

## With Joe in Rome, who runs for INGov?

Donnelly's Vatican nomination creates a 2024 question mark

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Three years is the proverbial “eternity” in politics, but in modern Indiana political history, many gubernatorial campaigns take root 24 to 18 months out from election. So while it’s early to begin assessing the open seat 2024 gubernatorial field, Indiana Democrats had their first big jolt of the cycle last Friday.

That’s when the White House announced that President Biden was nominating former senator Joe Donnelly to be U.S. ambassador to the Vatican. It’s a plum gig for Donnelly, a devout Catholic and Notre Dame graduate.



He told Howey Politics Indiana that he wouldn’t be a candidate for the U.S. Senate in 2022, but seemed to leave the door open for further cycles. “It was a great honor to serve our state in the U.S. House and Senate,” Donnelly said last March. “During the last two years, I have had the chance to teach U.S. national security at Notre Dame, to practice law, to work on Hoosier renewable energy issues, and to work with Indiana businesses to create more jobs. I remain open to being involved in public

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## Refuting ‘the steal’

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – As a prelude to Donald Trump’s presidency, his adviser Steve Bannon said in 2016, “Lenin wanted to destroy the state, and that’s my goal too. I want to bring everything crashing down, and destroy all of today’s establishment.”



A week before Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection – which ended up as the first violent encroachment of the U.S. Capitol since the British burned Washington in 1814, costing five lives, three police suicides, 150 cop injuries, and more than 500 criminal charges of sedition – Steve Bannon had President Trump’s ear.

According to the Bob Woodward and Robert Costa book



**“If we don’t solve the presidential election fraud of 2020 (which we have thoroughly and conclusively documented), Republicans will not be voting in ‘22 or ‘24. It is the single most important thing for Republicans to do.”**

- Donald J. Trump in a statement on Wednesday.



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**Jack E. Howey**  
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 1926-2019



"Peril": "You've got to return to Washington and make a dramatic return today," Bannon told Trump, who was at Mar-a-Lago. "You've got to call Pence off the f----- ski slopes and get him back here today. This is a crisis. We're going to bury Biden on Jan. 6. We're going to kill it in the crib. Kill the Biden presidency in the crib."

**The roadmap** to this conspiracy to violently take away Joe Biden's 81 million vote to 74 million vote victory (306 to 232 Electoral College) was a memo by "legal scholar" John Eastman who laid out the "Jan. 6 scenario" that claimed that seven states had transmitted dual slates of electors to the president of the Senate, Vice President Mike Pence. U.S. Sen. Mike Lee of Utah sought and could find no evidence of any dual elector slates.

According to Eastman, Pence would disqualify those seven states, leaving 454 instead of 538 electors. "There are at this point, 232 votes for Trump and 222 votes for Biden. Pence then gavels President Trump reelected." If Democrats insisted that the threshold was 270 votes, Pence would send it to the House, where Republicans controlled 26 of the 50 state delegations, with each delegation getting one vote to determine the next president.

The problem with this cornerstone to what has become "The Big Lie" is that there were not seven states with dual elector slates. Georgia had conducted three recounts, each verifying Biden carried that state. Forbes Magazine reported on Dec. 8 that the Trump campaign had lost 50

post-election lawsuits, many determined by Trump-appointed judges.

In Pennsylvania, U.S. District Judge Matthew Brann rejected a Trump suit. "One might expect that when seeking such a startling outcome, a plaintiff would come formidably armed with compelling legal arguments and factual proof of rampant corruption," Brann wrote. "That has not happened."

Conservative U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito rejected a Trump injunction, saying in a terse statement, "The application for injunctive relief presented to Justice Alito and by him referred to the court is denied."

On Dec. 15, the Electoral College voted for Biden, prompting Senate Republican Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to state, "The Electoral College has spoken, so today I want to congratulate President-Elect Joe Biden." When Trump protested, McConnell told him, "Mr. President, the Electoral College has spoken. That's the way we pick a president in this country. You lost the election. The Electoral College has spoken."

**Since Pennsylvania** put Biden over the 270 vote threshold on the Saturday after the election, Trump and Bannon had fomented a coup d'etat. Insiders like Hope Hicks and Kellyanne Conway had tried to dissuade Trump on Nov. 10. "You have a huge amount of goodwill. We can't squander it," Hicks told Trump. Conway tried to explain to Trump that he had lost the election: It was the mail-in ballots. COVID. Your cam-

paign running out of money, the debates, she said.

Trump responded to Hicks: "If I lose, that will be my legacy. It's not who I am to give up. It's not in me to do that. My people expect me to fight, and if I don't, I'll lose 'em."

Trump had reached for many levers to change the will of the voters. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark Milley feared a "Reichstag moment," and took steps to wall off the nation's nuclear arsenal from whom he considered a mentally ill president. Trump fired Defense Sec. Mark Esper and installed loyalists at the Pentagon. Trump attempted to fire the acting attorney general after Attorney General Bill Barr had resigned in mid-December, but was deterred by the threat of mass resignations at DOJ.

**On Dec. 1, according to** Woodward and Costa, Attorney General Barr told AP reporter Mike Balsamo that as the result of DOJ's review of the election, "To date we have not seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome of the election."

Barr was subsequently summoned to the White House by a furious Trump. A few weeks before, Barr tried to reason with his boss. "Mr. President, you did a great job there at the end and it's too bad it had to work out the way it did."

"Well, we won," Trump told Barr. "We won by a lot. And, you know, it's fraud. Bill, we can't let them get away with this. This is stealing an election. "

Barr ordered DOJ to do a preliminary analysis and assessment in five states where the presidential election was close: Arizona, Wisconsin, Michigan, Georgia and Pennsylvania. "It's all b-----," Barr told Trump in an account in the Woodward/Costa book. "The allegations are not panning out."

When Trump asked about vote boxes arriving in Detroit early in the morning, Barr explained, "Mr. President, did you go and check that against what happened in 2016? You actually ran stronger this year than you did in Detroit last time. Mr. President, there are 503 precincts in Detroit. In Michigan, it is the only county where the votes are not counted in precincts. They go to a central counting station, and so all night these boxes are moving in. That's what they do."

**Conservative Republican** Michigan State Sen. Ed McBroom, who chairs the Senate Oversight Committee, said of that committee's exhaustive analysis: "Our clear finding is that citizens should be confident the results represent the true results of the ballots cast by the people of Michigan. There is no evidence presented at this time to prove either significant acts of fraud or that an organized, wide-scale effort to commit fraudulent activity was perpetrated in order to subvert the will of Michigan voters."

Meanwhile Republican operative Karl Rove was in Georgia helping the two GOP Senate candidates gear up for the Jan. 5 special election. Rove told Woodward and

Costa, "The machines are reliable and safe. They're not connected on the internet and they tabulate the votes by taking a thumb drive, encoded to a specific machine in a specific precinct and taking that to a central local to transfer the votes and count them."

And in Arizona late this summer, an "audit" in Maricopa County by the firm Cyber Ninjas hired by Senate Republicans there found Biden's lead was actually larger than the official count. In a conversation with former vice president Dan Quayle, Pence mentioned Arizona irregularities. "Mike, I live in Arizona," Quayle said. "There's nothing out here."

On Jan. 5, Vice President Pence met with Trump in the Oval Office. "I personally believe there are limits to what I can do. So if you have a strategy for the 6th, it really shouldn't involve me because I'm just there to open the envelopes," Pence told Trump. "You're not going to be sworn in on the 20th. There is not a scenario where you can be sworn in on the 20th."

Trump responded, "You've betrayed us. I made you. You were nothing. Your career is over if you do this."

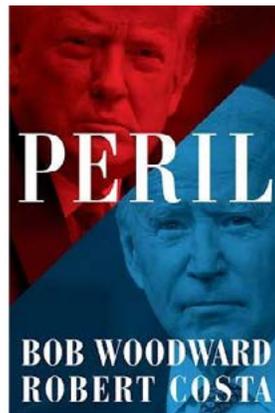
**At 1 p.m. on Jan. 6,** just minutes before the insurrection encroached the U.S. Capitol, Pence released a statement saying that it was "my considered judgment that my oath to support and defend the Constitution constrains me from claiming unilateral authority to determine which electoral votes should be counted and which should not." He ended it saying, "So help me God."

After the Jan. 6 mob that sought to "hang Mike Pence" was contained, Pence and members of Congress completed their constitutional duty in counting the Electoral College votes, resulting in the certification of Biden's victory.

As Pence left the Capitol around 3:45 a.m. Jan. 7, he received a text from his chief of staff Marc Short: "2Timothy 4:7." In the King James Bible, the verse reads: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Last Saturday, Trump and many Republicans are still claiming the election was stolen. "They used COVID in order to cheat and rig," Trump said at a rally at the Iowa State Fairgrounds. "Remember this is not about me being robbed of an election. This is about the American people having their country taken away from them."

There is no question that Donald J. Trump commands the Republican Party now. A Politico/Morning Consult Poll revealed him having 47%, with Pence and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis at 12%. Whereas past Republican presidential election losers – John McCain, Mitt Romney, Bob Dole – never recovered their power, Trump rules the GOP, despite being the first president since Herbert Hoover to lose the House, Senate and White House in a four-year span.



Trump's message that the election was rigged – something he claimed in his Iowa primary loss to Sen. Ted Cruz – is now spreading across the GOP.

In the view of Steve Bannon, the fact that many Republican voters no longer believe in certified election results, believe the election was stolen, and are willing to throw away the cornerstone of American democracy – the

peaceful transfer of power – is how Leninism is transforming one of the two major American political parties.

**Conservative former** radio host Glenn Beck was unnerved by Bannon's rhetoric in 2017. "Steve Bannon wants to burn it down," said Beck. "He's a nightmare, and he's the chief adviser to the president of the United States now." ❖

## INDems, from page 1

service again, but I will not be a candidate for public office in 2022."

Donnelly spent much of this past summer stumping for President Biden's American Rescue Plan with Indiana Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl, kindling some speculation that the senator, who had visited all of Indiana's 92 counties each year during his U.S. Senate term, might be best positioned for this open seat.

Donnelly is a moderately conservative Democrat. He and his top agriculture advisor Kent Yeager had vivid and widespread relationships across rural Indiana. When HPI talked with Donnelly last January, he was quick to point to his political prowess: "I spent six years raising \$18 million and then there was a candidate who can write a check for \$20 million in an afternoon. Those are always things that have to get considered as well."

Donnelly was confident he could win a second term. "Data analytics said if I hit 1 million (votes), I would win by 5% or 6%," he said. But that was before President Trump appeared at a half dozen rallies for (Mike) Braun. "We always knew it would be tough because of Donald Trump; we were basically running against Donald Trump," Donnelly said of his 5% loss to Braun. Donnelly ended up with 1,025,178 votes, but lost to Braun who polled 1,161,546.

The door is still open for a potential gubernatorial run. If he follows the path former Indiana congressman Tim Roemer did after President Obama appointed him ambassador to India, he could spend two years in Rome, then come back to ignite a 2024 campaign in mid- to late-2023.

But with Donnelly at the Vatican, the 2024 gubernatorial field could take shape.

Topping the list of potential candidates is former legislator Christina Hale, Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett and Indiana Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl. Others expected to take a look at the race include State Sen. Eddie Melton, businessman Josh Owen and former superintendent of public instruction Jennifer McCormick.

Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., who is

seeking the 2022 Democratic U.S. Senate nomination, told HPI on Wednesday, "I always hoped that Joe Donnelly would come out of retirement for the 2024 governor's race. Now that he's been appointed the ambassador to the Vatican, that option is off the table. Mayor/Secretary Pete Buttigieg probably won't be an option either. I have the feeling he will either be busy defending the Biden administration as they seek reelection, or he himself will be running for POTUS if Biden doesn't seek a second term."

McDermott, the former Lake County Democratic chairman, continued, "I'm sure Mayor Hogsett will take a look at that race also. After all, he has the resume. He's a successful big city mayor of Indianapolis. I'm sure the open governor's seat will intrigue him. Mayor Joe has a great statewide brand and would be a formidable opponent for any Republican. I'm also a huge fan of Christina Hale, who would be an amazing candidate for governor. She is politically astute and very ambitious. Christina is tough as nails, isn't afraid to campaign against anyone and is known statewide. She would be an awesome candidate."

Here is HPI's first assessment of the potential Democratic field:

### **Indianapolis Mayor Hogsett:**

Appearing at the Indiana Democratic Editorial Association convention last August, observers told HPI that Hogsett was acting like a future gubernatorial contender.

The mayor has had a mixed record in Indiana's capital city after defeating Republican Chuck Brewer in 2015 by 62-38% and in 2019, drubbing State Sen. Jim Merritt 71-26%. He has faced record homicide rates for much of his two terms. He has taken \$419 million of American Rescue Plan funds and sought \$150 million for a three-year anti-crime plan. On this front, it would be the

antithesis of a frequent Republican attack line against Democrats, that the party seeks to "defund the police."

Hogsett also inherited decrepit roads and bridges, and launched systemic paving and bridge reconstruction, along with residential street repaving. In 2019, he proposed an eight-county regional infrastructure funding program. DPW Director Dan Parker said, "Those commuters have jobs in Marion County, but they aren't paying for



any of the infrastructure. They pay zero in income tax to Indianapolis. It all goes to the county of residence.” But the Hogsett plan caught suburban mayors like Scott Fadness of Fishers, Jim Brainard of Carmel and Greenwood’s Mark Myers off guard, saying they were “surprised” and “perplexed” by Hogsett’s proposal, which has since found little traction.

Beyond policy, Indianapolis mayors haven’t done well running statewide. While the late Sen. Richard Lugar holds the all-time record for most votes statewide, winning seven of eight Senate races (but losing to Sen. Birch Bayh while still mayor in the Watergate election of 1974), Hogsett knows all too well that it’s tough for an Indy mayor to run statewide. In 1990, he defeated Republican Indianapolis Mayor Bill Hudnut for secretary of state, 53-47%. Hudnut had hoped to use a secretary of state win as a springboard to the 1992 Republican gubernatorial nomination to challenge Gov. Evan Bayh. Hogsett’s campaign successfully attacked Hudnut for dozens of tax and fee increases.

In 1988, Republican Mayor Steve Goldsmith ran unsuccessfully for lieutenant governor as John Mutz’s running mate, losing to Evan Bayh and Frank O’Bannon. In 1996, Goldsmith was an early heavy favorite to win the open seat, but lost 52-47% to Lt. Gov. O’Bannon. That run was hampered by adverse reaction to the Meridian Street police riot (Exhibit A in not running statewide as a sitting mayor), as well as allegations of influence peddling and negative campaign ads.

Hogsett has not fared well in elections outside of Indianapolis, losing to U.S. Sen. Dan Coats in 1992 (57-40%), to Republican David McIntosh in an open 1994 congressional race (54% to 45%), and to Attorney General Steve Carter in 2004 (58% to 39%).

Those urban/rural divisions have only widened in recent campaign cycles as Indiana has gone from light red to deep crimson since 2010, and his regional infrastructure proposal would likely become a major GOP campaign issue should Hogsett win the Democratic nomination.

**Christina Hale:** Asked if she was considering a 2024 run, Hale told HPI on Tuesday, “Right now I’m focused on my ongoing work in health care, violence prevention and youth leadership development. I think that’s why people are asking me about running, as these are still issues on everyone’s mind. The election in 2024 will be a very high stakes one for Hoosiers for a number of reasons.”

Hale served on Gov. O’Bannon’s staff, managing state regulatory boards

Indiana Secretary of State, 1990			
Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Democratic	Joe Hogsett	775,163	51.83%
Republican	William H. Hudnut III	719,314	48.10%
No party	Write-Ins	971	0.06%

and commissions. She took part in Chairman Schmuhl’s American Rescue Plan tour this past summer and is deputy Democratic chair on candidate recruitment.

She won three competitive Indiana House races, defeating Republican incumbent Cindy Noe. In 2016, she was tabbed as John Gregg’s lieutenant governor nominee, only to watch Gov. Mike Pence join Donald Trump’s presidential ticket, with Gregg losing to Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb in what became a Trump-forged landslide that swamped down ballot Democrats. In 2020, she lost to U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz by 4% and has since been drawn out of the 5th CD.

**Mike Schmuhl:** The new chairman of the Democratic Party has all the skill sets to be a gubernatorial candidate: Organizing, messaging, fundraising, leadership. He ran Pete Buttigieg’s 2020 presidential campaign, raising \$100 million while using technology and old-style campaign stumping across rural Iowa to help the mayor win the caucuses there, then finishing a close second to Sen. Bernie Sanders in New Hampshire. Schmuhl initially turned down the chair late in 2020, before shifting gears. He has vowed to show up across Indiana’s rural counties and urban areas.

Schmuhl is native of South Bend, worked on campaigns for former Sen. Donnelly (2010), State Senator Shelli Yoder (2016), and businessman Mel Hall (2018). He served as Buttigieg’s first chief of staff in South Bend after running his campaign for mayor in 2011. Schmuhl was the elected the 2nd Congressional District Democratic chairman from 2011 to 2013, becoming the youngest member of the state central committee at the time with full voting rights.

Previously, he was vice president at the Democratic consulting firm 270 Strategies in Chicago, where he advised nonprofits, issue-based causes, and labor unions. Before working in politics, he worked in the newsroom of The Washington Post as a producer and booker for broadcast outlets. He also interned for the late Tim Russert at NBC News’ Meet the Press. He received a BA in History from the University of Notre Dame and a MA in International Affairs from Sciences Po in Paris, France.

If President Biden were to decline a second nomination and Secretary



Buttigieg ran for the presidency, it would surprise no one that Schmuhl would be back running a national campaign. With a former state party chair now in his second term as governor (Eric Holcomb), it is not a reach to put Schmuhl on this list, and Schmuhl presents all the necessary skill sets and campaign backgrounds to be considered a viable contender for governor.

**Josh Owen:** The Indianapolis businessman ran a brief campaign for governor in 2019/20 as the first openly gay gubernatorial candidate, giving way to eventual nominee Woody Myers. He lists Indianapolis and San Diego as home. While Owen was active in what direction the Indiana Democratic Party should take leading up to the chair election in March, he has kept a low profile since.

**State Sen. Eddie Melton:** He ran briefly for governor in 2019/20 before dropping out in favor of

Woody Myers. If he were to seek the governorship in 2024, he would have to give up his Senate seat. Melton is from Merrillville and served on the Indiana State Board of Education. Melton was elected to the state senate in 2016. In November 2020, Melton was elected as the assistant minority floor leader of the Indiana Senate. But with a tiny Senate Democratic caucus, Melton lacks the statewide network needed to forge a gubernatorial campaign.

**Jennifer McCormick:** The former one-term Republican superintendent of public instruction clashed with the Holcomb administration before announcing she would not seek a second term. McCormick began campaigning with Sen. Melton in 2019 on a statewide listening tour, igniting speculation that she might run for lieutenant governor on a ticket with Melton. She subsequently left the GOP. She is a former school superintendent from Yorktown. ❖

## Boehnlein seeks SD47 after the maps changed

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS – Kevin Boehnlein had been urged to run for the General Assembly by State Sens. Ron Grooms, Eric Bassler and Chris Garten. He had been endorsed by State Sen. Erin Houchin.

And then came the new maps. Sen. Grooms' SD46 was moved north to Indianapolis. Boehnlein was drawn into Houchin's SD47. "When the new maps came out, my phone blew up," said Boehnlein. "With the new maps, my reason for running did not change."

He lives in Greenville in Floyd County, which becomes the center of the new SD47 with 65,000 residents, with 40,000 in Harrison County and 40,000 in Sen. Houchin's Washington County. "Nothing for me really changed, geographically. As someone who has lived in New Albany, Georgetown and Greenville, what matters is that the residents of the new Senate district, which includes the biggest part of us who live in Floyd County, are as represented in the future as we have been in the past."

He's decided to seek the SD47 nomination, telling HPI on Wednesday, "It's a new district for both of us. It's not an incumbency factor like before."

Houchin announced she would seek reelection last week, saying, "While I will miss representing my friends in Crawford, Dubois, Orange, and Perry counties when my current term comes to an end, I know they will be in good hands with their new Senate representation, and will always be here if I may be of assistance. I am blessed

with many friends and family members in Floyd County and look forward to meeting and serving more if given the opportunity to represent them in the State Senate."

Floyd County Commissioner Shawn Carruthers had declared for the old SD46, and is still weighing a run in SD47.

Houchin quickly released a WPA Poll that showed



her leading with 55%, compared to 9% for Boehnlein and 7% for Carruthers. She leads in Floyd County with 19% while 55% of voters there are undecided. Boehnlein questioned the poll's credibility, asking, "Why would you poll this early?"

Boehnlein has political roots in SD47 as well as the General Assembly, where he was a House staffer under Speaker Brian Bosma. He managed the New Albany mayoral campaign of Regina Overton, who upset a two-term incumbent. In 2004, he managed U.S. Rep. Mike Sodrel's only win against Democrat Baron Hill.

"I know the governor like she knows the gover-

nor," Boehnlein said. "I know Todd Rokita like she knows Todd Rokita."

## General Assembly

### SD1: Dernulc eyes new district

Lake County Councilman Dan Dernulc, R-Highland, absolutely loves serving on the financial governing body for the state's second-most populous county (Carden, NWI Times). But Dernulc, who also leads the Lake County Republican Party, admitted Thursday he's considering — just considering, for now — leaving the county council behind for a chance at serving in the Indiana Senate. The new legislative district maps adopted last week by the Republican-controlled General Assembly combined state Sen. Frank Mrvan, D-Hammond, and state Sen. Lonnie Randolph, D-East Chicago, in Senate District 2, and created an open seat in the new Senate District 1 that includes Dernulc's hometown of Highland, along with Griffith, Dyer, Schererville, St. John, and southwestern Merrillville. Dernulc said he's already been asked by many people to consider running in the new district, and he acknowledged that he's taking those suggestions seriously and talking over what going to Indianapolis might mean to his family, friends, and political allies.

### SD46: Moed, Eason prepare to run

Two Democrats, including a current state representative, are expressing interest in running for an open state Senate seat encompassing downtown Indianapolis (IBJ). Democrat Rep. Justin Moed told IBJ he is gearing up to run for the newly drawn Senate District 46. He is planning to formally announce his campaign soon. Ashley Eason, an Indianapolis resident and former Democratic Senate candidate, announced her campaign for SD46 last week. Eason lost to Republican Sen. Jack Sandlin of Indianapolis in 2020. SD46 emerged from the GOP-redrawn Indiana Senate district map that cleared the Legislature last week and was signed into law Monday by Gov. Eric Holcomb. It placed a new Senate district in the heart of downtown Indianapolis and includes part of Fountain Square and Irvington. Marion County GOP chair Joe Elsener said he has not heard of any Republican candidates planning a run for the seat yet.

### SD23: Copenhaver announces

Fountain County Clerk Paula Copenhaver has announced that she is running for this new district that includes Attica, Clinton, Covington, Rockville, Veederburg, Waynetown, West Lafayette and Williamsport. Copenhaver has served as Fountain County Clerk since 2016. Prior to her election to that position, she served as Fountain County Voter Registration deputy clerk (2016) and



the Town of Kingman deputy clerk/treasurer (2012 to 2016). In 2020, Copenhaver said she would not enforce a mask mandate in her office during the pandemic, stating she will "not be part of the government overreach" and contends social distancing and hand sanitizer are enough. "I'm running for state Senate because I'm concerned about the direction our country is headed. We must get back to the basics, which include strong conservative values, ensuring election integrity, and looking for the truth that our founding fathers crafted into the U.S. Constitution," said Copenhaver, who says she has been an "educator" in American History and the Constitution for almost a decade. "I will fully defend the 2nd Amendment. I will always protect the unborn. And I will search for and support fair, cost-effective jobs initiatives to provide hard-working families with economic opportunities."

## Statewides

### Jaworowski names campaign team

Republican Treasurer candidate Suzie Jaworowski announced that Blair Englehart will manage her campaign. Also on the campaign are Dave Buskill while State Sen. Erin Houchin will be the chair.

## U.S. Senate

### Young reports \$1.6 million

Republican Sen. Todd Young's campaign reported Wednesday that he raised a record \$1.6 million in the third quarter and has \$5.6 million cash on hand (IBJ). The campaign said the amount was the largest raised in the third quarter during the off-year of a U.S. Senate campaign by an Indiana candidate. The record was previously held by former U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, a Democrat who raised \$1.4 million in an off-year quarter in 2017. Young also broke a record during the second quarter when he reported a total of \$2 million raised. The \$1.6 million comes from more than 10,000 donations, with 93% of those less than \$100, according to Young's campaign. "I am incredibly grateful for the support from so many Hoosiers," Young said in a written statement. "The fight has just begun, as President Joe Biden and the far-left seek an ally who will advance his liberal agenda, ignore the southern border crisis and push through a reckless \$3.5 trillion tax and spending spree." On the Democratic side of the Senate race, Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott leads the Democratic field with \$82,130 raised. Democratic candidate Haneefah Khaaliq has raised \$29,314 and Valerie McCray has \$2,684. The only other Republican candidate running for the seat so far, Danny Niederberger, has raised \$2,150.

## Presidential

### The muddled state of politics

The latest POLITICO-Morning Consult poll offers

a good snapshot of the muddled state of American politics right now. Some highlights:

**Question:** Now, generally speaking, would you say that things in the country are going in the right direction, or have they pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?

Right direction: 38%  
Wrong track: 62%

**Question:** Do you approve or disapprove of the job Joe Biden is doing as president?

Total approve: 46%  
Total disapprove: 51%

But Biden's "favorability" rating is higher than all other national political figures we tested ...

Joe Biden: 47%  
Kamala Harris: 45%  
Donald Trump: 41%  
Mike Pence: 39%  
Nancy Pelosi: 36%  
Chuck Schumer: 28%  
Mitch McConnell: 22%  
Kevin McCarthy: 22%

**Question:** Now, thinking about your vote, what would you say is the top set of issues on your mind when you cast your vote for federal offices such as U.S. Senate or Congress?

Economic issues: 36%  
Security issues: 19%  
Health care issues: 12%  
Seniors' issues: 13%  
Women's issues: 6%  
Energy issues: 4%  
Education issues: 3%  
Other: 7%

**Question** (for Republicans and independents only): If the 2024 Republican presidential primary were being held today, for whom would you vote?

Donald Trump: 47%  
Ron DeSantis: 12%  
Mike Pence: 12%  
Donald Trump Jr.: 6%  
Ted Cruz: 3%  
Marco Rubio: 3%  
Nikki Haley: 3%  
Mitt Romney: 3%  
Liz Cheney: 2%  
Kristi Noem: 1%  
Tim Scott: 1%  
Rick Scott: 1%  
Tom Cotton: 1%  
Josh Hawley: 0%  
Larry Hogan: 0%  
Mike Pompeo: 0% ❖

# A path for Hoosier Dems to start winning

By CHRIS SAUTTER

WASHINGTON – Hoosier Democrats are at a crossroads. Republicans dominate the state's politics. The GOP holds every statewide office, overwhelming majorities in the General Assembly, and seven of nine congressional seats.



When the next gubernatorial election rolls around in 2024, Republicans will have held the office for 20 uninterrupted years. Democrats must start winning elections if they want to avoid historic irrelevance in the state.

Of course, it wasn't always this way. Democrats won a majority of House seats in 1990 and 2000, giving them an edge in redistricting. After Tim Roemer won the South Bend area congressional seat in 1990, Democrats held eight of Indiana's 10 congressional seats. More recently, Barack Obama carried Indiana in 2008. And, Democrats Joe Donnelly and Glenda Ritz won statewide races in 2012.

But today Hoosier Democrats find themselves with virtually no visibility in the state. Not since the early 1980s have they been so completely shut out of participating in Indiana's political decisions. Leading into the 1982 midterms, Republicans had gerrymandered the congressional districts to limit Democrats to no more than three seats out of 10. Ronald Reagan had just won the White House and conservatives were pushing their agenda nationally. Prospects for a Democratic resurgence in Indiana looked bleak.

**Over the next decade or so**, however, Hoosier Democrats against odds picked up four congressional seats drawn for Republicans as well as winning statewide elections for Auditor (Otis Cox in 1982), Secretary of State (Joe Hogsett in 1990) and Attorney General (Pam Carter in 1992 and Jeff Modisett in 1996). Running on change and ending 20 years of one-party rule in 1988, the youthful, telegenic Evan Bayh swept past highly regarded Lt. Gov, John Mutz to capture the governorship. It took Republicans 16 years – until 2004 – to win it back. Over time, Republicans would win back the four congressional seats that it had lost in the 1980s as well as the 9th district where Todd Young defeated Baron Hill in 2010.

The challenge Hoosier Democrats face in regaining control is much more daunting than 40 years ago. Republicans have methodically turned Indiana into a one-party state. Using sophisticated technology, they have gerrymandered General Assembly and congressional districts more tightly than ever. The Republican war on unions, led in Indiana by Mitch Daniels and funded by national right-

wing groups, has largely succeeded. Unions had been the source of funds and organizational muscle for Democrats. Indiana Republicans accurately concluded that if unions can be destroyed it means Democrats will become less competitive come election-time. Daniels' attack on unions began on his first day in office when he banned collective bargaining rights for public-sector workers through an executive order. It culminated with the passage of a "right to work" law which Daniels signed into law in 2012.

**In addition, the death** of political journalism in Indiana has meant limited or no accountability for those in power. In the late 1980s, there were 44 credentialed journalists at the State House covering the General Assembly and the Robert Orr administration. Today there are just seven. The decline of aggressive political journalism in Indiana has given politicians a free pass to do anything they want irrespective of public opinion. When Bayh first ran, voters were ready for change because Republican corruption had been exposed, most notably in the license branch. Now political corruption and favoritism go unnoticed and unchecked.

Unfortunately, the national brand of the Democratic Party has been of little help to Hoosier Democrats. The Indiana Democratic Party's new state chair, Mike Schmuhl, who directed former South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg's presidential campaign, including a first place finish in the Iowa Caucus, hopes to change the Democratic Party's image in Indiana. Taking his cues from Buttigieg, Schmuhl says one of the Democrats' problems is that they stopped showing up everywhere and stopped championing issues that resonate with every day midwestern voters. Hoosier voters have felt left out and forgotten by Democrats, explaining in part Donald Trump's appeal. As a result, Schmuhl has been conducting statewide tours to discuss jobs and the American Rescue Plan, among other issues. Schmuhl has already visited two-thirds of Indiana's counties since taking over as Chair earlier in the year.

An open seat is usually an opportunity for the party out-of-power to at least compete. But three years out from the next gubernatorial election, there are few signs that Democrats are ready to compete. Elections are first and foremost about candidates. An Evan Bayh comes along once a generation if that often. There are no obvious Democratic frontrunners for 2024.

**Buttigieg would be a strong** candidate but has made it clear his interest is on the national level with another possible presidential run. Joe Donnelly has proven statewide appeal but President Biden has just nominated Donnelly to be ambassador to the Vatican. Joe Hogsett has name recognition as Indianapolis' mayor but would have difficulty selling himself as a candidate of change after more than 30 years on the scene.

Besides, Hogsett knows first-hand the vulnerabilities an Indianapolis mayor brings to a statewide campaign having defeated Indianapolis Mayor Bill Hudnut in 1990 with relentless attacks on Hudnut's record. Two state senators are mentioned as having statewide potential – Eddie

Melton of Merrillville and Shelli Yoder of Bloomington. Both are hardworking legislators with attractive personal stories. Yoder, in particular, would make for a terrific statewide candidate. It is uncertain whether she would be willing to forgo almost certain reelection for a statewide run – either for governor or U.S. Senate in 2024.

Competing in 2024 starts with the 2022 elections. Democrats need to find a way to hold Republican Senator Todd Young accountable for votes that have hurt working Hoosiers. The Secretary of State race is effectively an open seat campaign. Connie Lawson, who had served on Donald Trump's discredited Voter Fraud Commission, retired from the post before her term expired to give the governor an opportunity to appoint her successor – Holli Sullivan, who is virtually unknown. At a time when Republicans are revolting against democracy, there is an excellent opportunity for a young, aggressive Democrat to try to replicate Joe Hogsett's win from three decades ago.

The 5th CD where Victoria Spartz defeated Christina Hale by a margin of 50% to 46% in 2020 also provides Democratic opportunity. But Republicans eliminated the Marion County and therefore Democratic portion of the 5th putting it into the district held by André Carson. Former state representative Melanie Wright announced this week she will take on Spartz, a close associate of Marjorie Taylor Greene the Georgia QAnon congresswoman. Hoosier Democrats have had success winning congressional seats drawn for Republicans in low turnout off-year elections. Wright will have to build a strong grassroots campaign and paint Spartz as way out of the mainstream to bring over moderate and independent minded voters in a district drawn to protect the Republican.

**If a quality candidate is** the starting point for a winning campaign, message provides the context and ability to persuade.

Democratic resurgence in the 1980s and '90s was based on a message of change, fiscal responsibility and putting an end to the insider deals and corruption that cost Hoosier taxpayers. Democrats would be prudent to adopt that message in 2022 and 2024. Democrats must also effectively communicate how much has eroded in Indiana since Republicans took over in 2004. Indiana has fallen behind in virtually important category under Republicans from education to health care to child welfare to housing. In addition, Indiana's ethical rules are among the most lax in the nation and leave governmental officials and agencies vulnerable to charges of conflicts of interest, favoritism and corruption.

Democrats can write a come-back story in 2022 and 2024. But it will require good candidates to step forward and aggressiveness in pushing an effective, winning message. ❖

**Chris Sautter is a Washington based political consultant.**



# Why I am optimistic about our future

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – One of the great privileges of teaching and working on a university campus is the chance to be in regular touch with young people. Even better, I sometimes get asked to give talks elsewhere and to meet with young people of all kinds and descriptions – sometimes one on one, sometimes in small groups, sometimes with as many as 50 or 60 people.



Over the past few years, this has given me a chance to observe the upcoming generation of citizens and leaders, and what I've seen heartens me. Not least because the young people I've met are, for the most part, deeply concerned about the future of the country. They can be sharply

critical, but it's clear that most of them take a fundamental pride in what this nation stands for and how far it's traveled over the centuries.

This shows up in a fundamental respect for the country's diversity, and an overall respect for many of the institutions of representative democracy: The military, the courts, law enforcement, the health care system, though Congress often comes in for some sharp words. To be sure, they can also be critical of these institutions' flaws, but I haven't encountered anyone who wants to tear them up and start over again.

Instead, they want to fix what's in front of them. They're curious about how the nation's institutions work, even skeptical, but they don't reject them outright as irredeemably flawed.

**There are several** key issues that dominate our conversations – climate change, COVID-19, student loans and college debt. If you ask what problems they're most concerned about, racial issues also loom large; they see racial inequity and repairing historic wrongs as a huge and important challenge to our representative democracy. Interestingly, more than the older people I encounter, they will often speak up in favor of U.S. engagement with the world and want the U.S. to exert a helpful leadership role.

When it comes to domestic politics, I've been

struck by the extent to which the students I meet seem interested in making voting easier. Not infrequently, they'll bring up the idea of making Election Day a national holiday. And they seem to like the idea of automatic voter registration for citizens, to encourage participation.

As for their own participation, I often ask if anyone wants to run for public office. I'm always pleasantly surprised at the number of hands that go up. More than a few want to pursue jobs in government at all levels, arguing that they can make a greater contribution there than they might otherwise. They recognize that working for government is not a path to great wealth, yet they're still committed to that idea.

**Perhaps most heartening**, even those who have no desire to serve in government confess an interest in serving their communities and improving their corner of the world. I always come away stirred by the number of these young people who speak with knowledge and commitment about their desire to be of service.

To be sure, it's bracing to sit in on their discussions about where the country's headed. They're often robust, with plenty of differences of opinion. But underlying these conversations is a general optimism about the future and, quite notably in this political climate, a wide tolerance for the viewpoints of others and a willingness to listen to one another. I wish it were more common among adults.

The one other thing I'll note is that fairly regularly, I come across students – of all races, ethnicity, and description – who are clearly talented, engaged, and impressive. They are, I believe, marked for leadership. If I'm right, we're going to be in good hands. ❖

**Lee Hamilton is a senior advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a distinguished scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a professor of practice at the IU O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.**



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# St. Joe Democrats are aghast at Bosma's firm in drawing districts

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – St. Joseph County Democratic officials are aghast over the Republican-controlled Board of Commissioners hiring a former Republican House speaker and other attorneys that challenged Donald Trump's election loss to redistrict in the county.



Aghast, I say, aghast! They are aghast that what they expect to be a blatant Republican gerrymander of the three commissioner districts is paid for by the taxpayers, with a commissioner-approved contract paying the attorneys up to \$35,000 plus expenses.

Aghast, I say, aghast! They already were aghast over the

Republican-controlled state legislature's redistricting that leaves Republican Congresswoman Jackie Walorski with even a slightly more favorable district in which she could win reelections for a decade.

Aghast, I say, aghast! Should Democrats have been surprised? No. In the famous, oft-quoted words of William Marcy, a New York senator defending patronage clout of Andrew Jackson in 1832, "To the victor belong the spoils."

Patronage has weakened, but 189 years later, the party controlling redistricting still gets in most of the country to draw redistricting lines for political advantage – although with past salamander shapes not as acceptable.

With Republicans holding all three commissioner posts after the 2020 election, there should have been no doubt about the Republicans drawing districts favorable to their future chances, especially in the 1st District, where Board President Andy Kostielney faces a serious challenge from Jason Critchlow, a former county Democratic chairman.

The Democratic-controlled County Council also is expected to look out for the party's incumbents in council redistricting, although options are limited by the requirement to draw three districts within each of the new

commissioner districts.

Democrats thought, naively, that there could be some cooperation in the process that is so complicated by the council districts needing to fit in the commissioner districts. Then the commissioners hired an Indianapolis law firm, with former Indiana House Speaker Brian Bosma as lead attorney, to draw new commissioner districts.

The contract lists an hourly rate of \$435 for Bosma – a discount, the agreement states –and rates somewhat lower for four other attorneys, including two who represented Trump in challenging his election loss in Wisconsin.

So many attorneys to draw three districts in one county? It brought retelling of an old joke: How many attorneys does it take to change a light bulb? Three. One to hold the bulb and two to turn the ladder.

A sharp high school student, with all the census statistics, could draw three districts with virtually equal population and compact size. But the law firm serving its Republican commissioner clients can consider more than just population. It will have data on political leanings of voters in every area, down to the smallest. The contract also guarantees drawing "legally sound districts" and representation in any court challenge.

To be clear, with all jokes aside, Bosma was a highly respected House speaker for six terms and is with the prestigious Kroger, Gardis & Regas law firm in Indianapolis. There will be nothing illegal or unethical in drawing the map.

Within the law, of course, an effective redistricting for political purposes is possible. State redistricting created districts with compact shapes and ideal population sizes – and also districts designed to guarantee 7-2 Republican control of the congressional delegation and super majorities in the state legislature. Hearings were held and all kinds of citizen suggestions were received and ignored.

What exactly to expect with the commissioner districts is uncertain. No plan could make all three districts more Republican. So, will emphasis be on trying to make sure Kostielney wins next year? Could Critchlow's residence be moved out of the district? Could districts be drawn to hinder chances of council Democrats in the way they must be inserted within new commissioner districts?

When the commissioner map is official, will Democrats be pleased that it wasn't worse or remain aghast? Aghast, I say, aghast! ❖

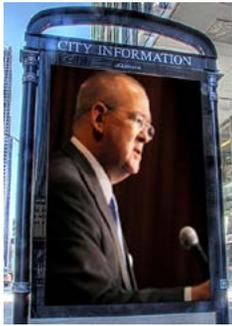


**Colwell is a columnist for the South Bend Tribune.**

# COVID and the risk of medical screen delays

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – Two decades ago, as a brand-new professor, I worked with a team of researchers studying healthcare access in rural West Virginia. Our goal was to identify ways to measure the effects of missing medical treatment or barriers that might cause patients from following up with healthcare. This research was performed at the Robert C. Byrd Center for Rural Health.



As most readers will imagine, it is difficult to isolate the effects of medical care access on patients.

People who lack health insurance or fail to seek regular medical care also tend to have other problems that exacerbate poor health. Thus, the statistical tools economists use likely cannot differentiate between a patient's inability to access care, and some other underlying condition related to poverty. This might be as simple as having access to reliable transportation, or the ability to take a whole day off work for a medical checkup.

Medical researchers were not any better off. A randomized control trial might be ideal to test a new treatment, but it is not appropriate for something like healthcare access. Withholding medical treatment for the purpose of evaluating the impact on patients is, in this type of case, a profound ethical violation.

Still, we researchers needed to measure the effects of access in order to determine if it was beneficial or wasteful to send extra healthcare dollars to these rural places. The hospital had limited resources, and it needed to apply them to the places it would provide the most benefit. The director of the center cared only that we did our best to measure the benefits and costs. He didn't care where the money went, only that it provided the most benefit. He was a first-rate researcher and clinician from whom I learned much.

**Our research team decided** to look for natural experiments within the health records of patients. We were looking for conditions that interrupted normal healthcare. In a mountainous, rural location, I thought transportation problems were most likely, as bridges and roads were often closed. We also looked for the closing of clinics or providers across the state. Neither of these were fruitful, but we did find one unusual event. The sole mammography equipment, which was located in a remote rural clinic, broke and remained unusable for a year. The effects of that incident became the focus of our study.

We pulled every record of every woman who'd visited the clinic in the years preceding the breakage, and everyone who visited for three years afterwards. In

the years leading up to the machine breaking, there was steady use of the machine and a nearly constant rate of cancer detections. That diagnostic tool was doing its job.

Once the machine failed, the test rate of these women plummeted to near zero. The rate didn't drop to absolute zero; some women visited other facilities, the nearest requiring a round trip of three hours. However, we can assume that in the year that the machine was inaccessible, there were cancers not detected among this population.

**Once the machine was** repaired, the number of women who received a mammogram at the clinic doubled over the next year. These are women who were seeking treatment close to home rather than making the long trip to the nearest machine. Sadly, the number of cancers detected more than doubled in the months after the machine came back online. This means that many women who deferred diagnostics for breast cancer missed a chance to catch their tumor early, when the disease is more survivable.

This was one incident at a small clinic, but it demonstrated that the absence of this machine locally proved a tremendous barrier to screening. COVID has caused these sorts of interruptions all across the country. It's been 20 years, and I honestly don't recall all the policy results of this study, except that a mobile mammography trailer was purchased and used throughout parts of rural Appalachia. I'd largely forgotten this study until last spring, when my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. Like many women, her cancer was detected in a routine annual screening.

In many ways my wife was lucky — if luck is the right way to describe any cancer diagnosis. Her annual screening was delayed by only a few months due to COVID. She was able to reschedule her missed appointment, and the tumor did not have time to grow or spread. Had she delayed screening by a full year or more, her good prognosis might be very different. For many Americans, COVID had similar effects to the broken mammography machine, even if the delays were by choice due to concern about exposure to COVID.

My wife is extremely healthy and is a thoughtful, educated consumer of medical care. She was diligent in rescheduling her physical. The medical office closures and full hospitals played no more than a modest role in her cancer detection and treatment. That won't be the case for everyone. As we think about the longer-term effects of COVID, we must consider how many people have deferred medical care because of the disease.

**The closed medical** offices and overflowing hospitals will have caused many to delay diagnosis or treatment. For some, the delay will lead to more difficult treatment or an earlier death. For others, it will be an inconvenience that reduces their quality of life. The United States is a large country, so these delays affect tens of millions of Americans. The delay of simple diagnostic services or treatments will be devastating for thousands of

these people, but for the fortunate others, it will be merely annoying. All of these will be part of our long struggle with COVID, and will have deep and lingering effects, both personally and economically.

**October is breast cancer awareness month.**

Many local groups, especially our schools, have events designed to raise money and encourage women to schedule their annual screenings. This is surely the most important breast cancer awareness month, coming as it does after 18 months when tens of millions of American women have

missed their annual screening. So, this would be a good time to encourage friends and family, or really anyone you know, to get that health checkup they missed during peak COVID. ❖

**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 at Ball State University.**

## Misinformation benefits no one

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Rep. Tim Brown (R-Crawfordsville) chairs the Indiana House Ways and Means Committee, the source for tax and budget bills. He entered the House in 1994, was appointed as chair of the committee in 2012, and is about to retire. I don't think we've ever met, and I have no bone to pick with him personally.



But I wonder, do we live in the same state? Rep. Brown was interviewed by Emily Ketterer of the Indianapolis Business Journal (IBJ 10/01/21 p.4A). Her question, among others, "What were some of your biggest accomplishments since you took office?"

Rep. Brown: "Over 28 years? I

mean, the biggest thing is seeing the change in Indiana. Yeah. I mean, we were in the bottom third of lower economic growth, and now we're in the top 10. So, to see that change in Indiana has been huge."

**This is an** interesting response. Rep. Brown does not celebrate his own contributions to the state, but to the economic condition of the state during his tenure. I do wonder, however, if he and I live in the same state.

Typically, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at the state level is used to measure the overall output of an economy. During Rep. Brown's 28 years in the Legislature, Indiana's GDP grew at a compound annual rate of 3.16% compared to 3.45% for the nation. Indiana

ranked 28th among the 50 states.

During the first four years of Rep. Brown's service, Indiana's GDP growth averaged 6.1% (28th in the nation) and in the past four years 2.5% (23rd in rank). Despite the representative's recollection, Indiana was not at the bottom of economic growth in those early years nor in the top 10 in the later years.

**If we adjust GDP** for population growth, we get a better measure of economic success. When we take population into account, Indiana's per capita GDP advanced annually by 0.6% (30th in the nation), behind the U.S. average of 0.9%.

That's the economic picture from the production side. But what about the worker/consumer side? Compensation per job grew by 3.4% annually in the U.S., but only 2.9% in Indiana during Rep. Brown's years in the Statehouse. Our rank among the states was 48th.

In 1994 Hoosier compensation per job was \$30,661 (24th among the 50 states) and 7.5% below the national average. By 2020 our compensation per job grew to \$65,111 (without adjustment for inflation) or 37th among the states and 17% below the national average.

With that increase of \$34,450, Indiana stood 46th nationally where the increase amounted to \$45,237.

Is Indiana making the progress so proudly hailed by our leading political figures? It's time for them to face up to reality; our lot has worsened relative to the nation under their ill-conceived direction of Indiana's economy. ❖



**Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at [mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com](mailto:mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com). Follow his views and those of John Guy on "Who Gets What?" wherever podcasts are available or at [mortonjohn.libsyn.com](http://mortonjohn.libsyn.com).**

# It was a bad week for Facebook's Zuckerberg

By **KELLY HAWES**  
CNHI State Bureau

ANDERSON – Poor Mark Zuckerberg.

The Facebook founder already had enemies on both sides of the political aisle. He already had folks blaming his creation for much that is wrong in the world today. And then along came Frances Haugen, the former employee who says she was recruited in 2019 to be the lead product manager on Facebook's civic misinformation team.



She joined the company, she told a Senate subcommittee, because she thought it had the potential "to bring out the best in us."

"But I am here today because I believe that Facebook's products harm children, stoke division and weaken our democracy," she said.

"The company's leadership knows how to make Facebook and Instagram safer but won't make the necessary changes because

they have put their astronomical profits before people. Congressional action is needed. They won't solve this crisis without your help."

She noted that the social media platform had suffered an outage the day before.

"I don't know why it went down, but I know that for more than five hours Facebook wasn't used to deepen divides, destabilize democracies and make young girls and women feel bad about their bodies," she told the senators.

**"It also means that** millions of small businesses weren't able to reach potential customers and countless photos of new babies weren't joyously celebrated by family and friends around the world. I believe in the potential of Facebook. We can have social media we enjoy, that connects us, without tearing apart our democracy, putting our children in danger and sowing ethnic violence across the world. We can do better."

In a message to company employees, Zuckerberg said Haugen's criticism didn't make sense.

"We make money from ads, and advertisers consistently

tell us they don't want their ads next to harmful or angry content," he wrote. "And I don't know any tech company that sets out to build products that make people angry or depressed. The moral, business and product incentives all point in the opposite direction."

He expressed disappointment at the criticism of his company's "industry-leading research program."

"It's disheartening to see that work taken out of context and used to construct a false narrative that we don't care," he wrote.

He noted the platform's impact in helping users to stay connected. "This is why billions of people love our products," he told employees. "I'm proud of everything we do to keep building the best social products in the world and grateful to all of you for the work you do here every day."

**The subcommittee** that heard Haugen's testimony is led by Connecticut Democrat Richard Blumenthal. He invited Zuckerberg to respond. "You need to explain to Frances Haugen, to us, to the world and to the parents of America what you were doing and why you did it," Blumenthal said.

In an essay for the Washington Post, Robin Givhan points the finger of blame in another direction. "The problem with Facebook is us," she wrote. "We've been weaponized against ourselves. Our personal data, our insecurities, our tribal tendencies, our fears. It's all bringing us down. We have become twitchy social media addicts ready to melt down or explode with the slightest provocation."

She might have a point.

Still, as Zuckerberg tries to fend off his platform's critics, my mind wanders back to a more innocent time, to the late 1950s and a hit song by the Coasters.

"Fee fee fi fi fo fo fum," the lyrics go. "I smell

smoke in the auditorium. Charlie Brown! Charlie Brown! He's a clown. That Charlie Brown. He's gonna get caught. Just you wait and see."

Cue Mark Zuckerberg, stealing a line from bass vocalist Will "Dub" Jones. You can almost feel the hurt in that deep voice as he asks, "Why's everybody always picking on me?"

Why indeed. ❖



**Kelly Hawes is a columnist for CNHI News Indiana. He can be reached at [kelly.hawes@indianamedia-diagroup.com](mailto:kelly.hawes@indianamedia-diagroup.com). Find him on Twitter @Kelly\_Hawes.**

# How Democrats are losing the county wars

By **LOU JACOBSON**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – One of the inexorable political trends of recent years has been the declining number of counties won by Democrats. Put simply, Democrats, particularly at the presidential level, are maintaining or increasing their electoral strength in populated areas, whether urban and suburban, as Republicans strengthen their hold on more rural areas.

During the era of President Donald Trump, Republicans have made gains even in those less-populated areas where Democrats once had a chance of winning – from the small towns of Iowa and Wisconsin to the coalfields of eastern Kentucky and West Virginia to the industrial areas of northeastern Ohio.

While Joe Biden won marginally more of the nation’s more than 3,100 counties (and county equivalents) than Hillary Clinton did 4 years earlier, it was still a smaller number than was won by every other Democratic presidential candidate this century (Al Gore in 2000, John Kerry in 2004, and Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012). A note: We used Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections to assemble the tables in this article, and we omitted Alaska, which doesn’t have counties or county-equivalents, as well as Washington, D.C.

In many states, Democratic strength – where it exists at all – is concentrated in a handful of populated counties.

For instance, in the 2020 presidential election, two states saw every single county vote for Trump: Oklahoma and West Virginia. Meanwhile, Biden won just two of 120 counties in Kentucky, five of 92 counties in Indiana, and three of 95 counties in Tennessee.

**This pattern held even** in states that were more favorable to Biden in their topline results. In Michigan, Biden won just 11 of 83 counties. In Minnesota, he won 13 of 87. In Pennsylvania, he won 13 of 67. And in Wisconsin, Biden won 14 of 72 counties. Yet Biden managed to win each of those four states, enabling his victory.

In some ways, this should not necessarily be a problem for Democrats. After all, they won the presidency in 2020, while holding the House and moving into a narrow Senate majority. The Democrats were able to do that because most of the populous counties in the U.S. backed Biden, more than compensating for the loss of less-populous counties. According to calculations by demographer William Frey, 67 million more people lived in counties won by Biden than those won by Trump.

Still, bleeding support in lower-population counties is not a great long-term strategy for the party. For

starters, it’s an indication that the party’s positions and rhetoric are not being well received throughout the country. And in a more practical sense, the imbalance in population density between Democratic and Republican areas could mean that Republicans will have a leg up as congressional and legislative districts are drawn.

**Below the presidential level**, most statewide Democratic candidates’ results have mirrored those of the presidential race. Those who did better than that are clear outliers.

Among sitting Democratic senators, Montana’s Jon Tester won in 2018 with 13 counties, compared to the seven Biden would win in 2020. West Virginia’s Joe Manchin won the same year with 24 counties, compared to 0 for Biden two years later. Ohio’s Sherrod Brown won

16 counties in 2018, compared to Biden’s 7 in 2020. And in Minnesota, Amy Klobuchar won in 2018 with 51 counties, compared to 13 for Biden two years later.

Among governors, Louisiana’s John Bel Edwards won 24 parishes in 2019 – the Bayou State’s county-level equivalent – compared to just 10 for Biden the following year, while Kentucky’s Andy Beshear won 23 counties in 2019, far more than the two won by Biden a year later (although that was many fewer than Beshear’s father, Steve, won when winning a second term for governor in 2011).

Four Democratic governors elected in 2018 also fared better than Biden would in 2020, though by more modest amounts: Kansas’ Laura Kelly, Michigan’s Gretchen Whitmer, Minnesota’s Tim Walz, and Wisconsin’s Tony



	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020
Counties won by Democratic presidential nominee	672	583	876	692	490	538

Evers. Four northeastern Republican governors have done the reverse, winning far more counties than Trump did in their state: Maryland’s Larry Hogan, Massachusetts’ Charlie Baker, New Hampshire’s Chris Sununu, and Vermont’s Phil Scott.

**To gauge how serious** the Democratic county declines have been, we took a look at how many counties the Democratic presidential nominee won in the elections of 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020. Determining whether Democrats improved in winning a state’s counties over that period, stayed roughly the same, or declined is more art than science, but we’ve done our best to categorize the 49 states with counties or their equivalents.

Ultimately, we decided to split these states into six categories based on a comparison of 2000 and 2020: States that went strongly pro-Democratic in terms of county shifts; states that went modestly pro-Democratic; states that didn’t change much; states that went modestly pro-

Republican; and states that went strongly pro-Republican, plus a lone example that has by far the most counties of any state – Texas – that merits highlighting on its own.

**One issue to note is that** in many states, the number of counties Democrats won ticked upward in 2008, when Barack Obama won, and to a lesser extent in 2012, when Obama was on the ballot the second time, before falling back in 2016 and 2020. By looking at the comparison between 2000 and 2020, we’re effectively setting the “Obama bump” aside, though it’s an interesting question to ponder whether the Democrats will ever be able to harness some of what went into that “bump” in the future to reverse the negative trends outlined here.

Let’s start with the good news for the Democrats: the states that saw either modest or more substantial gains in counties between 2000 and 2020.

The three strongest states on our list have all moved toward Democrats since 2000. In Colorado, Gore won 13 of Colorado’s 64 counties in 2000, but Biden won 24. In Virginia, Gore won 31 counties (or independent city equivalents under Virginia’s system) while Biden won 46. And in California, Gore won 20 counties but Biden won 35.

Maryland, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington, all blue states, saw gains in Democratic counties over that period, as did competitive New Hampshire. But perhaps more interesting is that seven red states have also shown (generally modest) increases in Democratic counties: Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Utah, and Wyoming. Kansas and Nebraska, for instance, have seen Democratic gains in suburban areas (like Johnson County in suburban Kansas City) and Douglas County (which includes Omaha). In Utah, the Democratic victories have come both in urban Salt Lake County and resort areas like Summit County (Park City) and Grand County (Moab).

**We found 12 states** that had a generally steady number of counties won by Democrats between 2000 and 2020. They’re a mix of red (both Dakotas), blue (Hawaii and Massachusetts, where Democrats have carried every county for the past several elections, as well as New Jersey), and purple states (North Carolina and Nevada). One state stands out here as notable: Arizona. Biden won just one more county than the other Democratic nominees since 2000, but that extra county was Maricopa (Phoenix), a mega-county that is the source of about 60% of Arizona’s votes. This was crucial in his narrow statewide victory.

The strongest moves, however, have been in the states that saw declines in the number of Democratic-won counties.

We found 21 states where the number of Democratic counties generally declined between 2000 and 2020 – 14 with stronger movement towards the GOP and seven with more modest movement. The 14 states with strong movement towards the GOP in counties won is almost five times as many as the three states with strong movement towards the Democrats over that period. A few of these “declining” states for Democrats are blue states. Two of them – Illinois and New York – have a dominant and strongly Democratic urban center along with an outstate region that has been drifting away from the party.

**But at least nine** (possibly more, depending on your definition) are solidly red states, or almost half of the 21 states in the declining category. They include some of the strongest numerical declines in Democratic counties of any state. For instance, between 2000 and 2020, the number of Democratic counties declined from 32 to eight in Arkansas, 15 to two in Kentucky, 36 to three in Tennessee, and 13 to 0 in West Virginia.

The declines were even more massive if you compare 2008 – the year of Obama’s first election victory – with 2020. Obama won his home state of Illinois with 46 counties in 2008, but Biden won just 14. Obama won 53 counties in Iowa, but Biden won just six. Obama won 47 counties in Michigan, but Biden won just 11. Obama won 22 counties in

Ohio, whereas Biden won just seven. And Obama won 59 counties in Wisconsin, compared to just 14 for Biden.

Perhaps the most worrisome trend for Democrats is the number of purple states in the “declining” category. Not only are such Trump-won states as Florida, Iowa, and Ohio in this category, but so are the Biden-won states of Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. That said, the number of counties won can be deceiving: Biden flipped Georgia despite winning fewer counties there than Gore, who lost the state by double digits – such is the power of Democratic growth in the fast-growing metro Atlanta area.

The Georgia trend is somewhat similar to the final state, Texas, which we’ve put in its own category. In Texas, the Obama bump held on through 2016, before declining in 2020 – even though Biden came much closer to winning the state than Obama ever did. ❖

**Table 4: States where the number of Democratic-won counties was largely steady**

State	Counties in state	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020
Arizona	15	4	4	4	4	4	5
Delaware	3	1	1	2	2	1	2
Hawaii	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Indiana	92	6	4	15	9	4	5
Massachusetts	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Nevada	17	1	1	3	2	2	2
New Jersey	21	14	12	14	14	12	14
New Mexico	33	13	12	18	17	14	14
North Carolina	100	25	20	33	30	24	25
North Dakota	53	2	4	13	6	2	2
Rhode Island	5	5	5	5	5	4	5
South Dakota	66	5	9	16	10	5	6

**Mitch Daniels, [Washington Post](#):** Cliches, however shopworn, can retain their usefulness provided they continue to describe their object with some accuracy. One cliché that has lost almost all value is “speaking truth to power.” These days, it almost invariably is attached not to an act of genuine courage but to its opposite, the spouting of some politically favored bromide. The speaker runs no risk of negative consequences from any power, individual or institutional; on the contrary, lavish praise and short-term celebrity are assured. Steven E. Koonin is a genuine example of someone daring to challenge a prevailing orthodoxy. Impeccably credentialed both scientifically (New York University physics professor; National Academy of Sciences member; chief scientist for BP, focusing on alternative energy) and politically (undersecretary for science in the Obama Energy Department), Koonin has written probably the year’s most important book. Not because of its conclusions about climate, about which his contrarian views might be completely wrong. Rather, because “Unsettled” is surfacing the anti-intellectual, burn-the-heretic attitude that has infected too much of the academic and policy worlds.

The ad hominem epithets began flying from the moment the book was published last spring. He is a “crank” and a “denier” who thinks climate change is a “hoax,” according to a dozen scientists writing in *Scientific American*. That is false: Koonin stipulates firmly that Earth’s climate is changing and becoming warmer, and that human influence is playing a role. He is eager to identify and advocate actions that will address these changes effectively. But he is deeply troubled — “appalled” is one of his terms — by the misuse of science, his life’s work, to persuade rather than inform, and by the near-hysterical pressure to stifle and vilify any deviation from the dogma of the day. As detailed in *The Post* earlier this year, the book uses government and academic reports’ own data to challenge the scientific “consensus” — about rising sea levels, droughts, extreme weather — now repeated endlessly and uncritically.

Doesn’t the world face economic catastrophe, absent wrenching, unimaginably expensive actions to reduce greenhouse emissions? Not according to Koonin, who cites the United Nations’s own report stating plainly that any such effect would be minor at most and decades away. Koonin also points out how wildly climate computer models disagree with each other. Having written one of the first textbooks on such modeling, he is especially harsh on the “fine-tuning” of models to adjust for unwelcome findings. He says that such manipulation often crosses the line into “cooking the books.” We have never expected much truthfulness or integrity from our politicians, whose self-interest in publicity and campaign dollars too often outweighs any scruples about scientific precision. Nonprofit “public interest” groups raise fortunes on forecasts of doom, often on the flimsiest evidence. The modern news

media, chasing the dollars that titillating, click-catching headlines bring, have been, if anything, worse than the political class in discussing climate change. Koonin serves up multiple examples, with descriptions such as “deliberately misleading” and “blatantly misrepresenting.” The truth’s last line of defense should be the scientific community, but here Koonin indicts those of his fellows who have discarded a commitment to the truth — the whole truth, and nothing but — in favor of their own view of wise policy. “Distorting science to further a cause is inexcusable,” he says, a violation of scientists’ “overriding ethical obligation.” ❖

## Christine Todd Whitman & Miles

**Taylor, [New York Times](#):** After Donald Trump’s

defeat, there was a measure of hope among Republicans who opposed him that control of the party would be up for grabs, and that conservative pragmatists could take it back. But it’s become obvious that political extremists maintain a viselike grip on the national and state parties and the process for fielding and championing House and Senate candidates in next year’s elections. Rational Republicans are losing the party civil war. And the

only near-term way to battle pro-Trump extremists is for all of us to team up on key races and overarching political goals with our longtime political opponents: the Democrats. This year we joined more than 150 conservatives — including former governors, senators, congressmen, cabinet secretaries, and party leaders — in calling for the Republican Party to divorce itself from Trumpism or else lose our support, perhaps with us forming a new political party. Rather than return to founding ideals, Republican leaders in the House and in many states have now turned belief in conspiracy theories and lies about stolen elections into a litmus test for membership and running for office. Starting a new center-right party may prove to be the last resort if Trump-backed candidates continue to win Republican primaries. We and our allies have debated the option of starting a new party for months and will continue to explore its viability in the long run. Unfortunately, history is littered with examples of failed attempts at breaking the two-party system, and in most states today the laws do not lend themselves easily to the creation and success of third parties. So for now, the best hope for the rational remnants of the Republican Party is for us to form an alliance with Democrats to defend American institutions, defeat far-right candidates, and elect honorable representatives next year — including a strong contingent of moderate Democrats. It’s a strategy that has worked. Mr. Trump lost re-election in large part because Republicans nationwide defected, with 7 percent who voted for him in 2016 flipping to support Joe Biden, a margin big enough to have made some difference in key swing states. ❖



## Ex-mayor Snyder sentenced 21 mos.

HAMMOND — Nearly five years after he was indicted and following two trials, former Portage Mayor James Snyder was sentenced after a day-long hearing Wednesday to 21 months in prison on federal bribery and tax violation charges

(Kasarda, [NWI Times](#)). In imposing the sentence, which

is below that recommended in sentencing guidelines, U.S. District Judge Matthew Kennelly said that Snyder's offense appeared to be an "aberration" in an otherwise law-abiding life. Yet Kennelly, a judge from the Northern District of Illinois, rejected the defense's call for no prison time, saying the sentence was necessary as a deterrent to public corruption. "It sends a message," Kennelly said of the sentence. The judge gave Snyder until Jan. 5 to surrender himself to begin his prison term. The 43-year-old Republican was twice found guilty of soliciting and accepting a \$13,000 bribe in 2014 in return for steering a \$1.125 million garbage collection contract for the city of Portage to the local Great Lakes Peterbilt company. Federal prosecutors say he also obstructed the Internal Revenue Service's efforts to collect unpaid taxes on a private mortgage company he ran.



## Inflation at highest rate in a decade

WASHINGTON — U.S. inflation accelerated last month and remained at its highest rate in over a decade, with price increases from pandemic-related labor and materials shortages rippling through the economy ([Wall Street Journal](#)). The Labor Department said last month's consumer-price index, which measures what consumers pay for goods and services, rose by 5.4% from a year earlier, in unadjusted terms. That is the same rate as in June and July

as the economy reopened, and slightly higher than in August. The so-called core price index, which excludes the often-volatile categories of food and energy, in September climbed 4% from a year earlier, the same rate as in August.

## Expect giant gas bills this winter

NEW YORK — Americans got a stark warning from the government this week: Expect higher heating bills this winter ([Wall Street Journal](#)). According to the Energy Information Administration, nearly half of U.S. households that warm their homes with mainly natural gas can expect to spend an average of 30% more on their bills compared with last year. The forecast rise in costs, according to the report, will result in an average natural-gas home-heating bill of \$746 from Oct. 1 to March 31, compared with about \$573 during the same period last year.

## Biden addresses LA port jam

WASHINGTON ([AP](#)) — President Joe Biden tried to reassure Americans on Wednesday that he can tame high inflation, announcing a deal to expand operations at the Port of Los Angeles as prices keep climbing and container ships wait to dock in a traffic jam threatening the U.S. economy and holiday shopping. Prices are jumping in large part because container ships are stranded at ports and because unloaded goods are waiting for trucks, leading to mass shortages and delays that have caused a longer than expected bout of inflation.

## NACS board votes to keep masking

FORD WAYNE — Masks will stay at Northwest Allen County Schools through the end of the semester to keep more students in classrooms, the five-member board

decided in a split vote Wednesday night ([Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). Board President Kent Somers — who repeatedly referenced East Allen County Schools' and Southwest Allen County Schools' mask-optional policies — stressed his disagreement. "Absolutely not," Somers said after a lengthy debate that was conducted virtually. More than a dozen people showed up for an earlier, tightly controlled in-person meeting, but they mostly stayed outside the school holding signs protesting masks and Superintendent Chris Himself.

## FDA approves Lilly breast cancer drug

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved an oral tablet from Eli Lilly and Company to treat certain people with high-risk, early breast cancer ([WTHR-TV](#)). Verzenio abemaciclib, in combination with endocrine therapy, is used as treatment of adult patients with hormone receptor-positive (HR+), human epidermal growth factor receptor 2-negative (HER2-), node-positive, early breast cancer at high-risk of recurrence.

## Biden signs Braun, Spartz teacher bill

WASHINGTON — The Consider Teachers Act is a law that essentially overhauls a grant program meant to incentivize young teachers to teach in "high-need, under-served communities." It was signed into law by President Biden on Wednesday ([WIBC](#)). "The TEACH grant is an important program to incentivize teachers to serve in neglected communities, but 12 years of poor government management has turned these grants into groans for thousands of teachers," said Sen. Mike Braun. "The passage of the Consider Teachers Act in the House and Senate shows our appreciation for America's great teachers, and I am proud that this bill to help teachers has been signed into law."