauded President Donald Trump for creating the coronavirus Task Force and for appointing Vice President Mike Pence to lead the nation's efforts to combat the spread of the coronavirus. "By creating the Coronavirus Task Force

and appointing Vice President Pence to lead its efforts, President Trump is sending the country a clear message that there is no higher priority than the health and security of the American people," Mitchell said.

Baldwin endorsed by Brainard, Cook

Fifth CD Republican candidate Scott Baldwin announced today he has earned endorsements from Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard and Westfield Mayor Andy Cook, gaining the support of all four Hamilton County Mayors. Mayor Cook and Mayor Brainard join Noblesville Mayor Chris Jensen, Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness and 20 other Hamilton County local elected officials endorsing Baldwin in his Senate campaign. Cook said, "Scott will be a champion for Westfield and families all across Hamilton County. His law enforcement background, experience in the U.S. Marine Corps and commitment to public safety will serve Hamilton County well." Brainard said, "Scott is an entrepreneur, job creator and an active member of our Hamilton County community. He will be a strong advocate for our small businesses and residents in the state Senate." ❖



Secretary of State Pete

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Back in 1980 while working for the Elkhart Truth, I covered a rising star congressman named David Stockman, who represented a southern Michigan district.



He was handsome, astute, Harvard-educated and cerebral, with one of my editors observing, "The genes really came together with him." Conservative Washington Post columnist George Will became an ardent proponent of Stockman, declaring that should Ronald

Reagan reach the White House, he should put Stockman in charge of the Office of Management and Budget.

That actually happened, though subsequent events collided with a sensational interview with legendary journalist William Greider in the 1981 article, "The Education of David Stockman" in which he acknowledged the inherit contradiction of Reagan's campaign promises to raise defense spending, cut income taxes, and balance the budget, all at the same time.

While Stockman would premise his Reagan-esque promise of "it's how the world works," during the Greider interview, he acknowledged "absolutely shocking" metrics. "All the conventional estimates just wind up as mud," he said. "As absurdities. What they basically say, to boil it down, is that the world doesn't work."

Stockman finally said in what had become the obvious: "None of us really understands what's going on with all these numbers."

It famously earned Stockman a trip to President Reagan's woodshed.

I tell this tale in the days following Pete Buttigieg's withdrawal from the Democratic presidential race last Sunday. Mayor Pete knew the metrics, saw his path to the Democratic nomination winnow to less than a mouse hole, pulled out of the race and endorsed Joe Biden. He, too, understood how the world worked.

In tandem with U.S. Rep. James Clyburn's endorsement of Biden the week before, these two men — a grizzled civil rights icon and the young, gay mayor — walked American Democrats off the ledge, at least for the time being. I'm referring to the suicidal trapeze of the party nominating socialist Bernie Sanders, the opponent President Trump was salivating over.

Buttigieg spent the final weeks of his campaign warning that a Sanders nomination would be a down-ballot disaster. On Monday night in Dallas as Biden looked on, Pete Buttigieg explained, "There was a goal that was always much bigger than me being president. We need to win, not just win back the White House, but to win the House and Senate. And we've got to do it in a way that changes the toxic divisive nature of our politics. We can't go on like this."

Biden accepted Buttigieg's nod, said he reminded him of his late son, Delaware Attorney General Beau Biden, and added, that if this happened in "another six years, I wouldn't be standing here; Pete would be standing here and I would be endorsing Pete. Pete knows the role of the president is not just to fight, not just to win, but to heal."

Needless to say, a President Biden will be poised to tap Mayor Pete into his cabinet.

I believe that a President Biden should be thinking big when it comes to Buttigieg's future. Like secretary of state.

The reason I took Buttigieg's presidential campaign seriously occurred last June at Indiana University. As former House Foreign Relations Chairman Lee Hamilton looked on, Buttigieg laid out his foreign policy views. It was a tight weave, packed with an array of poignant observations.

Buttigieg presented a five-point strategy, contrasting with President Trump, who he said, governs in a "pattern" made "impulsively, erratically, emotionally, and politically — often delivered by means of early-morning tweet — with little regard for strategy and no preparation for their long-term consequences."



"The tasks before the next president are clear," Buttigieg said. "First, we must put an end to endless war and refocus on future threats. Second, we must promote American values by working to reverse the rise of authoritarianism abroad. Third, we must treat climate change as the existential security challenge it is. Fourth, we must update the institutions through which we engage the world to address 21st-century challenges and opportunities.

"And fifth," he continued, "We must do all this while involving citizens across America in a meaningful conversation about how foreign policy and national security concern their communities, and do more to include their voices and values in formulating our policies."

"Not only must America do this in order to prosper, but the world also needs America to do these things," Buttigieg said. "To cope with enormous change, American foreign policy for the future must be securely grounded in American values, American interests, and American relationships."

The obstacles facing America are the "models that fly in the face of our values — from Chinese techno-authoritarianism to Russian oligarchic capitalism to anti-modern theocratic regimes in the Middle East — all present a major challenge to us," Buttigieg explained. "And it is no accident that their hostility to shared values comes as they also present a greater threat to our interests. Ironically, at the very moment when American prestige and respect is collapsing, it has never been more needed that America lives up to the values we profess."

He describes in his book "Shortest Way Home" the rigorous PPE (philosophy, politics and economics) program at Oxford where he studied as a Rhodes Scholar. "Any sloppy argument or imprecise claim would get picked apart politely by a skeptical professor or fellow student," Buttigieg wrote. "I learned more rigorous ways to explain the moral intuitions I already had about politics and society."

As I noted last June, these were on conspicuous display at the IU Auditorium. With this address, Mayor Pete passed presidential muster. Throughout the 10 presidential debates this past year, Buttigieg continually displayed wisdom beyond his years, beyond his modest resume.

And it's why a President Biden — and there's a long road with a treacherous fight with President Trump ahead — would be wise to cast Pete Buttigieg as his secretary of state should he reach the White House. ❖

House honors Bauer's record 50 year career

Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana House honored the longest-serving lawmaker in state history Wednesday, Rep. Pat Bauer (Smith, [Indiana Public Media](#)).



regularly honor outgoing members – Bauer's just came with an extra bit of history. Remarks from his colleagues ranged from the humorous, like Rep. Phil Gia-Quinta's (Indiana Public Media): "In 1971, you passed your first

bill – tax exemption for the aged," GiaQuinta says. "Which might come in handy now." To the heartfelt, like Rep. Earl Harris (D-East Chicago)'s, whose father served with Bauer for 33 years before his death. "I will miss him being here but what I really want to thank him – excuse me, sorry – for is the relationship and friendship that he had with my father," Harris says. "That meant so much to my mother and I." Bauer's parting words included some old stories and a thanks to his fellow legislators. "You're sacrificing but you're trying to do something that's good – you're trying to help your community," Bauer says. "And that's why I kept coming back." Bauer is retiring after 50 years in the General Assembly.



Sen. J.D. Ford endorses Yoder in SD40

Shelli Yoder, Democratic candidate for Indiana SD40, announced her campaign has been endorsed by Indiana's first and only openly-LGBTQ state legislator, Senator J.D. Ford. "I am excited to endorse my friend Shelli Yoder to be the next State Senator for District 40," Ford said. "Shelli is a mom and educator with a history of service to Monroe County. Her perspectives and thoughtful insight will be invaluable to our state legislature." Yoder is a mom, educator and progressive Democrat who served on the Monroe County Council from 2013-2019. She teaches at Indiana University's Kelley School of Business and previously led nonprofit organizations related to women's healthcare. Yoder is seeking the Democratic nomination against Indiana Democratic Chairman John Zody. "Senator Ford exemplifies the next generation of Democratic servant leaders. His commitment to both his constituents

and to progressive values demonstrates why it's imperative we have more diverse voices in our statehouse, and I am grateful for his support as we look ahead to the primary election this May," Yoder said.

Indiana quietly releases A to F grades

Indiana released 2019 A-F grades for schools and districts Wednesday in a quiet rollout that points to the diminished meaning of the measure. Last month, lawmakers passed a two-year "hold harmless" provision to protect schools and teachers from the negative consequences of low ILEARN scores. Scores dropped to a new low in the first year of the new state standardized exam (Fittes, [Chalkbeat](#)). The hold harmless provision blocks a school's grade from falling by allowing it to be calculated using 2018 scores if those scores were higher than the current year. That helped most schools in the state: Only 120 schools scored well enough in 2019 to see their grades increase, a Chalkbeat analysis found. As widely

expected, the exemption means 2019 A-F grades look a little rosier: Most schools—73%—received an A or B. Fewer schools received an F compared to the year before. Without the exemption, state officials said most schools would have received a D or an F. That would have affected teacher's evaluations, and therefore pay, and put many schools on the path to state intervention. But it also makes it

difficult to judge how schools are truly performing. State Board of Education members didn't discuss the results before approving them on Wednesday. And unlike previous years, the Indiana Department of Education released a bare-bones spreadsheet that didn't break down how schools' grades were calculated or what scores were factored in, saying that would "undermine the hold harmless."

Holcomb appoints new fire marshal

A suburban Indianapolis fire chief is set to become Indiana's next state fire marshal. Gov. Eric Holcomb announced Wednesday that he had appointed Plainfield Fire Chief Joel Thacker to oversee the state agency that investigates suspicious fires, promotes fire prevention and enforces safety codes in public buildings. Thacker will begin his new duties April 6. Holcomb said Thacker has "risen through the ranks to bring 28 years of fire and emergency response experience" to his new position. Thacker began his career as a first responder in 1992 as an EMT and volunteer firefighter in central Indiana. Five years later, he became a firefighter, first serving in Brownsburg and then Johnson County's White River Township. ❖

Dems risk passing on Bernie Sanders

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO — I rarely find myself giving unsolicited advice to the Democrat Party, but this may be the time to offer some based on my real life experience. After all, if you don't gain wisdom as you age and gather experiences,



both good and bad, what the heck are you doing? The advice that I have to give is in regard to the current effort by Democrat Party insiders to nuke Bernie Sanders as a threat to win the nomination to be their party's standard bearer in the 2020 presidential election.

Here is my advice for those actively pursuing the "Never Bernie" strategy: Don't even think about it!

It sends shivers down the spine of every insider Democrat to imagine what President Trump might do to Sanders and down ballot candidates in a head-to-head campaign. They see not only another loss to Donald Trump, but also the loss of their House majority and a potential strengthening of the Republican majority in the United States Senate. Yes, a Sanders candidacy even potentially spreads disaster down to state and local election levels. After all, how would you like to be a reasonably moderate candidate for state representative in Moose Heel, Minnesota, and have your election jeopardized by political ads focusing on the Sanders/Castro lovefest?

I know, I know, Bernie has never been a "real" Democrat. He runs as an independent, a Socialist or a Democrat Socialist to suit his needs. He's as old as Methuselah, has health problems and doesn't play nice with others. He makes opposition research amazingly easy because of his many pro-Communist comments and his verbal attacks on Israel, the free enterprise system and other beliefs that many Democrats hold as dear as most Republicans.

There are a hundred reasons to conspire as a party to deny Bernie Sanders the nomination and only one to not do it. The sole negative reason is that it will shatter the Democrat Party in two.

I intimated earlier that I have some experience on this issue. In 2016, Donald Trump was not my favorite Republican candidate. In fact, he was not even in my top 15. I found his personal demeanor to be repugnant and boorish. Trump surprisingly started piling up wins and

delegates and his opponents started dropping one by one. "Big ears" Marco Rubio, "Low Energy" Jeb Bush and "Ugly" Carly Fiorina all folded under Trump's verbal insults. By the time the Republican circus came to Indiana, all that were left in addition to Trump were "Lyn" Ted Cruz and John "I don't even rate an insulting nickname" Kasich. This was when most Republican establishment types had a real "WTF" epiphany and tried to launch a much-too-late effort to stop Trump.

I personally felt that Donald Trump could mean the end of the Republican Party. In an interview with Politico.com before the Indiana primary, when asked if there was any way that I could see myself voting for Donald Trump I answered, "Well I suppose if Satan was the Democrat Party nominee, then I might consider it." This somewhat innocent response came at the end of a very long interview, but you can guess how Politico framed it with their headlines. Let's just say that my comment received undo attention from Trump supporters, about 3,000 of them, who flooded my emails, voicemails at work and voicemails at home. These were not particularly nice emails although a few did not end with the perfunctory, "I hope you die in a flaming car wreck with Ted Cruz, John Kasich and the rest of your disgusting family."

By the time of the May primary, some strategists were plotting to steal the nomination from Trump at the Republican National Convention. I was approached by some of these operatives, but after Trump won Indiana



in a landslide, I resigned myself to the inevitability of his ultimate nomination. To continue the folly of trying to deny Trump the nomination in the face of his huge popular vote would have been the destruction of the Republican Party in presidential politics for decades. Better to go down in defeat in the 2016 election than to lose for the rest of my lifetime.

What should have been a fun and thrilling convention in Cleveland was a somewhat depressing coronation. Sure, I held up signs, clapped and cheered on cue, but my

heart wasn't in it as I felt the party of Lincoln and Ronald Reagan was rushing for the edge of the political cliff.

My turning point on Donald Trump came as Democrats nominated Hillary Clinton as their candidate. Well, in this good ole boy Hoosier's humble opinion, the Democrats didn't nominate Satan, but they did nominate a close associate. This is what finally got me on the Trump Train.

As time unfolded, in my capacity as both a Republican county chairman and Indiana 4th District chairman, I came to see the potential benefit of bringing into the polling booths an army of new voters who had previously distrusted the system as rigged and hopeless. I believed that someone voting for the first time because of Donald Trump might just vote for our United States Senate candidate, Todd Young, and our governor candidate, Eric Holcomb, not to mention all of the rest of our Republican candidates. My suspicions were correct. In fact, by the morning of the November election, I predicted to a long-term political friend that Republicans would make a clean sweep of both the presidential election and the key state and local elections. My reason, the pro-Trump energy had united and energized everyone.

It appears to me that the typical Bernie Sanders wild-eyed supporter is just the opposite side of the same coin as the typical Donald Trump faithful. They are people who were or are unhappy with the status quo and who were or are looking for a radical answer to the many problems that our country faces. They are an army of what the sociologist Eric Hoffer called "the True Believers." They are

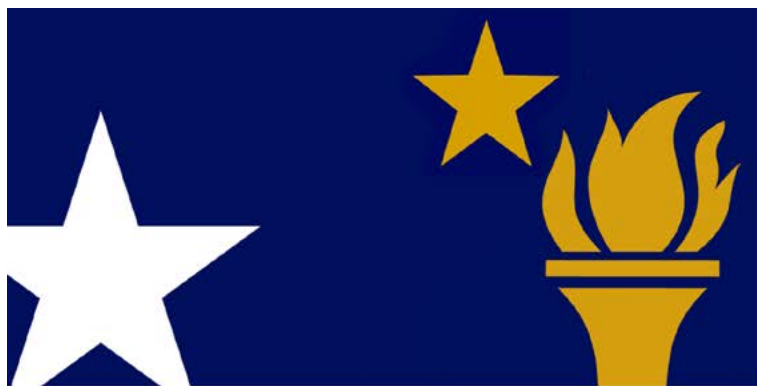
a most valuable component of any meaningful mass movement. They are also not a force to trifle with.

My transformation from a stop-Trumper to a pro-Trump advocate has evolved not because he showed he could beat Hillary and turn out new voters. Yes, that was my early cynical view. My support for Donald Trump is now based solely on results. I still get a little squeamish at his Twitter comments, boastfulness and personnel management.

That being said, he has strengthened our national defense, reinvigorated our economy, cut and slashed government red tape, transformed both the appellate and supreme courts with outstanding appointments, and reversed decades of the exportation of American jobs to our fiercest competitors. Trump is a disrupter in an amazingly successful way!

This brings me back to Bernie Sanders. Democrat leaders are faced with the unenviable choice of nominating Sanders and risking devastating losses at the November polls or interceding to stop Sanders and risk fracturing the Democrat Party beyond repair. To those Democrat string-pullers who are tempted to interfere in the nomination process, take it from one who has stared into the abyss and then stepped back, if you are considering using your institutional muscle to deny Bernie Sanders the nomination, don't even think about it! ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman..



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What to value about America

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON — Sometimes, you just need to step back. The political conversations I hear these days are strikingly negative, dominated by what’s amiss in Washington, by the deep divisions in the country, by President



Trump’s actions and the aftermath of his impeachment, and by the difficult problems we face but seem to make little progress toward resolving. There’s a lot of discouragement out there.

I’ve done my share of carping, too. But at times like these, I find it helpful to draw back and look for the positives, as a reminder not to lose sight of the benefits we all share as Americans.

For one thing, in the great game of world politics I’m pleased to be able to identify with the United States. We are not always right as a nation, though often we are. We have an economy that remains the envy of the world. Even if it’s not the record-breaking marvel the president claims, we’ve enjoyed economic growth over a long period, and despite our problems with wage stagnation, inequality, and rising concern about affordability, our overall performance, both political and economic, holds up well against our chief global rivals, Russia and China.

That is why our economy continues to attract outside investment and why our shores remain a top destination for refugees and immigrants. And it is why, quite remarkably for a superpower, we have friends, allies, and partners whose ties are voluntary, based on shared ideals and values.

We can always do better, of course. Some of our alliances have become frayed of late. And it may be that we’re no longer at the pinnacle of global power we once enjoyed. But we’ve been able to protect our standing without descending into outright war, and though our global challenges are sobering and we have to appreciate the constraints on our power – we’re not going to make every country in the world peaceful, prosperous, and democratic – we can still have a profound influence for the better on the world around us.

This is in part

due to the nature of our democracy. I don’t buy into the view that our country is collapsing. Yes, I understand that we have a vigorous public debate that goes on between the right and the left, and that as liberals, conservatives, and moderates all compete aggressively for power, sometimes the competition gets out of hand. It’s not a perfect process, but it has served us well on the whole. Most notably, we have a longstanding tradition of free and fair elections, a free press, separation of powers, the rule of law (though some of these are under stress right now) and an active civil society.

All of these produce a feature of our democracy that constantly impresses me: Our capacity for reform. Our freedoms give us the capability to stand back, watch the process unfold, search for the truth, try to understand what’s happening in the country and the world, and then make decisions based on the information we have in front of us. If we make a mistake, which is hardly uncommon, we have the ability to correct it, usually by working through the system to change course. True, popular protests in this country occasionally turn violent, but more often than not we sort out our problems peaceably by working together.

This is why I don’t share the gloom I see in a lot of the predictions about where we’re headed. Since our founding – in fact, it’s right there at the start of the Constitution – we have striven to achieve “a more perfect union,” and though that goal has suffered setbacks and at times seemed beyond reach, over the course of our history we’ve always been able to advance toward it. It takes hard work to overcome the challenges and to bounce back, but our capacity for self-renewal is strong and no less vital now than it ever was. We should remember that. ❖

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice at the IU O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.



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Now available for iOS and Android devices

The virus and the economy

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — The spread of the coronavirus is serious. It should not be taken lightly, nor need we over-react and assume damages that may not occur. To prepare is appropriate. To assume what could happen, will happen, and already has happened, is foolhardy.



The stock market response has been irrational and irresponsible. Irrational because we can respond appropriately with careful direction of resources by the professionals who understand the needs. Putting a bunch of political appointees "in charge" is only a theatrical step. Irresponsible because it gives rise to a panic, a

media frenzy, and a misdirection of our attention from the preparation actually required.

The big Wall Street firms (Fidelity, Schwab, TD Ameritrade, and Vanguard) hold the buying and selling power for many millions of Americans, many billions (trillions) of dollars for investors/savers worldwide. Their responses to legitimate news reports and speculative pronouncements by 24-hour news "analysts" determine how the market moves.

Some industries have cut back in anticipation of continued catastrophes. Airlines have cancelled flights to currently contaminated destinations, most notably to China and northern Italy. Will you now, in panic mode, avoid your neighborhood Chinese restaurant or local pizzeria?

In this era of world trade, much of the economic impact of the current viral attack depends on the ability of firms and households to shift among alternative products and the amount of product already in the pipeline.

Much attention has been given to cell phones because of China's significant role in making the parts used in those instruments which now dominate our lives. The reduced-price phone promotions of carrier companies (AT&T, Sprint, etc.) may be endangered, but you'll still be able to report every splinter you suffer to all your contacts.

When you dine out, you might find the stock of lush red wines from northern Italy unavailable, existing inventories having been depleted. Nonetheless, your northern Indiana palate may be satisfied with a Hoosier red.

An astounding number of cases were contracted in Wuhan, Hubei Province. Extraordinary stress was placed on medical facilities and personnel.

Many of those cases are not serious. Of those that are serious, some are fatal. Thus far, the fatality rate is 2.9% in Hubei Province. As yet, it is too early to determine

the incidence of this epidemic, that is the number of cases divided by the population in a given area.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (the CDC) reports the 1918-19 flu virus infected "about 500 million people or one-third of the world's population ... The number of deaths was estimated to be at least 50 million worldwide." That was a 10% fatality rate. Today, we have greater medical capabilities to manage a pandemic, if we prepare for it. Our attention should be given to what can be done and what is being done to prevent the spread of this virus. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonj-marcus@yahoo.com. Follow his views and those of John Guy on "Who gets what?" wherever podcasts are available or at mortonjohn.libsyn.com.

Researchers find gaps in media literacy

By **KELLY HAWS CNHI**

ANDERSON — On learning that Russia had staged a massive disinformation campaign in the 2016 presidential election, schools across the country began adding digital literacy classes to their course offerings.

A new study, though, suggests those classes might be targeting the wrong age group. Researchers from New York and Princeton universities checked the data and concluded it wasn't kids who were sharing those fake news stories. It was their parents and grandparents.



The study found that those over the age of 65 were seven times more likely to share a fake news story than those under the age of 30.

Andrew Guess, an assistant professor of politics and public affairs at Princeton and a co-author of the study, says folks who didn't grow up using computers often lack the skills they need to separate the fake from the real.

"They are simply more susceptible to the kinds of online content that happened to be weaponized in that particular election," he told National Public Radio.

Those who fell victim to these disinformation efforts weren't necessarily less educated or less well off financially. Researchers saw no connection between education or income and the sharing of fake news.

Gender also seemed irrelevant. Men and women

seemed equally likely to fall victim.

The researchers did find a link to politics. Eighteen percent of Republicans shared links to fake news sites compared to less than 4% of Democrats.

Still, researchers said, it wasn't so much that Republicans were more vulnerable to disinformation as that they were more likely to be targeted. Much of the propaganda favored Donald Trump and worked against Hillary Clinton.

Susan Nash, a visiting scholar at the Stanford University Center on Longevity, says the problem with fake news didn't start with the internet.

"When I was pregnant with my second child, my 70-year-old mother-in-law called to ask if I was still swimming at the public pool," she wrote. "She had read in a print newsletter that swimming in a public pool could cause birth defects. It didn't matter that no scientific evidence backed up this article; she wanted me out of that pool."

Now, she says, millions of older Americans are getting their news through social media, and they're falling victim not just to political hoaxes but to the same sorts of health scares that tripped up her mother-in-law.

"As a member of the over-60 crowd myself," she wrote, "I believe we must teach older people to be smarter online, and soon."

Nash cited a recent YouGov poll in which 44 percent of participants over the age of 65 admitted they had

fallen for fake news.

"If Jefferson was right that only a well-informed citizenry can be trusted with democratic government, then our democracy is in trouble," she wrote.

Part of the problem is what the researchers call confirmation bias. The fake news stories tend to confirm what we already believe to be true.

How can society address the problem?

Nash suggests offering media literacy classes at public libraries, senior centers and other places where older Americans gather. These classes won't necessarily teach older Americans how to search the internet as quickly as their grandchildren, but they can offer useful tips such as how to spot questionable websites and where to go to find information you can trust.

Nash also suggests public awareness campaigns urging older Americans to think twice before spreading false information.

"We all know an informed democracy is the only way democracy works," she told NPR. "And if we don't teach them how to evaluate what they're seeing, then we are poisoning our electorate." ❖

Kelly Hawes is a columnist for CNHI News Indiana. He can be reached at kelly.hawes@indianamedia-group.com. Find him on Twitter @Kelly_Hawes.

The stunning Joe Biden turnaround

By **KYLE KONDIK**
and **J. MILES COLEMAN**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Joe Biden's challenge on Super Tuesday was to build on his victory in South Carolina and defend the other Southern states from incursions by Bernie Sanders. Not only did he accomplish that, but Biden was William Tecumseh Sherman in reverse — using the South as a springboard to move North in force.

We were not particularly surprised that Biden won every southern state, but Biden winning Maine, Massachusetts, and Minnesota was stunning.

Two of the first states reporting last night were North Carolina and Virginia. As soon as a critical mass of votes from those states were tallied, it was clear that they were very much an extension of South Carolina (Map 1).

In most counties, Biden was claiming outright majorities. Conventional wisdom suggested that Biden would perform well with African Americans — which he did — but

there was little positive news for Sanders in the suburbs or Appalachian parts of the states, regions where he had shown a modicum of strength in 2016. Virginia set the tone for the night, in that Biden's performance in the suburbs carried over to places in other regions -- like the Twin Cities in Minnesota, a state which was, to a large extent, in question going into the night. Likewise, Sanders' weakness in rural parts of Virginia were indicative of other regions, like eastern Oklahoma, where he performed much worse than his 2016 showing.

It is also very surprising that Biden may very well come out of Super Tuesday with more delegates than Sanders, but that is a story yet to be written. As of this writing (Wednesday afternoon), our delegate count with Decision Desk HQ shows Biden up 501-438 over Sanders (that takes into account the February contests

as well as Super Tuesday). There are still many delegates yet to allocate, and the lion's share comes from California — which Sanders won (along with Colorado, Utah, and his home state of Vermont). So Sanders might catch up — but, remember, our expectation (shared by other analysts) was that Sanders would come out of Super Tuesday with some sort of substantial delegate lead.

In that sense, Biden really overperformed.



The dramatic and sharp shifts in the race were driven in no small part by the signals that Democratic leaders have been sending to Democratic base voters since Nevada about what they believe are the perils of nominating Sanders. Biden's smashing win in South Carolina restored faith in his presumed electability, and the twin drop-outs and endorsements by Pete Buttigieg and Amy Klobuchar allowed Biden to keep riding the wave (surely Klobuchar's backing was especially helpful in her home state of Minnesota).



Sanders' supporters will cry foul, saying the "establishment" is taking the nomination from them. But party leaders can only make arguments at this point of the primary season: It's up to voters as to whether they want to heed those arguments. Clearly, many did, particularly Election Day voters. This showed up in Virginia, a state that does not have much meaningful early/absentee voting and where Biden rolled up a 30-point victory. Biden likely would have won states like North Carolina and Texas by more had a significant chunk of the vote not already been cast before his surge.

Sanders, meanwhile, arguably wasted the 10 days following his victory in Nevada. It is quite possible that there is nothing Sanders could have done to reassure Democratic leaders (and voters) who were concerned about his ability to win a general election, but Sanders did not do anything, at least publicly, to extend an olive branch to his detractors.

Instead, he reminded skeptical Democrats of what worries them about Sanders: He once again defended certain aspects of Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba; he said that his vice presidential nominee would have to support Medicare for All, a proposal that strikes even some Democrats as politically and practically unpalatable; he declined to attend the Selma civil rights march commemoration in Alabama on Sunday, making him the only major Democratic presidential candidate who did not show up; he continued to rail against the "Democratic establishment."

None of these things are that important on their own. Put together, they didn't help Sanders change any minds among Democratic leaders and voters already predisposed to oppose him. Nor has Sanders' steadfastness helped him generate higher turnout that benefits him, specifically among younger voters. Instead, it appears that the spikes in turnout are centered in affluent, highly-educated suburban places where Sanders doesn't have that much appeal (see friend of the Crystal Ball Niles Francis' map of Virginia turnout as an illustration -- compared to 2008, turnout was significantly higher in blue-trending and suburban Northern Virginia than in less densely-populated

areas).

Turnout overall is definitely up when compared to 2016, but not always when compared to 2008, the blockbuster Barack Obama-Hillary Clinton primary. Table 1 compares primary turnout over the last three contested years; remember that population size naturally grows almost everywhere, so even matching 2008 doesn't necessarily mean turnout was better. We don't know if these turnout

spikes are really predictive of anything for the fall, but obviously any party wants to engage more voters as opposed to less. We excluded California here because so many votes remain to be counted as well as states that held caucuses this year or in past years, and some of these states are not fully reported yet (noted with an *).

Remember, too, that Republicans had a contested primary as well in 2016; the absence of such a race is likely boosting Democratic turnout to some degree. Donald Trump, meanwhile, romped in all of his primary contests yesterday, getting vote shares in the high 80s even in a Trump-skeptical GOP state like Utah.

The path ahead

After Nevada, Democratic leaders had a short window to work to stop Sanders. It appears that they took advantage of that window. Sanders is not quite stopped, but the advantage has passed to Biden now.

The reason why we highlight Biden's victories in the North is that they represent a positive sign for him after his horrible start to the nominating season in Iowa (the Midwest) and New Hampshire (the Northeast). Many of the major big states that have yet to vote lie in these regions: Michigan votes next week, Illinois and Ohio the week after, and then New York and Pennsylvania on April 28. Given what we saw last night, one has to like Biden's chances in these states, at least at the moment. Biden also seems very likely to win the big Southern states Florida (March 17) and Georgia (March 24) comfortably.

There is always the possibility the race may change again. Certainly Biden is going to be under renewed scrutiny, and his campaign performances have been shaky at best (last night he seemed to mix up his sister and his wife during the start of his victory speech, for instance).

But Sanders also has not expanded his own base, and it's clearer than ever now that at least some of his support in 2016 was simply a function of being the alternative to Hillary Clinton. ❖

Jon Webb, Evansville Courier & Press: Let's take a short quiz. Who is Woody Myers? Is he: A.) A motorcycle daredevil from the 1970s; B.) The former football coach of the Ohio State Buckeyes; C.) A beloved Pixar character; D.) The Democratic candidate for Indiana governor. If you guessed A, you might be right. I don't know Myers' entire history. But sadly, D is more accurate. After several other Democrats exited the race, Myers is the only major-party candidate left who hopes to challenge Republican governor / Craig T. Nelson impersonator Eric Holcomb in the November election. And I'd be willing to bet a small amount of money that most Hoosier voters don't know much about him. So here are a few things you should know. Myers' website only speaks in generalities – high-quality healthcare, good-paying jobs, etc. – but a few scant details have leaked out. In his response to Holcomb's State of the State Address, Myers leaped on the governor for the pitiful way the state treats its teachers. He called for higher teacher pay and a better testing model for students. He also supported increasing the smoking age to 21 and curbing layoffs that have upended middle-class families. As far as healthcare, he vehemently expressed support for the current system in a 2008 interview with Indiana journalist Brian Howey. "My conclusion is I would not trade our system for any system, anywhere else in the world, including Canada (and) England," he said then. He worked as an attending physician at the former Wishard Memorial Hospital in Indianapolis – a job so central to his identity that he announced his campaign in 2019 while standing in front of its doors. He also served as Indiana's health commissioner under governors Robert Orr and Evan Bayh. During his tenure, he lost 201 pounds after embarking on a liquid protein diet, the Courier reported in 1986. But his website also touts his "background in business" – specifically his time in the health insurance industry. Among other jobs, he worked as a medical director for Anthem – the owners of that little white card you keep in your wallet that rarely lowers your healthcare costs. He's also a venture capitalist with Havencrest: a private equity firm. I'm so poor that I only vaguely know what "venture capitalist" means, but rest assured: Woody has plenty of dough. Running as a rich, healthcare-system-loving Democrat in 2020 is a little like a Republican slapping on a Che Guevara t-shirt. But hey, it's Indiana. ❖



and what it takes to produce it. Thus, when there are headlines announcing billions of tax dollars going to farmers for disaster aid, crop insurance, or Market Facilitation Payments, they see agriculture as takers and not as givers. According to Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, the average American spends 5% of their disposable income on food. Compare this to France where the average French person spends 13% of their disposable income on food. According to Perdue, when you multiply this by the population of the U.S., farmers give consumers \$840 billion. These are dollars that, if it were not for our food and fiber production system, they would have to spend on food. The \$40 billion spent on a wide variety of farm support programs looks like a pretty good deal. Yet that is not how it gets spun by the uninformed mainstream media or activist groups. The result is farmers are viewed as takers of handouts rather than the significant contributors they are.

John Krull, Statehouse File: Pretending a problem doesn't exist, it turns out, isn't a good way to solve it. Nor is searching for someone else — anyone else — to blame for the problem. Those are the leadership lessons President Donald Trump's flailing response to the spread of the coronavirus has delivered thus far. In just days, panic has spread. Schools have closed. Major events have been cancelled. And the stock market has seen a record drop. It's the sort of moment that calls for presidential leadership. Think of Franklin Delano Roosevelt saying to the country during the heart of the Great Depression, when as much as a quarter of the nation's population was jobless, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." Or Ronald Reagan telling his fellow citizens at a time when inflation was galloping while wages stagnated and many feared that this country's best years were in the past that a new day was dawning and soon it once again would be "morning in America." Theirs were voices that projected calm during chaos. And confidence. The great leaders, Republican or Democrat, liberal or conservative, know that unreasoning fear is the great enemy of success. Such leaders seek to reassure those they lead that, however great the danger, the country is up to facing it. To mastering it. That's the difficulty for this president. Donald Trump is good — exceptional, in fact — at stoking fears. There may be no one better in America's history at transforming resentment into rage and turning anxieties about cultural and economic changes into political weapons. If there is a threat, real or perceived, to his base, the president will find a way to exploit it. That is his gift. It is a dark gift, to be sure, but it has elevated him to the highest office in the land. But it doesn't serve him — or the nation — well at this moment. The present crisis calls for him to alleviate rather than alarm, soothe rather than stoke. And he doesn't know how to do it. That's why his press conference dealing with the galloping coronavirus concerns was such a disaster. When he wasn't incoherent, he was clueless. ❖

Gary Truitt, Hoosier Ag Today: There is an old adage that goes, "a hungry man has one problem, and a well-fed man has many." This is true in our American culture. Consumers walk into a grocery store and can choose from 50 different breakfast cereals, 30 different laundry detergents, and an entire row salty snacks. The produce department is filled with a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, no matter what the season of the year. The milk and meat cases are always full. Yet most people do not understand how this food gets delivered to their store

Senators against Olympics in China

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sens. Todd Young (R-Ind.) and Mike Braun (R-Ind.) joined a bipartisan group of Senators on a resolution calling on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to move the 2022 Winter Olympics out of China and rebid it to another country unless Beijing addresses its violation of human rights. "The People's Republic of China is a Communist state and it is outrageous to reward bad behavior by allowing them to host the 2022 Olympic Winter Games. Currently in China, millions of Uighur Muslims are being held in secret re-education camps against their will, millions of babies have been aborted at the government's direction, and the police are using force to crack down on those in Hong Kong exercising their basic rights," said Senator Young. "In light of these and other ongoing abuses, the International Olympic Committee should abandon plans for the 2022 Games in China and seek out a new host country that respects and protects human rights." "The Chinese Communist Party cannot be trusted on human rights and it's wrong for them to host the 2022 Olympics," said Senator Braun.



Chief Justice rebukes Schumer

WASHINGTON — Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. issued a rare rebuke of a sitting member of Congress on Wednesday, chastising the Senate's top Democrat, Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer, for saying at a rally outside the Supreme Court that President Trump's two nominees to the court would "pay the price" for a vote against abortion rights (Washington Post). In a highly unusual statement issued by the court, the chief justice recounted comments Schumer (N.Y.) had directed at Neil M. Gorsuch

and Brett M. Kavanaugh and said: "Justices know that criticism comes with the territory, but threatening statements of this sort from the highest levels of government are not only inappropriate, they are dangerous. All members of the court will continue to do their job, without fear or favor, from whatever quarter." Schumer, speaking to abortion rights supporters Wednesday morning as the Supreme Court heard arguments in an important abortion case from Louisiana, called out the two by name. "I want to tell you, Gorsuch; I want to tell you, Kavanaugh: You have released the whirlwind, and you will pay the price," Schumer said. "You won't know what hit you if you go forward with these awful decisions."

GOP disappointed by Biden comeback

WASHINGTON — Republican lawmakers are surprised and disappointed by the results of Super Tuesday, which firmly re-established former Vice President Joe Biden as the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination and dealt Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) a major setback. Republican senators conceded Wednesday they would rather face Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist, as the opposing nominee, instead of Biden, whom they consider more mainstream and tougher to draw a contrast with. In the battle for the Senate, Republicans would like to tie Democratic candidates to Sanders and socialism, and generally see Biden as a stronger candidate. Similarly, Democrats were uneasy about Sanders as their standard-bearer, and Biden has made this a point of attack on the campaign trail, arguing he would help Democrats take back the Senate. "I think Bernie is the easiest to contrast with. Biden would be a little harder to contrast with," said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.). "Truly, I think it's better for us for Bernie to be the nominee in terms of down-ballot."

Focus returns to Hunter Biden

WASHINGTON — A GOP probe into Hunter Biden and the Ukrainian gas company Burisma is picking up speed on Capitol Hill as former Vice President Joe Biden gains new momentum in the 2020 Democratic primary (The Hill). Republicans argue the investigation, spearheaded by Sens. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), isn't political and is broader than just Ukraine. But the effort threatens to put the former vice president back in the hot seat at a time when his campaign is on the rebound. Even as votes were still being tallied from Super Tuesday races, where Biden staged what amounted to a come-from-behind victory, Johnson, who chairs the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, announced he would hold a vote next week on a subpoena of a former executive from a firm with ties to Burisma. "We're proceeding down this path," Johnson said Wednesday. "If there's wrongdoing, the American people need to know it. If there is no wrongdoing or nothing significant, the American people need to understand that as well."

U.S. airstrike on Taliban

KABUL — The U.S. military said early Wednesday it had conducted an airstrike against Taliban forces in Afghanistan, the first such attack since a historic peace deal was signed with the militant group Saturday (Fox News). The Helmand Province strikes targeted fighters attacking an Afghan government checkpoint. "This was a defensive strike to disrupt the attack. This was our 1st strike against the Taliban in 11 days," Col. Sonny Leggett, a U.S. military spokesman in Afghanistan, tweeted. Taliban leadership promised the international community they would reduce violence and not increase attacks.