

Sen. Young has it all (except Trump nod)

Young is sitting on \$5.6M cash, but Trump endorsement is elusive

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Sen. Todd Young seems to have it all these days. He raised a record \$1.6 million for his first Senate reelection campaign this past quarter, sitting on a lofty \$5.6 million cash. He doesn't have a primary opponent. The three Democratic candidates have raised a combined \$100,000.

But Todd Young is lacking what may count most: The endorsement of former president Donald J. Trump in a state where he won twice with 57%.

According to Politico, Sen. Young's campaign made inquiries for a Trump en-

dorsement last winter not long after the Jan. 6 insurrection and then Trump's second impeachment trial, when Young voted to acquit the former president.

Politico: "Trump's revulsion to even minor instances of disloyalty only intensified. As an example, they noted that Trump is currently withholding an endorsement of



Indiana Sen. Todd Young after Young called Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene 'an embarrassment' to the Republican party last month. Young's comments came shortly after Greene claimed she received Trump's 'full support'

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Donnelly 'perfect choice'

By **JACK COLWELL**

SOUTH BEND – Former Sen. Joe Donnelly appears to be a perfect choice for U.S. ambassador to the Vatican. Perfect for representing President Biden, described by Donnelly during the presidential campaign as someone he knows to be sincere in faith "because I know Joe Biden, and I come from the same Irish Catholic faith tradition."

Perfect for Pope Francis, who can express church concerns for moral issues from climate change to world hunger to an ambassador who knows the president and knows the faith.

Perfect for Senate confirmation prospects, with quick bipartisan support from Indiana Republican Sen. Todd Young, who



"I've always said that I support and respect those companies that have mandates to make sure that their workforce is operational."

- Gov. Eric Holcomb, signaling he will oppose coming legislation that would block employer vaccine mandates.



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Jack E. Howey
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said: "Joe is a devout Catholic and longtime public servant, and I know he will serve the nation well and represent the best of our Hoosier values."

But there will be opposition, some political, some from critics believing the pope isn't Catholic enough and that Donnelly isn't "pro-life" enough.

One reason confirmation is expected is that senators who served with Donnelly view him as a cooperative moderate, not a divisive colleague. Approval, however, will not come quickly, perhaps not until the end of the year, if Sen. Ted Cruz continues to stall confirmation votes and the Senate keeps battling over so many other matters.

Donnelly has told friends that Biden asked him to serve as ambassador in June and he quickly accepted, but he couldn't tell them then because of White House restrictions. There was the extensive vetting process and desire to prevent leaks before official announcement last week.

Donnelly must refrain from news media interviews prior to Senate hearings. Understandable. One comment can set off a Washington firestorm. He explained he could only say the nomination is an honor and he's "proud to help a president, who is a man of deep faith, and to serve the country."

Indiana Democratic Chair Mike Schmuhl, once campaign manager for Donnelly before managing Pete Buttigieg's presidential campaign, said he actually heard of the ambassador nomination from the White House be-

fore Donnelly was free to talk to him about it.

Schmuhl said Donnelly finally could describe contact first from White House officials about whether he would accept the nomination. He would if the president wanted him. Biden called to say that he did. And Donnelly had no hesitation about accepting.

There was speculation that Schmuhl took the chairmanship with the thought of Donnelly becoming a ticket-leading candidate for senator in '22 or governor in '24.

"I mainly took the job because our party needed help," Schmuhl said, not with expectations of specific future candidates. He said Donnelly helped in appearances around the state to support the Biden agenda, even though quickly taking himself out of a Senate race.

Will the ambassadorship eliminate a political future for Donnelly in Indiana? "I don't think it forecloses him from doing something political in the future," Schmuhl said.

Who knows?

Who knew when Biden won the presidency that he would pick Donnelly to be ambassador to the Vatican? Who knew when Donnelly's mother died of cancer when he was 10, that he, inspired by his father's faith, would graduate from Notre Dame and Notre Dame Law School?

Who knew, in political ups and downs, that he would be trounced in a congressional race and then two years later defeat the

incumbent? Who knew he would risk his Senate candidacy when Sen. Dick Lugar was the incumbent and win, after Lugar lost in the Republican primary to a lightweight?

Who knew that Donnelly, ahead in polls, would lose for Senate reelection after heavy-handed Democratic attacks on Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court nomination convinced many Hoosier voters that Kavanaugh was the victim?

Young, from page 1

during a phone call with the former president. Trump's 'money and his endorsement and engagements [are] very valuable. It's political currency to a lot of these candidates and he plans to keep tighter reins on that,' said a former senior Trump administration official."

What did Young say to breed such Trumpian contempt?

On Jan. 6 as the senator was confronted by Trump supporters outside the Russell Senate Office Building, Young said, "My opinion doesn't matter. And you know what, when it comes to the law, our opinions don't matter, the law matters. The law matters. I share that conviction that President Trump should remain president. I share that conviction, but the law matters. I took an oath under God, under God!"

In a statement, Young said, "As Congress meets to formally receive the votes of the Electoral College, I will uphold my Constitutional duty and certify the will of the states as presented. The people voted and the Electoral College voted. Congress must fulfill its role in turn. Like so many of my patriotic constituents and colleagues, I too wish the results of this election were different. I strongly supported President Trump and his agenda the last four years. I campaigned hard for him. But upon assuming this office, I took a solemn, inviolable oath to support and defend our Constitution, just as I did as a United States Marine. I will not violate that oath."

In normal times, such statements wouldn't be a problem. But over the past year, Trump has only amplified claims that the 2020 election was "rigged" and "stolen" despite little evidence and pushback from Republicans like Attorney General Bill Barr, Vice President Mike Pence, former veep Dan Quayle and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Following the Jan. 6 insurrection, Young called it the result of "a failure for many of our leaders to be

Who knows what being ambassador to the Vatican will bring and whether Donnelly will be looking at a future with Biden reelected or Donald Trump back in the White House? ❖

Colwell has covered Indiana politics for the South Bend Tribune.

truthful to the American people about what precisely has happened in our elections in recent months." Asked if President Trump played a role in encouraging the violence, Young responded, "Of course. He's president of the United States."

While Young voted to acquit President Trump during his second Senate impeachment trial, the Hoosier senator said, "I can tell you what I'm hearing from Hoosiers, Republicans, Democrats, and I'm hearing it from other Americans as well. I'm hearing that President Trump is now a private citizen. There are other avenues for those who want to hold him to certain charges. Moreover, because of the extraordinary time period we're in, I really don't want to spend a lot of time on this."

Then there was the subject of whether QAnon supporter Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia should be in the GOP. "There should be no debate about Marjorie Taylor Greene," Young said in a conference call with reporters last January. "She's nutty. She's an embarrassment to our party. There's no place for her in the Republican Party. There ought to be no place."

"She's not even part of the conversation as far as I'm concerned," Young said. "But there is a question about whether our party is going to be a party that is grounded in resentment and anxiety and fear or, if instead, we're going to be an aspirational party that is dedicated towards addressing the convergence of globalization in the fourth technological revolution and urbanization and the lack of agency and control over one's lives that those different forces have imposed upon certain segments of our population."

"That's what we need to be wrestling with right now – and the hollowing out of certain communities on account of these forces," Young continued. "So government at the federal level has an important role to play. I believe in institutions. That's why I characterize myself as a conservative, because I believe in institutions and institutions, including government, need to work."

A reporter asked Young if he is worried about



facing a Republican primary challenger when he faces reelection in 2022. "I've got a pretty low pulse. You know, I really don't worry," Young said. "I didn't worry when Evan (Bayh) entered my race. I got a lot of fallback options. So, you know, unlike some career politicians who are wedded to their titles and their positions, I got a good life."

So Young has had a complicated relationship with Donald Trump.

Sen. Young presided over the Republican National Senatorial Committee beginning in November 2018, raising a record \$70 million while seeking to build on a 53-47 seat majority. "This Republican-controlled Senate is America's fire wall as we try and consolidate all of the important wins that we've had over the last couple years and then look to build on those in the future," Young said after Indiana Republican Mike Braun upset U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly in 2018 with Trump making a half dozen campaign stops in the state.

But then President Trump, angered by his loss of the White House by eight million votes in 2020, did what was politically unthinkable: He torpedoed the campaigns of two incumbent Georgia Republican senators running in the Jan. 5 run-off, tweeting four days before the election that the two Georgia Senate races are "illegal and invalid."

GOP strategists said Trump's infatuation with personal grievances and false claims of a "rigged" and "stolen" election in November would depress their party's turnout, dooming Republicans David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler. "At the end of the day, all of this narrative that you can't trust the voting machines, you can't trust absentee ballots – it's hurting Republican turnout," a Republican strategist told Fox11 on Jan. 4. "So if you can't trust the vote, how do you vote? And that's the big question Republicans have right now."

Trump succeeded with this sabotage, with both Loeffler and Perdue losing, giving Democrats a 50/50 Senate tie, with Vice President Kamala Harris providing the tie-breaking vote.

Despite raising a record amount of money, Young failed to hold the GOP Senate majority, with many blaming President Trump. Young kept his thoughts about that debacle to himself.

Trump has been openly hostile to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell – a Young ally – calling for his removal from leadership. "Mitch McConnell should have challenged that election because even back then, we had plenty of material to challenge that election. He should have challenged the election," Trump said at the Iowa State Fairgrounds earlier this month. "He's only a leader because he raises a lot of money and he gives it to senators, that's the only thing he's got. That's his only form of

leadership."

Trump has since reportedly worked to have McConnell ousted as Republican leader, and in April called him a "dumb son of a bitch" and a "stone cold loser."

In June, Trump said, "Had Mitch McConnell fought for the presidency like he should have, there would right now be presidential vetoes on all of the phased legislation that he has proven to be incapable of stopping," Trump said in a Monday statement, reiterating his belief that Republicans lost both Senate runoff races in Georgia in January because of ... McConnell. "He never fought for the White House and blew it for the country. Too bad I backed him in Kentucky, he would have been primaried and lost!"

And in a bizarre statement last week, Trump appeared to warn his supporters about voting for Republicans in 2022 and 2024, something that certainly caught Young's attention. "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," Trump said on Oct. 13.

Washington Examiner columnist David Drucker, who published a new book "In Trump's Shadow: The Battle for 2024 and the Future of GOP" said on MSNBC's Morning Joe earlier this week that Trump fashions himself as a kingmaker. "He understands very well what impact he has on Republicans. He is very acutely aware of what impact he has on Republicans," Drucker said. "They are afraid of voters who will follow him almost anywhere."

Thus, Trump can become a "RINO destroyer." That came a couple of weeks after he kinda, sorta endorsed Democrat Stacey Abrams over Republican Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, saying at a rally, "And Stacey Abrams, who still has not conceded, and that's OK. Stacey, would you like to take his place? It's OK with me. Of course having her, I think, might be better than having your existing governor, if you want to know what I think. Might very well be better."

While Sen. Young maintains he keeps a "low pulse," he could be bracing for curve balls from the former president. Indiana's filing deadline is noon on Feb. 4, 2022. While Young has a \$5 million war chest, Trump's pull with his supporters could swamp that number in a matter of weeks.

All of this would be moot if Trump were to just endorse Todd Young. But renewing that request could put Indiana's senior senator on the radar, which could be a double-edged blade. ❖



Biden swoons as ports clog & IRS snoops

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The dog days of August have dissolved into autumnal discontent with the Biden administration. A Quinnipiac Poll released Wednesday gave President Biden a 37% approval as his legislative agenda faltered in Congress, container ships stacked up off the U.S. coasts and illegal immigrants flooded across the Mexican border.



There are three distinct red lights flashing for Democrats. One is the Treasury Department's proposal for the IRS to collect additional data on every bank account that sees more than \$600 in annual transactions. The other is the empty grocery store shelves and prospects of a turkeyless Thanksgiving, and no presents under a phantom Christmas tree in December.

In a POLITICO/Morning Consult poll released Tuesday, 62% of American voters say the administration's policies are either somewhat or very responsible for increasing inflation, including 41% of Democrats, 61% of independent voters and 85% of Republicans. The right track/wrong track question also looked pretty grim for Biden, with just 38% of voters – and seven of 10 Democrats – saying the country is heading in the right direction.

U.S. authorities detained more than 1.7 million migrants along the Mexico border during the 2021 fiscal year that ended in September, and arrests by the Border Patrol soared to the highest levels ever recorded, according to unpublished U.S. Customs and Border Protection data obtained by the Washington Post.

The supply chain issues crimping U.S. commerce began generating headlines as Transportation Sec. Pete Buttigieg took an unannounced family leave in August, several months after he and husband Chasten adopted twin babies.

A Transportation Department spokesman told the Washington Post on Friday that Buttigieg was "largely off-line" for the first four weeks of leave, "except for major agency decisions and matters that could not be delegat-

ed," and then began taking on more work.

While paternal leave is a good policy (when I had my first son, the Elkhart Truth adjusted my schedule so I could stay home during daytime hours and work at night), the fact that Secretary Buttigieg took it just eight months into the most ambitious job he's ever held and coinciding with the most profound supply chain issues in a generation is proving to be a tone-deaf decision.

A Rasmussen Reports poll on Tuesday revealed only 37% of likely U.S. voters have a favorable impression of Buttigieg, while 47% view him unfavorably.

These worldwide bottlenecks appear to be on the horizon well into 2022 as the pandemic fueled a shift from service purchases to products as homebound consumers decided to upgrade kitchens and rebuild decks.

"Certainly a lot of the challenges that we've been experiencing this year will continue into next year. But there are both short-term and long-term steps that we can take to do something about it," Buttigieg told CNN's Jake Tapper on "State of the Union" on Sunday. "Look, part of what's happening isn't just the supply side, it's the demand side. Demand is off the charts. This is one more example of why we need to pass the infrastructure bill. There are \$17 billion in the president's infrastructure plan for ports alone and we need to deal with these long-term issues that have made us vulnerable to these kinds of bottlenecks when there are demand fluctuations, shocks and disruptions like the ones that have been caused by the pandemic."

The darker, more mysterious "deep state" problem for the Biden administration comes with the \$600 bank account issue. When my mother tells me that it's the talk of her retirement home dining room, that's a signal that the issue has permeated into the mainstream.

Bank accounts with \$600 of annual transactions would cover 90% of Americans. As criticism mounted, the Biden administration and Senate Democrats are proposing to raise the threshold to accounts with more than \$10,000 in annual transactions, and any income received through a paycheck from which federal taxes are automatically deducted will not be subject to the reporting, according to ABC News. Recipients of federal benefits like unemployment and Social Security



and any income received through a paycheck from which federal taxes are automatically deducted will not be subject to the reporting, according to ABC News. Recipients of federal benefits like unemployment and Social Security

would also be exempt. The IRS would collect the total sum of deposits and withdrawals from bank accounts with more than \$10,000 in non-payroll income. Information on individual transactions would not be collected.

The changes were announced Tuesday by the Treasury Department: "In response to considerations about scope, it [Congress] has crafted a new approach to include an exemption for wage and salary earners and federal program beneficiaries. Under this revised approach, such earners can be completely carved out of the reporting structure. This is a well-reasoned modification; for American workers and retirees, the IRS already has information on wage and salary income and the federal benefits they receive. The changes would exempt millions of Americans from the reporting requirement, and help the IRS target wealthier Americans, especially those who earn money from investments, real estate, and other transactions that are more difficult for the IRS to track."

U.S. Sen. Todd Young, up for reelection next year, pounced on the issue Tuesday. "At a time when the American people have lost so much trust in the leaders of our major institutions, and the institutions themselves, including government, I couldn't think of a worse idea for our national Democrats to embrace," Young said in a Senate floor speech. "Nancy Pelosi was asked whether she intends to include this in Democrats' \$3.5 trillion boondoggle the other day, and her response was: 'Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.'"

"Well, I've consulted with so many people, as I travel the highways and byways of Indiana, and what I am consistently hearing is: 'No. No. No. No,'" said Young.

While these are danger signs for President Biden and Democrats, I'll repeat a familiar mantra: Anyone who says they know what will happen in an election 13 months away has a bridge in the Arizona desert to sell you.

President Biden could still land his infrastructure and budget reconciliation deals, even with his tiny congressional majorities. There is the Jan. 6 House committee probe into the insurrection. And voters will be making decisions on how the messy and lethal COVID-19 pandemic is going.

While Biden's 37% approval is anemic, Americans give Democrats in Congress a negative 30% job approval rating, and congressional Republicans get a 23% approval. Voters appear to be saying, "A pox on both your houses."

According to the Quinnipiac Poll, 58% of likely voters don't want to see Donald Trump run for president in 2024, including 58% of independent voters (78% of Republicans want Trump to run). That's a pretty shaky starting point for Trump, who became the first president since Herbert Hoover to lose the House, Senate and White House within a four-year period.

A slight majority of Americans, 52% to 41%, say the country is worse off today than it was a year ago, including 56% of independents. "While a majority of Americans say, 'been there, done that' about Trump, and half feel he has damaged the underpinnings of democracy, support for the former president within the GOP has

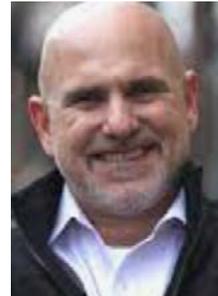
grown," said Quinnipiac Polling Analyst Tim Malloy.

Braun welcomes unvaxxed Chicago cops

U.S. Sen. Mike Braun made an appeal to unvaccinated Chicago cops facing suspension: "Our police do the hardest job in the world, and they deserve respect – not losing their pay or being fired for refusing to comply with a ridiculous vaccine mandate. Indiana's police departments are hiring now and will welcome you with the respect you deserve. My office stands ready to help connect Chicago police officers to an Indiana police department that is hiring now and doesn't have a vaccine mandate. Welcome to Indiana!" More than 460 American law enforcement officers have died from COVID-19 infections tied to their work since the start of the pandemic, according to the Officer Down Memorial Page, making the coronavirus by far the most common cause of duty-related deaths in 2020 and 2021.

Sen. Baldwin listed as Oath Keeper

State Sen. Scott Baldwin has been identified in a [ProPublica article](#) as a member of the Oath Keepers. Dozens of Oath Keepers have been arrested in connection to the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol, some of them looking like a paramilitary group, wearing



camo helmets and flak vests. But a list of more than 35,000 members of the Oath Keepers — obtained by an anonymous hacker and shared with ProPublica by the whistleblower group Distributed Denial of Secrets — underscores how the organization is evolving into a force within the Republican Party. ProPublica identified 48 state and local government of-

ficials on the list, all Republicans: 10 sitting state lawmakers; two former state representatives; one current state assembly candidate; a state legislative aide; a city council assistant; county commissioners in Indiana, Arizona and North Carolina; two town aldermen; sheriffs or constables in Montana, Texas and Kentucky; state investigators in Texas and Louisiana; and a New Jersey town's public works director. The membership list also names Alaska State Rep. David Eastman as a life member and Indiana State Sen. Scott Baldwin and Georgia state Rep. Steve Tarvin as annual members. Baldwin's spokesperson said he was unavailable to comment.

Democrats

Small town tour scheduled

The Indiana Democratic Party announced Wednesday it would launch a statewide tour ahead of the holiday season, this time focused on Indiana's rural communities. Called the "Small Town, Indiana" tour, Hoosier Democrats will visit more than a dozen small towns to celebrate with voters and families about how Democrats,

not Republicans, are delivering for them when it comes to fully funding their public schools and the farming industry – a critical pillar to Indiana’s economic success – they are proud to be a part of. The first stop of the “Small Town” tour will be in Greendale, with Jennifer McCormick and Kent Yeager serving as primary speakers for the tour’s launch. “Public schools and farmers are the heartbeat of rural communities and the backbone of Indiana itself, and Democrats are set to hold intimate conversations about how we are delivering solutions to the most-pressing problems facing Hoosier families in Indiana’s small towns,” said Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl.

House to vote on Bannon contempt

The U.S. House will meet at 10 a.m. and at noon will take up a vote on finding Steve Bannon in criminal contempt of Congress, with first votes expected between 1:30 p.m. and 2:15 p.m.

Virginia governor: Race tied at 46%

Democrat Terry McAuliffe and Republican Glenn Youngkin are locked in a close battle for governor of Virginia, tied at 46% in a Monmouth Poll. This marks a shift from prior Monmouth polls where McAuliffe held a 5-point lead, 48% to 43%. ❖

Three decades of INDOT

By DAVE KITCHELL

LOGANSPORT – When former Gov. Evan Bayh took office in 1989, one of the first things he did was combine agencies under the umbrella of a new title, the Indiana Department of Transportation.



The move made sense from a state coordination standpoint. For a state that bills itself as the Crossroads of America, it made perfect sense. Intermodal facilities need to be located at the nexus of highways and railroads. Ports on the Ohio and Lake Michigan have to have access. A growing reliance on small airports to transport executives was burgeoning.

Now more than 30 years later, it’s hard to believe there was a time before INDOT. But

if we turned back the clock and magically asked Hoosiers in 1989 if they thought there would be fewer passenger trains today and no high-speed rail at this point in history, they’d probably scoff at the notion. But that is what has happened.

Perhaps one of the most important news stories in years that didn’t lead nightly news casts in Indiana happened this month. It was announced that the federal government is undertaking a 40-year plan to improve rail travel across the United States. One of the key areas that will benefit is the Midwest, and Indiana in particular.

Columbus, Ohio, which is the largest city without Amtrak access, would benefit, as would Fort Wayne. Indiana already has a solid infrastructure in place along its northern border with the South Shore Line from South Bend to Chicago. This plan would augment that and potentially could open up new lines south to Indianapolis,

Lafayette and Louisville.

It also would make sense to extend service from Fort Wayne to Lafayette, replicating the former Wabash Cannonball route through northern Indiana and connecting cities along the Hoosier Heartland Corridor.

With the 2020 Census figures as a guide, it stands to reason that state and federal officials – sometimes prompted by city and county officials – can start a fresh dialogue about this proposal and its impact on Indiana. Census figures continue to reflect that metro Indiana is growing, but most of Indiana is losing population. There is a net positive, but with greater access to rural areas, metro employers can only enjoy the same benefits that employers in New York, Boston, Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia have enjoyed for decades.

There are many among us who remember when the Colts were spirited out of Owings Mills, Md., in the dark of night thanks to Mayflower moving vans. While we were at it, Indiana officials probably should have taken some rail access from the Eastern Seaboard too.

This country has long catered to highway and airport development while putting rail on the back burner to fend for itself. Cities and counties can establish their own rail authorities, but those are often islands without bridges to the main networks of rail transportation.

On-time delivery is crucial to many industries, and at a time when global warming presents an horrific threat to everyone, rail transportation is cleaner and more efficient than ever. Indiana makes it a point to cater to advanced manufacturing and industrial development, but it lags the nation in having a viable plan to complement our transportation network of highways, airports and seaports with greater potential utilizing railroads.

An aide to the late House Speaker Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill called Social Security the third rail of American politics because of the stability it represented. But the rail plan idea offered in the past week represents the fourth rail of American Politics that can do more for Indiana than many other states. ❖

Kitchell is the former Democratic mayor of Logansport.

Documents in which our democracy rests

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – As Americans, we tend—understandably—to focus on the Constitution as the source for our representative democracy. It is, after all, our basic operating document, the blueprint for the system we’ve

been shepherding for the last 234 years. But the Constitution did not arise out of thin air; our forebears marked key steps along the way with other documents as well. Here’s a quick tour of some of them.



The first was the Mayflower Compact, signed in 1620 by 41 of the male colonists, including two indentured servants, aboard the Mayflower after it made land in Massachusetts. There is no historical

certainly about who actually wrote it, though it’s often attributed to William Brewster, one of the leaders of the community.

It’s not long, and it essentially says that the colonists – who at the time were divided between the Pilgrims, who had intended to settle in Virginia, and the merchants, craftsmen, servants, and others who’d gone along for the ride – would work together to establish the colony and enact the “laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices” the colony needed. This seems mundane today, but at the time it was revolutionary, at least in European society. It established the right of the colonists in essence to govern themselves, based on the consent of the people, while at the same time remaining loyal subjects to the king.

Now we move forward 156 years, to 1776 and the Declaration of Independence. Which, of course, laid out why the American colonists – who had a long list of grievances against England – could no longer remain loyal subjects. More than that, however, it laid out the arguments for the 13 colonies becoming an independent country. And in its preamble, it set down basic principles that would inform the system to come: “That all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of happiness.”

You may not have heard of the next document,

which came 11 years later. The Northwest Ordinance was adopted by the Confederation Congress (our current structure hadn’t come into being yet) on July 13, 1787. It set the rules for establishing states in what was then called the Northwest Territory, essentially becoming a model for the expansion westward to the Pacific.

One of its most important contributions was to establish the procedure by which new states would be admitted to the Union, ensuring that states would be treated equally regardless of when they formally joined the new country; and in particular, that new states would enjoy the same status as the original 13. The ordinance also created a basic bill of rights for individuals in the territory: Protecting religious freedom, the right to a writ of habeas corpus, the right to trial by jury, and outlawed slavery in the new territories.

That same year produced our fourth document, the U.S. Constitution – though it wasn’t ratified until 1788 and didn’t take effect until 1789. It’s impossible to summarize briefly, but everything we now take for granted in how our representative democracy works – the three branches of government, the separation of powers, the individual rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights, the concept that the basic operating rules of the country could be changed – is in there. In many ways, so are the difficult questions our founders grappled with, failed to resolve, and left for succeeding generations, including our own, to tackle: Slavery and the unequal treatment of Blacks, women, Native Americans, and others; centralized vs. decentralized government; tension between urban and rural areas; individual freedom versus community responsibility.



I don’t in any way mean to give short shrift to other crucial contributions to our early evolution as a democracy, such as the Great Law of Peace establishing the Iroquois Confederacy, which influenced early notions of balancing what amounted to local and federal power; the writings of such thinkers as Hume, Locke, and Rousseau; and the Articles of Confederation. All of them,

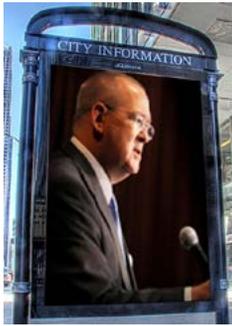
including the four documents I mention, are a reminder that building a democracy is a process, with multiple steps along the way. So, for that matter, is safeguarding it. ❖

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.

Market adjustments aren't inflation

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – Inflation talk continues to animate the airwaves, or at least cable TV, and remains part of the political conversation. Economists should have something to say about this; after all, it has been a central area of research for much of the past century. Still, we should approach the issue with an abundance of epistemic humility.



Those who warned about high inflation in the wake of the Great Recession were wrong. A casual observer might view this with some relief, since we nearly all erred in overestimating inflation. Still, this should be of no comfort. The mathematical models we use to understand and predict inflation perform poorly, and there is plenty of opportunity for symmetry of error, so there is a real possibility of underestimating the risks of inflation this time.

The fiscal and monetary stimulus following the pandemic recession is much larger than that of the Great Recession. Of course, the economic damage of the pandemic is far worse. One great unknown is whether we have too much or too little stimulus today.

Another great unknown is how much the adjustment of households and businesses in the post-pandemic world will affect prices and quantities. We also cannot know whether the big drop in labor supply is permanent or transitory.

None of these unknowns is really a harbinger of inflation, they merely distort the measurements we use to understand price level changes. This is particularly true about anecdotes of inflation that fuel worry and political opportunism. In reality, there are few data-driven warnings of inflation. Measured inflation to consumers is slightly above a 20-year trend, but it is not a persistent increase.

The consumer price data measure the prices of identical products across the nation and place them into a "basket" of average goods consumed by families. It is not a perfect measure, and it has been attacked by many conspiratorial-minded folks since at least the 1970s. It was then that the "basket" of goods was updated regularly to account for different choices consumers made for goods and services. It's no use trying to debunk a conspiracy theory, since their claims are always non-falsifiable and so cannot be disproved. Suffice it to say that for the past 40 years, serious economic research largely concludes we overstate rather than understate inflation.

Today, inflation is running far less than 1.0 percentage point off trend. Keep in mind we had a huge shock to prices in 2020, so comparing inflation today to a

period of deflation last year distorts today's price changes. As measured by surveys current to early October, consumer and businesses expectations of inflation show modest increases – roughly 2.3% over the coming years.

As the biggest warning of inflation, the yield difference on government bonds of different times to maturity signal "all quiet on the inflation front." So, despite what a politician or two may say, the financial markets in which well-informed buyers and sellers register their inflation alarm is quiet.

Still, some prices change quickly, driven by shortages. My favorite example is the price of used cars. I am the proud driver of a 2009 Honda Ridgeline with nearly 190,000 miles. This vehicle is now advertised for 55% to 75% of what I paid for it a dozen years ago. This won't last, and there is no theory of inflation that isolates individual products or services. My newfound wealth in used cars is due to higher demand in the wake of a microchip shortage affecting new cars. This sadly, is a transitory price increase.

Many factors contribute to these shortages – the lingering effects of COVID on production and transport, the big surge in demand over the summer, and the hangover from Mr. Trump's trade war. Nothing would have such an immediate effect on supply chains as ending the tariffs on European and Chinese imports.

The price changes cause markets to adjust in ways that are often slow and uncomfortable. Too few new cars prompt us to buy used cars, and too few used cars cause us to seek public transportation and ridesharing. Not enough turkeys over the holidays will cause us to shift to ham or roast beef. Long lines at restaurants prompt us to cook at home.

In response, auto manufacturers will find other firms to produce microchips, and reward them with longer-term contracts. Prices tell us a far fuller story than any other market signal, so desperate consumers buying turkeys will prompt farmers to raise more, and trucking companies to invest in more refrigerated trucks. Groceries will offer more pre-packaged goods and TV shows for novice cooks will find air time. These market adjustment processes aren't fast or painless, but they are better than any human invention that matches people with goods.

Of course making all this happen takes people with skills, e.g. how to make microchips, clean and market used cars, drive public transportation, raise turkeys, stock shelves or cook restaurant meals. The most obvious element of price changes right now comes in wages, the price of labor. In some sectors, like hospitality and tourism, wages are up 12% over the past year. This is not solely inflation, and it's not a technical or academic definition.

If wages rise by 10% or 15%, one of two things must happen. Prices for the goods or services must rise, or workers must become more productive. If a worker receives a 10-percent pay hike, and is able to produce 10 percent more value for the employer, there is

no change in labor costs. Of course, as with producers of goods, a 10-percent wage increase will cause workers to more readily offer their services to firms.

We are in the midst of a great adjustment that will require months and years to fully sort out. This process will be disruptive and will cause some firms and occupations to disappear. Others will change their style and hours of work to increase productivity. Along this path,

we might see inflation raise its unwelcome head, but so far, data on inflationary pressures is slim. ❖

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.

A chain of other costs

By MORTON J. MARCUS

INDIANAPOLIS – My neighbor, Phil Pillpusher, was raking leaves when I stopped. “Congratulations,” I said. “Just heard about the new miracle drug on the news,” “Yeah, blockbuster,” he smiled. “Going to be big once Oxy-BoZo is in the heads of doctors and their patients”

“That’s where your job comes in,” I smiled. “Get those ads on TV telling folks to ‘Ask your doctor about OxyBoZo’ and the cash rolls in.”



“It’s a great example of how research keeps Big Pharma getting bigger,” Phil beamed. “Our social scientists found that 96.3% of all men have been identified by their loved ones as Bozos at some point in their lives. Then 92.8% of those 96.3% want to be free of that bozo identity, safe from Bozo-itis.”

“So this will be a popular drug for a social discomfort, not a real physical or emotional malady?”

I said. “Exactly,” Phil confirmed. “It’s just the kind of product that could be kept from the market if Congress allows Medicare to negotiate prices for pharmaceutical products.”

“You pharma guys hit that point hard.” I observed. “But I hear VA gets lower prices for veterans and federal employees get lower drug prices on their health insurance. Big Pharma doesn’t seem to be suffering.” “Oh, no,” Phil said. “Industry leaders and analysts have made it clear there will be serious consequences if government forces negotiations.”

“But it’s all rhetoric without evidence,” I said. “Consider this from a Heritage Foundation writer, ‘There would be a chain of other costs: Billions of dollars in averted research and development expenditures by drug makers, forgone investment in an untold number of new drugs, and the considerable loss of valuable research and science jobs.’

“Those thoughts were published in 2007

and the same fantasy arguments are being made again today, 14 years later. Sadly, the headlines and the stories written about this subject don’t question industry flacks and flacks who confidently predict disaster, if drug prices were lower.”

“You are playing with fire,” Phil fired back at me. “Society demands advances to battle the ravages of disease. Don’t forget the struggles against orphan illness.”

“Right, battle, ravages and struggles. Warlike language taking advantage of human misery. Drama and theatrics to pad the profits of Big Pharma,” I responded. “Unfair!” Phil proclaimed.

“How much does your industry spend on spinning facts, on lobbying legislators, and advertising to a gullible public?” I asked. “Well...” he offered. But I was rolling. “And why do three very conservative Republican U.S. senators want an investigation of the way pharma companies spend the incentives the federal government gives the industry to do research on those orphan illnesses?” I asked.

“Weren’t you headed home? Well, go,” Phil pleaded.

❖

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

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

Villifying adversaries leaves us further apart

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI State Bureau

ANDERSON – A Facebook friend recently shared a post suggesting that mainstream Republicans had become “racists, Nazis, child molesters and blackout drunk, gang-raping prep school boys.” Really? Mainstream Republicans?

Look, I understand the Republican Party has some fringe elements, but posts like this are way beyond the pale. Such exaggerations are not limited to the political



left. Take a recent post from another Facebook friend contrasting the positions of the two political parties. Republicans love freedom, it says, while Democrats love socialism. Republicans have gratitude for America, it says, while Democrats apologize for America.

In reality, of course, both parties embrace freedom. Democrats do support programs such as Medicare and Social Security, but so do most Republicans. And

neither party has cornered the market on patriotism. Those on both sides have been known to criticize American foreign policy.

The post also misrepresents the immigration debate, saying Republicans want a secure border while Democrats want an open one. Republicans want to abolish the street gang MS-13, it says, while Democrats want to abolish U.S. Immigration and Customs enforcement. Republicans believe in legal immigration, it says, while Democrats support illegal immigration.

The fact is neither party advocates open borders. Neither embraces street gangs. Neither supports illegal immigration. Democrats do tend to favor less restrictive immigration policies, but that doesn’t mean throwing open the border. Some have questioned certain aspects of border security, but few have advocated eliminating enforcement entirely.

And then there’s the debate over police reform. Republicans want to defend police, the post claims, while Democrats want to defund them. To some extent, Democrats did this to themselves. “Defund the police” was never going to be a popular slogan.

Still, the debate should have progressed beyond this point by now. Democrats and even some Republicans see some

real issues with law enforcement that need to be addressed. The meme suggests Republicans believe all lives matter while Democrats believe some lives matter. This misconstrues what the Black Lives Matter movement is all about. No one is suggesting only some lives matter. In fact, the argument that all lives matter is exactly the point. For far too long, advocates complain, Black lives have tended to matter just a little bit less.

The post also addresses the historic differences between the two parties.

Republicans want to lower taxes, it says, while Democrats want to raise them. Republicans believe in personal responsibility while Democrats believe in government control. Democrats might respond that their party wants to fund government while the Republican Party seeks to starve it.

On health care, the meme contends, Republicans believe you should choose your own doctor while Democrats believe the government should choose your doctor. Democrats might respond that their party believes health care is a right while Republicans believe you’re on your own.

On gun control, the post says, Republicans believe you should be able to keep your guns while Democrats believe the government should take them. Actually, neither party supports taking your guns. Democrats support what they consider to be common sense regulations, limits on who can own a weapon and what kind of weapon a person can own.

The post also misrepresents the abortion debate. Republicans oppose abortion, it says, while Democrats support even late-term abortions. The truth is a lot more complicated. Democrats generally support a woman’s right to choose while many Republicans seek to make almost every abortion illegal. A lot of Republicans say life begins at conception. Most Democrats say it begins some time later.

People on both sides of the political divide have strongly held beliefs, and it might be hard on some issues to find common ground. We’ll never find it, though, by believing the worst of folks on the other side. ❖

Kelly Hawes is a columnist for CNHI News Indiana.

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Biden voters likely to back compromise

By **LARRY SHACK** and **MICK McWILLIAMS**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – Those who voted for Joe Biden appear to be more open to compromise than those who voted for Donald Trump.

That is one key takeaway from the latest analysis of our ongoing University of Virginia Center for Politics/Project Home Fire polling and data analytics project.

After looking at the divides in American life, including support for secession among a significant share of those who voted for Donald Trump and Joe Biden, and analyzing immigration attitudes as a key dividing line between the two camps, we wanted to highlight the kinds of people who are most receptive to compromise, based on our analysis of a survey project we conducted in late July and early August.

In our assessment of which Americans are more open to compromise, we created five categories, ranging from the most committed to compromise (“Committed Compromisers”) to those least committed to compromise (“Conflict Hard Cores”).

The committed compromisers group is made up of two-thirds Biden voters (66%) and just one-third (34%) Trump voters (see Table 1 below). Those in this group favor both Americans and their congressional representatives working together to find common ground and solve our nation’s critical challenges. They see ongoing conflict as a harbinger of bad things to come and disagree with the idea of a national divorce.

Meanwhile, about two in five (61%) of “Conflict Hard Cores” are Trump voters, while about two in five are Biden (39%) voters. They believe the other side has become too extreme for compromise and that their party’s congressional representatives should resist compromising with the other side. They reject the idea of prioritizing compromise over conflict, and the level of fear and distrust of the other side among this group is high. They see compromise as contrary to their interests, and present as seeing the benefits of their own interests as superior to the benefits of what compromise can offer.

There are markedly more women (62%) than men (38%) in the compromise-favoring former group, while there are slightly more men (53%) than women

(47%) in the compromise-averse latter group.

What follows is an explanation of how we came to these findings, and what they might mean for incentivizing compromise between Trump and Biden voters.

Finding and prioritizing common ground

To better understand Biden and Trump voters and their openness to compromise, we created a “compromise receptivity” score through a simple average of two questions’ responses: belief that Americans need to compromise versus a belief that the other side has become too extreme for compromise, as well as a belief that the respondent’s party’s congressional representatives should compromise with the other party versus a belief that they should resist compromise.

This analysis revealed that a surprisingly large amount of Biden and Trump voters (28%) – or more than 43 million Americans who voted in the 2020 presidential election as extrapolated from the results of this survey – self-select as “double receptives,” or what we call “Committed Compromisers.” That is, they strongly agree that “Americans must prioritize compromise over conflict to overcome our political divisions and address our nation’s critical challenges” and that “Republicans/Democrats in Congress should work to achieve compromise with the congressional Democrats/Republicans in solving America’s problems.”

On the other hand, we found 23% of Biden and Trump voters -- more than 36 million Americans who voted in the 2020 presidential election, extrapolated from the survey -- self-select as “double rejectors,” or what we call “Conflict Hard Cores.” That is, they believe both that “Americans on the political right/left have become so extreme in what they want America to become that there is no longer room to compromise with them” and that “Republicans/

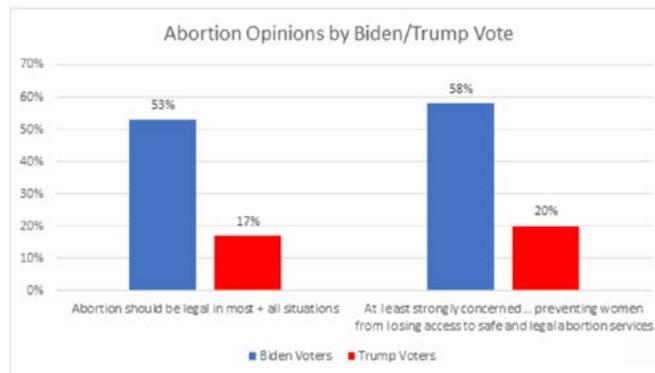
Democrats in Congress should resist compromising with the congressional Democrats/Republicans and seek solutions to America’s problems on their own.”

There are also swing groups that identify with favoring one pathway of compromise, but not both -- 11% that favor compromise between people, but not in Congress, and 20% that favor compromise in Congress, but not between people. Further, 18% present as conflict or compromise ambivalent; that is, they average middling scores on both measures of compromise willingness.

To better understand what most strongly predicts Biden and Trump voter compromise receptivity, we ran an



Figure 1: Abortion opinions, Biden vs. Trump voters



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To better understand what most strongly predicts Biden and Trump voter compromise receptivity, we ran an

analysis across almost 290 different variables. Focusing on the Conflict Hard Cores and the Committed Compromisers – those most inclined to block compromise or accelerate compromise, respectively – we find that those who reject compromise are motivated by a “fear of the other” mindset that manifests itself as hostility towards people on the other side, while those who prioritize compromise are disillusioned with what is happening because of the polarization and conflict that dominates our politics today.

Conflict Hard Cores do not see how compromise translates into benefits for them: This group overlaps significantly with those voters who are opposed to starting a dialogue on immigration, as well as those who are supportive of secession. More than eight in 10 of these voters express some form of distrust for voters they associate with the other side, see elected officials from the opposite party as presenting a clear and present danger to American democracy, and believe they will experience personal loss or suffering due to the policies of the other side.

Not surprisingly, these Biden and Trump voters are consistently less inclined towards compromise receptivity. Perhaps surprisingly, both Biden and Trump Conflict Hard Core voters are likely to agree equally with these statements.

Committed Compromisers see compromise as a path forward. This group overlaps more with those voters open to a conversation about immigration that balances their interests with those of immigrants, and they are more likely to disagree with the idea of a national divorce.

Those who prioritize compromise say they have spent a lot of time viewing video footage of the events that took place at the United States Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, suggesting they are critical of those events. They reject the idea that the election was stolen from Donald Trump. Further, these voters set up as motivated by anxiety about what is happening in society and favor taking proactive steps to address systemic concerns they have – from

addressing systemic racism in America to expanding access to voting in elections to investing in clean energy to help reduce carbon emission and combat climate change.

Significantly, looking across both these groups it is women who are both less unwilling and more willing to favor compromise over conflict than men. Amongst the Conflict Hard Cores 53% are men, while 47% are women. Looking at the Committed Compromisers, 62% are women vs. 38% men. So, to a greater extent than women, men present as compromise blockers who are motivated by a fear of the other side and who are likelier to evince a winner take most attitude that prioritizes polarization,

radicalization, and conflict. On the other hand, women are likelier than men to more strongly present as compromise accelerators who elevate comity and community over anger and alienation. Those in the Committed Compromisers group are likelier to want to take steps to address racism, expand voting rights, and protect the environment. These issues are powerful in predicting compromise receptivity. They speak to the concerns women have about what is happening in society and what it means for them and others. They rise to the goal of elevating an “others focus” that is consistent with their leanings towards compromise over conflict.

From conflict to compromise

Looking across the UVA Center for Politics and Project Home Fire releases to date, we see mounting evidence that the level of distrust that exists in our nation right now is unprecedented in recent history. It poses a real threat to the future of our democracy and our ability to address domestic and international challenges. Left unchecked we risk waiting until it is too late to find our way back.

We know there is a better way forward: We believe there are pathways for engaging people and moving them to action; bringing people together and moving forward based on our shared values and our long history together; challenging the jaded view that conflict is the only way forward; and building consensus and creating new solutions grounded in the motivations of compromise receptive Biden and Trump voters.

In the coming weeks we will be building on our understanding of this Committed Compromiser group and the role they might play as a “bridging population” – a collection of Biden and Trump voters who present as compromise receptive and are, in significant ways, less dissimilar from each other than they realize. This analysis will take a deeper look into these compromise receptive Biden

and Trump voters. It will group them based on their motivations as gleaned through their responses to key questions. It will identify further who they are, how to reach them, and ways we can better connect with and engage them to support the bigger goal of healing and repairing our democracy. And we will support this effort with ongoing work focused on the roughly 50% of Biden and Trump voters who present as falling somewhere between compromise receptive and compromise resistant to make gains on moving some towards compromise receptivity and to prevent others from sliding into conflict. ❖

Table 1: Biden/Trump voter compromise receptivity scores

Percentages agreeing Americans should compromise & Congress should compromise (compromise receptivity score):	Which candidate did you vote for in the 2020 US presidential election?		
	Biden Voters	Trump Voters	Total
Conflict Hard Cores	17.3%	30.1%	23.4%
Both Ambivalent	16.9%	18.1%	17.5%
Congress Receptive	16.8%	23.4%	19.9%
People Receptive	13.4%	8.0%	10.8%
Committed Compromisers	35.6%	20.3%	28.3%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Taegan Goddard, Political Wire: The pandemic has changed work forever. And that's going to have big implications for politics. One of my sons who recently graduated from college got his first job entirely virtually. He went through four rounds of interviews, took a two-hour writing test and never left his apartment. He even accepted the job on a video call. But he's never been in the company's offices. It's not clear when he'll actually meet his colleagues in person. His entire team has learned to do their jobs remotely. While that might not be ideal in every circumstance, it's certainly created other advantages. For instance, once geographic location is no longer a constraint on workers, they can live anywhere. And if they can live anywhere, they can vote anywhere. Silicon Valley is watching this play out before much of the country. A poll this week suggested that more than half of Bay Area residents see themselves moving away permanently in the next five years. That seems insane — until you realize that most tech jobs can really be done from anywhere. So as we watch the current round of redistricting play out, it's quite possible those new congressional maps — and the new electoral map — will very outdated for the next reapportionment in ten years. ❖



John Krull, Statehouse File: I thought of that old teacher of mine when the dust-up between Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita and Indiana media personality Abdul-Hakim Shabazz flared in recent days. (In the spirit of full disclosure, I should report that TheStatehouseFile.com runs Abdul's column from time to time.) Rokita's press secretary banned Abdul from a press conference. Abdul says the press secretary told him the press conference was for "credentialed media" only. Abdul has media credentials issued by the state of Indiana. He's hosted radio shows for years. He writes for a series of publications, including one he owns and edits. He has a large audience. Something he wrote or said must have irritated our thin-skinned attorney general. It likely wasn't partisan. Abdul presents himself as one of the relatively few Black Republicans in positions of prominence. Ideologically, he's a somewhat moderate free-market conservative with strong libertarian leanings. That means he doesn't want government taxing people any more than it must — or trying to rule their private lives. One might think that he and Todd Rokita, who is also a Republican, would be in basic agreement on most things. If so, one doesn't understand Rokita well at all. Rokita doesn't like to be questioned. Ever. ❖

Paul Ogden, Ogden on Politics: Donald Trump is the gift to Democrats that just keeps giving. Yesterday, Trump emailed instructions to his followers not to vote in the 2022 and 2024 elections unless the "Presidential Election Fraud of 2020" is "solved." Upon reading Trump's message, Kentucky Senator and Majority Leader Wannabe Mitch McConnell had a heart attack. Meanwhile,

Republican Virginia gubernatorial hopeful Glenn Youngkin ended his candidacy by jumping off a 10 story building. The Democrats ought to support Trump's efforts to get back on Twitter. They should want to amplify as much as possible every dumb thing Trump says, including his statement encouraging Republicans not to vote in upcoming elections. Trump is an expert when it comes to motivating Democrats to vote. But that has always been offset by his ability to get his own supporters to the polls. If Trump succeeds in encouraging his supporters to stay home that would have a devastating impact on Republican candidates up and down the ticket. Can we stop pretending that Trump actually cares about the GOP or conservative causes? Donald Trump cares about Donald Trump and no one else. ❖

Andrew E. Busch, Wikimedia Commons: After a brief respite in the 2020 election, attention is turning again to the possibility of third parties playing a significant role in American politics. In 2016, both the Libertarian Party ticket and the Green Party ticket received an unusually large number of votes — a record-high 3% for the Libertarians and second-best ever 1% for the Greens. Also that year, former House Republican policy director Evan McMullin ran as an independent, garnering some votes from anti-Trump Republicans and threatening Donald Trump's lead in Utah for a time. In 2020, however, enthusiasm for these options was limited, and third-party vote percentages were much lower than four years before. Now the wheel has turned again. Democratic divisions, openly on display in Congress, have also led to the defection of a notable party figure. Andrew Yang, a 2020 candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination and a 2021 Democratic candidate for mayor of New York, has announced the formation of the Forward Party. On the other side of the partisan divide, anti-Trump Republicans, who had hoped that the president's defeat and ignominious departure from the White House would allow for a fresh start, are disheartened. Adjusting to the possibility that the GOP still belongs to Donald Trump, they are also thinking about their options. Conservative commentator Jonah Goldberg has suggested that they, too, create a third party. What does the history of third parties or independent candidacies tell us? The most obvious historical lesson is that such candidates face long odds. No non-major party candidate has ever won a presidential election since the advent of the modern two-party system in the 1830s. Even Abraham Lincoln's Republicans, starting as a third party in 1854, had displaced the Whigs as the second major party by the time Lincoln won the presidency in 1860. Third parties rarely win contests below the Oval Office, either, though it does happen sometimes. Both Greens and Libertarians have elected officeholders in recent decades. What explains this paucity of political success? Most obviously: The major parties still hold the loyalty of most American voters. ❖

Lawmakers to take aim at vax mandate

INDIANAPOLIS — Some conservative Indiana lawmakers who want to stymie President Joe Biden's planned COVID-19 vaccine mandates for private employers are facing skepticism from their own Republican leaders and the state's largest business group (AP). While Biden has promised federal vaccination-or-testing regulations for all companies with 100 or more workers, bills are planned by some Indiana legislators who want to join other Republican-led states in trying to prohibit private companies from requiring vaccine shots. Supporters of that action are already preparing to raise the issue again when the new Indiana legislative session starts in January, even though similar bills failed during the 2021 session. "I just don't think that anyone has any right to tell someone else what kind of medicine they're to take in order to keep their job. That's just outrageous," said state Sen. Jim Tomes, R-Wadesville. Gov. Eric Holcomb, a Republican, has opposed Biden's proposed federal mandate as a step too far even though he says he wishes "everyone would get the vaccine." Holcomb, however, isn't joining the push to block businesses from adopting their own vaccine requirements. "I've always said that I support and respect those companies that have mandates to make sure that their workforce is operational," Holcomb said. "Sometimes there are some unintended consequences to that, people walk off the line. But every company that I've talked to that has gone down that road has said that we've done that risk analysis." Indiana Chamber of Commerce President Kevin Brinegar said business vaccine mandates in the state have primarily been limited to hospitals and other health care providers. "It should be an employer's



decision," Brinegar said. "Whether it's a presidential mandate or legislators trying to prohibit employers from determining what's best for their workforce, we're kind of getting it from both sides."

Trump to form media platform

NEW YORK (AP) — Nine months after being expelled from social media for his role in inciting the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, former President Donald Trump said Wednesday he's launching a new media company with its own social media platform. Trump says his goal in launching the Trump Media & Technology Group and its "Truth Social" app is to create a rival to the Big Tech companies that have shut him out and denied him the megaphone that was paramount to his national rise. "We live in a world where the Taliban has a huge presence on Twitter, yet your favorite American President has been silenced," he said in a statement. "This is unacceptable."

Henry Co. attorney facing meth charges

NEW CASTLE — The attorney for an eastern Indiana county who once served as its top prosecutor has been charged with dealing methamphetamines (AP). Martin R. Shields, 67, was arrested Tuesday and charged in Henry Circuit Court with two counts of dealing in meth and two counts of possession of meth. Shields, of New Castle, was released from the county jail after posting a \$25,000 surety bond and a \$2,200 cash bond. Court documents allege that an informant wearing audio- and video-recording equipment for the Henry County Area Drug Task Force obtained meth from Shields during transactions earlier this month, The Star Press reported. That person had allegedly been to Shields' home "on several occasions and observed methamphetamines in plain view and had been given (meth) in the past, sometimes for money

and sometimes for free," according to court records.

FDA approves J&J, Moderna boosters

WASHINGTON — U.S. health regulators significantly widened the nation's Covid-19 booster campaign, clearing use of extra doses of Moderna Inc. and Johnson & Johnson vaccines and also saying people can get a shot that is different from what they had previously received (Wall Street Journal). The moves, announced by the Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday, will make boosters available to the majority of adults who have been fully vaccinated and have passed the recommended waiting period. Now every Covid-19 vaccine authorized in the U.S. also has a booster.

Senate GOP block voting rights vote

WASHINGTON — Republicans on Wednesday blocked action for the third time this year on legislation to bolster voting rights, leaving Democrats few options to advance the bill outside of changing the Senate filibuster rule and passing it over G.O.P. opposition (New York Times). All 50 Democrats and independents supported bringing the Freedom to Vote Act to the floor, but all 50 Republicans voted against doing so, maintaining a stalemate over a proposal that Democrats say is needed to counter efforts in Republican-controlled states to impose new restrictions on voting in the aftermath of the 2020 elections. "These laws will make it harder for millions of Americans to participate in their government," said Sen. Chuck Schumer. "If there is anything worthy of the Senate's attention, if there's any issue that merits debate on this floor, it is protecting our democracy from the forces that are trying to unravel it from the inside out." The tie left Democrats at least 10 votes short of the 60 needed to overcome a filibuster.