



Indiana's 'purple' CD: 5th or the 1st?

DCCC takes aim at Rep. Spartz, but new maps could color Rep. Mrvan's 1st CD purple

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana's "purple" 5th CD has already made it to the crosshairs of the 2022 election cycle, with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee announcing it was "in play."



But there's a huge catch: No one has any idea where the 5th CD

lines will be drawn, let alone the partisan makeup of the district. And we won't know until late this summer. That is going to carve months out of the candidate decision process and their ability to raise funds.

In 2020, the DCCC made the 5th CD a priority,



Freshman U.S. Reps. Victoria Spartz, R-5th, and Frank Mrvan, D-1st. Both stand to see big changes to their districts with new maps later this year.

only to watch Democrat Christina Hale lose to Republican State Sen. Victoria Spartz 50-46%, or by 16,986 votes. Libertarian Ken Tucker drew 4% or 16,788 votes.

Hale hasn't ruled out a rematch, but told Howey Politics Indiana on Tuesday that she won't make a decision

Continued on page 3

Center of the universe

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – If there was a silver lining after a horrible year of pandemic, it was that the Hoosier Hoops Holyland and its ancient cathedral (Hinkle Fieldhouse, among other venues) would become the Center of the Basketball Universe during March Madness.



The pandemic has been a cruel arbiter. When it surfaced in March 2020, games were literally ended at halftime, Butler's Bulldogs had been ranked No.5 in the nation just a month before, and Indiana Coach Archie Miller was looking at his first tournament in three years at the helm. There would be no crowned champion.



"I am super concerned about our seniors. Hoosiers should not have to be election law experts in order to vote in a free and fair election."

- Indiana Democratic Party Vice Chair Myla Eldridge, testifying on SB353 on Tuesday.



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. Howey, Editor

Subscriptions

HPI, HPI Daily Wire \$599
 HPI Weekly, \$350
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

© 2021, **Howey Politics Indiana**. All rights reserved.
 Photocopying, Internet forwarding, faxing or reproducing in any form, whole or part, is a violation of federal law without permission from the publisher.

Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



The 1976 Hoosiers under Coach Bob Knight are still the last men's NCAA champions to go undefeated.

By the time the Pandemic March Madness unfolded last month, ominous trends began to emerge. Purdue was the lone state team to make the field. Archie Miller had been fired. Brad Stevens wasn't interested in a move to Bloomington, even though his eighth year at the helm of the Boston Celtics was underwhelming, fueling speculation of dismissal. The pandemic field was not only missing IU, but Duke and Kentucky as well. Kansas and North Carolina missed the Sweet 16.

For the next two weeks, it appeared the basketball gods were punking us. Purdue continued its March Madness futility, losing to tough North Texas State, ruining about 90% of brackets in the state. Half the IU team had entered the transfer portal. The powerful Big Ten's nine entries quickly faded despite early round games at familiar Assembly Hall and Mackey Arena. And when the Final Four was forged, who showed up? Houston Coach Kelvin Sampson, who had been the poster boy of IU's post-1987 futility.

The notion that the Cheatin' Sampson might cut down the nets at Lucas Oil Stadium was of peculiar karma for the Hoosier nation.

But then the clouds parted, a shaft of sunlight appeared, and angels began singing. Gene Keady showed

up for a reunion at Bob Knight's new Bloomington digs. Mike Woodson was lured away from the New York Knicks to take the helm at IU, pleasing The General. After two decades since Knight was fired by Myles Brand during his "zero tolerance" era, IU decided to arm its stalled franchise with someone from the Knight coaching tree.



"We are all very pleased to have Mike Woodson as the person in charge of leading our program," Knight said. "He will do an excellent job. He will be an outstanding disciplinarian and teacher working with his team. He is just a great man."

Former Ohio State and Butler coach Thad Matta was brought on board to head the university's basketball opps. Dane Fife left

Tom Izzo's Cadillac Michigan State program to join Woodson. All Big Ten Trayce Jackson-Davis announced he was coming back for his junior season and IU's transfer portal dried up.

Scott Drew, a Butler graduate who began reviving his Baylor Bears program 18 years ago, delivered a swift emphatic kick to Coach Sampson in the semi-finals, ending THAT potential offensive spectacle.



Bobby Plump became hot property again. The IU women's team made the Elite Eight down in San Antonio and return five starters for next year. The New York Times featured a full-page story by Billy Witz on Hinkle Fieldhouse and quoted 91-year-old Gene Hackman as describing a day of prep during the filming of "Hoosiers."

"We ... rehearsed for a day or so without an audience, so by the time the actual scenes were shot, we were accustomed to the space," said Hackman, playing Coach Norman Dale, who famously got the tape measure out to confirm the height of the rim, the depth of the foul line. "But it was still somewhat overwhelming."

We heard stories of how Tony Hinkle opted for a

train trip back to Butler U. instead of joining Miller Huggins' New York Yankee Bronx Bomber dynasty. We learned that in the first state prep finals, the Morristown team got drunk on bourbon at halftime and the Crawfordsville team played with feverish cojones.

Like Hackman's "Hoosiers" practice, the 2021 Final Four was played before nearly vacant stands and a riveted national TV audience. A 35-foot bankshot at the buzzer in OT by Gonzaga's Jalen Suggs sidelined UCLA in the semi-finals.

The pandemic stalked the

tournament, with the University of Virginia exiting before the first round due to a COVID outbreak, while a fan from Alabama tested positive before dying, while St. Elmo closed when nine employees tested positive, and a veteran bartender passed away.

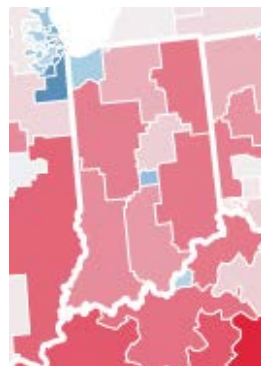
Then Scott Drew joined the championship ranks of Johnny Wooden, Branch McCracken and Knight with an emphatic 86-70 throttling of the Zags in Monday night's final game.

The March Madness of 2021 cemented Indiana as sacred hardwood. Hope springs eternal. ESPN has Purdue ranked No. 3 for next season. We're all gonna make it through this together. ❖

Purple, from page 1

until the new maps are drawn up and signed into law by Gov. Eric Holcomb. She wondered if she would be drawn out of the 5th CD and placed into the neighboring 7th CD (which happened to U.S. Reps. Chris Chocola and Todd Rokita in the last two sets of maps). Congressional rules don't require members to actually live in their districts.

HPI analysis of current maps and results from the 2020 election cycle brings us to this conclusion: The 5th CD may not be the "purple" district that will command attention next year. If the maps are drawn in a politically calculated fashion, the real battleground may be freshman U.S. Rep. Frank Mrvan's 1st CD. Mrvan defeated perennial Republican nominee Mark Leyva 56.6% to 40.5% in 2020 following the retirement of U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky.



The 2020 Cook Partisan Index rates Indiana's nine districts like this: 1CD Democrat +8; 2CD Republican +11; 3CD Republican +18; 4CD Republican +17; 5CD Republican +9; 6CD Republican +18; 7CD Democrat +11; 8CD Republican +15; and 9CD Republican +13.

Now look at the neighborhood. Mrvan's 1CD is bordered by the 2nd CD where U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski

won in 2020 with 61.5%, and the 4th CD where U.S. Rep. Jim Baird won with 66.6%. And those two Republican districts are bordered by 3CD where U.S. Rep. Jim Banks won with 67.8% in 2020, and 8CD where U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon won with 66.9%.

It doesn't take a genius to figure a Republican slice-and-dice could easily shift Mrvan's 1st into a purple dynamic, while bolstering the 5th CD's historic crimson pedigree. As one influential Democrat told HPI earlier this week, "They could draw eight Republican districts and leave one for André" – a reference to 7th CD Rep. André Carson.

Ditto for Rep. Spartz's 5th CD, which neighbors the +18 Republican 3rd and 6th CDs, where U.S. Rep. Greg Pence won with 68.6% in 2020.

While Hoosier Democrats, Common Cause Indiana and the Indiana Citizen website are now publicly pushing the General Assembly to switch to an independent redistricting commission, don't hold your breath. Any such reform would require the signoff of Senate President Pro Tem Rod Bray and the Senate Majority Caucus. Even in the days when former House Speaker Brian Bosma endorsed the idea of an independent commission and sponsored legislation in two sessions to create such a panel, that sentiment never pervaded the Senate. It

never, ever came even close.

Bosma told HPI in 2018, "I have authored or co-authored the bill twice, we've passed it through the House twice over the last 10 years. It's not going to get satisfactory attention in the Senate, so it probably doesn't warrant going through the knock-down-drag-out here over it."

"We're going to make sure that we have lots of public hearings and lots of public input about communities of interest that are across the state so that we are careful about where we draw our lines and not divide those communities of interest," Bray said last December.

The current maps drawn in 2011 were drafted with the help of Washington GOP consultants, then dressed up as "compact" while "nesting" state House and Senate districts, and observing "communities of interests" that kept cities and counties intact within districts. Gone were the "Frankendistricts" of 2001 where gerrymandered maps looked convoluted and very political, like the 4th CD, which stretched from three counties south of Lake Michigan to three counties north of the Ohio River.

These districts fooled advocates like Julia Vaughn of Common Cause, who pronounced in 2011, "They seem to be far, far better, and to meet any reasonable test of compactness and respecting communities of interest."

The 2001 maps created one of the most competitive decades in state history. While the Indiana Senate stayed monolithically Republican, the Indiana House changed majority hands three times – from Democrat to Republican in 2004 with the election of Gov. Mitch Daniels, back to the Democrats in 2006 mid-term, and then to the GOP in 2010 in the Tea Party mid-term. In congressional districts, five incumbents were defeated under the 2001 maps.

While the 2011 maps were compact and not considered "gerrymandered," the comparison starkly revealed the devil in the details. Not a single congressional incumbent lost in the five election cycles, and only one CD changed parties, when in 2012, Rep. Joe Donnelly decided to seek the Senate seat held by U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar, and Republican Jackie Walorski won the 2nd CD. In contrast, of the three U.S. Senate races run between 2012 and 2018, two resulted in changed parties.

In the Indiana House, the days of endangered majorities came to an abrupt end. The Republicans went from a 52-48 minority in 2008, to a 60-seat majority in 2010, to 69 seats in 2012, 71 seats in 2014, 70 seats in 2016, 67



Senate President Pro Tem Rod Bray moved State Sen. Jon Ford into the Senate Elections Committee chair last November.

seats in 2018, and 71 seats in 2020.

According to data from the Indiana Election Division website, in 2018 congressional races, Republicans carried a composite 55.3%, compared to 44.3% for Democrats and 0.4% for Libertarians. In Indiana House races, Republicans carried 54.7% of the composite vote, Democrats had 44.8% and Libertarians had 0.5%. So in the House, the GOP had 67% of House seats based on that 54.7% of the vote.

Hoosier Democrats are basically powerless in the shaping of the new maps later this year. It would be stunning if Bray and Senate Elections Committee Chairman Jon Ford did anything remotely approaching the ceding of power to an independent commission outside of their control. Bray installed Sen. Ford as chairman last November.

In 2018, SB326 set the stage for a repetition of the 2011 maps. Passing in the Senate by a 42-6 vote, it set specific requirements for how lawmakers in 2021 must create the state's nine congressional districts, 50 Senate districts and 100 House districts. They include nearly equal population, contiguous territory that is as compact as possible under the Voting Rights Act, no crossing of precinct boundaries, avoiding splitting up municipalities or other communities of interest where practical, and not considering the location of the current officeholder's residence.

"This bill is an effective first step in our redistricting efforts," said Sen. Greg Walker, who chaired the Senate Elections Committee until last November. "Redistricting is a complex issue, and this bill would get the ball rolling on how we draw our maps in the future." At the same time, the measure permits the General Assembly to ignore the redistricting guidelines, so long as the reasons for each deviation "are publicly explained and documented."

That same year, a bill by State Sen. Mike Bohacek, R-Michiana Shores, proposed moving to an independent redistricting commission. It died in the Senate Elections Committee.

In 2018, Gov. Holcomb, a former state GOP chairman, told the IBJ that he was "skeptical so far in what I've read" of redistricting reform plans because "there is politics on both sides of this. It doesn't mean I wouldn't ultimately support" legislation. I've seen this not work in other places. We have a process now that's left in the people's representatives' hands."

With a demise of local media and opinion shapers, and a multi-million media campaign, it's hard to fathom how enough political pressure could be exerted on Senate Republicans to cede control of the process.

DCCC Chairman Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney included Indiana's 5th CD, despite the fact that delayed U.S. Census data won't reach the state mapmakers until July, thanks to the Trump administration's decision to challenge immigrant status, which subsequently threw the timelines out of whack.

"Every single Republican on this list voted against putting checks in pockets and shots in arms, and we're going to make sure voters in their district know it," Maloney. "The DCCC is prepared to protect our majority by recruit-

ing compelling candidates and empowering their campaigns with the resources they need to draw the contrast between Democrats' record of fighting for the middle class and Republicans' toxic brand of defending conspiratorial insurrectionists and opposing direct relief for working families."

In order to do that, Democrats are going to need new maps. But don't expect them to be any more favorable than the current 2011 maps. ❖

If Trump had embraced face masks, he might still be president

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS – Donald Trump became a "political genius" when he shocked everybody (including himself) by winning the 2016 presidential election. Filmmaker Michael Moore figured it out before anyone else when he observed the Trump campaign's wide use of baseball hats, and national political analysts who made fun of the billionaire's campaign finance reports showing a prioritization of the MAGA caps above just about anything else.

"I am an angry white guy over the age of 35. And I have just a high-school education, so I grew up with it, I lived with it, I still live with it," Moore said on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" after the 2016 election. "I looked at that and I thought, 'Wow, there's the bubble right there. They don't understand.'"

Now there is growing data from the 2020 election that suggests that had President Trump embraced the simple use of face masks during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, he might still be in the White House today.

You can trace the politicization of the pandemic to remarks President Trump made at the White House on April 3, 2020, as the country plunged into an unprecedented shutdown in an attempt to quell the virus. "The CDC is advising the use of nonmedical cloth face covering as an additional voluntary public health measure. So it's voluntary," Trump said. "You don't have to do it. They suggested for a period of time, but this is voluntary. I don't think I'm going to be doing it."

By May 21 during a Ford plant tour in Michigan, Trump wore a mask, but took it off, saying, "I wore one in the back area. I didn't want to give the press the pleasure

of seeing it." And on July 19, he told Fox News' Chris Wallace, "I don't agree with the statement that if everybody wears a mask, everything disappears."

So while Gov. Holcomb, Indiana Senate President Pro Tem Rod Bray, House Speaker Todd Huston, and U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell all took heed of the epidemiologists who said that wearing a mask was the "the best defense" (in the words of CDC Director Robert Redfield) to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it was a lesson lost on President Trump.

He ended up paying a historic price for the miscalculation.

"Whether it is his intention or not, the consequence is that he's undermining scientific authority, trust in science, and trust in scientists," Prof. K. "Vish" Viswanath of the Harvard University T.H. Chan School of Public Health told the Harvard Gazette. "We know from our data and other data that the greater the trust in scientists and researchers, the greater the likelihood of compliance with public health mitigation measures."

Dr. Robert Hahn, a CDC epidemiologist, became curious and published a study in the International Journal of Health Sciences. He estimated that 12,000 COVID deaths could be attributed to the president's negative or false assertions regarding the use of face masks in the period between April 3 and July 21, 2020. "If you assume that 25% of the people who don't wear masks are doing so because of Trump's statements about masks, whether they hear it directly or whether they hear it through the media, then we can calculate that more than 4,200 people have died as a consequence of the president's statements," Hahn told the Harvard Gazette. If 50% or 75% did not wear masks because of Trump, 8,356 or 12,202 of those deaths, respectively, can be attributed to Trump. Hahn said 75% is "probably high" while 25% is "probably low."

The U.S. reached the 100,000 death mark on May



27 and 200,000 on Sept. 22, just as Gov. Eric Holcomb put Indiana on his "Stage 5" reopening, while consistently telling Hoosiers to wear face masks and leading by example. Meanwhile, Trump was hosting indoor MAGA rallies and events at the White House where attendees didn't wear masks or follow CDC social distancing guidelines. The White House became a COVID hotspot that infected the president himself.

By Election Day 2020, the U.S. reported 91,530 new cases that day while crossing the 232,000 death toll. It has since surpassed 530,000 deaths.

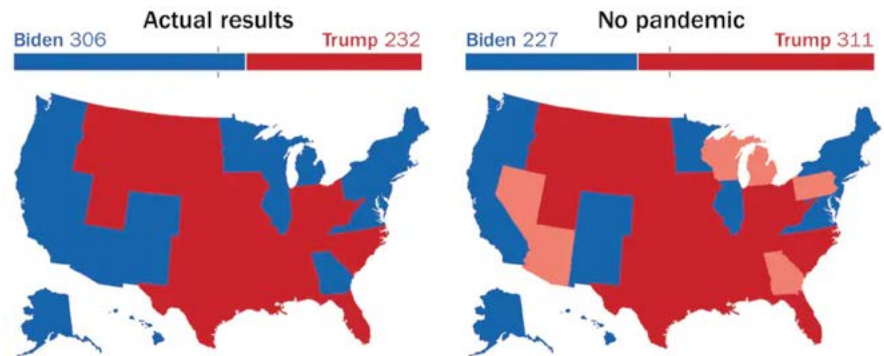
Trump pollster Tony Fabrizio produced research showing how those who voted against Trump were more likely to view his response to the pandemic critically. COVID-19 registered as a top issue among voters, a majority of whom said they disapproved of Trump's pandemic response, supported a public mask-wearing mandate and prioritized getting the virus under control over reopening the economy. While Trump "dominated" Biden among voters who prioritized the economy, "Biden won coronavirus voters, which was a bigger share," wrote Fabrizio.

The Washington Post cited a Peterson Institute for International Economics analysis, conducted by Marcus Noland and Eva Yiwen Zhang. In one counterfactual – What if there had been no pandemic? – the results are stark. "Trump's vote share increased by 2 percentage points on average across counties nationally," the researchers found. "Of this shift, 8% comes from the COVID-19 case fatality rate, 12% from the effect via COVID-19-vulnerable industries, and 80% from the decline in the labor force." That is more than enough for Trump to have been reelected.

Research from Andrew Atkeson of UCLA determined that implementation of robust efforts to halt the spread of the virus last May – widespread testing, mask mandates – could have held the country's death toll below 300,000 in total, according to the Washington Post. Atkeson's model estimates that the country will reach 672,000 deaths, meaning there would have been nearly 400,000 preventable deaths had the president embraced and advocated the use of face masks.

Donald Trump has always seen himself as a master brander. So he missed a huge branding opportunity when he could have deployed some 70 million often ardent supporters who could have been walking advertisements with Trump face masks, all while tamping down what turned out to be skyrocketing hospitalizations and death rates just as voters started going to the polls.

What might have happened in 2020



During his debate with Democrat nominee Joe Biden in September 2020, Trump said, "When needed, I wear masks. I don't wear masks like him. Every time you see him, he's got a mask. He could be speaking 200 feet away from them, and he shows up with the biggest mask I've ever seen."

Biden defeated Trump 81,268,924 to 74,216,154. Both were records for nominees of their particular parties as national turnout included 66.7% of all registered voters.

Pence forms advocacy group, book deal

Former Vice President Mike Pence launched a new advocacy group on Wednesday as he and other Trump officials look to boost their post-White House plans (Columbus Republic). Pence's Advancing American Freedom, which could serve as a springboard for his own presidential campaign, will aim to promote the Trump administration's achievements and work as a counterpoint to the Biden agenda. Pence's group includes an unpaid advisory board made up of conservative leaders including the anti-abortion rights advocate Marjorie Dannenfelser and Ed Meese as well as former Trump administration officials including former counselor Kellyanne Conway, economic adviser Larry Kudlow and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer. Pence also signed a multimillion-dollar, two-book deal with publisher Simon & Schuster. CNN reported the former vice president's deal is worth in the range of \$3 million to \$4 million.

GOP donors fret Trump's grip on party

The Republican Party's biggest donors are descending on Donald Trump's turf, Palm Beach, this weekend to huddle over the future of the party ([Politico](#)). But don't take the location as a sign that these donors will be pledging allegiance to Trump at the RNC's spring retreat, like the grassroots did at CPAC in Orlando last month. The program will focus on how to grow the party after Trump's 2020 defeat. And a big part of that, said one attendee who advises a top Republican donor, is limiting Trump's influence if the GOP is going to win back the suburbs. "Women for America First" will be hosting a three-day event dubbed the "Save America Summit" at Trump's Doral golf course in Miami. It's slated to draw speakers including Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, Rep. Matt Gaetz and Sen. Rand Paul. ❖



Is the party over?

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – In the late 1960s, when I began in politics as a teenager, Orvas Beers was the king of the Allen County Republican Party. Keith Bulen of Marion County was sort of the Orvas Beers of central Indiana. He represented a more populated area but had to share more of his power.



Back in the old days of spoils – the gains of patronage, political profits and power – maintaining control of a county political party was easier. The big bosses of the state could gather and make a deal.

Back then, the important things in Indiana (tied to jobs or, say, bank deposits) weren't left to the risks of primaries. Con-

ventions (more later on the modern version, the caucus nomination system) could be controlled by the "bosses" gathering in smoke-filled rooms to pick their favorites, later ratified by delegates.

My favorite story is the epic deal when the large counties divided the positions, with Ed Whitcomb of Seymour getting governor, Dick Folz of Evansville getting lieutenant governor, John Snyder of Washington getting treasurer and Trudy Etherton of South Bend getting auditor. Fort Wayne was supposed to get attorney general, but State Sen. Allan Bloom turned it down. Lake County, given the opportunity, chose Ted Sendak. Orvas Beers needed to find a secretary of state candidate.

According to legend, Orvas and his key allies, including city Chairman Allan McMahan, were sitting in his living room debating over the alternatives. Bill Salin was out mowing his lawn and one of them said, "Hey, what about Bill?"

The story is unfair to Bill Salin. He did become secretary of state and had a successful career in banking, but at that time he was not involved in political activity and organizations. He knew Orvas Beers.

Orvas had what would normally be called an influential law firm. E. Ross Adair, his law partner, was elected to Congress in 1950 and remains the longest-serving congressman in the history of the Fort Wayne-anchored district. The city attorney, Harry Scott, and the county attorney, George Mallers, were part of his firm. The license bureaus were lucrative cash cows.

County employees willingly contributed, went to Lincoln Days, and did whatever other task they were

asked. They understood that if the party was not strong, their immediate boss might lose their job. That, and failure to willingly participate was tantamount to quitting.

City employees, including police and fire officer appointments, were also part of the system when a party controlled the mayor's office. Party loyalty, and loyalty to those who controlled the party, were rewarded.

In 1976, Dan Quayle, a casual friend of mine from the young conservative days of the 60s, contacted me about helping with the marketing and strategy of his 1976 congressional campaign. Quayle had the idea of setting up the Kasten plan, developed by Congressman Bob Kasten of Wisconsin. It was built around the assumption of building, essentially, a separate precinct organization with the purpose of electing one candidate and loyalty to that candidate. For example, a critical point was to win a primary and then, especially when challenging an incumbent, turn out Democrats who were backing that candidate whether or not they supported any other Republicans.

Dan was more than acceptable to Orvas Beers and the establishment. His Pulliam family credentials were important. The fact that the longest serving congressman in the region's history (Adair) had lost to Roush in 1970, the president of the Senate (Bloom) had lost in 1972, and Sen. Walt Helmke, whose family had helped lead the Indiana Republican Party for decades, lost in 1974, was



U.S. Rep. Ross Adair (left) and Allen County Republican Chairman Orvas Beers (right) with WKJG-TV's Jack Gray, the first TV news anchor in Fort Wayne.

another factor.

By then other factors were changing as well. The spoils system, at least the financial side, was eroding rapidly. The parties were aging. Republicans were brawling in primaries as opposed to being hand-picked in conventions.

We built a strong grassroots organization that was committed to Quayle, not necessarily to the Republican ticket. It included the emerging pro-life movement and others, many of whom had been Democrats at the local and state level. Marilyn Quayle, who even made me look

tactful, was quoted in the media calling the Republican chairmen in our region something like old men no longer relevant to modern politics.

After Quayle won, he picked an evangelical as his district representative, Dan Coats, who had absolutely no involvement in Republican or any politics at the time (Coats was inspired to get involved by Chuck Colson and prison fellowship).

Over the years I had become close friends with Dick Prickett, who owned the Albion New Era newspaper. For decades he helped lead another powerful arm of the Indiana Republican Party, the Republican Editorial Association (which has never been studied enough given its impact on Indiana politics). He had been Adair's chief of staff during his long career in Congress.

After Quayle won, and Coats was selected his assistant over other choices preferred by Orvas who had some Republican ties, I ran into Dick by an elevator at the L.S. Ayres at Glenbrook Mall. He was not long for this world. He had tears in his eyes, which I had never seen from him, asking me how the Republican Party was going to survive this new wave. Quayle was fairly dismissive and ignored them.

No one even knew Coats. New campaign organizations were taking the volunteers and raising large sums of money. Television influence was rising, which was personality dependent and necessitated record amounts of campaign dollars. Political consultants replaced party bosses as the true political brokers.

When discussing patronage, the decline of party-controlled convention nominations, and "spoils" as a critical key to the decline of the power of Indiana political parties it is important to also note that not all states had the same style political systems as Indiana did, yet political parties in all states are not as powerful as they once were.

I do not believe that the party is over. At least not the Republican Party. That's the subject for my next column. There is still some life in the party. It isn't dying in part because there is a need for party organizations, and there are people working to make sure it lives on. ❖

Souder is a former Republican congressman from Indiana.

Why reforming the filibuster matters

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – As Washington turns its attention to infrastructure and other matters of policy, the Senate filibuster isn't commanding quite the same headlines as it did a few weeks back. But that's only because the issue is percolating behind the scenes. At some point, it will return to the limelight.



And when it does, you should understand what's at stake. Because as obscure as it seems, it actually goes to the heart of how we operate as a democracy. The key point to remember is that as the country's population has shifted, a growing number of senators have come to represent a shrinking portion of Americans.

In the House, this doesn't matter as much, since districts are apportioned by population. But in the Senate, current rules require 60 senators to agree to move a measure forward, with certain exceptions. This means that 41 senators can block most legislation, so in theory, the senators coming from the 21 smallest states – who together represent less than 12% of the U.S. population – can keep the nation's agenda from moving forward. It's hard to believe the country's founders would think this makes sense. And it's certainly a far cry from government of the people, by the people,

and for the people.

The Senate's rules are a big reason we have a Congress that struggles to get things done. In particular, it means that legislative initiatives that appear to have great popular support – including infrastructure spending, certain gun control measures, a higher minimum wage, even a legitimate path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants – will face tough sledding in the Senate.

This is because it is remarkably easy for the leader of the Senate minority, Republican Mitch McConnell, to muster the 41 votes he needs simply to block legislation from moving forward. It's a silent and powerful parliamentary move; without Americans as a whole or senators' constituents being any the wiser, bills die without coming up for a vote and there are no fingerprints on the murder weapon.

Now, the Senate wasn't designed to be like the House, and there's a lot to be said for maintaining rules that slow legislation down and ensure that the majority can't simply get what it wants without negotiating. But the key word is "negotiating" – when the filibuster is used simply to ensure that a president and elected majority can't get a bill considered, it's become something else. So while there appears to be little appetite in the Senate for ending the filibuster outright, there's strong incentive to explore alternatives.

These would be in keeping with a long history of filibuster reforms in the Senate. Budget reconciliation starting in the 1970s allowed many bills related to taxing and spending to move forward with a simple majority; in 1975, the Senate changed the number of votes needed to move a bill forward from 67 to 60; and more

recently, the Senate carved out exemptions on confirmation votes. In other words, there is precedent for change.

The options include expanding the breadth of bills that are exempt from the 60-vote requirement to move forward. Or the Senate could require more members (right now it's just one) to force a so-called "cloture" vote, which brings the filibuster into play. Or it could reduce the 60-vote requirement, either for all bills or for particular kinds. Or, as some senators seem to favor, it could revive the requirement that senators intent on blocking legislation actually must get up and talk about it, which would have some drawbacks but at least would make it clear who's standing in the way.

The Senate's rules are a big reason we have a Congress that struggles to get things done, and a big

reason our democracy seems to be hamstrung. I believe wholeheartedly in representative democracy, and in not trying to shortcut it or to restrict it. Proposals in front of Congress should be able to get a full debate and an up-or-down vote in which Americans' elected representatives make clear where they stand.

That's how we hold them accountable and how legislative bodies go about the hard work of finding broadly acceptable solutions to difficult challenges. The filibuster allows a small group of them to sidestep all that. ❖

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

Is this really Easter?

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – In an Easter Sunday column last year, I posed a question: "Is this really Easter?"

For many readers, it wasn't. Not the Easter they had known. For Christians, there were no Easter services to attend. Churches were closed. For kids, there were no traditional Easter egg hunts. Many of them couldn't even color eggs at home. Eggs were scarce.



Families couldn't get together. Not safe to have an Easter visit from relatives or friends from across the city, from across the country or even from across the street.

March Madness? No lively discussions then about how favorite basketball teams fared or how tournament bracket picks were right or wrong. No winners. No brackets. No tournament. No basketball. No scheduled opening days for baseball either.

Despite the coronavirus stress, I sought to stress a year ago that it really was Easter. The killer virus could not keep Easter from coming. Could not abolish Passover. Could not put off Ramadan. Could not stop spring from coming. Could not keep flowers from blooming.

But COVID-19 sure did mess with our lives and take hundreds of thousands of lives across the nation. Many, too many, right here. The effect of the pandemic on our lives has lasted longer than we envisioned a year ago. Still, it lasts. Not to an extent making anyone question whether today really is Easter. But as a continuing threat that prevents – or at least should prevent – returning to Easter as we had always known it.

Churches are open for Easter services. Not yet without need for masks and distancing. Kids can color

eggs at home. No shortage of eggs or other items so scarce a year ago. No big prizes, however, with kids racing in droves to hunt eggs for prizes.

More importantly, most kids are back in classrooms. By the fall, if the amazing distribution of the vaccines continues and reluctance to take them diminishes, all the classrooms could be open by fall.

Families can get together in at least a limited way for Easter visits. Grandparents protected with vaccines can see their grandchildren.

March Madness? We can again talk about tournament brackets, although some of us would prefer not to be reminded of our choices. And the baseball season is underway. Again, all is not back to normal. Attendance is limited.

A lot has happened since last Easter. Far more coronavirus deaths than predicted a year ago. Faster development of effective vaccines for mass distribution than was thought possible. Some good. Some bad.

A lot will happen before next Easter. Some good. Some bad. Maybe, maybe next year, there will again be a Dyngus Day observed as of old on the Monday after Easter. Maybe, maybe next year, little kids will scamper together in quest of prizes at traditional Easter egg hunts. Maybe, maybe next year, the Chicago Cubs and the South Bend Cubs will be selling tickets for capacity crowds, with wearing masks no longer needed.

Still, we don't know what will happen. We do know that what is done now can make a real difference in how soon we are back as close as possible to normal. Progress is slowed now, with a new virus surge threatened, by yahoos claiming a constitutional right to spread infection and death if they choose to do so. The virus also is promoted by cowardly politicians who seek to abolish or won't enforce safety precautions.

I pose a new question: Will we finally, really get together as a nation to defeat the virus, so that Sunday, April 17, 2022, really, really is Easter? ❖

Colwell covers politics for the South Bend Tribune.

Next pandemic poised to test Hoosier faith

Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS – The next pandemic to strike Indiana may end up being as much a test of Hoosiers' faith as it is in the ability of public health agencies to prevent illness and save lives (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). The Republican-controlled General Assembly is poised to advance to the governor's desk legislation barring any state or local official



from restricting the right to worship, including in-person worship, during a disaster or public health emergency. If Senate Bill 263 was in effect a year ago, churches would have been permitted to hold Sunday services throughout

the COVID-19 pandemic with no face mask requirement, capacity limits, or social distancing — even though such measures help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Supporters of the measure said they're confident pastors would not knowingly lead their flocks into danger. But, in any case, they said the right to worship is guaranteed by the U.S. and Indiana Constitutions, and no one should have the authority to infringe on that right.

According to the legislation, all other religious activities besides worship, such as Sunday School, Bible study, or charitable events, automatically would be classified as "essential," and any restrictions could be no more stringent than the emergency rules that apply to similar essential activities in a non-religious setting. State Rep. Carolyn Jackson, D-Hammond, pointed out it's not clear where weddings, funerals and related rituals that sometimes combine religious worship with other activities would fall on the permissibility scale. "I'm trying to figure out if this is designed to protect institutions or to protect people, because it does not protect people," said state Rep. Ed Delaney, D-Indianapolis. "The people who are going to those churches are not being given the protection that the same person would be if they tried to go into any other gathering."

Separately, state lawmakers also are close to finalizing Senate Bill 5, which creates a process for local elected officials to override any enforcement action taken by a county or city health officer during an emergency. It also mandates any rules issued by a county or city health officer during an emergency that are more stringent than state guidelines cannot take effect without the consent of the county or city legislative body that oversees the health officer. State Rep. Matt Lehman, R-Berne, the sponsor, said the legislation ensures the extraordinary power of local health officers in an emergency is checked by an elected body to ensure actions taken by the health officer reflect the will of the people. "I understand the allure of the idea

of having elected officials involved in some of these decisions," said state Rep. Matt Pierce, D-Bloomington.

Senate leaders kill gun bill

Republican Senate leaders in Indiana have killed a so-called 'constitutional carry' bill that would have nixed carry permits for handguns in Indiana (Lange, [IndyStar](#)). The bill had seemed to have significant momentum until recently. The move comes despite more than half of the Senate Republican caucus signing on as co-sponsors to the bill, which already had passed the Indiana House. Fort Wayne Republican Sen. Liz Brown, the chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee where the bill has been sitting, declined to give the bill a hearing before the deadline, effectively killing the legislation.

Lawmakers water down wetlands bill

Lawmakers watered down a controversial bill seeking to remove protections from Indiana's already diminished wetlands amid mounting criticism that the proposal could cause damage to the state's waterways, wildlife and vegetation ([AP](#)). If passed, the measure would eliminate a 2003 law that requires the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to issue permits in a state-regulated wetland and end enforcement proceedings against landowners allegedly violating current law. An amendment approved unanimously by the House environmental affairs committee Wednesday scales back the intended repeal, however. The amended bill no longer excludes all classes of wetlands from permitting requirements, but instead provides specific permitting exemptions for croplands and excludes ephemeral, or temporary, streams from being categorized as wetlands. The bill change also alters mitigation requirements, which Republican Rep. Harold Slager, of Schererville, said is meant to help property owners cut down costs associated with wetlands upkeep. "I understand that there may be a few little tweaks that we want to do ... and a lot of this needs a little deeper dive," Slager said. "But rather than trying to take a meat cleaver to this, we were a little more surgical and prescriptive in just trying to identify the problem and working within that." The bill now heads to the House floor. Slager said the issue has additionally been recommended to a legislative study committee "to see what else we might do" with future wetlands legislation.

IndyGo bill dies in House

Indianapolis rapid transit has survived its latest Statehouse challenge (May, [IndyStar](#)). Senate Bill 141, which jeopardized the planned Purple and Blue bus rapid transit lines, will not advance out of House committee by deadline. The bill, filed by Indianapolis Republican Sen. Aaron Freeman, advanced out of the Senate but stalled in the House Roads and Transportation Committee. Rep. Jim Pressel, R-Rolling Prairie, chairs the committee and ultimately decided to not hold another hearing on the bill. ❖

Holcomb did a great job handling pandemic

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO – I've never had a job where my decision has meant the difference between life and death. Shucks, during my 38-year career as a financial consultant, the two biggest challenges that I've had are recommend-

ing an investment before some world event made the markets drop, or not recommending the next greatest technological thingamabob before it became larger than the GDP of France.

Those sins of commission or omission may get you chewed out or cost you a client, but they don't cause me to lose sleep or develop ulcers, let alone suffering from immeasurable guilt. I get up, go to work, make decisions, but no one dies as a result



of my efforts. I like it that way.

I admire those who have those necessary jobs that require them to make life and death decisions on a daily basis. Our service men and women, law enforcement officers, first responders and medical personnel all deserve our gratitude. Most of us understand and accept the pressure-packed nature of these jobs and know that these folks are doing their best to serve the American people. We generally laud these vital workers and honor the work that they do.

However, there are a few jobs where no matter what decision you make, someone is going to criticize, vilify and condemn your efforts and decisions. Governor of Indiana happens to be just one of those jobs. The worst part is that many of those leading the chorus of criticism claim to be from the same political party.

I've always thought that it would be pretty neat to be governor of Indiana. You get to live in a great house on Meridian Street. You get a massive office in the State Capitol with lots of historical memorabilia surrounding you. You always have a coterie of staff hanging on your every word and waiting to serve your every need. You have a car and driver to whisk you away to every event. You get invited to sit in the boxes at all the big sporting events. It's pretty cool stuff.

Of course, you do have to go to those Lincoln Day dinners scattered in the far reaches of the state and listen to county chairmen, like me, drone on about the wonderful work being done by the Salt Liver Township trustee. You're fed dry chicken, mystery meat loaf and Aunt Ida's ptomaine potato salad. No matter what decision you make, whether it is being opposed to arming kindergarten pupils with AK 47s, to insisting on fiscal responsibility, or advocat-

ing for all Hoosiers to be treated equally, there is always someone loudly calling for your head on a platter. That is the downside of the job.

But then, once in a lifetime, a pandemic comes along and the job of governor of Indiana takes on life or death importance. Decisions must be made in an environment where no one knows the right answer. It's unplowed ground and there is no textbook or expert to turn to for perfect guidance. There is only an unknown pathogen spreading sickness and death and you must make the critical decisions that affect the lives of nearly 7 million Hoosiers. How you react and the decisions you make were not in your campaign literature, not in your party's platform and not the topic of all of those Lincoln Day dinners.

It is my opinion that Gov. Eric Holcomb has done a masterful job in dealing with the pandemic of 2020. He has demonstrated true leadership and has kept the best interests of all Hoosiers at heart in every decision that he has made. He has been prudent in administering safety guidelines and has consulted local governments throughout the past year for developing a plan that works for each Indiana county. Instead of dictating in intricate detail how each community must approach every pandemic issue, Gov. Holcomb has issued guidelines but allowed cities and counties to diverge from the guidelines if local leaders believe it is in the best interest of their constituents. The color-coded threat status for each county enabled risk to be addressed regionally and not be dictated from the Governor's Office.

Early decisions during the pandemic were made with an abundance of caution for the health and safety of all Hoosiers and who, except for the most dimwitted, can blame the governor for erring on the side of caution. I have no doubt that decisions made by Gov. Holcomb and his staff saved the lives of many Hoosiers back in the early dark days of the pandemic. I guess that I'm one of those who believe that if you have never had to look someone in the eyes and accept responsibility for the death of their loved one, you probably should keep your mouth shut.

This applies to ordinary Hoosiers and those state representatives and senators who breathe the rarified air of omnipotence in the hallowed halls of the State Legislature. Trust me on this one; the legislators criticizing Gov. Holcomb for his pandemic decisions are absolutely ignorant of public health concerns and are nothing more than petty demagogues pandering to a small but vocal crowd of rebel rousers.

I personally don't like wearing a mask. I have trouble breathing in them and communicating with my clients is terribly difficult while wearing one. That being said, I wear a mask at my office and when out in public because if my reckless behavior caused even one person to get COVID-19, I would feel terrible.

Don't get me wrong. I love street festivals, rock concerts, sporting events, weddings, church, big crowds, big parties and hugging and kissing friends and family. I know that one day everything will be back to normal.

I understand the frustrations of those whose everyday lives and occupations have been completely disrupted. I wish that instead of wasting trillions of taxpayer dollars on non-pandemic related projects that we would truly make every person financially touched by the pandemic whole. Perhaps public anger should be directed at those seeking to politically exploit the pandemic instead of attacking the true heroes of the fight to control the disease.

We are lucky to live in Indiana. My two Chicago daughters call Indiana the land of the free. My sister-in-law, in Detroit, works as a respiratory therapist at a hospital. Bad government decisions in Michigan have led to overflowing hospitals, refrigerator trucks backed up to hospitals as makeshift morgues, and medical staff who are completely exhausted. She wishes that she was here in Indiana instead of in the clutches of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

In December, my wife received the call that her mother had died of COVID-19. She was a nursing home patient in a Michigan facility. A staff member had brought

the disease into the facility, probably catching it from someone just out exercising their constitutional right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The disease ran rampant through the facility and took my mother-in-law as a casualty. One weekend we were standing outside the nursing home in freezing weather, talking to her through the window on cellphones and the very next weekend we were traveling to a very lonely burial service.

It is a cruel disease, made even more cruel by the thoughtless actions and words of some of our citizens.

One day, when the history of this pandemic is written, I believe that the actions and leadership of Gov. Eric Holcomb will stand out as a major reason why more Hoosier families did not have to grieve over the loss of their loved ones. As the great Hoosier poet James Whitcomb Riley once wrote, "Ain't God good to Indiana..." ❖

Dunn is a former chairman of the Howard County Republican Party.

Teachers' pay and the Electoral College

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – I've been asked (by two readers) to write about two questions. This flood of interest is overwhelming. Thus, with much humility, I offer the following opinions:



On teachers' pay: Michael Hicks at Ball State has offered two columns on the subject. He makes the statistical argument well about Indiana's delinquency regarding the pay of teachers. Our compensation for teachers is below the market rate. This likely, but not necessarily, gives us teachers who are below standard quality. Are the teachers' union and the local school boards

ready to dismiss or retrain teachers who do not perform up to the standards to which we aspire?

Perhaps we don't need higher pay for teachers. Rather, do we need pay for more teachers with the skills necessary to meet the challenges of today's students? Both more pay and more teachers suggest higher taxes, even for businesses.

Which brings us to our teacher colleges. Are they admitting sub-par students and turning out sub-par graduates? Likewise, are Indiana voters and legislators willing to upgrade the quality of our school boards and do battle with all the organizations mentioned thus far?

I see no evidence Hoosiers are ready to improve our schools. Why aren't the university presidents out in front on this effort? Must Mitch Daniels do everything

alone?

As for the Electoral College, the "problem" can be resolved without a constitutional amendment. Maine and Nebraska have shown us the way. In those two states, two electors go to the party that wins the statewide vote, just as today. Each remaining elector goes to the party winning each congressional seat.

In Indiana, we had 11 electoral votes in 2020. Under the current winner-take-all rule, all 11 electoral votes went to the winner of Indiana's presidential vote, Mr. Trump. If the Maine/Nebraska system had been operative, two electoral seats would go automatically to the Republicans. But with Democrats winning two congressional races, they would get two electoral votes; Republicans would get seven electors based on their seven congressional wins. In total, the score would have been R 9, D 2.

By my count, 27 states have split delegations to the House of Representatives. In California, instead of all 55 electoral votes going to Biden, under the Maine/Nebraska system, Biden 44, Trump 11. In Texas it would have been R 22, D13 instead of R 35, D 0.

With the Maine/Nebraska model in place, the 2020 electoral count would have been D 275, R 263 instead of D 306, R 232. The current system gave Biden 57% of electors; the proposed system would reduce that to 51%, matching the popular vote.

With these changes, candidates and their parties would pay more attention to congressional districts. We might increase competition as each party has reason to turnout their voters, winning districts and improving their statewide vote. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonj-marcus@yahoo.com.

For campus left, violence justified

By PETE SEAT

INDIANAPOLIS – When two men wearing black hoodies rushed the stage during Ann Coulter’s question-and-answer session on the University of Arizona campus, the instinct of this theater arts major was to think they were technicians coming to fix a bad microphone. But my Spidey-sense was off – way off.



I had shared with the police officers we hired to secure the event that message board chatter (this was in the stone ages of 2004) indicated a disruption of some kind was planned. Being naïve and unschooled in how vile the campus left already was in those days, I thought the worst we would witness was indecipherable shouting or sloppily hand-written posterboard signs.

Coulter’s assailants, however, had another idea in mind. Concealed in laptop cases they held parallel to the ground, their weapons of choice were pies that they hurriedly hurled at Coulter’s head. Thanks to a combination of poor aim and Coulter’s Matrix-like agility, the pies only grazed her hair.

The duo called themselves Al Pieda, a pathetic play on the name of heartless, blood thirsty terrorists who killed 3,000 American souls three years earlier. Charges were pressed but the Pima County prosecutor, a Democrat, refused to pursue the case because, well, she was a Democrat.

Despite being the person who invited Coulter and raised the money to host her on campus, and having sat next to her as the events unfolded, the incident didn’t shake me at first like it did others. Coulter parlayed the attack into a series of media appearances, including several hits in the succeeding days on Sean Hannity’s nationally syndicated radio show, and it probably boosted her brand overall if I had to guess. She even hired a full-time security guard after that. Nothing makes someone look cooler than having a security guard in tow, ya know?

But over the years, as I watched conservative after conservative get attacked on college campuses, or find their lectures canceled before a word was spoken, I became embarrassed that we had not done more to sound the alarm.

What I saw that night and learned in the years that followed is that the campus left is uninterested in verbal debates. Coulter was chosen to be rhetorically provocative and because she was within our price range. Stu-

dent government leaders thought it wise to invite liberal blowhard Michael Moore to campus three weeks before a presidential election without a conservative counterpoint, so it was left to us to fight verbal fire with verbal fire.

But what the campus left showed us is that if they disagree, any response, up to and including violence, is justified. We debated Moore, and complained about his student government-funded event, on the airwaves of Tucson television and radio; they decided to assault a woman with whom they disagreed by chucking pies at her (and missing, as Coulter joyfully pointed out over and over).

The same cult of agitators say, as their ears burn, that “words matter.” I agree. My entire living comes from writing and speaking words. But freedom of speech matters, too. Moore had every right to spew his vitriol on campus without fear of physical harm. Coulter should have felt similarly at ease.

When ideas of all kinds cannot be expressed without violence or someone pressing charges, the whole system is broken. A country whose very foundation rests on freedom of speech cannot function when speech is muffled, silenced and attacked with blunt force. Everyone has a right to speak their mind. We can ignore and avoid, but we cannot and should not silence.

As I recently watched the Adam Carolla/Dennis Prager Amazon Prime documentary, “No Safe Spaces,” I came to realize our event was the canary in the coal mine.



We saw to what lengths the left is willing to go in order to shut down free speech. We thought it was a one-off event at the time, but it was only the beginning of what was to come. I wish we had done more. ❖

Pete Seat is a former White House spokesman for President George W. Bush and campaign spokesman for Dan Coats, former director of national intelligence and U.S. senator. Currently he is a vice president with Bose Public Affairs Group in Indianapolis.

Economic development about value, not cost

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – The chances are that folks learn most of what they know about economics in their late teens or 20s, in a high school or college class. It is also often the case that the person teaching that class learned most of their economics 30 or 40 years before that. So, it may easily come to pass that an adult nearing age 60 is attached to economic ideas that are really 75 years old. I am not the first to observe this. John Maynard Keynes noted that “practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually slaves of some defunct economist.”

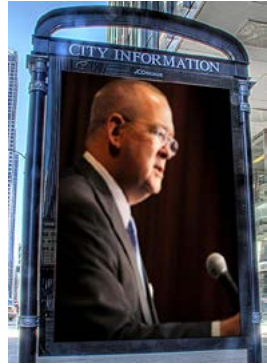
Of course, there are abundant lessons to be had in the economic ideas of old. A person today could get on quite well in most professions knowing nothing more than economists knew about the world in 1946. Indeed, Keynes died in April of that year, and his influence lingers still today. But, as a profession, economists have come to learn more about the world in the past 75 years than in the 75 centuries before it. Some of those things have usefulness today.

Forty years ago, when I was a budding undergraduate economist, the policy world was eagerly tackling high tax rates. An advisor to Ronald Reagan, Art Laffer, received a great deal of attention explaining the benefits of reducing the 70 percent tax rate on high-income earners. His views gained plenty of following in the policy world. There was good reason for that. It seems pretty clear that a 70 percent marginal tax rate removes the incentive for much productive work.

What became known as the Laffer curve, asserted that government revenues could increase following a tax cut. In some cases, that is surely true. So, Mr. Reagan signed legislation that cut taxes on the very rich from 70 to 50 to 37%. However, that tax cut didn't pay for itself, even in the 1980s.

At the same time, an important economic growth model developed in the 1950s enjoyed widespread acclaim. It predicted that poor nations would grow faster than rich nations. The reason for this is that places where capital investment is scarce would offer higher rates of return to businesses who invested there. So, poor places would naturally attract more capital and grow faster, while rich places would slow. The two would converge over time.

All this means that if you were an undergraduate student in the late 1970s–80s, you were taught that low tax rates and capital investment were the key to growth



and prosperity. While the Laffer curve was never mainstream economics, it was common in policy circles. The capital-led growth model received a Nobel Prize in 1987.

Fast forward 40 to 45 years, and those once fresh-faced college kids are now governors, serve in legislatures and run local economic development policies all over the country. But, the lessons absorbed in the late 1970s–80s seems not to have been updated. That's too bad, because economists made important new discoveries on both taxes and capital investment.

The Laffer curve died a pretty quick death. The failure of the Reagan tax cuts to pay for themselves killed it. But, a variant held on to public imagination—the notion that while tax cuts might not pay for themselves among existing businesses, they might cause families and businesses to relocate to a city. That would cause tax revenues to rise.

That idea too was quickly debunked in dozens of studies from economists of all stripes. But, one really interesting fact surrounding the question emerged. It turns out, people and businesses didn't move to the low-tax cities and states. They were actually flocking to high-tax cities and states. Over the past three decades, that trend has accelerated. Today, almost all population and employment growth occur in places with higher taxes. That is a puzzle that is partially solved by research on the failings of the capital-growth models from the 1950s.

By the 1980s, the predictions of poor countries growing faster than rich counties failed to materialize. This attracted a great deal of research, which settled on an answer that today is obvious. It's not capital that causes economic growth, but human capital. Workers and their education, skills, drive and capacity to adapt are the causal factors in economic growth.

This finding changed development policy in the third world, and helped fuel more poverty reduction in the past 30 years than the 30 centuries that preceded it. More importantly, it also explains why people, and especially businesses, might move to high-tax places. Generally, places with higher taxes spend more on education, which has a positive, albeit loose, effect on school performance. Better schools mean more kids finishing high school and heading to college or strong post-secondary training. Higher taxes often mean better healthcare services, so more productive workers. Often it means communities with more livable neighborhoods, less crime, better sidewalks and well-maintained parks. For businesses and households, the anguish of higher taxes is moderated by the better public services that accompany it.

The lesson in all this is that policymakers who 40 years ago were told that capital and low taxes drove prosperity, might wish to revisit what they know about the matter. Modern economic research reveals a far more complete picture. To summarize it, families search for value, not cost, in the places they choose to live. They do this when they buy a car, a TV or their dinner, it stands to reason they do so in the place they live.

Businesses are even more attentive to value, moving businesses to where they are most productive, rather than where they are cheapest. But, we don't need economic research to reveal this. If families and businesses ignored value for 'cheap,' then Indiana and Mississippi would be economic powerhouses, and Massachusetts and Washington would be vast economic wastelands.

The obsessive focus on lower tax rates infantilizes the decisions of families and businesses. Unless your vision is to make your city or state the 'discount store'

of communities, it is time to focus on value, not cost. If not, you risk being the intellectual devotee of some long-discredited economist, or worse, steering your community away from prosperity. ❖

Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University.

What can be done to fix Congress?

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI Indiana Bureau

ANDERSON – A Gallup Poll released in early March gave Congress its highest approval rating in 12 years, 36%. Just to be clear, that means 36% of respondents actually approve of the job Congress is doing. Almost twice



as many, 61%, say they disapprove. And that's an 11-point improvement from January when just 25% of respondents voiced approval and 71% said they disapproved.

Clearly, Americans don't much like Congress. Gallup says the institution's average approval rating over the last 16 years was 21%. It's not hard to figure out why. The gridlock in Washington is legendary. What with all the

partisan bickering, the average voter gets the idea that almost nothing gets done.

So what can we do about it? A recent Facebook post captures the sentiment of many Americans. "Since nobody reads 5,000-page bills," it says, "let's slip in term limits."

The idea has enormous support. A Gallup survey from January 2013 found three out of four Americans saying they would vote for term limits if given the chance. Subsequent surveys put the level of support even higher. A Washington-based group called U.S. Term Limits released a survey last month in which 80% of respondents supported a constitutional amendment setting term limits.

"Congress was meant to be a citizen legislature," the organization says in its online petition. "Our representatives were supposed to go to Washington, serve for a short time, then return to live under the laws they made." That doesn't happen much these days.

"Congress is now a haven for career politicians who put their own power, perks and privileges ahead of

public service," the online petition says. "Even worse, they are impossible to unseat thanks to cozy connections with lobbyists and special interests. This broken system needs repair."

The fix is to keep incumbents from settling in. "If we do not act now," the petition says, "we may never be able to bring back government of, by and for the people."

This is not a partisan issue. That survey of 1,000 adults included 360 Republicans, 370 Democrats and 270 independents. More than 87% of Republicans supported term limits while Democrats were closer to 74% and independents were approaching 80%.

The Term Limits for U.S. Congress Political Action Committee has its own online petition featuring photos of Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell along with their ages and the amount of time they've been in Congress. "No one," it says, "should have power over a nation for this long."

And yet, when voters get a chance to impose their own term limits in an election, they send nearly all of the rascals back to Washington. A Gallup survey last fall found that 60% of respondents believed their own member of Congress deserved to be reelected. That same survey found that 68% of respondents believed most members of Congress did not. Such findings are common through history. Americans tend to like the folks they elect themselves. They're not so fond of the folks everyone else elects.

Still, imposing term limits is not the way to fix Congress. If voters like their senators and representatives, they ought to be able to send those people back to Washington as many times as they want. What will really fix Congress is to address some of its arcane procedures such as the Senate filibuster. We could also get rid of gerrymandering so that more congressional districts were truly competitive, forcing our representatives to inch toward the middle rather than pandering to the base.

And then, of course, there's campaign finance reform. In other words, we need to create a legislative environment where compromise is a good thing and gridlock is a thing of the past. Congress is clearly broken. It's time to fix it. ❖

Kelly Hawes is a columnist for CNHI News Indiana.

Ken de la Bastide, Anderson Herald Bulletin:

There are mixed signals coming out of the Indiana Statehouse as it pertains to the coronavirus. Dr. Kris Box, the commissioner with the Indiana State Board of Health, announced this week that the COVID-19 variants and the number of positive cases of the virus are on the rise in Indiana. This came at a time when Gov. Eric Holcomb announced that starting on Tuesday the mandate to wear masks in public was coming to an end. Holcomb's decision comes at a time when the number of cases and the numbers of people being hospitalized in the state are both rising. As of Thursday there were 687,713 Hoosiers who tested positive for the coronavirus, a number that climbed by 1,240 on that date. The coronavirus has caused the death of 12,642 Indiana residents and at the national level, the death toll now stands at 549,098. Several Indiana cities, including Indianapolis, have decided to continue the mask mandate for people in public along with the social distancing. Hamilton County has extended the wearing of masks in the county building for 30 days. Madison County is following the governor's directive with a meeting of the local Board of Health set for April 14. Pictures from along Georgia Street in Indy and of the spring break crowds in Florida showed mostly younger people mingling close together with not many wearing masks. So what will Gov. Holcomb do when a larger surge hits Indiana this spring and summer? It will be difficult to re-implement a mask mandate and for Hoosiers to heed a renewed call to "hunker down." As more and more Hoosiers are getting vaccinated against the coronavirus, the wearing of masks in the public seems like the wise thing to do. The pandemic won't come to an end any time soon, or at least until the nation and Indiana reaches what is known as herd immunity. To obtain "herd immunity" requires 70% to 80% of the population to be immunized. That means approximately 5.4 million Hoosiers have to be vaccinated. As of Thursday, 1.1 million residents have been immunized. We have a long way to go. ❖



Joe Manchin III, Washington Post:

When Americans vote to send their two senators to Washington, they trust that they will work to represent the interests of their state on equal footing with 98 other senators. I have always said, "If I can't go home and explain it, I can't vote for it." It's no accident that a state as small as West Virginia has the same number of senators as California or Texas. It goes to the heart of what representative government is all about. The Founding Fathers understood that the challenges facing a rural or small state would always be very different from a more populous state. Designating each state with the same number of senators — regardless of the population — ensured that rural and small states and the Americans who live in them would always have a seat at the table. The filibuster is a critical tool to protect that input and our democratic form of government. That is why I have said it before and will say it again to

remove any shred of doubt: There is no circumstance in which I will vote to eliminate or weaken the filibuster. The time has come to end these political games, and to usher a new era of bipartisanship where we find common ground on the major policy debates facing our nation. ❖

Michael Gerson, Washington Post:

We have all seen the basic outlines of pandemic reality. Experts in epidemiology warned that the disease would spread through contact or droplets at short distances, which is how it spread. The experts recommended early lockdowns to keep health systems from being overwhelmed, and the lockdowns generally worked. The experts said Americans could influence the spread of the disease by taking basic measures such as mask-wearing and social distancing. The disease was controlled when people did these things. The disease ran rampant when they did not, killing a lot of old and vulnerable people in the process. There were, of course, disagreements along the way about the length of lockdowns and the form of mandates. But on the whole, American citizens have witnessed one of the most dramatic vindications of scientific expertise in our history. We have been healthier when we listened to the experts and sicker when we did not. This is the context in which the MAGA right has chosen to make Anthony S. Fauci — the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases since 1984 — the villain in their hallucinogenic version of pandemic history. Slamming Fauci was a surefire applause line at the Conservative Political Action Conference in February. For Trump officials, including Donald Trump himself, this makes perfect sense. If Fauci has been right about covid, then playing down the disease, mocking masks, modeling superspreader events, denying death tolls, encouraging anti-mandate militias and recommending quack cures were not particularly helpful. If Fauci has been right, they presided over a deadly debacle. Metaphorically (but only barely metaphorically), there is a body on the floor with multiple stab wounds. The Trump administration stands beside it with a bloody knife in its hand. It not only claims to be innocent. It claims there is no blood. There is no body. There is no floor. All these critics of Fauci have chosen to attack the citadel of science at its strongest point. With squirt guns. While naked and blowing kazoos. Fauci is practicing epidemiology. His critics are practicing idiocy. Both are very good at their chosen work. ❖

John Feinstein, IBJ:

This is the 41st time I have attended the Final Four. I have never seen anything like this version. And I hope never to see anything like it again. It isn't just sitting in 70,000-seat Lucas Oil Stadium with fans filling the place at about 10% capacity. It isn't sitting in a football press box several miles from the court. It isn't even feeling grateful for a bottle of water and a national anthem performed in less than three minutes. It's being in a ghost town. ❖

Notre Dame to require vaccine

NOTRE DAME — The University of Notre Dame will require all students to receive COVID-19 vaccinations in order to enroll in classes next school year ([Chicago Tribune](#)). Students in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs must be fully inoculated “as a condition of enrollment for the 2021–22 academic year,” the school announced on its website Wednesday. The private university just outside South Bend, Ind., is among the first schools in the country to mandate shots. “We will, of course, accommodate documented medical and religious exemptions,” Notre Dame said on its website. “We will also offer a way to be vaccinated for those who are unable to obtain a vaccination prior to arriving for the fall semester or whose vaccination is not recognized by the state of Indiana.”



Town ponders vaccine mandate

MERRILLVILLE — The Town Council is exploring the idea of mandating COVID-19 vaccinations for all town employees (Reilly, [NWI Times](#)). “At this point it’s under consideration. We are reviewing it,” Council President Rick Bella said. The issue will be up for discussion during the council’s April 13 meeting, he said. No vote will be taken and the public will be allowed to weigh in. “It’s an idea we are floating out there because our employees have contact with the public. We are just trying to be, as we have been, overboard on caution,” Bella said.

Rokita launches probe at big tech

INDIANAPOLIS — Attorney General Todd Rokita (R-IN) is beginning an investigation into tech giants

Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google and Twitter (Turner, [Indiana Public Media](#)). The probe will explore whether company policies harmed Indiana consumers—specifically those policies that removed content or limited speech. Rokita says the investigation stems from complaints and his own observations. “These platforms censor information given to consumers,” he said. “Now, is that censoring abusive, deceptive, unfair? That’s what this investigation is about.” Twitter temporarily censored Rokita after he made a post on Valentine’s Day claiming the 2020 election was stolen from former President Donald Trump. Rokita later said the post was a parody. The AG insists this probe has nothing to do with past election results, rather understanding how companies craft policies and whether they break any Indiana laws. “This is not an election situation that I’m looking at this through,” Rokita said in an interview. “I’m looking at this through consumerism and protecting consumers.”

Evansville eyes new water plant

EVANSVILLE, Ind. ([WFIE](#)) - Evansville Water and Sewer Utility is proposing construction of a new water treatment plant. Officials at Tuesday’s Water and Sewer board meeting said there will need to be a potential rate increase to replace the current waterworks plant that was first built in 1897. Officials with EWSU said they’ve been making significant improvements to the system for the last decade. The focus has been mainly on the distribution system, but officials said what has been neglected is the most important part of this system - where the water is treated. So what’s needed? Officials said over the next five years, they’re proposing an increase to monthly water rates with the highest monthly rate increase no higher than \$3.47. “What our customers can expect is over the next five years so 2022 through 2026, for an average customer that used 5,000 gallons at a residence,

their bill will never go over \$3.47 per month. So by the end of the five years they will see their bill compared to what it is today, be \$15.82 higher,” Lane Young, the Executive Director of Evansville Water and Sewer Utility said.

Young says Biden plan ‘full of goodies’

WASHINGTON — Indiana Senator Todd Young said to Fox News that he would always support infrastructure investment, as long as that investment goes towards what he believes in infrastructure (Darling, [WIBC](#)). “When the president was asked what constitutes infrastructure because this is a malleable term he’s trying to fit a lot into, he responded that it involves energy, transportation, or the Internet,” Young said. “There’s a whole category of ‘goodies’, in fact about 70-percent of the goodies in this \$2.5 trillion phase one of the bill, fall outside that definition.”

Cummins CEO sees vote ‘epidemic’

COLUMBUS — Cummins Chairman and CEO Tom Linebarger is criticizing what he described as an “epidemic” of bills proposed in state legislatures across the country that would restrict voting access and disproportionately impact Black and brown communities (East, [Columbus Republic](#)). “We’re just feeling like it’s kind of an epidemic of finding ways to limit access or reduce access or reduce voting rights,” Linebarger said in a telephone interview with The Republic. “In our opinion, voting rights are fundamental to our democracy and it’s really a civil rights issue.” Linebarger is encouraging businesses in every state to defend voting rights and do their part to let state legislators know that restricting voting access is a civil rights issue, saying that it shouldn’t take a “Herculean effort” to cast a ballot in the U.S.