

Race could impact Spartz/Hale

Mrvan prevails in 1st CD
on the thrust of Visclosky

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – To understand how 5th CD Democratic nominee Christina Hale will have to thread the proverbial needle to turn this reliably red district to blue in her race against Republican State Sen. Victoria Spartz, look no further than Carmel City Hall.

In a bizarre subplot to the COVID-

delayed Tuesday primary, on Monday, Mayor James Brainard threatened to sue Minneapolis for costs his city had incurred from the protests and riots that had spread across the nation. And

Brainard invoked a curfew, its duration “indefinite” due to what Carmel Police Chief Jim Barlow described as “threats directed toward our community,” insisting the curfew was “necessary to better ensure the safety.”

According to the 2010 Census, Carmel is 85%



white, 3% black, and 9% Asian. The “threats” presumably were made by protesters in Indianapolis. In other major U.S. cities there were threats by protesters of taking their actions to the suburbs. A source told HPI he witnessed a Carmel demonstration Tuesday near the Monon Center, describing it as “five African-Americans and whites who looked like they belonged to the Carmel Honor Society.” On Wednesday, Brainard announced he had ended the curfew, but said it could be reinstated if further information

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American carnage revisited

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

CARMEL – Donald Trump stood before us in January 2017 and surveyed a tormented nation that had chosen what it believed was the lesser of two evils. He and Hillary Clinton had offered Americans two nominees with the highest negatives in presidential election history.

At his 2016 Republican National Convention acceptance speech, he vowed, “When I take the oath of office next year, I will restore law and order to our country. Nobody knows the system better than me, which is why I alone can fix it.”

He added, “Here, at our convention, there will be no lies. We will honor the American people with the truth, and nothing else.”

Six months later, President



“I’m calling for the Election Commission to extend no-fault absentee voting to the General Election and come to a bipartisan agreement about extending necessary deadlines. This is something Hoosier voters want.”

- Democrat Chairman John Zody



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Jack E. Howey
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 1926-2019



Trump surveyed at his inauguration an insecure America teeming of crime, gangs and drug abuse. "This American carnage stops right here and stops right now," he said.

Today, President Trump presides over a nation that has lost more than 100,000 souls to the COVID-19 pandemic that he suggested in March would magically disappear by April. He signed off on an economic shutdown that tanked the economy, sending jobless numbers into a freefall not seen since the Great Depression. When a Minneapolis police officer pinned a black man's neck to the asphalt pavement for more than eight minutes, depriving him of his life, it ignited riots and looting in dozens of cities, and protests in a hundred others.

When a volatile crowd last Friday night forced the Secret Service to take Trump to the White House bunker normally used in terror events, it prompted him three days later to clear a peaceful protest across the street with percussion grenades and tear gas, prompting widespread criticism that included evangelist Pat Robertson and a couple of Republican senators. Trump didn't go to the boarded up St. Johns to pray or begin a dialogue. He brandished a Bible as a prop, then left.

Trump wasn't the only American politician to head to the bunker. Presumptive Democrat nominee Joe Biden was esconsed in his Delaware basement for much of the past three months. The reality is that it doesn't matter much what Biden does or says; the November election will be a referendum on President Trump.

The results from Tuesday's Indiana primary in the 5th CD bear this out. Club For Growth positioned its endorsed candidate, State Sen. Victoria Spartz, as a Trump supporter, and she won with 39% of the vote, matching Trump's approval in the latest Reuters/Ipsos poll.

National polls show Biden leading Trump by double digits, and the president was trailing in five of the six key battleground states, including the "blue wall" he toppled in 2016

when he carried Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin by about 80,000 votes.

If the election were held today, Trump would lose to Biden in a landslide. Just in the past day, polls in Texas and Ohio showed Trump in statistical ties (he won Texas by 9% in 2016) while two Fox News polls show him losing Wisconsin (49-40%) and Arizona (46-42%).

But the election is not today. It's a little under five months from now and as I repeatedly said throughout 2015 and 2016, anything can happen. Anything.

In the past six months, Americans have witnessed a cascading series of events and crises,



ranging from Trump's toothless Senate impeachment trial, to the possibility of socialist Bernie Sanders winning the Democratic presidential nomination, an attack by Iran on the U.S. military after we killed a savage Persian military commander, to the ghost of Biden rising from the political graveyard, to the pandemic and its 100,000 deaths, and now the most prolific spate of racial violence to hit American cities since Martin Luther King's assassination in 1968.

Trump has responded by denying the pandemic even existed, to routinely touting the coming "rigged" November election, to his proclamation as a Nixonian "law and order" president. Enough Americans wanted a "strongman" elected in 2016 to place Donald J. Trump at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, but a significant percentage of that vote came from people who simply refused to vote for Hillary Clinton. There is now

speculation that his authoritarian tendencies and his threat to invoke the Insurrection Act of 1807 pose a practical menace to the U.S. Constitution and the fragile American experiment, with Defense Sec. Mark Esper and the Joint Chiefs pushing back.

On Wednesday, former Defense Sec. James Mattis weighed in, saying in an extraordinary op-ed in The Atlantic, "I have watched this week's unfolding events, angry and appalled. Donald Trump is the first president in my lifetime who does not try to unite the American people — does not even pretend to try. Instead he tries to divide us. We are witnessing the consequences of three years of this deliberate effort. We are witnessing the consequences of three years without mature leadership."

Retired Adm. Mike Mullen added Tuesday in The Atlantic, "Even in the midst of the carnage we are witness-

ing, we must endeavor to see American cities and towns as our homes and our neighborhoods. They are not 'battle spaces' to be dominated, and must never become so." Mullen wrote that the St. John's church episode "sickened" him and that Trump's response to the nationwide protests has brought the United States to "an inflection point."

"Too many foreign and domestic policy choices have become militarized; too many military missions have become politicized," he said. "This is not the time for stunts. This is the time for leadership."

Trump appears to be grasping for and playing to his base, and one thing I'm hearing a lot these days is it's exhausting to be for Trump, particularly when it's all about him.

Trump's "American carnage" has met its inflection point. ❖

Spartz, Mrvan, from page 1

warrants.

Another cautionary tale that comes with the combustible race issue in American politics, Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., himself pitted in an intense Democratic 1st CD primary race, arrived at a volatile protest in his city on Saturday and intervened. "When I got there, nobody was talking to each other," McDermott told the NWI Times. "The cops were digging in and not letting them get to the highway and the protesters were yelling (curses) at them. The crowd was extremely hostile. They knew exactly who I was. People would come up and yell curses at me, although some people were saying thank you for being here."

While Lake County Sheriff Oscar Martinez credited McDermott for "calming the the crowd," on Tuesday, he was defeated by North Township Trustee Frank J. Mrvan in the primary election. McDermott's 11th hour leadership wasn't enough to cut into Mrvan's endorsement by out-going U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, the Gary Precinct Organization and the United Steelworkers.

We are in the Trump era of whiplash politics, where his impeachment seems like a far-off event even though it occurred in February, and the racial strife in the 10 days after a Minneapolis cop murdered George Floyd has displaced the 100,000 deaths from COVID from the headlines, but if 2020 becomes the "Floyd Election" as opposed to the "Pandemic/Depression Election," then Hale faces an arduous election.

Despite President Trump's ham-handed teargas-

clearing photo op at St. John's Episcopal Church across from the White House, his mulling of invoking the Insurrection Act and his summoning of Richard Nixon's "moral majority" has the potential of shifting the dynamics in what Democrats hoped for a "purple" 5th CD in November.

Brainard doesn't fit the profile of an ardent Trumper (he served on President Obama's climate task force). But his indefinite curfew and talk of threats stand to help Spartz, should racial politics stay in the foreground of this election.

Princeton University political scientist Omar Wasow in his May 2020 paper, "Agenda Seeding: How 1960s

Black Protests Moved Elites, Public Opinion and Voting," found that the violent protests following the April 4, 1968, assassination of Martin Luther King tipped that year's presidential race to Richard Nixon. Violent protests likely caused a 1.6% to 7.9% shift among whites toward Republicans. In contrast, the Democratic vote in white counties



that directly experienced, or were in proximity to, nonviolent protests rose by 1.6%.

New York Times columnist Thomas Edsall observed: "Based on these calculations, Wasow estimated what the outcome of the 1968 election would have been under a 'counterfactual scenario that Martin Luther King had not been assassinated on April 4, 1968, and 137 violent protests had not occurred in the immediate wake of his death.' Under this scenario, Wasow wrote, 'Hubert Humphrey would have won an additional 763,040 votes nationally, including a majority of the votes in five additional states: Delaware, Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey, and

Ohio. These swing states would collectively have provided Humphrey with an additional 84 electoral votes and allowed him to win the 1968 election with a total of 275 electoral votes."

Michigan State University political scientist Matt Grossman adds that in 2016, "Trump incorporated rhetoric combining conservative sentiments with symbols that invoke racial attitudes. He mentioned 'illegal' and 'criminal' more than prior campaigns and exceeded Richard Nixon levels of 'law and order' rhetoric, which had been effective in the past at marrying racial attitudes with broader ideas about liberalism. Trump took advantage of a moment of rising racial conflict. As he began to campaign in 2015, there had been a large upsurge in attention to the Black Lives Matter movement, protests of police violence, and campus protests of discrimination. The Baltimore Freddie Gray protests and riots before his announcement, and the Ferguson anniversary protests after it, stimulated widespread media attention and public interest."

Hale's campaign hasn't embraced the rhetoric and actions such as the \$3 trillion Democratic rescue package. Nor has her campaign issued statements in the post-George Floyd protests, suggesting that she is reticent to embrace a Democratic agenda that won't play well in the northern part of the district. It's a high-wire act, as she will need a robust turnout in the Indianapolis portion of the district.

"Our community is facing unprecedented challenges, and I'm committed to taking action on the issues most critical to families across (the 5th District)," Hale said in a statement following her defeat of 2018 nominee Dee Thornton on Tuesday, 39-28%. "Whether it's the lack of access to affordable health care during a global pandemic, or the economic crisis that has forced over half a million Hoosiers to file for unemployment, our problems are too grave to waste time on partisan politics."



How Spartz won

Sen. Spartz won her primary race with a coordinated media campaign. "Every day there was a mailer, two or three emails and texts," said former 5th CD Republican chairman Craig Dunn. She loaned her campaign \$900,000 (including \$150,000 in the last week), though her FEC financial disclosure does not list any bank accounts. In addition, her campaign aired four TV ads that included endorsements from Senate colleagues. There was a biography ad titled "Relentless," describing her life journey which

began in Ukraine. She was one of two candidates – Dr. Chuck Dietzen being the other – to use a full-page advertorial in the Carmel Current. "She had yard signs, TV ads and every method you could have to reach voters," Dunn said.

Club For Growth spent more than \$460,000 on the race, including two attack TV ads describing key rivals Beth Henderson and former Marion County prosecutor Carl Brizzi as anti-President Trump. In addition, Club For Growth members contributed more than \$56,000 directly to Spartz's winning campaign through the Club For Growth PAC.

"Victoria Spartz knows first-hand just how dangerous socialism is from her youth growing up in Soviet Ukraine, we congratulate her on her victory, and look forward to supporting her in the general election. As a fellow Hoosier I am proud of her principled, free-market positions she will take to Washington," said David McIntosh, president of Club For Growth PAC, who lost a 5th CD primary to U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks in 2012.

Spartz was the only candidate in the field of 15 Republicans who had a political base, even though she was appointed to her Senate district by caucus in 2017. Tuesday was the first time she appeared on an election

ballot. But she was able to use her franked mail privileges to communicate with a sizeable chunk of the 5th CD.

Beth Henderson was another self-funding candidate, loaning her campaign \$250,000. The personable nurse and businesswoman was crimped by the pandemic. "She couldn't play to her strong suit," Dunn said. "The pandemic really hurt her ability to reach out to people."

1st CD: Mrvan wins with Visclosky's help

North Township Trustee Frank J. Mrvan took en-

dorsements from out-going U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, the United Steelworkers and the Gary Precinct Organization to defeat Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., to win the open 1st CD Democratic primary. With 80% of precincts reporting, Mrvan had a 2,800 lead over McDermott. "I conceded to Frank two minutes ago," McDermott told HPI shortly after 10 p.m. (CT). "I don't see how I can make up 2,800 votes with what's left out there." McDermott had doubled Mrvan in fundraising and drew \$165,000 of outside PAC money, but it wasn't enough to overcome the organizational strength of Visclosky and the Steelworkers.

"We shocked the world," Mrvan told the NWI

Times' Dan Carden. "We were outspent three-to-one. We kept our head down. We stayed positive. We've proven that people want someone who can stay positive, unify, work for them, advocate for them, and bring results back to Northwest Indiana. People beat big money in Northwest Indiana."

Mrvan credited Visclosky for his win. "Everywhere I went, from the first step of the campaign, every minute of the campaign early on people asked: Who is Congressman Visclosky, who is Pete, endorsing?" Mrvan said. "He's handled the job with grace and dignity, he has proven results, he's beloved within our community, and his endorsement was something that gave credibility and also allowed us to be able to move forward with momentum, along with the United Steelworkers — one of the most powerful, results-driven unions in Northwest Indiana."

Mrvan now will face perennial Republican nominee Mark Leyva, the apparent winner of the six-candidate GOP primary, in the Nov. 3 general election. Voters have sent the Democratic nominee to Washington in every race since the district first was centered on Northwest Indiana in 1932, according to the NWI Times.

Hackett, Ruff win in 2nd, 9th CDs

In the 2nd CD, Democrat Pat Hackett was easily defeating Ellen Marks by 10,000 votes and will face Republican U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski.

In the 9th CD, former Bloomington councilman Andy Ruff had an 8% lead with 67% reporting, with the Associated Press declaring him the winner. Ruff will face U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth.

In the 3rd CD, U.S. Rep. Jim Banks was winning in a landslide over Christopher Magiera. Democrats Chip Coldiron and Carlos Marcano were in a nip-and-tuck battle for that nomination. With 80% reporting, the two were tied at 33%, with Tommy Schrader at 20%.

In the 6th CD, U.S. Rep. Greg Pence faces a rematch with Democrat Jeannine Lake, who easily defeated past nominees Barry Welsh and George Holland.

In the Democrat 8th CD, Thomasina Marsili had a narrow lead over past nominee Ron Drake, 36-33%, with the AP declaring her the winner. She faces U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon.

Indianapolis attorney Susan Marie Smith captured nearly half the vote to win the Republican nomination against U.S. Rep. Andre Carson in the 7th CD.

General Assembly

SD40: Zody loses to Yoder

Indiana Democratic Chairman John Zody suffered a landslide loss at the hands of 2016 9th CD nominee Shelli Yoder, who won by an 80-to-18% tally. The two Democrats were seeking the Democrat nomination after State Sen. Mark Stoops announced he would retire.



SD13: Glick glides past Wibel

State Sen. Susan Glick will end up north of 60% in a race between two former LaGrange County prosecutors. Wible ended up going strong negative the final week but the Senate Majority Campaign Committee responded in kind. Wible was aided by the Term Limits group from Florida who sent mailers for him. Former congressman Marlin Stutzman backed Wible on his WOWO radio show a few times for some late exposure.

SD16: Busch defeating Rhoades

State Sen. Justin Busch should end up at 70% or above in his race against Tom Rhoades. Busch won a caucus to replace retiring Senate President Pro Tem David Long.

SD7: Buchanan leading

State Sen. Brian Buchanan should end up at 70% as well. It was his first election since he won a caucus to replace State Sen. Brandt Hershman. The term limits group engaged similarly here, hitting him with multiple mailers and digital ads. The National Association of Gun Rights was heavily involved here against Buchanan, who had an A rating from the NRA.

SD30: Ruckelshaus winning with 80%

State Sen. John Ruckelshaus was blowing out Terry Michael with 80% of the vote with 84% reporting.

HD93: Sherman trails Jacobs

State Rep. Dollyne Sherman was trailing John Jacobs 2,063 to 1,877 with 80% of the vote reporting. A number of Johnson County absentee ballots still had to be counted. The Associated Press declared Jacobs the winner, but sources close to Sherman believe she still has a chance to close the gap. Sherman won a caucus to replace retiring State Rep. Dave Frizzell in 2019. Jacobs has a volatile reputation, with sources saying he once tossed bags filled with tomato juice at pro-choice legislators. He is a State Board of Accounts employee.

HD50: Rep. Leonard edges Stoffel

State Rep. Dan Leonard won a narrow 52-48% victory over Huntington teacher John Stoffel, who was backed by the IPACE PAC.

HD58: Davis wins with Burton backing

Michelle Davis, director of adult education at Central Nine Career Center in Johnson County won the open seat of retiring State Rep. Woody Burton. Davis had been endorsed by Burton. Davis won with 43%, with Jay Hart second at 33% and David Hopper third with 13%. Hopper had been backed by Greenwood Mayor Mark Myers.

HD75: Ledbetter wins open seat

Warrick County Councilwoman Cindy Ledbetter defeated Warrick GOP Chairman Michael Griffin, 52-48% in a seat being vacated by retiring State Rep. Ron Bacon.

HD79: Lehman dispatches Isch

House Majority Leader Matt Lehman was fending off a challenge from social conservative Taylor Isch, winning 56-44% with 84% reporting.

HD88: Jeter defeats McGrath

In the seat being vacated by former House Speaker Brian Bosma, social conservative Chris Jeter defeated Fishers Deputy Mayor Leah McGrath, who had been endorsed by Gov. Eric Holcomb, Bosma and House Speaker Todd Huston. With 73% of the vote reporting, Jeter had a 58-42% lead over McGrath.

HD6: Bauer wins

In the open HD6, Maureen Bauer had a 44-39% lead over Garrett Blad with 72% reporting. She is the daughter of out-going State Rep. B. Patrick Bauer and will be the third generation to hold the seat. Her grandfather, Bernie Bauer held the seat followed by her father. "It feels

very good," Bauer said Wednesday afternoon (South Bend Tribune). "I'm very grateful. It was an extended primary and it was through very difficult times to be campaigning for the first time."

HD39: Klein defeats Hinton

Democrat Ashley Klein defeated 2018 nominee Mark Hinton and will take on State Rep. Gerald Torr.

HD45: Borders defeats Garmong

Republican State Rep. Bruce Borders defeated Jeff Garmong with 68% of the vote.

HD100: Johnson prevails

Indianapolis City-County Councilor and IndyHub President Blake Johnson won over Clif Marsiglio, senior management analyst for IUPUI. Johnson led Marsiglio nearly 77% to 23%.

Parks loses delegate race

It wasn't a good election for party chairs. In addition to Democratic Chairman John Zody's blow out loss in SD30, Vanderburgh County Republican Chairman Wayne Parks lost his state convention delegate race. ❖

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Homogenous hegemony

By PETE SEAT

INDIANAPOLIS — From every angle, from every perspective, no matter how you slice it, America is divided. Age, geography, gender, ideology and, of course, race. We live within increasingly homogenous groups of people who look, act and think like us, groups that cater to our worst demons and resort to harmful hegemonic tactics to get their way.



Baby Boomers thumb their noses at Millennials, and Millennials indiscreetly mutter, "Ok, Boomer," to express their disgust at parents and superiors. Urban Democrats sway elections over rural Republicans – and vice versa depending on the location. Men and women tussle in the workplace and in the home. Republicans decry socialism on the left and Democrats scream of fascism on the right. And race,

which cuts across all these divides, is separating Americans at a time when unity is of paramount import.

The assertion of righteous dominance over groups of disparate mind – and, at times, of like mind – defines America in the year 2020. What should unite us is being American. Yet, we can't see past our differences. We see each other not as human equals, but as a member of our preferred tribe or as a member of the opposing gang. And within those groups, within the homogeneity of which we define ourselves, we work non-stop to put down the other groups who don't possess a similar worldview. As former President George W. Bush wrote in a statement this week, "America's greatest challenge has long been to unite people of very different backgrounds into a single nation of justice and opportunity." We are failing this solemn duty.

Homogenous hegemony, the mentality that I'm right and you're wrong and nothing you can say will change my mind, could bring America to its knees unless we take heed of this moment. I am hardly perfect in this regard. In fact, I am guilty of the impulses myself. Society's pull lurches me frequently to negativity. I watch a news story about Nancy Pelosi or Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and steam comes out of my ears. A minute later I see one about Indiana's Republican leadership and pop champagne bottles and high five friends. I try to look at the end of the rainbow but can't seem to find where it lies. Or if it lies there at all.

So to myself, and to all of you, I implore more discernment and less reaction. More empathy and less avoidance. More humanity and less dismissal. Speak your personal truth to enlighten those around you. But know in this moment, as in any moment in history, there is truth on both sides of the political debate and on both sides of the

protest line.

For example, those wanting protestors to be held accountable for defying city and countywide curfews have a truth to tell. The protestors fighting for their elected officials to be held accountable for systemic inequities in society have a truth to tell, too. To fully understand both sides, we must allow ourselves to let down our guard and open our minds to a voice unlike our own. There is no prerequisite for agreement and no obligation for conformity, there is only a requirement for mutual respect and emotional empathy.

We all struggle in some ways. The veracity of the struggle is within the mind and heart of those living the struggle – and within those who can empathize with the struggle. Not the status quo of our lives nor the end point of our endeavors can fully express the reality of those struggles. Nor can our age, geography, gender, ideology or race. The only true form of expression is to a willing audience.

Each of us deserves nothing less. The rich and affluent, the poor and downtrodden, the ideologically potent and the politically impotent, everyone's voice must be heard if our republic is to live to see another 200 years. As President Bush concluded in his eloquent dispatch to America, "This will require a consistent, courageous, and creative effort. We serve our neighbors best when we try to understand their experience. We love our neighbors as ourselves when we treat them as equals, in both protection and compassion. There is a better way – the way of empathy, and shared commitment, and bold action, and a peace rooted in justice."

George Floyd's death was an inflection point for our nation. But unlike the inflection points that were the election of Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump, which in their own ways exacerbated old wounds and further divided our land, let this inflection point not lead us to further division, but captivate us enough to begin shattering our homogenous tribes and our hegemonic ways to bring about the reconciliation our nation is crying out to realize.

❖

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. He is also an Atlantic Council Millennium Fellow and author of the 2014 book, "The War on Millennials.

Ducking all the conspiracy theories

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Attention: That story about the fatal shooting of 20 first-graders at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., was fake news. The little brats were just acting, pretending to be dead in a plot to promote taking away our guns.



Attention: A viral video called "Plandemic" tells how Bill Gates is orchestrating this coronavirus scam to control the world and make even more money through a vaccine monopoly. Dr. Anthony Fauci also is a villainous plotter.

Attention: Believers in QAnon reveal the threat of a global conspiracy involving politicians, celebrities, banks, media and a child sex-trafficking ring. Barack Obama is implicated.

If these conspiracy theories have come to your attention, I'm sure you realize that they deserve an evaluation often expressed by the ducks in the pond near my home: "Quack. Quack. Quack."

Well, actually I'm not sure about everybody agreeing with the ducks. When I write satire about ridiculous conspiracy theories, I often hear from some reader who finds the conspiracy more understandable than the satire intended to debunk it.

Ten years ago, at the time of the last census, I wrote a satirical column about some nutty conspiracy theories of the time. Beware, I warned: "Filling out the form could lead to confinement in a concentration camp. Licking to seal the return envelope could let them use your DNA to frame you. And letting them pinpoint your address could bring targeting of your home by a Predator drone missile."

Also mentioned was the claim that FEMA had established concentration camps, including one near LaPorte. And colored dots on mailboxes affixed in some areas for newspaper or other delivery purposes were really to help foreign troops round up American patriots.

Blue dot means you're off to a FEMA concentration camp. Pink dot means slave labor. Red dot means you'll be shot.

I received a letter from a nice lady in Mishawaka who was very worried. "I returned my census questionnaire and also licked the envelope," she wrote. Also, she said: "Some time ago a red dot was placed on my mail and Tribune boxes."

She wasn't sure if I wrote "a tongue-in-cheek article" or one with a real warning. "I will remove the red dots from my boxes after I hear from you," she wrote. I quickly contacted her, assuring there was no danger from the red dots or anything on the envelope. She understood and agreed it was a good idea to ridicule the lies.

She was no dummy. You don't have to be to hear about and wonder about some of these conspiracy theories, especially ones designed to play on fears and concerns, with full intent to mislead with false information, the ultimate fake news. Some of the conspiracy junk is laughable. Like the QAnon supporters who speculate this Q who started it all with postings is John F. Kennedy Jr., who faked his death and lives to warn of "deep state" plots.

Reaction to what is spread by the fakers isn't always funny. It can have life-threatening consequences. Pizzagate is an example. That was the fake news intentionally spread back during the 2016 presidential campaign about a child-enslavement and sexual-abuse ring run by Hillary Clinton in the basement of a Washington, D.C., pizzeria. It went viral online. Alex Jones, the creep

who claimed the kids at Sandy Hook really weren't killed, spread Pizzagate, expanding it to tell how Hillary murdered kids.

Nobody would take that seriously? A man from North Carolina did. He drove to the pizzeria to free the kids from the basement, entering with his AR-15 rifle and pistol and shooting off the lock on one door. There were no kids. The place had no basement. He went to prison. Too

bad he didn't listen to the wisdom of the ducks: "Quack. Quack. Quack."



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

Holcomb vows to fight injustice, seeks dialogue

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Just minutes after President Trump chided American governors for not “dominating” violent protesters, Gov. Eric Holcomb vowed to use “Every breath we take, every breath we have left should be devoted to making sure what happened to Mr. Floyd never happens again.”

Noting that his state is now battling the COVID-19 virus and violence in the wake of the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis a week ago, Holcomb observed, “What started as a justifiable, and actually, needed protest has turned into something else. Indiana, we don’t have more time or lives to lose. I implore every Hoosier... to use your breath, your will, in efforts that bridge, not divide. Only then will these tense and turbulent times give way to the more optimistic days ahead.”

It marked a trifecta in civil discord with the COVID-19 pandemic that has killed 2,000 Hoosiers since March launched the state into a 16.9% jobless rate as the shutdown tanked the economy, and then the spasm of violence over the weekend spread to more than a dozen Indiana cities.

Holcomb added, “Violence in the streets makes progress on all of these fronts harder. It’s just unconscionable to me that someone would go to these monuments that represent men and women that gave their lives so that people would have that First Amendment right to assemble peacefully. To speak, peacefully.”

“The folks who are peacefully responding to the extreme injustice that was done to Mr. George Floyd ... that is a noble cause. To not just protest that, but to seek change from it. Violence in the streets makes progress on all these fronts harder and sets us back from forming that more perfect union.”

As Holcomb spoke, smart phones across the state blared an “emergency alert” that Marion County would be under a curfew from 8 p.m. Monday until 4 a.m. Tuesday. At the same time, another peaceful protest was moving toward the Statehouse from Monument Circle.

Holcomb was preparing his remarks as President Trump had a conference call with governors, reportedly chiding them for being “weak” before saying, “If you don’t dominate you’re wasting your time. It’s like a war. ... It is a war in a certain sense. And we will end it fast. Be tough.” It came days after Trump began tweeting incendiary remarks,

at one point reviving a civil rights era slogan: “When the looting starts, the shooting starts.”

Holcomb was flanked by Indiana State Police Supt. Doug Carter and Indiana National Guard Brig. Gen. Dale Lyles at his Statehouse south atrium presser. Carter said that over the weekend, ISP resources worked hand in glove in Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Hobart, Michigan City, Merrillville, Tell City, Evansville, Jeffersonville and other locations.

Curfews were invoked in Indianapolis, Michigan City, Fort Wayne and Hammond.

“Hear me loud and clear,” Carter said at one point. “Law enforcement is not without sin. And we collectively own some of this distrust. We are human beings, just like you. And the death of George Floyd is a stern reminder that we, and what I represent, have much left to do.” But he deplored the violence that left three dead in downtown Indianapolis. “This is not the way to solve

complex, real and historic conflict,” Carter said.

Gen. Lyles said that National Guard assets were used Sunday to defend four sites in Indianapolis. “On Sunday ... soldiers and airmen from the reactionary force established a force at state properties in downtown Indy to protect centuries-old

monuments that were defaced on Saturday.”

Over the weekend, presumptive Democrat gubernatorial nominee Woody Myers said, “Last night, Hoosiers across the state practiced their 1st Amendment rights in protesting the tragic and brutal death of George Floyd. The numbers don’t lie; the Black community has been disproportionately affected by this brutality, both here in Indiana and across the United States. Law enforcement officers took an oath to serve and protect, and their violence against Black Americans is not only wrong, but criminal. The actions that perpetuated these events have exposed the racial inequities in our society, and require us to confront these injustices honestly and openly. While the initial protests were peaceful, the opportunistic looting that followed does little to further the righteous cause intended by the original protesters and activists. Our nation needs to progress into a more equitable tomorrow.

“I join the world in its outrage and anger at the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and Dreasjon Reed,” Myers continued. “We cannot accept that injustice remains the status quo in 2020 – the fight to provide a better future lands upon all of our shoulders to find a path together to justice.” ❖



America exceptional? We've got work to do

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – Like most Americans, I have always considered the United States an exceptional country. We possess a political system built on checks and balances, an ideal of giving voice to ordinary people across a diverse land, and a Constitution that favors finding common ground among them.



Our economy, at its best, offers opportunity, rewards innovation, and makes it possible for people from humble circumstances to succeed and thrive. Our civic spirit, despite hiccups and political conflict, has over the long haul pointed us toward tolerance, broadening civil rights, and encouraging participation from the neighborhood to Capitol Hill.

Recently, there has been a spate of public musing about “the end of American exceptionalism.” This is not new; conservatives have been lamenting our “decline” for years, while there are significant portions of the population for whom the promise of America never quite became real. But the coronavirus has laid bare a country fumbling for a response; a federal government that, despite pockets of brilliance, has failed overall to protect and offer guidance to Americans; a health care system that has been forced to scramble for the most basic supplies; and an economic downturn that has wreaked disproportionate havoc on the lives of middle-class and wage-earning Americans.

Yet even before this crisis, there was reason to question whether the U.S. truly is exceptional. This is worth spending some time on, because in the coming months of this election year you’ll no doubt hear grandiose claims about the U.S.’s virtues. They demand an honest accounting of where we excel and where we fall short.

Let’s take a quick tour. In education, for instance, the OECD ranked the U.S. as sixth most-educated in 2018; Canada came first. We do even worse on student test scores for reading, math, and science, where the U.S. in 2018 ranked 36th in math and 17th in reading. There was a time when our infrastructure was the envy of the world. Now it’s Singapore, the Netherlands, and Hong Kong; we’re not even in the top 10. In health care, World Population Review ranks us 37th. On a broad ranking of quality of life – that is, which countries offer the best chances for a healthy, safe, and prosperous life ahead – you’d want to be in Denmark, Switzerland, or Finland; on the Bloomberg “Healthiest Country” index, the U.S. didn’t make the top 20. In fact, in a separate look at life expect-

tancy in the 36 OECD countries, we rank 29th.

The pandemic didn’t rob us of our “exceptional” status. We’ve been doing that all on our own for years.

Which country is perceived as having the most advanced technology? Japan (we’re fourth). Where is democracy strongest? The Economist Intelligence Unit, measuring the state of democracy in 167 countries, put Norway and Iceland at the top, with the U.S. coming in 25th. Which country is viewed as possessing the most stable economy? Switzerland, Canada, and Germany top U.S. News & World Report’s list. The U.S. comes in 15th.

To be sure, on various indexes of military strength, we rank first in the world. But then, we also rank highest among the G7 nations for income inequality. I don’t want to make your eyes glaze over with numbers. And, in fact, the measures I cited might not be the ones you’d pick. Feel free to go online and search for “country rankings by…” whatever you’re curious about. What you’ll find is a mixed picture of the U.S., quite apart from anything caused by the pandemic. It didn’t rob us of our “exceptional” status. We’ve been doing that all on our own for years.

Not long ago, the writer Fintan O’Toole had a widely read piece in which he said, “However bad things are for most other rich democracies, it is hard not to feel sorry for Americans.” When I read articles like that, I think they miss a key point. I don’t feel sorry for us. Because what I said at the beginning of this commentary still holds true: Our political system, our economic potential, and our civic spirit remain the cornerstones of a great nation.

We have a choice. We can continue to lose ground globally. But if we choose to build and strive to reach our potential, we can become, without doubt, truly exceptional again. ❖

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

Our tweeting president

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News Bureau

ANDERSON — The war between our president and his favorite social media platform escalated in the wee hours of Friday morning. Just before 1 a.m., the president sent out a tweet about the rioting in Minneapolis. He called the demonstrators “thugs” and promised to take action to halt the violence.



“Any difficulty and we will assume control but, when the looting starts, the shooting starts,” he tweeted. “Thank you!” Less than two-and-a-half hours later, Twitter took action. “This Tweet violates our policies regarding the glorification of violence ... and the risk it could inspire similar actions today,” the company said.

Hours later, the official White House Twitter account posted the same message, and Twitter again took action. “As is standard with this notice, engagements with the Tweet will be limited,” the company said. “People will be able to Retweet with Comment, but will not be able to Like, Reply or Retweet it.”

The president is no stranger to outrageous messages on Twitter.

Take his latest attack on Joe Scarborough, host of MSNBC’s “Morning Joe.” In a series of tweets, the president suggested Scarborough might have killed a young congressional staffer nearly 20 years ago. “A lot of interest in this story about Psycho Joe Scarborough,” the president tweeted. “So a young marathon runner just happened to faint in his office, hit her head on his desk, & die? I would think there is a lot more to this story than that? An affair? What about the so-called investigator? Read story!”

The woman’s still-grieving husband asked Twitter to take down the president’s tweets, but the social media platform declined. “We are deeply sorry about the pain these statements, and the attention they are drawing, are causing the family,” a company representative said in a prepared statement. “We’ve been working to expand existing product features and policies so we can more effectively address things like this going forward, and we hope to have those changes in place shortly.”

The president’s response was to repeat his slander. “Psycho Joe Scarborough is rattled,” he tweeted, “not only by his bad ratings but all of the things and facts that are coming out on the internet about opening a Cold Case. He knows what is happening!”

After Twitter had the audacity to fact-check his claims of election fraud, the president signed an executive

order attacking the protections granted to social media companies under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. “We’re here today to defend free speech from one of the gravest dangers it has faced in American history, frankly,” he said from the Oval Office. “A small handful of powerful social media monopolies control the vast portion of all private and public communications in the United States.”

Kate Ruane, senior legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, was skeptical the president would succeed in his effort. “Much as he might wish otherwise, Donald Trump is not the president of Twitter,” she said in a statement. She argued the president was actually benefiting from the provision his order attacked. “If platforms were not immune under the law,” she said, “then they would not risk the legal liability that could come with hosting Donald Trump’s lies, defamation and threats.”

Lots of folks would love to see our president stop tweeting. Even his closest advisers have likely been tempted at times to take away his phone. Now that Twitter has taken him on directly, it’ll be interesting to see how it all plays out. What we know for sure is he’ll continue to portray himself as the victim.

And many of his supporters will believe it. ❖

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Go cranks, go!

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — Citizens are the final line of defense against misdeeds by business and government. Often these social soldiers are derided as cranks obsessed with unwarranted concerns of environmental, health, and safety matters.

Business and government are simultaneously seen as irresponsible and unresponsive. They plunder, endanger, defile, and destroy communities too weak or too greedy to resist the “investments” being proposed.



These conflicts characterize American history. Early on, with so much open land and little understanding of nature, questionable “progress” was invited to move further away, somewhere down stream, somewhere out of sight. But real progress is an inexorable force benefiting many despite any adverse consequences for the few.

Thus, Indiana and much of America “developed” until density overwhelmed “destiny.” With

less and less land open for “development” and more and more educated, sensitive people, “investment” is not an easy buy, build and prosper matter. There are now government and private oversight hurdles to master.

So it was for WSP (Waelz Sustainable Products) in Muncie recently. There, a plant to recycle steel mill by-products, in a former Borg-Warner facility, was rejected only after community guardians raised concern about mercury and zinc emissions. These pesky “protesters” included scientific researchers who challenged misleading “zero-emission” claims by the company.

Today, WSP is trying to advance virtually the same project further north on U.S. 35 in Cass County. Again, aroused and informed citizens are in opposition to WSP, a 2018 joint venture by two family-owned, experienced international recycling companies.

The American partner is Heritage, with locations in 17 states, including four in Indiana, headquartered in Indianapolis. The irony is Heritage maintains a sophisticated, convincing business website which details the services and philosophy of the organization.

Then why was WSP challenged in Muncie and Cass County? According to the company, they were defeated by a “campaign of misinformation.” With all the positives proudly proclaimed on the Heritage website, why can’t the toddler WSP present a convincing case to the public in Muncie and Cass County?

Misrepresentation by business and government about projects they wish to develop is sadly endemic and creates persistent distrust. For WSP to deny their recycling project would emit toxic contaminants in Muncie but admitting such on their application to Indiana’s EPA agency, was not just a singular error. It was breach of the public trust all organizations must establish.

Ultimate liability rests with the State of Indiana, the governor’s office, and, in this case with IEDC (the Indiana Economic Development Corporation). Before IEDC introduces suitors to Hoosier communities, offering subsidies to those companies, encouraging local cooperation and subsidies, those firms should be fully vetted.

Heritage has a 50-year history yielding a substantial record of performance. No Indiana city or county has the resources to certify the environmental, health, safety, and financial credentials of every firm seeking public support. The state should have and apply such resources on our behalf.

We should thank our “protesters” for their diligence and persistence. Go, cranks, go! ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com. Follow his views and those of John Guy on “Who gets what?” wherever podcasts are available or at mortonjohn.libsyn.com.

The Klobuchar veep hypothetical

By **KYLE KONDIK, J. MILES COLEMAN and LARRY SABATO**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — If you ever wonder why it takes so long for presumptive presidential nominees to name their running mates, even those who effectively wrap up their nominations relatively early in the nominating season, consider this hypothetical:

What if, two weeks ago, Joe Biden determined that he wanted to make a splash and had announced his vice presidential choice early?

Already struggling to break through the news cycle, Biden reasoned that picking his running mate would give him an important new surrogate to help make the case for his candidacy.

In making his choice in this hypothetical situation, Biden prioritized three major factors: proven success in an electorally important region; high-level experience to assist him as a governing partner in the White House; and a pedigree that would reassure voters the vice president could take over as president if necessary and/or become

the next Democratic presidential nominee four or eight years from now.

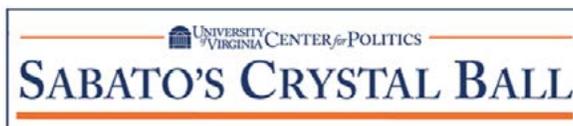
His choice in this hypothetical scenario? Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN).

Biden picked Klobuchar despite the objections of some black leaders, reasoning that Klobuchar, a three-term senator with a strong electoral track record from the Midwest, would be electorally helpful, a useful governing partner, and a plausible future president.

Mere days after rolling out the Biden-Klobuchar ticket, the killing of an unarmed black man, George Floyd, while in custody of Minneapolis police sparked protests around the country -- and immediately put Biden on the defensive given Klobuchar’s “tough on crime” history as Hennepin County Attorney and the history of the officer indicted for killing Floyd, Derek Chauvin.

Back in the real world, Biden is apparently going to wait at least a couple of more months before naming his running mate. As impatient as we all are to know his running mate, waiting makes some sense. For one thing, it gives the campaign the maximum amount of time to vet the candidates; for another, it allows more of the sand in 2020’s hourglass to pass, thus making it less likely that events conspire to spoil the eventual choice.

This is also why presidential candidates hardly



ever pick their running mate in the heat of the primary campaign -- such a decision only exacerbates the timing risks we just mentioned, and it can be a sign of desperation (as it was when Ted Cruz picked Carly Fiorina in advance of the fateful Indiana primary that ended his campaign four years ago).

Still, in the hectic hours after the South Carolina primary this year and in advance of Super Tuesday, it seemed possible that Biden might have traded the vice presidential nomination to Klobuchar for her exit from the race and endorsement -- which is why our ears perked up when Klobuchar said back in March that she was proud to join Biden's "ticket" at a Michigan campaign event before quickly correcting herself.

As it stands, Biden said recently that he will make his choice around Aug. 1. If the choice comes on that specific date, Biden's VP choice would come 16 days before the Democratic National Convention is scheduled to open in Milwaukee (the DNC was originally scheduled to start a month earlier). A Biden selection on or by Aug. 1 would actually be relatively early by historical standards: FiveThirtyEight's Nathaniel Rakich found that the earliest vice presidential announcement by a presumptive nominee in the modern presidential selection era (dating back to 1972) was John Kerry's selection of John Edwards 20 days before the 2004 Democratic National Convention. Another early pick was Mitt Romney's selection of Paul Ryan 16 days before the 2012 Republican National Convention.

Klobuchar herself may still be a contender for the vice presidential nod, but certainly one would think that the events of the past couple of weeks have significantly reduced her chances of being selected. Some black leaders were skeptical of Klobuchar even before the killing of George Floyd. Since it happened, House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn (D, SC-6), whose endorsement of Biden days before the South Carolina primary will feature prominently in histories of the 2020 campaign, stated the obvious about Klobuchar's VP odds: "This is very tough timing for her."

This has been an exceptionally hard year for African-Americans in the United States. It is already difficult being black in America, and the black community has been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus

epidemic. The killing of George Floyd, and other instances of police brutality, has refocused attention on a long-festering American problem: the reality that blacks have more reason to be fearful of interactions with police officers than whites do. Biden naming a black running mate would not, on its own, address these problems, but it would carry symbolic and, perhaps, electoral significance.

As friend of the Crystal Ball Ted Johnson wrote earlier this year, there is persuasive evidence that suggests Biden would benefit electorally from picking a black running mate, which could redound in Democrats' favor as a way to "to increase enthusiasm, voter participation and chances of victory." Johnson discussed this in a recent UVA Center for Politics panel on the VP search, while also noting that the black community is more cohesive in the United States than other broad groups of nonwhites (such as Hispanics or Asian Americans), meaning that, hypothetically, picking a black running mate might help Biden more with black performance and turnout than picking someone from a different nonwhite group would help him with that nonwhite voting bloc. That said, this is all hypothetical at this point -- while there has been a black president, Barack Obama, every major party vice presidential nominee has been white, and only two have been women (Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin).

Remember, too, that heading into Memorial Day weekend, Biden made news for telling progressive black radio host Charlamagne that black people who don't back Biden "ain't black." There have also been some indications that Biden is not quite as strong with black voters, particularly younger black voters, as perhaps he could be.

Biden's age is a factor. At 78 by Inauguration Day next January, he would not just be the oldest first-time president, but the oldest person, period, to ever hold the job at any point. If Trump is reelected, he would turn 78 his last year in office; Ronald Reagan, the oldest-ever White House occupant, left office at 77. It's an open question as to whether Biden would seek a second term, meaning that the person he selects as his running mate could be the Democratic presidential nominee as soon as four years from now. So this is an important choice, although all vice presidential choices are.



Unsurprisingly, our list is led by Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA), who has long seemed like a top VP contender.

When we compiled this list, the three of us each did separate rankings independently of one another, which we then used as the basis for our collective list. While the lists differed substantially in many ways, all three of us had Harris listed in the top position.

Harris brings some obvious attributes to the table. She would bring racial and regional balance to the ticket, and she also would be broadly acceptable within the Democratic Party: Some on the left do not like her, but we suspect that none of Biden's most plausible vice presidential picks would satisfy Bernie Sanders' most hardcore supporters. Of all the candidates, she also seems like the best future Democratic presidential nominee among the contenders, although that may just be because she is still on the younger side (55) and because we just saw her in action as a presidential contender. But she does make sense as a candidate of both the present and the future -- in other words, the manifestation of Biden's "bridge" to the future.

After Harris, our next leading candidate may be somewhat surprising: Rep. Val Demings (D, FL-10). Demings, a former Orlando police chief, has emerged as one of the brighter stars in the Democratic House caucus, even though she was just elected in 2016. Like Harris, her background in law enforcement may bring both positives and negatives to her candidacy, and the Biden team will have to vet her carefully, both because she is relatively new to the national scene and because there is some history from her past as the chief of police that could be damaging. It remains to be seen if she has enough high-level experience to strike the broader public as being supremely qualified for the job, but her background may also be the right fit for the moment.

Demings, unlike Harris, comes from an important swing state, Florida, and her district is based in Orlando, part of the electorally important I-4 corridor (which runs west to east from Tampa to Orlando). She is one of 27 House members from Florida, though, so while she may be decently known in Orlando, her name ID in Miami might not be any better than it is in Milwaukee. Speaking of Milwaukee, the last time a member of the House was on a ticket, Paul Ryan in 2012, it didn't really help Romney all that much in Wisconsin. In fact, down the ballot, Ryan also was a candidate for reelection that year, and he won by the smallest margin of his career.

Next on our list is a trio of senators, Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI). From a strict electoral standpoint, Baldwin may bring the most to the table: Wisconsin is arguably the state likeliest to vote for the winning presidential candidate, and it appears to also be very competitive. If vice presidential picks are worth even a point or two in their home states, as some studies indicate, Baldwin's place on the ticket could be electorally vital.

On the other hand, Wisconsin has no provision for

a gubernatorial appointment to replace her in the Senate -- there would be a special election in 2021 to fill her seat. That would be a very competitive contest, and special elections often break toward the party out of the White House, particularly in midterm election cycles (as was the case in 2017-2018). So there are major Senate control risks with Baldwin.

Duckworth, an Asian-American and disabled veteran with House and Senate experience, would, to us, be a safe choice. Gov. J.B. Pritzker (D-IL) would be able to appoint a replacement to her seat, and there wouldn't even be a special election, as her seat is regularly scheduled to be on the ballot in 2022. In her 2016 Senate election, Duckworth won a substantial chunk of Trump voters in downstate Illinois -- perhaps that appeal could boost Biden in other Midwestern states.

Warren, meanwhile, seems like an obvious contender, too. She could give Biden more credibility with the left, and she is very policy-focused, making her a strong potential governing partner for Biden.

However, we also see a lot of downsides with Warren. Even though she's probably the most liberal of any of the top contenders on our list, the most hardcore Sanders backers don't seem to like her very much, owing to the belief of some that she splintered the progressive vote (we don't really think this was the case). Finally, Warren's age -- she'll be 71 later this month -- makes her a less compelling "bridge" candidate than many others on this list.

Current Massachusetts law would give Gov. Charlie Baker (R-MA) the right to appoint a Republican placeholder to Warren's seat, giving Republicans at least temporary control of the seat, although Democrats hold a supermajority in the Massachusetts legislature, so they could change the law to protect Democratic control of the seat.

Three governors, and a prominent former gubernatorial candidate, round out the list. Gov. Gina Raimondo (D-RI) has governed the Ocean State as something of a centrist. Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM) would bring diversity to the ticket, and she has federal experience as a member of the U.S. House. She is also now the one major Hispanic candidate, as Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) dropped out (Cortez Masto would have ranked highly on our list if she wanted the job). Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D-MI) has achieved a significant amount of national prominence because of coronavirus, although she suffered a bad headline recently when her husband seemed to try to use her position to retrieve their family boat (in the VP search, everything matters). And finally, former state House Minority Leader Stacey Abrams (D-GA) became a major national figure during and following her narrow gubernatorial loss, and she has not been shy about wanting the job. But her lack of experience in any of the traditional VP feeder positions (governor, senator, or U.S. House representative) significantly hurts her position in our eyes. ❖

David Stafford, Indiana Lawyer: Say what you will about Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill, he is a man of convictions. But for purposes of this earned polemic, let's set aside the wrongful convictions that are still being overturned from Hill's years as Elkhart County prosecutor. Instead, let's focus on his time as AG and explore Hill's personal and political convictions. Hill's campaign recently sent a letter to delegates who will choose the Republican AG nominee at the party convention next month. In it, Hill said he would use the month starting May 18 to "reflect on lessons learned." That's some euphemism for "suspended from the practice of law for 30 days." But Hill needs much more time for reflection, demonstrating he has learned nothing from his suspension. Because Hill's bedrock conviction is he is right. If you disagree, Hill is a hammer, you are a nail. In suspending Hill, the Indiana Supreme Court cited Hill's vindictive streak toward the four women who accused him of groping and sexual misconduct. Nevertheless, within days, Hill's fellow Republicans were getting a taste. Hill's campaign braintrust went from reflection to retaliation in the length of a letter. "Don't be fooled," his letter warned fellow Republicans, telegraphing scorched-earth politics. "These new candidates don't care about your voice. They only care about themselves and taking another step up the ladder." Hill is talking here to members of his own party about his fellow Republican challengers — Nate Harter, Todd Rokita and John Westercamp.



Hill's campaign letter also warns "the establishment" is out to get him, never mind that he occupies — well, did occupy — the office of Indiana attorney general. Has it never dawned on Hill that he won? That once you hold statewide office, you are the establishment? But playing the establishment card feeds another Hill conviction: that he is a victim. This is amplified in his appeal to Republican delegates. "(T)he establishment is just being quiet now, biding their time to take out everyone who doesn't give them power," says Hill's letter, stopping just short of seething, "my precious!"

"The establishment" in this case is everyone who told Hill that the right and proper thing for him to do was resign and spare the state a pointless years-long slog through the muck. Amid his rhetoric, Hill told delegates, "I don't need Rhetoric ... I've got a Record!" He sure does. Just this month, Hill not only claimed the record of first Indiana attorney general disqualified from office due to professional misconduct, he also created a very un-Indiana-like constitutional crisis over who is in charge in the AG's office. Hill had his chief deputy cover for him, but Gov. Eric Holcomb thinks he should be able to appoint an AG while Hill is off reflecting. The Indiana Supreme Court snubbed Holcomb when he asked if he could appoint a new AG. Predictably, a lawsuit now challenges Hill's eligibility to serve. Onward through the muck we slog. Hill's record also includes a lack of transparency on spending and picking fights with elected prosecutors and fellow statewide Republican elected officials, suing in their names even when

they beg him not to. Secretary of State Connie Lawson can tell you about this, and if she won't speak about it, the court filings where she did live on. Hill was making his record on voter suppression when he went to court as AG to undermine Lawson — the official duly in charge of elections in Indiana — because Hill wanted to block expanded voting in Indianapolis. There were any number of legitimate, timely opportunities for Holcomb and the Indiana General Assembly to hold Hill accountable. Cowardice prevailed. They blew it, and we're stuck with a malcontented, unscrupulous AG whose convictions are surpassed only by his unfitness.

❖

Ezra Klein, vox: In the early years of the Trump era, I was often asked if American politics had been this bad before. I always said the same thing. It has been so much worse. Think of the 1960s. John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X were assassinated within two years of each other. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were murdered within two months of each other. Riots set cities aflame. Domestic terrorists detonated bombs across the country. Freedom Riders were beaten and killed. White police officers turned dogs and hoses on black children. The Vietnam draft forced the nation's young to war. The Democratic Party's 1968 convention collapsed in violence. America was coming apart, with disagreements measured in bullets and blood. But there was one thing the 1960s had, that we, today, do not: a political system designed to absorb conflict and find consensus, or at least stability. I do not seek to smother the age in nostalgia. That calm was often purchased at terrible moral cost, as in the union of Dixiecrats and New Deal Democrats that upheld segregation for decade after decade. But our divisions did not track our parties, and so they were muffled in our politics. What our political system could not solve, it suppressed. What it could no longer suppress, it sought to solve. When the Civil Rights Act passed, it did so with Republican votes, even as it was signed by a Democrat. Imagine legislation of such consequence passing without partisan valence today. The compromises of that era saved the country, but they ended that political system. The Civil Rights Act set off a realignment of the parties. Richard Nixon weaponized the fury his predecessors had sought to quiet. The parties slowly restructured: The Democratic Party became the party of liberals, its coalition racially and religiously diverse, its power centers urban. The Republican Party became the party of conservatives, its coalition white and Christian, its power centers rural and exurban. This is the story of American political polarization. For a time, in the 20th century, our political coalitions did not echo our social divisions, our parties were mixed enough to see little benefit in sharpening the contradictions, and so the political system often calmed our conflicts. It did so imperfectly, and often unjustly, but America held together when it could have come apart easily. Today, our political coalitions are our social divisions, and that changes everything. ❖

Holcomb, Lawson don't commit to November mail vote

INDIANAPOLIS — Hoosiers who appreciated the convenience and safety of voting by mail in Tuesday's primary election may nevertheless be forced to cast their ballot in-person, at a polling place, for the Nov. 3 general election (Carden, [NWI Times](#)).

Gov. Eric Holcomb and Secretary of State Connie Lawson declined to say Wednesday whether mail-in voting will continue to be available to all Hoosiers in future elections, or if the opportunity to vote by mail again will be limited to only those with a specific excuse for being unable to vote in person.

The Indiana Election Commission authorized no excuse mail-in voting for this year's rescheduled primaries due to the coronavirus pandemic and based on the bipartisan recommendation of the leaders of Indiana's Republican and Democratic parties.

Since that time, however, Republican President Donald Trump repeatedly has called on states to scrap mail-in voting, by claiming — without evidence — the mail-in process, which Trump used to cast his own primary election ballot in Florida, is riddled with fraud. "We're still counting the votes by the way. So before we weigh in on the next election, we need to land this one," Holcomb said. "But I know from the turnout yesterday in person, that that option is critically important to many people." Similarly, Lawson said state and county election officials have yet to evaluate how well mail-in voting worked at this election, so it's too soon to say whether it should be available in future elections. "But my goal would be to have a normal election in November with the normal absentee process, 28 days of early, in-person voting, and voting on Election Day," said Lawson, a Republican. Senate Democratic Leader Tim Lanane, D-Anderson, said it's imperative the more than 500,000 Hoosiers



who requested absentee ballots for Tuesday's election again be allowed to vote by mail in November. "We are still battling a major pandemic, and our state government must ensure that Hoosiers are not forced to exchange their own health for their constitutional right to make their voices heard," Lanane said.

21% more nursing home deaths

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana health leaders said they were working Wednesday to determine why a federal report found about 200 more coronavirus-related deaths among the state's nursing home residents than state officials had tallied ([Indiana Public Media](#)). A report released by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on Monday listed 1,141 total COVID-19 deaths among nursing home residents as of May 24. That number is 196, or 21%, more than the 945 such deaths reported this week by the Indiana State Department of Health. State officials suspect the difference stems from Indiana nursing homes only being asked once in early April for a total number of previous COVID-19 deaths and infections, while they have since been required to report new cases within 24 hours, said Dr. Dan Rusyniak, chief medical officer for the state Family and Social Services Administration.

Hogsett ends curfew until weekend

INDIANAPOLIS — Indianapolis will drop until Friday the overnight curfew that was imposed after a weekend of violence following protests over the death of George Floyd and police treatment of African Americans, the mayor's office said Wednesday ([Indiana Public Media](#)). The city won't continue the curfew for Wednesday and Thursday nights after ordering people off the streets for three straight nights. "For the safety of what we believe will be much larger dem-

onstrations this weekend, and given the violence and property damage we experienced this past weekend, we intend to reinstate the curfew order for Friday and Saturday," Mayor Joe Hogsett said in a statement.

Tippecanoe ballots unaccounted for

LAFAYETTE — There are some concerns with voting in Tippecanoe County after a historical amount of absentee ballots were cast. The head of the election board said there are thousands of mail-in votes not accounted for yet (WLFV-TV). Randy Vonderheide and County Clerk Julie Roush answered Wednesday how the election played out and what the county and state can do better going forward. Tippecanoe County more than quadrupled the record for mail in votes in the 2020 primary. "Turnout was lower than we expected, but the turnout for mail-in ballots was extremely high," said Roush.

Fort Wayne installs protest barriers

FORT WAYNE — The city of Fort Wayne has installed a row of barriers along the sidewalk between the Allen County Courthouse lawn and Clinton Street, where protesters have gathered to protest racism and police brutality. City spokesman John Perlich told [WANE 15](#) the barriers were installed "as a safety measure to protect protesters and motorists in the area where the majority of the protests and demonstrations have occurred."

SNAP benefits can be used for delivery

INDIANAPOLIS — Hoosiers on who qualify for SNAP benefits can use their EBT cards, beginning Wednesday. Both Walmart and Amazon have been approved retailers for the SNAP delivery service. Amazon offers delivery, while Walmart offers delivery and pickup options for groceries.