

Post-pandemic session finds evolving state

Worker shortage, switch to electric vehicles, mandates, health care to highlight session

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Speaker Todd Huston had just taken the gavel during the waning days of the 2020 Indiana General Assembly as the COVID-19 pandemic began to wreak turmoil across the state. Now, less than two years later, he and super majority Republicans will begin to reshape the state during what has become a persistent problem.

Facing the 150 members and Gov. Eric Holcomb are a worker shortage (including teachers, bus drivers, nurses, truckers), a state education system that still isn't meeting the needs of employers, and a new technological revolution that

will see the internal combustion engine give way to electrical propulsion that needs just a fraction of the parts that hundreds of Hoosier companies produce.



At the Indiana Chamber's Preview session on Monday, CEO Kevin Brinegar noted the observation of new Indianapolis 500 owner Roger Penske, who expressed "surprise at how fast" the technology is evolving on elec-

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Mike & Pete in 2024

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Right now Donald J. Trump is sucking much of the oxygen away from other potential 2024 presidential contenders. But by the time that election cycle hits primetime, there could be two Hoosiers seeking the nation's highest office.

Mike Pence is already running. He's maintaining a busy nationwide schedule and that is expected to increase as he stumps for Republican congressional candidates in 2022, collecting an array of potential IOUs.

And U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg has positioned himself in a way that conjures Theodore Roosevelt's influential stint as assistant secretary to the Navy in the McKinley



“Today I rise in the light of recent events that I can no longer stay silent. This is illustrative of this body's inability to legislate. I have found Paul Gosar to be an honorable and effective legislator.”

- U.S. Rep. Jim Baird, on the censure of Rep. Paul Gosar for posting a threatening video.



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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



administration. Secretary Pete will play a crucial role in the Biden administration's disbursement of an unprecedented \$1.2 trillion infrastructure law funds, while Vice President Kamala Harris chafes about her difficult policy portfolio and bad staffing.

There will be much to sort out when it comes to potential 2024 Pence and Buttigieg presidential runs. The crucial element is the viability of Donald Trump and President Biden. Both men would be the oldest to ever seek the presidency. A Politico/Morning Consult Poll released Tuesday found that only 40% believe Biden "is in good health" while 50% disagreed. A USA/Suffolk Poll found Biden's approval at an anemic 38% and Harris at 28%. 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.

Biden's low approval ratings, coming just as he achieved his greatest legislative victory with the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure law, are relative. Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels polled in the low 40th percentile in 2006, only to win reelection with 58% of the vote in 2008. President Reagan lost 26 House seats as that Oil Shock recession persisted, only to be followed by the 1984 "Morning in America" election which saw him win reelection with a 49 state landslide.

Trump's polling is even worse than President Biden. While he is unlikely to officially declare his candidacy prior to the 2022 mid-terms, Trump is setting himself up for an out-sized impact. He is ardently backing candidates in Georgia, Pennsylvania, and other crucial states for the GOP's Senate retake that have crawled out from the rocks. Herschel Walker in Georgia and Sean Parnell in Pennsylvania have histories of domestic abuse and bizarre behavior. Should Trump's Senate Class of '22 draw comparisons to the Class of 2012 (Richard Mourdock, Todd Akin) and 2010 (Christine "I'm

Not a Witch" O'Donnell), he could make history by blowing a second consecutive Senate majority.

Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie taunted Trump last week after he was chided for his 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."

In the past week, a number



of stories in Politico, CNN and the Washington Post have depicted Vice President Harris as stumbling during her first year in office.

CNN: "Worn out by what they see as entrenched dysfunction and lack of focus, key West Wing aides have largely thrown up their hands at Vice President Kamala Harris and her staff – deciding there simply isn't time to deal with them right now, especially at a moment when President Joe Biden faces quickly multiplying legislative and political concerns. The exasperation runs both ways. Interviews with nearly three dozen former and current Harris aides, administration officials, Democratic operatives, donors and outside advisers – who spoke extensively to CNN – reveal a complex reality inside the White House. Many in the vice president's circle fume that she's not being adequately prepared or positioned, and instead is being sidelined."

While Harris positioned herself behind President Biden as

he signed the infrastructure law on Monday, Secretary Pete was a few feet away.

The Associated Press offered this analysis: Pete Buttigieg, the transportation secretary who holds the purse strings to much of President Joe Biden's \$1 trillion infrastructure package, was holding forth with reporters on its impact – the promise of more electric cars, intercity train routes, bigger airports – when a pointed question came. How would he go about building racial equity into infrastructure? The 39-year-old former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and 2020 Democratic presidential candidate laid out his argument that highway design can reflect racism, noting that at least \$1 billion in the bill will help reconnect cities and neighborhoods that had been racially segregated or divided by road projects. "I'm still surprised that some people were surprised when I pointed to the fact that if a highway was built for the purpose of dividing a White and a Black neighborhood ... that obviously reflects racism," he said.

And Politico analyzed the growing Harris/Buttigieg rivalry: "President Joe Biden says he intends to run for reelection in 2024. But not all Democrats believe him. Nor are they convinced his No. 2 would be the clear heir if he did choose to opt out. As Vice President Kamala Harris grapples with a portfolio of seemingly intractable issues and responsibilities that have drawn her away from the national spotlight – she Zoomed into the infrastructure Cabinet meeting from Paris on Friday – other Democrats have raised their own national profiles. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg is the point person on implementing much of the popular bipartisan infrastructure deal."

There will be advantages in being that point person, and pitfalls if the evitable pork in the law dominates future news cycles. As Politico observed: "GOP critics of President Joe Biden's Build Back Better agenda ... will be watching closely for flaws to highlight to voters. 'Most Republicans didn't vote for this bill,' said Democratic strategist and pollster Mark Mellman. 'Some of those Republicans are going to be claiming credit anyway. Others will be looking for opportunities to rub somebody's nose in bad results. Some will be doing both. But a lot of people will be looking for problems with how this money is spent.'

Politico adds, "Even in the best of circumstances, Buttigieg, whose previous political experience was running the city of South Bend, Ind., has his hands full. South Bend's 2022 budget is \$386 million. DOT's annual budget is around \$90 billion – and now that the infrastructure bill has



been signed into law, it will swell to about \$140 billion. Buttigieg may have one advantage, the generally slow pace of infrastructure projects, especially big ones. Consequential projects are often multiyear affairs, and that could mean that any problems that arise will emerge slowly."

Buttigieg's profile towers above just about every other cabinet official. The documentary "Mayor Pete" was released on Amazon Prime last Friday, giving behind-the-scenes glimpses of his meteoric 2019/2020 presidential run. It detailed his historic win in the Iowa caucuses, and the quick implosion after Biden won South Carolina and romped on Super Tuesday.

The documentary captures the essence of Buttigieg and his husband, Chasten. The film reveals the sequence where Buttigieg addressed his "coming out" during his 2015 reelection campaign in South Bend, when he was returned to office with 80%. At one point Chasten describes how "nobody" ever came out of the closet when they were growing up and exhorts his mate, "You're going to tell every single gay kid that it's going to get better."

"This is the only chance you'll ever get to vote for a Maltese-American, left-handed, Episcopalian, gay, war veteran, mayor," Buttigieg tells a crowd in Iowa. "It's a leap going from mayor to presidential candidate, but I realize I had something to offer that was just different."

He later adds, "The challenge is how to master the game without it changing you."

At one point, Buttigieg is informed that someone was costumed at a rally. "Just to let you know there's a cow in the audience," he's told, to which the mayor responded, "Do we know whose side the cow is on?"

The notion that Pence and Buttigieg could end up seeking the presidency in 2024 finds an uneasy equilibrium between them. When Pence was governor, he called Buttigieg "a friend" as the two collaborated on regional policy initiatives.

The two clashed in 2019



during Buttigieg’s campaign. Buttigieg said he’s “not interested in feuding” with Pence and is just pointing out the vice president’s discriminatory policies against the LGBTQ community. Buttigieg had accused Pence of moral inconsistency by supporting the “porn star presidency” of Trump and said that he wished Pence and others on the religious right understood that their quarrel over his being gay “is with my creator.”

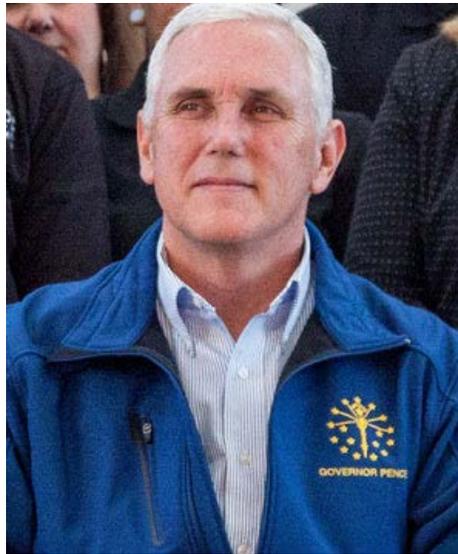
“If he wanted to clear this up, he could come out today and say he’s changed his mind, that it shouldn’t be legal to discriminate against anybody in this country for who they are,” Buttigieg said.

Meanwhile, Pence is trying to steer through the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection. Key Pence aides are still upset at how Trump turned his mob against his vice president. Trump defended his treatment of Pence during an interview with ABC’s Jonathan Karl for his book “Betrayal.”

Karl: “Were you worried about him during that siege? Were you worried about his safety?”

Trump: “No, I thought he was well-protected, and I had heard that he was in good shape. No. Because I had heard he was in very good shape.”

Karl: “Because you heard those chants – that was terrible.”



Trump: “He could have – well, the people were very angry.”

Karl: “They were saying ‘hang Mike Pence.’”

Trump: “Because it’s common sense, Jon. It’s common sense that you’re supposed to protect. How can you – if you know a vote is fraudulent, right? – how can you pass on a fraudulent vote to Congress? How can you do that? And I’m telling you: 50/50, it’s right down the middle for the top constitutional scholars when I speak to them. Anybody I spoke to – almost all of them at least pretty much agree, and some very much agree with me – because he’s passing on a vote that he knows is fraudulent.”

lent.”

Former Pence and Trump aide Alyssa Farah believes that Pence is “uniquely positioned” to run in 2024, saying he can “tout the record” of Trump while avoiding “a lot of the downside.” Farah characterized a potential Trump second term as a “nightmare scenario” with Trump indulging his “autocratic” tendencies.

A lot can happen in the next 18 months, but for the first time since 2011 when Pence and Gov. Mitch Daniels pondered White House campaigns, two Hoosiers could find themselves in the presidential spotlight. ❖

General Assembly, from page 1

tric vehicles. “Penske predicts there will be a hybrid or electrical vehicle in the Indy 500 by 2025,” Brinegar said.

On Monday, President Biden signed his signature \$1.2 trillion infrastructure law that will bring more than \$8 billion to Indiana to revitalize roads and bridges and \$100 million to expand the state’s electric vehicle charging network.

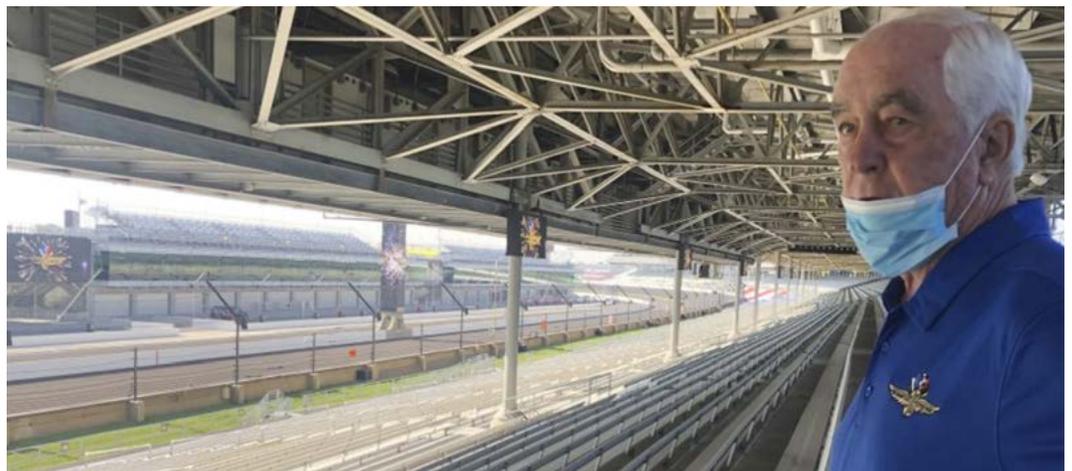
Huston said that change is afoot “clearly around EV battery. Automotive jumps out; anything in renewable space. A very big economic shift will take place in the next three to five years. Many things that require key components are going through change. There’s no doubt change is happening fast and we have to be nimble.”

There are 519 auto manufacturing establishments in Indiana, including 23 motor

vehicle manufacturing (not including two Ford assembly plants just beyond state lines in Chicago Heights and Louisville), 165 body and trailer manufacturing, and 331 parts manufacturing establishments, according to CAR.

Brinegar laid out the Chamber’s 14th annual Employer Workforce Survey that, despite two decades of trying to correlate Indiana labor needs to education output, much work remains.

“Indiana has a workforce shortage,” Brinegar said,



noting that 85% say meeting talent needs is a challenge, 67% say lack of workers is the biggest obstacle, while 72% say applicants don't meet current needs.

"The skills gap will persist due to the Great Resignation," Brinegar said. He noted that 60% of Hoosier employers said they left jobs open due to lack of qualified workers (up from 45% a year ago); 58% will seek to increase workforce size (17% more than a year ago). He said that 72% of workers will be looking at other job opportunities.

Layered on top of the lack of workers is a shortage of child care workers, which is keeping thousands of women out of the workforce. "This is a complicated issue," Huston said. "One of our greatest challenges is the child care industry is trying to find enough people. I won't have a magic wand on this. There's been a huge push federally. But you have to have the people to work."

State Rep. Terri Austin, D-Anderson, said that child care costs more than a year of college. "It's about \$12,000 to care for a child; \$9,000 for tuition," she said. "If you want to help solve shortage, get woman back in. Twenty percent of child care centers have closed. Workers make about \$12 an hour. Some of federal money has flowed in, but when Amazon pays bonuses they go work in warehouses.

"If we're smart," Austin said, "We'll take some of that \$500 million surplus" and steer it into child care.

Renewable energy sitings

Another big dilemma facing legislators is the siting of wind and solar farms. Messmer said that polling shows support for a shift from coal to renewable energy ranges from 60% to 80%, but counties are throwing up siting barriers.

"People want to more see renewable energy," Messmer said, but the perception is that renewable sources produce 50% of the state's energy, when it is actually in the 6% to 7% range. "All of us want it to be higher, but we just can't get there with a patchwork of regulations from local counties."

Asked about the future of net metering, Huston said, "I would leave that topic to (Rep. Ed) Soliday and (Sen. Eric) Koch. Everything needs to be looked at and evaluated."

Tax cuts

House Republicans are ginned up on ending the personal property tax and reducing the state's 3.23% flat state income tax. Speaker Huston called the personal property tax "the last bad business tax we have in play."

But several times at Monday's Chamber preview, Huston said that he had "made a commitment clear to lo-

cal officials we're not trying to do this on their backs."

On the income tax reduction, coming after an expected \$170-per-taxpayer surplus refund, Huston said, "I certainly intend to make sure, in one way or another, we are giving back to people the money that they deserve, that they've earned. That is a huge priority goal for me, and, I believe, for our caucus. I think it would help a ton



of small- and medium-sized businesses in Indiana and I think it's exactly the right thing to do. I think it's the last bad business tax we have in play."

But Senate Majority Leader Mark Messmer wasn't on the same page, saying on Monday, "When that federal stimulus money dries up, at this point I don't think we can accurately predict where those tax revenues will settle out."

The leaders were asked if the biennial budget could be reopened during this short session due to the fact that revenues are running well ahead of projections. "It depends on your perspective," Huston said. "We're about \$500 million ahead and we want to continue on that trajectory. This coming year, there will be a \$545 million in taxpayer refund. I certainly hope we are giving back money they deserved. My biggest fear if we keep it we'll spend it. We will have another forecast in December. That will revise our thinking. I'm not looking to be imprudent or irrational. We want to maintain enough of a reserve. Our costs are going up."

Messmer described the Senate Majority Caucus as "extremely cautious," adding, "Should we get another automatic taxpayer refund next June 30, that's probably not a bad way to proceed in the short term."

Last week, Gov. Holcomb gave an emphatic "we'll see" on potential tax cuts.

Health care costs

Another controversial topic will be rising health care costs and vaccine mandates.

Huston observed, "I meet with too many businesses and people frustrated by health care costs. We've got to be better in our total cost of health care. In next few weeks, we will lay out everybody's part of that. Hopefully we'll set some clear expectations via metrics. Stakeholders know we need to see measurable reductions in costs."

Messmer added, "There's going to be a heavy commitment" on the issue, adding, "We're well above the national average."

On vaccine mandates, Huston said, "I'm on record I prefer to have businesses make those decisions; employers need to be cautious on how they handle religious exemptions. I would offer a level of caution on how employers address this issue."

Messmer added, "Governments should never be in business of mandating employers," saying that it could impact 30% to 40% of production employees. "There's been a huge exodus of people leaving the workforce and I think that has to do with vaccine mandates. Employers are having a tough time."

Logistics

How is the upcoming General Assembly going to operate in 2022 after the 2021 session featured a great deal of plexiglass, social distancing and masking, during the committee hearings in House and Senate chambers? "Back to normal," said Huston at Monday's Chamber Preview session. "You can expect a session to run much like 2020 or an earlier session."

This comes as there were 3,481 new Indiana coronavirus cases, highest one-day total since Oct 8, with 9.3% of Tuesday's batch of tests coming back positive.

The legislature is pondering a session date at the end of November or early December due to Gov. Holcomb's executive orders on public health. An informed and reliable source tells HPI that some \$400 million in federal aid could be lost due to the way Holcomb dealt with the pandemic via executive order. That could prompt the session date at the end of the month to align with federal requirements. It comes as the unprecedented 2021 session officially ended at midnight Monday.

"When extending the last state public health emergency for another 30 days, I asked my team to bring me a plan that would allow us to wind it down responsibly," Holcomb said on Tuesday. "They have presented me a plan that identifies three key items that must be preserved if I am to responsibly allow the state public health emergency to expire. To carry this out, I am working with Senator Bray and Speaker Huston to consider passing three key statutory changes to continue protecting Hoosiers by allowing for the continuation of enhanced federal matching funds for Medicaid expenditures, the continuation of the enhanced benefit for those receiving federal food assistance and extend the ability to efficiently vaccinate our 5- to 11-year-olds."

House Resolution 2 has been filed by 31 Republicans, including state Rep. Hal Slager, R-Schererville, state Rep. Julie Olthoff, R-Crown Point, and several GOP committee chairmen, making the issue all but impossible for Huston to ignore. The speaker told The Times on Monday his intention is to collaborate with the governor to identify any statutory changes that might need to be made to ensure Indiana's COVID-19 response can continue absent an ongoing state of emergency proclamation.

Huston said at Tuesday's Organization Day that as of right now, the next session day will be Tuesday, Jan. 4, but added, "Stand by for further instructions."

Sen. Messmer added at the Chamber event that Senate leadership was meeting on Monday to determine how session business will be conducted. "We're going back to normal," Messmer said. While Huston said the House Chamber could be utilized for some committee meetings, much of the session will be conducted in past form in committee rooms.

Messmer and Huston predicted the session will end in early March. ❖

Supremes to hear power showdown case

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The legal fight over the increased power Indiana legislators gave themselves to intervene during public health emergencies will be going before the state Supreme Court, although not for nearly five months. The state's highest court issued an order Wednesday taking over a lawsuit that Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb filed against the GOP-dominated Legislature contending that that a law granting the power violates the state constitution. A Marion County judge upheld the new law last month, ruling that the constitution gives the General Assembly the authority to determine when and for how long it will meet. Holcomb is appealing that decision. The Supreme Court's order sets an April 7 hearing for arguments from private attorneys hired by the governor's office and the state attorney general's office, which is representing the Legislature. The new law establishes a process under which legislative leaders can call the General Assembly into an "emergency session." Holcomb's lawsuit argues that the law violates a state constitutional provision that says only the governor can call the Legislature into a special session after its annual sessions adjourn, which is normally late April in odd-numbered years and mid-March during even-numbered years. ❖

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INDems embrace marijuana reforms

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Hoosiers and Americans have supported marijuana reforms for years now. In October 2016, a Howey Politics/WTHR-TV poll found more than 70% of Hoosiers, including 58% of Republicans, favored marijuana reforms.

Gallup has documented increasing support for legalizing marijuana over more than five decades, with particularly sharp increases occurring in the 2000s and 2010s. In 2013, a majority of Americans, for the first time, supported legalization.

As was the case in 2020, solid majorities of U.S. adults in all major subgroups by gender, age, income and education support legalizing marijuana. Substantive differences are seen, however, by political party and religion. While most Democrats (83%) and political independents (71%) support legalization, Republicans are nearly evenly split on the question (50% in favor; 49% opposed).

According to Ballotpedia, the first state legalized marijuana for medical use in state law in 1996. In 2012, the first states legalized marijuana for recreational use in state law. As of April 2021, 36 states and Washington, D.C., had passed laws legalizing or decriminalizing medical marijuana; an additional 10 states had legalized the use of cannabis oil. Nineteen of the states that had legalized medical marijuana did so through citizen-initiated ballot measures, and the other 16 did so through legislative action. As of June 2021, 18 states had legalized recreational marijuana.

This past month, one of Indiana's major parties – Democrats – has embraced marijuana reform.

Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., kicked this sequence off when he said in his Left of Center podcast that 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. Illinois is one of 18 states that has legalized recreational use while another 13 have decriminalized cannabis. 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."

Now Indiana Democrats are lining up on the issue.

"We want to be the party in Indiana that really takes the lead on this issue," said Indiana Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl. "I think we have seen the impact that legalization and medicinal use has made on the states around us, and we're losing out. I think Indiana is behind on this issue."

Michigan and Illinois both have legalized recreational marijuana, while Ohio has legalized it for medical uses. "This is a really popular issue," Schmuhl said. "And I think people want to see this get done. And so if Democrats can take the lead on it, even being in the minority, that's great, and we're going to try to get as many Republicans on our side as we do it."

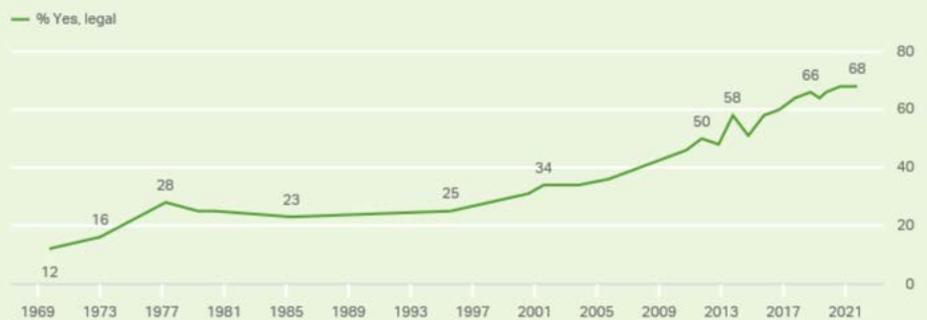
"Hoosiers have seen the impact that recreational and medicinal cannabis use has made on the states around us, and not only are they contributing to neighboring states' economies, Indiana is now on the verge of losing out altogether," Schmuhl continued. "The Republican supermajority at the Statehouse is losing its economic common sense if they do not join Democrats this session in making this opportunity a winner for the Hoosier State," said Schmuhl.

State Sen. Rodney Pol Jr., who replaced Sen. Karen Tallian, tweeted, "This session, I will be following in Senator Tallian's footsteps and introducing her legislation to change our out-of-date and out-of-touch marijuana laws. We shouldn't be sending folks to jail for marijuana use."



U.S. Support for Legalizing Marijuana, 1969-2021

Do you think the use of marijuana should be legal, or not?



GALLUP

Hoosier Republicans are also changing stances, with former state senator Jim Merritt backing legalization while State Rep. Jim Lucas, R-Seymour, has introduced reform legislation in recent sessions.

"Whether it is medicinal or for legal adult use, it is time to legalize cannabis in Indiana," Merritt, who is preparing a gubernatorial run in 2024, wrote in an IBJ oped article in October. "Given the state's proven track record of being incredibly accommodating to businesses and our strong agricultural roots, we are missing opportunities to attract new companies, create jobs and boost our economy overall."

Two Indiana counties stand out in this debate on the changing norms surrounding this issue.

Marion County Prosecutor Ryan Mears is no longer charging individuals for possession. Mears explained, "In Indiana, the continued criminalization of marijuana is an inadequacy in our criminal justice system that increases racial disparities and limits economic opportunities for our state. This is why, under my leadership, the Marion County Prosecutor's Office established a policy to no longer prosecute simple marijuana possession in 2019. This decision has kept hundreds of non-violent offenders out of jail, allowed our office to devote more resources to successfully prosecuting violent crime and ensuring justice for victims, and saved taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars."

In Whitley County, former Purdue and Portland Trailblazer star Caleb Swanigan was arrested on Dec. 23, 2020, with 3.4 pounds of marijuana, drug paraphernalia and cash inside his vehicle. He was sentenced earlier this year to a 180-day suspended sentence with two days served.

Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives introduced legislation on Monday that would decriminalize marijuana at the federal level and eliminate legal hazards facing many cannabis-related businesses while regulating its use like alcohol (Reuters). U.S. Rep. Nancy Mace of South Carolina, who is spear-heading the legislative effort, described the bill as a "compromise" with less onerous regulations than measures proposed earlier by other lawmakers including Democrats. The legislation's path in the Democratic-controlled House was uncertain. Mace, a first-term lawmaker, said the measure has five Republican co-sponsors.

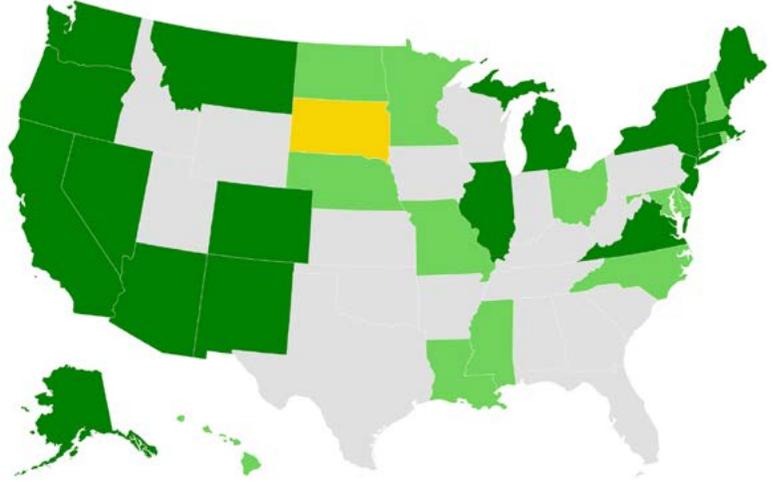
Governor

Braun disputes finance allegations

The campaign of U.S. Sen. Mike Braun disputed preliminary findings by the Federal Election Commission that revealed \$8.5 million in "inappropriate loans" during his 2018 showdown with Democrat Joe Donnelly. "The draft audit report issued by the FEC's audit staff nearly two months ago was just that: A draft issued before the campaign committee provided the necessary documentation to clear up the loan issues raised in the report," said Braun Chief of Staff Joshua Kelley in a statement last Thursday. "However, if you have read the documents that the campaign committee has since provided to the FEC or listened to the recent hearing with the FEC commissioners, it is clear that the final version of the FEC's audit report will conclude that all the loans fully complied with the law. Sometimes these FEC audits require time to work themselves out; that has



Recreational marijuana legal status as of March 2021
 ■ decriminalized ■ illegal ■ legalized ■ legalized but overturned



been the case here, and we're not the least bit concerned about how the process will end."

According to The Daily Beast, FEC 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."

The Braun campaign blames the violations on the campaign treasurer, Travis Kabrick, who has not responded to inquiries from the Braun campaign as well as the FEC. Kabrick, "was, at least ostensibly, an experienced FEC compliance professional who had worked for many federal candidate committees over many years" according to the Daily Beast.

According to the draft report, the FEC found seven mistakes or potential campaign finance violations: Misstatement of financial activity; failure to file 48-hour notices of contributions; failure to disclose contributors' occupations and/or name of employer; receipt of apparent prohibited contributions-loans; receipt of contributions in excess of the limit; failure to disclose memo entries and candidate loans; and prohibited candidate personal loan repayments.

INDEM Executive Director Lauren Ganapini called for a criminal investigation of Braun, saying, "It's clear from the reporting that came out this morning that Mike Braun broke the law and stole a United States Senate seat in 2018. Today, Hoosiers need to ask themselves a sobering question: Do we have an illegitimately elected U.S. senator? Braun used \$8.5 million of 'apparent prohibited loans' to fuel his campaign – an amount of money that made his campaign much more competitive. The Department of Justice and the United States attorney for the Southern District of Indiana should determine whether federal laws were broken. The Indiana attorney general also should look into any wrongdoing with state law, particularly those related to tax records."

Congress

8th CD: Bucshon announces for reelection

U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon will run for reelection. (Dubois County Herald). Dr. Bucshon is a heart surgeon and has held the 8th District seat since being first elected in 2010. "During my time in Congress, I've worked to champion commonsense conservative values of faith, family, and freedom," Bucshon said. "Amid the biggest wave of socialism to wash over our nation ever, I am eager to remain in the fight to champion these values and to ensure that we pass on a country full of unlimited opportunity and freedom to future generations of Americans. I am running for reelection next year and I humbly ask Hoosiers in the Eighth District to renew my job contract in 2022 for another two years in order to allow me to continue fighting on their behalf in Congress."

9th CD: Fyfe to challenge Hollingsworth

Democrat Matt Fyfe is hoping to challenge incumbent U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth as a candidate for Indiana's 9th Congressional District. Ballotpedia reports that Democrats Jonathon Cole, D. Liam Dorris and Babak Rezaei are declared candidates in the 2022 general election, along with Republican Hiren Patel and Libertarian Tonya Millis. Fyfe, 33, grew up near Fort Wayne and now lives in Bloomington. He is a father of three who teaches math at Bloomington High School North and serves on the board of the Monroe County Education Association. "You could say I'm an outsider, but I have some of that teachers' union spunk in me," he said.

General Assembly

SD46 (current): Boehnlein wins caucus

Southern Indiana businessman Kevin Boehnlein has been selected to fulfill the remainder of Indiana State Sen, Ron Grooms' term, beginning this session. Boehnlein was elected on the first ballot by a caucus vote with overwhelming support against Charlie Moon. Boehnlein is expected to run in the new SD47 against State Sen. Erin Houchin. Boehnlein thanked precinct voters and community supporters. He said: "It is time for new energy, new ideas, new leadership and real world experience. I have a strong passion for service, as well as an enduring love for the district and its people." Boehnlein emphasized the importance of cutting the state income tax this session. Floyd County Recorder Lois Endris stated, "The caucus results speak for themselves: Kevin Boehnlein has the confidence of the community and the region; he will serve us well." Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Huffer said, "Congratulations to Kevin Boehnlein on winning



the caucus and becoming Indiana's newest state senator. Hoosiers in the 46th Senate District will be well represented in Indianapolis by Sen. Boehnlein."

SD19: Holdman to seek reelection

Sen. Travis Holdman has announced he will seek reelection to the Indiana Senate in 2022 to represent Senate District 19 – which will include Allen County (Kelly, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). "During my tenure in the state Senate, I have kept my promise to fight for the citizens of northeast Indiana and be a strong voice for our shared conservative values at the Statehouse," Holdman said. "With everything going on in Washington D.C., at the federal level of government, it is more important than ever that we keep strong, conservative leadership in Indianapolis."

SD31: Walker to seek full term

State Sen. Kyle Walker (R-Lawrence) announced his campaign for reelection. Walker was elected to the Senate one year ago by Republican caucus to replace Sen. Jim Merritt. Democrat Fishers Councilwoman Jocelyn Vare announced she would run last week.

SD26: Wright shifts from CD5

Former legislator Melanie Wright is going to seek SD26 and not CD5, according to a Facebook posting. "I have decided to run for the open Indiana State Senate seat for District 26. The district was created through the redistricting process that was recently passed by the General Assembly with no incumbents included in the area," Wright said. "Why the change? I found myself telling political affiliates that I couldn't wait to knock doors again, build relationships with people and be a problem solver. A federal race is not necessarily built on these tenets:) There has to be room in the middle for a common sense school teacher to be able to represent rural Indiana! I sincerely just want to help others and provide insight on how legislation can be molded to truly serve those in Indiana." New maps signed into law in October took the 5th CD which had been +9 Republican in the Cook Partisan Index to +22 Republican in FiveThirtyEight ratings.

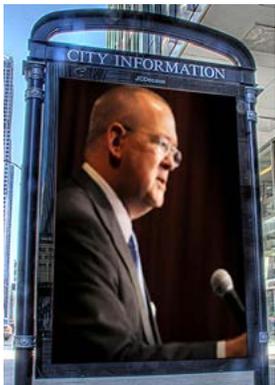
HD72: Grubbs to challenge Rep. Clere

New Albany resident Jackie Bright Grubbs will be running in the Republican primary (News & Tribune). Charlie Moon and Tom Jones have also declared for the 2022 Republican primary. Having been in contact with state representatives, Grubbs came to the conclusion that the concerns of citizens did not resonate with some of them. "Our school systems were designed to teach academics, logic, and critical thinking skills. It is apparent that academics have taken a backseat while social issues rule the school," Grubbs said. Grubbs also noted that she is both pro-life and supports the Second Amendment. In the House seat, Grubbs would like to provide "the point of view of the everyday citizens." ❖

It's time to be honest about debt, spending, and taxation

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – The U.S. Congress is turning its attention to something called the Build it Back Better (BBB) bill. This is a good time to think critically about the political economy of our national debt. It is good to start with some facts and acknowledge what we do and do not know about the economic consequences of a large public debt. A



big part of this is discussion must be the question of how we tax ourselves to pay for this debt.

Public debts aren't new, and the U.S. government has spent more than it has received in taxes for almost all of the past half century. Despite our economic cycles, we remain the largest rich economy, with reasonable long-term growth and currency that is the most dominant in world history. Clearly, a rich na-

tion can run a debt for a long time without meaningful consequences.

A nation like ours can also finance big negative shocks, like a world war or global pandemic. We have been successful in paying these back over long periods, financed by sufficient economic growth that our tax revenues exceed spending. However, we can also hold debt for decades, if what we buy is a boost to long-term economic growth.

The composition of debt matters deeply. Spending that makes us more productive because of better public capital or a more educated workforce often pays for itself through increased GDP that is then taxed. Still, a great deal of government spending doesn't boost the economy and isn't designed to do so. Social Security, military pensions and much of direct income support for poor people are programs that don't pay for themselves in new tax revenue or savings elsewhere.

I honestly think there is little disagreement among Americans about these types of programs, or at least the spending portion. Although we may disagree in the details for how these programs are administered and who gets payments, where we disagree the most is how to pay for them.

A small minority in Congress believe this is a moot point because they cling on to something called Modern Monetary Theory (MMT). The basic idea behind MMT is that deficits don't really matter until they become inflationary. The role of taxes is solely to keep inflation in check. To

most people this seems implausible, as it does to the vast majority of economists.

Today's economic conditions provide a good thought experiment on the reasonableness of MMT. We are in a period of higher prices for everything from food and gasoline to used cars. Suppose the price increases we see from supply chain disruptions turn into full-fledged inflation early next year. Imagine consumer prices rising by 4% or 6% by early summer. To MMT proponents, the way to remedy this is through higher taxes on consumers. And here's where the thought experiment gets interesting. Imagine the current Congress voting to raise taxes if gas is \$4.50 a gallon.

You may pause reading long enough to stop laughing. It must be said that Modern Monetary Theory is a "Hee Haw" skit masquerading as sensible economic policy, and therein lies our problem with talking about deficits. The Build it Back Better bill has a lot of parts, some of which will appeal to many Americans. However, the tax increases that accompany it won't come close to paying for it. If it did, then the Congressional Budget Office would've been asked to do a full analysis months ago.

The difficult fact is that we cannot tax billionaires or millionaires enough to pay for this bill. To pay for the BBB, we will need a wholesale reworking of taxes. The BBB edges the United States much closer to Scandinavian nations in terms of social spending. To be clear, this is not socialism; Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark are not socialist nations. Still, I think few Americans want that type of government. I am old-fashioned, and think the best way to prevent something that is unpopular is simply to tell the truth about it.

In order to pay for the large social spending of the BBB, the U.S. will need much heavier, Scandinavian-style taxes. These cannot be levied solely on the very rich, in either income or wealth taxes. We could tax all the billionaires 100% and not pay for year one of the BBB. In fact, the big difference between U.S. and nations such as Sweden and Norway is not how we tax the rich, but how we tax the middle class and the poor.

Right now, the U.S. has a very progressive federal tax. About half of families pay no income taxes. They do pay payroll taxes for Social Security and Medicare, along with state and local taxes, but that raises far too little revenue to pay for the large social programs in the BBB. And, because people can choose not to work or lobby for a myriad of loopholes, we are close to the maximum share of revenue we can raise through income taxes.

In order to pay for the BBB, the U.S. will have to institute broad value added taxes, or VAT. These are essentially a national sales tax that is levied on every exchange, including business-to-business sales. Readers who support the BBB, you should know that the value added tax rate in these four Scandinavian countries is currently 24% or 25%. To catch up with the Scandinavian countries, the average tax rate on the middle class U.S. family will have to rise by one-third or more. That truth should help

frame any future discussion on federal spending. ❖

Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Cen-

Sec. Pete taking smart streets to new level

By **JACK COLWELL**

SOUTH BEND – Mayor Pete brought smart streets, smart sewers and other infrastructure improvements to South Bend.

Some constituents preferred the streets the way they had been, dumb or not. They liked fewer bike lanes and when streets offered more speed, less aesthetics. But the downtown was revitalized, population grew and civic pride was enhanced.



Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg now faces other needs for infrastructure improvements. This time, the scope is nationwide, involving everything from replacing crumbling bridges to modernizing our third-world airports, from improving safety of

water and power systems to meeting highway needs and providing widespread internet service. Funding will come from the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill finally passed by Congress. President Biden signed the bill Monday.

Buttigieg will use some of the same approaches he relied on locally to get things done. Challenges are a heck of a lot bigger. How he meets them will determine not only his political future, but also how successfully the nation tackles problems neglected for decades.

He described himself as “a tech-oriented mayor,” with data-driven decisions, but with realization that more than just efficiency must be considered in evaluating the impact on people. He will be a tech-oriented secretary of transportation, but with realization that politics must be considered in seeking to do anything in Washington.

Just as some South Bend residents grumbled about bike lanes, critics will find fault. Some Republicans already call the infrastructure bill a socialist scheme. Some Democrats will be irate when pet projects don’t get funding.

Mistakes will be made. That’s inevitable with so many projects everywhere. Anything falling flat or sounding silly will be featured in campaign advertising and in Fox News commentary.

Most of all, Buttigieg must guard against corruption with bidding or with payments going astray. He was diligent in guarding against such things as mayor. But it will

ter for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics at Ball State University.

be harder to prevent some corruption somewhere in the nation.

The first transportation crisis Buttigieg faced was personal, the ambulance trips to the hospital for his newly born adopted son, on a ventilator during “terrifying” weeks as both of the twins adopted by Pete and Chasten Buttigieg battled a virus.

Now, after the health crisis, Buttigieg is back with TV appearances as key spokesman for the infrastructure projects. His task is tougher due to the long delay before squabbling House Democrats finally passed the monumental bill. Meanwhile, popularity of the president and the bill suffered.

The bill was highly popular back when it was passed in the Senate with bipartisan support. It passed with over a third of Republicans, 19 of them, including Republican leader Mitch McConnell, joining the unanimous Democrats for passage. By the time it finally passed in the House, only 13 Republicans out of 213 supported the bill. The Republican votes were essential, however, when six progressive Democrats voted to kill it amid lingering concerns about social safety net legislation.

House Republican leaders urged a “no” vote because passage would be a victory for President Biden. They see Biden and congressional Democrats as on the ropes. The 13 Republican supporters, including Congressman Fred Upton in Michigan, received threats of removal from committees and threats of personal harm.

McConnell remained supportive. “We have a lot of infrastructure needs, both in rural areas and with big bridges.” McConnell said. “It’s a godsend for Kentucky.”

Here’s another problem for Buttigieg. When there are approval announcements, ground breakings and ribbon cuttings, who gets invited? McConnell will when the long-needed new bridge connecting Kentucky and Ohio is approved. Upton will for infrastructure improvements in Michigan.

Invited or not, you can bet that most of the 200 Republicans and six Democrats who voted to kill the infrastructure bill will crowd into ribbon cuttings and issue statements about the great improvements in their districts. ❖

Colwell is a columnist for the South Bend Tribune.

Finding, nurturing our roots

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – In the small forest behind our house, the leaves are falling in showers of color. They return to the earth the nutrients taken from the earth. It is one of the great cycles of nature.



Those who ascribe a consciousness to trees might say the trees are thanking the ground from which they grew. Others would claim the trees are acting in their own self-interest, assembling a form of savings for their own future betterment.

This is also the season for organizations with all sorts of meaningful causes to solicit donations. The basic concept is parallel to the trees and the leaves. Our status in life, to some degree, is due to the conditions in which we have been placed or we have chosen.

Organizations from our past and present remind us of their missions and seek our financial support for their programs. We are asked to return to others the opportunities we have enjoyed. One such organization is Indiana Landmarks that rescues and restores buildings and structures in which Hoosiers created the environment, economy, and families in which we live today.

We also have historical societies in many counties, as well as an Indiana Historical Society and an Indiana State Museum. However, Indiana has few museums dedicated to the businesses in this state which have shaped development of the nation. Where are the museums of the metal or wood industries that have shaped our state?

Some folks are developing the Airmail Museum of Fort Wayne at Smith Field, on the north side of today's city. The plan is to tell the story of the people and machines that made airmail possible. It is a story filled with adventure and reckless devotion to the concept, "The mail must go through."

Mail service was the essential means of exchanging information when letters, pamphlets and newspapers carried the call to revolution in the 18th Century. The abolition of 19th Century slavery was advanced through the mails. The 20th Century saw retail trade transformed by mail-order houses.

Mail to and from regional centers by air was inaugurated in 1911. However, but airmail did not really take off until 1918 when regular routes from Washington to Philadelphia and New York began. In the early 1920s, mail was flown from New York to San Francisco in just 33 hours. By 1927, air service was so well developed, the Postal Service began to contract shipments by commer-

cial carriers. Early on, Fort Wayne was a key part of the system. Now, Indiana can have a midwestern museum that gives wings to understanding how aviation revolutionized business and household communication before the internet.

History gives structure to understanding how we got where we are. Only then can we see paths to our future more clearly. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist.



Democrats search for relevant issues

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI State Bureau

ANDERSON – If you ask James Carville who's to blame for the Democratic Party's recent election losses in Virginia and elsewhere, he'll point to the progressive wing of the party. "They're suppressing our vote," he told PBS NewsHour. "I've got news for you. You're hurting the party and hurting the very people you're trying to help."



The man who made his political bones in the 1990s as a strategist for Bill Clinton has no doubt how his party managed to lose a state Joe Biden won by double digits only a year before.

"What went wrong is stupid weakness," Carville said. "Don't just look at Virginia and New Jersey. Look at Long Island, Buffalo, look at Minneapolis, even look at Seattle, Washington. I mean this 'defund the police' lunacy, this take Abraham Lincoln's name off of schools. People see that, and it really has a suppressive effect all across the country on Democrats. Some of these people need to go to a woke detox center or something."

Veteran political analyst Stuart Rothenberg offered a somewhat different take in a column for Roll Call. "The combination of Biden's weak job approval rating and Democratic infighting on Capitol Hill, with progressives and moderates slugging it out daily, gave Republicans the ideal political environment for this year's elections," he wrote.

Rep. Ro Khanna, a progressive Democrat from California, had a different assessment in his own interview with NewsHour. "I think there is a general sense of discontent, a tough year with the delta variant, the challenges in the supply chain, the sense that Washington has been gridlocked," he said. "We can't control the external circumstances, but we can control getting things done."

One thing we can say for sure is that Republicans

have been winning the messaging war. They managed to make this month's elections about Biden and the Democrats in Congress and not about Donald Trump or the Jan. 6 assault on the Capitol.

Some on the progressive side will tell you the Virginia result was about racism. They'll say that by pledging to keep critical race theory out of the public schools, Republicans were playing on the fears and resentments of suburban white voters.

What we know so far is that the Democratic response didn't work. Suggesting that all of those unhappy parents might be racists didn't win any of them over. Suggesting they were stupid for thinking the public schools were teaching a theory they weren't actually teaching didn't work either.

In the weeks leading up to the election, Attorney General Merrick Garland came under fire for his response to what he called "a disturbing spike in harassment, intimidation and threats of violence against school administrators, board members, teachers and staff who participate in the vital work of running our nation's public schools."

He suggested the FBI might even get involved.

"The obligation of the Justice Department is to protect the American people against violence and threats of violence and that particularly includes public officials," Garland said.

Republicans cried foul. U.S. Rep. Tom Emmer, a Minnesota Republican who leads his party's congressional campaign committee, held a conference call with reporters in which he argued all those angry parents were voicing "legitimate, real concerns."

"They want to have a dialogue, and instead these people are trying to crush them with the strong arm of government," he said. "They're going to be held accountable for it in November of '22, I believe."

Emmer's committee recently added 13 Democratic seats to its target list, boosting the total to 70. "In a cycle like this, no Democrat is safe," he said. "Voters are rejecting Democrat policies that have caused massive price increases, opened our borders and spurred a massive crime wave."

How's that for an optimistic message? ❖

Kelly Hawes is a columnist for CNHI News Indiana.

For better or worse, we're all connected

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – It's a cliché to say that everything's connected. But we live in a world where this is clearly true. Ideas, goods, services, workers, tourists, commerce, communications, drugs, crime, migrants, refugees, weapons, climate impacts ... and, of course, viruses; they all cross borders constantly.



This is one reason I've come to believe that drawing a distinction between "foreign" and "domestic" policy, while often helpful, is also misleading. Globalization essentially means that we can't escape the impact of what's happening

in other countries and regions around the globe, either at the policy level in Washington or on the street where you live.

This is often beneficial. The free movement of goods and services from this country to others builds our economy and creates jobs. Likewise, goods and services produced elsewhere and imported or used here have provided many American consumers with a quality of life that would have been unthinkable a generation ago. The relatively free flow of ideas, cultural life, and people with talent, skill, ambition, or all three, have enriched this country and many others.

Yet managing globalization is also a clear challenge, because it's not only the good stuff that goes along with it. The work of government—not just at the federal level, but in our states, counties, and cities and towns—is to find ways of promoting what's good and mitigating what's bad.

Sometimes, this takes global coordination. The UN Climate Conference taking place in Scotland is one clear example. Climate change affects everything, from the kinds of plants and animals you might see in your backyard to the behavior of the oceans and global wind currents. The Glasgow meeting is aimed at accelerating governments' action on ratcheting back the human-made causes of climate change and at finding ways for nations and communities to adapt to the changes that we're too late to prevent.

Sometimes, this demands clear-headed national strategies. All countries need goods and services from other countries: food, cars, entertainment, manufacturing parts. And economists would argue that our interconnectedness on these fronts has, on the whole, served both the U.S. and the world well, raising standards of living, lowering costs, and expanding the array of choices available. Yet when factory workers are thrown out of work, farmers are disrupted by competition from overseas, or over-dependence on the global supply chain proves to be a vulnerability, as during the pandemic, these demand thoughtful policy change from the federal government, whether it's pursuing trade talks, developing support for re-training programs, or buttressing small-scale agriculture and local supply chains.

And at the local level, the forces of globalization clearly require a community response. Maybe it's find-

ing ways of assimilating and educating migrant workers or refugees. Maybe it's helping small farms connect with local markets that will boost their chances of success and help feed surrounding communities. And maybe it's promoting home weatherization and other energy-related policies that help reduce carbon emissions.

The point is that the forces of globalization are with us whether we like it or not, and we can't ignore them. We're affected by what takes place everywhere else, and both at home and in the halls of power we have to understand and manage it. It's inevitable that we'll face

challenges and disruption. Our task is to recognize the opportunities and spread the benefits. ❖

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.

6 decades of regional change in House

By **KYLE KONDIK**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – One of the likely outcomes of the ongoing redistricting process would be the already-huge Republican edge in a region we'll call the Greater South growing even larger. If the Republicans capitalize on this opportunity, it will continue what has been perhaps the most important story in House elections since the middle of the 20th century: The South's transition from a heavily Democratic to a heavily Republican House delegation.

Republicans in North Carolina and Texas drew maps designed to increase their advantage in the House delegations of both of those growing states (we analyzed those maps last week). Republicans in the region's 2 other most-populous states, Florida and Georgia, likely will as well. Redistricting combined with what for Republicans may be a sunny political environment next year could push the GOP edge in the region to even greater heights.

In my new book, "The Long Red Thread: How Democratic Dominance Gave Way to Republican Advantage in U.S. House Elections," I tell the story of House elections from 1964 through 2020. The narrative starts in 1964 because it was the first election after the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark reapportionment decisions, which applied the principle of "one person, one vote" to U.S. House redistricting, thus mandating population equality among districts in states and setting up our modern redistricting system.

The year 1964 is also significant for other rea-

sons. It came in the midst of a stretch of more than 6 decades of nearly uninterrupted Democratic control of the House from 1931 to the 1994 election. Americans in 1964 elected 295 Democrats to the 435-member House – which remains the largest post-World War II House majority held by either party. But even in the midst of that Democratic success, 1964 was also a year of Republican growth, at least in the South: They netted 4 seats in the region even as Democrats were netting 3 dozen seats overall nationally. The presidential candidacy of conservative Barry Goldwater (R), who opposed federal civil rights legislation, helped Republicans in the conservative South. Still, Democrats retained their historical advantage in the region's House delegation for another 3 decades, even as Republicans chipped away at it before finally winning the region in their 1994 breakthrough.

Before we go any further, let's define what the "Greater South" means, as well as the nation's other regions. The South is traditionally defined in political science as the 11 states of the Civil War-era Confederate States of America. We add Kentucky, Oklahoma, and West Virginia to the group, states that have some cultural and political similarities to the classically-defined South. The other 4 regions are the Northeast, Midwest, Interior West, and West Coast. We borrowed these 5 regional definitions from David A. Hopkins' excellent book *Red Fighting Blue*,

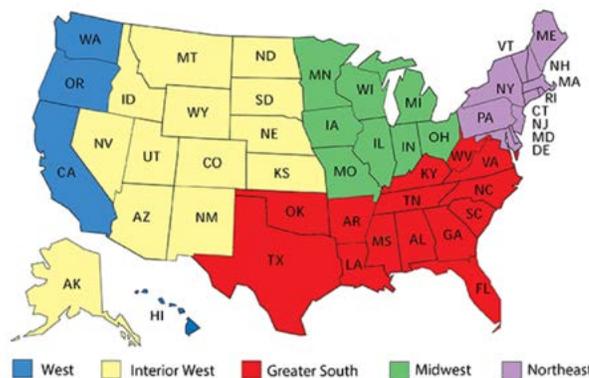
which explores the nation's political divides by geography.

The Greater South had the largest House delegation back in the 1960s, and growth there – led by Florida and Texas – has given it an even larger share of the nation's House seats now. Table 1 shows each region's share of House seats from the 1960 census through the 2020 census, upon which this decade's congressional district maps will be based.

From the 1960 to 2020 census, the Greater South's share of the seats went from 29% to 36%. The In-



Map 1: Regional definitions



terior West went from 7% to 10%, while the West Coast went from 12% to 16%. Meanwhile, both the Northeast and Midwest contracted – together they had 53% of all the seats in the 1960s, whereas now they will have just 39% (the regions have had almost the same number of House seats as each other for decades, as illustrated by the nearly-overlapping green and purple lines on the map).

Democrats held 85% of the seats in the Southern region in 1964 but only 32% now – and they were under 30% prior to a rebound in their strong election of 2018. Meanwhile, Democrats have long had edges in the Northeast and West Coast, but those advantages have generally gotten larger in recent years, albeit with a bit of backsliding in 2020. The Republicans almost always hold majorities, and often big majorities, in the growing Interior West, which nonetheless has the fewest seats of any of the regions. The GOP also has often held an edge in the Midwest in recent decades: This century, Democrats have only won a majority of the region’s seats once (2008), although they have come close a few other times.

Let’s take a look at the regional trends in another way. Democrats won 243 seats in 1968; a quarter century later, Republicans won 230 seats in their 1994 wave; and, a quarter century after that, Democrats won a slim 222-213 edge in 2020.

The Democrats’ 1968 majority was reminiscent of modern Democratic majorities in the sense that they had healthy edges on the West Coast and Northeast, although those advantages were not nearly as sharp as they are now. But Democrats owed their overall majority to their still-imposing strength in the Greater South: Even after some erosion in the 1960s, Democrats still held three-quarters of the seats in the region. Republicans dominated the Interior West and had an edge in the Midwest. Overall, Republicans held a 161-150 edge outside the Greater South – but the Democrats’ 93-31 advantage in that region meant they easily held the majority.

The GOP finally broke through and won the House in 1994. This was not only the first time since the 1952 election that they had won a majority; it was also the first time since the 1956 election that they had surpassed 200 House seats.

One striking thing about this map is how evenly divided the parties were by region, other than the usual Republican edge in the sparsely-populated Interior West. The West Coast was an exact tie – fueled by Republicans turning an 8-1 Democratic edge in Washington into a 7-2 GOP majority and by Republicans clawing to near-parity in California. Meanwhile, the Democratic advantage in the

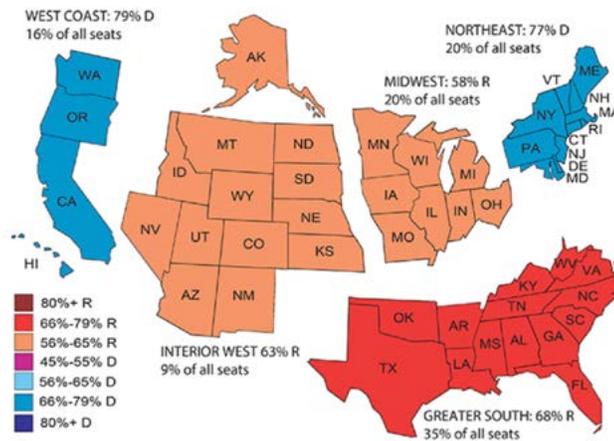
Northeast was the smallest of the time period covered.

Two years later, as part of President Bill Clinton’s reelection, Democrats netted enough seats across the other 3 regions that if they had just held serve from 1994 in the Greater South and Interior West, they would have narrowly won the House back. But the GOP made further advances in the Greater South – in part by conservative Democrats switching parties and joining the GOP – and, to a lesser extent, in the Interior West. So the Democrats’ 15-seat combined net gain in the Northeast, Midwest, and West Coast was almost totally negated by the Republicans netting an additional 12 seats in the Greater South and Interior West. This foreshadowed further growth for Republicans in the Greater South.

In the quarter century since the Republican breakthrough, the Democrats have built a huge edge in their strongest regions, holding more than three-quarters of all the seats in the Northeast and West Coast combined. But the Republicans have kept pace by squeezing markedly more seats out of the Greater South than they held during the 1990s and maintaining advantages in the Midwest and Interior West. That this Republican growth in the Greater South has coincided with the region adding more seats overall has made the GOP gains there even more important and meaningful.

One can also see how the House results in these regions reflect presidential partisanship. In 2020, Joe Biden won every state in the West Coast and Northeast regions. Donald Trump won all but 2 of the Greater South states (Georgia and Virginia were the exceptions). The Midwest states split 4-4, and while Trump carried a majority of the Interior West states (9 of 13), Biden won the 2 most populous states in the region: Arizona and Colorado, where Democrats have also made inroads in the House in recent years.

Map 3: 2020 House results by region



The road ahead

As noted above, redistricting, along with the current political environment, should allow Republicans to increase their margins in the growing Greater South. There also will be Republican offensive opportunities in the other 4 regions.

In 2020, Democrats won a 173-110 advantage in the 4 non-Southern regions. But the Republicans’ 103-49 advantage in the Greater South kept them close. The region also will represent by far the most important pillar of the next Republican majority, no matter whether it comes next year or in years to come. ❖

James Briggs, IndyStar: If Democrats ever get competitive again in Indiana, we might look back on this moment as a turning point. The Indiana Democratic Party this week went all in on marijuana legalization, revealing to IndyStar's Kaitlin Lange a push for legislation that would permit recreational use. That policy stance comes as Thomas McDermott Jr., the Hammond mayor and likely Democratic nominee to run for U.S. Senate, has said he will make it an issue next year during his campaign. McDermott also talked about smoking marijuana at a recent concert, a disclosure that is mildly interesting now but would have been a scandal back when former president Bill Clinton awkwardly claimed he didn't inhale. Indiana Democrats are making it clear: They are the party of legalized weed. While that is not an important issue to everyone, it is the kind of pitch Democrats can use to convince some of the state's right-leaning voters to give them a fresh look. Going all in on legalized marijuana is a smart move for several reasons, most notably because Democrats are taking a popular position gifted to them by the Republican Party. If Democrats are going to make a comeback in Indiana, this is one way it happens: by picking off issues that appeal to broad swaths of voters. A solid 60% of U.S. adults support legalizing marijuana for both medicinal and recreational use, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in April. That includes 47% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents. While that's still a minority of Republicans, it could become a majority fairly soon. The slice of Americans who think marijuana should be illegal under all circumstances has declined to less than 10%. Democrats are making themselves a little more relatable by advocating for recreational marijuana use. To paraphrase a political adage, there's no Republican or Democratic way to smoke a joint. There is, though, only one party that wants to let you do it in Indiana. ❖



Abdul-Hakim Shabazz, Statehouse File: Whenever I am asked how far away Indiana is from legal marijuana, my response is 80 miles. Just hop on I-74 to Illinois. Get off on Exit 220, make a right, and go about half a mile to the Sunnyside Dispensary. You will know you are there because the parking lot will have more Hoosier plates than the Indy 500. The same can be said for Michigan. In this legislative session, Indiana Democrats say they will push for marijuana legalization. However, as you know, they are in the super minority, so don't expect too much to happen from them. Republicans, on the other hand, have the potential to be a different story. A poll taken back in September shows that most Republicans in Indiana favor some form of legalization when it comes to marijuana. The poll conducted by BK Strategies this past September shows that 52% of Republicans surveyed favored legalization for both medicinal and recreational use. Only 40% opposed. That's compared to 65% of the

general population supporting both medicinal and adult use, while only 28% opposed it. And 67% of independents supported it, while 20 percent opposed it. When it comes to legalization for medicinal purposes only, the numbers were much higher. The results showed that 74% of Republicans supported medicinal marijuana use, while only 17% opposed it. For all voters, 79% supported medicinal use while only 13% were against it. Among independents, the numbers were 77% to 9%. ❖

Jill Long Thompson, IBJ: The give and take of the democratic process often makes it feel as if Washington is doing nothing to address the major problems facing our communities and country. But while there is always much work to be done, President Joe Biden is providing the leadership that is moving us forward during a most difficult time of political polarization. President Biden and our Democratic representatives in Congress are delivering for Hoosiers. For example, on March 11, less than two months after taking office, President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan. The rescue plan also provided \$250 million for broadband improvements across Indiana. More than one in 10 Hoosiers live in areas that lack broadband infrastructure and almost half live in an area with only one internet provider. Access to affordable high-speed internet service is critical to businesses, including Indiana's ag community, and to Hoosier families—and this \$250 million investment is making a difference in communities throughout Indiana. For the first time in more than a decade, because of the ARP, public schools in Indiana are fully funded and teachers have received a well-earned pay raise. ❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: U.S. Sen. Mike Braun, R-Indiana, had a difficult decision to make. When the Federal Election Commission issued a draft audit showing that Braun's 2018 Senate campaign broke multiple election finance laws, the senator had to choose between two possible defenses for his actions. He could argue that he was incompetent. Or he could acknowledge that he was corrupt. Braun went with the first option. He said he really wasn't in charge of his own campaign or his own finances. He tried to blame the whole mess on a bookkeeper, Travis Kabrick, who—Braun's team alleged—had "vanished." The Daily Beast, which has done detailed reporting on this mess, found Kabrick in a matter of seconds. The reporters there apparently used some new, cutting-edge and hard-to-procure technology to track him down. It's called Google. The Braun team now is doing its best to shovel the debris from this debacle under the rug, regardless of how large a lump it leaves in the carpet. The senator's mouthpieces say that the FEC findings are only a draft audit, not the final product. They contend that documents the campaign has submitted will explain away all the problems and leave Braun looking as pure as a vestal virgin. ❖

Churchill awarded Terre Haute casino

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Gaming Commission has selected Louisville-based Churchill Downs Inc. as the operator for the new casino in Terre Haute. However, the company will not receive the Vigo County gaming license just yet ([Inside Indiana Business](#)).



The commission said Wednesday an appeal of its decision to not renew the license for Terre Haute-based Lucy Luck Gaming must still be resolved. In the meantime, Churchill Downs will receive a "certificate of suitability," which will allow the company to begin the process of establishing a casino. Churchill Downs proposed a \$240 million project known as the Queen of Terre Haute, to be built on nearly 21 acres of land on Honey Creek Drive west of the Haute City Shopping Mall, according to documents filed with the commission. The nearly 400,000-square-foot casino building will include 56,000 square feet of gaming space featuring 1,000 slots and 50 table games. The project also includes a 125-room hotel. Churchill Downs said the project would create more than 500 full-time and part-time jobs. According to WTHI-TV, Churchill Downs will have 180 days to obtain a local development agreement for the project.

Fauci warns of 'double whammy'

WASHINGTON — With winter closing in and coronavirus case rates creeping up once again, White House chief medical adviser Dr. Anthony Fauci is warning that the vaccines' waning immunity combined with the highly transmissible delta variant will make for a "double whammy" that will impact "even the vaccinated people" (ABC News). "The somewhat unnerving aspect of it is that if you keep the

level of dynamics of the virus in the community at a high level -- obviously the people who are most most vulnerable are the unvaccinated -- but when you have a virus as transmissible as delta, in the context of waning immunity, that dynamic is going to negatively impact even the vaccinated people. So it's a double whammy," Fauci said in a pretaped interview aired at the 2021 STAT Summit Tuesday afternoon. "You're going to see breakthrough infections, even more so than we see now among the vaccinated," he added.

House censures Rep. Gosar for video

WASHINGTON — The House voted on Wednesday to censure Republican Congressman Paul Gosar of Arizona and strip him of his two committee assignments after he posted an edited anime video to his social media accounts that depicted violence against Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and President Biden ([CBS News](#)). The House passed a resolution punishing Gosar by a vote of 223 to 207, with Republicans Liz Cheney of Wyoming and Adam Kinzinger of Illinois joining all Democrats in support of the measure and one Republican voting "present." U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski headed the House GOP defense of Gosar and U.S. Rep. Jim Baird spoke on his behalf. After the resolution was approved, Gosar stood in the well of the House chamber while House Speaker Nancy Pelosi read aloud the formal rebuke against him.

Pigott to resign from IDEM

INDIANAPOLIS — Bruno Pigott notified Gov. Eric J. Holcomb that he will be stepping down from his role as commissioner of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) for a new position as the deputy assistant administrator in the office of water for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

"Bruno Pigott's lifelong passion is to make Indiana and our country a better place to live," Gov. Holcomb said. "For more than 20 years, there's been no one more dedicated to balancing environment and business than Commissioner Pigott. With his guidance, the agency has streamlined processes, eliminated backlogs and cleaned up contaminated properties." Pigott was appointed IDEM commissioner by Gov. Holcomb in 2017. Prior to serving as commissioner, he was the chief of staff and was the assistant commissioner in the Office of Water Quality for 10 years.

QAnon 'shaman' sentenced 3 years

WASHINGTON — Jacob Chansley, the self-described "QAnon Shaman" who infamously marched through the U.S. Capitol with a spear and horned helmet during the Jan. 6 riot, was sentenced Wednesday to 41 months in prison for his role in the attack ([ABC News](#)). It matches the longest sentence handed down to any Jan. 6 participant, following the 41-month sentence handed down last week to Scott Fairlam, a former mixed martial arts fighter who pleaded guilty to assaulting a police officer during the riot. "What you did here was horrific," Judge Royce Lamberth said during the sentencing hearing.

Gun fired in Statehouse office

INDIANAPOLIS — No one was injured Wednesday when a law enforcement officer assigned to the Indiana secretary of state's securities division accidentally fired a gun in the office (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). According to Allen Carter, director of communications for Republican Secretary of State Holli Sullivan, the officer was cleaning the gun when it went off. In accordance with standard procedure, the Indiana State Police is investigating the officer-involved shooting, Carter said.