

Teacher pay an issue of semantics

Holcomb promises \$250M in 2021 budget; says 99% of teachers got pay boost in '19

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Wait 'til next year?

That was part of the reaction to Gov. Eric Holcomb's fourth State of the State address Tuesday night when he announced he would use \$250 million of the state's \$2.3 billion surplus to free up \$55 million "to redirect" to teacher pay. Next year.

Except the governor's office produced data that 99% of teachers received an average pay bump of more than \$1,200 this year, due to actions he took in 2019.

Holcomb and Speaker Brian Bosma had hinted over the past week that the governor would address

teacher pay during his statewide televised speech. The reality is that Holcomb and GOP legislative leaders believe they've already delivered on the issue that roused 15,000 teachers to the Statehouse on Organization Day last No-



vember. The implied political threat was a fate similar to the 2012 election verdict on Republican Supt. Tony Bennett, who was upset by Democrat Glenda Ritz who rode a wave of teacher support augmented by a Tahir Square-

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Blind, dumb luck

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Some politicians are just lucky. Take David McIntosh, for instance. The current Club For Growth chief decided to come back home to run for Congress in 1994, only to have U.S. Rep. Phil Sharp decide to retire and then frontrunner State Auditor Ann Devore forgets to file.

McIntosh was then swept into office with the Newt Gingrich tsunami after reporting about \$10,000 on his second quarter FEC report.

That's blind, dumb luck. I think President Trump has this valuable commodity. He runs for president in 2016 against 15 establishment



“Our efforts have yielded a transformative deal that will bring benefits to both countries. Keeping these two giant and powerful nations together in harmony is so important for the world.”

- President Trump, signing Phase I of his trade deal with China on Wednesday





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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



Republicans, who didn't know how to handle his insults and campaign infomercials. He wins the nomination, then insults Sen. John McCain, Gold Star Mothers, has Billy Bush and the Access Hollywood "Grab 'em by the pussy" audio tape blow up in his face, then shows up at the next debate with his wife wearing a fuschsia pussy bow. The real "October surprise" was James Comey's bombshell that he reopened the file on "Crooked Hillary", when in reality it was the Trump campaign under investigation.

Hillary ran a real stinker of a campaign. When her blue wall collapsed, Trump was stunned that he won. He didn't even have a victory speech drafted.

This dumb luck, thank goodness, appears to have extended into the Trump presidency.

"Little Rocket Man" has become a pen pal. The Chinese either don't know how to deal with him or they do and we just don't know it, yet.

And now there are the Iranian ayatollahs.

President Trump stuns his Pentagon commanders when he chooses the most severe option when it comes to revenge for the December death of a U.S. contractor

months after calling off a retaliatory strike 10 minutes before launch. With little forethought or long-range strategy, he orders the drone assassination of General Suleimani near the Baghdad Airport. A million Iranians fill the streets with tears of grief, while the Iraqi parliament orders U.S. troops out of this fragile nation-building fiasco of a country. The war drums beat.

Meanwhile, Trump and his administration spend the next 10 days struggling with the narrative to justify the attack. They finally settle on the "imminent threat" Suleimani posed to four Middle Eastern U.S. embassies, only to have that rationale under-

mined when Defense Sec. Mark Esper pulled a Sgt. Schultz "I know nothing" on "Face The Nation." Over on Fox News, Chris Wallace sensed the bovine scatology. "It does seem to be a contradiction; he's telling Laura Ingraham [of imminent attacks] but in a 75-minute classified briefing, your top national security people never mentioned this to members of Congress, why not?" Wallace asked National Security advisor Robert C. O'Brien on "Fox News Sunday."

Once again, President Trump was caught in a fib.

By Monday, President Trump ended the mangled speculation. This was a tactical decision with no broader strategy. "It doesn't really matter," Trump tweeted, "because of his horrible past."

But our president's luck did not run out there as he cooed "all is well." As the Iran Supreme



Iranian students refuse to walk on an American flag sidewalk depiction following the shooting down of an airliner in Tehran earlier this month,.

Leader's salty tears still glistened on Suleimani's coffin, his henchmen rained missiles on U.S. forces in Iraq. And then they downed a Ukrainian airliner, killing 170 souls on board.

The mullahs and ayatollahs, instead of taking it to the U.S. infidels, were warding off massive protests across the sanction-stricken nation. The Persians were in revolt.

Trump's 15,000th-and-some lie became a moot point.

Democrats and the punditry were also on their heels, as Trump suggested them to be defenders of Suleimani and terrorists.

What President Trump and

his supporters may want to keep in mind is that dumb, blind luck doesn't always veer in the same direction.

In June 2009, the Iranian regime was under severe duress as demonstrations broke out across the nation, fueled by persistent social media. And then the unthinkable happened: Pop star Michael Jackson dies. Social media – hell, all media – dries up, and the Iranian revolt collapses. The insidious regime survives.

So there is no "boy cries wolf" lesson here. The lies and knee-jerk reactions don't matter to this president. He didn't learn the lessons of foreign intervention dur-



ing the Mueller probe; it took him less than a day to repeat the process with Ukraine President Zelensky. The resulting impeachment and almost certain Senate acquittal is setting up the president for a MAGA arena victory vindication lap.

The remaining Democratic presidential field looks like toy poodles compared to the honey badger Trumpublicans.

Almost all the presidents before him had a foreign policy crisis to deal with. President Trump has his luck. ❖

Holcomb, from page 1 styled social media campaign.

Holcomb, who is sitting on a \$7 million reelection war chest, appears to be confident in internal polling that shows his reelection to be on stable ground.

"I know a little about this. My mother was a teacher, and I saw how hard she worked," Holcomb said in a speech where the reaction often seemed to be on a two-second time delay. "That's why I created the Teacher Compensation Commission and asked them to come up with a sustainable plan to make our teacher salaries competitive with other Midwestern states. Their report is due this spring, but we didn't wait. Last year, we devoted an unprecedented increase of 763 million new dollars in K-12 education, including paying down \$150 million in the Teacher Retirement Fund, which freed up \$65 million more a year for teacher pay increases. All of our school corporations have finalized their locally bargained contracts and more Indiana school districts have raised teacher salaries this year than in any other year in recent history."

Holcomb continued, "Tonight, I am recommending that in the next budget the General Assembly use an additional \$250 million from our surplus and put it toward teacher retirement funds. In turn, \$50 million a year will be generated to redirect to teacher pay. Together that's \$115 million more available annually to increase teacher pay with more to come after the Compensation Commission releases its recommendations."

Waiting until the 2021 biennial budget didn't sit well with Democratic Chairman John Zody, who is running for a Senate seat in November. "Bottom line, pay raises for hardworking educators are more than a year away, if ever," Zody said, "That's not taking action, it's taking a back seat."

Dr. Woody Myers, who is seeking the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, observed, "It took thousands of teachers rallying at the Statehouse saying, 'Enough is enough' for the governor to acknowledge that Indiana has

failed our teachers and students. When adjusted for inflation, average Indiana teacher salaries have dropped 15% since 2000 and a third of new Indiana teachers leave their jobs within five years."

And rogue Republican Supt. Jennifer McCormick said she was "disappointed" in the "delay" of teacher pay hikes. "While I appreciate the governor including the teacher compensation crisis in the State of the State Address, I am disappointed Indiana continues to delay necessary action," said McCormick, who had been rumored as a potential ticket mate to State Sen. Eddie Melton until he pulled out of the gubernatorial race last week. "Insufficient school funding resulting in inadequate teacher compensation impacts 1.1 million students, 78,000 Hoosier educators, and the future of our great state. Students cannot afford to lose more great educators while Indiana decides if we can afford them."

But according to data from the Education Employment Relations Board, 99% of school corporations have raised teacher salaries this year, with about 60% of those school corporations providing increases equal to or larger than their raises last year. The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette reported that last year's average salary increase was \$1,299. The governor's office also said 62,595 out of 63,006 Indiana teachers, representing 99% of traditional public school teachers, work in one of the 301 public school corporations that are increasing teacher pay this year.

Keith Gambill, ISTA president, said that the governor "continued to work to find innovative solutions to increase teacher pay. He also laid a foundation for what could be done in the future on a larger scale. However, Hoosier educators need action now. We will continue to advocate for lawmakers to invest at least \$75 million this year to provide an increase to teachers' base salaries."

Heavy on education

Gov. Holcomb's speech was heavy on education. He said that out of 23,000 Hoosiers enrolled in Workforce

Ready Programs, 10,000 had completed a Next Level jobs workforce-ready-eligible certificate program, which he called a “mega milestone.” He said another 2,000 Hoosiers who previously started college but didn’t finish came back and completed their post-secondary educations. He said the goal to teach 1,000 Department of Corrections inmates computer coding has been reached and expanded to 3,000. “Because of these new programs and opportunities, our state recidivism rate has dropped 4%,” Holcomb said. “By 2022, I want 500 returning citizens annually to have validated job opportunities waiting for them before they walk out of prison, and 3,000 more formerly incarcerated individuals in jobs within five months of their release.”

Historic economic numbers

Holcomb noted that the jobless rate has dropped to 3.2%, or a “19-year low.” He added, “We’ve set all-time records in jobs commitments and capital investment. In fact, there are an additional 88,000 jobs in the IEDC’s pipeline because of the work that’s been done in the past three years. And it’s not just the quantity of these jobs, but the quality. Last year’s new jobs commitments averaged more than \$28 an hour – another all-time high.”

He announced that “Fiat-Chrysler has chosen Indiana for diversification and will invest nearly \$400 million in its Kokomo facility” and that other investment will be announced at the sprawling Toyota complex at Princeton.

The Republican governor added, “In 2019, we ranked No.1 in “infrastructure, top two in the nation for “long-term fiscal stability, No.1 in the Midwest and top five nationally for business. A recent editorial in the Chicago Tribune put it this way: ‘What does Indiana offer that Illinois doesn’t? Lower taxes, more stable home values, balanced state budgets and funded pension systems.’”

Holcomb vowed to complete the “free-flow” U.S. 31 from South Bend to Indianapolis, and promised to strengthen public health and attack the drug epidemic. He said he would “expand OB navigator program to 20 counties” and added, “We’ve taken many steps to attack the opioid epidemic, including restricting the number of prescriptions and increasing outpatient addiction treatment and the trend is finally improving. In 2018, opioid prescriptions dropped 12% – faster than the national average – and, most importantly, deaths from drug overdoses went down nearly 13%, twice the decline of the national average.”

Holcomb also addressed the state’s high smoking rate and his goal to move up the legal purchase age

from 18 to 21. “We know that 95% of smokers start the habit before age 21, and there’s been an alarming rise in e-cigarette use among Indiana’s youth,” Holcomb said, “In addition to raising the age to 21, we’ll also seek to increase the penalties for retailers who sell tobacco and vaping products to underage buyers. Our message hasn’t changed: If you peddle illegal substances to our kids, we’re coming after you.”

Gains in infant mortality

Holcomb also claimed “Our infant mortality rate decreased significantly from 2017 to 2018 and is at its lowest since 2012.” Data from the Indiana State Department of Health released Wednesday show 559 Indiana babies died before the age of one in 2018, down from 602 in 2017. The overall infant mortality rate stood at 6.8 per 1,000 babies in 2018, down from 7.3 in 2017.

“Indiana has been investing heavily in improving health outcomes for moms and babies as we work toward



Gov. Holcomb’s goal of having the lowest infant mortality rate in the Midwest by 2024,” said State Health Commissioner Kris Box, M.D., FACOG. “It’s heartening to see those efforts pay off so that more Hoosier babies can celebrate their first birthdays.”

Holcomb explained, “There’s no better person in the nation to lead this effort than our Health Commissioner Dr. Kris Box, an OB-GYN and expert in this field. The Levels of Care program I asked you to approve ensures that the highest-risk babies are now delivered at hospitals with the necessary facilities. And more expecting mothers are being verbally screened for substance-use disorder and receive support and medicine when they need it. Steps like these are making a difference.”

DCS update

As for the troubled Department of Child Services, Holcomb said, “In 2018, I tasked Director Terry Stigdon to right the ship, and she did just that, undertaking a total

culture change, focused on supporting the frontline staff who work directly with children. The result is a much more stable workforce. The turnover rate of family case managers has been reduced by 18%. And now we're seeing significantly improved safety outcomes – fewer kids in the system, fewer returning to the system and a faster rate to permanency."

Myers response

Dr. Myers said that Gov. Holcomb did not address "maternal mortality" in his address. "There are now 33 counties where you cannot have a baby (in a hospital)," Myers said. "We need to focus in a bipartisan way on costs and solutions on infant and maternal mortality. One thing he did mention is there is a strong connection between cigarette consumption when you're pregnant and infant mortality."

Myers said that Holcomb should raise taxes on cigarettes as opposed to just raising the purchase age.

"There was a lot I wanted to hear that I didn't



hear on jobs and education," Myers said. "Starting with education, it's the most pressing issue as far as dollars spent. It's the most pressing concern among Hoosiers. I don't think we heard what we needed to hear. There were 15,000-plus Hoosiers who came to the Statehouse ... and I don't think the governor saw them or heard them the way they needed to be heard. I just don't get it. If it's a crisis, why aren't we acting like it? When I talk with school superintendents in the state they're telling me they're having a hard time recruiting teachers. We know we are losing teachers to all our surrounding states and we also know starting salaries in Indiana are terribly low. We know the ILEARN test has been a failure as was the ISTEP test."

Asked how he would address standardized testing, Myers said he would go back to the Common Core concept. "We spent a millions of dollars on those tests and we didn't get what we paid for."

Myers called it a "false narrative" that a 10-week session isn't long enough to deal with teacher pay this year. ❖

Holcomb starts with \$7M cash advantage

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric Holcomb will hold a \$7.25 million cash edge on Dr. Woody Myers, who told Howey Politics Indiana on Wednesday that he "raised and spent \$173,000, plus or minus."

Myers said in a statement his campaign will report \$172,801 raised. A second Democrat, Indianapolis businessman Josh Owens, filed a report of \$83,906 raised and a little over \$16,000 cash on hand. The largest campaign fund of any Democratic gubernatorial candidate belongs to 2012 and 2016 nominee John Gregg. He

has about \$360,000 left over from his 2016 campaign but didn't collect any contributions during the past year.

Holcomb's campaign account, combined with the accounts of Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch and the Indiana Republican Party, ended the year with \$8.61 million cash on hand. This combined total is also record-setting, topping the historical combined totals at this point in the gubernatorial cycle.

"Hoosiers are donating their time, talent and

resources to help Gov. Holcomb and Lt. Gov. Crouch get reelected in November, and this new fundraising record demonstrates the strength of our campaign and the enthusiasm for the Republican ticket," said Kyle Hupfer, Holcomb for Indiana campaign manager. "With these record-breaking fundraising numbers, it's clear that Hoosiers want the Holcomb-Crouch team to keep putting people first for the next four years."

The combined total surpasses the previously reported 2019 cash-on-hand total of \$8.25 million. It includes the Indiana Republican Party cash-on-hand, which ended the year with \$1.04 million in the bank, and Lt. Gov. Crouch's cash-on-hand, who posted a total of \$316,570 at the end of 2019.

Myers told HPI, "There were decisions I have made and I don't regret them. I'm not a politician. I made some decisions not to do major campaign fundraising until after the November elections. I didn't want to step on mayoral campaigns. I was told you can do both, but if I'm going to be a great governor I'm going to need great mayors to help."

Myers added, "We've hired the best fundraising team in the country, the team that got Beshear elected in Kentucky. We've hired several more fundraising staff, and we've got a lot of events that are already on the books or are in planning stages. I'm happy with the progress we've made."

The Myers campaign hired Scott Gale with Fundraising Management Group (FMG). Gale most recently



helped propel Democrat Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear. Mary Klinkose is coordinating fundraising for the campaign. Klinkose's resume shows she began her career with Gov. Evan Bayh and has worked as a fundraiser for the Marion County Democratic Party and raised money for former congressman Baron Hill's U.S. Senate campaign and other Democratic statewide campaigns. Aaren Myer and Jack Metcalfe round out the finance team.

Myers' new campaign manager is Zakiya Thomas, who he described as "battle-tested, helping to elect Democrats statewide in red-to-blue states. Thomas most recently worked on Kamala Harris' presidential campaign as the deputy national political director. Indianapolis-native Aaron Schaler is taking on the role of deputy campaign manager. Schaler is the former president of Hoosiers for Justice and of Indiana Stonewall Democrats, where he helped bring awareness to LGBTQ issues.

In a statement, Myers said, "I am proud that we spent the first six months of this campaign traveling to 34 counties around Indiana, listening to Hoosiers talk about the issues they care about and sharing our message for a better Indiana. Our campaign is creating a solid grassroots organization, building out a talented staff, and working with the best fundraising and communications consultants in the country. We're on pace to submit petition signatures ahead of the Feb. 4 deadline and are opening our new campaign headquarters in the historic Stutz Building in Indianapolis."

Congress

1st CD: McDermott has big money lead

Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. appears to have raised more money in the two months since U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Gary, announced his retirement than any of the other Democratic candidates seeking to



represent Northwest Indiana in Congress (Carden, NWI Times). The five-term leader of Lake County's most populous city tells The Times his Federal Election Commission fundraising report, set to be made public Jan. 31, will show he raised \$170,000 from 271 donors between Nov. 6, when he announced his bid, and Dec. 31. McDermott said he was particularly proud that nearly half his donations were

under \$100, including 72 donors who gave \$20.20 in recognition of the 2020 election year. "It's a real good cross-section from Lake and Porter counties," McDermott said. "Every penny counts, and we appreciate all the support. I

think next quarter we'll do better than this. I need to have half a million dollars to run the campaign I want to run, so I'm 40% of the way to where I need to be." State Rep. Mara Candelaria Reardon, D-Munster, expects to report donations totaling \$100,000. Valparaiso attorney Jim Harper, who ran an unsuccessful 2018 campaign for Indiana secretary of state, said he feels "really good" about raising \$80,000 in a multi-candidate field during the six weeks he's been actively campaigning. North Township Trustee Frank J. Mrvan said his FEC report will show he raised \$53,916 from 91 donors during the same period as McDermott.

Leyva runs again for GOP nod

A Republican congressional candidate who has lost seven times this century to retiring U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Gary, wants to see how he'll fare without Visclosky on the ballot (NWI Times). Mark Leyva, of Highland, this week announced he's seeking the GOP nomination for a chance to represent all of Lake and Porter counties and western LaPorte County in the U.S. House. The former steelworker said if he's elected to serve The Region he will work to support organized labor and "advance legislation which allows our domestic steel industry to be competitive in the U.S. and global markets."

2nd CD: Leucke endorses Hackett

Former South Bend Mayor Steve Luecke endorsed Pat Hackett for Congress on Tuesday. In a video released by the campaign on Tuesday, the former South Bend mayor shared why he was supporting Hackett's candidacy. "I am endorsing Pat Hackett because of her integrity, her values and her work ethic. I know she will be a great representative for our community as a voice for health care for all and an economy that works for everyone. She will bring a voice to Congress that represents the values of the 2nd District. I encourage people to join Pat's campaign."

Statewides

Attorney General: Krupp announces

Indiana Department of Revenue Commissioner Adam Krupp is resigning at the end of the month to campaign full time for attorney general and try to unseat fellow Republican Curtis Hill (IBJ). Krupp, 41, officially announced his plans to seek the Republican nomination for attorney general Monday morning. Republican incumbent Hill is seeking reelection despite allegations that he inappropriately touched a state lawmaker and three legislative staffers in 2018. He has resisted calls from top Republican officials to resign. Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb tapped Krupp to run the revenue department in 2017, and Krupp also worked under former governors Mike Pence and Mitch Daniels. Krupp said his resignation will take effect Jan. 31. "I'll be over the state fast and furious the next five months," Krupp said. "I want to be all in. I want to be everywhere I can." He said he met with Holcomb about



his decision to leave the DOR and run for attorney general. "He was very thankful and supportive of my service in his administration," Krupp said. "He wished me the best, and we shook hands, and we went from there."

Holcomb statement on Krupp

"I'm grateful to Adam for his years of dedication to the public," Gov. Eric Holcomb said in a written statement (IBJ). "His leadership helped transform the Department of Revenue into one recognized and ranked as a best place in the state to work. He leaves the department perfectly positioned to continue delivering Hoosiers with great government service at a great taxpayer value. I wish him well in his new endeavors." Holcomb, who has called on Hill to resign, has not offered any endorsements in the attorney general's race.

Is Rokita running?

HPI asked former congressman and secretary of state Todd Rokita if he was running for attorney general. He texted back: "Well, between my federal leadership PAC and my federal reelect account as well as my still open state account, I have about as much cash on hand as Curtis (Hill) and I haven't raised money for two years."

Westercamp fails to get traction

Central Indiana attorney John Westercamp hopes to get the nod instead of Attorney General Curtis Hill at the Republican Party's state convention next year. But his campaign has struggled to gain traction (Kelly & Francisco, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Westercamp's first finance report filed in July showed he had raised \$55,000. But the Zionsville resident hasn't had a single large donation – \$1,000 or more – to report since. That's perhaps why some Republicans are whispering about finding another candidate to challenge Hill, who is saddled with scandal over allegedly groping women at an Indianapolis bar and questions about his spending while in office. Westercamp says he has visited all 92 counties and received more than 120 public endorsements from Republicans including from state legislators, county party officials and local government officials. The list includes Rex Early, former chairman of the state GOP and President Donald Trump's Indiana campaign. In addition, he has received endorsements from several Steuben County Republicans and State Rep. Dave Heine, R-New Haven.

Tallian posts \$205K

State Sen. Karen Tallian's year-end report shows she posted \$205,000. "We have to keep our eye on the prize" said Linda Lawson, former state representative and

retired Hammond police captain. "The process right now is about choosing the candidate who is best able to defeat Curtis Hill next November. Karen Tallian is the most qualified candidate in this race, on either side of the aisle, and the person most likely to win in the fall." Tallian has raised over \$205,000 in the last quarter in her campaign to be the next attorney general. "We set a goal, and we met it," said Tallian. Her campaign manager, Alex Cortwright, said that the report evidences her wide support all across the state. "Except for a couple of old high-school buddies, these donations are from Hoosiers. This is in stark contrast to the past reports filed by Attorney General Curtis Hill, which show that large chunks of his money are coming from out of state" he said. Former Evansville mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel said his campaign finance report will show he raised \$124,100 in the 21 days after launching his campaign Dec. 10. He also has some \$480,000 left over from prior runs for public office.

General Assembly

HD7: Councilman Teshka files

South Bend Councilman Jake Teshka filed to run for Republican HD7 Tuesday. "Residents of House District 7 need an effective state representative who can work across the aisle and fight for their needs. My experience on city council has taught me that we need leaders who listen before they speak, and I will do just that," Teshka said in a statement released Tuesday morning. HD7 was won by former State Rep. Joe Taylor, who defeated Republican Troy Dillon 51.7% to 48.3% in 2018, then resigned. He was replaced by Ross Deal. "As a state representative, I will focus on driving more education dollars into our children's classrooms and championing proposals that deliver mental health services to citizens that need our support."

HD15: Slager seeks rematch

Republican Hal Slager is seeking a rematch with Democratic State Rep. Chris Chyung. Slager was upset in 2018, losing to Chyung by just 82 votes.

HD24: Schaibley faces rematch

Republican State Rep. Donna Schaibley is facing a rematch against Democrat Naomi Bechtold, who lost 55.6% to 41.6% in 2018.

HD34: Basham to challenge Errington

Retired Muncie educator Dale Basham, who sees "fantastic things happening in Muncie," announced over the weekend that he will seek the Republican nomination for House District 34, currently represented by Democratic Rep. Sue Errington, who ran unopposed in 2018 (Slabaugh, Muncie Star Press). The candidate, who is one of Muncie's most vocal cheerleaders, said it dawned on him to throw his hat in the ring when he learned – while on the road speaking about "all of the fantastic things happening in

Muncie” – that the Indiana State Teachers Association was looking for educators to run for the Indiana General Assembly. The epiphany occurred during a speaking engagement in Metropolis, Ill., when Basham asked himself, “Why I am in Metropolis talking about Muncie and not in Muncie, Indiana, talking about how fantastic Muncie, Indiana, is,” he told supporters at his campaign headquarters in the former Munson’s used-car dealership on Saturday night.

SD20: Baldwin in as Spartz suspends

Scott Baldwin announced today he is running in the Republican primary for State Senate representing District 20. His candidacy prompted incumbent Sen. Victoria

Spartz to suspend her campaign in order to explore a 5th CD run. “I’ve dedicated my life and career to serving our country and community, through my background in the military, law enforcement and public safety, to building and growing businesses in central Indiana,” Baldwin said. “As senator serving the residents of District 20, I will champion common sense, conservative leadership to help build our economy and grow jobs, promote fiscal responsibility, improve public safety and ensure Hamilton County continues to thrive.” Baldwin has endorsements from Noblesville Mayor Chris Jensen, Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness, Hamilton County Commissioner Steve Dillinger and 17 other local elected officials within Hamilton County. ❖

Pete’s lackluster debate may not matter

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — His supporters were hoping for that defining moment in the final debate Tuesday evening before the Iowa caucuses three weeks out.

But when the dust settled after two hours, former South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg was described as “muted” and struggling for attention. The Hill observed: “Buttigieg continues to present himself as the youthful centrist, at one point jabbing at progressives for purportedly believing that ‘the boldness of a plan only consists of how many Americans it can alienate.’”

While the media was fixated on the story that Bernie Sanders had told Elizabeth Warren he didn’t believe a woman could be elected president, it was Joe Biden who seemed to come out of this debate unscathed.

Some believe that Buttigieg may have peaked too early in Iowa. Last week Buttigieg was leading the Real Clear Politics polling composite. This week, he’s third at 18.7%, trailing Biden at 20.7% and Sanders at 20.3%.

Biden and Buttigieg have been handed a gift from Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who held onto the articles of impeachment of President Donald Trump, pushing the Senate trial to start next Tuesday. That will crimp Sens. Sanders, Warren and Amy Klobachar in the Iowa and New Hampshire home stretch.

Foreign policy was expected to dominate this debate following the Iran “crisis.” But it didn’t.

It did produce this one moment when Buttigieg was asked how he is qualified to be commander-in-chief. “The very president who said he was going to end end-

less war, who pretended to have been against the war in Iraq all along, but we know that’s not true, now has more troops go into the Middle East,” Buttigieg responded. “And whenever I see that happen, I think about the day we shipped out and the time that was set aside for saying goodbye to family members. I remember walking with a friend of mine, another lieutenant I trained with, as we walked away and his one-and-a-half-year-old boy was toddling after him not understanding why his father wasn’t turning back to scoop him up, and it took all the strength he had not to turn around and look at his boy one more time. That is happening by the thousands right now as we see so many more troops sent into harm’s way. And my perspective is to ensure that that will never happen when there is an alternative as commander-in-chief.”

Another challenge for Buttigieg is his anemic polling with African-American voters. He trotted out the endorsement and campaigned with the black mayor of Waterloo, Iowa. But a Washington Post/Ipsos Poll revealed



that Biden is the overwhelming choice among black voters at 48%, Sanders at 20% and Warren at 9%, with Buttigieg polling just 3%.

That poll asked if they were “enthusiastic about” or “comfortable with supporting a gay man,” and 57% of African Americans agreed. That’s 16 percentage points higher than the net result (41%) of those who said they “have some reservations about supporting” (20%) and are

"very uncomfortable with supporting" a gay man (21%).

If Biden falters, almost half of the black voters will have to find another candidate.

Buttigieg was asked about support from black voters Wednesday on MSNBC's "Morning Joe." He responded, "Well first, my support among black voters is strongest among those who know me best. In South Bend, in the Midwest, here in Iowa too. We're going to continue driving that message and also, sharing South Bend's story not only from me but from others, elected officials from our community who can speak to the work that we've done on the ground. We have worked these issues on the ground in South Bend, not from the comfort of a debate stage or a committee room, but actually having to get them done – which of course means that we succeed often and often we come up short."

As for his electability against President Trump, Buttigieg said on "Morning Joe," "You'll have Donald Trump standing next to somebody who actually belongs to the kind of industrial community that he talks about all the time but has clearly walked away from. You know, the decisions he's made, the economic policies where as far as

Democratic Presidential Nomination RCP Poll Averages					
National		Iowa		New Hampshire	
Biden	27.2	Biden	20.7	Biden	23.3
Sanders	19.2	Sanders	20.3	Sanders	22.3
Warren	16.6	Buttigieg	18.7	Warren	17.0
Buttigieg	7.2	Warren	16.0	Buttigieg	13.3
Bloomberg	6.2	Klobuchar	7.0	Klobuchar	5.0
Yang	3.6	Yang	3.3	Gabbard	3.0
Biden +8.0		Biden +0.4		Biden +1.0	
Nevada		South Carolina		Betting Odds	
Biden	25.0	Biden	32.0	Biden	34.6
Sanders	19.3	Sanders	15.0	Sanders	31.1
Warren	14.7	Warren	14.0	Warren	14.1
Buttigieg	7.7	Steyer	8.3	Bloomberg	13.3
Steyer	7.3	Buttigieg	6.3	Buttigieg	8.4
Biden +5.7		Biden +17.0		Biden +3.5	

I can tell, the only promise he's kept when it comes to economic policy was a giant tax cut for corporations and the wealthy. Meanwhile, manufacturing is in its own recession and so many folks in communities like mine, even if their wages are going up, it's not nearly as fast as the cost of health, the cost of long term care, the cost of retirement. So when I'm standing next to this president, I'll be able to speak to that.

"If he tries the tough talk, he'll have to do it standing next to somebody who is a walking reminder of the president's decision not to serve and to take advantage of his status as the son of a millionaire in order to get

out on bone spurs," Buttigieg added. "I'm just going to be a fundamentally different kind of candidate."

The Buttigieg calculus has emphasized fundraising (he has bagged more than \$70 million) and his ground game in the early states, which will be augmented by an impeachment trial advantage. He is in tossup races in Iowa and New Hampshire. His campaign has been adroit enough to break into the top tier.

In less than three weeks we'll see if he can close an early deal. ❖

Sanders rises and Indiana implications

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS — Bernie Sanders is rising, and conventional wisdom is that a Democratic nomination of the Vermont Democratic socialist will play right into President Trump's reelection wheelhouse. But look back to the faint echoes of 2016 here in the Hoosier State, and polling this week from Morning Consult injects doubt into that conventional wisdom.



Sanders catapulted into the Iowa caucus lead in a Des Moines Register/CNN poll with 20% on Friday. In a Monmouth New Hampshire Poll, Mayor Pete had the lead at 20%, with Biden at 19%, Sanders at 18% and Warren at 15%. In that 2016 Indiana primary, both Trump and Sanders were the anti-establishment candidates. Both drew

uuuuuge crowds, with Sanders filling Monument Circle with 10,000 followers on primary election eve. Both won their Indiana primary with 53% of the vote and with virtually no support from their party leaders, fueled by stump rhetoric complaining of a "rigged system."

Hoosier Republicans eventually warmed up to Trump after he selected Gov. Mike Pence for his ticket in July. When the INGOP put its original Republican National Convention slate together before Pence's ascension, delegates Rex Early and Sullivan County's Bill Springer were the only two Trump delegates. Since Pence was added to the ticket, Indiana has become a "Trump state."

As for Sanders, there has been no discernible Sanders presence on the calcified Indiana Democratic Central Committee. Here was HPI's take on Sanders in the May 5, 2016, edition: "I watched Bernie Sanders indict the current economic and political status quo in front of about 10,000 people on Monument Circle last night. His campaign has raised more than \$100 million in small donations, is not beholden to super PACs and special interests, and is promising a 'revolution' that the broader public appears to be embracing. The \$7 billion in profits by United Technologies, and its move to Mexico to save \$65 million



while abandoning a city it called home for six decades, has become the poster for middle class angst. Sanders conjures notions of \$100 million golden parachutes for departing executives, and an extreme bent for shareholder profits over any scraps for the middle and lower classes that resonates in a different prism than the one Trump presents. But Sanders and Trump are clearly feeding off the same energy. Throw in (Hillary) Clinton's 2002 vote on the Iraq War resolution, arguably one of the most disastrous geopolitical events in this century thus far, and Sanders presents a classic case for an emphatic paradigm shift. The heavy voter turnout today could propel both Sanders and Trump into a wild summer of American politics."

Trump appears to be savoring a Democratic nomination by Sanders, who he will portray as a "socialist," but if there's a case of socialism encroaching on the state, look no further than the farm, where President Trump's \$14.5 billion Market Facilitation Program created about 40% of agricultural profits in 2019. The farm bailout is twice the size of President Obama's 2009 rescue of the domestic automakers, which was opposed by then-U.S. Rep. Mike Pence, who urged those manufacturers to recover via traditional bankruptcy.

Trump is beginning to fixate on Sanders, saying at a Thursday night MAGA rally in Toledo, "Bernie is going up. He's surging. Crazy Bernie is surging. Bernie Sanders – crazy Bernie! – has condemned the U.S. military strike on Soleimani, the world's top terrorist."

Therein lie other similarities between Trump and Sanders. Both have been persistent critics of the 2002 Iran War Resolution and 2003 invasion, the biggest geopolitical disaster for the U.S. since Vietnam. Except then U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders voted against the resolution, while when Trump was asked by shock jock Howard Stern if he backed the war, he responded, "Yeah, I guess so." Then Rep. Pence voted for that resolution.

Jim Messina, who managed former President Barack Obama's 2012 reelection bid, said in a recent Politico interview that Trump would love to run against Sand-

ers, noting that Republicans have already signaled they plan to hammer the socialism angle in the fall campaign.

But a new Morning Consult poll tracking the strength of the top Democratic contenders against Trump in hypothetical matchups found Sanders performs better than his rivals, including front-runner Joe Biden, with groups viewed as key to beating the unpopular incumbent.

Sanders leads Trump in the latest head-to-head polling 46% to 42%, picking up 2 percentage points on the incumbent Republican since the previous survey and statistically tied with Biden, who leads Trump 46% to 41%. The latest national survey, which was conducted Jan. 6-12 and polled between 8,218 and 8,386 registered voters, has a 1-point margin of error.

Sanders outperforms Biden against Trump among voters ages 18-29, those who are not interested in politics and self-described independents. Biden is the strongest candidate among college-educated whites, older people and suburban white women. Sanders posted his closest margin against Biden in Democratic primary polling since April, 23% to 29%.

Could Sanders carry Indiana in the primary and/or general elections? Former South Bend Mayor Buttigieg has had virtually no statewide presence, beyond the handful of mayors (but not Mayors Joe Hogsett of Indianapolis, Tom Henry of Fort Wayne or Tom McDermott of Hammond) who have endorsed him. Perhaps the biggest strike against Buttigieg making the ticket is that he would be no cinch to carry his home state.

Conventional wisdom is that the state is a lock for the Trump/Pence reelection bid, but the We Ask American Poll for the Indiana Manufacturers Association had Trump's job approval at 47.4% favorable while 47.7% disapproved, well below his 19% plurality in 2016.

A Trump vs. Sanders showdown this fall would find these two candidates offering up similar rhetoric and feeding off the same grievances. ❖

House panel weighs pot decriminalization

Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS — The Lake County Council’s goal for police to issue tickets for misdemeanor marijuana possession, instead of officers hauling people off to the county jail, could get a boost from state lawmakers (Carden, [NWI Indiana](#)). On Wednesday, the House Courts and Criminal



Code Committee began considering bipartisan legislation that would clarify the authority of police to simply issue a summons to appear in court for a misdemeanor or offense, rather than arresting the alleged perpetrator. State law

already permits police to issue a summons for all misdemeanor crimes, except domestic violence and driving while intoxicated, but officers generally are reluctant to use that authority because often there are no standard procedures for doing so, the committee learned. As currently written, House Bill 1076 would mandate police always issue a summons for a nonviolent misdemeanor committed in their presence. Though that is likely to again be made optional before the committee considers next week whether to advance the proposal to the full House. Nevertheless, Democratic Marion County Prosecutor Ryan Mears said an explicit endorsement of the summons in lieu of arrest option by the Republican-controlled General Assembly would go a long way toward expanding its use across the state, especially in counties experiencing jail overcrowding. “It would help to have the Legislature push us in the right direction on this issue,” Mears said. “This legislation is taking leadership on the issue by saying, ‘Here are the standards. Here are the guideposts.’” Council President Ted Bilski, D-Hobart, said Lake County is not looking to encourage the use of marijuana. But, he said, with Illinois and Michigan having legalized recreational use, Lake County doesn’t want to bear the costs of arresting and jailing people nabbed in Indiana for possessing a product they legally purchased elsewhere.

Senate panel OKs smoking age raise

A Senate committee Wednesday passed its own version of a bill to raise the legal smoking and vaping age from 18 to 21 (Smith, [Indiana Public Media](#)). The Senate bill differs slightly from its House counterpart. Both measures create harsher penalties on retailers who sell tobacco products to underage buyers – something Indiana State Medical Association President Lisa Hatcher says is vital. “Three out of every four children less than 18 years of age who attempted to purchase tobacco products were able to do so,” Hatcher says. “We need to let our retailers know that this is just not acceptable.” But the House ver-

sion makes it much easier for retailers to lose their licenses when they sell to underage buyers. The Senate version dramatically increases fines – something some Republican senators balked at. Still, the measure unanimously cleared the committee and is headed for the Senate floor

Senate bill toughens tobacco fines

The push to toughen Indiana’s penalties on stores for selling tobacco products to underage customers is facing some questions over whether the proposed fines are too steep ([AP](#)). Members of state Senate’s health committee voted 11-0 on Wednesday to endorse the bill that includes raising the minimum age for smoking and vaping from 18 to 21 to conform with the new federal law. State Health Commissioner Kristina Box told committee members that 95% of smokers started before they were 21 and that vaping among teenagers is a growing public health problem.



Box said raising the smoking age and tougher penalties on retailers was the “logical next step” to help prevent more people from picking up habits. The Senate proposal would triple possible retailer fines to between \$600 and \$3,000 based on number of violations in a six-month period. Some committee members questioned raising the fines so much, so those might be lowered when the full Senate takes up the bill.

House passes township assessor bill

A bill that would eliminate the 13 remaining township assessor offices in the state, including the Penn Township Assessor’s office in St. Joseph County, was narrowly approved in a 53-44 vote in the Indiana General Assembly Tuesday afternoon ([South Bend Tribune](#)). A pair of amendments to the bill were voted down, which would’ve called for new local referendums on the offices rather than eliminating them. If passed in the state Senate, the township assessor offices that were retained following referendums in 2008 will be eliminated at the start of 2023 and the duties will be taken over by county assessor offices. Of the 13 township assessor offices in the state, nine are located in the north and northwestern counties of Indiana: five in Lake County and one each in Porter, LaPorte, St. Joseph and Elkhart counties. Penn Township assessor Mike Castellon previously expressed opposition to the bill, which he said will take away local control and mean that his constituents won’t as easily be able to have their concerns addressed.. ❖

Surveying that failed state to our west

Ain't God good to Indiana?
Folks, a feller never knows
Just how close he is to Eden
Till, sometime, he ups an' goes
Seekin' fairer, greener pastures
Than he has right here at home.

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO — Reporter William Herschell wrote these words in 1919, but they are just as true today as they were then. What prompted me to recall these lines written so long ago, that became so famous that they grace a bronze plaque in the Indiana Statehouse? Why, Illinois, of course!



Illinois, home of incarcerated former governors, middling sports teams and mountains upon mountains of budgetary red ink in Chicago and in the state capitol, Springfield. Illinois, the state that is called home by more than 200,000 fewer residents than five years

ago. Illinois, the tax-and-spend state that has become the poster child for Democratic government mismanagement.

Illinois citizens, including my two daughters, awakened yesterday to welcome in the New Year and nine new Illinois taxes totaling \$1.7 billion. This new spate of taxes are in addition to 11 new taxes authorized last year that, in addition to the new taxes and fees, will gleefully extract \$4.6 billion from the good people of Illinois. And, mind you, this does not even include the new taxes coming from Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot!

Illinois is firmly in the grip of what former Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels liked to call a "death spiral," the process of budget deficits leading to tax increases leading to business and population loss, leading to more budget deficits...You get the picture. It isn't pretty and it is almost impossible to escape without some cataclysmic event or a complete political overhaul.

If only these new taxes could pull Illinois out of its current power dive, perhaps the sacrifice would be worth it. However, the Illinois Policy Institute believes that the operating budget will still be \$1.3 billion in the red. Another analysis from the organization found that the \$45 billion capital plan, which is partially funded by the new taxes, contains at least \$1.4 billion worth of waste. Of course, waste is always in the mind of the beholder. New pickleball courts, dog parks and renovations of privately owned businesses may be perfectly reasonable to the

budgetary elites in Springfield. "Would the last person left in Illinois, please turn the lights off on the pickleball courts?"

Let's look at some of these new taxes or fees to be paid in Illinois:

You don't have to scratch your head and wonder why Illinois legalized cannabis Jan. 1. They project a minimum of \$500 million of new tax revenue on the sale of legal "weed." And if you are thinking about opening up a cannabis shop on State Street, be advised that the government expects \$170 million of licensing fees just to sell the stuff. New online and remote retailer sales taxes are projected to bring in \$420 million more. Everyone owning a vehicle will be dinged an extra \$50 per registration, ringing up \$441 million in additional revenue. The poor suckers who sought nirvana by buying electric automobiles will pony up an additional \$237.50 per vehicle. Trucking company registrations will go up \$100 per vehicle.

Don't think you can beat some of the higher taxes by just parking your car and walking. Parking garage taxes will rise by \$60 million.

My personal favorite of the Illinois tax scams is the trade-in-vehicle tax. That's right, you heard it correctly, a trade-in-vehicle tax. Paying sales tax on a new vehicle is nothing new. However, now when you trade your vehicle in toward the purchase of a new vehicle, you will pay sales tax on the full value of your trade-in.

Let's look at how this will work in practice. If you traded a car valued at \$20,000 before Dec. 30, in order to purchase a \$35,000 vehicle, you would have paid \$1,311 in sales tax. Now, with the ringing in of the New Year, that same transaction will cost you \$2,185. Ouch! On the bright side, this will bring Illinois government an additional \$60 million.

The 20 new taxes enacted in Illinois over the past 12 months have amounted to a monumental shearing of the sheep. No matter how ugly these taxes have been and no matter how damaging to the future outlook for the Land of Lincoln, things may get worse.

Way back in 1818, the enlightened and conservative leaders of Illinois created their state constitution. For over 200 years, the Illinois Constitution has required that all taxpayers pay the same flat tax rate. This has been fair and has worked fairly well over the years. This constitutionally mandated flat tax does have a major drawback. It is a political hand grenade. If you want to increase income tax, you risk the ire of every Tom, Dick and Luigi who brings a paycheck home. From the local 7-Eleven clerk to the owners of the White Sox, everyone pays the exact same tax rate.

Politicians, particularly Democrat ones (and you know who you are), have become adept at playing the class warfare game of soaking the rich and giving the money to their cronies. It is a simple mathematical function to figure out how much more cash you need to raise, determine what percentage of the voting public you are willing to offend and then stick it to them, all in the

name of the wealthy paying their fair share of taxes. The problem in Illinois is that the nasty old and dusty state constitution has blocked this practice. Well, that may soon change. In November 2020, Illinois voters will be asked to approve amending the Illinois Constitution to allow state government to abolish the flat tax and implement a graduated income tax scale.

This important vote in November will be the defining moment for the future of Illinois. If the majority of the voting public allows amending the Illinois Constitution to enable state officials a seemingly never-ending and bottomless pot of cash, in the name of rich Illinois taxpayers paying their fair share, then there will be nothing to stop the inevitable death spiral to the bottom. The wealthy and productive class will continue the present mass exodus from the state, deficits will rise, property values will sink, large and small employers will abandon Illinois for the green fields of Indiana and the beat, or beat down, will go on. The good news is that the unemployed will have new pickleball courts to while their time away.

You may wonder why I would write about Illinois. I believe that Illinois serves as a cautionary tale. Prior to Gov. Daniels, Indiana ran up to the precipice, looked over the ledge and then took a giant step back. We have made the tough decisions that have put Indiana on firm financial ground, stimulated business development and employment gains and has given our state a bright and shining future for our citizens. But make no mistake, the same thought process that resides in the Illinois halls of power lurks in the Hoosier State. If given their way and the political power to do it, Indiana Democrats would take us down the same road to financial ruin as our brothers and sisters in Illinois.

Don't for a moment think that it can't happen. It almost did just 16 short years ago. Today, let's rejoice in what we have achieved under governors Daniels, Pence and Holcomb, but remain ever vigilant to protect the state we hold so dear.

Ain't God good to Indiana? You bet! ❖

Too little & too much

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — Perhaps the most important lesson for me as a student of economics was, "Some is preferred to None. More is preferred to Less. Until it is Too Much."

This simple adage applies to most, perhaps all, things in life. It describes our experiences with peanut butter, pizza, beer, sex, and the news from Washington. From this concept come the phrases easily spoken by economists, readily turning off their listeners, including "diminishing marginal utility" and "economies of scale." These may be the most important elements today shaping our apprehension about tomorrow. Small is endangered and big is getting too big. What we need to learn is how to grow and how to contract.



The problems are seen at every scale of operation. Individual homeowners are victims of their homeowners' associations. Small towns are slowly disappearing from the countryside, while big cities are being crippled by congestion and pollution. Small businesses are unable to compete with big businesses, which are strangled by their own bureaucracies. Small nations are powerless against large nations, which are unmanageable.

There is indisputable evidence that unit costs decline as more is produced or more are served – up to a point. Then those costs can rise with overcrowding,

increased maintenance, and simple confusion of competing demands. Do we know how to shrink huge hospitals, universities, companies and governments?

Think of a restaurant. A family eatery struggles until it becomes a delightful place for a leisurely meal. With popularity, customers stand and wait until more tables are set up. The kitchen enlargement means more cooks and servers. New technology and management systems are employed, a chain established, and district managers hired.

But has growth gone too far? Look around. See the struggles of businesses and communities today adopting strategies to downsize, to shed real estate and personnel as technology and preferences change. This is happening with businesses and cities in Indiana and across America. People who move from the stifling emptiness of small towns to larger places are disappointed by the traffic snarls, the impersonal life, the expense of the amenities that lured them in the first place.

Similarly, those who escape the big city to the quiet suburb become disenchanted by the smugness of the entrenched "old guard," the endless construction of new homes, the traffic, the new stop lights, the traffic circles, the noise, the chain stores moving in and the disappearance of the personal service from entrepreneurial shop owners, all brought on by the emergence of the problems they sought to leave behind.

In effect, is the quality of life deteriorating in the eyes of those who expected better by using their increased income and/or leisure to move elsewhere? Is discontent with prosperity and growth a consequence of our poorly managed experiences? Aside from short-term headline hysteria, do we have the time to address our future? ❖

Trump's Iran move & question of leadership

By PETE SEAT

INDIANAPOLIS – What is leadership?

It was a question posed to us, a group of two dozen Atlantic Council Millennium Fellows, as we sat in a small classroom at a secluded and rustic resort on the outskirts of Bogota, Colombia, this past May for a professional development retreat. What attributes constitute leadership, the session's facilitator asked. How, more specifically, do you know a leader when you see one?



The answers ran the gamut of available responses. Leadership was having a platform to share a worthwhile message, offered one fellow. It was casting an actionable vision, said another. We also heard that one could not be a leader without

followers and that leadership meant exacting change or taking risk where others may otherwise disengage. In this lively exercise, our global focus group proved a universal point: Leadership has many definitions.

This same question of leadership came to the fore when reading the Eurasia Group's "Top Risks 2020" report. In it, authors Ian Bremmer and Cliff Kupchan write that "both U.S. allies and enemies over the past years have come to wonder whether the United States intends to lead – and they've hedged their bets accordingly. In the midst of a disputed 2020 election, many of those countries will wonder whether the U.S. can govern itself. It's a period of unusual geopolitical vulnerability to shock and escalation."

And it is those different definitions, and different perceptions, of leadership that have caused a whole lot of hubbub regarding President Donald Trump's decision to kill, via drone, Qasem Soleimani, the Iranian major general who commended the country's Quds Force, moments after he landed in Baghdad, Iraq, on a visit that was, according to U.S. intelligence, meant to coordinate attacks on Americans and American interests.

For Trump, leadership comes with coercion and confrontation. He sees his role as a disruptor who will say or do anything to achieve his objective. The end justifies the means – always. And in that moment, he disrupted the norms of engagement by proactively eliminating an enemy combatant. His objective of removing a top-tier global terrorist was achieved. Similarly, Trump's berating of NATO allies to meet their agreed-upon defense spending obligations as members of the alliance undoubtedly rattles the less bellicose European contingent, but his words have led to measurable results. Again, the end justifies the means.

His detractors on the worldwide stage, however, define leadership as certainty and predictability. They long for a morally superior United States that can engage in almost any dispute and bring it to a peaceful resolution (with sometimes questionable long-term results). And when that is not possible, a United States that possesses the military might and wherewithal to destroy the opponent within the guardrails of international law.

Those weary of Trump saw in the attack on Soleimani a pre-ordained act of trigger-happy aggression. The hysterics in parts of the media and from some on the left that World War III was surely upon us is the clearest indication of that. But their worst fears did not come to fruition. After a dozen missiles fired by Iran purposely missed targets at U.S. bases in Iraq both sides stood down and the fear of imminent conflict subsided. The message was delivered and received, however unorthodox that delivery took place.

In this particular example, could leadership have instead been standing down from the outset and requesting a conversation through diplomatic channels with the Iranians following the death of an American contractor in Iraq? Or was leadership doing exactly what Trump did and ordering the U.S. military to forcibly remove a known threat from the picture? It all depends on whom you ask.

But it's not just Trump. A similar debate played out, literally, on a debate stage in Iowa this week where one bunch of Democratic presidential aspirants, such as former Vice President Joe Biden, argued for predictability in foreign affairs.

Others, such as Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, suggested another four years of disruption – his kind of disruption – is what we need on the world stage instead.

Ultimately, the American people will decide in November whether the definition of leadership continues to be defined by Trump, redefined by a successor or undefined altogether. ❖

Pete Seat is a former White House spokesman for President George W. Bush and campaign spokesman for former Director of National Intelligence and U.S. Sen. Dan Coats. Currently he is a vice president with Bose Public Affairs Group in Indianapolis. He is also an Atlantic Council Millennium Fellow and author of the 2014 book The War on Millennials.

Fixing the system is up to all of us

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON — You know these words, but how often do you stop to think about them? “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity...”



They belong, of course, to the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. That remarkable document is not just the blueprint for our political system. Its Preamble is also a profoundly aspirational

call to arms. Because when you read it, it’s hard not to ask yourself how we’re doing — at establishing justice, promoting the general welfare, securing the blessings of liberty, and, in sum, creating a more perfect union.

It’s especially hard to avoid asking this question now, when the warnings of democracy in retreat are all around us. For many, the creeping authoritarianism that has taken hold in any number of countries — Russia, China, Bolivia, Turkey, the Philippines, and Hungary, among others — seems alarmingly on the ascendant.

You can also look around and find developments that make you wonder whether the world’s democracies have much cause for complacency. Worrisome environmental trends, population growth, climate change, the ills that go along with rising consumption, like mountains of trash and depletion of natural resources, all suggest a world unable to rein in its appetites.

Yet it’s undeniable that we’ve come a long way in this country and in other democracies, expanding women’s rights and the rights of minorities, ending child labor, banning nuclear testing, improving literacy, building strong economies. The world’s most vibrant economies and most nimble military forces remain mostly in the hands of democratic nations: The U.S., France, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, and Australia.

I don’t believe that people around the world favor authoritarianism. They prefer a voice in government. But most of all, they want decent lives for

themselves and their children. They are not so wedded to a democratic system that if they see no improvement in their lives, they’ll reject authoritarianism. So democratic governments have to perform. They have to meet the expectations of their people and improve the quality of their citizens’ lives.

In the U.S., many Americans, worried about the direction of their country, wonder whether it is making progress toward the ideals of the Preamble. We seem to advance, fall back, and then move forward again, all in incremental steps.

What do we mean when we talk about “a more perfect Union”? I suppose we think of material progress. But more fundamentally, I hope, we think about the expansion of human freedom and progress toward the goals set out simply and eloquently in the Preamble. There’s a sense that we’re all in this American experience together; it brings us together and connects us with our past, present and future.

The American experiment in representative democracy is always a work in progress. The results are always in doubt. Lincoln’s words at Gettysburg — “whether a nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure” — will probably resonate for as long as we’re a nation.

We face immense systemic problems at the moment: Racial discrimination, wage stagnation, staggering income inequality, political polarization, the pernicious effects of too much money washing around in the system, the degradation of civil discourse. It is not a given that we’ll be able to resolve them, and we always have to be alert to the fact that our freedoms and rights can be eroded. Which means that to prevent this erosion we have to step up to the task of responsible citizenship.

This is a challenge for every generation. We’ve stepped up to it in the past, through world wars, the Civil War, economic recessions and depressions. As Americans we believe in a set of democratic ideals, basic rights, fundamental freedoms, and the notion that all people are created equal and all are entitled to dignity. These are ideas that give us cohesiveness and identify us.

But we cannot take our ability to deliver on them for granted. Without a renewal of energy and commitment to the democratic values of the Constitution, without acting on the call issued by the Preamble, we could lose them. ❖

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

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

Will Indiana matter in 2020 presidential race?

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI Indiana

ANDERSON — One of the frustrating things about living in Indiana is that we frequently have little voice in the selection of presidential candidates. Will we have one this year? If the Republican primary in 2016 is any guide, the answer is maybe.



Heading into Iowa that year, 11 candidates were still in the running. By the time they reached New Hampshire eight days later, the field had been narrowed to eight, and by Super Tuesday on March 1, it had been cut to five.

When the contest reached Indiana in early May, only three candidates were still standing. And two of them were looking a bit shaky.

Still, it was nice to be noticed. For years, Indiana had been an after-thought in the selection of presidential nominees.

Lots of folks paid attention to the Iowa caucuses and the early primaries in February and March, but by the time Indiana rolled around in early May, the contest was all over but the shouting.

Then came 2008 when Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton were engaged in a heated battle for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. Obama had the lead, but Clinton still had at least an outside shot.

The two candidates and their surrogates crisscrossed the state, and suddenly Hoosiers were getting the attention usually reserved for voters in other states. Indiana gave the nod to Clinton, and the battle raged on for a short while longer.

Eight years later, our state was in the spotlight again, this time with both parties' nominations somewhat in doubt. Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton both seemed headed for victory, but their opponents had not yet given up hope.

For the Republicans, challengers Ted Cruz and John Kasich were hoping for a brokered convention. They talked of ganging up on Trump, with Cruz challenging him in Indiana and Kasich going after

him in Oregon and New Mexico.

In the end, Indiana Republicans gave Trump 53% of the vote, and the contest was effectively over.

As they had eight years before, Indiana Democrats went for the underdog, handing a victory to Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders with more than 52% of the vote.

Maybe Democratic primary voters just wanted to give folks in other late primary states a chance to cast a meaningful vote.

Now, for the third time in four presidential elections, Indiana might be poised to play a role in the selection of at least one party's presidential nominee.

Who will still be in the race? Well, let's see.

Sanders might be there again, as might Joe Biden, the former vice president from the state of Delaware. Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts has a shot. And then, of course, there's former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who's skipping the early contests in hopes of making a splash on Super Tuesday.

I have not yet settled on a favorite, but I like former South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Amy Klobuchar. Both have a moderate approach I think the country needs right now.

As for which of those might still be standing when the campaign reaches Indiana, I'll pick Buttigieg. Klobuchar, the senator from Minnesota, is hoping for an upset in neighboring Iowa, but her recent poll numbers don't look promising.

To be honest, I like the idea of a nominee younger than 70. Still, I'm not sure we'll have a chance to vote for one. My guess is Biden and Warren will be the last two candidates still standing.

Keep in mind, though, I'm a lousy prognosticator. Four years ago, I said there was no way the Republicans would pick Donald Trump as their presidential nominee.

❖

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President Trump is no shoo-in for reelection

By **ALAN ABRAMOWITZ**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – In less than 10 months, Americans will be heading to the polls to decide whether Donald Trump deserves a second term in the White House -- assuming that he survives an impeachment trial in the Senate, as appears likely to be the case. Despite his chronically low approval ratings and his status as only the third president in U.S. history to be impeached by the House of Representatives, Trump is being touted as a solid favorite to win a second term in the White House by commentators ranging from Washington Post columnist Kathleen Parker to economic forecaster Mark Zandi.

The reasons basically boil down to two factors -- the advantage of incumbency and a strong economy. But will these be enough to overcome the president's other liabilities?

There are reasons to be skeptical. Since the end of World War II, three incumbent presidents have lost their bids for reelection – Gerald Ford in 1976, Jimmy Carter in 1980, and George H.W. Bush in 1992. Carter and Bush suffered from approval ratings that were well under water and Ford, while personally popular, was damaged by his association with his disgraced predecessor, Richard Nixon. All eight successful incumbents had net approval ratings that were either positive or, in the cases of Harry Truman (-4) and George W. Bush (-1), only slightly negative, in the months preceding their elections. In contrast, Donald Trump's approval rating has remained mired in negative territory from the beginning of his presidency. As of Wednesday, his net approval rating stood at -10.8% (approval 42.2%, disapproval 53.0%), according to the FiveThirtyEight weighted average of recent polls. Moreover, polls measuring the intensity of these opinions have consistently found that those strongly disapproving of Trump's performance outnumber those strongly approving by a fairly wide margin. In a Jan. 7-9 YouGov poll, for example, 45% of Americans strongly disapproved of Trump's job performance compared with 26% who strongly approved.

What about that advantage of incumbency? Since World War II, only one incumbent, Jimmy Carter in 1980, has lost his bid for a second term when his party had reclaimed the White House four years earlier. According to my own "Time for Change" forecasting model, first-term incumbents like Trump enjoy a significant advantage beyond what their approval ratings and economic conditions would predict. However, there are strong reasons to suspect that Donald Trump may not benefit from the same incumbency advantage that previous first-term presidents have enjoyed.

According to recent research on congressional elections, the advantage of incumbency has declined sharply in recent years as a result of growing partisan polarization.

Gary Jacobson of the University of California, San Diego has shown that voters have become increasingly reluctant to cross party lines to support incumbents based on their voting records or constituency service. The same logic may well apply at the presidential level, especially with an incumbent like Trump whose electoral strategy is based on reinforcing partisan divisions among the public. Indeed, Trump's presidency has produced the sharpest partisan divisions in job approval ratings in the history of public opinion polling. In a December Quinnipiac poll, for example, 91% of Republican identifiers approved of Trump's performance with 79% strongly approving. In contrast, 94% of Democratic identifiers disapproved of Trump's performance with 89% strongly disapproving.

Rather than trying to expand his electoral coalition by appealing to Democrats and independents, Trump's strategy for 2020 appears to be based almost entirely on energizing and mobilizing the Republican base. The problem with this approach, however, is that efforts to energize and mobilize the Republican base also energize and mobilize the Democratic base. Thus, the 2018 election produced the highest turnout for any midterm election in over a century and big gains for Democrats, and recent polls have found that voter interest in the 2020 election is very high among Democrats as well as Republicans.

The other key advantage that President Trump enjoys, according to some election forecasters, is the strong U.S. economy. The first three years of Trump's presidency have produced solid job growth, declining unemployment, and a booming stock market. Despite the solid economic numbers, however, there are good reasons to believe that the economy may not be as big an advantage for Trump as some analysts, and the president himself, believe. For one thing, the rate of economic growth under Trump has actually been fairly modest and consistent with that under his predecessor, Barack Obama. Economic forecasts generally have the U.S. economy expanding a rate of about 2% during the first half of 2020. The average growth rate of GDP for incumbent presidents since World War II is 3.9%. And while unemployment is near record low levels, gains from the growing economy have been concentrated heavily among the wealthiest Americans.

Another reason why the president may not receive much political benefit from a growing economy is partisan polarization. John Sides of George Washington University has recently shown that public opinion about the state of the U.S. economy is now far more divided along party lines than in the past. Republicans generally have very favorable opinions about economic conditions and credit the president for producing those results. Democrats, on the other hand, are far less sanguine about the economy and give the president far less credit for any positive results. As a result, Sides argues, Trump may receive less benefit from positive economic trends than earlier presidents who presided over growing economies. ❖



Nate Feltman, IBJ: Politics is as predictable as Indiana weather. After all, who predicted in early 2016 a Trump/Pence administration and Gov. Eric Holcomb? Speaking of predictions, here are mine ... Bernie Sanders wins Democratic nomination. Sanders is the last man standing after gaffe-prone Joe Biden fails to excite the growing progressive wing of the Democratic Party led by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (who endorsed Sanders). Sanders led the pack in fourth-quarter fundraising and is gaining momentum. Pete Buttigieg chosen as Democratic VP nominee. The young and comparatively moderate now-former mayor of South Bend is too irresistible to not put on the national ticket. Mayor Pete has shown he also can raise big money, and his Midwestern roots will bring geographic balance. Trump wins re-election. Think James Carville's "it's the economy, stupid." Trump's tax cuts have helped lead to 7 million more jobs (versus a predicted 2 million). Wages are rising faster for low-income earners than for high-income. The clear contrast between Trump's low-tax, less-regulation, pro-growth agenda versus Sanders' big government socialism recipe leads Trump to a 25-point win over Sanders in Indiana (besting his 19-point margin in 2016). All Indiana Republicans benefit from the "Trump bump." Republicans control Congress. Nancy Pelosi's impeachment gambit backfires. Voters see the impeachment process (and those involved) as mean-spirited, extremely partisan and an attempt by Congress to decide the election. Republicans win back the House and hold the Senate on the strength of the Trump economy, and voters send a message that they are tired of partisan politics. Holcomb wins re-election in landslide. Holcomb's political chops and ability to lead during a polarizing time in our country will be rewarded handsomely. He will win by more votes than any governor in history. Moderates appreciate Holcomb's willingness to reach across the aisle to get things done, and Democrats are not overly excited about their options. Todd Rokita is next Indiana attorney general. Follow me on this one: Former Evansville Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel, a Democrat, has announced his candidacy for attorney general. Weinzapfel will beat Sen. Karen Tallian at the Democratic convention. Weinzapfel is an easy-to-like, generally pro-business Democrat with Statehouse experience and has served as chancellor of Ivy Tech Community College's Evansville campus. Republicans do not want a Democrat as attorney general or a platform for a Weinzapfel gubernatorial run in 2024. Enter Rokita who, like current embattled AG Curtis Hill, is no favorite of the Republican establishment. But the Republicans need a candidate who can win and Rokita, having served two terms as Indiana secretary of state and eight years in Congress, is a proven statewide vote-getter. Republicans persuade Rokita to run for AG at their state convention and vote for him over Hill (and others) rather than risk a Weinzapfel victory. Do you see it differently? Send me your predictions and we'll see who gets more right. But I get three bonus points if I get the Rokita call correct! ❖



Matthew Yglesias, Vox: Joe Biden walked onto another Democratic debate stage Tuesday night as the frontrunner and once again walked off the winner by default. The moderators kicked things off by baiting Sen. Bernie Sanders and the former vice president into arguing about the Iraq War authorization vote in 2002. But even as Sanders stuck to his guns on this point, he wasn't able to zoom out and explain what about Biden's foreign policy record should make voters worried about his approach as president. In the days before the debate, Sanders's camp heavily telegraphed a big looming criticism of Biden's past advocacy for Social Security cuts, but it didn't happen. Similarly, Sen. Elizabeth Warren's camp indicated that she was finally interested in talking about bankruptcy, her main area of academic expertise and the subject of a years-long debate with Biden. But that didn't happen either. Instead, the biggest heat of the night came from a slightly odd Sanders-Warren disagreement over whether a 1990 election constituted something that happened "in the past 30 years." And it's not just that the progressives didn't really take on Biden; the moderates didn't either. Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota reiterated her electability pitch, and it's a pretty good one. But right now, electability-minded moderates are voting for Biden, and you can't win them over without making a case against Biden any more than Sanders or Warren can beat Biden without really criticizing him. To an extent, the issue is a tactical dilemma in a crowded field. It's in everyone's interest for someone to go after Biden, but it's not necessarily in any particular candidate's interest to be the one to do it. ❖

William Galston, Wall Street Journal: The past two decades have exhausted Americans' willingness to accept or even risk extended military action in the Middle East. Whoever takes the oath as president in January 2021 will face a daunting task: building a sustainable Middle East policy on the ruins of U.S. engagement in the region. The events of recent weeks have revealed the weakness of the U.S. position. Bashar Assad's regime, now a wholly owned subsidiary of Khamenei & Putin Inc., is pursuing a ruthless offensive in Idlib, Syria's last rebel-held province. Nearly 300,000 civilians, many already displaced from elsewhere in Syria, are fleeing for their lives. Turkey, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, has resisted U.S. pressure to reverse its purchase of a Russian S-400 air-defense missile system. All parties to the Libyan conflict have noted the near-absence of U.S. involvement and the weakness of European Union diplomacy decoupled from American leadership. Escalating tensions between the U.S. and Iran, capped by the killing of Qasem Soleimani, haven't rallied America's allies in the region to its cause. On the contrary, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which took note of the U.S. failure to respond to Iran's September attack on a major Saudi oil facility, have signaled their desire to avoid further conflict. ❖

Parnas implicates Trump in scandal

WASHINGTON — Lev Parnas, an associate of Rudy Giuliani, said he warned a top aide to the newly elected president of Ukraine that the U.S. would halt aid to the country if it didn't announce investigations that could benefit President Trump politically (Wall Street Journal). In a May meeting with Serhiy Shefir, an aide to then-Ukrainian President-elect Volodymyr Zelensky, Mr. Parnas delivered the message at the direction of Mr. Giuliani, Mr. Trump's personal lawyer, he said in an interview with MSNBC's Rachel Maddow on Wednesday. "Rudy told me after meeting the president at the White House—he called me, the message was, it wasn't just military aid, it was all aid" that the U.S. would cut off if Ukraine didn't announce investigations, Mr. Parnas said. In addition to halting aid, he said he told Mr. Shefir that without an announcement of investigations, the relationships "would be soured" and no U.S. officials—including Vice President Mike Pence—would attend Mr. Zelensky's inauguration. Mr. Pence didn't attend the inauguration later that month, though a handful of other U.S. officials did. On Wednesday, Mr. Parnas broadly tied Mr. Trump to efforts by himself and Mr. Giuliani to press Ukrainian officials to announce those investigations. "President Trump knew exactly what was going on," he said on MSNBC. "He was aware of all of my movements. I wouldn't do anything without the consent of Rudy Giuliani and the president." Asked why Mr. Trump said he didn't know him last fall, Mr. Parnas replied: "He lied."



Pence was 'in the loop' says Parnas

WASHINGTON — In an interview with Rachel Maddow Wednesday night, Lev Parnas said that Vice Presi-

dent Mike Pence was given the task of telling Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy that if he did not announce his government's investigation into the Bidens, the U.S. would not provide any military aid (Newsweek). When asked if Pence was aware of the quid pro quo, Parnas said, "I'm going to use a famous quote from [Ambassador Gordon] Sondland. Everybody was in the loop." Newsweek reached out to the White House for comment but did not receive a response in time for publication. Parnas said that Pence was scheduled to be a guest at Zelenskiy's inauguration. "It was already planned out, it was already discussed," Parnas said. But Parnas told Zelenskiy's senior aide Sergei Schaffer that if the investigation were not announced, then the relationship between Ukraine and the U.S. would become "sour." "The announcement was the key at that time because of the inauguration and I told him Pence would not show up, nobody would show up to his inauguration," Parnas said. "It was particularly Vice President Mike Pence." Pence's visit to the inauguration was canceled the day after Parnas met with Schaffer.

House votes to send impeachment

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House voted Wednesday to send two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump to the Senate and approve House prosecutors for only the third impeachment trial in American history (AP). The nearly party-line vote moved Trump's impeachment from Speaker Nancy Pelosi's Democratic-run House to the Republican-majority Senate, where Trump expects quick acquittal, even as new evidence is raising fresh questions about his Ukraine dealings. The vote was 228-193, coming at the start of a presidential election year and one month after the House impeached Trump alleging abuse of power over his pressure on Ukraine to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden, using military aid to the country as leverage. Trump was also

charged with obstructing Congress' ensuing probe. "We are here today to cross a very important threshold in American history," Pelosi said, addressing the House before the vote. Trump, during an event at the White House, rejected the charges as a "hoax."

CJ Rush connects opioids to jails

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana's courts are working with police, legislators and others to thread the needle on jail overcrowding (WIBC). In her annual State of the Judiciary address, Chief Justice Loretta Rush says the opioid epidemic has flooded Indiana's courts, and jail often isn't the best answers. She says judges need the best possible risk assessments to assess which offenders represent a danger to the community if released, and then should release lower-risk offenders without bail. Rush calls the justice system "the single biggest referral source to get someone to treatment." She says judges need to recognize addiction is a brain disease, not a moral failure, and treat defendants accordingly to get them the help they need.

Fired president sought teenage boy

FRANKLIN — Franklin College's former president arranged to meet what he thought was a 15-year old boy at a fast food restaurant in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, saying he was attracted to younger men, according to a criminal complaint filed Wednesday in a Door County, Wisconsin, circuit court (Ratliff, Statehouse File). Thomas Minar, who was terminated by Franklin over the weekend, used a dating app called Grindr to exchange messages with an undercover police officer who identified himself as a minor, the complaint says. The officer identified himself as Tyler and originally told Minar he contacted him on accident and was too young. Minar responded: "You're not too young for me :)"