

## House GOP takes aim at COVID mandates

Coming session will weigh public health and ‘individual freedom’

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – For the 3.4 million Hoosiers who have received the two or three COVID-19 vaccinations, the proposed HB1001 unveiled by House Majority Leader Matt Lehman on Monday will have little impact, unless the omicron variant turns into a microbe monster.

Fully vaccinated Hoosiers are pretty much going about their business, attending Colt and Big Ten games, going to restaurants and bars, enjoying holiday festivities with friends and families. If there’s a breakthrough COVID infection, the risk is on par with a case of the flu or a bad cold.

There are now Lilly antibody treatments available for these breakthrough cases that pretty much prevent



hospitalization.

HB1001 is designed to protect federal funding for SNAP and Medicaid and maintain voluntary state vaccine clinics. Or as Lehman put it on Monday, “This proposal

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## Pence, Roe and 2024

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – There have been two stratas of Mike Pence for president stories in recent weeks. The first has been about Pence taking his nascent campaign to Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina, preparing for an upstart 2024 campaign. The second is the many articles saying he has little to no chance, particularly if former president Donald Trump runs.



And now comes the Mississippi abortion case that was heard Wednesday morning by the U.S. Supreme Court, described as the most direct challenge to Roe v. Wade since the Casey case three decades ago. According to the AP, the Supreme Court had never agreed to hear a case over an abortion ban so early in pregnancy



**“We are committed to ensuring a real consequence. Rep. Boebert’s comments are an insult to this institution and to American ideals. We are not anyone’s scapegoat.”**

- U.S. André Carson, in a press conference with Reps. Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib on Tuesday.



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**Jack E. Howey**  
 editor emeritus  
 1926-2019



until all three Trump appointees – Justices Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett – were on board.

While we won't know whether this Mississippi case overturns Roe, or changes the dynamic of the timeline for fetal viability for several months, this represents the culmination and goal of Mike Pence's political career. And should the Supreme Court overturn Roe v. Wade, it would become his most profound achievement.

**Pence spoke at** the National Press Club on Monday at a Susan B. Anthony event, saying, "Today as the Supreme Court prepares to hear oral arguments in those hallowed halls, we are here to declare with one voice 'no more.' I'm very hopeful and I do believe that Roe v. Wade will be overturned whether it's now or in the future."

He urged the high court to throw the Roe v. Wade decision to the "ash heap of history," a phrase that has echoed throughout his congressional and vice presidential career sequences.

Pence has been in a political purgatory since he resisted President Trump's coup d'etat on Jan. 6, surviving the mobs chanting his name in the shadow of a gallows erected on Capitol Hill, then moving to certify the Electoral College victory of Democrat Joe Biden after the insurrection was quelled. He was the only Trump administration official to attend Biden's inauguration, and has been the subject of frequent barbs from Trump via emails to supporters and quotes in a hail of tell-all books describing the chaotic and seditious end to the Trump presidency.

Polls show Trump with a huge early advantage over Pence and the rest of a possible GOP field. A YouGov poll conducted in November showed

Trump leading Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis 44 to 21%, with Pence at 4%.

As we all know, Donald Trump reached out to Pence about joining his ticket in April through July 2016, finally settling on the Indiana governor over New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie for two key reasons: 1. Pence looked like a vice president according the constantly screen testing Trump. 2. He brought along the GOP's evangelical voting bloc that had been uncomfortable with Trump's history of womanizing while straddling the Roe v. Wade political divide.

It was Pence who articulated the importance of the Federalist



Society's SCOTUS list of potential nominees, with their willingness to overturn Roe. It was Pence who was the driving force behind President Trump's nominations of Justices Gorsuch, Kavanaugh and, finally, Notre Dame's Amy Coney Barrett, that have set in motion the most ardent challenge to Roe which was heard on Wednesday.

**"President Trump** had me interview all of the finalists for the Supreme Court," [Pence told CBN News](#) on Wednesday. "I was able to spend time with Justice Brett Kavanaugh and Justice Amy Coney Barrett and Justice Neil Gorsuch before they were appointed. I will tell you that they are men and women of integrity and conviction and I'm just going to be joining a great chorus of Americans that will be praying that they

have the courage to seize this moment for life.”

**According to the** New York Times: The Supreme Court seemed poised on Wednesday to uphold a Mississippi law that bans abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy, based on sometimes tense and heated questioning during a momentous argument in the most important abortion case in decades. Such a ruling would be flatly at odds with what the court has said was the central holding of *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that established a constitutional right to abortion and prohibited states from banning the procedure before fetal viability, or around 23 weeks.



But the court’s six-member conservative majority seemed divided about whether to stop at 15 weeks, for now at least, or whether to overrule *Roe* entirely, allowing states to ban abortions at any time or entirely.

Should the Supreme Court strike down *Roe*, or set in motion a state-by-state recalibration of fetal viability, it will not only change the political dynamic in dozens of state legislatures, but it could also revive Pence’s political muscle with evangelical voters, creating a viable lane to the 2024 nomination, particularly if Trump’s brand fades and he decides not to risk a second embarrassing loss.

As NBC’s Meet The Press Daily asked on Wednesday, does the new six-to-three conservative court rule against a constitutional right for women to have abortions in this country? And two, if so, what does American politics look like in a post-*Roe* world? Especially in these hyper-polarized times?

“For nearly the last 50 years, *Roe* has provided stability to an uncomfortable and controversial issue,” the

MTP analysis observed. “But if you get rid of *Roe*, every single state will need a position on fetus viability, weeks when you can/can’t have an abortion, parental notification, sonograms and possible exceptions (like on rape, incest or threat to the mother’s life). And every single primary and general election could be dominated by those specific positions – all in a nation where a majority of Americans believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases, and where even more say they support *Roe v. Wade*.”

While Trump has been focused on his “Big Lie” on the “stolen” 2020 election and a plethora of teeming “RINOs” that need to be eradicated from the Republican Party, he has been virtually silent on perhaps his most profound impact as president, which is setting up SCOTUS for this very moment.

Trump has left a hole in his base on what many consider to be his greatest triumph. There is some evidence that the evangelical base has tired of the constant strife, as well as the politicization of life issues.

**Pence will certainly** reaccentuate his pro-life mantle and use it to rebuild his base and create a lane for the 2024 nomination.

As for Jan. 6, Pence told CBN on Wednesday, “I don’t know if President Trump and I will ever see eye to eye on that day. Or that many of our most ardent supporters will agree with my decision that day. But I know I did the right thing.” ❖

**Howey is publisher of HPI.**

## Mandates, from page 1

covers the three items the executive branch asked for as a condition for lifting the state of emergency, while also strengthening the rights of individual workers throughout Indiana.”

But the other key thrust is for the 50% who have opted not to vaccinate.

“What we’re really trying to find here is a balance between the business’s rights to manage their affairs,” Lehman said. “But then we also have an issue of the rights of the individual.”

It comes as the Indiana State Department of Health on Wednesday reported 6,164 new cases of COVID. The last time the case count was so high was Jan. 8, when 6,199 cases were reported. The department also reported

63 more deaths from COVID, coming on the heels of 117 reported deaths the previous day.

According to the filed HB1001, which has 56 co-sponsors, the bill would:

- Provide that an employer may not impose a requirement that employees receive an immunization against COVID-19 unless the employer provides individual exemptions that allow an employee to opt out of the requirement on the basis of medical reasons or religious reasons.

- Require an employer to provide employees with an option to submit to testing for the presence of COVID-19 not more than once a week at no cost to the employee in lieu of receiving an immunization against COVID-19.

- Provide that an employer may not require an employee who has tested positive for and recovered from

COVID-19 to receive an immunization against COVID-19 for the six-month period following the employee’s date of recovery.

- Provide that an employer may not take an adverse employment action against an employee because the employee has requested or used an exemption from an employer’s COVID-19 immunization requirement.

The Indiana Republican Party was once the keeper and defender of business. But, following the lead of U.S. Rep. Jim Banks in Congress, they are now targeting corporations, opting for individual donations as opposed to PAC contributions. “We are now the party supported by most working class voters,” Banks observed in a memo to House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy earlier this year. “The vast majority of the Republican Conference doesn’t want to return to a GOP-era that neglects working class voters; House Republicans need to consciously promote policies that appeal to working class voters.”

Rank-and-file House members, facing their first election with new districts and fearing primary challengers along with hostile and demonstrative constituents who have opted against vaccinating at Third House meetings, pressed House leadership to defend “individual freedom.”

Rapidly vanishing within the majority party is the Judeo/Christian ethic of doing what’s best for your family, friends, coworkers and society, which is to get vaccinated to protect yourself and your community. As Rep. Lehman acknowledged, this is a collision between the protection of the greater community and “individual freedom.”

At the Nov. 23 hearing, a suspended Ascension St. Vincent Health nurse testified, “I actually hope I get COVID. I do. I want the immunity.”

In the hours after the Nov. 23 joint Rules and Legislative Procedures Committee hearing, it became clear that the rank and file have chosen to ignore medical expertise that widely recommends vaccination as the quickest strategy to end the pandemic, and instead is following the radicalized wing of the party that has moved toward its center. While there were enough House votes to suspend rules and move the legislation in one day, it was the Senate that put the brakes on, with multiple sources telling Howey Politics Indiana there weren’t enough votes for passage.

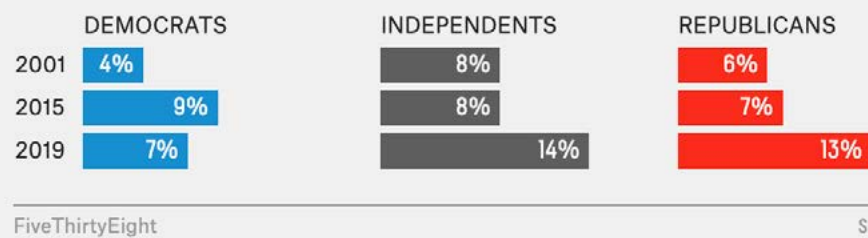
“Due to the urgency of these matters, a plan was in place to reconvene the legislature Monday, Nov. 29, to address these issues in a single day if consensus on action items existed,” said Senate President Bray. “The ongoing complexities of the issues raised and the potential unintended consequences, the logistics of moving legislation to the floor during a time when the General Assembly is not

typically in session, and the need for the public and members of the General Assembly to fully vet the legislation have led to the conclusion that the efforts to gather input and better solutions should continue until the legislature reconvenes in January. These matters will be taken up in earnest at the outset of the coming legislative session.”

On Nov. 23, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, the Indiana Manufacturers Association and the Indiana Restaurant and Lodging Association joined the Indiana Hospital

### Republicans and independents are increasingly anti-vaxx

Share of respondents who said vaccines are “more dangerous than the diseases they are designed to prevent,” by party identification



Association and the Indiana Medical Association in opposing what was then just a preliminary draft.

“Employers are getting squeezed from both directions,” said Chamber President Kevin Brinegar. “It significantly discourages employers from requiring vaccinations, which in our view is contrary to what the state of Indiana has been doing for months and months, spending millions of dollars to encourage people to get vaccinated and showing them the efficacy of that.”

Added IMA President Brian Burton, “The COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing in Indiana and across the world, with infection rates again on the rise and new variants emerging. Manufacturers are best-equipped to make their own decisions regarding workplace vaccination policies, and those decisions should be made independent of unnecessary government intervention.”

Dr. Stephen Tharp with the Indiana Medical Association explained, “We are concerned that this legislation which seeks to disincentivize vaccinations will result in the prolongation of COVID-19. Prolonging the pandemic would be harmful to our health care system, and all parts of our society.”

Indiana Democrats opted to portray the GOP as “Bad for Business, Bad for Workers.” On Monday, the party announced it will highlight the Republicans’ “troubling record that has stunted the economic opportunity for the state, underpaid and undervalued Hoosier workers, and produced unnecessary culture wars that have divided communities across Indiana.” It cited HB1001 that would “make Indiana’s businesses pay for COVID-19 testing for its workers, a reversal from federal guidelines.”

“Indiana Republicans have attacked businesses, made Hoosiers work more for less money, created un-

necessary culture wars against Indiana’s cities, defunded Indiana’s public schools and law enforcement, and considered investments like broadband, roads, bridges, and clean water as ‘socialism’. This partisanship is as extreme as it can get, and it’s an agenda that has to stop,” said Indiana Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl. “Indiana Democrats have seen enough and we’re ready to go on offense to defend the future that’s being created for Hoosier families through the American Rescue Plan and the Jobs Act. Indiana Republicans are simply bad for business and workers, and until they are held accountable, they will diminish the real potential of the Hoosier State.”

**Anti-vax movement gears up**

This anti-vaccine movement ignited by the COVID pandemic is essentially the Indiana Republican Party moving into space that was once totally and controversially that of former U.S. Rep. Dan Burton, who waged a mostly fringe campaign against childhood disease vaccination. The emerging reality is that opposition to the COVID vaccine is likely just the beginning of a movement that will seek to end MMR mandates needed for children to attend K-12 schools, and even university vaccine programs.

According to FiveThirtyEight, in a 2013 YouGov poll, 11% of Democrats, 14% of independents and 9% of Republicans said they believe vaccines cause autism. But in a 2017 YouGov poll, 19% of Democrats, 31% of independents and 39% of Republicans said it was “definitely” or “probably” true that vaccines cause autism. A 2015 Pew Research Center poll found 9% of Democrats, 10% of independents and 5% of Republicans thought the MMR vaccine was unsafe. And in a 2015 CBS poll, when asked whether parents should be required to vaccinate their kids or should be able to decide for themselves, 38% of Republicans, 34% of independents and 23% of Democrats said parents should be able to make their own choice.

“I’m worried that the politicization could threaten the social consensus [currently] in favor of vaccination,” Brendan Nyhan, a professor of government at Dartmouth College, told FiveThirtyEight. “If we start to see attitudes toward vaccines become closely linked to partisanship and ideology, we could see a polarization over vaccination that would threaten herd immunity on a whole series of diseases over time.”

Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends routine vaccination against 16 diseases from birth through age 18.

As one influential Republican told HPI recently, the current vaccination regimen was formulated following Dr. Jonas Salk’s polio vaccine in the 1950s. A parent’s greatest fear was a child con-

tracting polio and ending up in an iron lung or wheelchair. Now there is a sizable bloc that has equated the need to vaccinate or not as one of personal freedom.

**Monday’s special session scrubbed**

It was a horrified Purdue Prof. C.A. Waldo who in 1897 learned of a bill by State Rep. Taylor I. Record to redefine the mathematical concept of “pi”, rushing to quell what would have been a national embarrassment.



Memories of that episode resurfaced after Speaker Todd Huston and Senate President Rodric Bray called off a special session originally scheduled for Monday to “end the pandemic.”

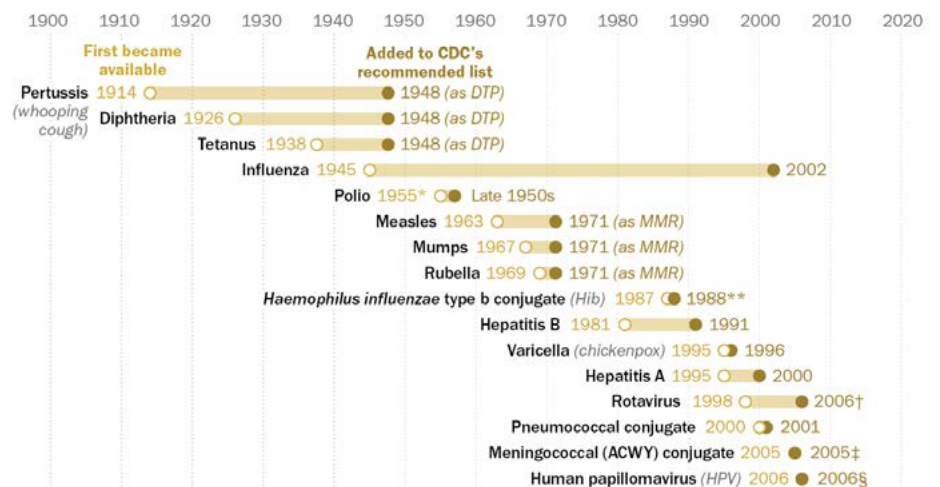
NWI Times’ Dan Carden: “Historians of the COVID-19 pandemic may look back on last week in Indiana, when some Republican state lawmakers believed they could simply declare an end to the public health emer-

gency, with amusement at their ignorance, or perhaps, their innocence. That’s because, once again, the coronavirus is proving that even if Hoosiers are sick and tired of COVID-19, the virus isn’t done making Hoosiers sick.”

IndyStar’s James Briggs: “The Drumstick Dash is back and the political turkey trot is canceled. While you were preparing for Thanksgiving, and maybe for a run in Broad Ripple, the Indiana General Assembly’s gobbledygook plot to set a new speed record for bad policymaking ended in a sloppy, embarrassing fiasco. We might as well call it what it is: Republicans were effectively planning to

**Timeline of currently recommended routine immunizations**

*Immunizations recommended by the CDC for infants, children and teens*



ban employer vaccine mandates. Indiana is already fighting the Biden administration's effort to force employers into vaccine mandates. But some Statehouse Republicans want to go further and take the choice away from businesses."

On Friday, the "omicron" variant of COVID-19 was officially recognized by the World Health Organization, the Dow reacting by falling nearly 1,000 points, and Americans girded for yet another "not again!" episode of this pandemic where vaccination is readily available (and free!) but 50% of Hoosiers and 30% of Americans are rejecting.

### How bad could omicron be?

National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Francis Collins on Fox News Sunday: "If you've raised antibodies against [COVID-19] from previously being infected or from being vaccinated, the question is, will those antibodies still stick to this version of the spike protein, or will they evade that protection? We need to find that out, to be honest, though that's gonna take two, three weeks in both laboratory and field studies to figure out the answer."

Dr. Anthony Fauci: "When you have a virus that has already gone to multiple countries, inevitably it will be here." On Wednesday, the CDC said the first U.S. case occurred in California from a person who recently returned from South Africa.

Dr. Scott Gottlieb: "The question here is going to be whether or not a fully boosted individual, someone who's had three doses of vaccine has good protection against this variant right now." Dr. Michael Osterholm: "This is a stay-tuned moment. There a lot left to be learned."

As statewide hospitalizations surge, the Indiana Hospital Association, Indiana State Medical Association, and Indiana State Nurses Association urged Hoosiers to vaccinate: "COVID-19 hospitalizations are rising dramatically in Indiana, increasing 66% over the past three weeks and approaching 75% of the peak of the pandemic Indiana faced last November. In addition to the rapid increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations, in which the vast majority are unvaccinated, hospitals are caring for more critically ill patients than ever before. Clinical data indicates that patients have more complex conditions than before the pandemic and have longer lengths of stay. In addition, emergency room visits are on the rise, which puts further strain on the system. Should the current trends continue, everyone in need of health care could be impacted. We urge all Hoosiers who have not yet received a vaccine or who are eligible to get a booster to do so before winter arrives to ensure a hospital bed is available for all in need. The COVID-19 vaccine has proven to be safe and effective at reducing hospitalizations and death and the best way to reduce your risk of serious illness and protect your friends



and family is to get vaccinated before gathering for the holidays."

### Holcomb extends public health emergency

The Indiana governor's office acknowledged Wednesday that the statewide COVID-19 public health emergency will likely extend into the new year after a failed attempt by legislators to quickly approve steps the governor sought to let the declaration expire. Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb signed the 21st monthlong extension of the public health emergency he first issued in March 2020 along with an executive order continuing a handful of administrative actions but no business or crowd restrictions. Both orders are in effect until Jan. 1. Holcomb's emergency order said about 95% of recent COVID-19 hospitalizations and 75% of deaths in the state involved unvaccinated people and stated that "the virus remains a threat to the health, safety and welfare of all residents of Indiana."

Indiana has seen a roughly 80% increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations over the past three weeks, with about one-quarter of those patients being treated in intensive care units, according to tracking by the Indiana Department of Health. The state is averaging about 20 COVID-19 deaths a day. Health experts have argued now is not the time to end the state's public health emergency as Indiana and other Midwestern states have seen a new surge of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations even before identification of the omicron variant last week sparked new worldwide concerns. Indiana has the nation's 11th lowest rate for a fully vaccinated population at 50.6%, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ❖

### Biden to unveil winter strategy

President Joe Biden is set to kick off a more urgent campaign for Americans to get COVID-19 booster shots Thursday as he unveils his winter plans for combating the coronavirus and its omicron variant with enhanced availability of shots and vaccines but without major new restrictions (AP). The plan includes a requirement for private insurers to cover the cost of at-home COVID-19 tests and a tightening of testing requirements for people entering the U.S. regardless of their vaccination status. But as some other nations close their borders or reimpose lockdowns, officials said Biden was not moving to impose additional restrictions beyond his recommendation that Americans wear masks indoors in public settings. Biden said Wednesday that the forthcoming strategy, to be unveiled during a speech at the National Institutes of Health, would fight the virus "not with shutdowns or lockdowns but with more widespread vaccinations, boosters, testing, and more." The White House released details of Biden's plan early Thursday, in advance of the speech. ❖

# Braun seeks government shutdown over mandates

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – U.S. Sen. Mike Braun will seek to shut down the U.S. government on Friday. He might want to check in with former congressman Marlin Stutzman to see how that stunt worked in 2013.

Citing “multiple GOP sources,” Politico Playbook said that Braun was part of a group of “conservatives on both sides of the Capitol are privately plotting to force a government shutdown Friday in an effort to defund the Biden administration’s vaccine mandate on the private sector.”

Even if Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell convinces his members to abandon a shutdown showdown, the fight over President Biden’s vaccine mandates on Capitol Hill is not going away. As early as next week, Braun plans to force a vote to disapprove and nullify Biden’s vaccine mandate through a process called the Congressional Review Act. He already has all 50 Republicans lined up to back the issue, and they’re hoping to flip one moderate Democrat.

In 2013, then Rep. Stutzman played a leading role in a government shutdown that was aimed at curbing government spending by taking aim at Obamacare. He became known for one short quote to the Washington Examiner: “We’re not going to be disrespected. We have to get something out of this. And I don’t know what that even is.”

A day later, Stutzman tried to walk back what had universally been seen as a blunder: “Yesterday, I carelessly misrepresented the ongoing budget debate and Speaker Boehner’s work on behalf of the American people. Despite my remarks it’s clear that the American people want both parties to come to the table to reopen the government, tackle this nation’s debt crisis, and stop ObamaCare’s pain.”

During the 17-day shutdown, approximately 800,000 federal employees were indefinitely furloughed, and another 1.3 million were required to report to work without known payment dates. It ended with the approval of an increased debt limit. Obamacare still exists.

In a meeting Tuesday night, the House Freedom Caucus voted to pressure Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy to take a harder line on the so-called continuing resolution unless Democrats strip out funding to enforce the mandate, Politico Playbook reported.

“There is leverage immediately in the Senate, and we think that House Republicans ought to be backing up any number of Senate Republicans ... to use all procedural tools to deny the continuing resolution passage Friday night — unless they restrict use of those funds for vaccine mandates,” Rep. Chip Roy (R-Texas), a Freedom Caucus

member, told Playbook.

On Tuesday, McConnell predicted that “we won’t shut down,” arguing that “nobody should be concerned about a government shutdown.” McConnell has never been a big fan of shutting the government down.

## Statewides

### Conrad to run for SofS

Newton County Commissioner Kyle D. Conrad told HPI he will seek the Republican secretary of state



nomination, challenging appointed incumbent Holli Sullivan. “I’ve heard from all four corners of Indiana, from county chairs and clerks to election board members, about how much experience matters and how important it is when it comes to elections and the secretary of state,” Conrad said. “Now is not the time to learn as we go.” Conrad served 10 years as Newton County clerk. He was recognized

by both the Association of Indiana Counties (1995) and the Association of Clerks of the Circuit Courts of Indiana (2000) as the state’s outstanding clerk. He was named Election Administrator of the Year by the Election Division of the Indiana Secretary of State’s Office in 2000. From 2009 to 2021 Conrad was an account manager for Governmental Business Systems, an election service and equipment provider in Indiana. Republican Diego Morales is also seeking the nomination.

### Rokita taking battle to school boards

Attorney General Todd Rokita is taking his unprovoked battle with Indiana’s local school boards and the state education establishment to the next level (Carden, NWI Times). The Republican, originally from Munster, recently issued a second, expanded edition of his “Parents’ Bill of Rights” that in 54 pages goes well beyond his initial 16-page screed over Critical Race Theory (CRT) and other “Marxist ideologies” that he originally claimed are “consistently being backdoored into Indiana classrooms.” Rokita’s new handbook practically is a call to arms for Hoosier parents to swarm school board meetings, school administrator offices, teacher classrooms and the Indiana Statehouse demanding answers about everything their child may potentially encounter in a school building on any given day. “We the parents have the duty to raise our families and are primarily responsible for what and how our children learn. It’s not the government’s job to raise our children, even if it wants to do so,” Rokita said.

## General Assembly

### SD14: Johnson, Turpin announce

Dr. Tyler Johnson is the second candidate to announce for the open SD14 seat. Johnson works as an emergency physician at Parkview Regional Medical Center, Parkview DeKalb and hospitals throughout the region. Johnson says he has served in a variety of leadership roles in his field and has been an advocate for advancing emergency care and patient safety (WANE-TV). "We've been talking with the community and we really feel called to do it. And we are really concerned about what the future is going to be and we've been urged by the community to put ourselves out there and step up for this position,"



**Dr. Tyler Johnson (left) and Ron Turpin.**

Johnson said. "Really, it's a personal choice, it's a discussion between me and my family and my doctor, so really nobody else has a discussion about my risk tolerance, my benefits that I see to it. And really, if it's something that I don't need or want, nobody else should be able to tell me that," Johnson said. Last month, businessman Ron Turpin announced he also wants to succeed Sen. Dennis Kruse. Turpin says he will defend the traditional Hoosier conservative values of faith, family and freedom. He believes the government closest to the people governs best and the state should move more power to its residents and away from politicians and bureaucrats in Indianapolis. "I would first and foremost describe myself as a Christ-follower. I am also a husband, father, conservative businessman and a community leader that has a history of delivering positive results. In the Statehouse, I will fight for fiscal responsibility, preservation of local decision making vs. state control, reform of out-of-control state agencies, and strengthening of our local infrastructure, including revitalization of our rural communities. We look forward to sharing our common sense and conservative message with the people of the 14th District," Turpin said.

### HD25: Abernathy running

Retired Army Col. Kent Abernathy has announced his campaign for HD25 Republican nomination. As a result of recent redistricting, the new HD25 will include parts of Boone and Hendricks counties, encompassing portions of Zionsville, Brownsburg, and Whitestown. A native Hoosier, and graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, Kent has dedicated his life to service. His military ser-

vice included active duty in Korea and with the 82nd Airborne Division, before transitioning to the National Guard. Abernathy worked in the commercial banking field before he felt the call to return to active military service after 9/11. Abernathy served in the administrations of Governors Mitch Daniels and Mike Pence, including as commissioner of the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) under Gov. Pence. "Throughout my life, I have been blessed with tremendous opportunities, and have been honored to serve," said Abernathy. "My experience in the military and business, and in all levels of government from local, to state and federal, has uniquely positioned me to serve as a member of the General Assembly, and I'm proud to seek election to House District 25. Serving our local communities and working on your behalf to make them even better would be the honor of a lifetime." His priorities include: Strengthening the economy and improving access to high-paying jobs; improving government efficiency and ensuring taxpayers receive the best value for their money; upholding and defending the conservative Hoosier values we hold dear; ensuring our families and communities are safe, and law enforcement has the tools they need to succeed, and; guaranteeing every Hoosier child has access to the quality education they deserve.

## National

### Trump plans to campaign in mid-terms

Politico reports that former president Donald Trump is throwing himself into midterm races where he hasn't even endorsed a candidate because he views the contests "as a tool to bolster and measure his own political standing ahead of a potential 2024 bid." For instance, Trump took exception to Club for Growth ads in Ohio highlighting J.D. Vance's comments in 2016 calling him an "idiot," "noxious" and "offensive." The reason: Trump told Club President David McIntosh the ads "could have the effect of driving down his popularity in Ohio."

### John Kelly says Trump won't run

Former chief of staff John Kelly told The Atlantic's Peter Nicholas that "Trump won't run" in 2024. "He'll continue talking about it; he may even declare, but he will not run," Kelly said. "And the reason is he simply cannot be seen as a loser."

### Abrams to run for GA governor

Democrat Stacey Abrams announced her campaign to be Georgia's governor Wednesday, setting up another challenge against Gov. Brian Kemp. Abrams ran against Kemp in 2018 and lost by 1.4%, writes The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's Greg Bluestein: "Her decision, long expected by local Democrats, clears the way for what could be a titanic showdown between two longtime political rivals. That is, if Kemp survives a fight for the GOP nomination first." ❖



# Weigh in on the 2022 Power 50 List

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – When we were putting the finishing touches on the 2021 Howey Politics Indiana Power 50 List, it came in surreal times. We literally were watching the U.S. Capitol engulfed by insurrectionists on Jan. 6. It came as the COVID-19 pandemic hadn't yet reached a year in duration, while reverberations from the November 2020 election were still playing out.

The 2022 list, which will be published on Jan. 7 next year, will reflect some of the residual impacts of the pandemic as well as the Jan. 6 insurrection. It will also forecast who will be playing key roles in the short session of the Indiana General Assembly.

The year 2022 will be the first mid-term cycle with the newly drawn congressional and General Assembly maps. It will be the first mid-term under President Biden. It will reflect how the 2024 Indiana gubernatorial and U.S. Senate races are taking shape. And it will also provide an early indication on how the 2024 presidential race is developing, with current U.S. Transportation Sec. Pete Buttigieg and former vice president Mike Pence potentially running.

Since 1999, Howey Politics Indiana has published the Power 50 List as a method of forecasting who will potentially wield power in the coming year. We rely on our leaders to nominate specific individuals or, as some do, create their own lists.

You can email your nominations or lists to me at [bhowey2@gmail.com](mailto:bhowey2@gmail.com).

## Here is our 2021 HPI Power 50 List:

1. Gov. Eric Holcomb
2. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch
3. White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain
4. Speaker Todd Huston
5. Senate President Pro Tempore Rod Bray
6. Health Commissioner Kristina Box
7. Transportation Secretary-designate Pete Buttigieg

8. Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer
9. U.S. Sen. Todd Young
10. Vice President Mike Pence
11. Commerce Sec. Jim Schelling
12. INDOT Commissioner Joe McGuinness
13. FSSA Commissioner Jennifer Sullivan
14. OMB Director Cris Johnston
15. Ways & Means Chairman Tim Brown
16. Senate Appropriations Chairman Ryan Mishler
17. Rep. Timothy Wesco and Sen. Greg Walker

18. U.S. Rep. André Carson
19. Attorney General Todd Rokita
20. Republican National Committee members John Hammond III and Anne Hathaway
21. Purdue President Mitch Daniels
22. Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett
23. Education Sec. Katie Jenner
24. Evansville Mayor Lloyd Winnecke
25. Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry
26. Indiana Gaming Commission Executive Director Sara Gonso Tait
27. Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness
28. Sen. Jeff Raatz and Rep. Robert Behning
29. U.S. Sen. Mike Braun
30. U.S. Rep. Jim Banks
31. Secretary of State Connie Lawson
32. U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth
33. U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski
34. Earl Goode
35. Patrick Tamm
36. South Bend Mayor James Mueller
37. Joe Donnelly
38. U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon
39. Seema Verma

40. HHS Secretary Alex Azar
41. Mike Schmuhl
42. U.S. Rep. Frank Mrvan
43. State Sens. Mark Messmer and Ed Charbonneau
44. Zionsville Mayor Emily Styron
45. Cam Savage
46. Jodi Golden and Erin Sheridan
47. Lacy Johnson
48. Lawren Mills
49. LaPorte Mayor Tom Dermody
50. Brian Tabor ❖

**This Power 50 comes in time of crisis**

Power struggle in DC, decline of Indiana delegation, pandemic and a powerful governor shape 2021 Power 50 list

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – After two decades of publishing Power 50 lists in the first week of January, this one comes in a true crisis atmosphere. As we watched in horror the U.S. Capitol being overrun by supporters of President Trump on Wednesday, the COVID-19 pandemic has killed more than 8,000 Hoosiers and 350,000 Americans, shutting down our state and nation for nearly two months last spring.

While vaccines are coming, there will be a distinct BC (Before COVID) and AC delineations as this epic story comes to a close. It gripped like a vise key figures, from Gov. Eric

**Banana States of America**

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – When newly-elected Mike Pence showed up at the U.S. Capitol for his first joint session of Congress on Jan. 6, 2021, he watched Vice President Al Gore declare George W. Bush and Dick Cheney as the winning Electoral College ticket. He heard Gore, who lost a bitter election that was ultimately decided in the Bush v. Gore U.S. Supreme Court case, tell the assembly at its conclusion, "May God bless our new president and new vice president, and may God bless the United States of America."

Nine months and five days later – on Sept. 11 – Rep. Pence stood in that Capitol as the doomed Flight 93 approached, only to be forced in the ground hundred miles

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

"I call on this mob to pull back and restore order. Words of a president matter. I call on President Trump to go on national television now to demand and end to this scene. The world is watching. I am genuinely shocked and saddened."

- President-elect Joe Biden

Continued on page 4

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# A time for thanks

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – Thanksgiving is upon us again, bringing to mind the Pilgrim story. That is a fine tale of religious refugees, which is probably the most enduring and evocative American experience. But rightly understood, the American Thanksgiving comes to us from Abraham Lincoln. It was made by his proclamation of Oct. 3, 1863, while the



Gettysburg dead were still being gathered, on an autumn day in the shadow of our nation's darkest hour. If Mr. Lincoln could find reason to call us together for a day of gratitude, we can now have no cause to do otherwise.

Shifting focus to our most recent year, America's factories have recovered and produced more goods this summer than at any time in history. Our ports are full, sending a record value of these goods abroad. At the same time, ships bring more goods to our factories and stores from trading partners abroad. Our American dollar rules the globe, denominating everything from global oil shipments to taxicab trips in Bangladesh. All of this happened in the wake of the biggest economic shock in global history.

Today, Americans have never been richer. Indeed, we are so affluent that our standard of poverty lies slightly above the global average income per household. Thus, a very poor American is richer than half of all living people. One out of three Americans has wealth that places them in the top 10% world wide.

Growing wealth and rising economic fortunes are good things. Improved economic conditions free people to pursue broader dreams and aspirations. Our affluence permits us to retire, to take longer vacations and spend more time with family. Economic growth funds research and development, science and education. It is not everything, but it unleashes great possibilities.

**America's enrichment is** even more bounteous coming as it did in a time of unequalled global economic growth. The past 30 years have seen more people escape poverty than in the 30 centuries before that. Since 1990, the global poverty rate dropped from 1:3 to 1:10 worldwide. Close to 3.0 billion people escaped the most dire impoverishment in just three decades.

This stunning growth came about almost wholly as a consequence of market-based reforms. What we call capitalism, free trade and a focus on building democratic institutions freed more humans from economic bondage in a little over one generation than any other force in human history. This stunning growth of wealth also permitted other institutions to thrive.

To offer an example, more than 1.0 billion hu-

mans – one out of every seven of us – were vaccinated against COVID in just one month of 2021. This is, hands down, the most remarkable human achievement in history. Within 18 months of a new disease attacking our species, we developed multiple vaccines, tested and manufactured them, and distributed them to 179 nations, which then administered them to more than 1,000,000,000 people in 30 days.

These marvels of science, free markets and dedicated public workers don't free us from the realities of being human. We are imperfect, so while we set aside time for giving thanks, there will still be murders, assaults and theft. The glories of our age haven't changed human nature. Still, one useful way to judge our times is through a thought experiment akin to that offered by philosopher John Rawls.

**Suppose you were given** a choice of when and where to be born. You could pick any place and any time in all of history, but there's a catch: You must enter the world under a veil of ignorance about who you will be. You can choose the time and place, but not your gender, or race, or intelligence. You cannot choose your parents, nor their occupations, nor their education. You cannot choose to be tall, or short, or beautiful. You may be healthy or disabled, belong to a religious minority, or be a refugee. Knowing nothing about who you will be when born, you may only choose where and when'll be born.

Can there be any doubt about when and where you would choose to be born? Of course you'd choose to be born now, in the United States. And, it would not matter what chance delivered you to be. This place and time would yield the highest income, the longest lifespan, and the greatest opportunity for human flourishing.

It is worth thinking through this critically, especially at a time of giving thanks. No group of Americans has suffered worse within our national experience than those of African, Native American or Japanese ancestry. Still, on average the most affluent and successful people of African or Japanese ancestry worldwide are Americans. Despite slavery and mass incarceration, here they thrive in ways that are almost unknown in Africa and rare in Japan.

We cannot make that direct comparison for Native Americans, but do know that that the poorest reservation family incomes are three times that of the world average. Every other displaced minority, from the Scots-Irish and Ashkenazi Jews to Guatemalans, are better off here than in the lands that drove them away. If you are gay, Jehovah's Witness, transexual, or atheist, you will find more acceptance, less bigotry and more opportunity here than anywhere else in the world.

**There is more work to** be done in our effort to create a more perfect union, and naturally we will not agree on the most pressing priorities. We are an exceptional nation, whose current greatness lies not only in our many successes, but in acknowledging our many shortcomings.

But, this past weekend is not set aside for celebra-

tion or critical introspection. The task before is easier; we are called merely to give thanks. Or, as Mr. Lincoln proclaimed, "The day shall be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People." ❖

**Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics at Ball State University.**

## A Biden-Trump rematch taking shape

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Polls show that voters, when asked about a rematch between Joe Biden and Donald Trump, are signaling a tossup, with Trump slightly ahead in some samplings.



This is a reflection of the plummeting approval ratings for President Biden. On June 1, the Real Clear Politics average approval for Biden in national polls was 53.32%, with a plus percentage over disapproval of 11.3%, higher than Trump ever approached. By the middle of last week, Biden's average polling approval percentage was 41.3%, with a negative gap of 12.1%, down where Trump

dwelted.

Now, to put this in perspective: The 2024 presidential election is three years away. Whether there will be a Trump vs. Biden rematch is uncertain. Polls, even a few days before an election, don't always show the outcome. They certainly can't be regarded as highly accurate forecasts this far out.

But the sagging Biden popularity, though there is a lot of time for recovery before '24, is bad news right now for Democrats. Their chances of retaining control of the House next year appear to have vanished, and Senate prospects are not as good as once envisioned. Traditionally, the party of a newly elected president loses support in the next congressional election. That certainly will hold true if Biden remains so low in approval.

**Democrats express confidence** that Biden's approval and their '22 chances will improve as the infrastructure bill, finally passed, will bring major, long-need projects. The bill is popular and could have slowed the decline in Biden's approval if bickering Democrats had passed it two months earlier. Also, Democrats hope the president's Build Back Better bill will be popular. But they have to pass

it, and do so with explanation of what's in it rather than just confusing voters by fighting with each other over costs of this and maybe that.

And they say it's unfair that Biden is slipping in polls in part over continuing COVID-19 spread, when it's Republican governors and Republican-controlled legislatures such as in Indiana, seeking to stymie the president's efforts to halt the pandemic. Well, it is unfair. But nobody ever promised that politics will be fair.

The messy withdrawal from Afghanistan also hurt Biden's approval. The withdrawal was negotiated by Trump, but Trump supporters say that he would have had a smoother departure.

Democrats are shocked by those polls showing so many voters, a slight majority in some polls, pick Trump in a rematch. They see Trump as a repudiated and disgraced former president who refused to leave office gracefully and sought to overturn his election loss with violence to stop the Electoral College count. Trump's favorable percentage average remains low, at only 41%. That so many voters see a tossup in a rematch tells a lot about how far Biden has sunk.

**Will Trump actually run again?** He shows every sign of doing so. Why wouldn't he, when he would love to be back in debates and get back in the White House to retaliate against his enemies?

Right now, Trump would be certain to win the Republican nomination. That could change if Trump's efforts to defeat Republicans he doesn't like in the '22 primaries result in Democrats winning in key contests in the fall. Doubtters about his candidacy say his ego wouldn't let him risk losing again – becoming a two-time loser. Even if he lost, however, he could again claim that he really won.

Will Biden seek reelection? He says he will. Some analysts thought Biden was the only Democrat who could have defeated Trump last year. That could be the situation in '24. Kamala Harris has an even lower favorable rating than the president.

Trump vs. Biden again? Pollsters test it because it's possible. ❖



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

# Fortuitous forecasting frolics for my 30th

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Normally, I wait until mid-December. This year, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of this weekly homily, I went early for my annual visit with Elvin Elfenhausen at the North Pole. As we downed rounds of Santa Sauce from our tankards in the Polar Pub, we talked about forecasting.



"We do lots of forecasting here at Santa's Workshop," Elvin told me. "What do you need to forecast?" I asked. "The weather for the sleigh's delivery route? Which houses have which children? They do move around, but is that necessary?"

"All that and more," he told me. "In addition to knowing the weather and the location of each child, so we don't deliver the same presents as the year before, we have to identify toy trends and the economic conditions of each household."

"Wow!" I exclaimed. "That's one bleep of forecasts." Santa's Sauce was getting to me.

"You bet it is," he replied dolefully. "We have to surprise children and their parents, but never go outside their range of rational expectations. We have to understand what fits with that family's aspirations. A fancy edition of novels by Dickens might be wrong for the child who has yet to read Dr. Suess stories or needs winter gloves."

"I understand completely," I said.

"It's not like those economic forecasts done by outta-state consultanting hired nuns used by the Plate of Indiana," Elvin said slurring his words.

"Yeah," I agreed agreeably. "The revenue forecasts that use those economic forecasts very often come in too low."

"Makes sense," Elvin said. "A forecast that's low is better for the politicians than one that's high. Even if the pols are high."

**"Yeah," I repeated.** "A low forecast is always safer than a high one. It says things are better than expected. And the pols can take the credit for the wisdom of their policies which they'll claim have made those things better than expected."

"Couldn't be said better," Elvin nodded. "Then there's the Golden Gift," I told him. Now Elvin said, "Yeah."

"Yeah," I said with enthusiasm. "Call it a Budget Bonanza or a Sizzling Surplus. So we're going to take a piece of it and give it back to the taxpayers in an election year, like 2022."

"Smart move, taxpayers, who else is there?" Elvin

pronounced.

"Except," I said moving my index finder to my nose, "Indiana doesn't have a surplus of money, it has a deficit of services. It needs to update its sewers, its water systems, its roads, its schools and other public buildings, and repair its natural environment."

**"No way. That would be** forward looking and good for everybody. That's why we're getting Biden Bucks," Elvin smiled.

"Right," I said. "The Hoosier legislature thinks it's supposed to make people happy, not make them better off. And our legislature always makes people laugh." ❖

**Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at [mortonj-marcus@yahoo.com](mailto:mortonj-marcus@yahoo.com). Follow his views and those of John Guy on "Who Gets What?"**

# GOP's tricky COVID blame game

By **KELLY HAWES**  
CNHI State Bureau

ANDERSON – In a recent speech, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy chastised President Joe Biden for failing to deliver on his promise to get the pandemic under control.



"I took President Biden at his word," he said. "I took him at his word when he said he was going to get COVID under control. Unfortunately, more people have died this year than last year under COVID." McCarthy didn't mention, of course, that it has been mostly members of his own party standing in the way of delivering on that promise.

A survey in mid-September found that 90% of adults identifying themselves as Democrats had been vaccinated compared to 58% of adults identifying as Republicans. This divide has caused Republican politicians across the country to engage in a delicate balancing act. On the one hand, many call on constituents to follow public health recommendations and get vaccinated. On the other hand, some of these same politicians actively fight administration efforts to stop the coronavirus from spreading.

**Take the president's** vaccine mandate. The order requires businesses with at least 100 employees to offer workers a choice, get vaccinated or begin following stricter protocols, including weekly testing to ensure they're not infected with COVID-19. The only way for employees to avoid the mandate is to obtain a medical or religious exemption. The mandate is now on hold as a

result of more than two dozen lawsuits, many of them filed by Republican officials.

Critics see this as a fight for individual freedom. They believe the mandate tramples on their right to control their own bodies. The Biden administration characterizes it as an issue of workplace safety. It contends employers have an obligation to do what they can to stop the spread of COVID-19.

**A three-judge panel** in the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals found the mandate to be “fatally flawed” and “staggeringly overbroad,” raising “serious constitutional concerns.” In response to a motion by the federal government, all of the cases have been consolidated in the Sixth Circuit, but no matter what that court eventually decides, observers predict the issue will wind up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

In its own court filing, the Biden administration argues the delays are costing “dozens or even hundreds of lives per day.” Among those filing briefs in support of the government’s position is the American Medical Association, which argues that COVID-19 poses a “grave danger” that has “wreaked havoc in communities across the country.” The United States has recorded at least 48 million cases and more than 775,000 deaths. Americans have been dying at a rate of nearly 1,500 a day.

The AMA argues in its brief that vaccines provide the most effective way to protect workers from infection. “The more workers who get vaccinated, the closer we are to slowing the spread of the virus and creating a safer environment,” the association told the court.

In a less cynical world, Americans of all political stripes would join hands to face down a common enemy. Unfortunately, we don’t live in that world.

The minority leader’s spokesman, Matt Sparks, told *The New York Times* he saw no conflict between fighting vaccine mandates and blaming the Biden administration for the spread of the virus. He mentioned the administration’s failure to exempt anyone who had already had the virus from the vaccine mandate based on natural immunity. “The lack of acknowledgement of this fact further erodes the public trust in the vaccine and our public health officials,” he said.

**Never mind that a study** in Kentucky found that those with “natural immunity” were still more than twice as likely to contract the virus as those who were fully immunized. Such facts don’t matter to guys like McCarthy. For them, it’s all about winning the next election.❖

**Kelly Hawes is a columnist for CNHI News Indiana.**

## Redistricting a challenge for our democracy

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – It would be fair to say that for a good bit of our history, Americans paid scant attention to redistricting. The redrawing of congressional and legislative lines every 10 years, sparked by population shifts captured by the Census, tended to pass unnoticed. Unless, of course, it involved some particularly outrageous instance of gerrymandering.



For line-drawers, especially in the age of the computer, this was just fine. When your basic laptop can so easily create any desired political complexion for a district, the politicians who were usually in charge of the process were quite happy to get the chance to choose their voters without much public notice. This would give the party in power in a state a lock on as many seats as possible—never mind the damage it did to competitive elections and, more generally, our representative democracy.

**An interesting thing** happened after the last redistricting round, however. As overt and divisive partisanship ratcheted up around the country, so did public

concern about partisan line-drawing. In several states, reform advocates were able to create citizen-led redistricting commissions, including in Arizona, California, Colorado, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Virginia. The goal was to remove redistricting from the hands of self-interested politicians and, ideally, make it fairer and more representative of voters’ political desires.

**But these are highly partisan times**, and in at least three of those states – New York, Ohio, and Virginia – the commissions split along partisan lines, with each side putting forth its own preferred maps. Moreover, as bracing as it is to see public support for non-partisan redistricting, the reality is that most states still put state legislators in control; this go-round, like last time, Republicans (who control the legislatures and governorship in most of those states) will have a distinct advantage.

Does this matter? I would argue that it does. To begin with, would you rather vote in a district in which you knew that your preferred candidate could never win, or in a district in which your party had a realistic chance of prevailing every other November? I don’t think it’s a coincidence that as elections have grown less competitive, the interest of ordinary citizens has waned.

But the truly troubling issues arise when it comes to the overall makeup of the U.S. House and of state legislatures. When a district is drawn to make it easy for a particular party to win there, it means that politicians don’t need to appeal to a cross-section of the electorate; instead, they must win over “the base.” Which, not

surprisingly, means that they focus on voters who are more extreme than the electorate in general. Our roiling partisanship these days is partly a result of redistricting bipartisanship out of existence. Overcoming it will prove nearly impossible as long as congressional and legislative districts are explicitly designed as vehicles for partisanship.

**The problem is, from** a politician's point of view the incentive to keep gerrymandering is quite strong. A 2017 study by the Brennan Center for Justice found that extreme partisan redistricting in a handful of states produced 16-17 more Republican seats than the party would have won otherwise, thus bulking up the GOP presence in the House for much of the last decade. The party seems likely to extend its dominance this time around, though in several Democratic-controlled states, legislators are doing their level best to cut into their margins.

This is not healthy. For most of our history, the House was legitimately seen as "the people's house," and

state legislatures were viewed as equally representative. But if their members actually represent only committed activists, it is hard to see them living up to the founders' expectations. Elections need to reflect public opinion as it evolves over time, and political competition forces candidates to adjust. They must work to understand the needs and desires of voters, explain their positions, and offer voters a choice in the marketplace of politics. Competitive elections undergird our self-expression as citizens. Don't let self-interested politicians take that away from you. ❖

**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.**

## Secretary of state battles coming in 2022

By **LOUIS JACOBSON**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – Next year, 27 states will hold elections for secretary of state. In most years, these contests would be an afterthought, even for political junkies. But with former President Donald Trump continuing to make election fraud the centerpiece of his effort to return to the presidency – despite the lack of any evidence that there was widespread voting fraud when Trump lost the 2020 election – the outcome of the secretary of state races in 2022 will likely be more important than ever. That's because in most (but not all) states, the secretary of state is given significant oversight of the election process – the very election processes that Trump is targeting.

Trump has directly inserted himself in several key secretary of state races by making endorsements. These include endorsements of Republican candidates running in Arizona, Georgia, and Michigan – three states that Trump lost narrowly in 2020 and that would be crucial to his winning the presidency if he runs again in 2024. In each of these three states, Trump and his allies sought to block the certification of results following the 2020 election. Having a supportive secretary of state next time would provide Trump with a friendlier audience for whatever inevitable complaints he would have about voting processes in 2024.

"The single biggest issue – the issue that gets the most pull, the most respect, the biggest cheers – is talking about the election fraud of 2020's presidential election," Trump said at a rally in Iowa in October.

In September, Reuters interviewed 9 of the 15 Republican candidates that had declared secretary of state candidacies in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, and Wisconsin; the article found that most supported a push for "more audits or other investigations of the 2020 vote, despite dozens of audits, recounts and court rulings that confirmed Biden's victory."

The intense focus on election administration has made the 2022 cycle of secretary of state races an exceedingly tricky one to handicap. I have handicapped secretary of state races for the past decade for Governing, the Cook Political Report, and now for the Crystal Ball. But never in those efforts – nor in any of my other handicapping efforts for other offices all the way back to 2002

– has the landscape been so complicated.

Usually, even a year before Election Day, I'm able to have some sense, even a tentative one, about how a given general election will shape up. This year, not so much. In several of the most important secretary of state contests for 2022, handicapping has become a 2-stage process.

First, a winner will need to be determined in the Republican primary. One factor will likely be decisive for these heavily base-oriented contests: How closely allied is a candidate with Trump? In many states, the identity of the Republican nominee will shape the GOP's prospects for the general election. Will the Republican simply coast to victory based on party affiliation alone, especially in a midterm election that is looking favorable to the GOP? Or will voters be turned off by a strongly Trump-aligned candidate whose opponent is painting them as a threat to democracy? In the latter scenario, will moderate Republicans vote Democratic and will Democratic and Democratic-leaning independents be energized to turn out to oppose



an aggressively pro-Trump candidate?

### **Georgia: Brad Raffensperger (R)**

Raffensperger infuriated Trump by rejecting his request to “find” enough votes to make Trump the winner over Joe Biden in Georgia, and by forcefully opposing the outgoing president’s allegations of election fraud in the state. Such positions led to death threats against Raffensperger and his family. Trump is aggressively backing a primary challenge to Raffensperger by Rep. Jody Hice (R, GA-10). “Nobody understands the disaster of the lack of election integrity like the people of Georgia, and now is our hour to take it back,” Hice said at a Trump rally in Georgia. There’s another challenger in the GOP primary: David Belle Isle, who lost a runoff to Raffensperger in 2018 and who told Reuters that he believes Biden should not have been declared the winner. Political observers in Georgia suggest that Raffensperger will be at a steep disadvantage in a primary dominated by Republican base voters. The Democrats have a primary as well, with three leading candidates. State Rep. Bee Nguyen is a well-regarded legislator and outspokenly progressive; John Eaves is the former chair of the Fulton County Commission; and Floyd Griffin is a former state senator and mayor. Given Trump’s intense focus on backing Hice, the contest promises to be one of the midterm’s marquee races. Regardless of which candidates become the parties’ nominees, it’s likely to be a competitive race.

### **Nevada: Open seat**

Nevada, like Georgia, is a state that Biden won in 2020 and where Trump allies tried to cast doubt on the results. Here, the secretary of state position is coming open in 2022. Incumbent Republican Barbara Cegavske, who is term-limited, is the only statewide elected Republican in Nevada today, but the state party censured her after she pushed back against Trump-aligned allegations of voting irregularities in the state. Trump hasn’t endorsed a GOP primary candidate yet, but the one who seems best placed to secure it is former state assemblyman and unsuccessful 2020 congressional candidate Jim Marchant. Marchant has been an announced guest at events with voter fraud conspiracy theorist Mike Lindell and figures linked to QAnon, according to the Nevada Independent. The Democrats have at least two candidates: Cisco Aguilar, a former state athletic commissioner and former congressional aide, and Ellen Spiegel, a former state assemblywoman. Expect a competitive race, regardless of the nominees.

### **Arizona: Open seat**

Arizona, another Biden-to-Trump state and the home of a months-long “audit” initiated by Trump allies, is another state with a secretary of state office coming open in 2022. Incumbent Katie Hobbs is running for the gubernatorial seat being vacated by Gov. Doug Ducey (R); the role that both Hobbs and Ducey played in certifying

the Arizona results has made them a target of pro-Trump forces. Each of the 4 main GOP primary candidates for secretary of state is aligned with Trump to one degree or another. One, state Rep. Mark Finchem, has received Trump’s endorsement. A second, state Rep. Shawna Bolick, chairs the House Ways and Means Committee and is married to an Arizona supreme court justice. A third is state Sen. Michelle Ugenti-Rita, while a fourth is Beau Lane, an advertising executive with no previous experience running for elected office. On the Democratic side, the primary will be between state Rep. Reginald Bolding, the current House Minority Leader, and Adrian Fontes, the former county recorder for Maricopa County (Phoenix) who lost his reelection bid in 2020.

### **Michigan: Jocelyn Benson (D)**

Benson, who was elected in 2018, has been attacked by Republicans for being overly partisan in election administration, although her extensive experience in the field – she was dean of Wayne State University Law School – and her unflappable style have won her some popularity. One issue that Republicans hope to exploit is her handling of something fully separate from elections: the state’s motor vehicle branch offices, which have been spotlighted by GOP-led legislative hearings. The GOP frontrunner is Kristina Karamo, a Trump-endorsed activist who has not served in elected office. She has called Benson “evil” and alleged widespread voting fraud in the state, according to Vice. Also running is term-limited state Rep. Beau LaFave.

### **Wisconsin: Doug La Follette (D)**

The big difference with Wisconsin’s secretary of state race compared to many others is that the position does not oversee elections. (Instead, the state is embroiled in bitter fights over a board that has that task.) This hasn’t stopped Republicans from gunning for the seat held by 81-year-old La Follette, a distant relative of former Wisconsin governor and senator Bob La Follette. La Follette has served as Wisconsin’s secretary of state for all but 4 years since 1975. One GOP candidate, former Menasha town supervisor Jay Schroeder, told Reuters that “there is lots of reasonable doubt” about whether Biden won the election. Other GOP candidates include state Rep. Amy Loudenberg and activist and podcast host Justin Schmidtka. Wisconsin’s series of razor-thin elections suggests that this contest could be competitive in the general.

### **Indiana: Holli Sullivan (R)**

Sullivan was appointed to the office by GOP Gov. Eric Holcomb in May to succeed the retiring Connie Lawson. Sullivan has extensive experience in the legislature as well as with the state party organization and is considered a credible candidate. However, she’ll face a primary against Diego Morales and Newton County Commissioner Kyle Conrad. ❖

**James Briggs, IndyStar:** When some healthcare workers lined up last week to testify to the Indiana General Assembly about their objections to vaccine mandates, here's what they were telling us: They can't be bothered to do the simplest thing in their power to make sure they don't contract and spread the most urgent health threat we are facing. As I noted in my Sunday column, one Ascension St. Vincent nurse even boasted about her desire to get infected with COVID-19. "I actually hope I get COVID," the suspended nurse said. "I do. I want the immunity." That is disqualifying judgment for a nurse, even on the religious grounds that many are citing (religious objections to vaccines is a complex topic that warrants its own future column). The healthcare workers who are fighting employer vaccine mandates would be better off finding new careers — and their patients might be better off, too. Instead, vaccine hesitant healthcare workers are finding a warm reception from Indiana lawmakers who are willing to take up their cause.

The Indiana General Assembly failed in its embarrassing Thanksgiving week effort to stop employers from firing workers over vaccines, but 56 House Republicans have already joined in on legislation to defang employer vaccine mandates when the new legislative session starts in January. The House is billing it as a top priority. It's not clear how much the Indiana legislature can help vaccine-resistant healthcare workers. The Biden administration's federal vaccine mandate, which is held up in court amid a challenge by Indiana and other states, applies to medical institutions that accept Medicare and Medicaid. It's disturbing, though, that the Indiana General Assembly wants to interfere with vaccine policies in hospitals.

Here is what Indiana's COVID-19 dashboard says: Fully vaccinated people account for just 4.7% of Indiana's 16,970 deaths. Only 0.04% of vaccinated Indiana residents have been hospitalized. Age appears to be the greatest factor in severe cases among people who are vaccinated, with 88% of breakthrough infection deaths occurring among those 65 or older, with an average age of 79. In other words, there is a simple and easy-to-find answer to Sen. Taylor's question and the nurse who testified either was not aware of just how protective vaccines are or she willfully obfuscated. Whatever the case, any healthcare professional who equivocates on whether it is safer to be vaccinated or unvaccinated is not well suited to their career. ❖

**David Ignatius, Washington Post:** The CIA discovered something scary in October: Russia was moving troops toward the Ukrainian border — and, unlike in previous border thrusts, was making secret plans about how to use them. The agency also worried that the potential conflict zone didn't appear to be just the eastern sliver of Ukraine occupied by Russian-backed separatists, which Russian troops had approached the previous April, but a

much broader swath of the country. Alarm bells rang at the agency, and then across the U.S. government. Reports of the Russian buildup couldn't have come at a worse time. President Biden was seeking improved relations with Moscow after his June summit meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Geneva. The Russians seemed to be reciprocating with dialogue on cybersecurity and strategic stability. And the administration had signaled support for an eventual diplomatic deal on Ukraine that would give Putin much of what he wanted. The tension

mounted through November. CIA Director William J. Burns rushed to Moscow at the beginning of the month to warn the Russians that an invasion of Ukraine would shatter the Russian economy and void any hope of rapprochement with the West. But Putin didn't seem to be listening. The Russian buildup continued, accompanied by defiant rhetoric. As the Ukrainian crisis enters December, the Biden administration is pursuing what policymakers like to call a "dual strategy." To deter a Russian invasion, Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet Wednesday with NATO allies in Latvia to share U.S. intelligence and discuss joint military plans to raise the cost of any Russian invasion. At the same time, the White House has continued high-level conversations with Moscow that could lead to a meeting between Biden and Putin, virtual or in person, before year end. Russia isn't backing down. It has nearly 100,000 troops close to the border, and administration officials expect that number could increase soon. ❖

**William McGurn, Wall Street Journal:** When the Supreme Court on Wednesday hears oral arguments about a Mississippi law that bans abortions after the first 15 weeks of pregnancy, the issue in contention will be clear. Ever since the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973 the court has held that women have a constitutional right to an abortion up to the point of viability—roughly 24 weeks. Expect to read a great deal about how pro-lifers seek to impose their moral views on the nation. Nothing could be further from the truth. Certainly the pro-life community would cheer a ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* upholding the Mississippi law. Pro-lifers would also welcome the encouragement that would give other states to pass similar laws. But the real issue in *Dobbs* isn't abortion bans. It's whether the court will allow a democratic politics of abortion or continue to force one side of the abortion argument—the pro-life side—to play by rules stacked against it and the Constitution. This is the status quo, the result of what the Supreme Court wrought in both *Roe* and its progeny, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992). In each case, a handful of unelected justices took abortion out of the hands of the American people and instead imposed their own morality on the entire country. In so doing, far from settling the issue, the Supreme Court only nationalized and inflamed the passions. ❖





## Legionnaires cases at Indiana prison

PENDLETON — The Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) says three cases of Legionnaires' disease have been confirmed in inmates at the Pendleton Correctional Facility ([AP](#)).

Two other probable cases have been identified and all five have been hospitalized. Le-

gionnaires' disease is a bacterial lung infection that is spread via aerosolized water droplets, such as mist or steam, and not through person-to-person contact. It is a type of pneumonia that can be treated with antibiotics, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. IDOC is working with the Indiana Department of Health to determine the source and testing is underway.



## ND set to hire Freeman as coach

NOTRE DAME — The University of Notre Dame is working on a deal to promote defensive coordinator Marcus Freeman to head coach to replace Brian Kelly, a person with knowledge of the situation told [The Associated Press](#) on Wednesday night. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because nothing had been finalized, though the first piece of Notre Dame's plan to regroup after Kelly left for Louisiana State University earlier this week had already fallen into place. Offensive coordinator Tommy Rees informed Notre Dame he would remain with the Fighting Irish instead of joining Kelly in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Notre Dame released a video on Twitter of Rees telling the team he was staying put.

## Teen charged in Michigan shootings

OXFORD TOWNSHIP, Mich.

([AP](#)) — The parents of a teenager accused of killing four students at a Michigan school were summoned to discuss his behavior just a few hours before the violence, a sheriff said. The disclosure was made Wednesday as Ethan Crumbley, 15, was charged as an adult with two dozen crimes, including murder, attempted murder and terrorism for a shooting Tuesday at Oxford High School in Oakland County. "He deliberately brought the handgun that day with the intent to murder as many students as he could," assistant prosecutor Marc Keast said while successfully arguing for no bail for Crumbley and a transfer to jail from a juvenile facility. No motive was offered. But prosecutor Karen McDonald said the shooting was premeditated, based on a "mountain of digital evidence" against Crumbley.

## Mayor Prince tests positive

GARY — The Gary mayor and deputy mayor tested positive for coronavirus and are experiencing "very mild symptoms," city officials reported ([NWI Times](#)). The announcement Wednesday afternoon stated that Mayor Jerome Prince and Deputy Mayor Trent McCain have each been able to carry out their responsibilities remotely and have attended meetings online. "This past Sunday, I received a positive diagnosis for COVID-19," said Prince. "I was vaccinated earlier this year, and, despite some mild symptoms, I feel well. I immediately began my quarantine when I received the diagnosis. I have remained in full contact with my staff, and I continue to carry out my full range of responsibilities."

## Carmel Council ponders impeach

CARMEL — A proposed ordinance making its way through the Carmel City Council would establish a procedure to remove its members ([IndyStar](#)). Councilors Sue Finkam and Laura Campbell co-sponsored the

ordinance, which would allow the city council to remove a member through resolution, a "bill of impeachment" and a city council hearing. A supermajority, or two-thirds of the city council, would be required to remove a member, under the language. State law already gives cities the power to expel members for violating official responsibilities or if they can't do what the office expects of them. "The Common Council shall have the power to expel any of its members for violation of an official duty or declare the seat of any member vacant if the member is unable to perform the duties of the member's office," the proposed Carmel ordinance states.

## MLB owners lock out players

IRVING, Texas — Major League Baseball plunged into its first work stoppage in a quarter-century when the sport's collective bargaining agreement expired Wednesday night and owners immediately locked out players in a move that threatens spring training and opening day ([AP](#)). The strategy, management's equivalent of a strike under federal labor law, ended the sport's labor peace after 9,740 days over 26 1/2 years. Teams decided to force the long-anticipated confrontation during an off-season rather than risk players walking out during the summer, as they did in 1994.

## Second arrests in Elkhart barn fires

ELKHART — A second arrest has been made in connection to the string of barn fires in Elkhart County ([WNDU-TV](#)). Joseph Hershberger, 41, of Nappanee was charged with arson Tuesday. And now, his 32-year-old girlfriend Sherry Thomas, also of Nappanee, is in custody as well. Hershberger is facing eight counts of arson for all eight barn fires we've told you about extensively in Elkhart County dating back to April.