

## Holcomb urges vax as pandemic remedy

‘Individual freedom’ will collide with responsibility; notes uptick in Indiana prison violence

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – It had been two years since my meeting in person with Gov. Eric Holcomb to do the annual year end interview. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted Zoom sessions this past year. With more than 17,000 Hoosiers dead, making it the most lethal health sequence in Indiana history, almost the entire interview dealt with that subject Tuesday morning.

“I noticed you don’t have Gov. Goodrich’s portrait in here,” I said to Holcomb. Civil War Gov. Oliver P. Morton peered out of his frame above the fireplace while fellow Navy veteran Gov. Joe Kernan and the first governor, Jonathan Jennings, adorned other walls.



“That’s a good thought,” Holcomb responded.

But Gov. James Goodrich, who held office during the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918-19 played virtually no

Continued on page 4

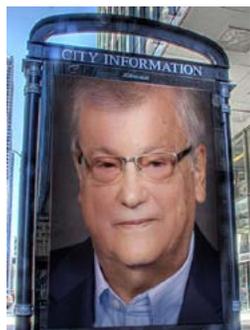
## Chairs and spoils

This column is the first in a series by Howey Politics Indiana on legendary and notable county political party chairs.

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – In 1903, famed Indiana writer and humorist George Ade wrote a play, “The County Chairman.” It features a county chairman pushing a challenger into a campaign against an incumbent. As the campaign progresses, the candidate asserts himself by insisting: “Well, this is my campaign!” The county chairman responds: “Your campaign! Why, who are you? You are only the candidate! Your cue is to lay low and follow instructions.”

In 1967, Richard Hatcher was



**“I was very straightforward. There were no minced words. I was polite but I made it very clear: If, in fact, he invades Ukraine, there will be severe consequences.”**

- President Biden after his two-hour call with Russian President Putin on Tuesday.



**Howey Politics Indiana**  
**WWWHowey Media, LLC**  
**c/o Business Office**  
**PO Box 6553**  
**Kokomo, IN, 46904**  
**www.howeypolitics.com**

**Brian A. Howey**, Publisher  
**Mark Schoeff Jr.**, Washington  
**Mary Lou Howey**, Editor  
**Susan E. Howey**, Editor

**Subscriptions**

HPI, HPI Daily Wire \$599  
 HPI Weekly, \$350  
**Lisa Houchell**, Account Manager  
 (765) 452-3936 telephone  
 (765) 452-3973 fax  
 HPI.Business.Office@howeypolitics.com

**Contact HPI**

bhowey2@gmail.com  
 Howey's cell: 317.506.0883  
 Washington: 202.256.5822  
 Business Office: 765.452.3936

© 2021, **Howey Politics Indiana**. All rights reserved.  
 Photocopying, Internet forwarding, faxing or reproducing in any form, whole or part, is a violation of federal law without permission from the publisher.

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



chosen as the Democrat nominee for mayor of Gary. John Krupa was the legendary Democrat Party Lake County and district boss, a throwback to the famous kingpins of yesteryear. An article by George Mavrelis retells the story of Hatcher's win. He quoted Hatcher as claiming that after his primary win, Krupa approached Hatcher and said, "Congratulations and the party will select the chief of police, the city attorney and the city controller."

**The difference** from 1903 was that Hatcher had defeated Krupa's organization in the primary. Hatcher didn't have to take all of Krupa's orders. The 1960s and early '70s were at the end of the spoils era, not the prime years. When I became active in Indiana politics in the late 60s as a teenager, this phase was where I came in. In fact, my only experience with Boss Krupa was eerily related to this story.



In 1970, I was one of the College Republican volunteers for the Richard Roudebush for Senate campaign who went to Lake County as election poll watchers. Lake County was not known as the most honest county in the state. It was known as a pillar of Democracy, not spelled with a little "d" which was not the favored standard there. In fact, the courts gave the Republicans the right to designate a number of attorneys who had the right to check the machine vote counts at any point. The counts would also be given to the Democrats.

Each attorney was accompanied by a driver (ours was a steelworker) and students. In our case, either Maurice Emery or I stayed in the car with a phone (with the number for the local media) and the other would go up to the poll place to watch for questionable activity that suggested phantom voters. We volunteered for the first cluster, which was in the heart of Gary.

The day in general had not

gone well (most of our precincts wound up in the Supreme Court challenge, another story) but it was capped by a rowdy scene late in the day. I was carrying a camera. A large crowd, illegally, was milling about the doorway and then our attorney was being carried out by a group of men. Suddenly my camera was pulled down and a man put a strong grip on my shoulder. He opened his overcoat with his other arm, showing me his police officer badge. He identified himself by giving me his officer rank. He was Mayor Hatcher's brother.

Our unhelpful accompanying burly steelworker lifted my camera back up again, and proclaimed that I was a citizen, on the sidewalk, who had a right to take pictures. Officer Hatcher pushed it back down with his free hand and said: "Either your camera or your face is going to be broken."

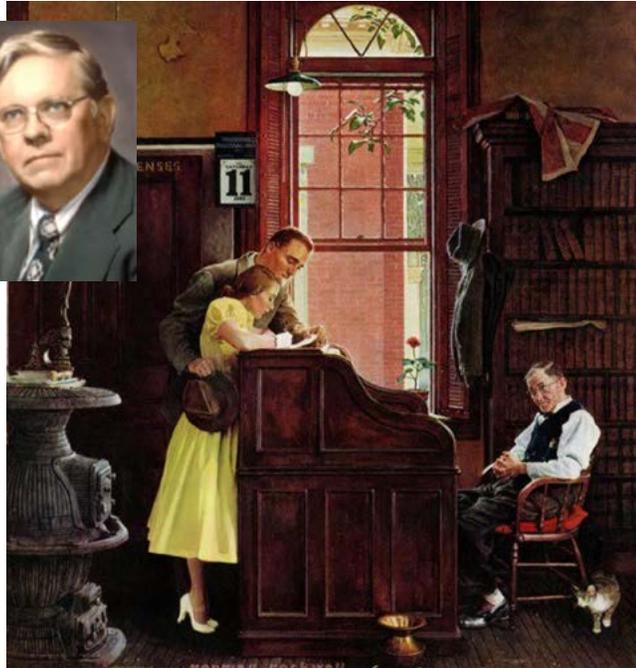
Just then Boss Krupa appeared (apparently notified about the incident) and did an arm chop, breaking the vise grip on me. I really don't know what happened next because I ran to the car and stayed there for the remaining hour or so. But that was to be my only encounter with Boss Krupa.

**In this series of** articles I am going to share some stories of my encounters over the last 50 years with a few county chairmen, our Indiana political bosses. As an organizing principle, I'm dividing it into three eras: The spoils years, the rise of television and candidate independence, and the current era of media fragmentation.

I will share some stories about county chairmen I met during these periods and some of the issues that pushed the changes. Obviously, as a Republican, most of those I mention will be Republicans but before plunging into that, let me briefly discuss the other legendary Democrat political party boss I met. It illustrates something else about

politics of that era.

In 1974, Diane and I were married in Bremen, Ind., on July 28. I had gone to work as marketing manager for one of America's largest furniture stores in Edina, Minn., (Minneapolis) after graduating from Notre Dame. My vacation days were not yet enough to cover the related wedding things plus a honeymoon, so weekends were my only option. Indiana had a requirement that you must file for your wedding license relatively close to the wedding. County clerk offices were closed weekends. Diane was from South Bend, so we needed to sign our license there.



**I called my friend Dan Manion** to ask for help. The then clerk of St. Joe County was another of the most legendary Democrat bosses of Indiana, Joseph Doran. During his era, local Congressman John Brademas was a national leader. Doran encouraged Joe Kernan to run for mayor, who called him "the go-to guy." Dan called Doran for us asking for his help.

Joe Doran opened up his office on a Saturday. We went into his office, a classic old courthouse office, and he was there at his old desk. It was a Norman Rockwell scene. Actually, we have had the Norman Rockwell figurine (based on Rockwell's painting) in our house for some 40 years because it seems more like a nearly exact picture to us than an imagined image. The clerk even looks like Doran.

The point of this story is that it is an example of what Doran described in a radio interview a few years before he died: "We'd fight like hell on election day. Then 10 days after, we'd be back on the phone. And we'd work together to do good for the county, for the good of this country. Today, they don't know how to work together. It's sad. It scares you."

Dan Manion was a rock-ribbed conservative and no supporter of Democrats. But Joe Doran, who was very kind to us by sacrificing part of his day off and in talking with us while there, exemplified that rivals didn't have to be mean to each other. They could actually be friends when not arguing politics and policy.

One last legend in this column: Seth Denbo of Crawford County. He made it clear to me and others upon meeting him that Crawford County was not one of the rich, urban counties of northern Indiana. He told a story

of a meeting where a man walked in with one shoe. Everybody got excited and asked him where he found it.

It was hard to establish exactly when Seth Denbo, especially in his later years when I first met him, was pretending to be a gruff, old-style boss and when it was real. "Crawford County is so poor that we can't afford voting machines," he'd say and then add "and as long as I'm county chairman we will never have them." I never checked but chalked that up to hyperbole.

On the other hand, when the College Republican volunteers were being trained how to watch for ballot altering in hand counts in Lake County, Seth said to watch for lead underneath a fingernail on the left hand. The person altering the ballot would distract you with the right hand, while doing something – such as marking two choices in the critical race – to get the ballot tossed with the left hand. He demonstrated how it could be done on a sample ballot. At one point, he said "we" then quickly shifted to "they" to suggest that perhaps it was personal experience.

**In one of the more unusual** political experiences of my life, I had recently been chosen by the College Republicans to be state chairman. Dave Tudor, the previous chairman, worked for State Treasurer John Snyder. It was Lt. Gov. Richard Folz's birthday, so we went over to his office to celebrate with him. Seth Denbo was there already.

What I remember most were these things: 1) They went on about the beauty of the Ohio River, which was not a topic in my part of the state. 2) They reveled in telling stories of the old days in Indiana politics, especially along the theme that fighting Democrats was enjoyable but there is nothing like a good old-fashioned brawl inside the Republican Party. 3) Keith Bulen and Orvas

Beers were from the wrong side of the tracks. We will pick up from there. ❖



**Seth Denbo**

**Souder is a former Republican congressman from northeastern Indiana.**

# Holcomb, from page 1

role in the government response to that pandemic which killed an estimated 10,000 Hoosiers. He was a former state Republican chairman who began the layout for the initial state highway system as well as reorganizing state government.

Holcomb found himself facing the pandemic in February 2020. Last October, he told HPI that the only pandemic playbook on state government shelves was one for the flu.

After shutting the state down for nearly six weeks, then gradually reopening through the summer, Holcomb's modus operandi was always to "manage" his way through the crisis. A year ago, Holcomb and the nearly 7 million Hoosiers appeared to be anticipating the vaccine. Today, he is confronted with a fifth surge of patients filling up hospital ICUs, while about half of all Hoosiers have rejected taking the vaccine.

"When you look at about any measure, hospitalizations, death rates, it is all 70% to 80% unvaccinated, week after week after week," Holcomb said. "These stories are real that I pick up on a daily basis, people who are taken from us prematurely, who say 'I just didn't think it would happen to me.'"

According to Indiana State Department of Health statistics, since the start of the pandemic unvaccinated Hoosiers account for 97.7% of COVID-19 infections; 99.96% of COVID-19 hospitalizations; and 99.98% of COVID-19 deaths.

Holcomb is still immersed in a legal battle with Republican General Assembly leaders and Attorney General Todd Rokita over who can gavel in a special General Assembly session and whether it will be state or local officials who call the shots.

While Gov. Goodrich confronted the 1918-19 pandemic with a hands-off approach, Holcomb has created the Governor's Public Health Commission that will reassess what has happened over the past year and what changes should be made. "This coincides perfectly with one of the reasons that came out of this, we've gone decades without major attention on our local health departments, and the state and local health delivery models," Holcomb said. "That's what this Governor's Public Health Commission is all about. It's structure, delivery, funding."

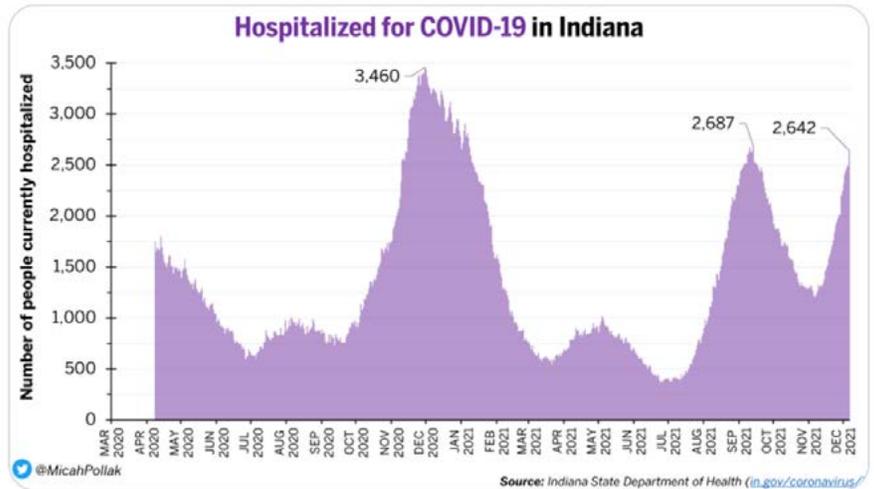
Holcomb enters his sixth General Assembly session as governor seeking to balance "individual freedom" that some feel was cramped by employer and federal pandemic mandates while expressing concern for what's in the best interest of the broader community.

Here is our HPI Interview with Gov. Holcomb:

**HPI:** I remember remarking to you that the opioid epidemic was the story of our time, but here we are entering a second winter with the COVID-19 pandemic. How do you see this ending, because that, obviously, is going to be the story of your two administrations?

**Holcomb:** I'm resigned to the fact that it's going to be here until it's not and it's going to take people who deny the vaccination prematurely.

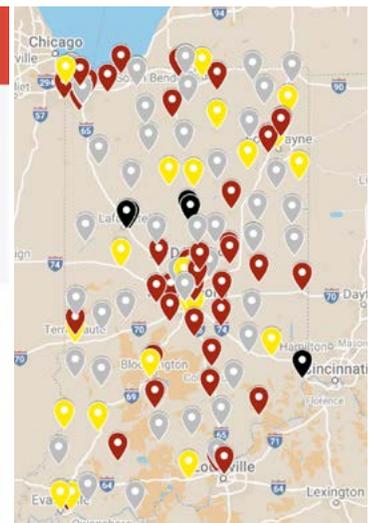
**HPI:** I figured the vaccine hesitancy would be the



Indiana Hospital Usag...  
Micah Pollak

Indiana ICU and inpatient bed usage by hospital facility.  
"In Use" = current usage  
721 views  
Published yesterday at 3:21 PM  
[SHARE](#)

- Week ending 12/2/2021
- ICU above pandemic avg.
- ICU below pandemic avg.
- ICU at highest ever
- No ICU beds data/value



5% to 10% that a normal school corporation might have to deal with in a school year. A year ago, I never dreamed that we would be here with half our population resisting. Did that surprise you?

**Holcomb:** We're a pretty independent-minded lot who tend to not like people telling us what to do, what not to do in general.

**HPI:** So it's that Jacksonian streak that took shape just after our founding that is still driving individual responses.

**Holcomb:** Injecting something into your body is about as serious as it comes. What is surprising to me, if anything is about that, is the data that is available and there is very compelling (evidence), much more so than any other vaccine that has come to market, about how ef-

fective it is. When you look at about any measure, hospitalizations, death rates, it is all 70% to 80% unvaccinated, week after week after week. These stories are real that I pick up on a daily basis, people who are taken from us prematurely, who say, "I just didn't think it would happen to me." They just didn't think it would happen to them, whether they are 23 or had it, laid up for one or two months in a hospital, and they're still not over it after they get out of the hospital. I wish people would just deal with the facts. I'm reminded of the times in the 1960s or the 1860s, I often wonder what would have happened if we had had social media in the 1860s, what would have happened next.

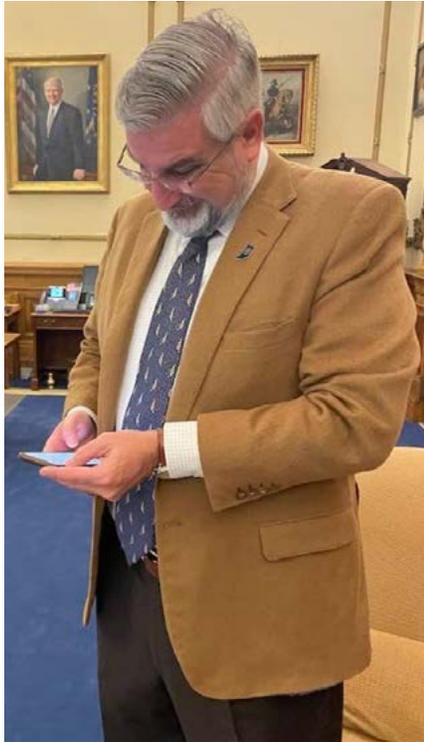
**HPI:** I have a nine-month-old granddaughter, Katina Rose, and she's the only one in our family who is unvaccinated. I don't see her as much as I would like because of exposure if I go to an IU game or a theater, even though I'm vaccinated and boosted. So we have this concept of "individual freedom" colliding with "person responsibility" and half of the population doesn't appear to care about the impact on their community. What are your thoughts on that?

**Holcomb:** That's the rub.

**HPI:** We're going to see this conflict play out in the General Assembly in the coming three months.

**Holcomb:** What do liberty and freedom mean when it affects others, adversely, maybe fatally? Those are the discussions we will have in these halls in our state, and I think rightly should be made in this state. I took exception to the federal mandates for constitutional reasons. I'm not an attorney, but I was suspect of the constitutionality, federally, using OSHA. It seems unprecedented and for it to be unprecedented in this time of uncertainty, I thought it was counter-productive and would probably bring about unintended consequences. For us, as a state government, we have to deliver services that are critical to this state's population, as a matter of fact, are required. For those federal mandates to come down on a state, that puts our ability into question to deliver those services. Whereas we might be able to figure out, as we did, ways to deliver service that didn't mandate vaccine, even though I believe in it, even though I promote it, even though I encourage it every day of the week.

**HPI:** During 2020, you had the weekly Zoom press conferences, and you were given high marks for transparency and focus. After you gave what I call the "light at the end of the tunnel" speech in late March, you pulled back and stopped having them. You're a graduate of the "Mitch Daniels School of Using Your Political Capital."



Why didn't you barnstorm the state urging people to vaccinate and protect themselves and their communities?

**Holcomb:** It was absolutely counter to what I heard as I got around the state.

**HPI:** Having said that, we watched West Virginia Gov. Justice and Ohio Gov. DeWine try to coax and incentivize their populations with stipends and lotteries that didn't work out so well. What were you seeing that moved the needle and what was counter-productive?

**Holcomb:** I don't pretend to be a know-it-all or have a crystal ball. All I know is I was tethered to all 92 counties and what was going on on the ground. I'll be in Fort Wayne tomorrow, I'll be in Upland on Friday, I was in Oldenburg last Saturday. That is my focus group. Those interactions are what I hear. And what I heard when the vaccine came on the scene and we started having the ability to manage this ourselves and that is the answer. We absolutely have to make

sure the resources are available as a state.

**HPI:** And you did, successfully.

**Holcomb:** I mean testing, and 95% of our kids are in class right now. So when I get out and about, and I do weekly announcements, people know COVID is with us. And they know where to get vaccinated if they need to. But what I said at the very beginning is we have to balance our lives safely, our lives and our livelihoods. What people were telling me, "It would have looked like he was just milking the promotion of COVID" and people would have said, "Get on with the other aspects of the job." Make sure our GDP continues to grow and make sure that when COVID is no longer with us, as we manage our way through, but if you get out into Rochester or Vincennes, they'll say, "We know COVID is here. What are you doing to bring us more opportunity?" That's GDP, that's revenue, that's single family home permits, that's housing, that's new job commitments in their areas, that's more headquarters moving into the state of Indiana. We're already at \$6.5 billion in capital assets this year; we were \$5.6 billion last year, which was a good year. It's because we didn't take our eye off the ball on the other side of the ledger. When COVID is behind us for good, whenever that may be – and it could be sooner for you if you get vaccinated – whenever that may be, we will have created real separation between us and the rest of the competition. Not because we're in denial about COVID-19; it's here! We're doing that. But it's because we stepped forward, the State of Indiana, and said, "Here's a bold idea: Let's regionalize the whole state." Counties self-determining what region they want to be in. There's \$500 million that 92 counties stepped forward and said, "We really want to chase \$1.5 billion." That equated to \$15 billion on the outside. That's

\$15 billion that would have never stepped forward in an organized way. Housing, some \$4 billion of that is housing. Transportation. Marketing, like we've never seen it before. Workforce development, quality of place items. So for us, how do we grow at the end of the day opportunity? At the end of the day that is quality of life, workforce development programs, making sure our economy is growing. In 2017 our GDP was \$353 billion; it's \$417 billion now.



**HPI:** As I researched the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918/19, Gov. Goodrich and President Wilson never commented on it, never took action. Everything that happened occurred at the local level, with decisions made by local health officers. So are we seeing the perfect circle, regarding how the General Assembly has reacted and what they'll want to do this coming winter?

**Holcomb:** Absolutely. This coincides perfectly with one of the things that came out of this, we've gone decades without major attention on our local health departments, and the state and local health delivery models. That's what this Governor's Public Health Commission is all about. It's structure, delivery, funding. So once again, we're thoughtfully delivering, just like the Teacher Pay Commission. We're putting in the hard work to provide the data to the legislature, so when we arrive in 2023 in a long budget session, we can make some real decisions about health care costs, quality and delivery, what kind of funding levels do we need? Where are we deficient? We know generally what they are, but where specifically? That's going to be a big topic we tackle, but we have to be equipped with information before we do.

**HPI:** You covered my sixth question about the Public Health Commission. When you talk to legislators, and I know they are reacting to their business communities and the mandates, it would seem to be the best course would be to get the pandemic over with and then figure what worked, what didn't, and what changes to make, which is what the commission will do.

**Holcomb:** Different legislators, mayors, commissioners and business owners react to their circumstance. Legislators have to collect all of those different opinions, and I do the same thing. When I am out and about I've got my ear to the ground. One thing that helped us, pre-vaccine, weather the storm and get tough to the point of the vaccine, we were tethered to businesses, schools, hospitals, like never before. It reminded me of my days in the military; it was a joint exercise on a morning, noon and night basis: Department of Corrections, INDOT, the state

police, and the ramifications of every decision that was made. One of which was correctional facilities. So when you talk about quarantining at home, that's much different than quarantining in a cell. The violence that's occurring on the inside is at a level that we have not seen in a long, long time. I am literally calling people in, our employees in, to meet with them and let them know that we're here to help, through therapeutic means. I sat down with one correctional officer and she had seen violence, and I asked her, "How can you continue to go in to work?" and go into a room where the concrete is bloodstained and she said, "I have to go back in there, that's my family." Her coworkers were her family.

"They need me." I just talked about the rosy economic picture, the wages going up to \$27.88 through the IEDC ... well, when you've got someone making \$19 an hour that's having who knows what being thrown at them through those bars, and seen the violence, and having one correctional worker surrounded by 150 inmates, it prompts me to say, "\$19 an hour? They can go to fastfood restaurant and make \$18 to \$19 an hour. That again prompts me to say we're going to have to do some things in 2023 to continue to deliver the services required for our population.

**HPI:** Post Roe v. Wade, legislation is going to come that will address fetal viability timelines as well as where women in poverty who can't afford a trip to another state can deal with their dilemma. Any thoughts or guidelines on how that process will go?

**Holcomb:** It's a constant temptation to opine or predict ...

**HPI:** I know Roe hasn't been repealed and I know Chief Justice Roberts saved Obamacare.

**Holcomb:** To get inside the head of those who wear the robes, and we're not going to know their decision until June or July. I like to know the facts. The more facts you have the more certainty will serve in the decisions we make. We'll track anything that comes through the legislative process this year and then deal with reality on the ground once the decision is made. If there is a decision.

Here are other excerpts from Gov. Holcomb's year-end media interviews:

**NWI Times, Dan Carden:** Gov. Eric Holcomb has two simple words of advice for Hoosiers as COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths once again surge amid the holiday season — "Get vaccinated. I'm convinced that the vaccine works," Holcomb said Monday in an exclusive interview with The Times. "The numbers are compelling, no doubt about it. You'd have to ignore them to come to a different conclusion." The Republican noted state data show that in recent weeks unvaccinated individuals accounted for more than 80% of COVID-19 infec-

tions, more than 90% of COVID-19 hospitalizations and 3 out of 4 deaths caused by COVID-19. Since the start of the pandemic, including the period before a vaccine was available, unvaccinated Hoosiers comprised 97.7% of COVID-19 infections, 99.96% of COVID-19 hospitalizations and 99.98% of COVID-19 deaths, according to the Indiana Department of Health. "I didn't coin this phrase but this is, pretty much, a pandemic of the unvaccinated that we find ourselves in right now," Holcomb said.

**Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, Niki Kelly:** Ending the COVID-19 public health emergency has a lot of symbolism attached from both sides. Those tired of the renewals by Gov. Eric Holcomb want to end the order to show the state is moving past the pandemic and back into normalcy and growth. But those pointing to rising case and hospitalization numbers say ending the order sends the wrong message – that Hoosiers no longer need to take precautions. So where is Holcomb on the topic? He told legislators three administrative changes he needed in law to "responsibly" end the order, then extended it through the year when they balked. "I don't subscribe to either of those sides. I really don't," he told The Journal Gazette in a sit-down end-of-year interview. Legislators will hear comments on ending the public health emergency at 9 a.m. Dec. 16. The language has been filed in House Bill 1001 and the House Employment Labor and Pensions Committee will hold a hearing. Another key part of the bill severely restricts employers from having vaccine mandates for employees. "COVID-19 is with us. It's with us for a while; till it's not. Our positivity rate is at a point that I don't like. Our vaccination rate's at a point I don't like," Holcomb said.

**CBS4, Kristen Eskow:** Gov. Eric Holcomb says he supports businesses that choose to mandate the COVID-19 vaccine, despite a bill introduced by Indiana House Republicans to limit those mandates. The state's daily new COVID-19 cases at have reached their highest levels since January, according to the Indiana Department of Health. State data shows 53% of the eligible population is fully vaccinated. When asked how he would grade Indiana's COVID-19 response, Holcomb responded, "Getting there, long way to go." Holcomb says he will extend the public health emergency for another 30 days. Amid Indiana's latest COVID-19 surge, Holcomb calls it a "pandemic of the unvaccinated" that is impacting the entire country. "I'm just shouting from the rooftop that 'Get vaccinated,'" Holcomb said. "This is the answer." The governor also reiterated his opposition to legalizing marijuana in Indiana while it remains illegal at a federal level. He would like both Purdue University and Indiana University to study the medicinal benefits it might offer.

**IndyStar, Kaitlin Lange:** During the 2021

legislative session Gov. Eric Holcomb vetoed more bills than he had in any previous session. Likewise, lawmakers voted to override more of his vetos than any other session. Lawmakers also filed numerous resolutions in an attempt to end Holcomb's public health emergency declaration against his will. Holcomb is also entangled in a court battle against the General Assembly over a bill they passed in 2021 enabling them to call themselves back into legislative session. Still, when asked about his relationship with Republican lawmakers, Holcomb said there was no bad blood between them. "I was with the speaker of the House this morning," Holcomb told IndyStar. "We have good relations. I was with a member in Oldenburg for fried chicken this Saturday. So I wouldn't overstate one disagreement on a constitutional basis. I was with the president pro tem about a week ago for a sporting event just to have fun, and so those relationships are there."

**Associated Press, Tom Davies:** With Indiana's COVID-19 hospitalizations doubling in the past month, Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb expressed frustration Tuesday at the "absurd" reasons some cite for refusing vaccinations, although he isn't offering any new state actions to combat the spread of the virus (Davies, AP). Many members of the Republican-dominated Legislature are set for a second year to push measures handcuffing anti-virus efforts, this time a bill forcing businesses to grant broad exemptions from workplace vaccination requirements that could be voted upon soon after the new legislative session starts in early January. Holcomb recalled during a Statehouse interview about a woman telling him that she was glad he opposed President Joe Biden's proposed vaccination mandates on large businesses, but also that she was disappointed Holcomb had received the COVID-19 vaccine because "I had a chip in me now." "We deal with the absurd and we deal with facts and there's a lot in between there for people to form their own opinions," Holcomb told

The Associated Press. "What I have to do is try to be persuasive enough so that folks understand that they're going to learn it the easy way or the hard way, unfortunately, by being vaccinated or not."

**KPC News, Steve Garbacz:** Gov. Eric Holcomb says he has the blueprints for Indiana's future in his back pocket, with all the pieces starting to come into place to start aggressively building it. Although

the ongoing pandemic is still a weight pulling down on some aspects of life in Indiana, Holcomb has otherwise switched back very much to a pre-pandemic mindset, with economic and community development first and foremost on his mind. "I know the plans that we have," Holcomb said in a 15-minute, year-end virtual interview with KPC Media Group. "Suddenly in Indiana we're building our state's future like never before." While economic development is where Holcomb wants the state to be driving, the pandemic is still a roadblock, albeit not as obstructive as it was at the same time a year ago. ❖



# Braun seeks bipartisan support vs. mandates

By **MARK SCHOEFF JR.**  
and **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

WASHINGTON – Sen. Mike Braun, R-Jasper, hopes a resolution to kill the Biden administration’s coronavirus vaccine mandate that he helped push through the Senate Wednesday night will send a bipartisan message against what he calls government overreach.

Scoring political points is about all it can do.

Although Braun said a similar measure has momentum in the House, it’s not clear that it will get a vote there. Even if it gains House approval, it will die on President Joe Biden’s desk.



“What we’re going to

accomplish with this, even though it will get vetoed, is [make it] a bipartisan issue,” Braun told Indiana reporters Wednesday morning before the Senate approved the resolution, 52-48, later in the day with two Democrats joining all Republicans in favor. “It’s another indication of why it’s a bad idea because it’s an executive ruling.”

Braun pointed to courts that have blocked the mandate – which requires Covid-19 vaccinations or weekly tests for companies with 100 or more employees – as well as public opinion polls showing opposition.

“Now Congress is about to say the same thing,”

Braun said. “It was a bad idea from the get-go, and almost any approach has been verifying that and reinforcing it.”

He touted the fact that the resolution drew the support of Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Jon Tester of Montana. It was offered under the Congressional Review Act, which allows Congress to reject federal regulations within a certain time after their promulgation. A CRA cannot be filibustered.

Braun estimated that the House version of the resolution has about 212 votes out of 218 needed for approval. Democrats hold a three-seat House majority. Braun said anywhere from 20 to 30 swing-district Democrats might end up supporting the resolution.

The Senate victory that Braun spearheaded may change the political calculations for them. “That ups the ante for House Democrats,” Braun said.

In his travels around Indiana, Braun said sentiment against the vaccine mandate is palpable. “It’s been the biggest issue since I’ve been in the Senate,” Braun said.

Braun supports vaccinations. “You should get the vaccination unless you’ve got a good reason not to,” he said. But he argues the decision should be made by companies and individuals, not the federal government.



“Every Americans’ personal freedom is at stake today,” Braun said in a Senate floor speech on Wednesday. “The federal government has no authority to make anyone choose between getting a job or losing their job.”

He also pursued that theme during his media availability. “Is it worth the marginal loss of one additional job for the marginal addition of one more vaccination?” Braun told reporters. “It doesn’t make sense.”

The Department of Labor’s Occupational Health and Safety Administration issued the vaccine and testing emergency temporary standard on Nov. 5. The agency has extended the public comment deadline to Jan. 19.

The core group of Republicans pushing to kill the regulation had wanted to tie the move to blocking a measure to fund the government, which would have caused a shutdown. That move was stopped by Senate leadership, including Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

Braun said he favored using a stand-alone CRA because of the “purity” it would convey about opposition to the vaccine mandate. “The reason I led on the CRA [is because] it was the only way for Congress to weigh in,” Braun said.

## Braun pressed on post-Roe

For a half century, Roe v. Wade has redefined our parties and created the political skirmish lines. There was a time when the Republican leader of the Indiana House was pro-choice, and the Democratic speaker was pro-life. No more. Indiana’s GOP has become monolithically pro-life, with a policy position tantamount to whether one would move up the political ladder. After last week’s U.S. Supreme Court case involving Mississippi, many are expecting an outright Roe repeal. So, what’s next for Indiana politics?

Sen. Braun was pressed by Meet The Press host Chuck Todd about the future of abortion in Indiana. He had few specifics. “When it comes to things like abortion, I think it’s clear it’s time to turn it back to the states, let the diversity of this country show forth,” Braun said on Sunday. “It eliminates a lot of the contention to where we become the Hatfields and McCoys on many of these issues. The beauty of our system is that it’s federal. It’s got all of these different ideas. And when you try to nationalize, federalize the way the other side of the aisle is doing on more than just this, I think you’re constantly in that area of contention.”

Todd pressed Braun, saying, “Every elected official is going to have to state very specifically now” on future restrictions, saying that they had been “hiding behind Roe.” Braun: “In my case when you believe in the sanctity of life, you want abortions eliminated from the landscape if you can.” He said that the issue won’t likely be “settled in a homogenous way.” How would you enforce a ban on abortion? “You leave that to the states,” Braun responded. “You try to find that right mix. I’m not saying you got that right in Indiana.” Todd: What’s your idea? Braun: “It needs to be different from where it is. I don’t have the

silver bullet." Todd: Do you criminalize abortion? Braun: "We just need to take off from where it is and return it to the states."

## General Assembly

### SD23: Beaver third candidate to enter

A third candidate has announced their candidacy for SD23 Local businessman Christian Beaver is also running on the Republican ticket (WLF-TV). Beaver is former a leasing manager for Granite Student living and in 2020 joined his father's family-owned residential and commercial development business. "The work of a legislator is year-round," said Beaver. "You've got to be accessible they have to go to be able to get to you have to return calls, return emails, you've got to text back. It's not all just about you know legislation there are different things that a candidate can do by connecting their constituents with state resources.. resources within their own community." Longtime aide to Mitch Daniels Spencer Deery, and Fountain County Clerk Paula Copenhaver are both also running.

### SD46: Field getting crowded

Andrea Hunley, an IPS principal, announced she was entering the crowded race (IndyStar). Hunley joins Karla Lopez-Owens, Ashley Eason and Kristen Jones – all Democrats – in the campaign for the newly created Democratic-leaning Indianapolis Senate district. The Indiana AFL-CIO endorsed Jones this past week. "We are incredibly excited to have this endorsement from the women and men of organized labor," Jones said in a statement.

### SD26: Alexander announces

Republican Scott Alexander, the president of the Delaware County Council, announced he is running for the soon-to-be vacant SD26. Melanie Wright, a former Democratic lawmaker, also plans to run in the district.

### HD32: Wilburn, Jaworowski announce

Dr. Victoria Garcia Wilburn announced her candidacy for HD32 on Saturday in Carmel. She joins Suzie Jaworowski in this race. "We've welcomed 73,000 new residents across Hamilton and northern Marion County in the last decade. This unique and new district, House District 32, is a new opportunity in our state's history to establish a foundation of what is important and central to our communities," said Wilburn. "In the Statehouse, I will focus on three pillars, safety, public health, and education. We will continue to pursue safety by environmental design and common sense gun laws, we will push forward agendas that put the environmental effects on health front and center and we will continue to invest in a strong and robust public education system while not forgetting the most vulnerable of our special education community." Wilburn is assistant professor of Occupational Therapy in the School of Health and Human Sciences at IUPUI. Fishers business-

woman and former Indiana State Director for the 2016 Donald Trump presidential campaign Suzie Jaworowski has announced she is running for HD32. She had previously announced a run for state treasurer, but reconsidered her decision after attending events throughout Indiana and listening to people's concerns. "I'm running for state representative because I've listened to people around the state and to my heart," Jaworowski said. "My fellow Hoosiers have told me they're concerned about their future and the future of our country. My heart has told me that I can best help Hoosiers by serving them in the legislature. I'm ready to work for Indiana."

## Nation

### Pence campaigns in NH

Former Vice President Mike Pence made a big swing through New Hampshire on Wednesday. His focus is on President Joe Biden, the economy and helping local Republicans, but the attention Pence is paying to the Granite State Could be an early indicator of interest in 2024 ([WMUR-TV](#)). "And I'm here in New Hampshire today, the Granite State, live free or die, to make sure people know that this last bill includes not just nearly \$4 trillion in spending, but it literally raises taxes on businesses just like this one," Pence said. "There's a lot of talk about '22 and you can't come to New Hampshire without people talking about a few years past that, but I think the battle is right now. We've got to stop 'Build Back Broke' before it gets to President Biden's desk." Pe's clear that he's not waiting for his old boss to make a decision ([The Derrick](#)). "Come 2023, we'll reflect, we'll pray and we'll respond to that calling, whatever that is," he said.

### Biden approval at 40% in Monmouth Poll

In a new [Monmouth University Poll](#), Biden's approval rating is ticking down again. The December numbers: 40% approve and 50% disapprove. That's compared to 42% approval and 50% disapproval in November. About three in 10 Americans name either everyday bills (15%) or inflation specifically (14%) as the biggest concern facing their family right now. This far outpaces COVID (18%) or any other single issue as the top kitchen table worry in the country. "Concerns about inflation have taken center stage in discussions around America's kitchen tables. And, as one would expect, many are placing the blame squarely on Washington," said Patrick Murray, director of the independent Monmouth University Polling Institute.

### 40% believe Roe will be overturned

Morning Consult polling reveals 40% plurality of voters said the high court is likely to overturn Roe v. Wade, up from 26% who said the same in a May 2019 survey. Overall, 45% of voters said they think Roe should be upheld. ❖

# 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

**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

**HPI Mobile Offers...**  
The Daily Wire - 6 Days a Week  
Photo & Video Galleries  
Access to HPI Columnists  
News Alerts  
and more for  
**\$0.96 per day**  
Now available for iOS and Android devices

Download it today!  
[howeypolitics.com](http://howeypolitics.com)

# Some more talk about inflation

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE – Thanksgiving at my home was a delightful affair. We enjoyed a large family gathering, well-seasoned with old and new friends. Nobody spoke of inflation, which is always a welcomed thing. In fact, my advice to anyone whose Thanksgiving table is despoiled by macroeconomics is to establish hard fines for such talk next year. Still, there's no way to avoid noticing a change in prices this season, and it is helpful to try to make some sense of the data.



A price increase is not inflation. We see them all the time, of if there is a natural disaster or some other irregularity that disrupts supply. Prices go up when people are willing to pay more, such as for flights during the holidays or Florida rentals during spring break. We are used to seeing these and making adjustments accordingly. However, this time is different in a few important ways.

First, we are seeing general price increases. We see them at the pump and the grocery and in wage increases for some types of workers. Second, these price increases are coming at the same time that the supply of money has increased substantially. Third, the labor force remains stubbornly lower than it should have been without the pandemic, which hints that it may actually cost more to produce and deliver goods and services. All told, this is a combination that spells growing risk of longer-term price increases, but there's more to the story.

The price increases we now see are not themselves evidence of long-term inflationary pressure. Over the pandemic, household savings in the United States spiked. For two decades, the average savings rate hovered between 6% and 8%. During the pandemic it spiked to over 35%, and as recently as last spring was over 26%.

**The pandemic caused** most American families to cut spending on vacations, gasoline, new clothes, restaurants and the like. At the same time, the CARES Act rushed money into the hands of the unemployed and provided stimulus funds to working families and businesses. Over the past few months, families across the U.S. have been urgently spending that money. They've gone on vacation, visited restaurants and amusement parks, and bought RVs, boats and automobiles. The past few months have seen an unparalleled surge in demand for goods and services.

Businesses responded to this surge. U.S. manufacturing production hit an inflation-adjusted record in the

summer of 2021, while imports of goods also hit a record level. The "supply shortages" that so animated the media occurred at exactly the same time we had record goods available to sell.

This present price increases are driven almost wholly by exhausting pent-up demand. Certainly some goods are hard to find, e.g. new cars. And, it is surely hard to find workers for many jobs; we're still making, importing and moving more goods than at any time in U.S. history. So, inflation concerns focus on whether this is a permanent or transient phenomenon.

There are still plumper-than-normal savings accounts, but spending patterns are returning to normal levels, more or less. So, the biggest source of excess money seems to be moderating. I've even noticed gasoline prices moderating by a quarter a gallon over the past week. That is highly unusual during a holiday season, and is too soon to be a consequence of releasing the national petroleum reserve.

**Black Friday and Cyber Monday** had plenty of discounts, though it is too soon to know if those prices were contained to the holiday weekend or are more seasonal. As I write this, there are several days of broad price declines for most commodities, including oil, natural gas, precious metals, row crops, and livestock. Home price growth has also moderated significantly, as has the stock market. Of course, this might just be due to the Federal Reserve indicating its increased concern about inflation. The only prices to rise this week were for interest rate futures, a signal of heightened expectations of a Fed policy move to tighten money supply in the coming weeks.

For many months, worry about inflation has involved one of two scenarios. The first is that we saw an increase in inflation that is really just a one-time price increase. The second is that prices will increase, then increase again, and continue to grow for months or years.

If prices rise a bit, but just for a few weeks or months, we might end 2022 with price levels about where they would've been without the pandemic. In fact, if we look back over two years, the typical inflation rate is just under 3%, which remains historically low. But, if the current increase in prices gets built into labor contracts, new orders for equipment and buildings, then it will raise expectations of future inflation.

I believe the most likely scenario is that much of the current burst of inflation remains short term. I believe this because the horde of family savings caused by COVID will be depleted in the coming months, and I believe that the Federal Reserve will tighten interest rates in the first months of 2022. I also expect that the large Build it Back Better spending bill is no longer politically tenable. So, we will not be adding more fiscal fuel to inflation.

**The most compelling** evidence I have that longer-term inflation risks are low is that bond market activity does not indicate alarm. Markets for government and private bonds are the single most sensitive marker of inflation expectations. As long as the buyers and sellers of

bonds continue to perceive the many ways in which today's inflation appears transitory, the remainder of us can rest easy. ❖

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

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

## GOP's 'beautiful' St. Joseph maps

By **JACK COLWELL**

SOUTH BEND – Politically, for what it's designed to do, the Republican gerrymander in St. Joseph County is a beautiful thing. Beauty, of course, is in the eye of the beholder.



For Republican political purposes, it's a beautiful plan, designed to perfection, drastically changing the three county commissioner districts to draw one district with as much of South Bend Democratic strength as possible, making the other two very likely to be won by Republicans.

It's aimed at providing a 2-1 Republican majority on the board of commissioners for a

decade, until redistricting again in 2031, by surrendering completely one district to solidify chances of winning the other two.

It's also calculated to prevent the Democratic-controlled County Council, as it draws its districts, from a retaliatory gerrymander to assure that at least six of the nine council members will be Democrats. Six, the present total, is needed to override a commissioner veto, such as happened when the commissioners vetoed accepting \$3 million in federal funds for health purposes.

Three council districts must be drawn within each of the new commissioner districts. The way incumbent council members are situated within the redrawn commissioner districts leaves Democrats with a good chance to win only five seats.

**Ugly, of course, also** is in the eye of the beholder. Democrats criticize the plan as ugly, so partisan that it even drew one formidable Democratic candidate out of the district where he planned to run. Dissent also comes from one Republican commissioner who was thrown under the bus and from good government groups advocating fairness rather than gerrymandering in drawing districts.

With all the dissent and criticism, Republican architects of the plan find it unwise to talk publicly about its political beauty. But with gerrymandering efforts to pick voters for the wards for Chicago's City Council, aldermen there boast about political acumen in drawing districts to

help some segment of the Democratic Party.

Political boasting isn't viewed as favorably in the eyes of voters here, so the architects of a beautiful thing politically talk of it as really aimed at guaranteeing that South Bend residents have a commissioner of their own. And that should be the case – election of a commissioner, likely a Democrat – in that district packed with South Bend Democratic precincts. But it's designed also to guarantee each of the two sprawling districts outside the city will have their own commissioners, most likely Republicans.

The aim of the gerrymander: South Bend's very own commissioner could always be outvoted 2-1 by the Republican commissioners. It's classic bundling of opposition strength. Politically, a beautiful thing.

**Chicago, where political** moves are transparent, not hidden, is an exception in bragging about political cunning in redistricting. Democrats and Republicans elsewhere when gerrymandering point to how close new districts are in population and how some geographic or community boundaries are maintained. With political pros, lawyers and computers, that can be done while still gerrymandering.

An unintended consequence of the St. Joseph County gerrymander is that Republican Commissioner Andy Kostielney has decided not to run for reelection in a district he helped design as safe for him. Kostielney has had serious health problems, and the furor over the redistricting is not conducive to good health.

It's ironic that Kostielney, now target of harsh Democratic criticism, won in the past with substantial Democratic support and often took nonpartisan stances for the good of the county. But the gerrymander designed to make him safe politically brought his political demise.

Another ironic aspect is that Republican Commissioner Derek Dieter, thrown under the bus, situated in that solidly Democratic district, was so recently hailed by Republicans as a former Democrat winning a seat for the GOP. A little collateral damage, however, doesn't smudge the beauty, politically, of the gerrymander. ❖

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

# Inflation is the cost of what we want

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – 2020 will be the missing year. Before and after 2020 will be the years we see as the continuum of our lives. 2020 will be the Great Interruption, a chasm for some and just a dip for others caused by COVID-19.



Data for 2020 will be dismissed as an historic ellipsis. But such data should not be ignored because they tell us much about ourselves and our nation in a time of great stress.

Recently, the U.S. Census Bureau released a statement read by TV newsreaders with great solemnity: "In 2021, 27.1 million Americans reported living at a different residence than a year

earlier.... This represents an 8.4% mover rate, the lowest documented rate in over 70 years."

Get that? Over 70 years! Well, what did you expect? The disruptions of COVID kept us home, but with a new sense of the value of being home. Value was found in working from home, not commuting, being home to care for children or other family members, and rediscovering the strength within ourselves.

Since we found new value in our homes, we were disinclined to sell them to others who felt constrained by their existing housing. In addition, vast numbers of renters sought to become homeowners. With this surge in the demand for houses, but reluctance of most homeowners to sell, prices skyrocketed.

Builders could not respond fast enough. With COVID rampant, experienced workers could not be found. Supplies were exhausted and inventories drained. Prices of all sorts of goods needed by builders and their vendors (such as timber) reached or exceeded old peaks.

**Higher home prices meant** higher home equity, giving more borrowing power to people with jobs. Additionally, middle income consumers were ready to spend cash sent from the government to stimulate the economy. Plus, unprecedented low interest rates made mortgages more bearable and loans for cars, furniture and other goodies more accessible.

The year 2020 spilled over into 2021. Orders backed up as suppliers couldn't supply enough. Folks who never thought about them suddenly understood supply chains. At railroad grade crossings, we watched freight trains of 100-plus cars roll by, knowing even all those shipping containers were not enough to satisfy all we wanted.

Now the newsreaders can huff, and the cable pontificators can puff about inflation. "Wicked inflation" caused

by "too much money" sent to consumers by a government successfully providing what voters wanted, a more vigorous economy. "Unjustified inflation" caused by consumers consuming and suppliers attempting to support those demands.

**The years 2020 and 2021** were the down and up rollercoaster years. As we step off into 2022, we're a bit dizzy. Not enough citizens and politicians yet realize our nation has underinvested in research, education, public health, and infrastructure.

Once again, consumerism has trumped common sense. ❖

**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?"**



# Has science overtaken Roe v. Wade?

By **KELLY HAWES**  
CNHI State Bureau

ANDERSON – When Scott G. Stewart suggested Supreme Court precedents were keeping state legislatures from considering recent advancements in medicine, Justice Sonia Sotomayor balked. "What are the advancements in medicine?" she asked.



Stewart, solicitor general for the state of Mississippi, was arguing the court should overturn those precedents. "Roe v. Wade and Planned Parenthood v. Casey haunt our country," he said. "They have no basis in the Constitution.

They have no home in our history or traditions. They've damaged the democratic process. They've poisoned the law. They've choked off compromise."

Stewart was defending a Mississippi law banning most abortions after 15 weeks. "The law includes robust exceptions for a woman's life and health," he said. "It leaves months to obtain an abortion. Yet, the courts below struck the law down. It didn't matter ... that the law applies when an unborn child is undeniably human, when risks to women surge, and when the common abortion procedure is brutal. The lower courts held that because the law prohibits abortions before viability, it is unconstitutional no matter what."

**Following the court's** decades-old precedent, he said, kept judges from taking into account "advancements in medicine, science, all of those things." He mentioned

"knowledge and concern about such things as fetal pain, what we know the child is doing and looks like and is fully human from a very early ..."

Sotomayor cut him off, pointing out that only a small minority of medical experts believe fetal pain exists before 24 weeks of gestation. "It's a huge minority and one not well founded in science at all," she said.

**Stewart argued that states** ought to be allowed to consider such things as "an unborn life being poked and then recoiling in the way one of us would recoil."

Sotomayor remained skeptical. "Virtually every state defines a brain death as death," she said. "Yet, the literature is filled with episodes of people who are completely and utterly brain dead responding to stimuli. There's about 40 percent of dead people who, if you touch their feet, the foot will recoil." A fetus recoiling from a poke might be no different, she said.

Sotomayor went back to her earlier question. What has changed in science to show that fetal viability, the point where a fetus can survive outside the womb, isn't a valid benchmark? Both lower courts, she said, found that the state of Mississippi had failed to produce an expert who could answer that question.

Stewart tried another tack. The problem with fetal viability, he said, is not really in the science. "It's that vi-

ability is not tethered to anything in the Constitution, in history or tradition," he said. "It's a quintessentially legislative line. A legislature could think that viability makes sense as a place to draw the line, but it's quite reasonable for a legislature to draw the line elsewhere."

Again, Sotomayor was unimpressed. "Counsel, there's so much that's not in the Constitution, including the fact that we have the last word," she said. She mentioned *Marbury v. Madison*, the case that established the Supreme Court's role in interpreting the Constitution.

After some more back and forth, Sotomayor arrived at the heart of the discussion. "So when does the life of a woman and putting her at risk enter the calculus?" she asked.

**For many, this debate** comes down to who has the greater rights. The unborn fetus still in the womb or the mother struggling to make her way in the real world? And when does the balance shift in favor of the infant? Sotomayor won't decide that question. She's outnumbered on the court by a margin of six to three.

Assuming conservatives carry the day, the debate will likely move to the halls of Congress and to statehouses across the country. The court's ruling is due this summer, just in time for the midterm elections. ❖

## We know how pandemic impacts property taxes

By **LARRY DeBOER**

WEST LAFAYETTE – What will be the effect of the COVID recession on the property taxes that fund Indiana local governments? I've been thinking and writing about the possibilities for a year and a half. Now we have enough data to answer that question. No spoilers, though. Let's consider what could happen, and what did happen after the Great Recession in 2007-09.



The Great Recession depressed new construction and reduced the demand for property. Property prices fell, especially for homes. Statewide, assessed values fell in 2011 and again in 2013. Assessments declined in 54 of 92 counties in 2013 alone.

**The COVID recession** was in 2020. Changes in property values were assessed in 2021, for tax bills in 2022. The recession of 2020 would hit local government budgets in 2022.

Property tax revenue is limited by the state-im-

posed maximum levy. It increases each year based on the six-year average of statewide non-farm income growth. That percentage increase is called the maximum levy growth quotient (MLGQ). In 2009 income dropped, and this negative number depressed levy growth starting in 2011 – there's that two-year lag again – and continued to depress the MLGQ through 2016.

The change in income in the COVID recession would enter the maximum levy calculation in 2022, and remain through 2027. Again, the recession first affects budgets in 2022.

**Tax rates are determined** each year by dividing the levy by the assessed value in each jurisdiction. If levies rise, even slowly, while assessed values fall, tax rates go up. Higher tax rates make more property owners eligible for credits under the constitutional tax caps. Tax cap credits are revenue losses for local governments. Credits did increase after the Great Recession.

So local officials been wondering and worrying; would assessments fall for 2022 tax bills? Would falling incomes restrict growth in the maximum levy? Would rising tax rates increase tax cap credit losses? There was no way to know.

Until now.

We know what will happen to the maximum levy growth quotient. During the recession unemployment increased and wages fell, but all that federal pandemic aid caused non-farm personal income to rise by 5.7% in 2020, the biggest increase since 2011. Adding that number to

the six-year average increased the MLGQ from 4.2% for 2021 budgets, to 4.3% for 2022.

But if assessed values fall, tax rates would have to rise to generate those higher levies. Tax cap credits could rise enough to erase much of the revenue increase. Now the numbers we need are posted on Indiana Gateway, the source for data on Indiana local government, at gateway.ifionline.org. Click Report Search, then Assessed Value, to find the first numbers I've seen about assessed value for 2022.

**I compared them to the** numbers for 2021.

The result: Assessed values are up! Net assessed value, after deductions, rose 5.6% statewide for pay-2022. The average over the past four years was 3.4%.

The big concern about property values was commercial property, such as restaurants, strip malls, or office buildings. Business was down because people didn't want to risk COVID. People worked from home and didn't need the office space. Occupancy rates were down, and so were rents. That could have depressed assessments.

But home prices are growing fast, and manufacturing businesses have done well. Apparently that was enough to offset any commercial property declines in

assessed values. Since assessments grew faster than the MLGQ limit on levy growth, it's likely that tax rates will fall in many jurisdictions. There should be no big increase in tax cap credits.

That's good news for local governments, but may be not for property taxpayers, especially homeowners. Tax rates may fall, but many home assessments will rise more. Tax bills could increase. The constitutional tax caps won't limit these increases, because the caps are based on percentages of assessed value. When assessments rise, so do the caps.

Owners of farmland may see tax reductions. Farmland assessments are not scheduled to rise very much, so falling tax rates would cut farmland tax bills. Local governments can lay to rest the threat of recession. Most won't suffer property tax revenue losses as a result of the 2020 COVID downturn.

What will we worry about now? How about inflation? ❖

**DeBoer is a profess of agricultural economics at Purdue University.**

## Gerrymandering in Illinois and Ohio

By **KYLE KONDIK & J. MILES COLEMAN**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – Illinois and Ohio, the two most populous states in the Midwest, each used to have reputations as bellwether states. Back in the late 1800s, when national elections often looked like the Civil War (North vs. South), this pair loomed large in part because they had both northern and southern elements.

The importance of these states endured throughout much of the 20th century, but Illinois clearly trended Democratic the past few decades as Democratic growth in the dominant Chicagoland area far outpaced Republican gains downstate. Meanwhile, Ohio has become markedly more Republican over the past couple of elections, as growing Republican dominance in outstate areas overwhelmed the Democratic vote in the state's big city areas.

By 2020, both states' presidential votes were equally distant from the national popular vote: Joe Biden's margin in Democratic Illinois was 12.5 points better than his national winning margin (Biden won Illinois by 17 as he was winning the popular vote by 4.5 points), while Donald Trump did 12.5 points better in Ohio than he did nationally (Trump carried Ohio by 8 while losing the popular vote by 4.5).

The strength of the majority party in each state –

Democrats in Illinois, Republicans in Ohio – is accentuated in their respective U.S. House delegations. While Biden won 57% of the vote in Illinois, Democrats won 72% (13 of 18) of the state's U.S. House seats last year. And while Trump won 53% of the vote in Ohio, Republicans won 75% of the state's House seats (12 of 16).

That Illinois Democrats gerrymandered their state while Ohio Republicans gerrymandered theirs helps explain why both parties punched above their weight in House races last cycle, although the Ohio GOP map was more consistently effective: It was designed to elect 12 Republicans and 4 Democrats to the House for the entire decade, and that's exactly what it did. Meanwhile, Illinois Democrats sought to elect a 13-5 delegation, but that edge was only 10-8 as recently as the 2014 election, and Democrats only maxed out in 2018 by winning a couple of affluent, highly educated Chicagoland seats that they had drawn to be Republican seats at the start of the decade.

As we recap the most recent redistricting news, we thought we'd focus primarily on these dueling Midwestern gerrymanders in left-of-center Illinois and right-of-center Ohio, where Govs. J.B. Pritzker (D-IL) and Mike DeWine (R-OH) recently signed into law new maps.

### Illinois

Ten years ago, when Illinois, with its Democratic trifecta, released its new congressional map, the liberal site Daily Kos Elections dubbed it the start of "Redistmas." In an otherwise rough redistricting cycle, Illinois was the sole large state that Democrats controlled, and the party



made some aggressive choices. Last week, when Gov. Pritzker signed the map that the Democratic legislature produced, it was another “Redistmas” gift to the national party. Though the state lost a seat, Democrats created 14 Biden-won seats, up from the current 12.

The new map retains 3 heavily Black districts, although they are less so than the previous map. While Rep. Bobby Rush (D, IL-1) keeps a 52% Black South-side Chicago seat, Reps. Robin Kelly (D, IL-2) and Danny Davis (IL-7) see their districts drop to under 50% Black by composition. Though Democratic gerrymandering likely precipitated this, it may have been hard to sustain 3 firmly Black-majority seats anyway – with the state losing a district, those seats would have had to pick up population in new areas.

Perhaps the most notable change in Chicagoland, though, was the creation of a new Hispanic-influence seat. The current IL-4 has its trademark earmuffs shape because it takes in disparate Hispanic communities across the city. At nearly 70% Hispanic by composition, the legislature decided it was appropriate to unpack it to form a new seat. The new IL-4 retains the southern “earmuff,” which has a large ethnically Mexican population, while the northern “earmuff,” which has more Puerto Rican influence, is moved into IL-3 – the latter also runs west to include pockets of suburban DuPage County. The Hispanic population in the new IL-4 is actually only slightly down from the current version – perhaps something that speaks to that demographic’s growth in the area – while 47% of IL-3’s residents are Hispanic. Both seats are overwhelmingly Democratic.

Elsewhere in Chicagoland, the creation of the new (and open) 3rd District necessitated the double-bunking of two Democratic incumbents. First-term Rep. Marie Newman, who by some accounts was less-than cooperative with legislative Democrats during the drafting process, is put into IL-6, held by 2-term Rep. Sean Casten. Casten flipped the current IL-6, a Romney-to-Clinton seat, in 2018, while Newman got to Congress by running as a progressive alternative to then-Rep. Dan Lipinski (D, IL-3) in the Democratic primary.

Last year, Rep. Cheri Bustos (D, IL-17), then the chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, had an embarrassingly close call, winning by 4 points, as her constituents narrowly stuck with Trump in the presidential race. Several months before the new maps were even out, Bustos announced her retirement.

Though Bustos’s departure sets the stage for a multi-way Democratic primary, the good news for the incumbent party is that the district has become several notches bluer. In short, IL-17 has become more urban: while it relinquishes holdings in a half-dozen rural counties, it takes in more of the cities of Rockford and Peoria, and expands into the blue-trending Bloomington area. With that, Trump’s share drops from 50% in the current district to 45% in the newly-enacted version. In carving out 14 seats intended to elect Democrats, mappers left 3 seats

that the Crystal Ball rates as Safe Republican. Before the new map was finalized, Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R, IL-16), one of the most vocally anti-Trump Republicans in Congress, announced his retirement. Though Kinzinger’s home was drawn into Lauren Underwood’s IL-14, he would likely struggle in a Republican primary most anywhere.

So while Democrats will have to work to keep some of the Biden-won districts in their column next year, they are favored in 13 of the districts and could win a 14th, IL-17, while Republicans will need a large-scale wave to match or exceed the 5 seats they currently hold.

## Ohio

The new Ohio map is definitely a Republican gerrymander, but it is not a maximal Republican gerrymander. However, there are good reasons to believe that it will function as though it is a maximal Republican gerrymander – if the Ohio Supreme Court does not force changes to it. In 2018, Ohio voters overwhelmingly approved a state constitutional amendment that, among other things, sought to promote compromise in order for the state to create maps that would last for 10 years, the customary shelf life of district maps. Failing that, the majority party could pass a map for 4 years (or just 2 elections) without minority party support, but there are certain state constitutional stipulations about splitting counties and not unduly favoring one party or the other that hypothetically constrains the party in power’s ability to gerrymander. This is why the Ohio Supreme Court, where Republican justices hold a 4-3 edge, is an important wild card in this process (Chief Justice Maureen O’Connor, a Republican, could potentially side with the 3 Democratic justices and force changes to the new map).

But for now, let’s assume that the new map is in place for 2022. Even though some of the districts are competitive on paper, Republicans can reasonably hope that it will produce their intended result – a 13-2 Republican advantage, up from 12-4 on the current map.

According to DRA, districts 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, and 14 all gave Donald Trump at least 55% of the vote in 2020. All of them are Safe Republican.

The Ohio Supreme Court will weigh in here at some point and determine whether the Republicans went too far based on the new rules. Ohio Republicans can argue that they could have been more aggressive but were not, which they absolutely could have been – earlier proposals from the state House and Senate show how that could have worked. But Republicans can also be reasonably confident that they’ll get the outcomes they want next year and in 2024 – and then they can draw a new gerrymander in 2025. Democrats will hope the court forces changes: most obviously, pushing for a redraw of OH-1 so that it becomes more Democratic, which would be easy to do. So we’ll just have to wait and see. ❖

**David Brooks, *The Atlantic*:** I fell in love with conservatism in my 20s. As a politics and crime reporter in Chicago, I often found myself around public-housing projects like Cabrini-Green and the Robert Taylor Homes, which had been built with the best of intentions but had become nightmares. The urban planners who designed those projects thought they could improve lives by replacing ramshackle old neighborhoods with a series of neatly ordered high-rises. But, as the sociologist Richard Sennett, who lived in part of the Cabrini-Green complex as a child, noted, the planners never really consulted the residents themselves. They disrespected the residents by turning them into unseen, passive spectators of their own lives. By the time I encountered the projects they were national symbols of urban decay. Back then I thought of myself as a socialist. But seeing the fallout from this situation prompted a shocking realization: This is exactly what that guy I read in college had predicted. Human society is unalterably complex, Edmund Burke argued. If you try to reengineer it based on the simplistic schema of your own reason, you will unintentionally cause significant harm. Though Burke was writing as a conservative statesman in Britain some 200 years earlier, the wisdom of his insight was apparent in what I was seeing in the Chicago of the 1980s. I started reading any writer on conservatism whose book I could get my hands on—Willmoore Kendall, Peter Viereck, Shirley Robin Letwin. I can only describe what happened next as a love affair. I was enchanted by their way of looking at the world. In conservatism I found not a mere alternative policy agenda, but a deeper and more resonant account of human nature, a more comprehensive understanding of wisdom, an inspiring description of the highest ethical life and the nurturing community. What passes for “conservatism” now, however, is nearly the opposite of the Burkean conservatism I encountered then. Today, what passes for the worldview of “the right” is a set of resentful animosities, a partisan attachment to Donald Trump or Tucker Carlson, a sort of mental brutality. The rich philosophical perspective that dazzled me then has been reduced to Fox News and voter suppression. ❖

**John Krull, *Statehouse File*:** It was a rare moment of grace in what has become any ever-increasingly graceless age. It was three years ago. When former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole, R-Kansas, a wheelchair-bound old man, visited the Capitol where the remains of the 41st president of the United States, George H.W. Bush, lay in state, he stood before the casket and saluted. It was a tribute, an offering of respect, from one leader to another. From one rival to another. What made it moving was the fact that the two men had not always gotten along. Bush and Dole jostled for political office several times. In 1976, both men were under consideration to be President Gerald Ford’s running mate as Ford squared

off against Jimmy Carter. Dole prevailed and became the vice-presidential nominee that year, only to lose in the general election to Carter and Walter Mondale. Four years later, they both ran for president — and they both lost in the battle for the Republican nomination to Ronald Reagan. Once again, both were in the pool to be vice-presidential picks. That time, Bush won and went on to serve as the nation’s VP for eight years. In 1988, they tilted at each other again in the race to succeed Reagan. By then, their dueling ambitions had been throwing them into conflict for more than a decade. The friction between them rubbed some spots raw. On national television right after the New Hampshire primary — a primary Bush won, on his way to capturing the GOP nomination and the presidency — the two men shared the screen for a moment. When the anchor asked Dole if he had anything to say to Bush, Dole snarled, “Stop lying about my record.” By then, there was little love lost between the two men. And yet... When Bush became president, Dole was the Republican leader in the Senate. Together, they presided over a crowded era of milestones. Bush and Dole were smart enough to know that opting to raise taxes at a time when the far right in this country had decided that good government was the only free lunch in existence would cost them politically. It did. ❖

**Jennifer Rubin, *Washington Post*:** The Democratic Party might consider closing up shop and finding other work if it doesn’t run ads in 2022 featuring the clip of Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) declaring, “We are going to take power after this next election. And when we do, it’s not going to be the days of Paul Ryan and Trey Gowdy. . . . It’s gonna be the days of Jim Jordan and Marjorie Taylor Greene and [Paul] Gosar and myself.” Voters cannot say they were not warned. The polite, sane GOP is gone. Voters will have a choice in 2022 between Democrats tethered to the center and a party run by those who sought to overturn the election, who concoct insane conspiracy theories, who defend animations depicting the murder of other members of Congress, who are willing to default on the nation’s debt, who voted overwhelmingly against an infrastructure bill and who just might decide the former president and insurrection instigator Donald Trump should be speaker. (House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy is delusional if he thinks the MAGA wing of his party will support him for the position should Republicans win the majority.) Is there a more potent recipe for chaos and a constitutional crisis than putting this crowd in power? Trump is intent on finding the most radical candidates — so long as they are loyal to him — to challenge the few Republicans who had the nerve to stand up to him. The MAGA cultists will gladly double down on the “big lie” of a stolen election and whatever conspiracy theories are in fashion at the moment to please their patron. ❖



## Indy one of 12 cities with murder record

PHILADELPHIA — At least 12 major U.S. cities have broken annual homicide records in 2021 -- and there's still three weeks to go in the year ([ABC News](#)). Of the dozen cities that have already surpassed the grim milestones for killings, five topped records that were set or tied just last year. Philadelphia's homicide record was broken in the same week that Columbus (179), Indianapolis (246) and Louisville (175) eclipsed records for slayings. "It's terrible to every morning get up and have to go look at the numbers and then look at the news and see the stories. It's just crazy. It's just crazy and this needs to stop," Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney said after his city surpassed its annual homicide record of 500, which stood since 1990. Philadelphia, a city of roughly 1.5 million people, has had more homicides this year (521 as of Dec. 6) than the nation's two largest cities, New York (443 as of Dec. 5) and Los Angeles (352 as of Nov. 27). That's an increase of 13% from 2020, a year that nearly broke the 1990 record. Chicago, the nation's third-largest city, leads the nation with 739 homicides as of the end of November, up 3% from 2020, according to Chicago Police Department crime data. Chicago's deadliest year remains 1970 when there were 974 homicides.



## Half of Indiana counties in red zone

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Half of Indiana's counties are now in the highest-risk level of COVID-19 spread as the latest infection surge across the state has pushed hospitalizations from the illness up 25% in the past week ([AP](#)). The weekly risk assessment from the Indiana Department of Health released Wednesday placed

46 of the state's 92 counties in the highest-risk red category, with all but one other in the next-highest orange category. Nearly all counties in the state's northern one-third have red ratings, including Fort Wayne's Allen County and South Bend's St. Joseph County. Southwestern Indiana around Evansville has another pocket of red-rated counties. The number of highest-risk counties is the highest Indiana has seen since the state's worst COVID-19 surge last winter when 73 counties had red ratings in early January. The state listed just three counties with red ratings at the beginning of November.

## Senate votes to nix Biden mandate

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Wednesday voted to nix President Biden's vaccine mandate for larger businesses, handing Republicans a symbolic win ([The Hill](#)). Senators voted 52-48 on the resolution, which needed a simple majority to be approved. Democratic Sens. Jon Tester (Mont.) and Joe Manchin (W.Va.) voted with Republicans, giving it enough support to be sent to the House. The resolution faces an uphill path in the House, where Republicans aren't able to use a similar fast-track process to force a vote over the objections of Democratic leadership. Instead, Republicans are hoping to get the simple majority needed to force a vote through a discharge petition, which will require support from a handful of House Democrats.

## Holcomb waits on tax cut stances

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Holcomb is taking a wait-and-see approach to House Republicans' plans for a tax cut (Berman, WIBC). Hoosiers will receive a one-time income tax cut next year under the state's automatic tax rebate law. Speaker Todd Huston says Republicans will propose an income tax cut, though he says they're still deciding whether

to cut the tax rate or give Hoosiers a credit on their return. Holcomb says it's a great statement that Indiana is in a position to even discuss cutting taxes. The state surplus swelled to \$3.9 billion in the fiscal year which ended June 30, triggering the automatic rebate for just the second time in its 10-year history. In the first four months of the new fiscal year, the state is already nearly \$600 million ahead of the projections in the new two-year state budget. But Holcomb says he needs to see the specifics of the size and method of the proposed cut, and what next week's updated revenue forecast looks like. And he says he doesn't want to hamstring the next state budget in 2023. He notes a special commission is reviewing how Indiana can improve public health, beyond COVID. That panel will deliver its recommendations at the end of next year, and Holcomb says those proposals could include some big-ticket spending plans.

## Crouch visits Clark jail

JEFFERSONVILLE — As the Clark County jail expands mental health services for inmates, a state official stopped by to learn more about the programs and possibilities for other parts of the state ([News & Tribune](#)). Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch met Wednesday with Clark County Sheriff Jamey Noel and jail officials for a tour of the jail and to discuss the mental health and life-skills programming at the facility, which have grown over the past year. Crouch said she came to Clark County to see how Noel is "doing things differently in the continuum of care" at the jail, saying the programs help improve the quality of life for inmates of the facility. "The model that Sheriff Noel has here was very intriguing and interesting, and certainly I think could be a model for other jails in the state of Indiana, because they have that continuing of care from the time they enter the jail and from the time they re-enter into the community," she said.