

INDem tour ‘knocks the rust off’

Schmuhl finds statewide tour energizes base, brings earned media, helps recruitment

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – While the crowds were somewhat modest coming in the summer of the quadrennial non-election year, the Indiana Democrats’ American Rescue Plan tour aimed at all 92 counties created news coverage deep in the heart of Hoosier Trump country that was notable, if not significant.

Indiana Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl knew he had to begin his party rebuild by showing up in some of the most Republican counties in the state. In Miami County, where Donald Trump bludgeoned Joe Biden 75-22% last November, State Sen. J.D. Ford and State Rep. Earl Harris Jr., showed up to make the pitch. They did so in the tiny town of Denver.

It resulted in the Peru Tribune banner headline,



Indiana Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl talks in Ripley County.

finishing a five-week tour of the state touting successes of federal legislation that has pumped millions of dollars into

“State Democrats tout local successes of ARP.”

In the article by the Tribune’s Jared Keever, the lead was: “Indiana Democrats are

finishing a five-week tour of the state touting successes of federal legislation that has pumped millions of dollars into

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Our inflation problem

By **LARRY DeBOER**

WEST LAFAYETTE – We’ve got an inflation problem. What should we do about it? That depends on what kind of inflation problem we’ve got.

In May the consumer price index was 4.9% higher than it was 12 months before.

The last time we saw an inflation rate that high was July 2008. The last time it was that high, and it was more than just rising gasoline prices, was October 1990. It’s the highest inflation rate in almost 31 years.

Inflation has increased these past three months, March through May. Partly that’s because the 12-month rate compares to March through May 2020, when



“I am most grateful for the way the Holcomb administration has fostered innovation, autonomy and accountability. My voice has been heard and I have grown as a leader, a policy expert and a citizen of this great state.”

- FSSA Sec. Jennifer Sullivan, who resigned to accept a job in NC.



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Jack E. Howey
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 1926-2019



prices were falling. That means the 12-month inflation rate would register high even if prices were just getting back to normal.

It's more than that. The three-month inflation rate jumped from 3.5% in February to 8.4% in May. That's the annual rate, the inflation rate we'd get if prices kept rising that fast for a whole year. The last time the three-month annual rate was that high – and not just because of gasoline – was July 1982. It's the highest inflation in almost 39 years.

Inflation policy is mostly the Federal Reserve's responsibility. To battle high inflation, the Fed could raise interest rates. People would borrow and spend less, and businesses couldn't raise prices so much. But at their meeting last week, the Fed left their policy interest rate unchanged, at near zero. They blamed inflation on "transitory factors." The Fed thinks this inflation won't last.

The Fed's inflation goal is 2% per year, over the long run. That means inflation should average 2% over many years. Inflation measured by the consumer price index has averaged 1.7% per year since the end of the Great Recession in 2009. The Fed will tolerate higher inflation for a while to bring that average up.

The reason is their other policy goal, "maximum employment." Before the pandemic the unemployment rate had fallen to 3.5%, a 50-year low. The unemployment rate in May was 5.8%. That's way down from the 14.8% peak in April 2020, but not low enough.

Good things happen when the unemployment rate is really low. Job opportunities are plentiful. Wages and benefits rise. Businesses hire people that they might not employ otherwise, spreading opportunity around. These good things won't happen, or won't happen as fast, if the Fed slows the economy by raising interest rates.

That's what they did in the last expansion. The conventional view was that inflation would start rising when the unemployment rate dropped below 5%. When it did, at the end of

2015, the Fed began raising interest rates. The unemployment rate continued to fall, but slowly. It took almost four years to get down to 3.5%.

And yet, inflation never did take off. The Fed decided that the higher interest rates were a mistake. They began cutting them in mid-2019, before the pandemic recession, to fix their mistake.

The Fed won't make that mistake again. Instead, maybe they'll make a different mistake. Inflation will be transitory if production eventually catches up to spending. Supply rises to meet demand, and prices stabilize.

But what if inflation isn't transitory? Suppose businesses increase the production of cars, lumber, computer chips and everything else as much as they can, but still can't meet demand. Inflation would continue.

Eventually people would come to expect inflation, and it would get incorporated into their decision-making. Businesses would raise prices because they expect costs to rise. Employees would need higher wages and benefits to cover higher prices. We'd have a price-wage spiral like we did during the 1970s. Back then the Fed fell "behind the curve," raising interest rates too late to stop price increases. When rates were finally increased enough in 1979, it kicked off the deep double-dip recession of 1980-82.

If this is transitory inflation, we can wait on interest rate increases and enjoy the benefits of maximum employment. If this is the beginning of a price-wage spiral, we'll have to raise interest rates sooner rather than later, and avoid bigger hikes that could lead to recession.

What kind of inflation problem do we have? We don't know – yet. But over the next couple of years, we're going to find out. ❖

DeBoer is a professor of agriculture economics at Purdue University.

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local governments, and that they say would not have been possible without their party. 'Not one of our federal Republican delegation voted for the American Rescue Plan,' State Sen. J.D. Ford told a group of Miami County residents Monday night."

Keever reported: "Gathered around tables in the basement of the old Methodist Church on Harrison Street in Denver, the residents listened as the two talked up broadband internet expansion, support for food pantries and extra money in the education budget that they said would not have been possible without the ARP, an early legislative victory for President Joe Biden this year that was passed as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Miami County alone stands to receive about \$6.8 million in funding from the legislation, and county commissioners have already voted to earmark \$1.4 million of that to expand broadband service to rural county residents through a Miami-Cass REMC project."

In Kosciusko County, where Trump defeated Biden 74-23%, reporter David Slone's lead in the Warsaw Times-Union was this: "A roomful of Democrats gathered at Mad Anthony's Lake City Tapouse Tuesday to hear former congresswoman Jill Long Thompson, District 3 State Sen. Eddie Melton and Indiana Democratic Party Director of Communications Drew Anderson talk about President Joe Biden's American Rescue Plan as part of the Indiana Democratic Party's American Rescue Plan tour.

"This is one of our many stops across the state that the state party is doing," Anderson told the attendees to start the discussion, according to the Warsaw Times-Union. "It is to celebrate the American Rescue Plan, and that is because the American Rescue Plan is helping Indiana and our families and our neighbors, our loved ones. We're putting COVID-19 into the rearview mirror, and that means we've got shots in arms, relief checks in our bank accounts because it's been a hard year and a half, and that also means we're creating some good-paying jobs. And, as Democrats, we know we value those good-paying jobs because usually they're union and that's the way to go."

"Anderson told those gathered in Warsaw that the Republicans' manipulation has already started from the Statehouse. The GOP, Anderson said, is sending out mailers to voters saying that \$250 million worth of broadband expansion is because of them. 'They're wrong! It's because of the Rescue Plan. It's because of Eddie Melton. It's because of Democrats in D.C. who got it done.' Melton said the legislatures went into session this year knowing it would be a session like no other."

Melton then joined in: "So this budget that we're talking about ... is a bipartisan budget. But it wouldn't be this way if it wasn't for Joe Biden, the American presi-

dent. I remember sitting in the Budget Committee room and they give you the budget forecast for what the state revenue is going to look like. We didn't know what it was going to be because we had heard we were going to be short this period and we were going to be that period. And it was jaw-dropping to see the amount of revenue that came in from the feds for the American Rescue Plan that supported, that went to the pockets of people you may know. That \$1,400 that helped put food on the table. That helped support child care. That went back into our local economy."

John Gregg, the Democrat gubernatorial nominee in 2012 and 2016, joined the team of Hoosier Democrats at a half dozen stops, mostly in Trump country. "I was



Former Indiana U.S. senator Joe Donnelly at an INDem tour appearance in Kokomo in June.

very pleased and pleasantly surprised," Gregg told Howey Politics Indiana on Wednesday. "There were good-sized crowds and new faces. People asked substantive questions about how they could defend on the bogus issues Republicans like to throw at to district voters, such as defund the police, socialism, Pelosi and Schumer, etc.

"There seemed to be good coverage in the local press as well as social media," Gregg continued. "I just kept reminding the listeners we have to brand ourselves and not let the other party brand us."

In the long-time national bellwether county of Vigo, where Trump defeated Biden 56-41%, Gregg was covered by the Terre Haute Tribune-Star's Michele Lawson, whose lead was: "The Indiana Democratic Party's American Rescue Plan tour, a statewide campaign to help deliver news about the COVID-19 relief package, made a stop in Terre Haute Friday for an inaugural 8th District mayors' luncheon. Ready to put the pandemic firmly in the rearview mirror, John Gregg, former Indiana House speaker, Tonya Pfaff, state representative from District 43, and Myla Eldridge, Indiana Democratic Party vice chair, shared tips on being more confident in talking to others about the plan

and about defending the Democratic Party in general.”

Lawson reported: “They specified just how the plan provides a contribution to all of Indiana’s 92 counties – including Vigo County, which received \$20.7 million, county schools were given \$30.4 million and the City of Terre Haute was provided \$38.2 million. Gregg made special note of how not one Indiana Republican elected official voted to support the rescue plan despite the law delivering \$5.8 billion in relief to the state, Indiana’s schools receiving \$2 billion in aid, and more than \$250 million being used to expand broadband Internet access across Indiana.”

‘Indiana has 11,000 bridges to maintain and we still have one in seven people who don’t have access to broadband Internet,” said Gregg. “Indiana has over a half-million veterans and there’s got to be more money spent on VA hospitals. We need to brand ourselves and identify ourselves as the party of the people and go on the offensive when we hear all the negative comments that identify Democrats as socialists, as abortionists, as anti-gun. When people say that Democrats are socialists, we need to ask them what they really mean and remind them that Social Security and Medicare are really socialist programs.”

Eldridge told Vigo Democrats, ‘It’s been a tough year to be a Democrat with all of the rhetoric going around. But we’re here to share the good news that Democrats deliver shots, checks and jobs for Hoosiers,’ she said. ‘The pandemic exposed how low our working wages are, so we need to raise them so that people will want to go back to work instead of just collecting free benefits.’

From Sullivan County, where Trump defeated Biden 74-24%, Sullivan Mayor Clint Lamb added, “There’s no such thing as a Democrat or Republican pothole or snowplow. We’re all just trying to make our communities better. We’ve got a lot great leaders taking care of people and that’s what the Democrat Party was founded on.”

Then there was Lake County (Biden won 56-41%), where Democrats drew a good crowd in Highland’s Wicker Park. The significance here was unity and cohesion. U.S. Rep. Frank Mrvan and Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., shared the stage, a little over a year after the two squared off in the 1st CD primary.

Reporter Dan Carden of the NWI Times: “Fast forward to Tuesday at Wicker Memorial Park in Highland and the onetime rivals stood united, alongside other Lake County Democratic leaders, in praise of President Joe Biden’s COVID-19 economic recovery agenda known as the American Rescue Plan, and in gratitude to Mrvan for supporting it in Congress. ‘Democrats delivered,’ Mrvan proclaimed to approximately 150 people standing on the

lawn behind the park’s social center. ‘During those times of uncertainty it was the Democratic Party that led. It was the Democratic Party that came together to find solutions.’”

Carden reported: “The American Rescue Plan, enacted March 11 without support from even one congressional Republican, is responsible for the \$1,400 stimulus checks recently received by nearly all Hoosier workers and the expanded child tax credit that next month will start going out to many Indiana households. The law also is providing some \$6 billion to the state of Indiana and Hoosier schools and communities to help speed the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic through targeted investments in infrastructure and other needs.

‘**McDermott said the American Rescue Plan is ‘a game changer’** that, quite simply, made his job as mayor



U.S. Rep. Frank Mrvan (right) and Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., address about 150 people at Wicker Park in Highland last month. (NWI Times photos)

‘night and day’ easier. ‘In the city of Hammond, we have money earmarked for pedestrian bridges, flood control projects, lead remediation projects – things that needed to be done but couldn’t be done. And I’ll tell you what, they’re on the board and they’re scheduled to be completed right now thanks to our congressman,’ McDermott said.

“The potential 2022 U.S. Senate candidate said he doesn’t understand how Indiana’s two Republican senators, and the seven Republicans of the nine members representing Indiana in the U.S. House, all could vote against helping Hoosiers get their lives, businesses and communities back together as COVID-19 fades into the rearview mirror,” Carden reported. “‘I’m proud to be a Democrat,’ McDermott said. ‘I’m proud to be in a party that believes in facts. I’m proud to be in a party that supports union workers and puts people to work. I’m proud of a party that sends \$173 million to public schools in Indiana.’”

Schmuhl’s ‘double header’

Schmuhl told HPI on Wednesday that the first critical phase of the Democrat rebound and remaking Indiana as a two-party state is “officially over.”

“I would just say it was hugely successful,” said Schmuhl, who likened it to Major League Baseball’s spring training. “We spent all of June talking to people in large counties and small.”

Schmuhl said the exercise was an important first

step, in part because of the 2020 pandemic. "We went through a presidential year, through a pandemic. We just had to knock off some of the rust. It helped us get a lot of earned media, it helped us hone our message with Hoosiers. We went everywhere. We were able to get former and current office holders and candidates, potential future candidates to spread the good news."

Schmuhl said that the party rebuild's next step will begin later this month, likening the coming focus on President Biden's American Jobs Plan to game two of a doubleheader. "We'll shift our focus to the American Jobs Plan and what that could deliver for Americans."

As for tangible results of the tour, Schmuhl noted that he is working with former lieutenant governor nominee Christina Hale on candidate recruitment, as well as with district and county chairs. "We feel good at where we are," Schmuhl said.

Asked if anything stood out from any of the tour stops, Schmuhl said that the events drew some independents and Republicans. "It was like bringing back some Pete Buttigieg in Iowa events," he said of his 2019/2020 campaign he managed for U.S. Transportation Sec. Buttigieg. "Some people were independents and former Republicans. That's great. We need to engage core supporters, but the way to win elections is building market share."

In pursuit of Jim Banks

In tandem with the tour was the party's aggressive pursuit of House Republican Study Committee Chairman Jim Banks, who has been portraying Democrats as seeking to "defund the police." The central part of this strategy was Banks' appearance on Fox News Sunday, where he was pressed by host Chris Wallace:

WALLACE: Congressman Banks, you voted against that package, against that \$350 billion, just like every other Republican in the House and Senate, so can't you make the argument that it's you and the Republicans who are defunding the police?

BANKS: Not at all, Chris. I mean, let's go back again and look at the last year and the record of comments that Democrats have made from Rashida Tlaib, who said that ...

WALLACE: No, no, wait, sir, respectfully ...

BANKS: ... policing is inherently evil.

WALLACE: Wait, wait, sir, respectfully, I heard you make that point, but I'm asking you, there's \$350 billion in this package the president says can be used for policing. And let me put up some of the specific things he said.

BANKS: Chris, the point that I'm making is important.

WALLACE: Congressman Banks, let me finish and then I promise I'll give you a chance to answer. The president is saying cities and states can use this money to hire more police officers, invest in new technologies and develop summer job training and recreation programs for

young people. Respectfully, I've heard your point about the last year, but you and every other Republican voted against this \$350 billion.

Banks never responded to Wallace's question.

Washington Post columnist Dana Milbank observed on Wednesday: "By midday Tuesday, a dozen House Republicans had tweeted messages about Democrats defunding the police. How, then, to explain the latest 'legislative scorecard' from the National Association of Police Officers, a group claiming to represent a quarter-million officers, who endorsed President Donald Trump's reelection? McCarthy, Stefanik and Banks all scored 57%, and some of the back-benchers piling on Tuesday – Reps. Ken Buck (Colo.), Jody Hice (Ga.), Mo Brooks (Ala.) – scored a paltry



43% on NAPO's pro-police scorecard. And the Squad? Democratic Reps. Ilhan Omar (Minn.), Rashida Tlaib (Mich.) and Ayanna Pressley (Mass.) all scored 86%. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) scored 71%.

"Where it really counts, all four members of the Squad are more pro-police than their Republican critics," Milbank said.

"Indiana Republicans like Jim Banks are more focused on making political points and building power instead of creating a better future for Hoosier families," INDem spokesman Drew Anderson said. "Their actions further show that the Indiana Republican Party has no identity or moral compass, and how the Democrats' record of delivering right now for Indiana is the winning strategy to move us forward."

Banks told HPI Wednesday night that he was attempting to make a "larger point" on Sunday. "When AOC says 'Defund the police' they mean defund the police," Banks said. "Progressive defund the police dogma is real. Every officer I talk to in Indiana knows we're on their side and Democrats are siding with the defund the police movement on the left."

Banks added, "When Wallace brought up the \$1.9 trillion stimulus deal, of course all the Republicans voted against it. That was a small part of it, additional funding for the police. I'm glad that it's there, but I was making a larger point to Chris Wallace about recruitment rates of police officers have gone down drastically. That's a part of this, too. I call on President Biden to denounce The Squad and defunding the police. Let's take Joe Biden and Jim Banks and anyone else and anyone else who wants to go along and do a national PR tour to support our law enforcement officers. That's what it's going to take." ❖

Rep. Banks joins Trump, Abbott at the border

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – U.S. Rep. Jim Banks joined former president Donald Trump, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and a delegation of congressional Republicans at the U.S. border at McAllen on Wednesday.

National media coverage was scant after actor Bill Cosby was released from prison Wednesday afternoon. HPI conducted an interview with Banks Wednesday night and he described what occurred.

"We took a large delegation down yesterday. We were out until about 1:30 in the morning at the border with Border Patrol agents as they were apprehending dozens of migrants," Banks said. "This morning we started off with a small round table with President



Trump and local law enforcement, agents that were sheriffs, a number of other local elected officials and Gov. Abbott. That was very substantive as they shared charts on the number of migrants being apprehended and the amount of drugs that are being brought across the border last year as compared to this year. In many cases it's a 200 or 300% increase in each category.

"In the morning we went down to the border wall where it was built, but halted by President Biden, who signed an executive order to stop the wall. We went down with President Trump to a section that was built and then stopped. President Trump spoke with Gov. Abbott for a period of time."

"Gov. Abbott spoke in both places more than President Trump as to what they are facing at the moment, as opposed what President Trump was doing compared to today," Banks continued. "That's not really the point. The point is this is really a humanitarian crisis unlike anything we've ever seen before and the State of Texas is doing everything they can to stop it, but if the federal government is failing to support Texas's efforts. Gov. Abbott is reaching out to other states – Gov. (Kristi) Noem of South Dakota announced today she is sending National Guard troops, Gov. (Ron) DeSantis has sent support. On that note, the Republican Study Committee has sent letters to at least a dozen governors thanking them for honoring Gov. Abbott's request to support from the states. This is a crisis that effects every state; every state is a border state when drugs are coming across the border at unprecedented levels."

What does the RSC recommend as a solution?

"The solution is simple," Banks told HPI. "The solution is to return to the Trump policies and do catch and release, they remain in Mexico policy. Those policies worked under President Trump. The wall is a big part of it as well. The wall helps agents do their job. It's not a one-size fits all solution. That drastically kept the numbers down under the Trump administration.

"The statistics are substantially different under Trump as opposed to the first six months under Biden," Banks said, adding he witnessed dozens of migrants "turning themselves in to border patrol agents."

"They're not running; they're walking to the border because catch and release is a magnet inviting more of them to come," Banks explained. "The sad part is last night there was a family of seven or eight young children and a couple of women. As it turns out, they weren't related, they were coming from two or three different countries. They found a 4-year-old boy and a 5-year-old girl who were by themselves. That's the humanitarian part of the crisis. It was like this before, but not like today and the numbers bear that out. It is a humanitarian crisis today unlike anything we've ever seen before."

As for the mood of Trump, whose business organi-



zation is facing indictment in New York today, Banks said, "It was a serious subject and he was serious during the briefing. He talked very little as we were being briefed. He talked a little bit at the border as to what was working under his watch and the challenges they faced in his efforts to build the wall. About 500 miles of the wall were built on a 1,400 mile border. As we drove along the border, there were sections of about 100 yards ... and then a lot of steel

on the ground because when President Biden signed the executive order to stop the wall, you see the materials taxpayers paid for everywhere. That part of it is disheartening.”

NYT video interpretation of Jan. 6

The New York Times posted a [video investigation](#) of the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection Wednesday night. The 40-minute video documents in vivid detail the origins of the mob that

was incited by President Trump, how the U.S. Capitol was breached in eight places, the deaths of two Trump supporters, and the hours of hand-to-hand combat that Capitol and Washington Metro Police endured. HPI watched this video last night and our takeaway was this: Given all the mayhem, it’s a wonder there weren’t more casualties. Despite the beatings that police endured, they only fired one shot. The video raises questions on why it took the Pentagon hours to respond to the incident, which had been planned in broad view on the Internet. It revealed how close the insurrection came to derailing the “peaceful transfer of power” that has forged the American democracy experiment and how fragile that has become.

On Wednesday, the U.S. House in a party line vote created a select committee to investigate the Jan. 6 insurrection, after the Senate rejected a bipartisan commission last month.



Governor

Holcomb joins RGA govvs vs. court packing

Twenty Republican governors, led by Alabama Governor Kay Ivey and including Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb, issued a joint letter to President Joe Biden opposing any efforts to pack the U.S. Supreme Court. “As Governors, we oppose any attempt to increase the number of Justices on the Supreme Court of the United States,” the letter reads. “In short, “court packing”—or increasing the number of Justices to manipulate the Court’s decisions—would be unprecedented, unproductive, and unpredictable.”

Rokita op-ed on CRT

Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita penned the following op-ed: “This past school year had many challenges caused by COVID-19. Among them was a shift to remote learning, which gave parents a unique window into their children’s classrooms. For some, it shed light on troubling ideologies being imposed in K-12 school

curriculum. Numerous parents and state legislators have contacted me to express concern about how much indoctrination, not instruction, is being thrust upon students. While American students fall behind the rest of the world in math, science, reading, and writing, some schools are prioritizing political agendas over academic achievement. These dangerous ideologies only serve to divide our children, which leads to a divided society. A divided society destroys our civic institutions by falsely discrediting them. Critical race theory and similar curriculums aim to co-opt America’s traditional U.S. history and civics curriculum by imposing deeply flawed, factually deficient instruction and racial division into the classroom. Across the state of Indiana, we’ve seen concerned parents begin to engage in renewed ways in their children’s education. For some, it’s the first time they’ve stepped into a school board meeting or interacted with their school administrators. In the Indiana Attorney General’s Office, we’re committed to empowering parents to engage in meaningful civic dialogue that will positively impact their child’s educational experience. That’s why my office recently released a Parents Bill of Rights aimed at giving all Hoosier families the confidence and tools to exercise their voice in their children’s education.”

General Assembly

SD46: Carruthers announces

Floyd County Commissioner Shawn Carruthers has announced he will seek the state Senate District 46 seat being vacated by Ron Grooms (Duncan, News & Tribune). Grooms, a three-term state legislator from Jeffersonville, said June 4 he would not seek reelection next year. Grooms has endorsed Kevin Boehnlein for the GOP nomination. Republican Carruthers, who has pondered a foray into state politics for about two years, saw Grooms’ pending departure as the right time to seize the opportunity. “It happened a little sooner than I expected,” Carruthers (pictured) said of the Senate seat opening up, “but it’s an opportunity I cannot let slip by.” Carruthers, of New Albany, was elected county commissioner in November 2018 and has served as president of the governing body. This week, Boehnlein released the names of more than 40 current or former federal, state and local elected officials who have endorsed his candidacy. Though Carruthers is the former chair of the Floyd County Republican Party, the list included several Floyd County and New Albany officials. Floyd County Prosecutor Chris Lane, Recorder Lois Endris, Clerk Danita Burks and Floyd County Councilmen Danny Short and Adam Roberts are among those who have endorsed Boehnlein. ❖



Comparing President Reagan to Trump

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – A week ago in Simi Valley, Mike Pence fell into a bad habit. In a speech at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, he explained why he decided to play the historic role of certifying Joe Biden's Electoral College victory over Donald Trump, while at the same time favorably comparing the 40th and 45th presidents.



"Now, there are those in our party who believe that in my position as presiding officer over the joint session that I possess the authority to reject or return electoral votes certified by the states," Pence said, without specifying that Trump had advocated "over-

turning" the election. "The Constitution provides the vice president with no such authority before the joint session of Congress. And the truth is, there's almost no idea more un-American than the notion that any one person could choose the American president. The presidency belongs to the American people and the American people alone."

Pence added, "In the years ahead, the American people must know that our Republican Party will always keep our oath to the Constitution, even when it would be politically expedient to do otherwise. Now, I understand the disappointment many feel about the last election. I can relate. I was on the ballot. But, you know, there's more at stake than our party and our political fortunes in this moment. If we lose faith in the Constitution, we won't just lose elections. We'll lose our country."

But then Pence lapsed into the ether, comparing President Reagan to President Trump. "President Donald Trump is also one of a kind. He too disrupted the status quo. He challenged the establishment. He invigorated our movement, and he set a bold new course for America in the 21st century. And now, as then, there is no going back. Under President Trump's leadership we were able to achieve things Republicans have been talking about since the days of Barry Goldwater."

It echoed campaign speeches Pence gave between July and October 2016 after Donald Trump selected him as his running mate. "Like Ronald Reagan, Donald Trump has the honesty and the

bluntness to confront the challenges facing the American people," Pence said in a speech at the Reagan library in September 2016. "And like Reagan, I believe Donald Trump has the toughness to rebuild our economy and command the respect of the world."

This was delivered before the Access Hollywood audio surfaced in which Trump had bragged that he could grab women "by the pussy."

After his 2016 remarks, President Reagan's son, Michael Reagan, responded: "The whole Reagan family is insulted by it. Donald Trump is no Ronald Reagan. His grandchildren are, in fact, insulted that they would compare Donald Trump to their grandfather.

"As a Reagan, I'm not going to support someone who is so demeaning," he said. "In my book, I talk about the lessons my father taught me, and one of those is you don't speak down to people, you don't be demeaning to people. You find a way to work together. If my father were anything like Donald Trump, Nancy never would have married him, let alone vote for him."

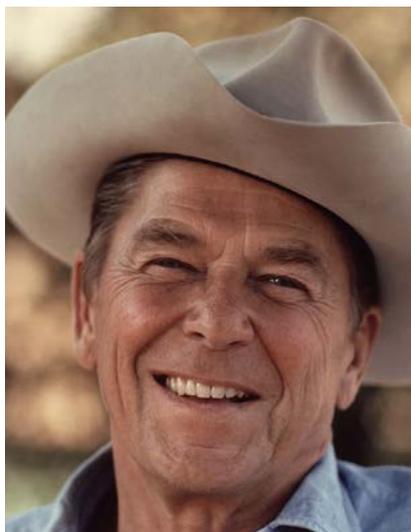
U.S. Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., added after Pence's remarks last week, "Reagan inspired. Trump destroyed. No comparison."

And former Reagan speechwriter and current Wall Street Journal columnist Peggy Noonan observed back in 2016, "Not only is Trump not Reagan, you sound desperate and historically illiterate when you think he is."

There are comparisons on the surface. Both Reagan and Trump were entertainers. They were both Democrats before becoming Republicans. Both had been divorced. Both entered Republican presidential politics in an anti-establishment vein as "disruptors," though it took Reagan three cycles (he lost to Richard Nixon in 1968 and President Ford in 1976) to win the nomination while Trump made it his first try. At age 69, Reagan was the oldest president to be sworn in until Trump at age 70.

As presidents, both proposed and signed massive tax cuts that led to exploding deficits. Both largely kept the U.S. out of new foreign conflicts.

But while Trump became a TV star on "The Apprentice," Reagan starred in more than a dozen movies, and had been president of the powerful Screen Actors Guild, while Trump had been a real estate developer. Reagan served in the military, while Trump received some five Vietnam era deferments for bone spurs. Reagan switched to the Republican Party in 1962, chaired Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign and then was elected to the first of two terms as California governor in 1966.



Trump became a Republican prior to announcing in 2015.

Ronald Reagan honed his political ideology as a spokesman for General Electric. When he showed up at a GE factory like those in Fort Wayne and Decatur, he took time to join workers in their lunchrooms. His index card notes from those lunches in the 1950s became the catalyst for a consistently conservative politician. Trump did little with or for the common man until he ran for president. He was an inconsistent conservative president.

Alexei Bayer observed for The Globalist:

"Reagan may not have been a great actor, but he was a professional, having spent a considerable amount of time honing his craft. He was a pro as a politician, too. When he became president, he knew exactly what he was going to do. As any professional would, Reagan had also assembled a team of other professionals that were able to implement his policies. One may disagree with Reagan's policies, but his ideology was nothing short of consistent.

"In contrast," Bayer continues, "Donald Trump has always been Trump – an amateur performer and an amateur president. He never studied a day of his life. Even as a real estate developer, he was not a great success, despite having a very successful father in the business who showed him the ropes. Trump's gift is that he appears like someone who keeps winning the lottery, and that is something that appeals to U.S. voters, especially those in the lower half of the U.S. income distribution."

How does Trump compare to Reagan with respect to GDP growth? Cumulatively Trump is at 6.17% compared to Reagan at 31.01% a difference of -24.84%. On non-farm payroll, cumulatively Trump is at -2.03% compared to Reagan at 17.72%, a difference of -19.75%.

When it comes to presidential political success, Reagan won 44 states in 1980 and 489 Electoral College votes, defeating President Carter 50.7% to 41% (43.9 million to 35.4 million for Carter and 5.7 million for Rep. John Anderson). In 1984, Reagan won 49 states and 525 out of 538 Electoral College votes, or 54.4 million votes to 37.5 million for Vice President Walter Mondale). That's 1,014 Electoral College votes and pluralities of 25 million votes.

Trump did not win the popular vote in his two elections, losing to Hillary Clinton 65.8 million to 62.9 million while winning the Electoral College 306-232. In 2020, Trump lost to Joe Biden 81.2 million to 74.2 million votes, and 306-232 in the Electoral College.

Reagan helped carry the U.S. Senate twice. Republicans lost the Senate majority when Trump became a disruptor in the two Georgia Senate elections on Jan. 5, 2021. The GOP lost the House majority in 2018. Trump is the first incumbent president to lose the Washington power trifecta since President Herbert Hoover.

Trump was the only president to be impeached

by the U.S. House twice. When President Reagan was confronted with the Iran-Contra scandal, he created his own commission to investigate, appointing two Republicans (John Tower and Brent Scowcroft) and one Democrat (Edmund Muskie).

According to Gallup, Reagan's average approval stands at 52.8%, while Trump's was 41.1%. According to C-Span historians, Reagan is ranked in the top 10 presidents; Trump is ranked in the bottom five.

Trump once retweeted a photo of him shaking hands with then-President Reagan, which included a quote from Reagan that said: "For the life of me, and I'll never know how to explain it, when I met that young man I felt like I was the one shaking hands with a president." According to IUPUI journalism Prof. Chris Lamb, "Reagan never said this."



And therein is another wide gulf between the two: Trump uttered more than 20,000 lies and half-truths while in office. President Reagan had the reputation as a straight shooter and had earned the trust of Democratic Speaker Tip O'Neill. "Facts are stubborn things," Reagan once said. This compares with Trump senior adviser and campaign manager Kellyanne Conway, who coined the iconic phrase that defines the Trump administration: "Alternative facts."

Lamb added, "Reagan saw America far differently than Trump does. Reagan saw America as a unified country and he sought to uphold its beliefs and values. Trump is a vengeful narcissist. He thinks America is his own family business and he can say whatever he wants and do whatever he wants with impunity."

The rhetorical contrasts are vivid. Reagan spoke of that "shining city of the hill."

"In my mind it was a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, wind-swept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace; a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity," Reagan said. "And if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here. That's how I saw it, and see it still."

Trump's idea for the nation was one of "American carnage" as he said during his 2017 inaugural address. Or as he put it at this 2016 GOP convention acceptance speech in Cleveland, "I alone can fix it."

In Reagan's farewell address on Jan. 11, 1989, he said, "And in all of that time I won a nickname, 'The Great Communicator.' But I never thought it was my style or the words I used that made a difference: It was the content. I wasn't a great communicator, but I communicated great things, and they didn't spring full bloom from my brow, they came from the heart of a great nation – from our experience, our wisdom, and our belief in the principles that have guided us for two centuries. They

called it the Reagan revolution. Well, I'll accept that, but for me it always seemed more like the great rediscovery, a rediscovery of our values and our common sense."

Trump never made a farewell address. In fact, after the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection, Twitter and Facebook kicked him off his favorite communication mode.

Trump never conceded the election, nor did he attend Joe Biden's inaugural. Instead, Trump repeatedly insisted the 2020 election was "stolen" (something former Attorney General Bill Barr called "bullshit" this past week). With promises of "It's gonna be wild," Trump unleashed the first insurrection and invasion of the U.S. Capitol since

the War of 1812, killing five people while injuring some 140 police officers. Hundreds of rioters vowed to "Hang Mike Pence."

Reagan once said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same."

Memo to Mike Pence: There are no apt comparisons between President Reagan's "shining city on the hill" and the makeshift gallows Trump inspired; brought to Capitol Hill for your neck on Jan. 6, 2021. ❖

History & Mike Pence

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – History will be kinder to Mike Pence than were the hecklers shouting "Traitor!" at him at a conference of religious conservatives last week. Much kinder than the insurrectionists chanting "Hang Mike Pence!" as they stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6.

He may not go down in history at the other extreme either, as the man who "saved American democracy," as Pence was described in a recent national column.



How Pence is portrayed in history books decades from now will depend in part on what he reveals in his own book. He contemplates that now, back home in Indiana in his just-purchased mansion in Carmel. More could depend on revelations in the anticipated book on the 2020 campaign by Bob Woodward and Robert Costa of the Washington Post.

Actually, Pence isn't likely to give himself as much credit as he deserves for carrying out his constitutional duties as vice president, doing so despite Donald Trump's demand for him to reject results of the presidential election. Pence plans to seek the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, and detailing that one break with the former president could bring such wrath from Trump, still the most powerful figure in the Republican Party, that Pence's candidacy would be destroyed.

So, it seems unlikely that Pence will write with the same strong message about freedom that he delivered as he completed his official duty of accepting certified votes from the states, a task completed after violent insurgents were driven from the Capitol. Pence said then: "To those who wreaked havoc in our Capitol today, you did not win. Violence never wins. Freedom wins."

Pence still was angry at Trump for not quickly calling off pro-Trump protesters and not even checking on the welfare of Pence and his family after they fled the Senate

chamber for safety in a secret location.

"And as we reconvene in this chamber," Pence declared as proceedings resumed, "the world will again witness the resilience and strength of our democracy, for even in the wake of unprecedented violence and vandalism at this Capitol, the elected representatives of the people of the United States have assembled again on the very same day to support and defend the Constitution of United States."

Then, however, Pence went silent for months about that role and his differences with Trump over whether to seek to overthrow the election results. Looking ahead to his political future, Pence only praised the record of the Trump administration.

In that column hailing Pence for having "saved American democracy," S.V. Date, HuffPost writer, said his stand "averted, at the very least, a constitutional crisis, and quite possibly open warfare and bloodshed in the streets." But the writer also noted that "no one wants to talk about it. Not even Mike Pence."

Pence doesn't want to talk about it and anger Trump. Democrats don't want to talk about Pence as a hero. They say he only did what the Constitution required. Those in the Trump base refusing to believe that he lost don't join in talk of Pence as a hero. They call him traitor.

As insider accounts are provided, especially in the Woodward-Costa book, by two outstanding journalists, one legendary since disclosures of Watergate, may well clarify the role of Mike Pence in refusing to reject election results, and in other Trump administration decisions as well.

Was Pence just a potted plant near the president's desk, a decoration for conservatives? Or behind the scenes did he talk an unhinged president out of dangerous actions? In history, Pence of course will be no Benedict Arnold. Just how he will be viewed decades hence will be clarified as we learn what real threats he faced, and from whom. Were shouts of "Hang Mike Pence!" just taunts or a real threat to destroy him, literally, along with the certified votes from the nation? ❖

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

Rufo explains critical race theory

By CHRISTOPHER F. RUFO

SACRAMENTO – Critical race theory is the latest battleground in the culture war. Since the murder of George Floyd last year, critical race theory's key concepts, including "systemic racism," "white privilege," and "white fragility," have become ubiquitous in America's elite institutions.



Progressive politicians have sought to implement "antiracist" policies to reduce racial disparities, such as minorities-only income programs and racially segregated vaccine distribution.

The ideology has sparked an immense backlash. As Americans have sought to understand critical race theory, they have discovered

that it has divided Americans into racial categories of "oppressor" and "oppressed" and promotes radical concepts such as "spirit murder" (what public schools supposedly do to black children) and "abolishing whiteness" (a purported precondition for social justice). In the classroom, critical race theory-inspired lessons have often devolved into race-based struggle sessions, with public schools forcing children to rank themselves according to a racial hierarchy, subjecting white teachers to "antiracist therapy," and encouraging parents to become "white traitors."

Alarmed state legislators have pushed back. In recent months, lawmakers in 24 states have introduced, and six have enacted, legislation banning public schools from promoting critical race theory's core concepts, including race essentialism, collective guilt and racial superiority. Parent groups around the country have mobilized to oppose critical race theory in the classroom, arguing that it cultivates shame in white students and fatalism in minority students. According to a recent YouGov survey, of the 64% of Americans who have heard about critical race theory, 58% view it unfavorably, including 72% of political independents.

That's a major liability for the political left.

Sensing that they are losing control of the narrative on race, left-leaning media outlets have launched a furious counterattack. Liberal pundits at the New York Times, Washington Post, MSNBC and elsewhere have begun spinning a new mythology that presents critical race theory as a benign academic concept, casts its detractors as right-wing extremists driven by racial resentment, and portrays legislation against critical race theory as an attempt to ban teaching about the history of slavery and racism. All three charges are false.

First, critical race theory isn't an exercise in

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Melton sees CRT as power play of the right

By EDDIE MELTON

GARY – If "critical race theory" is the latest battleground in the culture war, it is merely because culture warriors on the right have tried desperately to make it one.

The latest example of this in Indiana is Attorney

General Todd Rokita's release of a "Parents Bill of Rights" where he warns of the danger that the "radical ideology" of "critical race theory" will take over Indiana schools. The fact that the attorney general, elected to represent Indiana in legal challenges, issued a document about education without even consulting the Department of Education tells us all we need to know about the political



games behind flaming this culture war.

In reality, "critical race theory" is an academic framework that examines how racism is not only an individual prejudice, but is also embedded in our society and legal system. This goes beyond the legacy of slavery, including, for example, housing policy which denied Black Americans the same opportunities at homeownership and wealth-building as white Americans. Government officials have drawn lines around predominantly minority neighborhoods, also known as red-lining, and deemed them "poor financial risk." This resulted in banks refusing mortgages to Black families, denying them the opportunity to be homeowners and resulted in Black families building financial equity at a devastatingly disproportionate rate compared to white families.

If we want to build stronger communities and offer all Americans access to the American Dream, shouldn't our students, our future lawmakers, know our true history so not to repeat discriminatory acts but instead build a better America?

Luckily, we don't have to agree on the definition, because, contrary to the warnings of Attorney General Rokita, "critical race theory" is not currently being taught in Indiana public schools. It's a collegiate-level theory that advocates for history classes teaching, well, history. All of our history. The good and the bad. There is no curriculum in Indiana teaching white students that they are inherently evil oppressors or teaching minority students that they are inherently inferior. Using politically charged language to misrepresent curriculum and allege that educators are emotionally damaging our children does nothing more than fuel a political war that Hoosiers, and Americans, are tired of.

It is true that we have seen schools in Indiana ad-

Continued on page 12



Rufo

promoting racial sensitivity or understanding history. It's a radical ideology that seeks to use race as a means of moral, social and political revolution. The left-leaning media has sought to portray it as a "lens" for examining the history of racism in the U.S., but this soft framing obscures the nature of the theory, which maintains that America is an irredeemably racist nation and that the constitutional principles of freedom and equality are mere "camouflages," in the words of scholar William F. Tate IV, for white supremacy. The solution, according to prominent exponents of critical race theory such as Ibram X. Kendi, is to abolish capitalism and install a near-omnipotent federal bureaucracy with the power to nullify any law and silence political speech that isn't "antiracist."

Second, the grassroots movement against critical race theory is nonpartisan, multiracial and mainstream. Parents have revolted against critical race theory training at high schools in liberal cities such as New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. The most successful campaigns have been led by racial minorities who oppose the manipulative and harmful practices of critical race theory in the classroom. Asian-Americans in particular have argued that critical race theory will undermine merit-based admissions, advanced learning programs and academic standards.

Third, state legislation about critical race theory bans a specific set of pedagogies, not teaching about history. Left-leaning media outlets have claimed that bills in states such as Idaho, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas would ban teachers from discussing racism in the classroom. This is patently false. The legislation in these states would simply prohibit teachers from compelling students to believe that one race "is inherently superior to another," that one race is "inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive," or that an individual "bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race." The same bills explicitly say that teachers may and should discuss the role of racism in American history, but they may not shame or treat students differently according to their racial background.

This issue isn't going away. Critical race theory has taken a dominant position in many elite institutions, including public-school bureaucracies and the graduate schools training new teachers and professors. Parents, honest journalists and lawmakers should continue to combat the wave of misinformation, share stories about the damage critical race theory is doing to their communities, and develop a plan to combat it in local institutions. Critical race theory is a dangerous ideology that will take the nation into racial retrograde; Americans should have no hesitation in opposing it. ❖

Mr. Rufo is a contributing editor of City Journal and a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute. This article originally appeared in the Wall Street Journal.



Melton

dress concerns of racial justice in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the nationwide protests they sparked. Some Hoosier parents have raised concerns at school board meetings about this direction.

There will always be disagreement on what to emphasize in history instruction.

Not long ago many public schools in this country taught a "Lost Cause" mythology, downplaying the horrors and evils of slavery in this country. It is pushback of this type of suppression of our true history that has led schools to re-examine the lens through which our history is taught. I support schools' efforts to make U.S. history curriculum more comprehensive and accurate. And I trust our experienced teachers, elected school board members and parents to make decisions about curriculum that will best educate our students. They don't need help from politically charged think tanks that have no involvement in day-to-day education.

This past legislative session, I was proud to support the bipartisan legislation, HEA 1384, which mandates civics education be taught in Indiana classrooms, with curriculum to be established by the State Board of Education and the newly created Indiana Civic Education Committee. This curriculum will teach our children about government and instill in them an interest in being well-informed citizens who are engaged in community and government at all levels.

This is how we maintain our government of the people, for the people. I believe that this kind of action is far more beneficial to our students than political pundits and Republican politicians doing nothing more than trying to make people angry.

I sincerely hope Indiana does not follow the footsteps of other states, that in the name of stopping the boogeyman of "critical race theory," are passing laws which will censor academic freedom and deny our past. I want to be clear; this approach does not teach or ask students to adopt the shame or racism of that past.

The idea that acknowledging and learning about our nation's history is an exercise in making certain races feel ashamed is a regressive mindset and a convenient excuse to continue blocking out the parts of history that are uncomfortable.

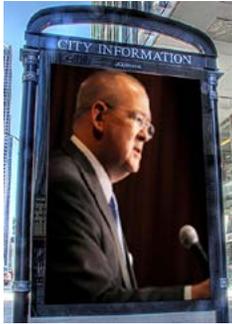
As I said before, we can only move forward as a unified nation, with actual justice for all, until citizens are taught all of our history. ❖

Melton is a Democratic state senator from Gary and assistant Senate minority leader. He is also a deputy chairman of the Indiana Democratic Party. He wrote this op-ed article for Howey Politics Indiana.

School choice, cost savings & ed spending

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE – My colleague Dagny Faulk and I recently completed an analysis of the fiscal effect of school choice on Indiana taxpayers. The data came from a Department of Education report on transfer students across the state, which we matched with state spending and overall enrollment. During the process of the Ball State CBER study, I learned a few surprising things that are likely to prompt anyone with strong feelings about school choice. So, it's best to proceed with an open mind.



Indiana adopted universal school choice a little more than a decade ago. That occurred through a series of changes that together made Indiana the national leader in school choice. Beginning after 2000, the legislature created and then expanded charter school programs. These are public schools that are overseen by a university, a municipality or a local public school system. These schools range from large online programs to specialized programs operated by local school corporations like the McCullough Academy for Girls in Gary.

The state also instituted full public school choice, permitting students to attend the school of their choice, with state funding following the student. There are some limits on student movement. Schools must accept every student without a significant behavioral record, and they must use a lottery system for enrollment if there are more applicants than spaces available. Indiana added a voucher program to assist low-income families wanting to attend private schools.

I know much of the rhetoric about school choice claims it is designed to destroy public education. If so, it has been a colossal failure. Since Indiana began its path to school choice, private school enrollment in the state plummeted by more than half. In 2000, more than 134,000 or 12% of Hoosier children attended private schools. Today it is under 61,000 or 5.4%.

Much of that change cannot be attributed directly to school choice. The introduction of nationwide school performance measures in the mid-2000s revealed what public education advocates have long argued. Many of Indiana's local public schools outperform nearby private schools, which certainly led to part of the exodus of private school students to public schools.

The broader policy goal of school choice always was to cause schools to compete for students on issues of quality. The stark reality is that when it came to compet-

ing for students, Indiana's local public schools absolutely dominated the competition. By the 2019-20 school year, local public school share of students rose from just under 88% to more than 91% of students. This doesn't include the large number of students enrolled in charter schools that are operated by local public school corporations.

In contrast, school choice has been devastating for Indiana's private schools. While there are a few that prosper, most struggle. Mergers or outright closure of many private schools continue to be a real risk to school choice in many communities. Today, Indiana pays for just 6.2% of students to attend either charter or offers vouchers for private schools.

By diverting students to less expensive schools, our study found that Indiana's school choice saved the state close to \$88 million in the 2019-2020 school year. The [details of this are located in our study](#), but it is worth explaining how the findings might be sensitive to assumptions about enrollment patterns. We calculated the savings from students using vouchers instead of attending their local public school.

To start, let's assume that only half those students would leave private schools if the voucher program ended. At first blush, that might reduce savings by maybe \$30 million. However, if 17,000 kids left private schools, many would close and send perhaps 50,000 more kids into public schools. That would be far more expensive. Few people will speak to the issue openly, but we'd be better off acknowledging that increasing vouchers is largely about preventing private schools from closing, which results in less competition for enrollment in local public schools.

This study didn't mention it, but in the years following full school choice, the performance of Hoosier kids on national tests have improved substantially. Again, that was the big goal of school choice, to improve performance in all schools. While Indiana's average national test scores cannot tell us whether this was caused by school choice, it places a pretty large hurdle in front of those who suggest choice played no role in school improvement. It also devastates the argument that school choice weakens education.

Our study also provides maps and tables of individual schools that will be interesting to residents across the state. Though this study offers analysis that should cool tempers about school choice, we also note deeper problems in Indiana's education policy.

From 2010 to 2020, during the longest economic expansion in Indiana history, inflation-adjusted spending on K-12 education declined, both as a share of our economy and on a per-student basis. Using the Consumer Price Index, real student spending dropped by more than 10% per kid. That understates the real losses because schools spend a lot more resources on healthcare and labor costs than the CPI reports. So, we understate the real effect of cuts by as much as 50%. In reality, the funding cuts to K-12 education from 2010 to 2020 were the steepest in state history.

As Indiana's economy grew, funding for schools declined. Indiana wasn't the only state to do so, but educational attainment in Indiana lags the nation. Even with the benefits of school choice, Indiana's cuts to education and growing educational gap clearly have slowed our economic growth.

I am proud of Indiana's courage in tackling school choice, and appreciative that the next state budget restores much of the cuts to K-12 education. But, it didn't go far enough, nor did it reverse the cuts to higher education, where Indiana now finds itself near the bottom of the

nation. Ultimately, how well we educate our children and young adults has far more to do with our prosperity than any other policy. In the end it doesn't really matter how robust our school choice options are if fewer and fewer people choose to live and work in Indiana. ❖

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.

Reinvigorating Indiana

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – My homily last week may have disturbed some loyal Hoosiers. Here was a foreigner, one who did not attend an Indiana high school, challenging a \$500 million program which openly admits all is not perfect in Indiana.



READI (the Regional Economic Acceleration + Development Initiative) is an open acknowledgment that most places throughout Indiana are not attractive to talented, skilled workers whether native or foreign born, as in Ohio or Michigan.

Yes, an Indiana governor and his cantankerous legislative accomplices have endorsed a program designed to make our state a more desirable place to live.

My chief objection to READI is that the IEDC (the Indiana Economic Development Corporation) made the essential decisions about a massive and important program without giving it sufficient thought. The project proposals being sought were to be based on geographic rather than substantive considerations.

Here are four themes, more valuable than previous regional efforts, yet fully consistent with READI's goals.

1. Reinvigorating cities and towns via updating existing housing to make it occupancy and purchase-ready. Many of the skilled and talented people we seek to attract prefer to live in semi-rural environments or older urban neighborhoods rather than sterile suburbs or undifferentiated cookie-cutter apartments .

However, the private housing stock and public services in too many places are substandard. Plus, many of today's younger householders do not have the skills or interest to buy a fixer-upper. This is not a regional prob-

lem; it is statewide urgency.

2. Today many people want accessible public recreation. Hiking trails, like the Knobstone winding from Clark to Morgan counties, link many counties together. Only when seen as a network, however, does the magnitude of these recreational and educational resources have real meaning.

A network of trails is multi-jurisdictional and not likely to be contained in a conventional regional configuration formed to attract funding from IEDC.

3. According to the June 2021 report of the Department of Correction, Indiana had 20,600 adult males incarcerated. Many of these men, and an untold number of those already released, have fathered children, but are not prepared to be successful, either financially or emotionally, in returning to family life.

The programs of the Fathers and Family Center in Indianapolis, which have proven outcomes, need to be strengthened and duplicated as a statewide investment in both our near-term and future workforce.

4. Selective reforestation is an environmental and economic statewide priority for Indiana. Commercial, private tree farms can serve the timber needs of the state and provide a benefit of carbon-sequestration, without disrupting our state forests. Urban canopy restoration reduces residential energy demands and enhance property values.

None of these four programs is a novelty, nor has applicability to a single geographic region alone. Yet, all four are likely to appeal to the talented and skilled workers envisioned by READI. They might even be appreciated by today's voting taxpayers. ❖

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

Of anti-vaxxers and fact checkers

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News

ANDERSON – I’m still getting the occasional email from defenders of coronavirus vaccine critic Dr. Michael Yeadon. The most recent noted that my column in mid-April had relied on Snopes, “a known purveyor of disinformation.” That’s actually the opposite of what Snopes does.



The article I cited pointed out that Yeadon was never actually the chief science officer at Pfizer and he had no real expertise in vaccines. The division he once led focused on developing drugs to treat asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The library at American University has assembled a guide for identifying fake news. It calls Snopes “an independent, nonpartisan website that researches urban legends and other rumors.” “It is often the first to set the facts straight on wild fake news claims,” the library says.

Snopes got its start in 1994, before many of us even knew about the internet, and it soon built a reputation as a reliable place to go for the real scoop on urban legends, hoaxes and folklore.

“When misinformation obscures the truth and readers don’t know what to trust, Snopes’ fact-checking and original, investigative reporting lights the way to evidence-based and contextualized analysis,” the site says. “We always link to and document our sources so readers are empowered to do independent research and make up their own minds.”

My reader suggested I was being snarky by pointing out that LifeSiteNews, the website reporting on Yeadon’s claims, had, by its own admission, been banned from YouTube.

“Yes, there is a reason for that,” she wrote. “It is called CENSORSHIP of anything that goes against what the Communist/Leftists/Democrats want to hear and want the public to hear!”

The website PolitiFact put together a primer for folks trying to sort

through the disinformation surrounding the COVID vaccines. “As evidence that vaccines are lethal or otherwise dangerous, vaccine skeptics commonly cite reports from the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System, a national vaccine safety surveillance program set up by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the FDA that records health issues that arise after vaccinations in the U.S.,” the website says, “But the agencies that run the tracking system warn that the reports shouldn’t be misinterpreted. VAERS records adverse events without confirming whether the vaccine caused them or even if they actually happened. Search results on the system come with this caveat: ‘VAERS reports alone cannot be used to determine if a vaccine caused or contributed to an adverse event or illness.’”

More than 320 million Americans have received at least one dose of vaccine, and 151 million have been fully vaccinated. Public health experts generally agree that Americans are almost always better off with the vaccines than without them.

“**Vaccines are by no means perfect,**” PolitiFact’s Angie Holan wrote in an email to subscribers. “They can have minor temporary side effects. A small number of vaccinated people will get breakthrough infections and get sick anyway. But for most people, vaccines keep you from getting seriously sick and dying of COVID-19.”

Holan admits it’s hard to talk to people who believe the scary stories circulating on social media, but she recommends a friendly approach using “solid, science-backed information.”

I’ll admit I didn’t really try that with my latest critic. I just didn’t think I’d be able to win her over. Perhaps it was the way she closed her message. “It is irresponsible of you and others in the media to try to suppress and discredit anyone who speaks out about the damage that is being done by these ‘vaccines,’” she wrote. “If you have any desire to be a credible source of news, you will need to do better than this!!”

I decided not to engage her. “I think we’ll just have to agree to disagree,” I wrote. That was probably an understatement. ❖



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Inconclusive studies of 2020 pre-election polling problems could help

By NATALIE JACKSON

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – At the 2021 virtual conference of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), a task force presented the findings from their official assessment of 2020 pre-election polling. [1] The findings confirmed what general suspicions and early analysis had shown: That 2020 polls collectively overstated support for Democrats in every contest and generated the highest polling errors in “at least 20 years.”[2] However, the task force was unable to determine what caused the error with the available data, only that it was “consistent with systemic non-response.”

The conclusions, or lack thereof, from the task force are disappointing on one dimension. That an all-star group of hard-working researchers in the industry did not provide concrete answers to what went wrong is somewhat disheartening. By the same token, however, that could be good for the industry overall in two ways: It could help reset expectations for pre-election polls because there is no single identifiable “fix” to be applied, and it is likely to spur innovation among diverse methodologies to identify and address underlying problems.

Polling error in 2016 vs. 2020, and how not knowing what is wrong can be good for expectations: After the 2016 pre-election polls underestimated Donald Trump’s support, a similar AAPOR task force went to work in early 2017 to investigate why. The conclusions from that task force pointed to two concrete sources of error that skewed polls away from Trump. First, the 2016 pre-election polls had unusually high proportions of undecided voters, among whom the majority ended up voting for Trump. Additionally, the polls that performed the worst tended to not adequately adjust their surveys to get enough voters with less formal education than a four-year college degree – a group that also swung heavily toward Trump.

In the lead-up to the 2020 election, there were far fewer undecided voters in polls, leaving the education weighting issue as the main point in discussions of polling accuracy. While pollsters often warned that fixing education weighting did not mean 2020 would be error-free, that caution usually came after a statement about making corrections and adjustments based on specific problems identified after the 2016 election. Fairly or not, the perception emerged that by correcting the education weighting deficiency, pollsters had fixed the problem (despite some warnings otherwise). The 2020 task force poured cold

water on that theory by noting that the issues identified in 2016 had mostly been ruled out as primary drivers of polling error in 2020.

The positive side of the lack of concrete answers is that the narrative of fixing polls by adjusting this one thing cannot take hold in the wake of 2020 polling errors. This time, instead of feeding a focus on how to make polls perfectly predict election outcomes, as the education weighting finding inadvertently did, the 2020 task force report seems as if it will put a spotlight on the unknown sources of uncertainty that exist in polling. If this is leveraged to foster better communication about and understanding of uncertainty, it will be a positive outcome.

No more “gold standard” and opportunities for innovation: It also follows that, because the AAPOR task force did not identify easily corrected flaws in pre-election polls, individual pollsters are left to innovate and problem-solve on their own. However, the findings do point to areas that need innovation – how we contact people and get them to take polls, and how we determine who are “likely voters” that we want in our polls.

It is increasingly clear that how a poll contacts people – formerly a key heuristic for assessing poll quality – no longer tells us what it used to about accuracy. The 2020 primary pre-election polling task force report found that whether the survey was online or by telephone had no bearing on accuracy, and the new task force report presentation indicated the same finding. As a result of their own analysis showing the same thing, FiveThirtyEight has retired the landline and cell phone live-caller survey as the “gold standard.” The field letting go of its attachment to one source as more accurate than others will allow other methodologies to become more prominent and encourage further experimentation with new methodologies.

The second key place we need to innovate, or at least focus more energy, is on determining who is a “likely voter.” The task force seemed to somewhat dismiss likely voter modeling as a reason for polling misses in 2020 based on the limited information they had available. That came with a huge caveat that the task force did not have information on likely voter models for most polls. That is not surprising; most pollsters regard likely voter selection or modeling as their proprietary “secret sauce” and do not divulge it. Without more information to analyze, there is no way for the task force to really rule out likely voter models as part of the bias. We need to increase awareness that, unless details are provided, anything labeled “likely voters” is essentially a pollster’s best guess about what the electorate will look like – nothing more.

An instructive illustration on how much likely voter selection matters comes from a 2016 article in the New York Times in which Nate Cohn had four different sets of pollsters adjust the same data using weighting and likely voter determinations, and they came out with results ranging from Clinton +4 to Trump +1. That exercise demon-



strated quite clearly that likely voter modeling – done by rational, smart people! – can result in significant survey error. Of course, this has always been true, but likely voter models will be much more consequential in elections won or lost on razor-thin margins in a few states. The best move AAPOR could make is to continue encouraging transparency in methods, including likely voter models.

Looking to 2024

There will still be plenty of presidential horserace polls in 2024, and before that in contests happening in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The demand for polls in the early 2021 Georgia Senate runoffs illustrated that polls are still a desirable part of campaign coverage. Polls are also still the best way to know what the mass public thinks.

However, when 2024 rolls around, it looks like pollsters will not be able to say, “we fixed x as the AAPOR report said we should to make up for what happened last time.” The more likely scenario in the absence of any type of community consensus is that individual pollsters will tweak their processes here and there, and those tweaks will be different for each organization. Some will be at the sample level, working hard at the task of making sure those non-trusting people are recruited into surveys somehow. Some will be in other parts of the process, including likely voter models. The AAPOR task force report is not telling us how to do that, but that leaves the field wide open to innovation and learning. That makes it a difficult, but exciting, time to be a pollster. ❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: Someone needs to find a hobby for Todd Rokita. Clearly, serving as Indiana’s attorney general and tending to the legal interests of the state and its citizens aren’t enough to command his full attention. He keeps looking for ways to occupy his time and energy some of them destructive to Indiana law and Hoosiers’ interests. It’s only a matter of time before he creates a mess that can’t be cleaned up without wasting a lot of taxpayers’ money. First, he wanted to keep a job in the private sector while serving as the state’s top lawyer. Only exposure and an outcry prompted him to back away from that ill-advised scheme. Then, he signed our state onto a Hail-Mary attempt to overturn the 2020 presidential election results. That effort was launched by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, who has been under indictment on felony securities fraud charges for six years and has sought with increasing desperation to delay his day of reckoning in court. Rokita also committed Indiana to a hopeless tilt at challenging the Affordable Care Act, even though the U.S. Supreme Court already had upheld Obamacare twice. This time around, the nation’s highest bench treated the challenge from Rokita and his cohorts with something resembling contempt, saying they lacked both standing and a case.

If Rokita and his cronies had managed to get their way, 31 million Americans would have lost their health coverage. And, of course, Rokita has done his best to make Indiana’s genuine constitutional crisis – the dispute between Gov. Eric Holcomb and the know-nothing caucuses in the Indiana General Assembly over who can call the legislature into session – even worse. He did so in a particularly adolescent way by arguing that he should have maximum authority with minimal or nonexistent accountability. He contended that he alone could serve as counsel for both the governor and the lawmakers while also filling a role as arbiter – judge – in the dispute. Most people think only God can serve as both advocate for and judge of all living things, but one suspects Rokita thinks the de-



ity has lost a step and needs some help. All these moves have been made with Rokita’s own interests in mind, not those of Hoosiers. He wants to be Indiana’s next governor so bad he would do anything to get there. Including costing millions of people their health care or disenfranchising voters by the tens of thousands. He has concluded that the best way to become governor is to capture Trump voters in the 2024 Indiana Republican gubernatorial primary. He reasons, likely correctly, that winning the nomination will be a tougher challenge than winning the general election. To that end, Rokita now has waded into the debate over critical race theory by issuing a “Parents Bill of Rights.” In typical Rokita fashion, he did so without consulting with the Indiana Department of Education – which also is in Republican hands – or, it seems, with anyone but his own smiling visage in the mirror. Much of Rokita’s bill of rights is boilerplate. There are explanations of how to run for school board and how to contact the DOE. But much of it also includes fulminations against critical race theory and arguments that Hoosier students shouldn’t ever be taught anything that might encourage them to ... learn something. Rokita’s thesis is, “the dumber we are, the happier we will be.” ❖

Michael D’Antonio, CNN: Former Vice President Mike Pence is seizing his chance. After four humiliating years playing the role of the President’s lapdog, which culminated in his fleeing a mob of Trump supporters, who threatened his life during the US Capitol attack on January 6, Pence seems to have begun his push to claim the presidency for himself. In a speech at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library on Thursday, Pence decried the attack, which was fueled by Trump’s repeated lie that the 2020 election was “stolen” from him. “Truth is, there is almost no idea more un-American than the notion that any one person could choose the American president,” Pence said. By clearing what is obviously a very low bar – taking a stand against an effort to undermine democracy – Pence benefits from looking and sounding like a credible politi-

cian who might just rescue the GOP from the former president's control. But Pence also tried the classic politician's two-step and followed up his veiled criticism of Trump by lauding him as the best conservative president in modern history. Pence, who went on to employ some of his former boss' scare tactics during the speech, could end up being a more polished iteration of Trump by employing the same dangerous talking points, but with the air of a dignified statesman. By diverging from Trump on the January 6th attack, Pence produced a handy sound bite to reassure those who were appalled. But anyone who paid close attention to the rest of Pence's speech would have picked up on his attempt to lay claim to the Trumpiest in the GOP. He suggested that Trump was a more consequential conservative than Ronald Reagan. "Under President Trump's leadership we were able to achieve things Republicans have been talking about since the days of Barry Goldwater," said Pence. In criticizing Trump and exploiting the critical race theory bogeyman in the same speech, Pence is trying to have his cake and eat it too. He wants the kudos that come with defending democracy and the energizing power that comes with stoking White grievance – a tactic Trump capitalized on with great success. This move may put Pence on track to run for president in 2024. It also affirms that as a man who held political office for the last 20 years straight, he understands the first principle of American politics as described by the famous boss of New York's Tammany Hall more than a century ago. In a little book published in 1905, the politician George Washington Plunkitt offered what he called "a series of very plain talks on very practical politics." In a passage addressing graft that has since been accepted as a bit of universal political wisdom, Plunkitt declared, "I seen my opportunities and I took 'em." Of Pence, Plunkitt would be proud. ❖

Mark K. Updegrave, New York Times: On Wednesday, C-SPAN issued a report card of past presidents, its fourth since 2000 — and the first to include Donald Trump. James Buchanan has held a lock on the bottom spot as the worst president. Would Mr. Trump change that? No — though he has very little to brag about. Historians deemed him the fourth worst of the 44 former presidents (Andrew Johnson and Franklin Pierce were also rated below him). The scores, rendered by over 140 independent historians looking at 10 criteria like "crisis leadership" and "performance within context of times," range from 897 (out of a possible 1,000) for the top-rated president, Lincoln, to Buchanan's 227. Mr. Trump got 312. It's too early to draw a dispassionate view of Mr. Trump's single term. Normally it takes at least a generation for the appraisals of historians to become rooted in more reasoned judgment. In a poll conducted by Arthur Schlesinger in 1962, Dwight Eisenhower, just a year out of office, tied with the forgettable Chester Arthur for 20th out of the 29 presidents measured. Likewise, in a survey done two years after leaving the White House, Ronald

Reagan placed 28th out of 37 presidents. But time has been good to Eisenhower and Reagan, as historians have come to focus more on the triumphs of their leadership: Eisenhower's deft foreign policy management, ensuring that the Cold War didn't become hot, and Reagan's productive partnership with his Soviet counterpart Mikhail Gorbachev, resulting in an easing of superpower tensions. In the new C-SPAN poll, Eisenhower and Reagan ranked — at fifth and ninth — in the top 10 with Lincoln, George Washington, Franklin Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Thomas Jefferson, Kennedy and Barack Obama, who bumps Lyndon Johnson from 10th (in 2017, Mr. Obama placed 12th).

For Mr. Trump, whose administration was marked by chaos, discord and division — much of his own making — it may take longer for greater even-handedness to take hold. But will he prove, like Eisenhower and Reagan, to climb the list with time as his record inspires re-evaluation and, ultimately, absolution? It's not likely. Presidents are principally measured by the most consequential aspects of their administrations, those that resonate in history and define the times in which they governed. Mr. Trump will be hampered by two central crises of his tenure. He treated the first, the coronavirus pandemic, which has resulted in the deaths of over 600,000 Americans, as an inconvenience. Offering hollow promises that it would magically disappear in the interest of keeping the economy growing and his re-election chances alive, he largely allowed the virus to spread perniciously. ❖

Karl Rove, Wall Street Journal: How distant now feels the glowing praise President Biden drew when he marked his 100th day in office. In celebration of that milestone in late April, the mainstream media went out of its way to praise Mr. Biden. The president "knows how to . . . underpromise, then overdeliver," wrote a New York Times editorial board member. He's "enacting an ambitious domestic agenda," wrote a liberal columnist, "while arousing hardly any controversy." A Los Angeles Times journalist declared that Mr. Biden's "image of competence is a key attribute," while John Podesta of the liberal Center for American Progress gushed "this is what an effective government looks like." That image of competence took several well-deserved hits last week. The most damaging was the backlash to the president's infrastructure switcheroo. Last Thursday, Mr. Biden announced that he and senators of both parties had "forged an agreement that will create millions of American jobs and modernize our American infrastructure." Then, almost immediately, the president said he wouldn't sign that \$1.2 trillion bipartisan measure unless Congress also passed the \$2.5 trillion in spending required to cover the sticker price of his American Families Plan—which the White House and senators from both parties had just agreed to set aside. "If this is the only thing that comes to me," Mr. Biden declared, referring to the bipartisan infrastructure agreement, "I'm not signing it." ❖

FSSA's Sullivan resigns for NC job

INDIANAPOLIS – After more than six years of state service as the secretary of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) and as the deputy state health commissioner, Dr. Jennifer Sullivan has notified Gov. Eric J. Holcomb that she is stepping away from her position for a new role in North Carolina. To ensure a smooth transition, Gov. Holcomb today named Dr. Dan Rusyniak, FSSA's chief medical officer, as the new secretary, effective Aug. 1. Gov. Holcomb said, "Secretary Sullivan tackled some of the most complex issues our state has ever dealt with and found new innovative ways to deliver improved results. I'll never be able to say thank you enough for all she has done for health care and social services in Indiana, but I'll never stop trying." Dr. Sullivan said, "I have had every resource needed to make changes based on the priority pillars laid out each year. My voice has been heard and I have grown as a leader, a policy expert and a citizen of this great state."



Holcomb extends COVID emergency

INDIANAPOLIS – Gov. Eric Holcomb is extending his declaration of a statewide public health emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic through at least the end of July (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). The Republican issued an executive order Wednesday that found, despite the state's ongoing mitigation and vaccination efforts, the coronavirus "remains a threat to the health, safety and welfare of all residents of Indiana," and further action is needed "to continue to address, control and reduce the threat posed by COVID-19." This is the 16th renewal of Indiana's COVID-19 emergency since Holcomb signed his initial declaration March 6, 2020, after the

first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in the Hoosier State. Since that day, more than 750,000 Hoosiers have tested positive for the virus and nearly 14,000 Indiana residents have died from COVID-19. Holcomb said renewing his public health emergency declaration through July 31 ensures Indiana can continue responding effectively to the hundreds of COVID-19 cases still being diagnosed daily.

Abortion reversal law blocked

INDIANAPOLIS — A federal judge on Wednesday blocked an Indiana law that would require doctors to tell women undergoing drug-induced abortions about a disputed treatment for potentially stopping the abortion process ([AP](#)). The ruling came just before the so-called abortion reversal law adopted by Indiana's Republican-dominated Legislature was to take effect Thursday. The temporary injunction issued by U.S. District Judge James Patrick Hanlon in Indianapolis puts the law on hold while the lawsuit challenging it makes its way through court. Hanlon ruled that the abortion-rights groups had a "reasonable likelihood" of proving that the requirement would violate free speech rights of abortion providers.

NCAA to allows student profit

INDIANAPOLIS — The NCAA has approved interim policies allowing student-athletes to be able to profit off of their name, image, or likeness. The NCAA Board of Directors approved the policy changes on Wednesday in a meeting at the NCAA headquarters. The changes were recommended by the NCAA Division 1 Council on Monday. "This is an important day for college athletes since they all are now able to take advantage of name, image and likeness opportunities," NCAA president Mark Emmert said. "With the variety of state laws adopted across the country, we will continue to work

with Congress to develop a solution that will provide clarity on a national level."

Holcomb tribute to Pat Whitcomb

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric Holcomb's statement regarding the passing of former First Lady Pat Whitcomb at age 91. "Pat Whitcomb served Hoosiers during her time as First Lady with honor and grace. I loved that she learned how to greet people in many different languages so she could communicate with the world as she loved meeting new people from all corners always defining our signature Hoosier Hospitality."

Indictments coming for Trump Org

NEW YORK — A New York grand jury has indicted the Trump Organization and its chief financial officer with tax-related crimes that will be made public Thursday in court, people familiar with the matter said, marking the first criminal charges against the former president's company since prosecutors began investigating it three years ago ([Wall Street Journal](#)). The charges against the company and longtime CFO Allen Weisselberg are a blow to former President Donald Trump, who has fended off multiple criminal and civil probes during and after his presidency. But the initial charges won't implicate Mr. Trump himself, his lawyer said.

Donald Rumsfeld dies at age 88

WASHINGTON— Donald H. Rumsfeld, the secretary of defense for Presidents Gerald R. Ford and George W. Bush, who presided over America's Cold War strategies in the 1970s and, in the new world of terrorism decades later, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, died on Tuesday at his home in Taos, N.M. He was 88 ([New York Times](#)). The cause was multiple myeloma.