

Hoosiers facing generational crisis

But Indiana leaders are flying blind early without testing

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Hoosiers are facing their greatest physical and economic threat since the Great Depression and on the most crucial aspect of this crisis – the availability of coronavirus testing that would allow health and policy executives to learn of the extent of the spread and contact trace those in a cluster – we are flying blind.

At this writing, only a mere 193 out of 6.85 million Hoosiers have been tested. While there have been 39 confirmed cases and two deaths, Bill Joy, the computer scientist who co-founded Sun Microsystems, told New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, “The last few weeks were actually pretty unsurprising and predictable in how the pandemic spread. But we’ve now reached a point where all of our interlocking systems, each with their own feedback



Vice President Mike Pence with members of the coronavirus task force answering questions at the White House last week.

loops, are all shutting down in unpredictable ways. This will inevitably lead to some random and chaotic consequences, like health care workers not having child care.”

Continued on page 3

Navigating virus legalities

By **JOSHUA CLAYBOURN**

EVANSVILLE — Howey Politics Indiana has received questions from readers about the novel coronavirus. Here, we compile answers to your legal questions.

Where does the power to quarantine and close businesses come from?

For the most part, states have wide latitude under the 10th Amendment to protect public health. The federal government can make recommendations and offer suggested guidelines, but much more beyond that would be a stretch under the commerce clause. Most power for this rests with the states.

Why does the governor



“This partnership between the ISDH and Eli Lilly & Co., will be transformational in our efforts to accelerate testing for COVID-19.”

- Gov. Eric Holcomb after the company decided to begin tests in its labs at no cost to the state.





Howey Politics Indiana
WWWHowey Media, LLC
c/o Business Office
PO Box 6553
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Brian A. Howey, Publisher
Mark Schoeff Jr., Washington
Mary Lou Howey, Editor
Susan E. Joiner, Editor

Subscriptions

HPI, HPI Daily Wire \$599
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Lisa Houchell, Account Manager
 (765) 452-3936 telephone
 (765) 452-3973 fax
 HPI.Business.Office@howeypolitics.com

Contact HPI

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

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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



have so much authority?

All of the governor's actions must first be approved by the legislature, but in virtually every state the legislature has delegated broad powers to the governor whenever he or she declares an emergency. (Congress has done the same for the president.)

What about mayors?

Mayors generally lack the authority governors have and when the two conflict, the state government usually wins because cities are creations of the state. But in the vast majority of situations, mayors are acting with the authority and blessing of state government.

Doesn't shutting down my church or restaurant violate the 1st Amendment?

No. Limiting the number of people at a gathering, including churches, is permissible. Thus far the orders have been content-neutral. The rules must simply compel governmental interest and be narrowly tailored to achieve that interest.

Are bars and restaurants really required to close down in Indiana?

As noted above, the governor has sweeping powers because a public health emergency has been declared. However, Gov. Holcomb's statement allegedly requiring closures comes in a single bullet point of a press release "directive," not in a for-

mal executive order or proclamation. Since this was originally released, Gov. Holcomb issued an executive order. Notably, neighboring governors used executive orders to accomplish this. Indiana state law (I.C. 10-14-3-12) requires that emergency gubernatorial powers be in the form of an executive order or proclamation, and that this order or proclamation be promptly filed with the secretary of state and with the clerk of the city or town affected or with the clerk of the circuit court. This initially created confusion and arguably makes the directive unenforceable.

Will businesses be able to sue for lost earnings under the 5th Amendment's "nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation"?

That's unlikely, but we don't have a lot of case law offering guidance in this situation. Deprivation of all economically beneficial use is, from the perspective of a property owner, deprivation of the property itself. But the closures are short term and still allow take out/delivery. Courts reviewing any such a balancing test, and owners, would need to prove the closures interfered with reasonable investment-backed expectations. In *Tahoe-Sierra Preservation Council, Inc. v. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency* (2002), business closures for 24- and eight-month periods were not considered a taking because; in short, fluctuations in

property value cannot be considered constitutional takings.

What about the rule of law?

While it is always critical to follow the law, it is especially important in times of crisis. Our true character will be revealed in times like these. Our system of the rule of law is based on society collectively respecting boundaries. We tell each other and ourselves that the words we ascribe to the law – due process, equality, justice – actually have force and meaning. We believe, against cynicism, that we're ruled not by raw power but by these magical words which form the rule of law. But this only works if we each choose to believe and respect these norms and

customs. It's up to each of us to support it. There are few things more important to a society's success and longevity. ❖

Joshua Claybourn is an attorney based in Evansville. This column has been prepared for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. This information is not intended to create, and receipt of it does not constitute, an attorney-client relationship. Do not act upon this information without seeking professional counsel.

Pandemic, from page 1

Joy described the power of exponentials: "The virus is like a loan shark who charges 25% a day interest. We borrowed \$1 (the first coronavirus to appear here). We then fiddled for 40 days. Now we owe \$7,500. If we wait three more weeks to pay, we'll owe almost \$1 million."

Last Friday, Dr. Box, Indiana's health commissioner, said modeling showed that up to 60,000 Hoosiers may be carrying the highly contagious virus. If these unknowing carriers transmit it to 2.5 people, as pandemic models suggest, another 150,000 people can be exposed, and they become spreaders. "People ask me a lot of times, 'Well, how many negatives have you had?' Well, unfortunately I don't have that knowledge," Dr. Box said.

Dr. Woody Myers, the presumptive Democratic gubernatorial nominee and past state health commissioner, said Wednesday that testing should be the "top priority" at this stage of the pandemic. "Without testing, we don't know where the patients are, where the clusters are," Myers said.

"Stealth" coronavirus cases are fueling the pandemic, with a staggering 86% of people infected walking around undetected, according to a study Monday in the journal *Science*. "It's the undocumented infections which are driving the spread of the outbreak," said co-author Jeffrey Shaman of Columbia University Mailman School, according to *GeekWire*.

That's why when Gov. Eric Holcomb announced the state's first death on Monday, he ominously said, "This is the beginning. This is real." He and Dr. Box will give an update at 1 p.m. today in the Statehouse south atrium.

[You can watch the livestreaming by clicking here.](#)

Since Monday, Holcomb has ordered all bars and restaurants closed; limited public gatherings to a maxi-

mum of 50 people; and activation of the National Guard to help with logistics and, if needed, establish MASH units. More than 270 school districts have closed, as have most of the colleges and universities. The NCAA's March Madness has been cancelled, as have the ISHAA tournaments.

If the Indianapolis 500 is cancelled (at this writing it's still on for May, but like the Kentucky Derby likely to be postponed), that would be a devastating economic hit on



Dr. Kristina Box said modeling has shown 60,000 Hoosiers could be infected, but lacks testing to determine where the patients and clusters are..

the state. The Indiana Business Resource Center commissioned a study in 2000 that estimated the economic impact was \$331 million. Adjusted for inflation in 2010, it was estimated to be \$431.1 million. It will almost certainly crest the \$500 million figure this year.

Holcomb faces a similar scenario as Gov. Mitch Daniels did in 2008, when the Great Recession almost sacked the domestic auto industry and Indiana's extensive

network of auto supply firms. Holcomb's second term, should he defeat Dr. Myers in November, is likely to be in stark economic contrast to his first term, which was marked by record investments and low jobless rates (it was 3.1% in January).

Treasury Sec. Steve Mnuchin warned Republican senators at their weekly Tuesday luncheon that unemployment could reach 20%, levels seen in places like Elkhart, Kokomo and Anderson during the 2008-09 Great Recession.

At least 60 American health care workers have tested positive for the virus with just 4,226 cases reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Wednesday. Of those cases, 229 were travel-related, 245 came via close contact, and 3,752 are under investigation. According to the Harvard Global Health Institute, if 60% of the U.S. population contracts the virus, the nation would need seven times the number of available hospital beds. That has prompted calls for additional beds to be created in now-vacant college dorms and private surgery centers.

The United States is expected to lose 4.6 million travel-related jobs this year as the coronavirus outbreak levies an \$809 billion blow to the economy, according to the U.S. Travel Association.

An internal report from the Department of Health and Human Services obtained by the New York Times concluded that the "pandemic will last 18 months or longer and could include multiple waves of illness."

Without widespread testing, Indiana and the U.S. has been faced with literally shutting down the economy, as opposed to South Korea, which tested and isolated those infected without broader shutdown.

The Trump administration is working on a \$1 trillion rescue package that could include two \$2,000 checks to be mailed to most Americans, one within two weeks and a second in May, and \$50 billion for the American airline industry. Last Sunday the Federal Reserve cut interest rates to zero. With budget deficits already more than \$1 trillion, and national debt more than \$22 trillion, the American quiver is quickly running out of arrows. What happens if "social distancing" lasts six to 18 months, as opposed to six weeks?

Vice President Mike Pence, who heads the federal coronavirus task force, said on Tuesday, "Every American can be confident that we're going to do whatever it takes to keep the American people safe and when we defeat the coronavirus in the United States, the economy will come roaring back. All of our health experts agree, you do not need the results of coronavirus testing to know what you should do. Every American in every community should be

following President Trump's guidelines."

As for President Trump, he told the nation on Tuesday, "This is a pandemic. I felt it was a pandemic long before it was called a pandemic."

On Jan. 22, he told CNBC when asked about a pandemic, "We have it totally under control. It's one person coming in from China, and we have it under control. It's going to be just fine." On Feb. 27, at a White House meeting: "It's going to disappear. One day – it's like a miracle – it will disappear." On March 7, standing next to President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil at Mar-a-Lago, he was asked if he was concerned. "No, I'm not concerned at all. No, I'm not. No, we've done a great job."

The president, who at the 2016 Republican National Convention declared, "I alone can fix it," was asked last Friday about the lack of testing. "I don't take responsibility at all," he said. The "responsibility" in the wake of its glaring absence from Washington has essentially been shouldered by both Republican and Democratic governors, sports league commissioners, and mayors.



Gov. Eric Holcomb visits the Indiana Emergency Operations Center which has been activated to Level One.

Beth Cameron, who headed the National Security Council's pandemic response team, observed in a Washington Post op-ed, "When President Trump took office in 2017, the White House's National Security Council Directorate for Global Health Security and Biodefense survived the transition intact. Its mission was the same as when I was asked to lead the office, established after the Ebola epidemic of 2014: To do everything possible within the vast powers and resources of the U.S. government to prepare for the next disease outbreak and prevent it from becoming an epidemic or pandemic. One year later, I was mystified when the White House dissolved the office, leaving the country less prepared for pandemics like COVID-19. The U.S. government's slow and inadequate response to the new coronavirus underscores the need for organized, accountable leadership to prepare for and respond to pandemic threats. In a health security crisis, speed is essential. When this new coronavirus emerged, there was no clear White House-led structure to oversee our response, and we lost valuable time."

Ron Klain, the Indianapolis native who headed

President Obama’s Ebola task force in 2014-15, said on CNN Wednesday, “As bad as this is, something worse is yet to come. The virus will be more patient than we are.”

Status of testing

ISDH Communications Director Jennifer O’Malley told HPI on Wednesday that “the ISDH lab is testing seven days a week, with results typically available within 24 hours. LabCorp is also performing tests in the state. All options for expanding testing are being explored. ISDH received additional testing materials from the CDC last week and again this week.

“Despite the additional supplies, ISDH, like other states, still has finite resources for testing because we receive our materials from the CDC,” O’Malley continued. “We are prioritizing high-risk individuals and healthcare workers, but individuals who do not meet those criteria can pursue testing through a private lab with their healthcare provider. Private labs have been asked to report their results to ISDH, and all information received is included in the count. However, there may be some lag time while private lab results are in transit to ISDH.”

On Wednesday, Eli Lilly & Company announced it will use its labs to test for the virus, adding to the state’s testing capabilities and making testing available for more people. Lilly is also piloting drive-through testing. “This partnership between the Indiana State Department of Health and Eli Lilly and Company will be transformational in our efforts to accelerate testing for COVID-19,” Gov. Holcomb said. “We are grateful for Lilly’s dedication to the health and safety of Hoosiers as we continue to put all of our focus into slowing the spread.”

Pence counting on personal hygiene

Vice President Pence told National Public Radio’s Steve Inskeep on Wednesday, “It really is all about trying to focus on two things. No. 1 is we really believe if every American will take strong steps now over the next 15 days, that we can significantly impact the spread of the coronavirus in the United States. And also, as every American puts these common sense personal habits and hygiene into practice, we’re going to protect the most vulnerable among us.”

Inskeep pressed Pence on the pandemic modeling he has seen: How many people are on their way to being sick, for example? How serious will the damage to the economy will be if nothing is done? What are your assumptions about how bad this is?

PENCE: Well, we got modeling in in the last several days, and that’s what precipitated the president’s decision. But let me say – and Dr. Tony Fauci and Dr. Deborah Birx, two of the leading experts in the world on



infectious disease, tell us – is that we are still at that point in the spread of the coronavirus in the United States where strong action, common sense, personal hygiene and what they call social distancing for now among every American can significantly reduce the spread of the virus in our country.

INSKEEP: But is that taking it from catastrophe to still a disaster, or what is on the horizon here?

PENCE: Well, look. There will be many thousands of Americans that contract the coronavirus. We know that. And as we expand testing, those numbers are going to be more evident to the American public every day. But what your listeners should know is that most Americans who contract the coronavirus will either have mild to serious flu-like symptoms and completely recover. Many will have no symptoms at all.”

Surgeon General Jerome Adams acknowledged on NBC’s “Today Show” Wednesday that the Trump administration’s recommendation that Americans practice preventive measures for 15 days is “likely not going to be enough” time to successfully halt the spread of the coronavirus pandemic in the United States. Fifteen days is likely not going to be enough to get us all the way through. But we really need to lean into it now so that we can bend the curve in the next 15 days, and at that point we’ll reassess.”

Epilogue

On Monday, Gov. Holcomb said, “For those of you who think we are over-reacting, I can assure you we are not. Indiana is under a state of emergency. We will win this war with COVID-19. Make no mistake about it, collectively the actions we are taking today will have a positive impact 30, 60, 90 days later.”

While he didn’t speak, Indiana National Guard Brig. Gen. R. Dale Lyles was present at the Statehouse press conference when Holcomb said the state had “contingency plans” to deal with a flood of cases that some fear will swamp the medical system: “We will respond to facts on the ground,” Holcomb said. “We want to stay as ahead of the game as we can. Every tool, every resource is on the table. We’re trying to slow the curve so it doesn’t last as long. We have resources around the state to deal with a surge.”

David Lauter of the Los Angeles Times reported: “The coronavirus pandemic has confronted governments around the globe with the ultimate bad choice: Wreck your economy or lose millions of lives. While some initially hesitated, leaders and legislators in the United States and worldwide increasingly have decided they have to accept the severe economic pain.”

“Everything else will come back,” President Trump said Tuesday even as the economic downturn and global turmoil deepened. “Lives won’t come back.” ❖

Time for timidity is now over

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE — This is the third column I've written this week. The first two were overcome by fast changing events. So, I will surrender to the deadline and pen a few words about how to think about COVID-19 over the longer term. This should help us formulate and accept the challenges of the coming months.



We are in recession which will be very deep one. Before today, the single largest increase in unemployment came in September 1945, right after V-J Day. That month we lost 1.9 million jobs. As of March 1, the U.S. had 2.66 million waiters and waitresses. Nearly all of them are now unemployed. The U.S. unemployment rate will double in two weeks, and rise to double digits by May. By June the unemployment rate will be higher than at any point since the Great Depression. From that point forward, things might get worse. It depends mostly on the path of this disease, and how we respond.

Some believe we are overreacting to the coronavirus. They may be right, but for the past several weeks, many epidemiologists across the globe have produced startling research about this disease. These aren't people who read casually about it, but the men and women in university laboratories who will write the book on this disease. If you argue that we are over reacting, the world wants to see your epidemiological projections and cost estimates. If you don't have any, follow Abraham Lincoln's advice and remain silent.

Some believe we are overreacting to the coronavirus. They may be right, but for the past several weeks, many epidemiologists across the globe have produced startling research about this disease. These aren't people who read casually about it, but the men and women in university laboratories who will write the book on this disease. If you argue that we are over reacting, the world wants to see your epidemiological projections and cost estimates. If you don't have any, follow Abraham Lincoln's advice and remain silent.

I have noted before that the mathematics of epidemiology are similar to mathematics of economics. Perhaps that why a very large share of economists have called for rapid, and expensive intervention. We economists can see their work and put dollar figures to the epidemiological estimates. By my reckoning, without this aggressive actions, the costs of the most optimistic estimates of this disease in the U.S. exceed \$5 trillion. Medical care costs will add perhaps another \$2 trillion. Again, this is on the optimistic side.

The recession we are in is, thus, a recession of choice. The only other clear example like it occurred in 1942, when we rationed food, gasoline, and clothing. To owners and workers in restaurants, service stations and haberdasheries, World War II was a deep recession. I think it best to think about this event like we thought about pub-

lic policy in World War II, except that our challenges are more modest.

The austerity of wartime rationing did not cause a broad recession because labor was absorbed by the production of tanks, ships and airplanes as well as a military draft. Much of the benefit of that production was destroyed on the battlefield. Today we have far happier choices about the way we spend money.

The most immediate economic goal is to sustain household spending. In a slower moving crises affecting a broader set of workers, we could affect this through the existing unemployment insurance system. That system is too archaic, and too full of gaps to properly sustain a meaningful share of newly unemployed workers. We require something more like a short term universal basic income.

Second, we must insure that small and medium sized businesses are around when the recovery comes. This can be done through loans, and some easing of bank regulations on collecting of delinquent loans. In this, we would be wise to avoid bailouts to larger firms, who have their own ability to raise capital.

In a normal world, these two actions should be sufficient to restore economic confidence. But, the Trump administration has squandered time and trust. There will be later opportunity plenty to fully critique their efforts, but to steady financial markets in the coming days this Administration needs to be much more aggressive with their approach. They also need more disciplined communications. Rarely, if ever, has stock market turbulence been so clearly attributed to fumbling, thoughtless policy response and presidential speeches.

Recovery is uncertain; timing is not. Indiana has a large Rainy Day Fund, but we are in a monsoon. We should be thinking about ways to spend money that accomplish long term wishes. If there has ever been a time to support broadband deployment it is now. We should have some sort of reasonably priced broadband communication available for nearly every home in Indiana before school resumes in August. Without it, school may not start again this fall.

I'm afraid that the state needs to plan to spend nearly \$2 billion of our Rainy Day Fund over the next next 12 months. We may not need to, but that is an appropriate planning target.

Finally, we should acknowledge that the burden of this crisis will not be borne equally by households. We are embracing a recession to reduce the rate of death and disease. That is prudent and appropriate, but most of us face little economic disruption otherwise. As in wartime, we must think through ways to equalize this burden. We should expect a more progressive tax structure, and should consider better ways to educate displaced workers.



We face unprecedented economic decline in the coming months. Thus far the economic damage we face is a result of an insufficiently aggressive reaction to an obviously expanding crisis. We now face a deep recession and by June an unemployment rate not seen in 85 years. Almost nothing we do today is too bold. ❖

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

What Congress represents

By **LEE HAMILTON**

INDIANAPOLIS — In one of the U.S. Capitol hallways that House members pass through regularly to get to the chambers, there's an inscription of a comment by Alexander Hamilton. It comes from his 1788 remarks to the New York convention on ratifying the Constitution, and reads simply, "Here, Sir, the people govern."



I've always thought that was a pretty good summation of what Congress represents: It is a repository of the thoughts and will of the American people. And my impression is that a lot of Americans think highly of that idea, too. I've held a lot of

public meetings over the years, and even in recent times, when Congress's public standing has been low, people often speak approvingly of the history of the institution itself; they're disappointed in how Congress performs, not in its role within our system. In all that time, I can't ever remember anyone saying we'd be better off without it.

My experience in the House bore that belief out. Though there were always flaws, the process the House followed was focused on deliberation, debate, discussion, and then choosing a solution based more often than not on a rough consensus of its members. Even if I didn't agree with the results, I'd often listen to the debates and think, "I like the way this institution works."

I still remember the time that Wilbur Mills, the powerful chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, came before the Democratic caucus to talk about the upcoming vote on establishing Medicare. I was a new, young representative, and when Mills told us that we easily had enough votes to ram the measure through over Republican objections, I and many others thought we should do exactly that. Mills, however, did not. He asked us to give him an opportunity to negotiate with Republicans and find ground that both sides could agree on, so that the bill could win support on both sides of the aisle. And that is exactly what he did.

Mills knew something that often gets forgotten these days, which is that the more broadly a piece of legislation reflects the American people, the greater its acceptability, effectiveness, and staying power. If you're in Congress, you're reminded pretty much every day that giving a say to this diverse country is a choice. The body is made up of members who fiercely advocate for their views through speeches, contacts of all kinds and descriptions, public appearances, and trying to win the media over to their side. And the whole institution is a focal point for competing interests weighing in on difficult problems. It is a real cauldron.

All of these beliefs are represented in the Congress, and the legislative process is a key part of how the country works through that cacophony of competing interests. Debate, deliberation, calculation, compromise — it's an inefficient process that, for difficult issues, can go on for a long time. But over the course of our history, it's been reasonably productive.

This is why those of us who value the institution of the Congress — who actually believe in Hamilton's words — have lamented the trend of recent decades ceding power to the presidency. The Constitution is explicit: Legislative power is vested in Congress. But if that power is not protected or goes unused, it does not merely evaporate; in our system, it flows to the presidency or the judiciary. And in doing so, it passes out of the hands of the body that most closely represents the American people.

When President Trump talks of the presidency as if there were no check on it, as if, as president, he is beyond the reach of the law or of Congress, members of Congress on both sides of the aisle rightly disagree. Sometimes they serve effectively as a check, sometimes not. Sometimes partisanship gets the better of them. But for better or worse, Congress remains the spot where the cross-currents of American popular opinion have their best chance of being heard, listened to, and acted upon. That's one power members should never give up. ❖

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies

What my Facebook ‘friends’ are saying

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – This column is dedicated to my Facebook friends and their friends. I’m writing it in response to the many ridiculous, clueless, heartless and just plain stupid posts that many of my friends have written over the past week. I call them Facebook friends, but in a real



sense, they are merely acquaintances or friends of friends of friends. I have nearly 1,600 “friends” on Facebook but in reality, I’ve never met most of them.

Because of my political work and work as a columnist on HoweyPolitics.com, I receive a lot of friend requests. Normally, these “friends” are a good source for stories and scoops in the making. They are always

interesting for entertainment purposes. They have great memes and funny jokes. But then along came the Covid-19 virus.

I’m now giving strong consideration to pruning my Facebook tree way back because many of these people have turned just downright loony. The number of wild and wacky conspiracy theories, attacks on government officials and callous disregard for their fellow man has moved from just irritating to alarming. Here’s just a sample of some of the garbage being posted for human consumption:

- Corona virus is a governmental plot to take away our constitutional freedoms.
- The Bilderbergs and the Council on Foreign Relations have engineered the entire crisis.
- The Democrats, the media and big business have hyped a minor flu bug into a freedom-threatening crisis.
- Sports are more important than a few people dying.
- Donald Trump is responsible for the pandemic because he blocked test kits.
- The virus is no worse than the annual flu or pneumonia.
- Trump is using the crisis to attack illegal immigration.
- In every country where there was a serious outbreak, they have socialized medicine.
- Homeschooling is better than public education.
- Gov. Holcomb is trying to destroy churches with his emergency order.
- The safest place to be during a pandemic is church.

- The Chinese created the virus for military purposes and it got out of control.
- COVID-19 is God’s way of thinning the herd.
- The virus crisis has been engineered to take down Trump.

I’m shocked that seemingly intelligent people could come up with some of this stuff. Even giving an allowance for boredom and cabin fever, there’s a lot of disturbing stuff floating around.

Some of the blame for this should probably fall on some of our government officials and the media. Not that anyone in our government could have done anything to prevent the spread of the virus or that the media has overhyped the threat. The blame might be that we have failed to speak to the American people in plain and simple terms. I’m sorry, but the average person fails to grasp the meaning of the need to “flatten the curve of virus spread.” I think that most people are aware that there are serious problems in China, Iran and Italy, but why in the heck are they canceling March Madness and my spring break?

I believe that government and the media are trying to have it both ways, tell the public that it is very serious and yet not scare them out of their wits. I’m not sure that the message is getting through. Here is the situation as I see it:

We have a worldwide spread of a virus that is extremely contagious and has a kill rate that is about 10 times greater than the annual influenza bug that we are all familiar with. Even though we have the best healthcare system in the world, it is nowhere even close to being able to handle the effective treatment of a huge spike in hospital demand. Our decades-long reliance on managed care has shrunk the number of empty hospital beds in order to control costs. We have great hospitals and healthcare for normal demand but are woefully unprepared for surges in demand. Because of this hospital bed shortage, a normal growth of the spread of the virus curve will become unmanageable in approximately two to three weeks. The best we can do is try to slow the spread of the virus so that hospitals and medical professionals can handle the influx of patients.

In all likelihood, we will all come down with the virus at some point. For some, it will be a mild case of Hoosier “creeping crud” and for others, the elderly and those with health challenges, it will be a battle for life. “Depressing the curve” is merely a plea to help us help ourselves.

If you want to know what the alternative is to depressing the curve, look to Italy. Hospitals have been overwhelmed and now physicians are being forced to decide how to allocate scarce medical resources. This is a sanitized way of saying that doctors must choose who lives and who dies. It is sad and frightening and it is happening right now in Italy. If we are not vigilant, it will soon happen to our neighbors and our own families.

I grew up admiring my parents for being part of the “greatest generation.” They suffered through the Great

Depression and World War II, endured shortages of every necessity in life, battled hunger, experienced crippling unemployment, lost friends and family to our enemies in war and yet carried on with an indomitable spirit that could not be conquered.

I wondered if my generation of Baby Boomers would be the lucky ones to avoid an existential crisis in our lifetime. Now, this is our challenge. We will either be successful or we won't. There will be no participation tro-

phies. It is our time to act in a manner that will bring pride to future generations. The great challenge is not in scoring an extra 24-roll package of Charmin, but in acting in such a way as to save the lives of unnamed and unknown others. Are you up to the challenge? ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman.

Could coronavirus make us trust institutions again?

By **PETE SEAT**

INDIANAPOLIS – Long before COVID-19 appeared in Wuhan, China, there was in the United States a deep chasm between government and constituent, business and customer, media and information consumer. This gulf is regularly gauged by the Edelman Trust Barometer, an annual measure of how Americans look at the institutions charged with protecting us, profiting our economy to the benefit of our citizenry and keeping us informed.



And while it's easy to blame distrust in our institutions as a consequence of the present political environment, 20 years of Edelman surveys can attest that the seeds were planted long ago and the trust has eroded over successive administrations and Congresses, and across generations of CEOs and a multitude of nightly news anchors.

This year's Trust Barometer, published just as COVID-19 emerged in our country, concluded that our institutions needed to "embrace a new way of effectively building trust: Balancing competence with ethical behavior." As this global pandemic spreads across the world and runs its course, could a consistently competent and ethical response bring about a cessation to our lack of institutional trust? Maybe not fervent trust, but at least a tepid détente between us and them?

Corporate business interests may have read the report because they are proactively moving to re-establish trust with their customers during this time. My inbox has been flooded with virus-related updates from Celebrity Cruises to Buffalo Wild Wings to DraftKings, all favorites of mine. Each brand is both sensitive to public

perception and committed to showing leadership in the face of global uncertainty.

In fact, many brands are making decisions that stand in opposition to their economic interest but that are squarely in the public's health interest. This includes cruise lines such as Royal Caribbean offering a 125% cruise credit to passengers who cancel, airlines waiving change fees for those traveling to Europe and Asia, and pharmacy and food delivery services either canceling or deferring delivery fees and commissions. Short-term pain will hit their bottom lines, but the rapport built with customers could yield long-term loyalty.

But what about government and the media? Government is expected to act in the interests of everyone, not only the few. And the media is expected to truthfully disseminate information while offering even-handed accountability. Are they keeping their end of the bargain?

To do their part, the White House is holding near daily briefings with either the president or vice president, alongside public health experts such as Hoosier Alex Azar, Hoosier Jerome Adams and Hoosier Seema Verma (I just like saying Hoosier over and over again). And national media outlets including CNN and Fox News are airing COVID-19 specials, with doctors and nurses explaining in full detail how to prevent contracting the virus and treat it if infected. So far, these two institutions are doing the jobs we expect them to do.

Whether they ultimately succeed in reigniting trust in the relationship is still an open question, but we see how ripe this opportunity is for renewal by how quickly sports organizations, major events and every day Americans heeded the words and advice of Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and suspended seasons, postponed conventions or implemented social distancing. Americans are craving guidance and are openly ready to respond to competence and ethical behavior.

And that's being reflected in polling, too. Already viewed more positively than the federal government, swift action by state and local governments produced high numbers of confidence in their ability to tackle this crisis in an NBC/Wall Street Journal poll. According to the survey, "a combined 75% of all voters say they have a great deal or a fair amount of confidence in their state governments to deal with the outbreak." Seventy-two percent have

the same feelings for their local governments and 62% expressed confidence in the federal government. These numbers, at least nationally, may be filled more with hope than learned despair.

Too keep the momentum going, it's time we listen to Rahm Emanuel and do our best to not let a serious crisis go to waste. This goes for government, business, media and the public. Competence requires coordination, therefore our institutions should join forces to form a competent and ethical army to fight the virus on multiple fronts. And as the NBA, MLB and NHL suspended their seasons, we the public should suspend our disbelief that business, government and the media is acting in our best interests. Nightmares of dogs and cats living together (mass hysteria!) aside, we still turn to the media for news and the media turns to government and business for answers.

Presented here with COVID-19 is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to mitigate loss through illness and prevent economic calamity, while also engendering the trust Americans should have in their public and private institutions. When we look back on these trying weeks, we will either recall them as the time we reversed the damage of decades of neglect, or as the time we reinforced the damage and made it an irreparable reality. ❖

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. Senator Dan Coats. Currently he is a vice president with Bose Public Affairs Group in Indianapolis, Indiana. He is also an Atlantic Council Millennium Fellow and author of the 2014 book, "The War on Millennials."

Brizzi, McDermott call for delay of primary

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Fifth CD Republican Carl Brizzi and 1st District Democrat Thomas McDermott Jr., are calling on Secretary of State Connie Lawson to delay Indiana's May 5 primary.

Lawson's office was coy when Howey Politics Indiana asked if a delay was under consideration. Lawson spokeswoman Valerie Warycha told HPI on Tuesday, "I'll be in touch when I have something to share."

Mayor McDermott told the NWI Times' Dan Carden on Wednesday, "The health and safety of both voters and election workers has to be the most important factor as our state leaders consider what to do about Election Day. For that reason, I am urging Secretary of State Lawson and the Indiana Election Commission to move Election Day at least 30 days, to early June."

McDermott was joined by Democratic rival Jim Harper, who told the Times, "In the coming days, our focus as a community should be on stopping the spread of this virus and supporting our neighbors in need."

On Tuesday, Brizzi said, "With coronavirus spreading across the United States, several states have already altered their primary contests in response to growing concerns. I don't want to do anything that puts Hoosiers at risk. As such, I am calling for the postponement of Indiana's May 5 primary. Not an easy decision, but the safety of poll workers and voters takes precedence. Free and fair elections are the foundation of American democracy, we need to ensure that all Hoosiers are heard and are safe."

Fifth CD Democrat Christina Hale told HPI on Wednesday, "Our top priority needs to be the health and safety of Hoosier families. Expanding no-excuse absentee-by-mail would allow us to prioritize public health while ensuring that every voter is able to cast their ballot by May 5."

Not all candidates were on board. State Rep. Mara Candelaria Reardon running in the 1st CD was against the delay, telling the Times, "This global pandemic has led to uncertain times, and all of us Americans have to work together to get through it. But one thing that will not help — and in fact be detrimental to our state and country — is sowing added uncertainty into our lives."

In a joint letter sent Friday to the Indiana Election Commission from Indiana GOP Chairman Kyle Hupfer and Indiana Democratic Party Chairman John Zody, they suggest allowing any registered voter to vote absentee by mail (IBJ). "The coronavirus pandemic is causing all of us to consider precautionary measures related to group gatherings and general interaction with other people, and Election Day is no exception," the letter said. Currently, Indiana voters can vote absentee by mail if they have a disability, are at least 65 years old, are a member of the military or are public safety official, are a "serious sex offender" or have a specific reason they can't vote on Election Day, such as unavailability of transportation, have to work the entire 12 hours polls are open or are confined due to illness or injury, Zody and Hupfer say they think the Election Commission should suspend that rule so voters do not need a reason to vote by mail. They are also requesting that the deadline to vote absentee by mail be extended to a date closer to Election Day. Currently, the deadline is 12 days before the election. They suggest that the extended date should be agreed upon unanimously by the Election Commission. "We recognize that risk to the general public is currently low; however, primary voters may have a legitimate concern about voting in person; either absentee at the clerk's office or on Election Day," the



letter said.

Meanwhile, Hupfer denied "rumors" the June GOP convention would be cancelled. "There are no plans to cancel state convention. I wanted to make sure that Republicans across the state, and especially our convention delegates, have the facts about informal discussions that have taken place among members of our state committee. Like most other large organizations that have upcoming events that will attract robust crowds, the Indiana Republican Party needs to be prepared with possible contingency plans if our planned state convention in June is impacted by the coronavirus. We do not anticipate the same sort of crowd control precautions taking place today in relation to sporting events to still be necessary in June. However, the responsible course of action is to be prepared, just in case. To that end, this morning, I had a call with members of the state committee to begin discussing what contingencies could look like if we are, indeed, impacted."

Calls for the delay come as Ohio abruptly delayed its primary on Tuesday. A judge tried to block an order by Gov. Mike DeWine, who then ordered Ohio's director of public health to "order the polls closed as a health emergency," DeWine said on Twitter. "To conduct an election tomorrow would force poll workers and vot-

ers to place themselves at an unacceptable health risk of contracting coronavirus." Illinois, Florida and Arizona held primaries, with Arizona relying heavily on balloting by mail. Kentucky, Maryland, Georgia, Louisiana and Wyoming have also announced delays. "Postponing the primary was not an easy decision, but the Republican secretary of state and the Democratic governor agreed, and so do the county clerks of both parties," Kentucky Secretary of State Michael Adams said. "My hope is that this delay will allow us to have a normal election."

Statewides

Visclosky endorses Tallian

The longest serving congressman in state history is recommending his fellow Hoosier Democrats nominate state Sen. Karen Tallian, D-Ogden Dunes, for Indiana attorney general (Carden, NWI Times). U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Gary, said Tallian has earned his "unconditional support and endorsement" because the 15-year state lawmaker "has been a true public servant throughout her career" and "demonstrated that she cares about the livelihoods of all individuals and families." ❖



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DAN SCHUBERTH
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Supply and demand with the coronavirus

By **LARRY DeBOER**

WEST LAFAYETTE — The coronavirus is a world tragedy. Millions will get sick and too many will die. All of us will worry about family and friends. All of us will miss important events in our lives. The economy will suffer too. But how much? Let's see if we can think it through using the economists' tools, supply and demand.



Supply is the production of goods and services, mostly by businesses. At first the news was about how the virus was disrupting supply chains in Asia. Businesses couldn't get parts, couldn't get products assembled, and couldn't get them shipped. Now, though, it looks like the main shortage will be employees. A

lot of people will have to stay home sick. Without all their employees, businesses can't deliver as many products, fully staff offices and factories, or stay open regular hours. Some will be required to close. Supply is reduced.

Demand is an even bigger problem. Demand is spending on goods and services, mostly by households. Social isolation will keep people at home. We'll especially cut back on the goods and services we buy in the company of groups of people. Airplanes fly with few passengers. Vacations are postponed. Sports and entertainment events are canceled. Restaurants are nearly empty or even closed. Demand is reduced.

Of course, demand increased for some goods, hand sanitizer and toilet paper, for example. This demand should slack off in relatively short order. After awhile the hall closet is bursting with toilet paper, and there's no need to buy more.

Restricted supply and lower demand will reduce the quantity of products bought and sold. Gross domestic product will fall. Unemployment will rise. There will be a recession.

Maybe the recession will be V-shaped – a sharp decline and a recovery just as sharp. After all, the economy was in good shape. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the February unemployment rate was back at 3.5%, a 50-year low. Perhaps the expansion will resume when the coronavirus fades. Businesses will get parts, their employees will return, establishments will reopen, and people will emerge from isolation and start spending, maybe a lot. Supply and demand both bounce back.

But the recession could be L-shaped – a sharp decline and then months of misery. What if businesses can't resume production, people can't go back to their jobs, and consumers can't resume spending? Businesses don't earn

revenue if they can't sell their products. If they can't pay their suppliers or the interest on their loans, some will fail. Employees can't go back to their jobs if their employers are out of business. Those incomes will be lost, so spending won't rise back to where it was. And many consumers will use up savings during the isolation, and will have to rebuild their finances by spending less.

Perhaps most dangerous of all, banks and other lenders may stop lending if many borrowers default on loans, or if lenders aren't sure about risks. Remember the financial market freeze during the Great Recession.

The recession can't be avoided, but policy might keep it V-shaped. The Federal Reserve uses monetary policy to influence interest rates, and acts as the lender of last resort. The Fed has cut rates as much as it can. This should encourage borrowing and spending. The Fed has already provided more than \$1.5 trillion in loans to financial markets, to stop them from freezing up. Most of those loans will be repaid, with interest, when the recession ends.

Fiscal policy uses federal taxing and spending. We could provide businesses and households with a bridge during the social isolation. Support revenues so businesses don't fold. Subsidize payrolls so they can keep their employees. Support household spending so people can pay rent and utilities, do essential shopping, so they don't deplete their savings as much. Those are the goals; the means are a matter of debate. But don't debate for too long!

Supply is down. Demand is down. The longest expansion in U.S. history is probably over. But if we're lucky and smart, we'll have a V-shaped downturn and recovery. If we're not so lucky, or not so smart, we'll have a longer, deeper recession.

So be smart. Keep your distance! Wash your hands!. ❖

DeBoer is professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University.

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Women's wages

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — I didn't title this column "Women at Work" because it suggests only women who are employed are working. At the same time, I don't do what the Bureau of the Census has done in a recent graphic release: Provide you with only the most recent differentials between the earnings of men and women.



Truth requires context. And the truth is, as it has been for ages, women earn less than men. In 2018, the most recent year available, the median earnings of women employed in all types of jobs, full-time, year-round, was 81.2% of men with the same employment profile. This figure is the most recent measure of the economic disparity between men and women employees.

What we aren't told is about a two-point improvement in the relative earnings of women from 79.2% in the preceding five years. Nor do we see the deterioration of the relative earnings of African-American and Hispanic women vis-à-vis men of the same description. Likewise, we don't discover the gains, relative to men, that women made, between 2013 and 2018, in professional, scientific, technical services plus manufacturing.

The data show many conflicting tendencies. But then, what we don't know won't confuse us about reality. That's why press releases are more likely to be covered by

sensation seekers than analytical reports.

What's behind these differentials? Part of the answer may lie deep in another chapter of the yet-to-be-written analysis, differential commuting patterns of men and women. Where are men and women employed? The American Community Survey for 2018 reports, 5.7% of women work at home, compared to a flat 5% of men. Women tend to live closer to their workplace than men; travel time to work for 64% of women is fewer than 30 minutes, while 58% of men enjoy a commute of less than a half an hour.

In addition, 70% of American men work in the county in which they live, but women have a greater tendency (75%) to work in their county of residence. Correspondingly, 33% of men leave for work between midnight and 7 a.m. The figure for women is 26%.

Overwhelmingly, men (85.5%) and women (80%) travel by car, truck or van. But women (23.3%) carpool or take public transit, while a somewhat smaller portion of men (22.5%) are joined by others commuting. These differences may be related to the finding that 4.4% of women have no vehicle available at home to get to work; for men the figure is 4.1%.

Together, all these small differences (time, distance, place of work, and mode of transit) may contribute to diminished job opportunities for women and the earnings differential so often observed. Or is it the other way around? As they say in professional journals, "These matters require further investigation." Won't somebody give me a grant? ❖

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



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**POLITICS - ELECTIONS
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Recession puts second Trump term in doubt

By **ALAN I. ABRAMOWITZ**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – The coronavirus pandemic has upended almost every aspect of American life over the past few weeks, and the 2020 presidential election is no exception. We have already seen candidates forced to cancel rallies, hold a debate with no audience present, and shift their campaign staffs to working online. But the biggest impact of the crisis on the 2020 election is likely to be through its effect on the U.S. economy.

With major sectors of the economy grinding to a near-standstill due to the pandemic, many economic forecasters are now predicting that the U.S. will experience a major downturn in economic growth in the current quarter that could continue for at least the next two quarters.

Some forecasters are predicting a major recession with the economy shrinking by 5% or more in the second quarter of 2020. That's significant because, in many election forecasting models, including my own "time for change" model, economic growth in the second quarter is a key predictor of the election results. Models like mine use second quarter GDP growth to measure the state of the economy because GDP is a broad measure of economic activity and the performance of the economy in the second quarter seems to shape opinions of the economy in the fall. So it's possible that even if the economy recovers later in the year, the most electorally-salient perceptions will nonetheless be formed in the spring and summer.

For the 2020 election, I have modified my time for change model by focusing entirely on elections with a running incumbent. That is because, in these elections, both the incumbent's approval rating in late June and the growth rate of the economy in the second quarter have much stronger effects than in elections without a running incumbent. I have also modified the model to make the electoral vote, rather than the popular vote, the dependent variable because it is the electoral vote that decides the winner. I unveiled this version of the model last April in the Crystal Ball.

The time for change model does an excellent job of predicting the outcomes of these elections with an adjusted R2 of .92 (this is a measure of how accurately the model predicts what happens on a 0.0 to 1.0 scale). The model predicts the correct winner of all 11 elections. The average prediction error is just 27 electoral votes. A one-point increase in the incumbent president's net approval rating (approval minus disapproval) can be expected to yield approximately 2.5 electoral votes. Likewise, a one-point increase in real GDP in the second quarter can be

expected to yield approximately 20 electoral votes. Finally, a first-term incumbent who did not take over from a member of his own party, like Donald Trump, can be expected to gain an additional 114 electoral votes compared with a second or later term incumbent -- a very substantial advantage.

It takes 270 electoral votes to win a presidential election. The results indicate that, despite the huge boost that Trump is predicted to receive as a first-term incumbent, an economic downturn in the second quarter, combined with a net approval rating in negative territory, would very likely doom Trump's chances of winning a second term. The only scenario here in which Trump would be favored to win a second term would be modest economic growth combined with a small improvement in his net approval rating, which has been stuck in the vicinity of -10 for many months according to the FiveThirtyEight average.

The model suggests that a major recession would likely result in an Electoral College landslide for Trump's Democratic challenger, especially if it is accompanied by

a further decline in the president's approval rating.



Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the results of presidential elections since World War II with running incumbents, a president with an upside-down approval rating and an economy in recession would have little chance of winning a second term in the White House. If President Trump's net approval rating remains where it is now or declines further, and if the recession is severe, with real GDP shrinking by three points or more in the second quarter, the result could well be a defeat of landslide proportions.

A few caveats are in order here. Voters may not hold an incumbent president responsible for a recession brought on by an unforeseeable disaster like the coronavirus pandemic, although they may hold him responsible for the government's response to the pandemic, which is a story that is still being written.

Moreover, in our current era of deep partisan polarization, events like recessions may not have as great an impact on an incumbent's electoral fortunes as they did in the past. We have seen that President Trump's approval rating has been remarkably stable due to almost unwavering support from his fellow Republicans and equally unwavering opposition from Democrats.

On the other hand, polarization might also mean that an incumbent, especially one who makes little effort to appeal to voters outside of his own party's base, might not receive the full benefit of incumbency, which depends on the ability of an incumbent to attract votes across party lines.

Finally, the fact that our forecasts are based on only 11 elections should make us cautious in interpreting these results despite the impressive accuracy of the model.

Overall, one of the best arguments in favor of the

president winning a second term has been strong economic performance for much of his term. The public health crisis seems very likely to depress that performance for at least the next few months. This poses an electoral threat to the president, which the model vividly demonstrates.

Indiana symbolizes statewide dominance

By LOUIS JACOBSON

By historical standards, Pete Buttigieg had a thin record in public office before he embarked upon a presidential run. Buttigieg had served two terms as mayor of South Bend, Indiana, a mid-sized city, and his one run for statewide office — for state treasurer, against a candidate who would later lose a U.S. Senate race ignominiously — ended in failure.

But Buttigieg was, like many politicians with potential, doomed to live in a state trending away from their party. In Buttigieg's case, a Democrat's chance of winning statewide office in Indiana seemed — and likely was — smaller than his chance of being elected president. Though he eventually gave in and endorsed rival Joe Biden, Buttigieg ended up as a top-tier candidate, narrowly winning the Iowa caucuses and finishing respectably in the New Hampshire primary — stronger showings than he might have had if he'd run for, say, secretary of state or state auditor back home in Indiana.

Such is the reality in today's highly polarized electorate. If you are a Democrat serving in local office in a red state, or a Republican serving in a similar post in a blue state, your chances of winning a statewide election have become vanishingly small, thanks to the highly polarized partisan preferences for filling relatively anonymous "row offices."

To understand this phenomenon fully, we looked at the partisan breakdown of major statewide offices in all 50 states. We focused on these positions — which include everything from governor, attorney general, and secretary of state to state auditor and state agriculture commissioner — because they serve as time-honored tools for ambitious politicians in both parties to climb the political ladder. We analyzed elected positions for which the candidates ran with a partisan affiliation. We included lieutenant governors only if they won election on their own, not as part of a ticket.

The Republicans swept every statewide office in 18 states, while the Democrats swept in 16 states of their own. In four other states, the Democrats beat the odds by winning the governorship even as they lost every other statewide office. The Republicans managed this trick in another three states. (The governorship, by virtue of its prominence in media coverage, is the most likely position to be evaluated on the candidate's merits, rather than by partisan preference.)

In three states, the Democrats lucked out by winning one non-gubernatorial seat amid a Republican sweep

in those states, while the Republicans managed the same feat in two states.

That leaves just four states in which a state's minority party managed to win at least two statewide offices. One of these states, Arizona, is undergoing a partisan transition from red to purple. Another state, North Carolina, has been a fierce battleground between the parties in recent election cycles. A third state, Iowa, has a history as a swing state, although less so today on the presidential level. And the fourth, Washington state, is a curiosity; a solidly blue state where the GOP has managed to hang on to both the secretary of state and state treasurer positions.

For an ambitious politician who has a proven record of winning office in a smaller geographic area -- say, in runs for mayor or county executive, this state of play is ominous. Making the leap from local positions to statewide posts today means competing on distinctly unfriendly turf, making the jump harder than ever.

Indeed, in many states, this becomes a vicious cycle. As minority-party politicians turn down longshot bids for state office -- opting instead to remain in safer local posts or to simply retire from politics -- the minority party's bench of future statewide candidates withers, further ensuring the party's long-term demise.

John Gregg, an Indiana Democrat who ran unsuccessfully for governor in both 2012 and 2016, said he faced several challenges in his bids.

"First, candidates must overcome a perception that the office is unwinnable," he said. "Regardless of the candidate's own personal experience, electoral record, and fundraising prowess, people too often make assumptions about a race before it is run. To make matters worse, in most of these places, the minority party doesn't have a strong party infrastructure, enthusiasm, and optimism."

A second factor, Gregg said, is the media. News outlets "can be somewhat dismissive because they want to follow the perceived winner. A candidate can propose detailed, well-thought-out policies and be ahead of the curve, but often there is no coverage. There are

fewer and fewer local media outlets, and that is having a huge impact on a candidate's ability to get a message out."

Indeed, Gregg said, the demise of local news has left many voters to tune into national cable outlets, which focus on fights between the national parties. That increases polarization, he said.

"Candidates are consumed by perceptions about national issues and people, regardless of whether they share those viewpoints or not," he said. "Tip O'Neill's saying that all politics is local is no longer true. Now, all politics is national."

Gregg has company. We came across skilled politicians in both parties whose aspirations have been stymied because of their party label. ❖



Mary Schmich, Chicago Tribune: How quickly it happened. How quickly we lost the chance to touch certain people we love, to hold a hand, to give a hug, to wipe away a tear. Suddenly this new virus named COVID-19 marauds across the land, and, just like that, everything is changed. Trips to see friends and family are canceled. Weddings are postponed. Funeral gatherings are called off. Jobs vanish. This too shall pass, we tell ourselves, and it will. But before it does, many people will face losses that had never crossed their minds and that may never be repaired? Sue Markgraf is among them. On Saturday, Markgraf went to visit her 81-year-old mother, who is a memory care patient in hospice in Joliet, south of Chicago. The facility - Sunny Hill Nursing Home of Will County - is excellent, Markgraf says. "It's clean, it's fun. The care my mother gets there is good." But a few days ago, Markgraf learned what she had feared: With the coronavirus spreading, visits would be restricted. Saturday's would be her last one for a while and maybe, given her mother's condition, forever. Befuddled. That's one word she uses to describe her response to the decree. Another word is mad. "It would be so much easier for me if there was somebody to be mad at," she says. "There's nobody to be mad at. No one is responsible for this. It's a virus. I'm mad at a virus that's dark and scary." Markgraf knows she's not alone. Many facilities for the elderly - the population most at risk of dying from the virus - have enforced similar restrictions in the past few days, and while those restrictions have good reasons, they've left Markgraf and many others afraid that they'll never see their elderly parents again, and fearful that their parents will feel abandoned. ❖



Calvin Trillin, The Nation:

The president believed that it made sense
To put Mike Pence in charge of our defense
Against this quickly spreading worldwide threat
To public health—perhaps the worst threat yet.
Could it be wise, some asked, to place reliance
On someone with a strong disdain for science?
At least, Mike Pence supporters say, he's trying
To modify his boss's blatant lying. ❖

Robert Zollelick, Wall Street Journal: Why would the U.S. increase the cost and difficulty of supplying protective gear to doctors and nurses? Why would Washington obstruct the acquisition of lifesaving equipment? Because the sclerosis of trade protectionism, once it takes hold, constricts economic health and adaptation. Chad Bown of the Peterson Institute for International Economics calculates that the Trump administration has imposed new taxes on almost \$5 billion of medical exports from China, totaling about 26% of U.S. health-care imports. With tariffs, the U.S. government is making it harder for first responders to procure masks, sterile gloves, goggles,

hospital gowns, surgical drapes, thermometers and breathing masks. America also imports about \$22 billion of medical technology from countries all over the world, including CT systems, patient monitors and X-ray devices. distributors are busy hunting for alternative producers and testing their equipment for interoperability when they should be concentrating on getting supplies to those in need. China, in turn, has diverted its sales to other markets. After President Trump hit Chinese medical suppliers with a 25% tariff in 2018, China's exports to the U.S. dropped by 16%. In some cases, American users had no good alternatives because suppliers must get certified by the Food and Drug Administration, which can take more than two years. U.S. medical-equipment producers have also been plagued by the president's new tariffs on imported components. ❖

Michael Gerson, Washington Post: Every time Vice President Pence appears for a coronavirus briefing, it is a reminder what the votes of just 20 Republican senators for impeachment might have accomplished for the republic. Pence is no Franklin D. Roosevelt, but neither is he an obviously outmatched leader like his boss. The vice president is a sycophant but not an incompetent. He possesses the type of qualities one might find in an effective governor facing a hurricane. President Trump possesses the qualities one might expect in a shady businessman trying to shift responsibility for bad debt and mismanagement — which was the main leadership qualification on his pre-presidential résumé. Never has the phrase "President Pence" had a better ring to it. Never have Republican votes against impeachment seemed more shortsighted and damaging to the country. The point here is not simply to condemn Trump, which has limited usefulness in the midst of a national crisis. At this point it is perhaps better to ignore him, which is precisely what governors and mayors across the country are doing to good effect. But Americans do need to recall this moment the next time they enter a voting booth. In nominating and electing Trump, Republicans were making the claim that presidential character matters for nothing. That only his policy views and judicial appointments really count in the end. Two months ago, every Republican senator except Mitt Romney (Utah) publicly reaffirmed this argument. By voting against impeachment for Trump's abuse of power, they were also denying that presidential temperament and judgment should be given serious weight in our public life. They were saying, in effect, that a trivial leader was sufficient for a trivial time. Who cares about integrity, wisdom and public spirit when the stock market is rising and the economy is booming? ❖

Young, Braun OK with virus package

INDIANAPOLIS — Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind., told reporters Tuesday that his advice to senators reluctant to vote for \$100 billion in coronavirus relief approved by the House was, "Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good, if you indeed regard this as good." The proposal appeared good enough for Young (Francisco, [Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). "I don't anticipate voting on a perfect piece of legislation," he said later in a Twitter video, "but what we send out the door and hopefully send out quickly is going to provide much needed relief to Hoosier families, it's going to keep people safe and secure, most importantly, and provide the health care needs that families deserve during these difficult times." The House bill approved last week would provide free virus testing, mandate paid medical and family leave for employers with fewer than 500 workers, expand unemployment insurance and increase spending on nutrition programs. Sen. Mike Braun, R-Ind., said the measure "could be a lot better" and is "putting the onus out of the gate on small-business owners." He said those owners favor enhanced unemployment insurance over paid leave that would be offset by quarterly tax credits for employers. "Don't put the burden on small employers to finance this and then have to grapple with a payroll tax credit," Braun said in an audio clip of his remarks to news media on Capitol Hill.

Holcomb signs hand-held ban

INDIANAPOLIS — (WTHR) - Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb just signed into law 84 bills, and a few of them could have a big impact on your day-to-day life. One bans people from holding or using a phone while driving. It takes effect July 1, 2021.



Another gets Indiana law up to speed with federal law when it comes to tobacco sales. Nationwide, the age to buy cigarettes or vaping products increased from 18 to 21. An update to an Indiana statute revises local old age requirements to match that. [You can find all the bills just signed into law here.](#)

Sanders signals he will exit race

WASHINGTON — Bernie Sanders signaled Wednesday that he was open to ending his presidential run after another round of landslide losses to Joe Biden, and new signs emerged of communication between the two camps as some Democrats hoped for a swift end to a bruising primary ([Washington Post](#)). Sanders campaign officials said the senator from Vermont planned to leave Washington and return home, where he and his wife, Jane, would talk to supporters and determine the future of his presidential run. The campaign also suspended its Facebook ads and, uncharacteristically, made no request for donations in an email to backers updating them on the situation.

Hill seeks info on price gouging

INDIANAPOLIS — Hoosiers who believe they've paid unconscionable prices for consumer goods due to the coronavirus pandemic can file a complaint online for possible investigation by the Indiana attorney general's office ([NWI Times](#)). Attorney General Curtis Hill Jr. is encouraging Indiana price gouging victims to visit the website [indianaconsumer.com](#) and click the "file a complaint" button in the middle of the page. While Indiana's anti-price gouging law is limited to fuel costs, which have been dropping steadily during the COVID-19 outbreak, Hill believes his authority under the state's Deceptive Consumer Sales Act allows him to investigate retailers charging excessive prices for

all products.

Indy hospitals face capacity issues

INDIANAPOLIS — Hospitals in the Indianapolis area could be quickly overwhelmed with an influx of patients if the COVID-19 spreads quickly, according to a new study by the Harvard Global Health Institute (Russell, [IBJ](#)). Even if only 20% of the adult population in the area is infected within six months, the region would need 1,331 beds in intensive care units to treat the most seriously ill, who often need ventilators and are kept under constant observation. That's more than the 1,081 total ICU beds on hand in the Indianapolis area, according the study, which examined more than 300 markets around the country and compared the number of beds here to the amount that would be needed under numerous scenarios. An "eventual disaster seems to be headed our way," St. Joseph County health board president Heidi Beidinger said, if projections are accurate that between 2,500 and 5,000 local residents might need hospitalization ([South Bend Tribune](#)). Memorial Hospital has about 240 adult beds suitable for acute care, and operates at about 80% capacity, while Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center in Mishawaka had "upwards of 75 beds" free at its latest count.

Indy cancels mini-marathon

INDIANAPOLIS — Organizers of the Indianapolis 500 mini-marathon have canceled the event for the first time in 43 years and suspended all other festivities through the second weekend of May (WIBC). The organization cited the recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to cancel or postpone large events over the next eight weeks. It had nearly 20,000 finishers last year.