

## What infrastructure law brings to Indiana

More than \$8 billion headed to state; political impacts by 2024

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – In a week after the Dow crossed 36,000 for the first time ever and 531,000 new jobs were created in October, House Democrats aided by 13 Republicans – though none from the Indiana delegation – voted late Friday night to pass President Biden’s \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill by a 228-206 vote. Six progressive Democrats voted against the measure after Speaker Nancy Pelosi received commitments on the Build Back Better Act to split the votes from this record infrastructure bill.

The bill will bring more than \$8 billion to Indiana to revitalize roads and bridges; \$751 million to ensure safe, clean drinking water; \$680 million to improve public transportation systems; \$350 million to expand broadband internet access, especially in rural areas; and \$20 million for Indiana to respond to extreme weather events.

But like just about everything else in this era of American politics, the infrastructure bill was characterized as “solving problems” in the words of Democrat U.S. Rep.



Frank Mrvan, or denounced as a “socialist scheme” according to Republican U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski.

“We have discussed the need to make desperately needed investments in our infrastructure and broadband technology for too long,” Mrvan told the NWI Times following the House vote. “Today, we delivered.”

**Continued on page 4**

## White House F league

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Johnny McEntee was President Trump’s final choice to head the White House Personnel Office. He was a 29-year-old former UConn football player who became candidate Trump’s “body man” in 2015.

But by the final fateful weeks of the Trump presidency, after being fired by Chief of Staff John Kelly and banned from the Department of Justice by Attorney General Bill Barr, McEntee had become, according to Jonathan Karl’s new book “Betrayal: The Final Act of the Trump Show,” what a senior official described as the “deputy president.”

Most presidents and governors start their terms with what insiders call the “A team,” and by



**“Federal law prohibits candidates from receiving contributions from corporations. This law has been on the books for more than a century.”**

- Paul Ryan of Common Cause on campaign violations of U.S. Sen. Mike Braun revealed in a FEC audit on Wednesday (see page 7)



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 editor emeritus  
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the end of the typical first term, the top talent moves to more lucrative and influential gigs and are replaced by the "B" and sometimes "C" teams. In Trump's White House, McEntee's appointment was much, much further down the HR alphabet.

**Six days after** Trump lost the election, he fired Defense Sec. Mark Esper, replacing him with Christopher Miller. According to Karl, McEntee also selected Miller's senior advisor, Ret. Army Col. Douglas Macgregor as the White House Personnel Office attempted to invade the Pentagon. McEntee then gave Macgregor a handwritten "to-do list" for the new team at the Pentagon:

- "1. Get us out of Afghanistan.
2. Get us out of Iraq and Syria.
3. Complete the withdrawal from Germany.
4. Get us out of Africa.

"This is what the president wants you to do," McEntee told him. They had until Jan. 20 to complete these withdrawals. If you thought that President Biden's Afghanistan pullout this past summer was fraught with incompetence, think of how this would have gone.

I tell this story as there is a rampant speculation of a Trump comeback in 2024; that the GOP nomination is his for the asking. Despite his scathing assessment of Trump after his second impeachment trial ("There's no question, none, that President Trump is practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of the day"), Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said he would support Trump for president if renominated in 2024, which is a scary, scary notion.

Trump is already forcing McConnell to accept repulsive Senate candidates (Hershel Walker of Georgia acknowledges he played Russian roulette with a live round, and Penn-

sylvania candidate Sean Parnell has denied beating his wife). Now think of the implications of Republicans signing off on a third Trump nomination and potential return to power.

Other Trump insiders are issuing warnings of a second Trump term. Alyssa Farah, who served as the White House's director of strategic communications and assistant to the president in 2020 as well as press secretary for Vice President Mike Pence, describes what she calls the "nightmare scenario" if Trump wins a second term.

"There were things that he wanted to do when he was in power the first time that were well beyond the scope of what the U.S. president should be able to do, but oftentimes it was simply the motivation of hoping to win reelection that kept him from doing things," Farah



told CNN's Jake Tapper. "Whether it's weaponizing the Justice Department against political opponents, whether it's going after the free press, he would certainly be open to using the military for political reasons as well."

**Trump's former** White House press secretary, Stephanie Grisham, told Good Morning America, "I want to just warn people that once he takes office, if he were to win, he doesn't have to worry about reelection anymore. He will be about revenge. He will probably have some pretty draconian policies that go on. There were conversations a lot of times that people would say, 'That'll be the second term. That'll be the second term,' meaning we won't have to worry about, you know, a reelection."

And Fiona Hill, a former national security advisor to Trump, said in another October interview that Trump wanted to "stay in power forever" like Russian President Vladimir Putin and now Chinese President Xi.

"He saw Putin as the kind of [the] epitome of the badass populist, frankly, you know, the kind of person that he wanted to be: Super-rich, super-powerful, no checks and balances, and essentially being able to stay in power forever."

There would be no Dan Coats, Rex Tillerson, John Kelly, and "Mad Dog" Mattis in a second Trump term. There would be the F teamers like McEntee, who introduced in the White House Personnel Office Trump loyalty tests and standards that suggest a tinge of Mao's disastrous Cultural Revolution where youthful fanatics turned on bureaucrats, teachers, former allies and even family members.

**On Jan. 1, McEntee** handed Pence's chief of staff, Marc Short, this rationale for Trump's Jan. 6 coup d'etat attempt:

"Jefferson Used His Position as VP to Win. The Constitution sets precise requirements for the form in which the states are to submit their electoral votes. In 1801, the ballots of all states were in perfect conformity except Georgia's. Georgia's submission dramatically failed to conform to the requirements. VP Jefferson presided over the counting of the ballots even as he was one of the candidates. Had the defective ballots been rejected, Jefferson would have most likely lost the election. Senate tellers told Jefferson in a loud voice that there was a problem with the Georgia ballots. Rather than investigating, Jefferson ignored the problems and announced himself the win-



ner. This proves that the VP has, at a minimum, a substantial discretion to address issues with the electoral process."

This assessment was the bullshit of a lunatic who just happened to be America's "deputy president."

**Pence, Short** and the vice president's chief counsel Greg Jacob, all studied the Electoral College counting constitutional requirements and not only rejected McEntee and attorney John Eastman's coup designs, but they orchestrated and left behind

an emphatic paper trail designed to dissuade others who might seek a similar coup d'etat in the future.

Should Hoosier Republicans running on the ballot in 2024 say they are backing Donald Trump, they're also signing off on Trump's F team, creating perhaps the end of America's fragile experiment in democracy.

For Hoosier Republicans like Eric Holcomb, Todd Rokita, Mike Braun, Suzanne Crouch, Victoria Spartz and Jackie Walorski, there's an easy off ramp: Mike Pence will likely mount a campaign. Hoosier Republicans could have the "favorite son" option.

In the fall of 2015, Republican National Committeeman John Hammond III described the thirst, in some quarters, for an American "strongman."

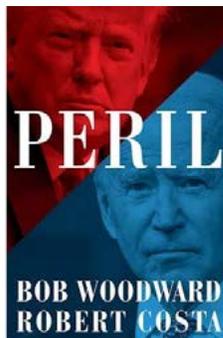
A second Trump term would be that sinister fait accompli. ❖

## Pence and staff after Jan. 6

**Excerpt from the book "Peril" by Bob Woodward and Robert Costa:** Vice President Pence met with Marc Short, Marty Obst and other former aides, including former chiefs of staff Nick Ayres and Josh Pitcock, in Pence's West Wing office on Jan. 13.

Emotions were still frayed. They found it off-putting that Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and Jared Kushner seemed to be ignoring the gravity of what had happened, and of how poorly Trump had treated Pence.

Ayres, who had nearly accepted an offer to be Trump's White House chief of staff in December 2018, had flown to Washington from from his home in Georgia for the meeting. He was angry and unhappy with Pence's response, which he felt was too soft and too ready to move on. He told Pence he was not interested in going over to see President Trump.



Jared Kushner soon popped his head into Pence's office and said he would like to chat with Pence about encouraging the president to issue a statement affirming his commitment to governing in the final days of the administration, and to an orderly transition. "Can you help me convince the president to do this?" Kushner asked.

Sure, Pence said, smiling and nodding. He said he would stop by Kushner's office.

Once Kushner left, Pence turned to his inner circle and said it was nice of Jared to bring him into that process. His aides' faces were blank.

"Is this a joke?" Ayres asked Pence. "Is that what you called us for?"

"Sir," Ayres said, "these people are transactional people. They made it very clear what they think of you. How many calls did they make when you were at the Capitol?"

Obst dismissed Kushner's efforts as "propaganda" and an attempt for Kushner to spiff up his own image following Jan. 6 by seeming to be a broker of a peace with Pence.

"This is about their personal financial situation, this isn't about the country," Obst told his colleagues. He said Kushner was probably worried about being linked to the riot once he rejoined the private sector.

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President Trump's Jan. 13 video: "My fellow Americans, I want to be very clear. I unequivocally condemn the violence that we saw last week. Violence and vandalism have absolutely no place in our country and no place in our movement. Like all of you, I was shocked and deeply saddened by the calamity at the Capitol last week. I want to thank the hundreds of millions of incredible American citizens who have responded to this moment with calm, moderation and grace. We will get through this challenge, just like we always do."

Before the ending, Trump took a shot at "the efforts to censor, cancel and blacklist our fellow citizens."

It seemed to be a wink at his supporters that even though he was reading this stiff presidential statement, he was with them in spirit.

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The whole world was watching on Jan. 6 as mobsters inspired by President Trump and broke into the U.S. Capitol as Vice President Mike Pence, his wife, daughter and congressman brother fled the rioters chanting "Hang

Mike Pence," down a back staircase. Now we learn from ABC Chief Washington correspondent Jonathan Karl that Pence had a White House photographer with him. Karl had wanted to use the pictures in his upcoming book, "Betrayal: The Final Act of the Trump Show," telling Stephen Colbert Monday night, "I got ahold of the photographer, I actually saw all of the photographs. This is the vice president of the United States, and he's like holed up in a basement."



When Karl asked Pence's team for permission to publish the photos in his book, his request was "vehemently denied." Karl told Colbert on "The Late Show" that the pictures should be published, as they were "part of the historical record." He also added that he believes House

Select Committee on the January 6 Attack would have interest in viewing the pictures.

The Jan. 6 select committee is interested in talking to at least five people from Pence's inner circle (CNN). The list could include Keith Kellogg, Greg Jacob, Marc Short, Nick Ayres, Chris Hodgson, Marty Obst and Zach Bauer. ❖

## Biden Infrastructure, from page 1

Walorski said, "As Hoosier families face the devastating ramifications of President Biden's inflation and supply chain crises, President Biden and the Democrats' socialist tax and spend scheme is astonishingly out of touch with the American people. This big-government behemoth was never intended to help working families grow and succeed – it has always been about securing more control over Americans from cradle to grave. As made clear by this radical scheme, Democrats are focused on grabbing power and deepening Americans' dependence on welfare without work."

U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon, R-Newburgh, observed, "While there may be individual pieces of this bill that would meaningfully invest in our nation's infrastructure, this legislation in its totality misses the mark. Only a fraction of funds contained in this bill are actually going toward critical infrastructure, with tens of billions in misaligned spending going towards Democrats' pet priorities. More importantly, this bill is nothing more than a Trojan horse proposal designed to enable the far-left Democrats to ram through their larger \$1.85 trillion bill that is full of job-crushing tax increases and budget-busting spending. These two bills are different sides of the same fiscally irresponsible coin."



And U.S. Rep. Jim Baird, R-Greencastle, said he could not support the infrastructure legislation because he considers it "little more than a Trojan horse" for additional, future Democratic spending proposals.

But Hoosier Republicans didn't balk at receiving a portion of the estimated \$28 billion the Trump administration paid to American farmers from 2017 and 2020 as part of the Market Facilitation Program and Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. Those programs paid billions to farmers for losses driven by tariffs that China placed on agricultural imports from the U.S. in retaliation for Trump's trade war.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act comes on the heels of Biden's American Rescue Plan last spring that will bring some \$4 billion in federal investments to Indiana, including \$1.28 billion for municipalities. ARP funds will also fund Gov. Eric Holcomb's \$500 million READI grants. So Hoosier governments are going to be seeing an unprecedented \$13 billion over the next four or five years.

Recently released state-level data demonstrate that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will deliver an array of upgrades for Indiana, coming some 16 years after the \$3.8 billion Indiana Toll Road lease fueled Gov. Mitch Daniels' 10-year, fully funded road program. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was passed and signed by President Obama in February 2009 during the Great Recession and included \$1.4 billion for Medic-

aid expansion (HIP 2.0), \$1.3 billion for education, \$650 million for roads and bridges, \$400 million for nutrition and another \$600 million for weatherization, water quality, housing, public transit and child care.

## What the IIJA will do

The historic Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is designed to:

- Repair and rebuild Indiana roads and bridges with a focus on climate change mitigation, resilience, equity, and safety for all users, including cyclists and pedestrians. In Indiana there are 1,111 bridges and over 5,478 miles of highway in poor condition. Since 2011, commute times have increased by 4.4% in Indiana and on average, each driver pays \$638 per year in costs due to driving on roads in need of repair. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is the single largest dedicated bridge investment since the construction of the interstate highway system. Based on formula funding alone, Indiana would expect to receive \$6.6 billion for federal-aid highway apportioned programs and \$401 million for bridge replacement and repairs under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act over five years. Indiana can also compete for the \$12.5 billion Bridge Investment Program for economically significant bridges and nearly \$16 billion of national funding in the bill dedicated for major projects that will deliver substantial economic benefits to communities.

- Improve healthy, sustainable transportation options for millions of Americans. Hoosiers who take public transportation spend an extra 88.7% of their time commuting and non-White households are 4.5 times more likely to commute via public transportation. In Indiana, 38% of trains and other transit vehicles are past useful life. Based on formula funding alone, Indiana would expect to receive nearly \$680 million over five years under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to improve public transportation options across the state.

- Build a network of electric vehicle chargers to facilitate long-distance travel and provide convenient charging options. The U.S. market share of plug-in electric vehicle (EV) sales is only one-third the size of the Chinese EV market. The bill invests \$7.5 billion to build out the first-ever national network of EV1. Under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Indiana would expect to receive \$100 million over five years to support the expansion of an EV charging network in the state. Indiana will also have the opportunity to apply for the \$2.5 billion in grant funding dedicated to EV charging in the bill.

- Help connect every American to reliable high-speed internet. Broadband internet is necessary for Americans to do their jobs, to participate equally in school learning, health care, and to stay connected. According to

the White House, 16% of Indiana households do not have an internet subscription, and 3.2% of Hoosiers live in areas where, under the FCC's benchmark, there is no broadband infrastructure. Under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Indiana will receive a minimum allocation of \$100 million to help provide broadband coverage across the state, including providing access to at least 217,000 Hoosiers who currently lack it. And, under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, 1,624,000 or 24% of people in Indiana will be eligible for the Affordability Connectivity Benefit, which will help low-income families afford internet access.

- Prepare more of our infrastructure for the impacts of climate change, cyber attacks, and extreme weather events. From 2010 to 2020, Indiana experienced 34 extreme weather events, costing the state up to \$10 billion in damage. Under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, based on historical formula funding levels, Indiana will expect to receive \$20 million over five years to protect against wildfires and \$20 million to protect against cyber attacks. Hoosiers will also benefit from the bill's historic \$3.5 billion national investment in weatherization which will reduce energy costs for families.

- Deliver clean drinking water to every American and eliminate the nation's lead service lines and pipes. Currently, up to 10 million American households and 400,000 schools and child care centers lack safe drinking water. Under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, based on the traditional state revolving fund formula, Indiana will expect to receive \$751 million over five years to improve water infrastructure across the state and ensure that clean, safe drinking water is a right in all communities.

- Improve our nation's airports. The United States built modern aviation, but our airports lag far behind our competitors. Under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, these values are estimates and may change based on updated factor data each fiscal year. Airports in Indiana would receive approximately \$170 million for infrastructure development for airports over five years.



## Holcomb and Chamber react

Indiana Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb told the NWI Times the federal funds "will be used to continue the state's trajectory of improving our infrastructure, which is the foundation in growing an even stronger economy. Indiana's healthy fiscal position has led to extensive investments in our communities. We have dedicated \$270 million in grants to connect all Hoosiers to broadband access, \$475 million in funding for three infrastructure projects that will be transformational for the state, and an additional \$500 million in the READI program to jump start community investment and collaboration."

The Indiana Chamber of Commerce said the spending is well worth it. "We simply couldn't let our infrastructure further deteriorate and burden business and citizens alike," Indiana Chamber CEO Kevin Brinegar said. "(This) is the type of long-term, needed commitment to improve the state and nation's infrastructure system that we've sought for more than a decade. In fact, it's the largest investment ever in bridges – many of which have been dangerously deteriorating for years – since the interstate highway system was constructed. We thank Indiana Congressmen André Carson and Frank Mrvan for voting for the bill."

The bipartisan National Governors Association gave its blessing. "Governors commend Congress for setting aside partisan differences to pass a bill that works for the American people," said Republican Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, NGA chairman. "States stand ready to immediately put these funds to good use to fix and improve our nation's infrastructure."

### Political impacts

Indiana Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl said the infrastructure measure fulfills President Biden's pledge to work across the aisle to form bipartisan coalitions to solve some of the most pressing problems facing the United States. "Unfortunately, Indiana Republicans always choose extreme partisanship when it matters most over creating a better future for Hoosier families," Schmuhl said. "Democrats look forward to holding Indiana Republicans accountable with every ribbon cutting or photo-op they attend as they take credit for work they did not do. Simply put, they said 'NO' before taking the dough."

Former president Donald J. Trump said in a statement, "Very sad that the RINOs in the House and Senate gave Biden and Democrats a victory on the "Non-Infrastructure" Bill, where only 11% of the money being wasted goes to real infrastructure. How about all of those Republican senators that voted thinking that helping the Democrats is such a wonderful thing to do, so politically correct. They just don't get it!"

A [Washington Post analysis](#) of the assertion that only 11% of the funds will go to traditional infrastructure showed this statement was not accurate. "No matter how you slice it, the claim that the infrastructure bill is only 11% 'real infrastructure' is simply false," the Post analysis explained. "More than one-third of the bill would qualify as infrastructure under the standards used by Trump during his presidency. But many more elements could be considered infrastructure, bringing the percentage as high as 80%."

The most likely political winner is U.S. Rep. Frank Mrvan, whose revamped 1st CD is on an NRCC target list. Other Hoosiers likely to be bolstered would be any incumbent mayor, city councilman, county commissioner and councilman who will have unprecedented amounts of

funds to invest in their communities.

While the Indiana Democratic Party will seek to hold Republicans "accountable" at future ribbon-cuttings, the severe nature of the redrawn congressional and General Assembly maps will likely dampen the impact on the nine members of Congress who opposed the bill.

There could be an opening for Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. and his challenge to U.S. Sen. Todd Young in 2022. McDermott hailed passage of the bill. In August, Young announced he would vote against the bill despite helping to negotiate the final Senate version.

"For the last several months, I've been working diligently with my colleagues toward a bipartisan infrastructure bill to provide crucial funding for our crumbling roads and bridges and to make targeted investments that yield positive long-term results in areas like broadband, ports, and airports," Young said. "As I've said many times, while I'm eager for a bill that makes these investments, I'm also committed to doing so in a fiscally responsible way. Having reviewed the Congressional Budget Office's (CBO) estimated fiscal impact of this legislation as currently constructed,

and frankly still not being comfortable with a number of the Democratic priorities contained in this version, I will vote 'no.'"

Speaking in LaPorte on Wednesday, Young defended his no vote ([NWI Times](#)). "The two were linked together by (House Speaker) Nancy Pelosi," Young said of Biden's Build Back Better plan that is still awaiting votes. "And if I ended up enabling the passage of a human infrastructure bill, the people of Indiana would be really upset with me."

Young said he's confident "the people of Indiana won't support" those programs, and he especially objects to the child tax credit not being linked to a requirement that the child's parents be working to claim the credit.

"It effectively creates a universal basic income and will forever incentivize people to stay out of the labor market, which will be most injurious to people of modest means," Young said.

LaPorte Mayor Tom Dermody, a Republican, said he doesn't care how Young voted, so long as Young works to help his city secure the estimated \$100 million needed to construct an alternative traffic corridor that will get the hundreds of semi-trailer trucks currently driving through downtown each day on a new route around LaPorte.

Young's dilemma – if there is one in what are expected to be big GOP gains in the 2022 mid-terms – is that McDermott will have ample opportunity to say Biden and Democrats are bringing home the bacon. Young will benefit from the timeline. Many of the ensuing projects will not be completed by November 2022. ❖



# Boehnlein to face Moon in Monday's SD46 caucus

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – When the Indiana Senate reconvenes on Tuesday for Organization Day, it will likely include incumbent State Sens. Kevin Boehnlein and Erin Houchin.

Boehnlein is expected to face Floyd County Republican Charlie Moon in Monday's 6 p.m., SD46 caucus to replace retiring State Sen. Ron Grooms, who had announced he wouldn't run again and then quickly retired after the new maps were signed into law. A Facebook live stream of the caucus will be available at [www.facebook.com/indgop](http://www.facebook.com/indgop).



Both Boehnlein and Moon will then be running in different districts in November 2022,

Boehnlein in SD47 against State Sen. Erin Houchin and Moon in HD72 against State Rep. Ed Clere.

The filing deadline is 6 p.m. Friday for the SD46 caucus.

Moon told the News & Tribune last month, "If you backpedal back from when [Grooms] announced his retirement and not seeking reelection, everything has kind of played in place with him coming out and supporting [Boehnlein], and now lo and behold out of the blue he makes it known on Thursday that he's going to vacate his seat a year early. A political game should not be played with the citizens."



**Kevin Boehnlein (left) and Charlie Moon have filed for Monday's SD46 caucus.**

"Boehnlein will win the caucus and he will be an incumbent the next session," said Kevin Kellems, who is a consultant to the Greenville Republican. "So you'll have two incumbent senators running for a new seat. This should be quite a donnybrook. New district, two incumbents. It will come down to grassroots support and issue differentiation."

The Boehnlein/Houchin showdown has been a dilemma for the Senate Majority Caucus, with leadership indicating support for Sen. Houchin.

An Oct. 13 fundraiser for Boehnlein was originally to be co-hosted by Grooms along with Sens. Eric Bassler, Chris Garten, Justin Busch and Houchin. After the new districts, Grooms was the only host.

Kellems wouldn't release Boehnlein's haul from the

fundraiser, but said that "95%" of the funds have come from the district and just 2% from political action committees.

Floyd County Commissioner Shawn Carruthers had also entered the original SD46 primary, but not Monday's caucus at this writing. He has not decided whether he will seek SD47.

## Governor

### Braun blames reporting violations on staff

A Republican senator faces serious allegations that he illegally loaned his campaign millions of dollars from his company ([The Daily Beast](#)). But the senator in question – Republican Mike Braun of Indiana – says he can't fully answer the government's questions because one of his key staffers "vanished." The Daily Beast found him within minutes. On Wednesday morning, the Federal Election Commission released its audit of Braun's campaign committee, alleging a litany of serious financial reporting errors, as well as millions of dollars in allegedly improper loans Braun used to finance his 2018 bid – including \$1.5 million routed from the candidate's former company. However, the campaign claims it cannot fully comply because its former treasurer "vanished," and they have not been able to locate him in three years. But the campaign must not be looking very hard. It only took The Daily Beast minutes to identify and locate the man. His mother said in a phone call that she would pass along a request for comment. The campaign's Oct. 4 response to the audit explains that the treasurer in question, Travis Kabrick, "was, at least ostensibly, an experienced FEC compliance professional who had worked for many federal candidate committees over many years." The auditors found that Braun's reports show more than \$8.5 million in "apparent prohibited loans" to his 2018 campaign. That includes \$7 million in direct loans and lines of credit—with no collateral—"that did not appear to be made in the ordinary course of business." The FEC also "identified two checks from one corporation totaling \$1,500,000 that were reported as loans." But that's just the beginning. The report cites an array of violations, including millions of dollars in misreported contributions and disbursements, as well as reporting errors for another nearly \$2 million in donations.

## U.S. Senate

### Young calls for 'lower temperature'

U.S. Sen. Todd Young says the U.S. needs to lower the temperature of its political debates. In an address to the Economic Club of Indiana, Young warned the American tradition of self-government is at risk from two overlapping trends (Berman, WIBC). People don't interact with their communities as much, a development which has been dubbed the "bowling alone" phenomenon.

Young says that feeling of isolation has mixed with other forces – globalization, the tech revolution, the rise of China, the declining rural population – to leave many parts of the country feeling resentful of what they view as a “rigged” system. And Young warns that resentment has curdled into an increased political “tribalism,” in which both parties have given up on even trying to listen or appeal to voters on the other side. “Let’s shout less and listen more, to all voices, even those we disagree with,” Young said. The Republican senator steered clear of any mention of President Biden or former president Donald Trump, but he included an unmistakable reference to Trump’s campaign slogan. “Let’s just place more faith in one another, not one man or woman,” Young said. “It’s our responsibility to make America whole again.” In a brief audience Q&A after his address, a questioner identifying himself as a longtime Republican asked Young when the party will distance itself from Trump’s unsupported insistence that the 2020 election was stolen. “I don’t” support that claim, Young said, then paused for several seconds before adding, “I don’t know” whether other Republicans will follow suit.

### McDermott backs marijuana reforms

Democrat Thomas McDermott Jr., said he smoked marijuana at a Grateful Dead Concert at Wrigley Field in Chicago this past summer and called for reforms during his Left of Center podcast on Friday (Howey Politics Indiana). Illinois is one of 18 states that has legalized recreational use while another 13 have decriminalized cannabis. It’s still illegal in any form in Indiana. On his Left Of Center podcast, Mayor McDermott said, “We were in Chicago. I went to a Grateful Dead show at Wrigley. It was a weird sensation for me to be by the Chicago Cubs dugout and everyone is smoking weed.” Asked by host Kevin Smith if he partook, McDermott said, “Yeah, I did. I was at a Grateful Dead show. I was in Chicago where it’s legal. I was there both nights. I had a ride there and from. I was in a state where it’s legal. I did. What’s the big deal? If it’s somewhere where it’s legal, why not? It’s the same thing as alcohol. I approach it the same way.” A generation ago, Bill Clinton said he smoked marijuana, but didn’t inhale. Evan Bayh said he did ... once. But in recent years a parade of conservatives ranging from Justice Clarence Thomas to Sarah Palin have urged cannabis reform. McDermott, who is seeking to challenge U.S. Sen. Todd Young, added, “If I’m elected to the U.S. Senate, I’m going to vote to decriminalize. I’m going to vote to legalize.” McDermott asked, “Is it a big deal that I admitted to smoking marijuana? It was a perfect situation.”

### Staterwides

#### Secretary of state: Wells eyes run

Indiana Democrats have struggled to find candidates interested in running for Secretary of State in 2022, but a source familiar tells Importantville that Destiny Scott

Wells – an Army Reserve lieutenant colonel focused on military intelligence, and currently adjunct faculty with the Army Command and General Staff College – could launch her campaign next month when she leaves active duty (Wren, Importantville). Wells was associate corporation counsel for the city of Indianapolis and Marion County and Indiana deputy attorney general. She serves as Indiana Democratic Party’s deputy chair for coalitions and expansion.

### General Assembly

#### SD26: Lanane to retire

State Sen. Tim Lanane announced he will not seek a seventh term. He was first elected to represent Anderson and Madison County in 1998 and ran successfully five times (de la Bastide, Anderson Herald Bulletin). Lanane said he made the decision not to seek a seventh term earlier this year but didn’t want to announce his intentions until after the new district maps were completed following the 2020 U.S. census. “It has been an honor



**State Sen. Mike Gaskill won’t be facing State Sen. Tim Lanane in the new SD26.**

to have served the citizens of District 25 since 1998, but I feel it is time to thank them for their confidence and allow a new person to step into that role,” he said. Lanane served as the Democratic Party minority leader in the Indiana

Senate from 2012 through 2020 and was the ranking minority member on several Senate committees including elections, agriculture, the judiciary and fiscal policy. He authored bills to establish coach’s training to protect student athletes against concussions, guarding consumers from predatory lending practices, promoting public education and creating jobs at the Hoosier Park Racing & Casino. Lanane has been an advocate of creating an independent commission to draw the district boundaries for the legislative and Congressional districts. This week he announced that he intends to introduce legislation again for the creation of an independent redistricting commission. “I look forward to finishing out the term next year and hope the General Assembly will seriously take its duty to find ways to move Indiana forward,” Lanane said. The new district maps approved by the Republican controlled legislature changed District 25 to include all of Madison County and two townships in Hamilton County. The map placed Lanane in the same district as Republican incumbent Mike Gaskill.

**SD31: Vare to seek Dem nomination**

Fishers Councilwoman Jocelyn Vare announced she will seek SD31. She formed an exploratory committee on Oct. 26. "I am so excited to announce my campaign for Indiana Senate District 31. Serving the people of Fishers as a city councilor has been the highest honor for me, and I look forward to the opportunity to take the same desire for transparency to the Statehouse," Vare said on Twitter. Vare was the first Democrat ever to be elected to the Fishers City Council. "Since becoming an at-large member of the Fishers City Council, I've worked to serve residents, change the status quo and make government accountable to the people it's meant to serve," she said. "I'm excited to continue fighting for government transparency, civic participation, and the issues that will elevate your community, neighborhood, and household."



**HD57: Haggard seeks open seat**

Lt. Col. Craig "Merle" Haggard (Retired) announced his candidacy for the newly formed HD57. Republican State Rep. Sean Eberhart occupies the current HD57 but he has been drawn into HD47, represented by State Rep. John Young of Franklin. Haggard, a lifelong resident of Mooresville, resides inside the district which encompasses parts of Morgan, Hendricks, and Johnson counties. "I care about my neighbors, I care about my community, and I care about the future of our state and our country. As someone who has dedicated himself to service, it is my honor to seek the support of voters to serve in the Indiana General Assembly," said Haggard. "Central Indiana has become a critical part of our state's economy and we have been fortunate to become a place where businesses want to locate and grow and where families want to live and prosper. I look forward to being an advocate for policies which help continue that record of success." Learn more about Lt Col Craig "Merle" Haggard at <https://Hoosiers-ForHaggard.com>.

**HD72: Clere to seek reelection**

Indiana State Rep. Ed Clere will be running next year for his eighth term representing District 72. Clere, R-New Albany, said that he is not yet focused on the primary election that is six months away but rather he is continuing his work to prepare for the House session that will begin in January (News & Tribune). "I'm working hard to prepare for that, but I hope to earn the opportunity to continue to serve the people of my district," Clere said. In his time serving as representative Clere's focuses have been on health, education and fiscal matters. He has served on and chaired numerous committees, including the Medicaid Advisory Committee, Ways and Means Committee and Education Committee. Floyd County Republican Charlie Moon has filed to challenge Clere in the primary.

**HD73: Davisson sworn in**

State Rep.-elect J. Michael Davisson (R-Salem) took the oath of office Monday to serve as state representative for HD73. Indiana Supreme Court Chief Justice



Loretta H. Rush administered the oath in the House Chamber of the Statehouse during a formal swearing-in ceremony. Davisson will serve the remaining

term of his late father, former State Rep. Steve Davisson of Salem, who passed away in September. "It's an honor and privilege to have the opportunity to serve our community at the Statehouse and to carry on the legacy and work of my father," Davisson said. "I strongly believe in, and will always advocate for, a limited government that lives within its means – just as Hoosiers do every day." Davisson is a lifelong resident of Salem. He currently operates a family-owned pharmacy in Salem.

**Local**

**Macer to seek township post**

Former state representative Karlee Macer announced she is seeking the Democratic nomination to serve as the next Wayne Township Trustee in the 2022.

**Presidential**

**Biden approval at 38%**

A year before the 2022 midterm elections, Republicans hold a clear lead on the congressional ballot as President Joe Biden's approval rating sinks to a new low of 38%. Vice President Kamala Harris's approval is 28%. A USA TODAY/Suffolk University Poll, taken Wednesday through Friday, found that Biden's support cratered among the independent voters who delivered his margin of victory over President Donald Trump one year ago. Nearly two-thirds of Americans, 64%, say they don't want Biden to run for a second term in 2024. That includes 28% of Democrats. Opposition to Trump running for another term in 2024 stands at 58%, including 24% of Republicans.

**Christie jabs at Trump**

Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, lacing up for a possible presidential run in 2024, told "Axios on HBO" he won't back down from a fight with former President Donald Trump, taunting his longtime friend for losing the last election. Trump had said that when Christie left office, he had a 9% approval rating. "When I ran for reelection in 2013, I got 60% of the vote. When he ran for reelection, he lost to Joe Biden," Christie said. "I'm happy to have that comparison stand up, because that's the one that really matters." ❖

# READI grants are already a success

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – Last month, the Indiana Economic Development Corporation made public all 17 regional proposals for the state’s READI Grant program. Since the program was announced, I’ve been dreading this date primarily because I was confident the program would fall short of even modest expectations.



The program was hurried through the General Assembly, and the time frame for this type of process was extremely short, just a few months. I couldn’t have been more mistaken.

I have now read all 17 proposals, covering all of Indiana’s 92 counties. It is a monumental achievement that 16 of these proposals would’ve been competitive for the Regional Cities Initiative from 2015. Only one proposal failed to lay out the details asked in the guidelines. Of course, that doesn’t mean all 16 should receive funding, simply that the selection committee faces a tough challenge in selecting the nine regions to fund.

It isn’t surprising that the three areas from the Regional Cities Initiative provided very strong proposals, or that the weakest one came from the same region with the worst Regional Cities proposal. Still, there were a number of surprising developments. The Indianapolis Metro region divided itself into four different regions, which allowed for more focus on particulars of each plan. Also, several cities in four counties aligned themselves with different groups. Some of this makes sense, given the geography of each of these counties.

The biggest improvement I saw from 2015 was the proposal by the West Central Region surrounding Terre Haute. The plan was far more developed than the region’s Regional Cities proposal, and did a better job explaining how the projects complemented one another. I’m impressed that the region’s largest private and public university are actively committing resources to the plan.

**The region around Kokomo**, stretching across six counties from Fulton to Clinton, developed a plan with detailed, project-by-project cost and investment leverage information. It also connected previous investments to this READI grant very clearly. Importantly, it identified long-term challenges and opportunities with great clarity.

The third big surprise was the proposal from the five-county region north of Louisville. In 2015, this region had a good plan that failed to be considered for Regional Cities money because of political fractiousness in one participating county. Since then, it has detailed a plan that should finally leverage the great potential southern Indiana has being adjacent to rapidly growing Louisville. It is clear

that since 2015, this region’s leaders have been actively and effectively working to prepare for this type of opportunity.

I don’t have enough space to do these proposals justice, but I would encourage readers to visit the [IEDC website](#) to read about them. It is worth acknowledging that much of the success of this program belongs to staff at the IEDC. In just a few months, they laid out a very straightforward path for regions to follow. They also did some friendly haranguing and extended the deadline a few weeks. This is as fair and transparent a process for state funding as I have ever seen.

**In general, the only** significant complaint I have is that most regions used unreliable housing data or misinterpreted the correct data.

It is also important to explain why an economist with a strong free-market focus supports this kind of effort. The READI Grant follows the very successful Regional Cities program of the Pence Administration, which itself was built from the Stellar Communities program started in the Daniels Administration. All of these state government programs ask communities to do something very basic and useful – identify what sort of infrastructure your citizens wish to see built, and prioritize these projects based on cost and need.

Often this happens through normal healthy politics; in fact, that is why the first few Stellar Communities won. Where Stellar Communities made a real difference is in its impacts on places that weren’t as effective at identifying problems and engaging with citizens. Several dozen Hoosier cities are today better off just for having attempted to win the Stellar Communities funding.

The expanded focus of Regional Cities demanded even more of communities around the state. Not only did counties, cities and towns need a transparent process of local engagement, but they also had to work with a broader region. Neighboring jurisdictions then act as an informal peer review for the design of spending priorities ranging from local trails or parks to large transportation infrastructure projects.

**All this work makes** political leaders confront tough questions about who benefits from the spending, where the funds might come from, and most importantly, what alternative uses might be better. This is the anti-thesis of the type of central planning us free-market types so rightly detest. Stellar Communities, Regional Cities and the READI Grant use state tax dollars to improve local governance. These are pragmatic, locally focused and process-oriented in the way James Madison envisioned federalism to work.

Make no mistake, the READI Grant program is not a panacea. Every region created in this process suffers from educational attainment levels markedly lower than the national average. That is Indiana’s fundamental economic problem, and it needs much more than quality of place improvements to remedy.

Ultimately, for regions, the benefit of the READI

Grant is the process, not the financial awards. Regions with good plans will eventually find resources for the work they need. Those with weaker plans should use this as an opportunity for more fundamental self-evaluation. Those that did so after losing bids in the 2015 Regional Cities Initiative offer the best example.

**Still, the widespread** response by Indiana's regions to the 2021 READI Grant program represents a remarkable policy achievement. Gov. Holcomb and the leadership of the General Assembly who worked hard to

pass this legislation should be rightfully pleased at this development. Like the Stellar Communities and Regional Cities Initiative, the READI Grants will gather national attention as thoughtful, low-cost efforts to grow the Indiana economy and strengthen local governments. ❖

**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.**

## House progressives and infrastructure

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Progressive Democrats in Washington, thinking they were maneuvering from a position of strength, insisted on including just about everything but the kitchen sink before permitting votes on historic infrastructure and social safety net legislation.



The result was passage of nothing as President Biden's approval ratings plummeted and Democrats lost the Virginia governor race and almost blew the "sure thing" contest in New Jersey. If they actually had promised new kitchen sinks, they now would be blaming Sen. Joe Manchin for sinking the sinks.

Failure to deliver on infrastructure and Build Back Better legislation certainly wasn't the sole reason Democrats lost all in Virginia, where Biden had won by 10 percentage points, and struggled in New Jersey, where the Democratic governor was expected to win easily. But it certainly was a key factor.

Stubborn refusal of House progressives to pass the infrastructure bill, holding it hostage in maneuvering for more expenditures for the social legislation, was the dumbest political move since an unhinged and vindictive Donald Trump cost Republicans two Senate seats in Georgia and control of the Senate. Somehow, progressives thought holding up highly popular infrastructure improvements would force Manchin and other moderates to go along with more expenditures and programs in the social legislation. How did that work?

**The House could have** approved the infrastructure bill, already approved in the Senate, two months ago. But House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who understood political need to show Democrats could get something done, couldn't persuade progressives to go along. And so, Democrats continued in their circular firing squad – progressives shooting at moderates for rejecting needed

programs, moderates firing back at progressives for going too far and risking inflation. Republicans just sat back and watched and won.

To the public, it seemed as though the fight was over how many trillions to spend, the price tag, rather than over what proposed programs actually would do. Virginia and New Jersey voters, and people elsewhere in the country, were tired of all the fighting and disappointed at lack of accomplishments.

One of the reasons a newly elected president's party usually loses seats in the next midterm congressional voting is that expectations for a new president are unrealistically high and there is disappointment over failure to achieve what proves to be impossible. Midterms loom. Virginia and New Jersey gave a preview.

**Progressives set very high goals.** Nothing wrong with that. So did Biden. But Biden has been more willing to compromise to get something done. In a direct appeal to House Democrats before his European trip, Biden urged support for a compromise social safety net proposal that he said would get the needed 50 Senate votes. He gave the assurances after long discussions with Manchin.

"I don't think it's hyperbole to say that the House and Senate and my presidency will be determined by what happens in the next week," Biden warned. But progressives, wanting more, would not provide the votes to enable Biden to get a victory with passage of the infrastructure bill. The rejection of the president's plea certainly had impact on what happened in Virginia and New Jersey.

After the Democratic election defeats, President Biden said passage should have come before the election and that "maybe" it would have staved off the narrow defeat of Terry McAuliffe in Virginia. Maybe campaigning on Democrats already providing road, rail, airport, broadband and environmental projects and all the jobs that means would have been better than defending seeming inability to govern.

After losing House seats in 2020 and having only a tie in Senate membership, Democrats lacked the strength to pass everything but the kitchen sink. Still, they already could have passed a lot more than nothing on their key proposals. ❖

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

# Inflation is subject to inflation

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – In September 2021, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 5.4% above the level of prices in the same month a year earlier. The media declared an economic avalanche.



That September figure was indicative of what's been going on since the COVID virus receded from the fear centers of many brains. The September 2021 figure was abnormally high; not once in the preceding 10 years had the September index exceeded 2.3% on a year-over-year basis.

Such a high figure does not mean the prices of what you buy went up by 5.4% or will go up by that amount in the near future.

Likewise, the prices of individual CPI components may be rising or falling; they do not move in lockstep.

Take a trip with me to the grocery. Good bread (not that paste substitute for real bread) increased in price by 2.8%. The peanut butter we'll buy carries a price 6.2% above the year earlier figure. But both the bread and the spread saw increases that were 2% lower than the increases of 2020.

If we add some roasted coffee to our shopping cart, the prices are 4.3% higher than a year ago. But knowing you, let's add some beer to our purchases; the price are up 3.3%. Yes, I do see the whiskey section, and there the prices have advanced by just 1.4%. Let's not forget the pet food. Those vital vittles for Petals and Bluster are priced 1.6% higher now, after falling in 2020 by 0.8%.

On the way back, we'll stop for some gas where the price is up a whopping 43% but remember those gas prices fell by 16% last year. The tires being advertised now went up by 8.3% after falling a bit (0.6%) in 2020. Same with insurance on your car. It's up 4.8% this year after dropping 5% a year ago.

**When we get back to** the house, I'll bet my wife will be at her sewing machine working on some beautiful fabric; those prices fell this year by 10%. I didn't buy a new TV this year while prices have been rising by nearly 13%, but I did buy one last year when prices fell by 11%.

Of course, 2020 was far from a "normal" year. With incredible demands on the health industries, and historically high injections of money from the federal government, prices had less than their usual significance. Thus, it is equally hard to interpret 2021 price changes when prescription drug prices fell by 1.6%, dental services prices rose 2.3%; hospital services up 3.2% and physicians' services by 3.8%.

Inflation is dependent on what and when we buy in response to price changes. The danger is consumers and firms insisting on maintaining past habits. Then engaging in panic buying, a communicable economic disease, which does raise prices. ❖

**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).**

# The real world and the 'Patriot Purge'

By **KELLY HAWES**  
CNHI State Bureau

ANDERSON – Appearing on "Fox & Friends," Tucker Carlson defended his three-part documentary as "rock-solid factually." Fellow Fox News personality Geraldo Rivera would beg to differ.



"There are some things that you say that are more inflammatory and outrageous and uncorroborated," he told The New York Times. "And I worry that – and I'm probably going to get in trouble for this – but I'm wondering how much is done to provoke, rather than illuminate."

He's not alone. Even before the series "Patriot Purge" began to air, Jonathan Greenblatt, chief executive officer of the Anti-Defamation League, wrote to Fox News expressing "deep alarm."

"Let's call this what it is," he wrote, "an abject, indisputable lie and a blatant attempt to rewrite history. As an organization committed to fighting antisemitism and all forms of hate, we remain deeply concerned that the false narrative and wild conspiracy theories presented by Carlson will sow further division and have the potential to animate violence."

It's worth mentioning that Carlson shares a writing credit on the series with Scooter Downey, director of a film called "Hoaxed: Everything They Told You Is a Lie." That film, which takes aim at the alleged lies of the mainstream media, was produced by Michael Cernovich, one of the guys peddling the tale that Hillary Clinton and other Democrats were running a child sex ring out of the basement of a pizza restaurant in Washington, D.C.

**The first installment** of Carlson's documentary series suggests the violence of Jan. 6 was driven by left-wing instigators disguised as supporters of Donald Trump. The siege on the Capitol, it says, might have been orches-

trated by antifa and the FBI.

"The very same corrupt interests in Washington that pushed the Iraq War under false pretenses are now pushing the lie of a domestic white terror," Carlson says in the film. "They are tying white nationalist terrorism to Trump voters. They're tying Jan. 6 to 9/11. They're tying millions of law-abiding Americans to al-Qaida and ISIS. Jan. 6 is being used as a pretext to strip millions of Americans – disfavored Americans – of their core constitutional rights, and to defame them as domestic terrorists."

**For the record, the** website PolitiFact rates Carlson's claim "pants on fire."

Jason Stanley, a philosophy professor at Yale University, examines the series in an essay for Rolling Stone magazine. Stanley, author of a book titled "How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them," compares the documentary to the work of Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels.

"Key to fascist propaganda is an overwhelming sense of danger, one that threatens to make the country's dominant majority into a powerless and endangered minority,"

Stanley writes. "Trump loyalists in this series appear only as targeted victims, at existential peril, without representation in any branch of government or media."

**Every propaganda film** needs a martyr, Stanley says, and this one has Ashli Babbitt, the woman who was shot trying to force her way into the House chamber. She's portrayed as an innocent victim killed in a noble attempt to defeat the evil liberals seeking to subvert the will of the people. In this way, the world depicted in the documentary is upside down. Those who support the authoritarian cult of the former president are patriots, and those who stand for fair elections are fascists.

Stanley doesn't entirely disagree with Carlson. "I share his view that ordinary fellow citizens who fall under the sway of propaganda should not be demonized," he writes.

The real blame, Stanley says, should fall on Donald Trump and his enablers, people like Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley. Stanley also lays blame on the media propagandists who helped to fire up the mob.

People like Tucker Carlson. ❖

## Modern collegiate sports is about money

By **DAVE KITCHELL**

LOGANSPORT – Something that happened at the University of Chicago in 1939 is relevant to what's going to be happening at many universities and at the Indianapolis-based NCAA in the very near future.



The president of U of C decided big-time college football didn't fit with the mission of the university. Eventually, Division 1 football, a Big Ten champion sport, was dropped. By 1946, U of C did something that would be unheard of today – it withdrew from the Big Ten.

Fast forward 75 years to the present. We're now in a time when college athletes can market their likenesses for profit. That runs counter to a time a generation ago when Peru Mr. Basketball Kyle Macy came under fire for posters in Kentucky with his name on them. Had Macy been a Kentucky player today, he could pocket plenty in promotional income.

**But more to the point,** Oklahoma and Texas joining the Southeastern Conference further underscores the notion that college sports really is all about money. How many teams can share bowl revenue? How many major markets will be watching conference games? How many bowl invitations will be automatic revenue? How much will

that bring in on the conference's television network? No one will ask "What will that do for my son's math class?" or "What will that do to promote equal opportunity for my daughter in a male-dominated field?"

Add in the growing specter of professional gambling revenue and state reliance on that income and you have the perfect excuse for why Chicago left the big time of college athletics for the big time of academics. If more schools had, we might be a better country today.

**The late Bob Kreibel,** long a columnist for the Lafayette Journal & Courier, once wrote about a former Purdue professor who grew weary of the emphasis on college football at Purdue and all the bad connotations it brought with it. The professor announced he was resigning his position for a more pristine academic environment that would ignore the enticements of the almighty dollar in college athletics.

Where'd he go, you ask? The University of Notre Dame.

One wonders if that professor rolled over in his grave when the Irish signed a long-term agreement with NBC Sports to broadcast all its home games, even when the Irish have losing seasons.

Like it or not, the almighty dollar in college sports is becoming even mightier, and no one – not even the NCAA – is able to stop feeding the beast. As long as university presidents accept the revenue with one hand and dictate academic policy with the other, don't expect anything to change. A fun but unfortunate fact to know is that in more than 40 states, a college coach is the highest-paid state employee – not a university president, the chief medical officer for the state or the governor. That alone puts our American priorities into perspective.

Think the Texas and Oklahoma inclusion in a conference that already has Florida, Alabama and Georgia won't affect us here in Indiana? Think again. With the probably dissolution of the Big 12, expect West Virginia and Kansas or Kansas State to be petitioning the Big Ten (which already has 14 teams) soon.

**As the late Bear Bryant** opined when someone scoffed at the importance of math compared to football

at Alabama, when was the last time anyone saw 100,000 people in a math class?

We're destined for a 21st century in which collegiate sports become the tail that wags the dog of major colleges and universities more than ever. ❖

**Kitchell is the former mayor of Logansport.**

# The fallout from Gov. Sununu's choice

By KYLE KONDIK

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – Republicans basking in the afterglow of their strong election showings last week got a rare piece of bad political news Tuesday morning, when Gov. Chris Sununu (R-NH) -- arguably the party's most important Senate recruit -- surprisingly decided not to challenge first-term Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-NH) in next year's Senate election.

WMUR reported later on Tuesday that national Republicans' likely second choice for the nomination, former Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), also was not going to run. Ayotte lost to Hassan by just 1,017 votes in 2016. Additionally, former Massachusetts Sen. Scott Brown (R) has also indicated he isn't likely to run. Brown, who credibly challenged Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) in 2014 after losing his reelection bid to now-Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) in 2012, said his family's focus is on the congressional bid of his wife, Gail Huff Brown (R), who is one of several contenders for the Republican nomination in the state's 1st Congressional District.

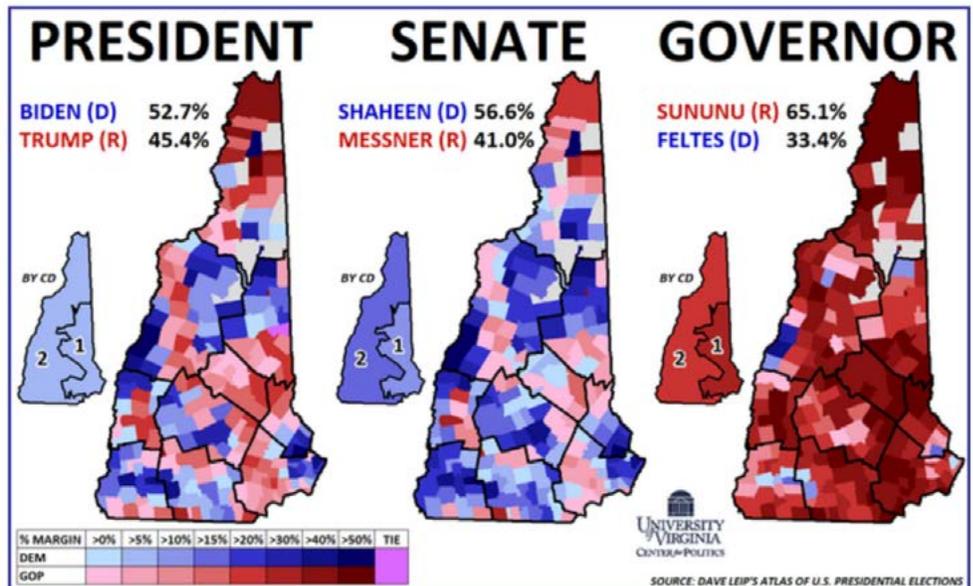
As of now, the only prominent Hassan challenger is retired Army Brig. Gen. Donald Bolduc (R), who lost a primary for the GOP Senate nomination in 2020. We do not believe national Republicans view him as a top-tier challenger.

**Sununu's surprise** announcement is a reminder that we shouldn't assume someone is running for an office until that person actually clearly indicates that he or she is in fact running. We had telegraphed for months our intention to move our rating in New Hampshire from Leans Democratic to Toss-up if Sununu entered the race, but we were waiting for an announcement. That's why

we kept New Hampshire at Leans Democratic last week even while we moved 3 other Democratic-held Senate seats, those in Arizona, Georgia, and Nevada, to Toss-up. With Sununu out, and with Ayotte and Brown remaining on the sidelines, we are going to keep New Hampshire at Leans Democratic for now. Candidate quality is likely more important for Republicans in the Granite State than it is in Arizona, Georgia, and Nevada simply because New Hampshire is a more Democratic state at the federal level: Joe Biden won the state by 7 points in 2020, while he only won the other 3 states by 0.3, 0.2, and 2.4 points, respectively. However, the political environment next year could be

bad enough for Democrats that it may not take a Sununu-level challenger to beat Hassan.

**There is still a** ton of time for more candidates to emerge in the Granite State. The candidate filing deadline is not until next June in advance of a Sept. 13 primary -- one of the latest in the nation. We can't rule out the possibility that one of the heavy hitters mentioned above (Sununu, Ayotte, or Brown) will change their minds and



decide to run after all, although because Sununu is running for reelection as governor we have to assume he has fully closed the door on a Senate bid.

Meanwhile, a bad development for the National Republican Senatorial Committee is a good development

for the Republican Governors Association. Sununu's decision to run for another term likely takes that race off the board for next year, and we're moving the New Hampshire gubernatorial race from Leans Republican to Safe Republican. While Sununu's approval rating isn't as strong lately as it's been previously, he ran way ahead of Donald Trump last year and is likely strong enough to dissuade a credible Democratic challenge.

We'll revisit this rating if a prominent Democratic challenger emerges. One person to watch in New Hampshire is Rep. Chris Pappas (D, NH-1). New Hampshire Republicans appear likely to make his swing district less Democratic, perhaps turning it into a Trump-won seat -- which would make him incredibly vulnerable next year. Perhaps that could push him into running for a different office, including governor.

Meanwhile, Map 1 is also a reminder that New Hampshire is a state where voters still can split their tickets, and the state has frequently proven to be swingy historically. Hassan is still vulnerable next year, but she's one of the few Democrats who has seen her prospects for next year actually improve in recent days.

## Redistricting updates

Though the Crystal Ball's attention over the last few weeks was mainly on the hotly-contested gubernatorial race in our home state, we have also been keeping tabs on the redistricting situation around the country. With Virginia's contest settled, we thought we'd take a look at states that have enacted new plans.

It may be hard to believe, but there is now less than a year to go until the 2022 midterms (Election Day next year is Nov. 8). Still, only about a dozen states have completed the redistricting process -- and in some cases (like Alabama and North Carolina), there is at least some chance litigation may further alter the shapes of the newly enacted districts. While we already covered some states that passed new plans (Colorado, for instance), we'll take a trip across the country to see how redistricting has played out in a handful of states.

One note: While Illinois's Democratic-controlled legislature has passed a gerrymander designed to elect a 14-3 Democratic delegation, Gov. J.B. Pritzker (D-IL) had not yet signed it into law as of this writing. So we'll hold off on a deeper analysis until he does. Idaho and Montana, two Republican states that employ non-partisan commissions, are also in the final stages of their redistricting process -- we'll likely have more to say on those states soon.

## Iowa

Since the 1980 round of redistricting, Iowa's congressional districts have been drawn by staffers of its nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency. Though the legislature is not obligated to accept the LSA's recommendations, lawmakers have nonetheless signed off on its plans. Still, with Republicans in full control of state government

for the first time in decades, it seemed that the tradition of deference to the LSA would be put to the test -- under Iowa law, if legislators rejected 2 LSA plans, they'd be free to draft their own proposals.

For a time, it seemed like the legislature would indeed end up snubbing the LSA. In mid-September, the LSA's initial redistricting plan reconfigured the current map, that features 4 Trump-won seats, to the benefit of Democrats: it turned Rep. Cindy Axne's (D, IA-3) Des Moines area seat into a narrow Biden district (Trump barely won the current version), while creating a new blue-leaning seat in eastern Iowa. Legislators voted down the plan, although they seemed to complain most, at least in public, that the state legislative maps double-bunked too many incumbents.

A few weeks later, the LSA released its second draft. This time, the status quo was essentially preserved: while IA-4, anchored in the rural northwestern part of the state, was kept as a deeply GOP-leaning seat, the other 3 districts would have favored Trump by lesser margins. The second plan passed the legislature and was signed into law by Gov. Kim Reynolds (R-IA).

Though the newly enacted plan is basically similar to last decade's plan, there are some differences. First, at a purely cosmetic standpoint, the numbering of the two eastern districts is swapped. The new IA-1 includes Iowa's portion of the Quad Cities, while IA-2 is situated in the northeastern corner of the state -- though the last two decades marked a departure from this, the new map marks something of a return to the map that was in place until the 2000 census.

At a more logistical level, though first-term Republican Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks' home county, Wapello, was moved into Axne's IA-3, she'll be running for reelection in the new IA-1. Geographically, IA-1 has more in common with her current IA-2 -- and it is slightly more Republican than IA-3. Miller-Meeks' move is not without precedent: since the LSA doesn't take incumbent residences into consideration, some members have had to similarly adjust in previous cycles.

We'd rate IA-1 as Likely Republican and IA-3 as a Toss-up. While Democrats seem to be excited about their candidate in IA-2, state Sen. Liz Mathis, we'd rate Rep. Ashley Hinson (R, IA-1) as a favorite, and would call that contest Likely Republican. Finally, in IA-4, there is little question that Rep. Randy Feenstra (R, IA-4) will secure a second term.

Though Republicans could well sweep the delegation on this functionally minimal-change map, this plan also leaves them room to fall. In a blue, or even neutral, cycle and if Democrats are competitive statewide, they could limit Republicans to just IA-4. This was the case in 2018: the Democratic nominee for governor, Fred Hubbell, took 47.5% statewide but carried 3 districts. The congressional split mirrored that breakdown, and the new plan retains 3 Hubbell-won districts.. ❖

**John Krull, Statehouse File:** Shock of shocks—Democrats finally demonstrated they could learn something. After months of wrangling, they passed a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill that will improve roads and bridges, expand broadband internet access and expand economic and other opportunities for every part of the country. It is a measure Democrats should have pushed through back in the early days of summer. Instead, they dithered, dallied and debated while the country watched and seethed. Clearly, the party needed a spanking to regain its focus. That's what Democrats received. After experiencing a pasting at the polls on Nov. 3 — where they found they'd managed to drop more than 10 percentage in public support in Virginia and 15 in New Jersey — the party of Jefferson and Jackson decided to re-engage with reality. At least part of the reason voters punished the party was that Democrats had broken what amounted to a promise to the public. That promise wasn't to provide a sweeping social agenda. It's possible that Americans will support such a broad program, but that wasn't what Democrats campaigned on. Because they didn't, they can't claim to have a mandate to enact such an overarching plan. This has long been a problem and a weakness for Democrats. They somehow seem to think that explaining why their ideas are good—that doing the hard work of persuading people—is somehow beneath them. Republicans operate under no such illusions. If U.S. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky, had a set of ideas to sell that were as politically attractive as building better roads and bridges in many American communities and improving internet access, he wouldn't have labeled it as a generic "infrastructure" plan. One with a \$1 trillion price tag, at that. No, McConnell likely would have taken the most popular parts of the plan and forced individual ballots on each. That way, he would have forced his opponents either to cast a vote in opposition to something that opponent's constituents really want, or he would have received that opponent's capitulation and support. Either way, McConnell — and the Republicans — win. Democrats don't think or operate that way. ❖



**James Briggs, IndyStar:** Todd Rokita is in the news a lot — for reasons ranging from issuing scam alerts to banning pundit Abdul-Hakim Shabazz from a press conference. Making headlines isn't just a byproduct of being Indiana attorney general. It is a lucrative perk — far more valuable than the \$107,000 salary — for politicians who want to use the office as a stepping stone to some other job. Rokita, a Republican and former congressman, is almost certainly going to run for either governor or U.S. senator in 2024, depending on how those races shake out. In the meantime, his day job is giving him a level of exposure that most other people could only get by burning through millions of dollars in campaign contributions. Rokita doesn't want you to miss any of those headlines

about him, so his office sends out a newsletter, called the Rokita Review, which recaps recent activities. The latest edition of the Rokita Review covers some normal attorney general stuff: The office alerted nurses to a scam threat; Rokita appeared at an event to raise awareness for unclaimed property that belongs to Indiana residents; and he filed a lawsuit against an Indiana company accused of giving a domestic platform to overseas robocallers. But the Rokita Review also makes clear how Rokita is using his platform to pursue a relentless agenda of partisan politics, which doesn't have much to do with his actual job, including constant criticism of President Joe Biden. The newsletter, for example, included a tweet where Rokita lamented that "while Biden spent his weekend biking, the nation continued to suffer from a disgraceful Afghanistan withdrawal, wide-open borders, an insane vaccine mandate, inflation & his support of a sham voting rights bill." Rokita also spends a lot of time leading — as in, leading Indiana into culture wars. Rokita "led an 18-state amicus brief supporting the Texas law, which prohibits providers from performing abortions once they can detect a fetal heartbeat" and he is "leading a 17-state effort to deter the Biden administration from threatening parents who express their views to school officials on issues regarding their children's education," according to the newsletter. It's great for Rokita that he can use the attorney general job to deliver government-funded anti-Biden messaging to Republican primary voters, but it's not so great for Indiana. The state should stop letting politicians exploit the attorney general's office and transform it into a position appointed by the governor. ❖

**Marc Chase, NWI Times:** Passion, good business sense and flying F-bombs. Those three things came to mind last week when Porter County Commissioner Jeff Good told me he wouldn't seek re-election in 2022. Good's political career — and even heated exchanges like one he had directly with me during that tenure — are solid reminders that friction and strong personalities don't necessarily prevent exemplary government. Good and I met over lunch Thursday to discuss his decision to finish out his current term and then hang up his political cleats. The decision marks a loss of solid business sense in local government — but also is one of many promises kept to Good's constituents. When Good first sought the office — one of three chief executives of Porter County government — he did so with a personal parameter of serving two terms and then getting out of the government game. His second term expires at the end of 2022, and Good is making good on that promise. As we discussed that impending decision last week, I immediately thought of the bipartisan coalition Good, a Republican, formed with the sole Democratic Porter County commissioner, Laura Blaney, and all of the taxpayer benefits that resulted. I also remembered a heated exchange Good and I had nearly four years ago — one that we both laugh about now. ❖

## Tyler sentenced to a year in prison

INDIANAPOLIS — A former Indiana mayor was sentenced Wednesday to a year in prison on federal charges of taking a \$5,000 bribe in exchange for steering city projects to a contractor.

Former Muncie Mayor Dennis Tyler reached an agreement with federal prosecutors in May to plead guilty to a count of theft of government funds (AP). In the plea agreement, Tyler admitted to receiving the bribe in 2015 from the business that federal prosecutors said received more than \$250,000 in improper city contracts for excavation and demolition work. Tyler, 78, told U.S. District Judge James Sweeney that his actions "left a stain" on a career that included 42 years as a city firefighter, The Star Press reported. Tyler, a Democrat, was Muncie's mayor for eight years, first winning election in 2011 after seven years as a state legislator. "I stand before you so ashamed, sorry and absolutely scared to death for what might happen next," Tyler told the judge before the sentence was imposed. Tyler did not seek reelection in 2019 and was indicted in the bribery case just weeks before his term ended.



## Man plows car into prison gate

MICHIGAN CITY — After driving through the main gates of a state prison, the driver was found to have a blood alcohol content of .14%, police said (AP). Robert D. Merriman, 62, of Winamac, faces charges including operating a vehicle while intoxicated, operating a vehicle while intoxicated endangering others and criminal trespass, according to a news release from Indiana State Police Sgt. Glen Fifield. At 6 p.m. Wednesday police were alerted of a potentially impaired driver traveling in a silver Chevrolet

Silverado on U.S. 421 in Michigan City. Police were searching the area when they were told that a Silverado drove through the main gate at the Indiana State Prison.

## Indiana revenue continues to exceed

INDIANAPOLIS — More than a quarter into the new fiscal year, Indiana's tax revenues continue to dramatically exceed expectations (Smith, Indiana Public Media). The state is already more than half a billion dollars ahead of its budget plan. Indiana collected \$137 million more in October than budget projections expected. Combined with higher-than-anticipated collections in July, August and September as well, that puts revenues more than 10 percent ahead of the new state budget plan. Every major tax category is outperforming expectations — particularly corporate taxes, 64 percent better than predicted this fiscal year. Over the last 16 months — dating back to the earliest days of the pandemic — Indiana has failed to meet budget expectations just once.

## Inflation spikes to 30-year high

NEW YORK — Inflation across a broad swath of products that consumers buy every day was even worse than expected in October, hitting its highest point in more than 30 years, the Labor Department reported Wednesday (CNBC). The consumer price index, which is a basket of products ranging from gasoline and health care to groceries and rents, rose 6.2% from a year ago, the most since December 1990. That compared with the 5.9% Dow Jones estimate. Fuel oil prices soared 12.3% for the month, part of a 59.1% increase over the past year. Energy prices overall rose 4.8% in October and are up 30% for the 12-month period. Food prices also showed a sizeable bounce, up 0.9% and 5.3% respectively. Within the food category, meat, poultry, fish and eggs rose 11.9% year over year.

## Rittenhouse testifies emotionally

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — Kyle Rittenhouse told jurors at his murder trial that he tried to get away from his pursuers the night he shot three men during street unrest in Kenosha, saying he never wanted to kill anyone: "I didn't do anything wrong. I defended myself." The 18-year-old spent most of Wednesday giving his account of what happened in just a few frenzied minutes on Aug. 25, 2020, sobbing so hard at one point that the judge called a recess. In an account largely corroborated by video and the prosecution's own witnesses, Rittenhouse said that the first man cornered him.

## Vicious backlash vs. 13 Republicans

WASHINGTON — One caller instructed Representative Adam Kinzinger of Illinois to slit his wrists and "rot in hell." Another hoped Representative Don Bacon of Nebraska would slip and fall down a staircase. The office of Representative Nicole Malotakis of New York has been inundated with angry messages tagging her as a "traitor" (New York Times). In the days since 13 House Republicans broke with their party leaders and voted for the \$1 trillion legislation last week, they have been flooded by menacing messages from voters — and even some of their own colleagues — who regard their votes as a betrayal. The vicious reaction to the passage of the bill, which was negotiated by a group of Republicans and Democrats determined to deliver on a bipartisan priority, reflects how deeply polarization has seeped into the political discourse within the Republican Party, making even the most uncontroversial legislation a potentially toxic vote. The dynamic is a natural outgrowth of the slash-and-burn politics of former President Donald J. Trump, who savaged those in his party who backed the infrastructure bill as "RI-NOs."