

Holcomb reelect on unprecedented arc

Jointly, Holcomb, Crouch, GOP will post \$8.25 million

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Gov. Eric Holcomb and Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch continued on their historic reelection arc as the Indiana Republican ticket is poised to report a year-end balance of \$8.35 million in combined funds.

Not only will these be unprecedented fundraising totals, they come with a dearth of corresponding large donations from the three current Democratic gubernatorial campaigns. The campaigns of Woody Myers, State Sen. Eddie Melton and businessman Josh Owens have reported no CFA-11 contributions over \$10,000 as of Tuesday.



In 2011 for the 2012 open gubernatorial seat, Democrat John Gregg had posted 11 CFA-11 contributions totaling \$174,999. In 2015, Gregg had posted 63 such contributions totaling \$2.069 million. And in the 2007 ramp-up to challenge Gov. Mitch Daniels, Jim Schellinger had posted 58 CFA-11 contributions totaling \$1.311 million, while eventual nominee Jill Long Thompson had posted eight CFA-11 contributions of \$285,000. Those two Democrats combined for a total of \$1.596 million. Schellinger now serves as Gov. Holcomb's commerce secretary.

Eric Holcomb for Indiana, Friends of Suzanne Crouch and the Indiana Republican Party have a

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Timing and speakers

By **BRIAN HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – To use a well-worn political phrase, timing is everything. That may have prompted the latest change of the Republican guard at the Indiana Statehouse this past week, where we saw State Rep. Todd Huston of Fishers take the House speaker's gavel by acclamation from one of the strongest speakers in Hoosier history when Brian Bosma of Indianapolis decided to stand down.

Bosma spent two non-consecutive terms with the gavel in what is considered by many as the most powerful Statehouse office due to the Indiana's constitutionally weak governorship, where a veto can be overridden by a simple majority vote. It follows a similar transition in the Indiana Senate a year ago, when



“Sad that we have lost Bill Ruckelshaus. Mr. Integrity, first head of EPA, my first boss. America was so lucky to have him.”

- Purdue President Mitch Daniels, on the Nov. 27 death of William D. Ruckelshaus.





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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



Rod Bray of Martinsville took the helm from Senate President Pro Tem David Long of Fort Wayne, while on the fiscal side State Sen. Ryan Mishler of Bremen and Travis Holdman of Market took the reins from Senate Appropriations Chairman Luke Kenley and Budget Chairman Brandt Hershman.

Informed and reliable sources tell me that House Ways & Means Chairman Tim Brown will seek reelection in 2020 after surviving critical injuries in a 2018 motorcycle accident at the Mackinac Bridge in Michigan. Huston served as co-chair of that influential, budget-writing committee during the 2019 biennial session.

"I'm incredibly grateful for the support from our caucus and the tremendous opportunity to serve in this new leadership role. Indiana's economic strength is largely rooted in strong, conservative leadership, and I'm honored to work alongside Speaker Bosma during his final legislative session and help continue our state's momentum," Speaker Huston said after his Organization Day ascension. Bosma added, "Todd is an invaluable member of our team and a respected leader, and I'm excited for him to take the reins and continue building on Indiana's success story. Whether it's serving as a tough budget hawk or finding common ground among differing viewpoints, he's been a reliable, go-to legislator for our caucus time and time again. I firmly believe he will take hold of this opportunity with both hands, and bring the vision and energy needed to help keep Indiana on the right track."

Bosma's first stint came with Gov. Mitch Daniels first two years in office during which he was instrumental in pushing through the \$3.8 billion Major Moves Indiana Toll Road lease as well as Daylight Savings Time. The GOP lost its majority for four years during the next election. Republicans and Bosma returned to power in 2010, forging an unprecedented super majority era that commenced with the 2014 election.

That 2012 class produced a future lieutenant governor in Sue Ellspermann. Bosma also launched an era of paramount transparency, with all General Assembly sessions and most committee sessions live-streamed via the World Wide Web.

Bosma briefly pursued the governorship when Gov. Mike Pence vacated his nomination to join Donald Trump on the national ticket, but quickly dropped out after finding little support on the Indiana Republican Central Committee, with whom he and Long had had a contentious relationship, particularly after Bosma allowed the infamous Religious Freedom Restoration Act to move out of the House. It subsequently blew up in Gov. Pence's face, derailing an expected 2016 presidential run. Sources close to Bosma believe he harbors



no gubernatorial aspirations in 2024, when Lt. Gov. Crouch is expected to seek to break Indiana's gender glass ceiling.

Bosma's return to the speakership in 2011 opened up a key sequence for Todd Huston, then serving as chief of staff to controversial Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett. Sensing a historic opening, former presidential advisor and Indiana Republican Chairman Al Hubbard, and long-time Daniels ally Mark Lubbers dined with Huston over

Scotch whiskeys and fashioned the school voucher reforms of 2011. According to reporting by Pence biographer ("Piety & Power: Mike Pence and the Taking of the White House") and then Associated Press reporter Tom LoBianco, Huston wrote in a Feb. 10, 2010, email, "My thought would be that we can get the momentum going and let MD (Mitch Daniels) take the lead when he feels it is time. As soon as he takes ownership of it, whether it is (November) or May, it becomes his initiative. This would allow him to do it after the election but the work is being done prior to his taking ownership of it."

Huston ran for and won a House seat in 2014, the same year the GOP super majority era began.

Lubbers said of Huston, "I have known Todd since his political beginnings, which I attach to the Tony Bennett service as state superintendent. He was vital to Tony's efforts, bringing organizational talent and structure to what was an effective and milestone revolutionary period. From the outset, he has been deeply and sincerely interested in public policy. And he has a remarkable record of translating vision and ideals into policy."

As for the "timing is everything" notion, Huston takes the gavel with a potential political time bomb ticking. Thousands of Hoosier teachers filled the Statehouse on the day Bosma handed him the gavel, seeking pay raises. Bosma defeated Democrat Poonam Gill by just 3,726 votes in 2018, his closest election with a 55.55% plurality. In 2016, Bosma defeated Democrat Dana Black 65 to 34.85%, or by 11,424 votes, while Huston defeated Democrat Aimee Rivera Cole by just 2,772 votes or 54.5% in 2018. In 2016 Huston defeated Democrat Mike Boland 64-36%, or by a little less than 10,000 votes. Republicans experienced a wipe-out in Indianapolis and Democrats picked up city council seats in once crimson-red Fishers and Carmel this past November.

In this era of President Donald Trump, Republicans remain resolutely in his camp, and voters are delivering a withering verdict. Even Hoosier suburbs are gaining a purple hue. A sitting Indiana speaker hasn't been upset since 1986. Bosma may have decided this calm before the storm may have a good time to get out of Dodge. ❖

Holcomb, from page 1

combined \$8.15 million cash-on-hand. "This number may go higher before we close the books on 2019," Kyle Hupfer, Republican chairman and Holcomb campaign manager, told HPI on Tuesday. "This is \$500,000 more than the 2007 record and \$1.2 million more than 2015."

Lt. Gov. Crouch transferred a historic \$1 million from her campaign account into the Eric Holcomb for Indiana account, the first time a lieutenant governor in Indiana history has both raised that much and transferred that much.

Expected year-end totals will include \$7 million for Eric Holcomb for Indiana at \$7 million; \$250,000 for Friends of Suzanne Crouch; and \$1 million for the Indiana Republican Party.

That contrasts with end of year 2015 when Mike Pence for Indiana posted \$6.767 million, Sue Ellspermann for Lieutenant Governor had \$163,205.80; and the Indiana Republican Party posted \$657,941.68 for a total of \$6,946,862.72. At end of year 2007, Gov. Mitch Daniels' Mitch for Governor Committee posted \$6,769,498.06; Skillman for Indiana had \$225,394.69, and the Indiana Republican Party had \$657,941.68 for a total of \$7,652,834.43.

Of the Holcomb totals, 13 previous Democratic CFA-11 donors had made what Hupfer described as "sig-

nificant donations."

Hupfer said that internal GOP polling from Eric Holcomb for Indiana shows the governor's job approval north of 60%, with strong numbers across ideological, geographic and racial demographics. "For instance, his approval rating is at an impressive 68% in Marion County, an equally impressive 67% in the donut counties, a solid 61% in the Chicago DMA, and 45% of self-identified Democrats approve of his job performance.

That internal poll was conducted June 16-18,

2019, and surveyed 600 likely 2020 General Election voters with a margin of error of +/- 4 percent. Ball State University's annual Hoosier Survey, released last month, confirms Gov. Holcomb maintains a high approval rating. Over half of Hoosiers surveyed approve of the job he's doing, with only 13% disapproving. Furthermore, a full 54% of Hoosiers say Indiana is headed in the right direction, with only 34% saying we are on the wrong track. In this polarized political environment, the strength and consistency of the governor's job approval rating, and the right direction numbers, are reflective of an appreciation Hoosiers have for Gov. Holcomb and Indiana Republicans.

A Morning Consult July survey put Holcomb's approval at 51%, disapproval at 23%, while 26% expressed no opinion.



Hupfer joined Gov. Holcomb after the HPI Interview as he unveiled his 2020 "Next Level legislative agenda in Terre Haute. "Because of the hard work of Hoosiers, Indiana has become a destination of certainty and stability, but we can't stop there," Gov. Holcomb said. "As I travel the state, I hear people concerned about rising health care costs, the increase in youth vaping, and our education system. My goal is to listen to their concerns and find solutions to build a bolder, brighter future."

The 2020 Next Level agenda includes Holcomb's "five pillars" detailing both legislative and administrative priorities for the year ahead. It includes:

Cultivation of a strong and diverse economy; Maintain and build the state's infrastructure

that will expand broadband service to unserved areas in Indiana, grow the state's systems of trails, and create more nonstop international flights. The 2020 agenda also focuses on preserving our highways and decreasing distracted driving by enacting a hands-free-device driving law;

Develop a 21st Century skilled and ready workforce that will include "a top priority by supporting the Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission." The 2020 agenda also includes identifying unfunded mandates and unnecessary requirements in K-12 education for elimination in 2021, holding schools harmless for ILEARN scores, changing career-related teacher professional growth points from required to optional, and redesigning our prison education system to better prepare Department of Correction offenders to re-enter society;

Deal with public health and the drug epidemic, with Gov. Holcomb calling for raising the age to purchase tobacco and e-cigarettes from 18 to 21 and enhancing enforcement to prevent underage buyers. In the fight against the drug epidemic, Holcomb will seek to add more recovery housing for Hoosiers coping with substance use disorder. The state will continue to work toward becoming the best state in the Midwest for infant mortality by 2024, protecting pregnant workers by providing more workplace accommodations; and

Deliver great government service: The 2020 agenda saves Hoosiers more than \$125 million in borrowing costs by using \$300 million in cash now to fund capital projects. Additionally, Gov. Holcomb will simplify how Hoosiers reach out for health and human services assistance by integrating the 2-1-1 helpline into FSSA call centers.

"These aren't just lofty goals; they are solutions to improve the lives of Hoosiers around Indiana," Gov. Holcomb said. "We are charting a bold course for our state to become the absolute best place in America to grow as an individual, a family, a business and as a community."

Indiana Democratic Party Chairman John Zody observed, "You didn't need a crystal ball to know Eric Holcomb would release a bland agenda, devoid of actionable steps to address the slowest-growing teacher salaries in the country. Even after 20,000 Hoosier educators rallied

for higher pay on his doorstep, Holcomb demurred for another year. Teachers can't pay their bills or put food on the table with Holcomb's flippant future promises. 'It can wait' shouldn't be a governing edict. For this do-nothing governor, it's a guiding light."

Hupfer described to Howey Politics Indiana a party and reelect campaign hitting on all cylinders. "We're obviously not taking anything for granted and we're going to keep our foot on the gas through next November's election. We've certainly continued on the upward trajectory since he was elected. The governor was as active as any I've ever seen in mayoral races. He took us from plus seven to plus 23 Republican mayors across the state. As Team Holcomb between his campaign and state party, we sent, jointly, mail in 60 races, we sent out ballot applications in dozens of races and we saw historic victories in places like Kokomo and Muncie. That's only going to grow the field of who we have to help us next November.

"The other historic show of strength is to have the ballot qualification signatures in hand in October," Hupfer continued. "To have those in hand on Oct. 1 is really unheard of. Our ground game infrastructure is only getting stronger. It got stronger during the Braun Senate race with state party in charge of the ground game; we were able to flex that for mayoral races and that will continue. Probably by mid- to late-January we'll announce our entire statewide team with county coordinators in every county, we'll have our five regional directors in place; we already have four of them. We are already 75 to 80% staffed. The Congress of Counties in January will be the beginning of our ground game."

Is Hupfer surprised by the lack of Democrat financial cohesion? "There are some significant prior John Gregg donors who support the governor. Thirteen prior \$10,000 donors for a Democrat are supporting the governor. That shows he's got bipartisan support across the state just like the polling does."

As for the national environment and Democratic dreams of the 5th CD turning purple, Democrats point to council seat pickups in Carmel and Fishers, while Hupfer notes GOP mayoral race pickups in Logansport, Peru and Kokomo. And, he said, he believes his party can defend the General Assembly seats of Rep. Brian Bosma and Speaker Todd Huston.

"It's a much different election cycle when you have the governor and president atop the ticket," Hupfer said. "We'll be prepared to flood the zone in the 5th District. Everybody has been awakened there and we will certainly get our vote out."

As for Speaker Huston, Hupfer accounts for the plurality drop-off to the mid-term cycle. "There was not a lot of energy put in by the party. They were automatic wins," Hupfer said, vowing to up the GOP profile in Huston's HD37 and the open HD86. "That will not be the case going forward." ❖

It will take an election to judge this transition

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI

ANDERSON — House Speaker Brian Bosma says his goal is simply to ensure a smooth transition.

The plan is that his hand-picked successor, State Rep. Todd Huston, will spend much of the coming session as something of an understudy, learning the tricks of the trade during Bosma's farewell tour.



"Most of it you see, and most of the members see, is out here at the podium," Bosma said. "The vast majority of the job is conducted elsewhere, behind the scenes trying to bring policies to a close and people together to move Indiana in the right direction."

The 62-year-old Bosma is Indiana's longest-serving House speaker. He first held the reins

from 2004 to 2006, before giving them up when Democrats won control of the House of Representatives. He won the job back when Republicans regained power in 2010.

The party's leaders seem to be on board with Bosma's succession plan. Take this statement from the party chairman, Kyle Hupfer. "During his service in the House, Todd has demonstrated the dedicated, thoughtful and principled leadership needed to serve as speaker," Hupfer said in a prepared statement. "Brian Bosma leaves behind a historic legacy of accomplishment that will continue with Todd Huston now at the helm."

Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb issued a statement saying that Huston had already proven himself to be a strong leader. "Having a year to learn from Speaker Bosma will prove invaluable," the governor said.

Of course, it's a little early to say whether Bosma's grand plan will come to fruition. The only thing certain at this point is that Bosma

won't have a vote. He plans to resign late in the coming session and thus won't be around when the next speaker is chosen after the 2020 election.

There's no guarantee Republicans will have the majority. Heck, it's not even certain Huston will be in office.

He won't be if Indiana Democratic Party Chairman John Zody has anything to say about it. Zody says his party will target Huston's seat. "Huston will be catching wind with a net to keep ultra-conservative allies on board while running in a purple district," he said.

Zody pointed out that the district takes in Fishers, a community that elected two Democrats to the city council this year for the first time ever.

To his credit, the 47-year-old Huston does not sound like a guy who plans to run roughshod over the opposition. He called the House minority leader, Phil GiaQuinta, "one of the finest people I know."

"I appreciate a place where we can agree to disagree, but we can also say that we really enjoy each other," Huston said. "And I don't want to change that."

I suppose Republicans can be forgiven for thinking they have a monopoly on Indiana government. They've been firmly in control for much of the past decade.

The party holds super majorities in both houses of the General Assembly, meaning that Democrats not only aren't in charge, they have very little voice in formulating legislation.

Still, it's that four-year interruption in Bosma's tenure in the late 2000s that should perhaps give Republicans at least a moment of pause.

Throughout this state's history, the pendulum has always swung back and forth. Democrats controlled the Indiana House for much of the 1990s and early 2000s. And you can bet that one day they'll win control again.

One way to speed the process along might be to take the voters for granted by assuming you'll win an election before the first vote has been cast.

Could Bosma's effort to choose his successor backfire on Republicans? I guess we'll find out next November. ❖



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Pence pulled into impeachment vortex

By MARK SCHOEFF JR.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — After two weeks of public impeachment hearings in the House, there is now a distinct difference between Vice President Mike Pence and his two predecessors who most recently served alongside a president threatened with removal from office by Congress.



Vice President Gerald Ford was not implicated in the Watergate break-in and subsequent cover-up that forced President Richard Nixon to resign before the House could take an impeachment vote in 1974.

Vice President Al Gore had nothing to do with President Bill Clinton's affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky that was the basis for Clinton's impeachment in 1998.

But the testimony last week of Gordon Sondland, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union, brought the impeachment proceedings against President Donald Trump to Pence's doorstep. Sondland said he told Pence before Pence's Sept. 1 meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Poland that U.S. military aid to Ukraine was being held up over demands from Trump that the country conduct investigations.

The impeachment inquiry centers on allegations that Trump used nearly \$400 million in congressionally approved aid as leverage to pressure Ukraine to probe former Vice President Joe Biden and his son, Hunter, over the younger Biden's role on the board of the Ukrainian energy company, Burisma. Trump also allegedly wanted Ukraine to scrutinize the widely dismissed claim that the country interfered in the 2016 U.S. elections.

Pence told a Wisconsin television station that he "didn't recall" any discussion with Sondland. Pence's chief of staff, Marc Short, said his boss never had a conversation with Sondland about Ukrainian investigations. "Everyone was in the loop," Sondland told members of the House Intelligence Committee on Nov. 20.

Until that moment, Pence hovered in his own orbit around Trump without being pulled into the controversial vortexes that Trump creates on almost a daily basis.

"When things are fine, he's around, and when things are bad, he's not there," said Tom LoBianco, a political journalist and author of a recent biography of Pence, "Piety & Power."

After Sondland's revelations, Pence is part of the impeachment process. "It would be surprising to believe he didn't know anything about this," LoBianco said. "Now, people really want answers from Pence and [Secretary of

State] Mike Pompeo."

If Pence was aware of the so-called "quid pro quo" tying Ukrainian investigations to U.S. aid, or "bribery," as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi calls it, it could open a new window into whether Pence is a plugged-in, powerful vice president or whether he's just along for the bumpy ride with Trump as he plans his own 2024 presidential run.

"People have questioned his influence and role in the Trump administration from the word 'go,'" said Andrew Downs, associate professor of political science at Purdue University Fort Wayne.

Being drawn into the impeachment controversy is potentially a no-win for Pence. If he knew what was going on with the Ukraine machinations and did nothing, or could do nothing to stop it, he looks ineffective.

Here's someone who served in Congress for 12 years and who knows very well the purse strings it controls on foreign aid. But he didn't try to communicate that to Trump.

On the other hand, if he knew nothing about the Ukrainian aid situation, then "everyone's in the loop" except Pence. It makes him look like an administration ornament.

The miasma surrounding the events that caused the House impeachment inquiry will continue to cloud Pence's role – or lack of one. That raises the question of whether he has suffered a political setback.

Cam Savage, a Hoosier Republican political consultant, said Pence has not taken a hit. He described Pence as being "unflappable" during last week's developments.

"I didn't think he was impacted," said Savage, a partner at Limestone Strategies. "He's a man of character and faith. He always represents the country well and carries himself with dignity. He is in many ways an ideal vice president. He's a real asset to this administration." Downs said Pence is holding steady politically.

"His status is probably unchanged," said Downs, director of the Mike Downs Center for Indiana Politics. "I would be very surprised if his (poll) numbers have moved in any meaningful way."

But Pence could become embroiled in impeachment while someone seen as his chief rival for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination – former South Carolina Gov. and UN ambassador Nikki Haley – is safely outside the fray, LoBianco said. "That's the political peril for Pence," LoBianco said. "It's not as immediate and urgent as what Trump faces, but it is very real."

Pence will benefit from the fact that the House impeachment proceedings don't seem to be causing a major stir in the electorate. Support for the Trump administration, and opposition to it, is about the same now as it was before the whistleblower raised questions about Trump's dealings with Ukraine.

"I do not see a lot of minds being changed by this process so far," Savage said. ❖

Schoeff is HPI's Washington correspondent.

Young circumspect on impeachment

Sen. Todd Young is saying as little as possible about impeachment, as the House Judiciary Committee starts its work this week. In a brief interview with Howey Politics Indiana's Mark Schoeff Jr. Monday night on the sidelines of the Indiana Society of Washington holiday reception, the Republican senator only would discuss impeachment procedures, not his assessment of the case House Democrats are building against President Donald Trump over allegations that Trump withheld congressionally approved military aid to Ukraine in exchange for an investigation of former Vice President Joe Biden and his son. Young is circumspect because he's looking ahead to the Senate trial that would follow a likely House impeachment vote. "I will continue to read up on all the proceedings that are occurring, of course, study all the facts, and cast a vote of conscience for the good of the country," Young said. "I want to see a full presentation of the facts. It appears I'm likely to be akin to a juror at a trial. I don't want to make any final judgments about things. That's why I'm discussing process with you. I told you I'd be boring." Young, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, did offer his opinion of the political atmosphere surrounding impeachment. "I think it's unfortunate that our

country will be seeing a partisan impeachment exercise," he said. While he's waiting for the Senate trial, Young said he's concentrating on normal legislative business. "In the meantime, I'm going to work on those important items that the people of Indiana sent me to work on -- making sure that we complete USMCA [North American trade agreement], properly fund the government, take care of our men and women in uniform and so forth," said Young, who chairs the National Republican Senatorial Committee, the Republican Senate campaign arm.

Dems unveil 2 articles of impeachment

House Democrats unveiled two articles of impeachment Tuesday morning charging President Donald Trump with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, a historic step that will define Trump's presidency and plunge Washington even deeper into a state of partisan polarization ([Politico](#)). "We do not take this action lightly, but we have taken an oath to defend the Constitution — and unlike President Trump, we understand that our duty first and foremost is to protect the Constitution and to protect the interests of the American people," Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler (D-N.Y.) said. ❖

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Weinzapfel announces for Democrat A.G.

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Former Evansville Jonathan Weinzapfel announced Tuesday he is seeking the Democratic attorney general nomination. It sets up a June convention floor showdown with State Sen. Karen Tallian of Ogden Dunes..

"I am committed to restoring honor and integrity to the office of attorney general, Weinzapfel said. "Through my work as mayor, chancellor, state representative and private legal practice, I know how to work together with people, putting politics aside, to get things done



and make our lives better. As attorney general I will work for the people of Indiana and ensure the laws work for them, not politicians, big corporations, or special interests in Washington."

Weinzapfel was elected mayor of Evansville in 2003 and reelected in 2007. After his two terms as mayor, Weinzapfel served as chancellor of the Ivy Tech Evansville campus from 2014-2019. His resignation from that post in November ignited speculation he was preparing to run statewide. He also served in the Indiana General Assembly as a state representative from 1999-2003. He currently works as a partner at the law firm of Jones Wallace in Evansville.



"I'm encouraged by the support I've already received from Democrats, independents, and Republicans across the state. Hoosiers are ready for an attorney general they can be proud of who will put aside extreme partisan politics. I hope to be that leader."

Republican incumbent Attorney General Curtis Hill is seeking a second term and is facing a convention floor challenge from Zionsville attorney John Westerkamp. Hill is facing an Indiana Supreme Court judicial review of his law license after sexual groping allegations surfaced in 2018. Gov. Eric Holcomb and Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch have called for Hill to resign.

Indiana Republican Chairmn Kyle Hupfer told HPI on Tuesday that while the state party and Gov. Holcomb may not endorse a specific candidate, it will likely oppose a Hill nomination because of the governor's stated "zero tolerance" for sexual harassment and assault in state government. Indiana National Guard Adj. Gen. Courtney Carr and associate Department of Child Services Director Todd

Meyer were fired after indiscretions surfaced.

The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette's Nikki Kelly reported last Sunday that after becoming attorney general, Curtis Hill quickly asked for a raise and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to renovate his office. including new furniture and reclaimed chandeliers. But it turns out Hill doesn't even spend much time there, instead using taxpayer dollars on a satellite office in Elkhart, where he lives.

"This guy is pretty rogue and it's frustrating to watch," said Julia Vaughn, Indiana's Common Cause director and a longtime Statehouse watchdog. Allegations of drunken and inappropriate behavior haven't seemed to move the needle with rank-and-file Republicans. Ann Bochnowski of Munster will serve as the chairperson for Weinzapfel for Indiana and Adairius Gardner of Indianapolis will serve as treasurer. To find out more about the campaign, visit www.WeinzapfelForAG.com or like Jonathan Weinzapfel on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter.

Congress

5th CD: Mithcell picks up endorsements

Kelly Mitchell announced Carmel Councilwoman Sue Finkam and defeated Indianapolis Councilwoman Colleen Fanning have endorsed her campaign for Congress.

9th CD: Ruff to challenge Hollingsworth

A longtime Bloomington City Council member is looking to challenge Republican Rep. Trey Hollingsworth for a southern Indiana congressional seat next year. Democrat Andy Ruff announced his campaign Monday for the party's 9th District nomination in next May's primary. Ruff is ending 20 years as an at-large member of the Bloomington council after he lost in last spring's Democratic primary while seeking a sixth term. Ruff is an academic adviser at Indiana University and previously was a staffer with former Democratic U.S. Rep. Baron Hill.

Governor

Holcomb tells IndyStar to 'cease & desist'

Gov. Eric Holcomb filed a cease and desist letter to the IndyStar after its publication of a Reveal story about the death of an Amazon worker. "While it is an unusual step to take, I'm compelled to do so," Holcomb said. "I will not let the false accusations about Indiana state employees and me stand, as first published by California-based Reveal and followed soon thereafter by the Indianapolis Star. Unfortunately, other news organizations in our state have either published the same story in its entirety or other versions unchecked for truth and accuracy, further perpetuating a false narrative." Holcomb denies Reveal's reporting that he ordered the Indiana Department of Labor to intervene in the case.

State Sen. Eddie Melton, a Democratic candidate for governor, said, "Worker safety is of the utmost impor-

tance and should not be compromised by any corporation to improve efficiency or their bottom line. A special investigation is needed to confirm what role the governor and his Administration played throughout this process. We must assure Hoosiers that their elected officials will operate in the best interest of the people and not of corporations. As a state, we can attract jobs in alternative ways such as investing in education, infrastructure and public transit; these methods potentially employed by our governor are not the answer.”

Presidential

Pete dips in Quinnipiac Poll

Former Vice President Joe Biden is in the best position that he has been since the end of the summer, with 29% of the vote among Democratic voters and independent voters who lean Democratic, according to a Quinnipiac University national poll released Tuesday. Biden is followed by Sen. Bernie Sanders with 17%, Sen. Elizabeth Warren with 15%, and South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg with 9%. Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg has 5%, businessman and Andrew Yang receives 4%. ❖

The personal income trio

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — As Gaul was to Caesar, so too is personal income divided into three parts by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). This is important



because political leaders have latched onto per capita personal income (PCPI) as a favorite measure of economic well-being. They are wrong, but it takes generations for old ideas and politicians to be retired.

The first and biggest part of Hoosier personal income is what we earn as workers. That’s 64.3% for us (15th among the 50 states), slightly higher than the nation’s 62.6% in 2018. Both figures are down from their 2008

levels; about two percentage points nationwide and 1.5 points in our Hoosier Holyland.

The second part of personal income is composed of what we “earn” on our investments: Dividends, interest, and rent. Note: Neither the growth of your holdings in the stock market nor the increased value of your house is included.

What is included, for those of us who own our homes, is the rental value of those homes. It’s the imputed value we would “receive,” if we had rented from ourselves. That makes sense to economists, who are, fortunately, a small portion of the population.

Investment income, in 2018, accounted for over 20 percent of personal income nationally and nearly 17%

in Indiana (47th in the nation). As a share of personal income, this second component rose over the decade by one percent in the U.S., but only 0.2% in Indiana.

The third component is transfer payments from government, including Social Security, medical payments on our behalf, welfare in its various forms, and other benefits. These transfers equaled over 19% of income in Indiana (22nd nationally), and approached 17% in the U.S. In both cases, the change in these shares were in the neighborhood of 1%.

So here we have earnings from employment equaling somewhere over 60% of income, with 20% coming from investments and another 20% from government transfers payments.

We think of investment income going primarily to those who have put money aside over time. Transfers we consider payments to those with limited current income. Both images are only partially true.

People with good investment income and strong savings (pensions, inheritance) receive both Social Security and Medicare. People with low income also have investment income, but they don’t see it. Dividends, interest and rent may be accumulating in their retirement funds. They can’t spend that at the grocery or to pay their rent, but it’s theirs, nonetheless.

A surprising aspect of all this: Nationally, the growth rates from 2008 to 2018, for investment income and for transfers, were somewhat above 50%. Perhaps this is coincidence, or perhaps investment income and transfers are responding to the same dominant force in our society, the greying of America by persons 45 and older. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonj-marcus@yahoo.com. Follow his views and those of John Guy on “Who gets what?” com.

Mayor Pete more upbeat than Biden

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – In their frequent emails to me, Mayor Pete comes across as more confident, more hopeful, than Joe Biden. The former vice president, though he predicts ultimate victory, tells me often that he is worried, fearful of falling behind, and really needs help.



Just consider some messages their campaigns sent to me as the end of November fund-raising approached.

From Buttigieg: "Hey Jack,

The more people get to know Pete, the more people understand that he is the leader we need.

"We know that in order to keep growing our support, we have to reach as many voters as possible. We will continue to build our teams on the ground – and we

know that television is still a great way to deliver key information about Pete's policies to voters in a fast and effective way.

"Our latest TV ad is up on the airwaves today. It shows Pete talking about one of the issues we know is most important to voters in 2020, education and affordability."

"Watch our new television ad and chip in . . .

"From Biden: "Judith, a poll from the Des Moines Register shows us tied for third in Iowa. And if we don't hit our end-of-month goal, we risk not having the resources to persuade more voters to support Joe. So don't delete this email. Don't get distracted checking social media. And please chip in \$5 right away!"

Why does Joe Biden call me "Judith?"

Surely, he knows better. And don't call me Shirley.

Well, he really doesn't know better. Although I've met him in the past, there is no way he would or should remember me. And he isn't checking names on all the emails sent out in quest of contributions. Mayor Pete isn't personally checking his myriad emails either. Couldn't.

Campaigns of presidential candidates send out appeals for funds to all the names of potential contributors they can compile. With a personal touch, as though they really know all of those folks, they use first names in salutations.

Somewhere there apparently is a Judith Colwell, and my email was mistakenly used in seeking to contact that potential contributor.

I'm not a potential contributor for Pete or Joe or any presidential candidate. As a journalist writing about politics, it would be improper to contribute to a candidate. So, my pathetic contributions go instead for things like journalism scholarships, the American Cancer Society and United Way.

My name gets on a lot of political fund-raising efforts, however, because it pops up in political stories and those grabbing names add it to the lists. I get surveys and fund-raising appeals from both the Republican and Democratic National Committees.

But back to the tone of appeals from Biden and Buttigieg.

From Biden, with "terrible news, Judith" the heading: "We just got a new poll from Iowa. And it sends a clear message: "Joe is the only candidate that a majority of people think can defeat Donald Trump. But we're fighting for the lead among three other candidates. And we've dropped 5 points."

From Buttigieg: "Jack, Did you see our note below? In several recent national general election polls, Pete beats Trump next November. Some of these polls even have Pete beating Trump by a larger margin than any other candidate in the Democratic field. If you can, please make a contribution today to help us reach tomorrow's fund-raising goal."

There was another email from Biden that was headed: "Judith, can I tell you a secret?" Since it's secret, I can't discuss it.

I was also getting "Judith" messages from Kamala Harris. Somewhere there is a faulty list for fund-raising. Enough was enough. Too much cluttered email. I cut off her messages. Result: Harris, distraught at losing "Judith's" support, just dropped out of the race. ❖

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

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

'The coup has started'

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – "The coup has started." I put these words in quotations because they were actually tweeted out by someone in the know. No, this wasn't one of President Trump's ubiquitous tweets. This tweet belongs to Mark Zaid. Who is Mark Zaid you ask? He is none other than the Trump whistleblower's attorney. Most importantly, this tweet was launched in January 2017. Zaid even followed up that tweet with, "Impeachment will follow immediately."



I think of television show Laugh In's comic Artie Johnson in his Nazi uniform, in a sinister German accent saying, "Interesting, but it's all screwed up."

For those of you who still believe the fairy tale that impeachment will solve all of your problems, now is the time to disabuse yourself of this myth.

The fact is, the Democrats were offered the form of their destructor, ala Dr. Ray Stantz in Ghostbusters, and instead of choosing the Staypuff Marshmallow Man, chose Adam Schiff. Schiff will go down in history as the destructor of the Democrats 2020 presidential election chances.

It is common knowledge that there is a coterie of Clinton Democrats, cuckoo social activists, conflicted billionaires, tech magnates, Justice Department and security detritus from 24 consecutive years of reign by the swamp creatures, media moguls and never-Trumpers who believe that Donald Trump could have a tire hung around his neck and be dealt with like Richard Nixon in 1974. Let me tell you from personal experience, this ain't your mamma's impeachment.

In 1974, as a 100% committed supporter of Richard Nixon, I lived, breathed, ate and slept his investigation, Watergate Committee hearings and ultimate resignation. I spent four months of that year working in Washington, D.C. as a college intern for a congressman. As part of the internship program, I had the opportunity to attend social functions at international embassies, live and interact with both Republican and Democrat students, walk the halls of Congress daily and gain access to a couple of the Senate Watergate Committee hearings. Based on my past experience, I feel comfortable telling you that the current attempt to remove Donald Trump from office has absolutely none of the feel of the atmosphere of 1974.

First, and this is most important, Watergate began with an actual, provable crime. Remember, that whole "high crimes and misdemeanors" thing actually requires "high crimes and misdemeanors". Donald Trump's problems began with a Hillary Clinton paid-for dossier of a

foreign operative with an ax to grind which was leaked to the press, seized by the FBI and used as the justification for a FISA Court warrant. There is this time-honored legal concept regarding the "fruit of the poisonous tree" that becomes a major headache for anyone expecting to remove Donald Trump through legal means.

Obstruction of justice was present in the Watergate scandal and was documented and supported by actual proof and witnesses to the crime. People who committed crimes testified as to what they did and when they did it. "I presume, I assumed and I heard someone talking about something to someone who heard about something," just didn't cut it in 1974. It took a while, but facts and first-hand witnesses were ultimately Richard Nixon's downfall.

Perhaps the most significant difference between 1974 and our current national malaise is that the American people were completely absorbed in the Senate Watergate hearings. People tuned in to television daily and listened intently to what each witness testified and saw the relevant evidence as presented. They witnessed transparency of the process, saw Republicans get to call their own witnesses and ask whatever questions popped into their minds. The American people made up their own minds as to Richard Nixon's culpability. They had no desire to defer their ability to make up their own minds to MSNBC, CNN, the Huffington Post or the New York Times. Slowly, gradually and then like a snowball rolling down a hill, the avalanche of public opinion told Richard Nixon that all hope was lost.

The facts with this trumped-up Trump investigation are that the hearings are not being conducted by a Judiciary Committee. There is no transparency in the process. Republicans are not allowed to call their own witnesses and are barred from asking questions deemed by Chairman Adam Schiff to be inconvenient. In short, the American people can smell a big, fat rat. It has been painful to see a former ambassador sit and whine about being removed from her post, when the fact is that past presidents routinely fired politically appointed ambassadors at will when taking office. Twelve witnesses have appeared to date and not one of them could affirmatively answer the question of "Do you have any proof, evidence or first-hand knowledge that President Trump committed a criminal act?" Democrats have no proof and that fact is now painfully evident to the American people. The average thoughtful American now knows that instead of evidence in search of an impeachment, they have witnessed an impeachment in search of evidence.

While I don't live my life by polls, those available should scare the bejeebers out of the Democrats. Trumps poll numbers have risen during this impeachment process, particularly in some critical swing states. This fact brings me to my final reason why this is not a 1974 redux. Rumor has it that those crazy whacky guys and gals who we like to call United States senators are political animals. They have one hand in your wallet and the

other on your pulse. In 1974, Republican senators could sense the ultimate direction of the Watergate investigation and were quick to jump ship. President Nixon's men could count noses and knew that he would ultimately be removed from office if he allowed himself to be impeached and tried. A few Republicans, such as Sen/ Lowell Weicker, even ran to the front of the crowd and tried to look like they were leading the parade.

During the final days of the Watergate ordeal, I had the opportunity to be invited to a political fundraising event in Washington, D.C., for Richard Lugar. I had spent my off hours working on his Senate campaign and Keith Bulen was nice enough to invite me to attend the event. What an event this was! I was one of only five non-senators at the event. I availed myself of the opportunity to slide up to senators at the Swedish meatball tray and strike up a conversation. To most of these senators, I was just a young kid, but to a few, loosened up by chicken on a stick or cocktails, I was worthy of engaging. My most memorable conversation was with Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania. I had participated in a meeting a few weeks earlier where Scott and Sen. Ted Kennedy had spoken. Sen. Scott had been overwhelmingly appreciated by the group of both Republican and Democrat interns and I related that fact to him. Perhaps because of starting our conversation by telling him that the young interns liked him much more than Sen. Kennedy, he loosened up a bit. Probably, it was because he couldn't get to the guacamole without going through me! I asked Senator Scott, point blank, whether or not Nixon could survive the process. Sen/ Scott, speaking to me like a grandfather, answered simply, "Son, don't go down with this ship."

The present and powerful truth is that Senate Republicans have shown no cracks in their support for Donald Trump. If it comes to a Senate trial, life will substantially change for the Democrats. Tables will be turned and Republicans will be allowed to call their own witnesses and ask any questions that they'd like. It will not be pretty for a whole slew of heretofore protected Democrat scions and their co-conspirators. I imagine that fact keeps many a Democrat up at night. It is one thing to run around making wild, unprovable accusations about Russian collusion or Ukrainian quid pro quos, but quite another to face the reality of a Senate impeachment trial. When that happens, as it surely must, the American people will demonstrate their indignation at the polls and it won't be pretty.

No, this is not 1974. The names, faces, circumstances and facts, or lack thereof, are all different. The outcome will be different. To the Trump-haters of the world, I understand that you don't want him to be president. Our Constitution has provided an excellent way to remove him from office. It's called the ballot box! If you truly loved your country, you would trust the process. I find it amazing that a party that calls itself democratic, just won't trust democracy.

My advice to my Democrat friends, "Son, don't go down with that ship."

Generational dichotomy

By PETE SEAT

INDIANAPOLIS – Firmly in their golden years and entering the twilight of their lives, the oft-muted Silent Generation is making a final and defiant stand to re-define their political legacy. But rather than march together en masse in support of one of the nearly octogenarian candidates of their generation – Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, former Vice President Joe Biden and former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg – the 74+ crowd is shifting a significant chunk of their allegiance to someone who is literally half their age, support that could otherwise put one of the Silent Generation candidates over the edge.



This generational dichotomy presents a delicious electoral irony. The trio of Bernie, Biden and Bloomberg, two of whom

are among the four top-tier candidates currently in the race for the Democratic nomination for president, are relying more on folks who they have likely always called "kids" – baby boomers and younger – to side with them in order to make generational history, while South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg, the favorite of the day in Iowa, has built a consistent base of support among older demographics in the hopes of making his own generational history by becoming the first Millennial president.

It's all sad, really, considering Bernie, Biden and Bloomberg represent a generation that has found the presidency an elusive goal to date. Four members of the Silent Generation, those born between 1925 and 1945, carried the banner of their respective political parties in presidential general elections – Walter Mondale, Michael Dukakis, John Kerry and John McCain. But while each won the convention, they also lost the general election. Now it's up to the three Bs to be the saviors of the cause. But while they sit on the cusp of potentially reversing that trend, two of the three are struggling to get the traction they need among their own cohort and one is getting a lot, but not enough.

Here's the data: Bernie, Biden and Bloomberg together account for a large slice of the pie, a combined total of 51.2% of the vote according to the most recent RealClearPolitics polling average. But over 50% of that combined support comes largely from younger voters. Biden, in the most recent CNN/SSRS national poll, pulled 21% of 18- to 49-year-olds with Bernie getting a whopping 30% of that group (numbers for Bloomberg are still too early to gauge). Contrast that with the 3% of voters over 65 supporting Bernie and the challenge becomes clearer, at least for him.

Biden is in a different boat. Yes, he is capturing a tad bit more than 40% of the 65+ crowd (which is comprised of both older Boomers and all Silents), but his support is relatively soft compared to traditional front-runners. If he could run up the score with 65+ (71% say they are willing to consider voting for him), that would seal the deal. But a sizeable percentage of his generational classmates seem to have other designs in mind.

Enter Buttigieg, who is riding a rising tide toward the early voting states and earns the largest share of his support from voters over the age of 65 and the least from his own age demographic (voters aged 35-49). And that recent post-debate bump inching him ever closer to one or two early state wins? It is almost entirely built on voters aged 50-64 and 65+.

So just as Buttigieg needs to amass a racially diverse coalition of voters to succeed in post-Iowa and New Hampshire America, he also needs to patch together a generationally diverse coalition, as do his Silent Generation competitors. But that is where the challenge becomes more difficult for the trio. While Buttigieg could better appeal to the 62% of Gen Xers, Millennials and Gen Zers expected to make up the electorate, there are simply not

enough members of the Silent Generation left to carry the day alone. For instance, Silents are projected to account for a paltry 9.5% share of American voters next year, down from the 25% share they had in the 2016 election.

But why, oh why, can't the generations stick together and consolidate support behind a single candidate with whom they share a common life experience? That's simple. Generational commonality ceases to exist when ideological differences come into focus. The old axiom about being liberal in youth and conservative when older is proving to be true. To younger voters, Buttigieg may not seem liberal enough for their liking. And for portions of the older cohort, Bernie, Biden and Bloomberg may be too liberal for them to stomach. Unless and until one of these candidates changes their approach, or drops out, the dichotomy will stay alive. ❖

Pete Seat is a former White House spokesman for President George W. Bush and campaign spokesman for former Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats and Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb. Currently he is a vice president with Bose Public Affairs Group in Indianapolis.

This recovery has not been kind to Indiana

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE — I deliver my annual forecast later this week, so let's review where we have come as an economy since the end of the Great Recession. The news is far more dismal than I prefer, but it is wise to know where we are coming from before discussing our future.

The Great Recession was deep and long. It stretched from December 2007 to June 2009, over which time U.S. employment declined by 5.2%. Indiana saw a deeper decline, with job losses accounting for 7.4% of our workers. Indiana actually fared better than should've been expected over this time. About half of recession

losses to production occurred in consumer durable and business plant and equipment. As the nation's most manufacturing-intensive state, we had to expect much higher job losses than a state like Florida, Virginia or California. We did, but the unemployment rate peaked well beneath the 1982 level, which is much lower than anticipated.

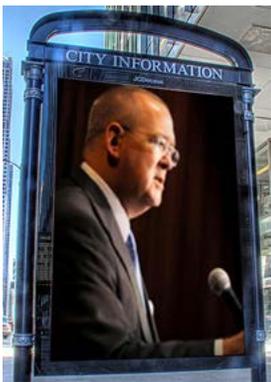
In 2011, I co-authored a study comparing Michigan and Indiana through the Great Recession. At its peak, I reported the unemployment rate in Michigan was a full

4.5% higher. Much of the difference was attributable to plant closures that were more concentrated in Michigan than in Indiana. I believe Indiana's tax reforms, focus on fiscal solvency and more predictable business environment helped us weather the Great Recession.

This is good news so far, but states and regions with more volatile business sectors experience deeper recessions and more robust recoveries. So, from 2009 to today, Indiana should have enjoyed a far more robust economic recovery. In fact, the opposite occurred. From 2009 to the present, Indiana has underperformed the nation by growing jobs and GDP more slowly. Taking into account the Great Recession and the longest economic recovery in U.S. history, Indiana has created jobs at barely over half the rate of the nation as a whole.

This is a surprising and worrisome trend that was not fully apparent until after 2015 as the economic rebound faded in Indiana. But, no matter when we look at data, from either just before or just after the Great Recession through today, Indiana's economic picture compares poorly to the nation as a whole.

Job creation in our state is not just low relative to the nation as a whole, the composition of jobs is decidedly inferior to the national average. As I've noted before, more than eight in 10 net new jobs nationwide have gone to workers with a college degree. The remaining two out of 10 jobs have gone to those with some college or an associate's degree. The U.S. simply is not creating jobs for workers who haven't been to college.



The Indiana story is different. The single largest educational category of job growth since the start of the Great Recession has been workers without a high school diploma. Instead of eight of 10 jobs going to college graduates, Indiana has fewer jobs for college graduates than we did in 2007. This lack of job growth and compositional change in employment means Indiana's economy is weakening over time.

Of course, there are skeptics of these employment data. Many argue they cannot find a plumber or sufficient truck drivers for their business, while college graduates are plentiful. I'm sorry, but labor markets, who have reason to know better, disagree. Wages for college graduates have continued to grow since 2010, but not for others. Were college graduates flooding lower-skilled occupations, this would not be occurring. There are other corroborating data.

GDP growth nationally has been almost twice as great since the start of the Great Recession as it has been in Indiana. Hoosier productivity growth is slower across all sectors, and Indiana's long-term shift away from the

national average on wages has continued. There seems to be very little official realization of these facts, particularly in the way we fund education and workforce development. Earlier this week, the state unveiling a program to increase training dollars on occupations that are declining in number, and which pay wages lower than they did in the Clinton Administration.

It is flabbergasting. In virtually every meaningful respect, Indiana's recovery from the Great Recession has been a disappointment. It is time to have a cogent, well-informed debate about how to move forward. To do otherwise is to accept an unrelentingly stagnant status quo. ❖

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How Biden endures

By KYLE KONDIK

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes. Joe Biden doesn't rhyme with Mitt Romney, although one of the words emblazoned on the side of Biden's bus (malarkey) sort of does.

More to the point, we are beginning to wonder if the endurance of Biden at the top of the Democratic heap is beginning to resemble Mitt Romney's endurance two cycles ago.

Despite his troubles, Romney seemed like the best bet to win the nomination for almost the entire campaign (except perhaps for when Rick Perry entered the race to great acclaim in August 2011).

The same may be true of Biden, although the race remains volatile. But Biden's position is arguably stronger than Romney's was at this time eight years ago.

In that 2012 race, Republican voters appeared at times quite willing to go with a different option than Romney. From late August 2011 through February 2012, Romney was surpassed no less than five different times in the national RealClearPolitics polling average, first by Perry, then Herman Cain, then Newt Gingrich (for two different stretches), and then, finally, Rick Santorum. Yet Romney always ended up back in the lead after his setbacks and emerged by the end of the first month of primary contests as the clear favorite to win the nomination (that year's race started in January, not February). Romney benefited from split opposition as the primary season went along, with Santorum, Gingrich, and Ron Paul all cannibalizing the

non-Romney vote.

Biden, meanwhile, has consistently led national polling. For a brief time in early October, Elizabeth Warren effectively tied Biden in the RealClearPolitics average, but Biden has since regained a decent-sized lead; he's in the high 20s, with no one else within 10 points of his lead. Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), along with South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg, are all clustered within the low-to-mid teens.

Romney did always have a firewall in one of the lead-off contests: New Hampshire, where he enjoyed something of a home state advantage owing to his time as Massachusetts governor. That's an advantage Biden does not have. In the first two contests, Biden trails in Iowa and New Hampshire. However, he leads in Nevada and South

Carolina, which round out the February contests before March 3's Super Tuesday kicks off a three-week barrage of primaries.

Democratic voters have been sampling their other options, but they have not coalesced around a clear alternative to Biden. Again, this is reminiscent of GOP voters' inability to ever settle on a true Romney opponent. Sanders has often polled in second place, with solid support in many places but dominating support nowhere. While remaining among the top tier, Warren has faded in recent weeks, falling slightly behind Sanders nationally and ceding support most notably to Buttigieg, who at the moment appears to be enjoying his own polling surge.

Beyond the top four, the freest-spending candidates (by far) are two others: late-arriving Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire former New York City mayor, and



wealthy activist Tom Steyer. Neither has been able to crack the top tier anywhere, although they have surpassed many other candidates who have far more formidable political resumes but far less money to spend.

Bloomberg, who could spend a billion dollars on ads without making a dent in his personal fortune, is pursuing an unusual strategy, declining to seek the breadth of donor backing currently required to qualify for debates and focusing on building his support nationally as opposed to in the early states. It is an unusual strategy that we don't think will work; ultimately, we're skeptical that Democrats are all that interested in buying what Bloomberg is selling, and whoever does well in the early states will bask in the glow of free media more valuable than Bloomberg's paid variety -- but Bloomberg's level of spending may end up being unprecedented for a primary.

At the very least, Bloomberg's efforts will provide a great experiment for political scientists to dissect the efficacy of overwhelming ad spending in a primary. We also can't definitively rule out the possibility that Bloomberg will effectively be able to buy the nomination. That is very hard to imagine from our present vantage point, but future historians might be able to easily place such a development in the context of this era, which sometimes feels very much like a second Gilded Age.

If they need it, the other Democrats have some sharp arguments they can make against Bloomberg. That is perhaps most true for Warren, who has been railing against Bloomberg as a symbol of the kind of mega-wealth she would target with taxes in support of her policy proposals. Warren also can say, accurately, that if Bloomberg had his way, Warren would not even be in the Senate; the billionaire media mogul backed then-Sen. Scott Brown (R-MA) against Warren in their 2012 contest. More recently, Bloomberg backed Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA) in a crucial 2016 race.

The four polling leaders, and the two big spenders, are denying oxygen to the other candidates, of which there are many. That's even after Gov. Steve Bullock (D-MT), former Rep. Joe Sestak (D, PA-7), and, most notably, Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA) dropped out of the race earlier this week.

Her exit arguably helps Biden the most. Not because Biden necessarily stands to inherit the bulk of Harris's meager support, but because her exit removed someone who even in her diminished state seemed like a potential threat to him.

Harris saw her support spike after a well-regarded first debate when she went after Biden. But she slowly faded into near-irrelevance. The failure of Harris to sustain her success, or for Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) or new entrant Deval Patrick, the former two-term governor of Massachusetts, to have much of any success, helps Biden because the most plausible threat to Biden's impressive support among black voters is, logically, a black candidate.

Biden's top challengers right now -- Sanders, Warren, and Buttigieg, all of whom are whites elected from

northern cities/states -- do not appear to have any obvious appeal to black voters, particularly older black voters. Poll after poll shows Biden, who served dutifully and effectively as the first black president's second-in-command, with an imposing lead with African Americans. Nationally, Quinnipiac University pegged his support at 43% with blacks and The Economist/YouGov at 48%, with the next-closest candidates struggling to break double figures.

Polling in South Carolina, the first primary state that will feature a majority-black electorate, reinforces these national findings for Biden among black voters.

Could black support shift? Sure. Again, let's keep an open mind. But the possibility of dramatic change isn't the same as the likelihood of dramatic change. Biden could do poorly in both lily white Iowa and New Hampshire and still retain significant black support, so long as his leading rivals remain Sanders, Warren, and Buttigieg. The real threat to Biden is if one of these three win both Iowa and New Hampshire -- and maybe even more diverse Nevada too -- thus establishing themselves as the clear alternative to Biden and building a broader base among Democratic voters, including African Americans. But the muddiness of the race right now -- Ron Brownstein offers a great summation of the competing strengths and weaknesses of the leading candidates -- leads us to think that the first few states may not render a clear verdict, which to us benefits Biden so long as he doesn't fall off a cliff in the first two, overly white states. (And he could end up winning one or more of these first contests, too.)

The other threat to Biden, and one that at the moment seems plausible only in the wildest dreams of the candidates and their staffs, is Booker or Patrick winning one of Iowa or New Hampshire, giving black voters a black candidate to rally around. This far-fetched scenario seems even less likely for Booker or Patrick than it was for Harris.

Why are we so fixated on black voters? Because they form the bedrock of the Democratic Party, dominate the voting in many Southern states, and strongly influence the voting in many more.

The last Democrat to win the nomination without doing the best among black voters was Michael Dukakis way back in 1988, who lost the black vote to Jesse Jackson but won the nomination anyway. Additionally, and as the New York Times helpfully illustrated earlier this week, the Democratic delegate allocation rules give districts with large African-American populations extra delegates (that's because these districts tend to be so Democratic, and the Democratic rules advantage this kind of party loyalty).

Here again, Biden's positioning is reminiscent of Romney 2012, at least in a way.

Eight years ago, Romney benefited from the composition of his opposition; he existed in the mainstream middle of his party, and his eventual leading rivals, Gingrich and Santorum, both ran to his right (Jon Huntsman, who ran to Romney's left, never became viable). ❖

Fred Clark, Pathos.com: Proverbs 26:4-5

Do not answer fools according to their folly,
or you will be a fool yourself.

Answer fools according to their folly,
or they will be wise in their own eyes.

I've come to appreciate the way these two apparently contradictory proverbs are juxtaposed in our Bibles. First we're told not to "answer fools according to their folly" and then, in the next breath, we're told that is exactly what we ought to do. So which is it? The point, I think, is that no matter what you do, you're screwed — because you're dealing with people trapped in "folly." When you're up against folly, you can't win. This is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, too, in his 1943 essay "After Ten Years": "Folly is a more dangerous enemy to the good than evil. One can protest against evil; it can be unmasked and, if need be, prevented by force. Evil always carries the seeds of its own destruction, as it makes people, at the least, uncomfortable. Against folly we have no defense. Neither protests nor force can touch it; reasoning is no use; facts that contradict personal prejudices can simply be disbelieved — indeed, the fool can counter by criticizing them, and if they are undeniable, they can just be pushed aside as trivial exceptions. So the fool, as distinct from the scoundrel, is completely self-satisfied, in fact, they can easily become dangerous, as it does not take much to make them aggressive. A fool must therefore be treated more cautiously than a scoundrel; we shall never again try to convince a fool by reason, for it is both useless and dangerous."

Bonhoeffer's idea of "folly" didn't refer to any intellectual or cognitive deficiency. Those he identified as fools were not people with low IQs. He was describing folly as he had witnessed it for the previous ten years in his native Germany — as a moral deficiency, which is to say a deliberate choice, one willingly made and then stubbornly repeated: "There are people who are mentally agile but foolish, and people who are mentally slow but very far from foolish. ... We thus get the impression that folly is likely to be, not a congenital defect, but one that is acquired in certain circumstances where people make fools of themselves or allow others to make fools of them. We notice further that this defect is less common in the unsociable and solitary than in individuals or groups that are inclined or condemned to sociability. It seems, then, that folly is a sociological rather than a psychological problem, and that it is a special form of the operation of historical circumstances: on people, a psychological by-product of definite external factors.

... The fact that the fool is often stubborn must not mislead us into thinking that they are independent. One feels in fact, when talking to them, that one is dealing, not with the person themselves, but with slogans, catchwords, and the like, which have taken hold of them. They are under a spell, they are blinded, their very nature is being misused and exploited. Having thus become a passive

instrument, the fool will be capable of any evil and at the same time incapable of seeing that it is evil. Here lies the danger of diabolical exploitation that can do irreparable damage to human beings. ❖



Nathaniel Frank, New York Times: As

Pete Buttigieg, the openly gay mayor of South Bend, Ind., has surged to a top position in Iowa polls in the Democratic presidential primary, media reports have emerged warnings that his sexuality may yet derail his White House bid. A recent national Politico/Morning Consult poll found that a plurality of voters, 45 percent, think the country is not ready for an openly gay president, with only 40 percent saying it's ready. Consultants have chimed in to say the mayor may be less electable than coastal elites realize because he's gay. Ordinary voters are quoted saying they — or their "devout Christian" mother — "would never vote for a gay." And the Buttigieg campaign's own focus groups recently found that many undecided black voters in South Carolina regard the candidate's sexual orientation as a "barrier" to winning their votes. But the power of polls to predict behavior around social issues and disfavored groups has always been poor, and what we know about people's attitudes and actions when it comes to L.G.B.T. concerns tells a cautionary tale about how to interpret claims by voters that they won't support an openly gay candidate for president. Pollsters have long known about the poor predictive power of asking respondents how they would treat members of an unfavored minority group, especially in politically polarized climates. Research has repeatedly confirmed this gulf between what people say they will do and what they actually do when it comes to treatment of certain groups. In the 1970s, surveys suggested that military officers would resign if women were admitted to the service academies. Those who opposed the change used the data to fight women's inclusion, warning that the military would suffer a fatal blow. But when women were admitted anyway, virtually no one left as a result. The same argument surfaced a generation later to oppose L.G.B.T. military service. In 2008, a Military Times survey noted that 24 percent of service members said they would not want to serve alongside gay or lesbian troops. Citing the poll, opponents of inclusive service warned of a mass exodus that could swell to half a million troops if President Barack Obama insisted on overturning a ban. Some said the policy change could "break the all-volunteer force." Yet after the "don't ask, don't tell" policy ended in 2011, nothing of the kind took place. A study written by a panel of service academy professors the next year found that "retention was unaffected" by the reversal of the policy. "There was no mass exodus of military members as a result of repeal, and there were only two verifiable resignations linked to the policy change, both military chaplains," the report said. ❖

Prince taps fed agent as Gary chief

GARY — Retired federal agent Richard Ligon has been tapped as the city's next police chief and the first to serve in Mayor-elect Jerome Prince's administration come Jan. 1. Prince announced Ligon as his pick at a noon press conference Tuesday at Gary City Hall (NWI Times).

"Gary deserves a police chief who has the leadership and technical skills that will command respect of the department and the community alike and will enable our officers to keep our neighborhoods safe," Prince said. Ligon, a retired federal agent and military commander, has 36 years of military service in the Army and 23 years as a federal law enforcement officer. He also served about five years as a Gary police commissioner.

Mayor Pete bids farewell to his city

SOUTH BEND — Pete Buttigieg stood before the Common Council Monday night for his final time as mayor, delivering a farewell address that served as a detailed defense of his record, especially in addressing the city's toughest problems and struggling neighborhoods (Parrott, [South Bend Tribune](#)). "South Bend's trajectory has been transformed," he declared at the beginning of speech. He later ended with another declaration, while noting many challenges remain: "South Bend is back." In spelling out the accomplishments during his eight years as mayor, Buttigieg called for his friend and successor, James Mueller, to build on work in the areas of public safety, economic development and housing. Buttigieg also addressed his personal life in South Bend, saying he was not sure there was a place for him in his hometown after leaving for college. "In so many ways, time and time again, South Bend gave me a greater sense of belonging than I

knew was possible," he said.

Buttigieg releases McKinsey client list

INDIANAPOLIS — Pete Buttigieg released a list of nine clients, including corporations and government agencies, he worked for during his tenure at McKinsey and Company, as his campaign tries to suppress attacks on his brief business record ([Politico](#)). Under pressure from his presidential rivals and Democratic activists, Buttigieg made a series of concessions

to transparency this week: opening his private, high-dollar fundraisers to the press, pledging to disclose a list of his bundlers and naming his full client list at McKinsey, after the company released him from a nondisclosure agreement on Monday. Within 24 hours, Buttigieg released a timeline of his work at the consulting firm. The work began in the health insurance industry, which is at the center of the policy debate in the 2020 Democratic primary: During his two and a half years at McKinsey, Buttigieg's clients included Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, the state's largest private health insurance provider. Other clients were Loblaws, a Canadian supermarket chain; the electronics retailer Best Buy; the Energy Foundation and the Natural Resources Defense Council, two environmental nonprofits; and several government agencies: the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, the Department of Defense and the U.S. Postal Service. "Now, voters can see for themselves that my work amounted to mostly research and analysis. They can also see that I value both transparency and keeping my word," Buttigieg said in a statement released Tuesday night. "Neither of these qualities are something we see coming out of Washington, especially from this White House. It's time for that to change."



Azar, Verma feud intensifies

WASHINGTON — They're not obsessing about the impeachment imbroglio consuming the rest of the Washington. At the West Wing's Navy mess, in hallway asides and at staff meetings, many White House aides just want to chatter about an increasingly vicious public spat between two of President Donald Trump's top health officials ([Politico](#)). Among top Trump aides, it's now an open question as to whether Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma can survive the scale of bickering that has appalled and horrified people internally, a White House official said. White House aides have been discussing the practical aspects of potentially replacing one or both officials if that decision were to come, as well as concerns associated with another Senate confirmation, according to the White House aide. Acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney has called both Azar and Verma to the White House for a meeting on Thursday in an attempt to mediate the duo's months-long personality and policy clashes. Already, Trump told Azar and Verma to knock it off and get along — to no avail, said two senior administration officials.

Pelos agrees to USMCA deal

WASHINGTON — Nancy Pelosi sat Mexico's top trade negotiator and foreign minister down in her office and gave the two men an ultimatum ([Politico](#)). It was late September, and Democrats feared Mexico was not going to implement labor protections mandated by the new North American trade agreement. So Pelosi convened a small, private meeting, looked Mexican Undersecretary for North America Jesús Seade and Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard in the eye, and said: "You have got to do this."