

## Phase I of redistricting concludes

After 9 hearings, Census data arrives today; Wesco promises public input after maps are drawn

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The first phase of the 2021 reapportionment process concluded Wednesday afternoon with a heavily attended public hearing in the House chambers. It was the ninth hearing scheduled by the House and Senate majority caucuses. The second phase begins today



when the U.S. Census Bureau releases the critical data needed for the maps to the state.

House Elections Committee Chairman Timothy Wesco said that the process will begin in the House with HB 1581 and 1582 as the vehicle bills. “We plan to reconvene in September,” Wesco said. “We will have hearings in both the House and Senate. There will be public input on



the maps. Members of the public can draw and submit their own maps.”

Pressed by Sen. JD Ford, D-Indianapolis, on whether there will be additional hearings, Rep. Wesco responded, “We will have hearings in the House and Senate and will have public comments. The maps will be available for the public to consider at that time.”

Wesco said all remaining hearings will

occur at the Statehouse, telling to AP that further delays in approving new districts could cause problems for county officials preparing for next year’s elections. “We have to be very careful about delaying this any longer than it has already been delayed,” Wesco said. “To delay this any longer

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## Baseball’s rural roots

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Major League Baseball is approaching 120 years in its two-circuit setup and it continues to amaze me how often the “firsts” still come along.

Take light hitting Chicago White Sox catcher Seby Zavallas, who last week became the first in history to smash his first three home runs in the same game. Or the guy Zavallas replaced, Yermín Mercedes, who back in April became the first in history to go 5-for-5 in his first major league start, and began his career going 8-for-8, his bat headed for Cooperstown. His personal slogan had been “the best or nothing,” though he has since been sent back to AAA Charlotte.



At 7 tonight on Fox,



**“We are not going to have a mask mandate. We are not going to mandate everyone doing one thing when this is different per community. The goal that the state of Indiana has is to make sure they have (vaccine) access. It’s easy, it’s free.”**

- Gov. Eric Holcomb on Wednesday



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**Jack E. Howey**  
 editor emeritus  
 1926-2019



another first will occur: The first game played in "heaven." Or as actor Kevin Costner put it in the 1989 movie classic "Field of Dreams," the first in "Iowa." The White Sox and New York Yankees will meet outside of tiny Dyersville, Iowa (population 4,000). Costner will be on hand along with 8,000 Iowans, in the game to be called by IU graduate Joe Buck for Fox Sports.

Sox reliever Liam Hendriks has a checklist for Iowa. "I want to do my own Shoeless Joe kind of feeling, walk through the corn to the actual field," Hendriks said during a conference call Monday. "I was raised to embrace the history of the game," Sox manager Tony La Russa added. "Too often we lose parts of it."

**Watching Ken Burns'** PBS class documentary "Baseball," what transpired in the mid-19th Century was a game that evolved from British "rounders" to one played in every American community and college, from below Coogan's Bluff in New York City to French Lick (home of the barnstorming Plutos). In 1869, big city dominance began with the Cincinnati Redlegs, and the owners, who put in the "reserve clause" that gave them power and control over the players.

Thus, the Big Leagues were anchored in American cities, which is one of the reasons why "Field of

Dreams" became such a cultural milestone. It returned the thrust of the game to Middle America, amidst the Iowa cornfields.

**When former** White Sox manager and current broadcaster Ozzie Guillen drove the four hours from Chicago to Dyersville for

Tuesday's NBC Chicago pre-game show, he was giddy. Guillen, who led the Sox to the 2005 World Series title, apparently had never seen rural America. As that broadcast ended, Guillen was reportedly at the Field of Dreams souvenir shop, gathering up mementos for his family.

Back in 1919, the young White Sox were poised to become a dynasty (they had won the World Series in 1917). But legendary sportswriters Ring Lardner and Hugh Fullerton figured out the fix was in their series against the Cincinnati Reds, and the new Baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis (who grew up in Indiana, though he was named for a Civil War battlefield) forever banned Shoeless Joe Jackson, Ed Cicotte, Swede Risberg, Lefty Williams and others.

The scandal inspired two movies. "Eight Men Out" in 1987 (starring John Cusack, Charlie Sheen, Chicago author Studs Terkel and a bit part by then-Goshen Mayor Max Chiddister) was filmed at Bush Stadium in Indianapolis. Two years later





came "Field of Dreams" starring Costner, James Earl Jones, Ray Liotta and Burt Lancaster.

Shoeless Joe Jackson's baseball star shone once again, this time as a ghostly apparition stepping out of the cornfields, after the wind had whispered, "If you build it; he will come." Jackson (played by Liotta) then disappears into the corn.

Had the Black Sox scandal not happened, the New York Yankee "Murderers Row" dynasty of the 1920s might not have been as prolific. Instead, it cast the Chicago franchise into 90 years of funk until they finally ended the drought with the 2005 World Series title.

Jackson apparently was not in on the fix, just as former Reds player and manager Pete Rose was banned from baseball for betting on games although he never placed a wager on his team losing. The irony is that gaming companies like FanDuel are now "partners" with the Sox and other clubs.



What hasn't changed is the pilgrimage scores of American families make to MLB ballparks every summer. Mine came in 1963 when my Uncle Jerry took me to a Sox-Yankees game at old Comiskey Park. From our out-field seats, I saw the legendary Yankee outfielders Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris.

A cherished family photo was one I took of my stepdaughter Renee in the "Bob Uecker seats" at the new White Sox stadium (we were literally in the stratospheric last row of the upper deck) with a tiny Carlton Fisk batting at the plate.

With the advent of Facebook, I fondly watch young families bring their kids into this American rite of passage, as Trevor and Whitney Foughty did on July 29 at Wrigley Field, taking 5-year-old daughter Abby to her first Cubs game on her birthday. Abby was handed the stadium mic and proclaimed on the video boards: "Play ball!"

That's what the White Sox and Yankees will be doing tonight in "heaven," or Iowa.

## Manning and James in the Hall

Sunday night became the capstone of Peyton Manning's career as an Indianapolis Colt when he joined the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He had already joined the Hoosier pantheon of sports heroes – Knute Rockne, Bob Knight, Larry Bird and Reggie Miller – but his 14 years with the Colts were, perhaps, more transformative than the others. Indiana became a "football state," or at least a twin to the hoops.

He kept Indianapolis as a "major league city" when he arrived in 1998. With the franchise rumored for a move



to L.A., Lucas Oil Stadium became the "house that Manning built." He led the Colts to two super bowls, winning the first one. He rewrote NFL record books and his season and game preparation were legendary. He became the iron man twin along with Chicago's Walter Payton, rarely missing a game, or even a series.

Check out Indiana prep box scores across the state these days and there are dozens of "Peytons" both male and female. His legacy was about community, as the children's hospital in his name attests. His hilarious Saturday Night Live hosting meant he had cut across mediums, going nationwide. When he departed for Denver in 2012 – owed \$25 million but recovering from two serious neck operations that brought in his ability to continue in doubt – it was as emotional for many of us as it would be in a family death or divorce.

At his induction Sunday, Manning became a steward of the game: "As members of this honored class, we have a responsibility to make our game stronger from the core playground to the most celebrated stadiums. During the past few years, the game of football has been challenged by an explosion of sports and entertainment options, safety concerns, erupting social justice issues and a worldwide pandemic. We certainly shouldn't walk away now. When we leave this stage tonight, it is no longer about us. It is about cultivating the game that has given so much to us. It's about nurturing football to live and thrive another day, another year, another decade, another generation. It's about guaranteeing that kids everywhere can learn, bond, grow and have fun with every flag pulled, every tackle made, every pass thrown, every run, block, sack and touchdown scored."

On Saturday night, RB Edgerrin James was inducted into the COVID-delayed Class of 2020, saying, "Inmate number 336 in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. My career started with gold teeth and ended with this gold jacket."

James added, "For some reason I always had to deal with perception. Perception, though, isn't always reality. It definitely wasn't my reality. People looked at my gold teeth and dreads and were shocked and surprised I had never been under arrest or spent time in jail. So many people told me you can't have dreads and gold teeth and be accepted in the NFL, but I never listened. I always knew who I was – a great football player, a great father, a proud Black man, a lion, and this was my mane, which many of those doubters would discover when they got to know the

real me. Times have changed. Look around the league. Look at some of the young stars. As a matter of fact, look at my Hall of Fame bust. Rockin' the same dreads they said I shouldn't." ❖

# Redistricting, from page 1

than it has already been delayed would create significant ripple effects, significant problems for the upcoming elections."

Wesco said a map-drawing tool should be running in a few weeks after today's release of census data. The tool is at [iga.in.gov/redistricting](http://iga.in.gov/redistricting).

State Sen. John Crane added, "If there's a silver lining in this, had the normal course of events occurred, the redistricting would have been in the mix with other issues. Now this will be the sole focus."

**Democratic Rep.** Cherrish Pryor of Indianapolis called the past week's hearings "window dressing" unless Republicans prove they've taken the public comments seriously. "One meeting for the House Elections Committee, one meeting for the Senate Elections Committee is not enough," Pryor said. "This is a redistricting that is going to impact us for the next decade, if not for the next 20 or 30 years. And people want to make sure that they have an opportunity to fully review and analyze the maps."

Democrat lawmakers said Republican lawmakers were holding public hearings to give the "elusion of transparency," Rep. Matt Pierce, D-Bloomington, told reporters Wednesday (AP). "We need to know who's going to be assisting the Republican map-drawing, who's actually going to be sitting at the computer drawing these maps, what political and demographic data will be used?" Pierce said.

House Republicans will not hire any outside consultants to draw maps or provide data, said Erin Wittern, spokesperson for the House Republican caucus. The IndyStar reported this morning that neither the House nor the Senate Republican caucus has signed any agreements with any consultants to help draw the legislative maps or provide data.

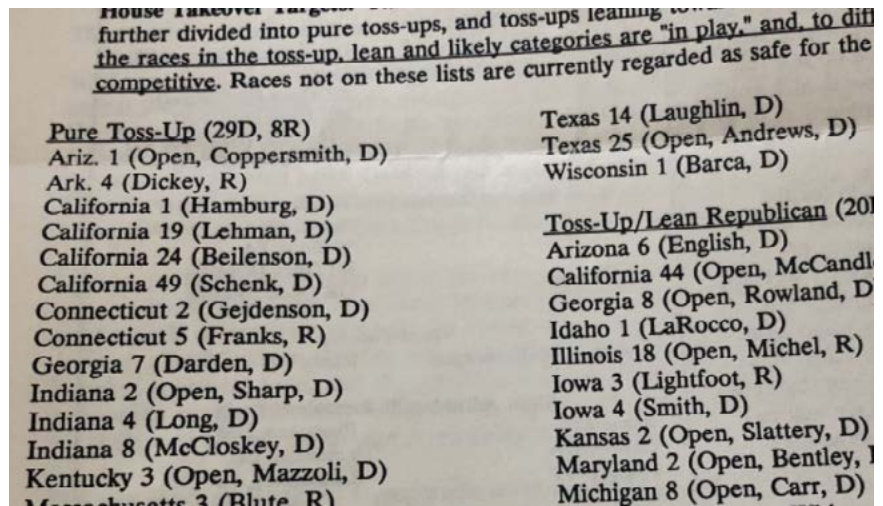
This process comes after a decade under the 2011 maps that resulted in the most uncompetitive era in congressional and General Assembly history.

**While the 2011 maps** were compact and not considered "gerrymandered" because of their shapes, 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: Sen. Lugar's seat won by Joe Donnelly in 2012, and then Mike Braun's defeat of Sen. Donnelly in 2018. In 2016, Republican Rep. Todd Young held Dan Coats's Senate seat

against Democrat Evan Bayh. At the gubernatorial level, Republican Mike Pence defeated John Gregg 49.5% to 46.6% in 2012, Republican Eric Holcomb defeated Gregg 51.4% to 45.4%. Holcomb's reelection in 2020 was a blowout against uncompetitive Democrat Woody Myers.

In the Indiana House, the days of endangered majorities came to an abrupt end. The Republicans went from a 60-seat majority in 2010, to 69 seats in 2012, 71 seats in 2014, 70 seats in 2016, 67 seats in 2018, and 71



**A copy of the Cook Political Report in 1994 revealed three Indiana congressional seats in play, all of which flipped parties that November.**

seats in 2020. It is the longest run of super majority party rule in Indiana history.

**Indiana Republican** Chairman Kyle Hupfer told HPI earlier this year that the GOP dominance at the General Assembly and congressional levels overlays the party's strength at local levels where Republicans hold a record 71 mayoral seats, over 90% of county commissioner seats and more than 80% of all county elected offices.

Hoosier Democrats are basically powerless in the shaping of the new maps later this year unless they can muster public opinion.

The uncompetitive, compact districts helped create an Indiana that by 2014 had one of the worst voter participation cycles in the nation. The Indiana Citizens Action Coalition observed, "In 2014, 54 of the 125 candidates for the Indiana House and Senate had no opponents. As a result, Indiana's voter turnout rate was the lowest in the country at 28%. In 2016, 35 of the 125 candidates for the Indiana House and Senate had no opponents. In 2018, 37 out of 125 seats were unchallenged.

The 2001 maps drawn by House Democrats and signed into law by Gov. Frank O'Bannon 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 2006, Republican Jon Elrod upset Rep. Mahern by eight votes.

In congressional districts, five incumbents were defeated under the 2001 maps, including 9th CD Democrat Rep. Baron Hill by Mike Sodrel in 2004; Rep. Sodrel by Hill in a rematch in 2006, along with 2nd CD Democrat Joe Donnelly over Chris Chocola, and 8th CD Democrat Brad Ellsworth over Rep. John Hostettler; and 9th CD Republican Todd Young defeating Hill in 2010. A sixth seat changed parties when Republican Larry Bucshon defeated State Rep. Trent Van Haaften in 2010.

**Senate Elections** Committee Chairman Jon Ford characterized the eight hearings last Friday and Saturday as featuring "grandstanding" for those testifying. "I hope there's a little bit more about what people would like to hear, you know, and what we would like to see in this race," Jon Ford told the IBJ. "I think that's important to hear, you know, that compactness is important. You know, competitiveness is important."



Julia Vaughn of Common Caucus Indiana on Wednesday characterized the current process as the "arsonists" acting as the "fire marshal." She asked majority lawmakers to do more than just follow "what the law requires."

"We are asking you to follow a higher law," Vaughn said to raucous applause. "We are asking that you focus on the greater good because Indiana's future and the future of self-governance is at stake."

She said at the Fort Wayne hearing Chairman Wesco was asked about the hiring of a Washington-based political consultant, Jason Torchinsky, a senior adviser and general counsel to the National Republican Redistricting Trust, to serve as legal counsel for the Indiana's redistricting process. IBJ obtained the letter of engagement signed by House Speaker Todd Huston, R-Fishers, in April, hiring Torchinsky to serve as an attorney offering legal advice during and after the redistricting process, should the maps face any lawsuits. He was not asked to help with drawing the maps.

"You said this is necessary because of federal law regarding the Voting Rights Act is complicated and you need this attorney's help," Vaughn said. "The problem isn't that you hired a consultant. The problem is the consultant and law firm you hired. Jason Torchinsky and his firm are not known for their work to upholding and strengthening the rights of voters of color, but for undermining them."

Torchinsky has been paid \$2,761.87 to date, and that comes out of the \$54,000 budget each caucus was given for expenses related to redistricting, he said. Wittern added that the House Republicans were not required to release the engagement letter but did so for the sake of transparency.

The eight earlier hearings allowed predominantly

Democrat audiences to complain about the process.

**The Anderson Herald Bulletin** reported:

"Although on the surface it sounds encouraging that the voting public will have some say in the congressional and legislative maps for the next decade, the consensus among many is that the meetings are window dressing. Democrats and Republicans alike are under the assumption that GOP lawmakers have already determined the new district boundaries, with a few minor tweaks to come once the census figures are released. Whatever maps are brought to the forefront for discussions will be designed with the intent of maintaining the GOP majorities in both legislative chambers."

Many hearing attendees cited a study Dr. Christopher Warshaw, associate professor of political science at George Washington University, released by Women4Change Indiana. Warshaw observed that Republican candidates received 53% of the vote in statewide elections but since 2012 Republicans have won 78% of congressional seats and 80% of state Senate

seats due to Democratic voters being "packed" into fewer districts. "Indiana is one of the most extreme examples of gerrymandering in the country," said Rima Shadid, executive director of Women4Change. "Gerrymandering hurts Indiana. It makes people not believe in our government."

**The Statehouse File** reported from the Lafayette hearing: "If there was much trust in the room that the Indiana General Assembly's Republican supermajority would resist a temptation to redraw congressional and state legislative maps to guarantee dominance for another decade, it didn't show Friday."

**Fort Wayne Journal Gazette:** "At Saturday's public meeting, one of nine being held statewide, 35 people shared questions and concerns. Some speakers described Indiana as a gerrymandered state where district lines are drawn with the goal of keeping incumbent legislators in office."

**Goshen News:** "Of those who chose to speak, nearly all voiced concerns that the state's current redistricting process is moving too quickly, without enough transparency, and urged Wesco and the other representatives in attendance to consider waiting to make any final decisions on the redistricting maps until all of the data has been provided to the public and they've been given time to provide feedback on any proposed changes. Most of those in attendance Saturday felt the public hearings being held to discuss redistricting are just window dressing, and will have little impact on how the redistricting process actually plays out."

**WANE-TV reported** from the Fort Wayne hearing: Outside of the building, the Indiana Democratic Party showing a similar concern that the Indiana Republican's supermajority in the statehouse will open up the door for gerrymandering, which is when district maps are drawn in favor of one party over the other. ❖



# Young's messy stance on infrastructure bill

By MARK SCHOEFF JR.

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sen. Todd Young's stance on a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill has been as messy as the legislative process that resulted in Senate approval of the measure this week – and his initial "yes," which turned to a "no," could switch back to a "yes" before the sausage-making is complete.

On Tuesday, the Senate voted 69-30 to send the bill to House. That tally exceeded the 60-vote filibuster threshold thanks to 19 Republicans who sided with the chamber's 50 Democrats in backing the legislation.

Young was not among the Republicans who helped advance the bill, which would upgrade the nation's roads, bridges, ports, airports, pipes and broadband networks. But he did join 16 other Republicans in a 67-32 vote on July 28 to bring the bill to the Senate floor.

One of the few Republicans up for election next year to back the bill, Young was effusive when the Senate began its debate, saying in a statement that Indiana needed infrastructure funding to fix "5,500 miles of Hoosier highways in poor condition."

He added: "We've made a lot of progress so far on an historic investment in our nation's core infrastructure that will be fully paid for without raising taxes. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle as we sand and polish the final product."

But late last week, the Congressional Budget Office released an estimate that said the infrastructure bill would add \$256 billion to the federal deficit over 10 years. By Sunday night, Young had gone from sanding and polishing the infrastructure bill to throwing it on the scrap heap.

"Having reviewed the Congressional Budget Office's (CBO) estimated fiscal impact of this legislation as currently constructed, and frankly still not being comfortable with a number of the Democratic priorities contained in this version, I will vote 'no,'" Young said about his position on final passage in the Aug. 8 statement.

Young has concerns about the "payfors" in the infrastructure bill. He also expressed misgivings about House Speaker Nancy Pelosi tying the infrastructure bill to a sweeping \$3.5 trillion budget reconciliation bill that incorporates a wide range of Biden administration social and climate spending.

The Senate approved early Wednesday morning

with only Democratic votes the budget resolution that is the framework for the reconciliation bill, which is being advanced with a parliamentary maneuver that avoids a Senate filibuster. Like all other Republicans, Young calls the reconciliation bill "reckless."

## No, for now, not forever?

But Young's "no" on the infrastructure bill could be for now rather than forever.

"Once this legislation passes the Senate, it will move next to the House of Representatives, where changes are all but certain," Young said in the Aug. 8 statement. "I intend to do what Hoosiers expect me to do, which is to continue working with my colleagues to improve this bill in hopes that the final product will be one I can support, because I sincerely believe we must address our nation's infrastructure needs."

That's how Young concluded the statement explaining his abrupt change of heart. It's also the part that illustrates an essential Young quality – his tendency to be a policy wonk.

When Young was in the House, I once had breakfast with him and his then-communications director Trevor Foughty at the Capitol Hill Club in Washington. My notes from that interview are long gone, but a phrase he used has stuck with me. Young said his goal as a lawmaker was to be a "policy entrepreneur."

That desire to create viable legislation likely led Young to be one of the Republicans who worked with Democrats to construct the infrastructure bill.

At a crucial moment, however, he abandoned the legislation.

But was it a flip-flop or a matter of the bill leaving Young rather than Young leaving the bill? That could become a key question in Indiana politics.

The \$256 billion figure "was more than he was expecting," said an Indiana GOP operative who is close to Young and spoke on the condition of anonymity to be candid about the machinations surrounding the infrastructure bill. "He's been the one in the room saying this needs to be paid for," the source said.

The source pointed out that the three-vote Democratic majority in the House puts a lot of pressure on Pelosi and could lead to changes to the bill that would make Young jump back on board.

"It's not out of the realm of possibility that something scaled back and smaller can pass," the source said.

## McDermott: Young caved to Trump

In the view of Hammond Mayor Tom McDermott Jr., a potential Democratic opponent for Young in next year's election, the senior senator's abrupt reversal on the infrastructure bill is straightforward. Young caved to former



President Donald Trump.

Trump blasted the bill in several statements as it made its way through the Senate. He threatened reprisals for Republican lawmakers who supported the legislation and gave President Joe Biden a victory.

Young kowtowed to Trump on infrastructure, as he did on his votes against a congressional commission to investigate the Jan. 6 Capitol riot and against a pandemic relief bill earlier this year, McDermott said.

"The overall summary is Todd Young is just trying to avoid a primary challenge from Donald Trump," McDermott said in an HPI interview. "It doesn't matter what six million Hoosiers think. He forgot who his bosses are. It's red and blue Hoosiers."

Infrastructure issues are at the top of the agendas of most mayors and county executives across the state, McDermott said. They particularly resonate on McDermott's turf in Northwest Indiana due in large part to heavy Chicago area traffic as well as the busy Indiana Toll Road.

"We get especially pounded in the Region," said McDermott, who has been Hammond's mayor for 18 years. "Anyone driving east-west goes through my city. I've followed the infrastructure bill because we need it."

McDermott anticipated Young would take the same pragmatic approach. He described Young as one of the two elected GOP officials in Indiana he thought of most highly – the other being Gov. Eric Holcomb.

But then Young did a 180 on the infrastructure bill, and McDermott was taken aback.

"I always admired him," said McDermott, who shares with Young a military background. Young served in the Marines, while McDermott was enlisted in the Navy. "I always felt like Todd was a guy who would go to D.C. and be bigger than politics," McDermott said. "Unfortunately, we saw that fall apart earlier this week."

A Young spokesman did not respond to two interview requests over the course of this week.

McDermott also said he has a hard time accepting Young's argument about the infrastructure bill costing too much. He said Young's concern about the deficit has re-emerged since Biden took office after being dormant during the Trump administration, when \$8 trillion was added to the deficit. "I find it ironic he's suddenly a deficit warrior," McDermott said.

If Young changes his mind on the infrastructure bill, it could take an issue away from McDermott, who has not announced a decision on whether to challenge Young but seems to be leaning in that direction.

"It takes a big man to admit when you're wrong," McDermott said. "Right now, Todd Young has made a mistake and, hopefully, he can walk it back."

## Payfors shaky from the beginning

It's somewhat surprising that Young has put himself in a position of going back-and-forth on the infrastructure bill. From the outset, it seemed to be clear that Republicans and Democrats had put so many revenue-raising provisions

off the table that whatever remained would be shaky.

For instance, one of the ways the infrastructure bill tries to pay for itself is by strengthening tax enforcement for digital asset transactions. That measure is estimated to raise \$28 billion over 10 years.

But Young's delegation mate, Republican Sen. Mike Braun, doubts the efficacy of the digital tax crackdown. "That's what you call a variable revenue source, and I don't think it's going to be a large one," Braun told Indiana reporters last week as he blasted the infrastructure bill. "That is really a squishy, soft payfor."

Young probably would have been better off to be more circumspect about the infrastructure bill when he voted in favor of beginning the Senate debate. He could have expressed doubts then about the revenue measures but voted to move it along in hopes it would improve.

He could have taken a page from the playbook of Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va. When Manchin voted to advance the budget resolution on Wednesday, he did so in a statement that was headlined, "Manchin Raises Serious Concerns About \$3.5 Trillion Budget."

## Young's political skills

Even though his approach to the infrastructure bill has not been smooth, Young is not alone. Two other Republicans worked on the measure and then turned against it, according to the Washington Post – Sens. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., and Mike Rounds, R-S.D.

It's also difficult to make the case that Young reflexively cowers to Trump. He voted to uphold the presidential election results in Arizona and Pennsylvania on Jan. 6, even as the Capitol was being stormed by Trump supporters who wanted Congress to change the outcome.

Young also has strong bipartisan credentials. His Endless Frontier Act that boosts by \$250 billion spending on U.S. research and development to better compete with China passed the Senate with more than 60 votes. He's also garnering support on both sides of the aisle for a bill that would reform the process for congressional authorization for the use of military force.

He's demonstrated electoral strength by defeating incumbents in a House primary and House general election and vanquishing a fellow House member in a Senate primary and former Democratic Sen. Evan Bayh in the 2016 general election. "The guy is a giant-slayer," said the Hoosier GOP operative.

Young has no reason to be worried about a Trump primary. There's no visible credible GOP challenger. On top of that, he has \$4.5 million in cash on hand.

That's what makes Young's flip-flop – or waffling, if you prefer – on the infrastructure bill unnecessary. It's an own-goal that could have been avoided by a politician as skilled as Young, if he had initially treaded more carefully. But there's still time to switch back later in the legislative process. ❖

# Indiana is not a good neighbor

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Indiana is not a good neighbor. It's a deadly neighbor, exporting guns to gangs in Chicago, where every weekend and on many weekdays, too, a blizzard of bullets threatens and often kills little kids as well as intended gang targets.

Most Hoosiers aren't complicit, of course, but there is blood on the hands of those, including a lot of state legislators, who proudly point to the state's lax gun laws that make buying a gun so easy, so fast, sometimes with no questions asked.



They say they want it easy for "law-abiding" citizens to get guns for protection, for hunting, for collecting. Nothing wrong with those purposes, if those were the real purposes of all the purchasers. Too many have no intent to abide by the law. They want to

get away with murder.

"Straw purchasers," as they are called, obtain in Indiana many of the weapons used in violence in Chicago, where stiffer regulations make it more difficult to buy guns.

Here's how it works: The straw purchaser is someone with no criminal or domestic violence history that would result in failure to clear a federal background check. The purchasers go to a store in Indiana, with its lax laws, and quickly get guns that wind up in Chicago, in the hands of the gang members who actually supplied the money for the purchases.

Chicago has filed a lawsuit against a Gary gun shop, alleging that the store knowingly sells guns to straw purchasers who intend to deliver them to the real purchasers in Chicago. According to the suit, between 2009 and 2016, the store was responsible for more than 850 guns recovered in Chicago after being used in crimes. And not just one store is involved.

**Chicago Magazine cites** statistics showing that 60% of illegal firearms recovered in Chicago came from outside Illinois. Indiana was the leading exporter of the guns.

I'm sure I'll hear from some folks who don't care whether gang members kill each other and an occasional bystander over in Chicago. But wait. There's more. Straw buyers and other gun purchasers are taking advantage of Indiana's lax attitude and loopholes to provide a plentiful supply of guns to the non-law-abiding shooters right here in the state.

The gun used to kill Chicago police Officer Ella

French during a traffic stop Saturday was bought in a sham purchase by a Hammond, Indiana, man on behalf of another man, who was in the car French and her partner pulled over before they were shot, federal prosecutors allege, the Chicago Tribune reported. Jamel Danzy now faces charges of conspiring to violate federal firearms laws. French was killed and her partner was critically wounded over the weekend after curbing a vehicle in West Englewood. Chicago police have two people in custody connected to the shooting, one of whom was arrested in possession of a Glock semiautomatic pistol, authorities said. Charges against those two suspects have not yet been announced. But shortly after the shooting, investigators traced both the gun and the car to Danzy, a restaurant worker in Northwest Indiana, according to the complaint. Records showed that Danzy bought the gun in March from a licensed dealer in Hammond, Ind., where he claimed to be buying the weapon for himself, according to the complaint.

**At a May 14 news** conference in Indianapolis for discussion of a spike in violent crime, participants said the city's murder rate for 2021 was surpassing Chicago's rate. "Per capita, Indy is actually equaling 1.3 homicides for every one homicide in Chicago," a Fraternal Order of Police spokesman said. At that pace, Indianapolis would break its record homicide total set in 2020.

South Bend and Mishawaka aren't exactly free of gun violence. Nor are Fort Wayne, Evansville or any of the other Indiana cities of much size. Nor are smaller communities exempt. And the Indiana General Assembly prohibits cities and towns from doing anything stricter on guns than is provided in state law that is designed to make obtaining guns easy.

Fortunately, the U.S. Justice Department is creating a firearms trafficking strike force in Chicago with intent to crack down on straw purchases in Indiana. The department also added personnel to seek that goal during the Trump Administration. So, this is not just a Democratic or Republican approach.

**Convictions are coming.** Sentences could be harsh if a sentence by a federal judge last month is an indication. A man who agreed to buy a gun for someone who was under age was sentenced to eight months in federal prison, even though the seller in this case made no money off the transaction.

Even if Indiana hasn't been a good neighbor, and Indiana's legislature doesn't want to do anything about it, the federal task force could help curb some of the violence, not only in a neighboring state, but in Hoosier neighborhoods as well. ❖

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



# U.S. repeats Vietnam blunders in Afghanistan

By CRAIG DUNN

CARMEL – In re-reading Winston Churchill’s 1897 book, “The History of the Malakand Field Force,” it became abundantly clear that the realities of life and war in eastern Afghanistan have changed little over the last 120



years. The enemy that Winston Churchill faced in his first action as a British soldier defending the realm has seen their great-great grandchildren squaring off against our American sons for the past 20 years to much the same result.

As Santayana so famously stated, “Those who fail to remember the past are doomed to repeat it,” was never truer than in Afghanistan. The British,

Soviets and the United States have all been dragged into the quagmire of Afghanistan for various motivations, but ultimately each suffered the same ignoble result, a final struggle between escaping with your pride and merely escaping. Each lost men and vast treasures in trying to control the uncontrollable.

**It would have been** bad enough if our leaders had forgotten the lessons we should have learned from the British and Soviet experience in Afghanistan, but there were over 56,000 other reasons why we should have given pause to thoughts of a long-term commitment to the conflict, and that was the tragic loss of life we suffered in our previous aborted attempt at interventionism, Vietnam. Although the details may differ, there is much similarity to the two shameful disasters.

The one glaring mistake that the United States seems to continually make is assuming that the rest of the world is either like us or wants to be like us. The stark, ugly fact is that much of the world shares neither our values nor our lust

for economic freedom and materialism. When your life consists of an everyday struggle to merely survive, you simply don’t have the time, energy or inclination to worry about such western issues such as gender equality, LGBTQ rights, education, voting rights, freedom of the press, rights of peaceable assembly or religious freedom.

**You cling tight to your** religion, your nationality and the simple orderliness of either a tribal or totalitarian system of order. This is true and may always be true despite the best intentions of intervening nations.

In my teenage years as I saw the young men of my community ship off to Vietnam, I believed that they were engaged in a noble battle between the forces of good and evil.

I believed that Vietnam was merely a surrogate war between the United States and a stand-in for the Soviet Union. I once thought that if we did not stop the spread of Communism in Vietnam, that it would soon engulf all freedom loving people. Today, I have my doubts. Even though I deeply honor the service, sacrifices and deaths of our Vietnam veterans, I now question whether we had any business being involved in a conflict in that country. Wrong place, wrong time and wrong war!

In reading Stanley Karnow’s “Vietnam: A History,” I was surprised to learn that both Ho Chi Minh and General Giap both had a lengthy, and productive relationship with the American OSS and, later, CIA. They were once our friends and associates and only became our enemies when the United States decided to help France restore its colonial grip on the country after World War II.

It was as simple as, we help the French and the North Vietnamese leaders seek out their own allies, the Soviet Union.



**Ho Chi Minh and Gen. Giap pose with American OSS officers during World War II when they were allied against Japan.**

For well over a thousand years, the Vietnamese people had fought as one nation against a litany of outsiders. Kublai Khan, China, Japan and the French had all been confronted with the reality of a true nationalistic enemy. It wasn't until the intellectual lights at the CIA and the State Department decided to draw the line in Vietnam, that the Vietnamese people split into two spheres of the conflict.

**Today, after billions of** dollars in expenditures, 56,000 lives lost and massive social upheaval, Vietnam is a peaceful, productive nation that is now a de facto ally in a shared goal of containing the aggressive nature of China. The whole darn Vietnam mess was about nationalism and not communism and the United States was up to its neck in the quicksand before we knew the difference.

In the case of Afghanistan, there was no doubt that there were some bad actors. We knew that fact quite well because the CIA armed and trained them in an effort to undermine the Soviet Union.

We should have known that Afghanistan was primarily a tribalistic country, with not much of a source of income other than poppy production and that the glue that loosely held the country together was a thousand-year history of nationalistic struggle and a fiercely fundamentalist Islamic religion. We should have known this from the start and planned our entire post-9/11 strategy around getting in quick, eliminating our biggest threats and then getting out before getting sucked into the vortex.

Alas, we didn't. We've learned, once again, that it is so much easier to get into a war than to get out of one.

Just as we learned in Vietnam that the fighting and killing goes on long after you've forgotten why you got into the conflict in the first place, Afghanistan has followed the same dismal path to ultimate failure. No president wants to be the one who lost a war or threw in the towel. The constant worry about his legacy led Lyndon Johnson to continue to pile men and resources into Vietnam long after he knew it was an unwinnable war.

**This same reluctance** to admit failure embraced both George W. Bush and Barack Obama and guaranteed 16 years of continued carnage. Donald Trump, to his credit, understood that Afghanistan was not a war that we should be fighting and that we had no long-term obligation to engage in nation building there. He advocated a more

thoughtful approach to disengagement that would leave a somewhat stable Afghan government and preserve some degree of national honor.

Unfortunately, President Biden seems to be hell bent on getting out of Dodge as quickly as possible, regardless of the effects on our relationships with our allies or the Afghan people who helped and supported us and came to believe in that quaint concept of freedom. We may not be seeing people climbing up on boxes on roof of the embassy in Kabul to catch the last helicopter out of town, but that scene is coming quickly, and it won't be pretty.

How does the United States prevent another di-



**President Biden with U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan earlier this year.**

saster such as Afghanistan and Vietnam from happening in the future? I believe that before we engage in any future conflict that requires a substantial investment of boots on the ground, we should be forced to answer the following questions and have a thorough national debate:

**What is the ultimate** goal of our intervention? What is the time frame for achieving the goal? What will be the estimated cost in lives and money in achieving the goal? Is there any other way of achieving the goal without committing ground forces? Once committed, how do we get out? Can our intervention actually make things worse?

Life as a young child was fun for me. I played lots of war games with me fighting as an American soldier against the Germans or Japanese. There were good guys, bad guys and no shades of gray. As an adult I have learned that there is more gray than I care to face, as the world is a truly complicated place and simple answers to complex problems just don't exist. ❖

**Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman.**



# Inflation puzzle partially solved

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – One of the great recent puzzles in economics has been the absence of inflation, particularly in the years after the Great Recession. Some recent research explains why inflation has been so muted for so long. This work also suggests that inflation will be of diminishing concern in the future. Those conclusions will be hard for many to swallow, so let me explain.



Americans under age 50 will have no meaningful memory of inflation, while Americans over 60 will have sharp and unpleasant memories of its effects. Fixed mortgage rates provide a good example.

A 1981 home buyer faced a 30-year-fixed mortgage rate of 18.5%, but a decade later, in 1991, it was half that rate. That same mortgage is today at 2.8%, perhaps a record low. Inflation affects nearly everything from the price of goods and services to credit card rates and wages. It is not something that affects just a few products or commodities. In that way, inflation reduces the standard of living of families. Inflation also slows economic growth by imposing a de facto tax on savings while shifting wealth from those who save to those who borrow.

The reemergence of inflation risk is not an idle worry. Inflation helped push Hitler to political prominence, and ushered in dictatorships from Argentina to Zimbabwe. Inflation is not just a minor financial phenomenon. The underlying cause of inflation is an excess supply of money in an economy. The most acute examples involve governments or central banks increasing the money supply to bolster a lagging economy.

**The huge stimulus** payments and easy money policies in the wake of the Great Recession caused inflation fears. More than a decade ago, I penned columns warning about the growing risk of inflation, a concern shared by most economists. Thankfully, our worries didn't materialize, but that failure of our predictive models unleashed a torrent of new research on the topic. In my judgement, that work has largely solved a decade-long puzzle.

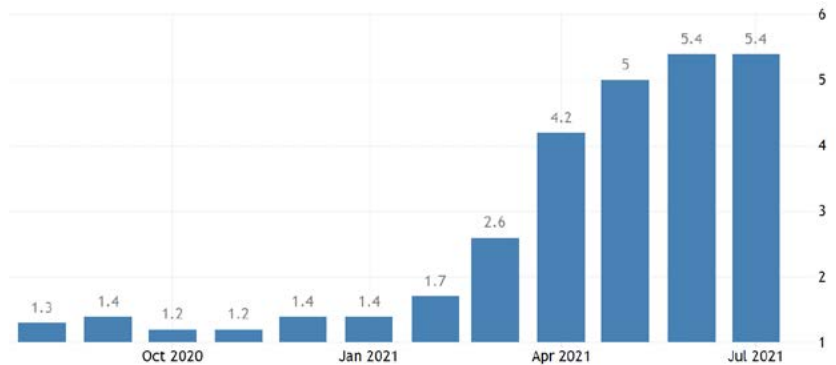
Inflation is caused by excess money, but for it to actually occur, markets for goods and services must experience price increases. Labor markets also respond with wage increases. However, today's labor markets are in the midst of historic change. Automation has replaced many jobs, particularly those that have routine tasks, such as assembly line work. These differed from less routine types

of jobs in their response to recessions. Within that modest fact lies the key to the puzzle.

Workers who perform more abstract tasks tend to change jobs more readily, which makes those labor markets more fluid. Workers in more routine tasks change jobs less frequently, making their labor markets less fluid, or more rigid. One study of European workers found that the labor markets for non-routine workers saw three times as much fluidity or job changes as those for routine workers. For example, consider which worker is more likely to change employers this year, a web designer or an assembly plant worker.

**There are many reasons** why this labor market fluidity may exist. Perhaps the workers who perform abstract tasks are more comfortable changing jobs. Maybe the business that employs lots of non-routine workers has larger capital investments, and so is more reluctant to risk suspending operations due to staffing shortages. Whatever the reason, this is simply an empirical fact.

Over the past three decades, labor markets have created far more non-routine or abstract jobs while eliminating routine jobs. For example, 81% of all the new jobs created in the U.S. since the end of the Great Recession went to college graduates, whose occupations comprise more abstract tasks. This makes labor markets far more fluid, but there are regional variations in these changes. The best laboratory for this is Europe, where there are differences in both the mix of occupations and inflation.



SOURCE: TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

Two economists at the French Central bank studied this in depth.

By controlling for industry differences in countries, and changes to policy by individual central banks, these authors were able to isolate the effects of labor market fluidity on inflation. They found that the more polarized the workforce, the less inflation was observed. Because Europe had both a sovereign debt crisis and a Great Recession over the past 15 years, there were also two different sets of impacts to help calibrate their findings.

**There are other hints** that underlying conditions in labor markets may be holding down inflation.

Two economists in the U.S. (Amanda Weinstein at Akron, and Carlianne Patrick at Georgia State) found the unemployment rate was far lower in cities with a higher



mix of abstract occupations. In cities with a higher share of workers performing routine tasks, the unemployment rate was higher, and more volatile during recessions. This implies, but does not conclude higher labor market fluidity in the abstract occupations.

**What is not yet clear** is why this labor market fluidity helps keep inflation in check. It may be that businesses face fewer shocks to profitably due to more fluid labor markets, and thus are less inclined to raise prices. Or, it may be that the more fluid labor markets occur mostly in firms that already enjoy some monopoly power. Larger firms tend to change prices less frequently, even when others around them do so. At least, that is what my doctoral dissertation reported. Thus, if we are indeed living in a more monopolized world, there will be fewer inflationary shocks.

There are two things about this most readers will find interesting. The first is that this provides a pretty clear insight on how research works. Economic models of infla-

tion worked well for decades, then their predictions failed. This caused theorists and empiricists to head back to their blackboards and computers. The second interesting issue is that if this holds true, we should expect less inflationary pressure in the future.

There is much discussion about inflation in today's political and economic news. We've just been through an historic economic crisis accompanied by an historic fiscal and monetary stimulus. Several products, like lumber or used automobiles have seen big price swings. But, if we look at consumer inflation over the last two decades, this is nothing but a modest adjustment period. Right now, that is what the evidence suggests we should expect. ❖

**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.**

## Saving media from corporate COVID

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Freedom of the press goes beyond banning oppressive government interference with the media. It also means not allowing monopolistic private forces to overwhelm the independence of local media.

Please note, the term media goes beyond the newspapers and flyers of the 18th Century that are no longer the sole means of providing description and interpretation of events. Gossip and word of mouth, wisdom of the ages and oral tradition have been with us forever. Media, however, connotes a more disciplined (professional, if you will) approach to the transmission of information.

We do not require certification or licensing of media personnel as we do of doctors, lawyers, plumbers and barbers. Anyone can run a blog, send a distortion of reality in an email chain, or publish a book with disruptive concepts.

**Media suggests, but does not guarantee**, objective intermediation by editors or others who monitor the reports they make public. The concept is relatively new, about 100 years old. It became iconic in the mid- to late-20th Century.

"All the President's Men" was preceded by movies, TV and radio programs that glorified publishers, editors, and reporters who "told truth to power," while withstanding the temptations and threats of destructive force.

When there were only three major TV news or-

ganizations, the American public had limited, but trusted, sources of national and international news. When communities had multiple newspapers and radio stations, state and local truth could surface.

Technology opened the doors to new sources for alternative perspectives as well as blatant lies. At the same time, private financing of media changed from independent, local entrepreneurs to large corporate chains that "trimmed" costs.

**Corporations behave like** individuals; they seek to avoid the risks of change and the challenges of diversity. Therefore, editors who accept the risk of divergent views are best removed. Reporters who impede corporate strategy are best discharged. Radio and TV stations are bought and stripped of their distinctive local content.

Given lower costs of production, newspaper and magazine offices, TV and radio stations, housing older equipment, with their associated personnel, become unnecessary drags on profits. A conglomerate can morph an enterprise from news and reasoned commentary into a conveyor of entertainment and sensationalism. "Efficiency" of the corporation often out-weighs the quality and nature of the product.

Once upon a time, we had rules constraining media operators from becoming so big that they exercised excessive political and economic power. Now, the Local Journalism Sustainability Act (S2434), introduced in Congress this year, attempts to restore local journalism. It offers tax credits for printed and digital newspaper subscribers, journalists, and advertisers. Broadcast radio and TV local news operations are similarly included. The monopolistic behaviors of large corporations, however, are not addressed. Our economy, like our democracy, needs independent, competitive journalism. ❖

**Mr. Marcus is an economist.**



# Redistricting in bluer western states

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

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – The states of the West have often been on the cutting edge of American political reform movements. Prior to the passage of the 19th Amendment, which guaranteed women the right to vote across the nation, several states had already approved women’s suffrage, and 10 of the first 11 states to do so were in the West: Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Washington, California, Arizona, Oregon, Montana, and Nevada (the lone exception was Kansas).

More recently, the West has also been in the vanguard of voting by mail. Oregon was the first state to switch to all-mail voting, and it has been joined by several other western states.

And the West is also a leader in independent redistricting commissions. Of the 10 states that we classify as having independent/nonpartisan congressional redistricting systems, seven are in the West:

Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, and Washington (the others, back east, are Michigan, New Jersey, and Virginia, and only the New Jersey system was in place prior to this decade’s round of redistricting).

These commissions can work in different ways. The Washington state commission has developed a reputation for protecting incumbents, which likely helped Republicans, at least earlier in the last decade. The Arizona commission emphasized competitiveness last decade, which frustrated Republicans and aided Democrats. California’s commission tore up the state’s existing districts last decade, creating a map that ended up breaking heavily in the favor of Democrats (although, as we note below, political realignment was a major part of Democratic gains in California last decade).

In this week’s edition of our ongoing congressional redistricting series, we’ll be looking at the West Coast and the Southwest -- specifically, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington. We’ll be looking at the remainder of the West, as well as some states in the Great Plains, next week.

The past couple of weeks, we’ve been looking at the Greater South, a region that Republicans dominate. But out West, Democrats dominate. Under the 2010s congressional apportionment, these seven states held 86 of the 435 House seats (20% of the total), and Democrats currently control 65 of those seats (76% of the total). Democrats hold an edge in all seven of these states, although that advantage is only 5-4 in Arizona and 2-1 in New Mexico. Joe Biden also carried all seven of these states, although Arizona and Nevada are swing states.

These seven states will continue to hold 86 seats based on the 2020 reapportionment, as California is losing a seat and Oregon is gaining one. We do not expect much to dramatically change in redistricting in these states, but this trade between California and Oregon may have the effect of netting the Republicans a seat.

Let’s take a look at these seven states in detail. But one important note before we begin: Later today (Thursday, Aug. 12), the Census Bureau is going to be releasing the actual, granular population data that will allow states to start drawing districts. In some or many instances, this actual data might look different than the 2019 estimates we’ve been citing in the course of our redistricting series.

## Arizona

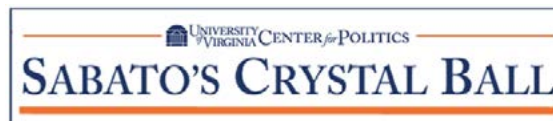
Arizona not gaining a 10th seat was one of the biggest surprises of the 2020 congressional reapportionment. In fact, 2020 marked the first census since the 1950 round that Arizona did not gain at least one seat in Congress -- the state’s growth in recent decades has been especially robust, as its population has doubled in the last 30 years, going from 3.7 million residents in 1990 up to about 7.3 million today.

Even with that type of growth, the Arizona map will continue to feature nine congressional districts. While some states have adopted redistricting commissions fairly recently,

Arizona’s was established to draw maps immediately after the 2000 census, as voters approved the creation of a commission via a referendum that year. But last decade, the legitimacy of the commission was tested. In 2012, Arizona Republicans were frustrated after the commission-drawn map elected a 5-4 Democratic congressional delegation, even as then-President Obama lost the state by nine points in his reelection bid. Legislative Republicans charged that the commission’s authority was unconstitutional, and took their case to the Supreme Court. But the high court ruled that voters could transfer jurisdiction over redistricting away from legislatures, so the Arizona commission was upheld. Republicans believed that last decade’s tiebreaking member overly helped the Democrats and unsuccessfully tried to have her removed from the commission. This time, the GOP seems happier with the tiebreaker.

## California

The U.S. House of Representatives reached its current-sized voting membership of 435 after the 1910 census, and it has had the same-sized membership ever since, with the exception of a temporary expansion to 437 to account for Alaska and Hawaii becoming states in the late 1950s. In that initial 435-seat apportionment for the 1910s, California had 11 House members -- tied with Iowa, Kentucky, and Wisconsin. The Golden State now has nearly five times that number of members (53), although the state’s explosive growth has slowed in recent years. The state did not add any seats in the 2010 reapportionment



round, which was the first time it failed to add a seat following a decennial census.

This most recent reapportionment represented a new, dubious first for California -- the state is actually losing a seat, going from 53 to 52, though it still has by far the biggest House delegation (Texas will be second at 38 seats).

The loss of a seat will force California's independent redistricting commission to chop a district. Beyond that, it's unclear how much the commission, which is in charge for the second time after voters created it in 2010, will tweak the lines.

The commission, which by law cannot take partisan data or incumbent residence into account, dramatically changed the state's map a decade ago. That new map put 27 incumbents into 13 districts and created 14 with no incumbent; seven incumbents retired, and another seven lost either to members of their own party or members of the other party (California uses a top-two election system, in which the top two finishers in an all-party first round of voting advance to the November general election). The commission injected some competitiveness into a state that had hardly any of it under a Democratic-drawn incumbent protection map in place for the 2000s: Just a single seat switched hands that entire decade, as Democrats started the decade with a 33-20 edge that became a 34-19 advantage. Democrats immediately netted four seats in the 2012 election, and they were up to a lopsided 46-7 edge by the 2018 election. Republicans recovered some of those seats in 2020, clawing back four Biden-carried districts. So one of the big questions about the commission is whether the commission will merely tweak the last decade's map, given that it was already drawn by a commission as opposed to legislators, or whether the members will take a wrecking ball to the existing map, much like the commission did a decade ago. This question is unanswerable at this point (at least from our perspective).

## Nevada

Compared to the post-2010 round of redistricting, Democrats have gained control of Nevada, but probably aren't in a position to add more seats. Ten years ago, with a Democratic legislature and a Republican governor, a panel of three special masters were tasked by a judge to draw the lines. At the time, the state was adding a fourth seat, which most observers expected to lean Democratic, which ended up being the case.

In 2011, the court-ordered plan kept a heavily Democratic Las Vegas seat, a GOP-leaning northern seat, and retained a swingy seat in Las Vegas' southern suburbs. The new seat, NV-4, was added in the northern Las Vegas area, and included a sampling of rural "cow counties."

Though Democrats, as expected, won the new NV-4 in 2012, it became something of a cursed seat. Then-state Sen. Steven Horsford, a Democrat, was elected as its first member. Then, as the red wave of 2014 hit

Nevada especially hard, Horsford lost to then-state Assemblyman Cresent Hardy, a Republican. Hardy was defeated himself the next cycle by Democratic state Sen. Ruben Kihuen. Faced with sexual misconduct allegations, Kihuen did not run again in 2018. Horsford made a comeback in 2018, beating Hardy by a 52%-44% margin in a rematch that year. Horsford was reelected in 2020, though by a closer 51%-46% vote -- this was the first cycle since its establishment that NV-4 reelected its incumbent.

## New Mexico

In New Mexico, which has had three seats since the 1980 census, Democrats face a choice: They can continue with two solidly blue seats, or they can risk trying to flip a third seat.

In 2011, with a Republican governor and a Democratic legislature, New Mexico's congressional map was a compromise plan enacted by the state Supreme Court. In essence, it made minimal changes to the existing plan. NM-1 and NM-3, based in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, respectively, remained Democratic-leaning seats while NM-2, which includes Las Cruces and encompasses much of the Texas border, retained its GOP orientation.

Then-Rep. Steve Pearce (R, NM-2) was popular in the 2nd District -- he held it for the first decade of the 2000s, then vacated it in 2008 to run for Senate. Pearce was reelected easily until 2018, when he launched another statewide run, this time for governor -- which meant a replay of 2008 in NM-2. Pearce lost by 14 points to now-Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM) while NM-2 flipped to Democrats. Xochitl Torres Small, a former Udall staffer whose husband was elected to the state legislature in 2016, narrowly beat out state Rep. Yvette Herrell for the open seat -- two years earlier, NM-2 supported Trump by 10 points. Torres Small took 65% in Las Cruces' Dona Ana County and kept Herrell's margins down in the rural counties.

## Oregon

Of the five states that touch the Pacific Ocean, Oregon is the only one left that lacks a redistricting commission. For 2012, a Democratic governor and a split legislature agreed on a minimal change plan -- their job was, perhaps, made easier by the fact that the state was retaining its same five seats. But this year, the Beaver State, for the first time since the 1980 census, will be adding a new district. Though Democrats nominally have a governmental trifecta, with the governorship and clear majorities in the legislature, Republicans are set to have a seat at the table. In a legislative compromise earlier this year designed to cut down on Republican stalling tactics on other legislative matters, state House Speaker Tina Kotek (D) announced that she would give the Republicans a greater role in redistricting. Assuming the deal holds, there will be an equal number of Democrats and Republicans on the House Redistricting Committee. ❖



**James Briggs, IndyStar:** Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett had infinite choices for how to spend COVID-19 relief money. What he came up with leaves no room for ambiguity. Hogsett has “aimed squarely at addressing the gun violence epidemic in our city,” as he put it. The Democrat who in 2015 ran to be the public safety mayor has found his chance to deliver on elusive promises. Hogsett on Monday introduced his 2022 budget to the City-County Council topped with a three-year outline for spending Indianapolis’ \$419 million share of the American Rescue Plan Act. Under Hogsett’s proposal, Indianapolis would set aside about a quarter of that money to cover possible revenue shortfalls related to the pandemic. Out of what’s left, more than half — \$166.5 million — would go toward public safety, including \$33 million directly to the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department. Here’s a shorter version: Indianapolis is super-funding the police. Namely, it’s Democrats doing the police super-funding, starting with President Joe Biden, who signed the American Rescue Plan, and trickling down to Hogsett and the Democratic-controlled council, which is scheduled to vote on the budget in October. The final budget under former Republican Mayor Greg Ballard gave IMPD a general fund budget of \$206.7 million. Hogsett is proposing an IMPD general fund of \$248.1 million for 2022, which would be a 20% increase over that 2016 Ballard budget. That doesn’t include the \$33 million in ARP funding that Hogsett wants to give IMPD. Hogsett is proposing to use \$4.5 million to hire 20 civilian officers to perform administrative work that can free up beat officers; \$19.5 million to hire 100 more sworn officers and \$9 million for technology, including license plate readers, a gunshot detection pilot program and cameras across the city. The Hogsett administration is characterizing these proposals as the largest investment in public safety in the city’s history. “We have invested in the manpower, the programming and the technology that has allowed us to inoculate and protect the public from the (coronavirus),” Hogsett said. “Now is the time to invest in the infrastructure to combat a much more complex, but no less deadly threat to the lives and livelihoods of our residents.” ❖



**Paul Waldman, Washington Post:** In the first step toward passage of what could be a truly revolutionary policy agenda, Senate Democrats passed a \$3.5 trillion budget resolution Tuesday night on a party-line vote. Now they have to figure out which parts of it they’re willing to sacrifice. Between now and the conclusion of this legislative drama there will be many stops and starts, twists and turns, moments of peril and, one hopes, ultimate triumph. If you’re a progressive, you ought to be excited about the change this bill represents. But you should also be prepared for some disappointment, because some parts of it will inevitably be stripped away. The question is which parts stay and which parts go — and that’s something

Democrats should be thinking about now. According to a memo from Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer to colleagues: Universal pre-K and expanded child care; Tuition-free community college; Affordable housing; Clean energy, electrifying the federal vehicle fleet, and climate research; A pathway to citizenship for “dreamers”; Investments in health, education, and housing for Native Americans; Paid family and medical leave; Health coverage for those left out by Republican states’ refusal to accept the Medicaid expansion; Adding dental, vision and hearing coverage to Medicare, and lowering the eligibility age; Extension of expanded child tax credit and earned-income tax credit. Passed as-is, this would represent a dramatic expansion of the benefits provided to Americans by the federal government. ❖

**Jesse Kelly, The Federalist:** Close your eyes and imagine holding someone’s scalp in your hands. I don’t mean cradling his skull as you thousand-yard-stare at his lifeless face. I mean a real scalp, Indian-style, of some enemy you just killed on the battlefield; somebody you hated and who hated you back. You killed him, won the day, carved off the top of his skull, and now you’re standing over him victorious on the now-quiet field of battle, with a quiet breeze blowing through your hair. Your adrenaline is still pumping with that primal feeling of victory and the elation of having survived when others didn’t. I’m not naive enough to think that less than 5% of those reading this are the only ones not cringing at that mental image. Amid our wealth and privilege, most Americans cannot even relate to that kind of violence, and they sure don’t want to fantasize about it. That whole thing feels barbaric, violent, and repugnant. Maybe you even wish now you hadn’t read it. But maybe, for just a moment, would you consider it? No, not a real scalping, but a metaphorical one. First, we all have to accept certain realities about where we are as a nation. Rains will come and go. The stock market will rise and fall. The sky is blue. Water is wet. And government in America will just never stop getting bigger. This is simply a fact of life. We haven’t seen our government shrink since Calvin Coolidge, and there is little appetite among the American public for shrinking the government. We are now at the point in this country where we call them “cuts” if the government doesn’t increase spending quite as much as they had planned. As government gets bigger, freedom must get smaller. Larger government, even when under the rule of supposed Republicans, is a leftist’s dream. Every day brings a new story about the infestation of liberalism in the federal bureaucracy. Such is the way of the world. So, barring some unforeseen awakening, America is heading for an eventual socialist abyss. It is really only a matter of dates. Will we all die in the inevitable communist purges within ten years? Of course not. Will it happen within the next century or two? Almost certainly. ❖

## Holcomb will not impose mandates

INDIANAPOLIS — Despite Indiana’s ongoing rise in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, Gov. Eric Holcomb says he will not impose a statewide mask mandate ([WANE-TV](#)). When we asked Holcomb about the surge Wednesday, he said he is not considering any statewide restrictions. “We are not going to have a mask mandate statewide,” said Gov. Holcomb. Holcomb said he is focused on making sure Hoosiers have access to the COVID-19 vaccine and the correct information on the virus and vaccinations. “The goal that the state of Indiana has is to make sure they have that access,” Holcomb said. “It’s easy, it’s free. That they have access to the data that should direct them on how to be safe.” Holcomb said local communities are welcome to impose their own safety guidelines. “We’re not going to mandate people staying inside,” Holcomb said. “We are not going to mandate everyone doing one thing when this is different per community.”



## Delta variant surge in hospitalizations

INDIANAPOLIS — The number of counties at or approaching high risk for community spread of COVID-19 is surging as an especially contagious coronavirus variant spreads in Indiana, where nearly half of the eligible population remains unvaccinated ([AP](#)). On Monday, 43 counties were in Indiana’s second-riskiest category for the spread of the virus, up from 29 counties a week earlier, according to the most recent update posted Wednesday on the state’s coronavirus dashboard. The county ratings have gone downhill in a matter of weeks. On June 26, 86 of Indiana’s 92 counties were in the blue category, and six were in yellow. No counties were

listed in the orange or red categories. About 1,300 Hoosiers currently are hospitalized with COVID-19, according to the most recent data released by the state health department. Of those, 305 were in intensive care, the most since Feb. 5. Indiana recorded 2,507 new cases of the coronavirus Wednesday, up from 1,725 one week ago, and marking the fourth straight weekday over 2,000 reported cases of the virus. About 51% of Indiana’s eligible population — those age 12 and up — are fully vaccinated, according to the state health department.

## Holcomb announces broadband grants

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric J. Holcomb announced Wednesday the third round of Indiana’s Next Level Connections Broadband Grant Program is open for applications. The grant program, which seeks to bridge the digital divide by bringing high-quality, reliable broadband to unserved and underserved parts of Indiana, began as part of Gov. Holcomb’s Next Level Connections initiative, a \$1 billion statewide infrastructure program announced in 2018. The first two rounds of funding awarded \$78.95 million to 63 projects, for a total investment of \$155.12 million, when including the local matching funds. These previously awarded projects will bring broadband infrastructure to more than 22,401 homes, commercial locations, and anchor institutions, such as schools, universities, hospitals or major employers, in 44 counties. “This latest round of grant funding builds on the historic investments Lt. Governor Crouch and I have made in our effort to foster connections for Hoosiers across the state,”

## Colts extend Reich, Ballard contracts

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indianapolis Colts have announced that they are signing both General Manager Chris Ballard and Head Coach Frank

Reich to contract extensions through the 2026 season ([WIBC](#)). “In Chris Ballard and Frank Reich, we have as great a general manager – head coach combination as there is in the NFL, and I can’t tell you how proud I am to have them leading our franchise,” said Colts Owner & CEO Jim Irsay. “I truly believe this football team is on the doorstep of great things, and that’s because of the culture both have cultivated in their time with the Horseshoe. Whether we are marching toward the playoffs or facing adversity, whether we are building our roster or making a difference in the community, we have the ideal leaders in Chris and Frank.”

## Home schooling doubles in state

FORT WAYNE – For many students all across the country, heading back to school has looked different than ever before. Some students have had to adjust to different protocol such as mask requirements and some students schooling has completely changed ([WANE-TV](#)). State numbers show that students who left public school and are now home-schooled has almost doubled. Home-school registration is not required in the state of Indiana, so the Indiana Department of Education says that they do not maintain a total number of Indiana students who are home-schooled.

## FDA to authorize booster today

WASHINGTON — Federal regulators are expected to authorize a third shot of coronavirus vaccine as soon as Thursday for certain people with weakened immune systems, an effort to better protect them as the highly contagious Delta variant sweeps the nation ([New York Times](#)). The decision to expand the emergency use of both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines is meant to help those patients with immune deficiencies.