



Holcomb, Hoosiers rally around Ukraine

Governor stresses the vital need for NATO, sees resilience among European allies

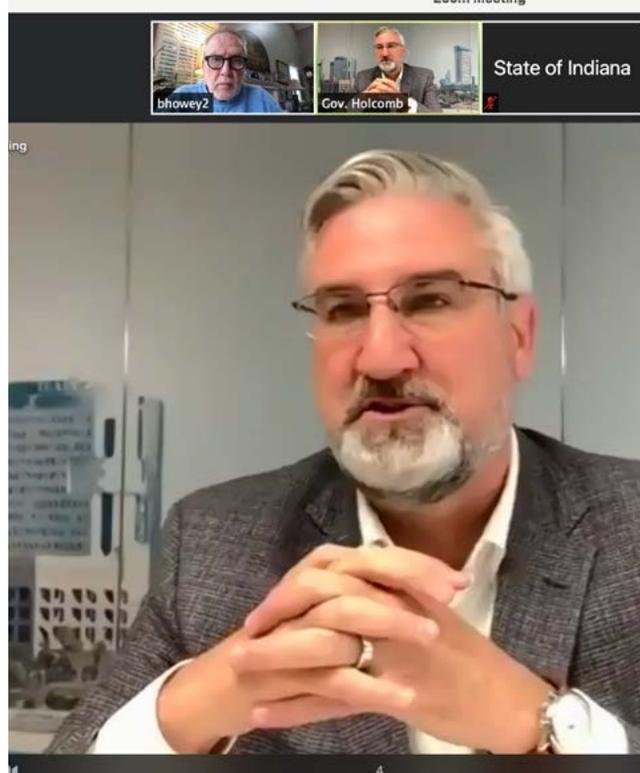
By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Hoosiers are rallying around Ukraine.

Gov. Eric Holcomb, who met with Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia

on Monday, wrote in an op-ed article, "As the world watches Vladimir Putin

relentlessly attack Ukraine, killing children and civilians, bombing a maternity ward, firing on a nuclear energy plant, and bombarding Mariupol among other cities, Hoosiers are sending prayers. Those include mine."



On Wednesday, Holcomb conducted this Zoom HPI Interview. "This is like a 60-minute conversation, not a six-minute conversation," the governor said. "This has been eye-opening."

Before leaving for Slovakia on Sunday, Holcomb ordered a review of Indiana investments in Russia and the administration announced it was divesting \$147 million.

In Slovakia, Holcomb tweeted, "There's a lot of family separation and trauma, and that can put a family off-balance. Hopefully they're able to return home sooner, rather than later. But it could be a year, or two years."

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Putin & tone deaf Don

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - Donald J. Trump appears to be the likely Republican presidential nominee in 2024. He is the de facto leader of the GOP. If he wins the nomination, like he did in 2016, he could be elected to a second term.

The year 2016 now seems like a distant era. Today we are fretting the actions of an isolated, illiberal autocratic despot – Vladimir Putin – who is rattling his nuclear saber while he reduces modern Ukrainian cities to splinters, setting off a 4 million person diaspora. He has been branded a "war criminal."

So Trump's decision to seek out Putin to provide "dirt" on Hunter Biden on Tuesday was an incredible turn of events, even for him. In an interview with the "Just



"Elections are about the future and, frankly, the opposition would love nothing more than for conservatives to talk about the past. By relentlessly focusing on the future, we can stop the radical left."

- Mike Pence, in rolling out his 2024 campaign platform today.



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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



the News" television show on Real America's Voice airing Tuesday, the former president cited a 2020 Senate report that disclosed that Russian oligarch Yelena Baturina, then the wife of Moscow's mayor, provided \$3.5 million a decade ago to a company co-founded by President Joe Biden's son and unanswered questions about why the money was given.

"She gave him \$3.5 million so now I would think Putin would know the answer to that. I think he should release it," Trump said. "I think we should know that answer."

Trump has busted through a number of taboo barriers frequently since he announced his presidential candidacy in 2015, but reaching out to a murderous dictator in the midst of a genocidal frenzy is a new low.

The problem for Republicans is that he and his team don't seem to know that the world has changed dramatically since Putin's tanks began rolling on Feb. 24. As The Bulwark's Charlie Sykes observed, "This was not taken out of context, nor was it a gotcha take. His own spokeswoman enthusiastically tweeted out his plea to Putin."

This comes on the heels of Trump calling Putin a "savvy genius" for sending in his "peacekeepers" to Ukraine. The people of bombed-out Mariupol would beg to differ. They are deaf due to the hundreds of missiles Putin has lobbed into residential neighborhoods, maternity hospitals and theaters shielding scores of children.

Trump is gallingly tone deaf. Sykes adds: "Republicans, defend this. Go ahead. Try. Don't dodge or hedge. Defend your leader's partnership in slime and blood with Vladimir Putin. Tell me again that he learned his lesson. Justify putting this defeated, disgraced, twice-impeached deplorable back in the Oval Office."

Then there is Trump's fallow grip on current affairs. In 2016, we discovered he did not know what the

concept of nuclear "triad" was. He said he got his foreign policy advice "from the shows."

Appearing on Fox News Stuart Varney's show earlier this week, the former president was pressed on how a "President Trump" would have responded to the Ukraine invasion: "There's this discussion about whether we should send jets, MiG jets to help the Ukrainian Air Force. Would you send in that kind of help?"

"Well maybe even more," Trump answered, "to be honest with you."

"Like what, Mr. President, like what?"

"Let me just explain that Putin is saying things like, 'Don't you dare send anything in,'" Trump began. "In the meantime he's killing



Exclusive: Trump calls on Putin to release info on Hunter Biden's dealings with oligarchs



Exclusive: Trump calls on Putin to release info on Hunter Biden's dealings with oligarchs
 "I think we should know that answer," America's 45th president says.
 justthenews.com

thousands and thousands of people. So he's acting like we're an aggressor if we send in some old 44-year-old plane that probably gets shot at in the sky pretty quickly, and he's acting like we're terrible people if we do that. But he's killing tens of thousands of people, far more than they're reporting."

Varney tried again. "What do you do now? You said you'd maybe do more than just send in the MiG jets. All right. What more?"

"Well what I would do, is I would, we would, we have tremendous military capability and what we can do without planes, to be honest

with you, without 44-year-old jets, what we can do is enormous, and we should be doing it and we should be helping them to survive and they're doing an amazing job."

At a MAGA rally in Georgia Saturday night, Trump talked about the "N word," in his case, nukes. "The smartest one gets to the top. That didn't work so well recently in our country. But they ask me, 'Is Putin smart?' Yes, Putin was smart. And I actually thought he was going to be negotiating. I said, 'That's a hell of a way to negotiate, put 200,000 soldiers on the border.'"

Trump told Varney, "We say, 'Oh, he's a nuclear power. But we're a greater nuclear power. We have the greatest submarines in the world, the most powerful machines ever built ... You should say, 'Look, if you mention that word one more time, we're going to send them over and we'll be coasting back and forth, up and down your coast. You can't let this tragedy continue. You can't let these, these thousands of people die.'"

This is a man who once asked if nuking a hurricane was an option. This is a man, a number of his former national security advisers believe, who would have pulled the U.S. out of NATO in a second term and will do so in 2025 if elected, which is a career goal of Vladimir Putin. This is a man that prompted Joint Chiefs of Staff Chair



Mark Milley to revert to a 21st Century version of the Schleisinger Rule in limiting the defeated president from exploiting the nuclear codes, so alarmed was he by Trump's mental state in the waning days of his collapsing administration.

Sen. Mitt Romney said, "If he were to come back as U.S. president, I think it would represent a pretty dramatic departure for the world." John Bolton said in March, "In a second Trump term, I think he may well have withdrawn from NATO and I think Putin was waiting for that."

In a second Trump term, there would be no Mad Dog Mattis, John Bolton or Dan Coats. There would be the fringe D-team players and sycophants, the same MO that Putin has used to find himself in his current dire predicament.

President Biden, mired with a 40% approval rating, said over the weekend he'd be "fortunate" to have a rematch with Trump in 2024.

The isolated and paranoid Putin is alarming the world with his reckless threats of using nuclear weapons. A President Trump in 2025 would be pouring the gas of yawning ignorance on the fire. ❖

Holcomb, from page 1

Who knows? Folks are looking for work. Folks are looking for mental health services. Folks are looking for schooling for their children. I'm here to learn how we can be of help."

Former veep Mike Pence: "We need to meet this moment with American strength. I am glad that President Biden increased sanctions. The administration was slow on that. We need to give them the arms. We need to put pressure on Russia with economic terms more every day. The Biden administration should transfer those MiG [fighter jets] out of Poland to Ukraine, do it immediately. They've got pilots in Ukraine that know how to fly them. But just as important, we need to continue to provide the kind of ground-based anti-aircraft systems that can take out Russian aircraft that are doing the high stratosphere bombing."

Purdue University announced it was bringing 20 faculty members and Ph.D. students from Ukrainian universities. President Mitch Daniels: "It wasn't ever a matter of whether it's a good idea. It's the practicalities, which will probably be tough. Can these people get out? If they're out, can we get them in here without trouble?



Which I think we can. ... We'll just have to see. It just seemed like the sort of thing we had to do if we had a chance – bring them here until it's safe to return to their home."

Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry has reached out to its sister city in Plock, Poland. Mayor Henry said Monday that \$77,000 has been donat-

ed to Plock to help with the refugee crisis. On March 16, Henry met via Zoom with Plock Mayor Andrzej Nowakowski. The mayors discussed the current situation in Ukraine and how Plock is working to make a meaningful difference in providing resources to Ukrainians in need of assistance. The mayors also discussed the importance and value of solidarity and a commitment to wanting peace and democracy restored in Ukraine.

Here is the HPI Interview with Gov. Holcomb:
HPI: Governor, what do Hoosiers need to know about what's going on in Central Europe?

Holcomb: Most do realize what's unfolding, but what's becoming crystal clear in my mind is that Ukraine matters. Slovakia matters. Eastern European countries matter. This is a crisis not just in Ukraine, not just with the mass destruction which is occurring, it's having a ripple

effect in Eastern Europe and beyond. The European Union matters. NATO matters. Sometimes it takes a crisis for people to make a change in their lives and take a different course or action. We're not just witnessing what's going on here, we're living through history. The most important thing in my mind is are we going to make history? Do we stand with democracies or leave them to hang out to dry and ... be erased from the map?

The inspiring observation I've made is Ukrainians are made of steel. Their resolve is second to none and I just want to export this Hoosier hospitality that we're known for and provide resources as we have the capacity to do so. They are living through their greatest hour of need and it's their time of choosing. The world is taking note on who is lining up behind whom. I just want to make sure that it's as blunt as this: Ukrainian blood cannot be worth less than Russian oil and perpetuate the Russian war machine. One thing is clear today, the bear is not hibernating any longer. The bear is out, gobbling up, engulfing and devouring and needs to be stopped.

As a world we all need to do our part. As a governor of a state in America, I want to make sure that they know that and that neighborhood knows that not only are we a partner in this, we are a friend, and our friendships go deep and they are long lasting, whether it's Slovakia, where we've had an Indiana National Guard partnership since 1994. We are on first name basis with leaders there. So when I had the opportunity to talk to the prime minister and the defense secretary, foreign minister, the general in charge of the troops inside Slovakia, I can tell you it puts wind in their sails. There are people from around the world, but even a governor in a Midwestern state can say, "How can we help?" We don't want to be a burden, we don't want to get in your way, but how can we help?

HPI: How vital is NATO right now?

Holcomb: I don't think it can be overstated how vital both the EU is and NATO, because of that question of what's next. If we do not address this, contained in Ukraine, what will be next? That is forcing countries like Slovakia, who are 100% dependent on Russian oil, 85% gas, and 100% nuclear for their energy sources, and so that's forcing countries in that whole area; you're seeing countries step up to the plate saying 'We have not only got to modernize our military for today's potential battle, but to contribute to NATO because an attack on one is an attack on all.'

HPI: The Biden administration has indicated it wants to take in 100,000 Ukrainian refugees. We've got 100,000 open jobs in Indiana, correct?

Holcomb: Yes. We have more than that.

HPI: So doesn't it behoove us as the United States to open up to, say, a million refugees if it comes to



that?

Holcomb: Music to my ears. Here's the flip side to that coin: We don't want all the talent to leave Ukraine permanently. You can imagine, this is going to take a Marshall Plan to rebuild that country. The economy, the infrastructure, you certainly don't want to lose your most valuable asset. The people I've been visiting with, the women and children; the men are still in Ukraine fighting right now. But absolutely we want to make sure folks have a temporary safe haven. If they choose to live in a country different than their native home, I would love for them to be in Indiana, to be in America. Ukrainians are made of steel, they are hard-working people. There are so many similarities between Hoosiers, Slovaks, Ukrainians, We keep our head down, we grind it out, overachieve. Slovakia is the No. 1 auto producer in the world, per capita. Indiana is No. 1 in the world manufacturing state per capita in the country. There are so many similarities. Our friendships go way back. We need to make sure that we're together going forward.

HPI: What should Hoosiers be doing to help in this crisis?

Holcomb: It depends if you're talking about helping in Ukraine or if you're talking about Poland or Slovakia, Hungary or the Czech Republic. The neighboring countries are overwhelmed with health care services and education needs. I asked that same question before we went to the refugee camp and they said what we really need right now are games for our kids, art supplies for our kids. They have gone through two years of this ebb and flow with COVID and now they are displaced from their homes completely. So we'll put together something when we get back. And just pray. Pray for the families, but they may need tablets to connect, because there are teachers in the Ukraine who can teach, but there is a language barrier. As that exodus has occurred, the questions you are asking are being asked on the ground right now. They want Ukrainians to come home when it's safe to do so. Making sure they have access to water, health care, and basic human necessities is what we can contribute right now. ❖

Biden stumbles, fumbles and mumbles in Poland

By CRAIG DUNN

CARMEL – In 40 years, the United States presidency has transitioned from the “Great Communicator,” Ronald Reagan, to the “Great Stumble, Fumble, Mumble and Bunglegator,” Joe Biden.

American presidents used to say, “I say what I mean and I mean what I said.” No longer. Press Secretary Jen Psaki’s job has morphed from being the administration’s spokesperson to a job somewhat akin to being the person walking behind a circus parade with a shovel and a bag.



I have changed over the last two years from demanding that Joe Biden come out of his basement seclusion, where every word and action was carefully scripted by some unseen hand to now wishing that our president would spend his every waking moment eating ice cream in the White House bowling alley, instead of speaking.

I truly hoped on Groundhog Day that the president would see his shadow and decide to hide out in the Oval Office for six more weeks. The fact is, our president is a verbal time bomb, set to detonate at the worst possible moments. The combination of obvious mental decline and the tendency to bloviate makes Joe Biden an extremely dangerous man.

It is no great secret that the Ukrainian Special Military Action is not going well for Vlad the Bad. The failure, thus far, of Putin’s massive military assault on Ukraine, coupled with unprecedented sanctions imposed by the United States, NATO and concerned democracies throughout the world have slowly forced the Russian president into an ever-smaller corner. In the best of times, ill-conceived comments made by an American president (ala Donald Trump) might be easy to laugh off, but in the white-hot crucible of a military and political disaster, such as Vladimir Putin faces in Ukraine, one just doesn’t know how every word will be interpreted and received.

This past week President Biden went for the trifecta of stupid and dangerous misstatements during his trip to NATO ally, Poland. Please keep in mind that during the best of times these statements would have been stupid and dangerous, but during a conflict such as the Ukrainian War, these statements are an outright existential threat. This is not Saddam Hussein who we are confronting, but

a country with 4,000 nuclear weapons and a deranged leader.

The first, and worst, of Joe Biden’s ill-conceived statements was made off-script during a speech at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, Poland on March 26. The president said, “For God’s sake, this man cannot remain in power.”

You heard it and I heard it and, most assuredly, Vladimir Putin heard it. The United States is demanding regime change in Russia. This is not exactly the message you want a man with his finger on a nuclear trigger to hear, even though virtually everyone would love to see regime change as the result of Putin’s naked aggression. Like a bad Jim Carey movie, the president just could not help himself from blurting out what he was thinking.

Several of our NATO partners, United States Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and the White House press office were quick to disavow the words of the president and tell us what Joe Biden actually meant to say. You can try and walk it back all that you want, but the words were simple and to the point, “this man cannot remain in power.” Russia is now able to paint the United States as an aggressor and use the president’s own words in its state-run propaganda.

On Friday, while the president was addressing the soldiers of the United States 82nd Airborne, on duty in Poland, Biden spoke about the bravery of the average Ukrainian and then said the following, “And you are going to see when you are there and some of you have been



there. You are going to see, you are going to see women, young people standing, standing in front of a damn tank, just saying, ‘I’m not leaving. I am holding my ground.’ They are incredible. But they take a lot of inspiration from us.”

“And you’re going to see when you’re there.” This is a fairly clear statement but, according to a White House spokesperson, “The president has been clear we are not

sending U.S. troops to Ukraine and there is no change in that position." I'm beginning to see the ghosts of Bill Clinton's Monica Lewinsky deposition and his infamous "Depends on what you mean by 'is'" statement.

On Thursday, Biden was asked by a reporter if the U.S. would respond if Russia were to use chemical weapons as part of its invasion of the Ukraine. The president responded that such a move by the Russians would "trigger a response in kind."

In a statement of inexactitude made by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan while trying to walk back the president's words, Sullivan said that Biden meant, "we'll respond accordingly" and that Russia would pay a "severe price. And I won't go beyond that other than to say the United States has no intention of using chemical weapons, period, under any circumstances."

I'm not sure what message Putin received from this exchange. I guess it is that the United States either will or will never retaliate with the use of chemical weapons.

Even more dangerous than all of Biden's previous gaffes and misstatements was his March 20 words to President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, where he called Putin "a war criminal." Putin may hear this simple designation as saying you just cannot withdraw from Ukraine and put an end to this conflict. It may be heard as you will be tried in front of the International Criminal Court for the

committal of war crimes.

If convicted, Putin could be facing imprisonment or worse. This provides a major incentive for the Russian president to fight it out to the bitter end, using whatever tools are at his disposal. When your future appears to be a bullet to the head or imprisonment, you could well understand Putin viciously fighting with his back to the wall. What does he have to lose by refusing to leave the Ukraine?

President Biden has verbally closed all the fire escapes for the Russian president.

It is a significant danger for the United States to continue to allow President Biden out of his cloistered environment in the West Wing without competent adult supervision. His handlers, whoever they are, need to force him to stay on script and only give speeches that have been reviewed by his national security advisor, Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense. These are far too perilous of times to allow a befuddled geriatric to run amok with the security of the world at risk. And you can quote me on that!

Editor's note: What Craig Dunn actually meant to say is that he believes the United States, our allies and Vladimir Putin would be better served if they considered the source and did not take the spoken word so literally. Words do not always have meaning and actions maybe shouldn't have consequences unless they do. ❖

NBC Poll reveals GOP wave is developing

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The latest NBC Poll reveals that congressional Democrats are facing a "shellacking" this November.

The Wrong Track stood at 71%. President Biden's approval was 40%. On the most important issue, the economy, Biden's approval stood at a mere 33%. "He is minus 30% on the No. 1 issue," said Amy Walter of the Cook Political report.



Republicans hold a 2-point advantage among registered voters, with 46% preferring a Republican-controlled Congress, versus 44% who want Democrats in charge, which is well within

the poll's margin of error.

"That R+2 result doesn't tell the whole midterm story," said NBC Meet The Press host Chuck Todd. "For starters, the R+2 showing is the GOP's best score on congressional preference in our poll since 2014. And you remember what happened in the 2014 midterms. What's more, the NBC News poll shows a midterm environment

that looks a lot more like 2010 (when the GOP won the House) than 2018 (when Dems did). Republicans are ahead among independents by double digits; the GOP has a larger lead with men than Dems do with women; and white voters have gone from R+5 in 2018 to R+17 now."

"Finally," Todd said, "and perhaps most importantly, our NBC News poll shows Republicans with a whopping 17-point advantage in enthusiasm, with 67% of GOPers indicating a high level of interest in the midterms (either a "9" or "10" on a 10-point scale), compared with 50% for Democrats.

The most popular issues and qualities among registered voters: Funding the police, expanding oil and gas production, supporting the bipartisan infrastructure law and supporting Biden's call to lower health care and prescription-drug costs. The least popular: saying Trump won the 2020 presidential election, wanting to overturn Roe v. Wade, being endorsed by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and defunding the police.

The one issue that could save the Democrats is if the U.S. Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade in June. That could jump start Democrats into closing the enthusiasm deficit.

AP Poll shows Americans fret nukes

Russia's war on Ukraine has most Americans at least somewhat worried that the U.S. will be drawn directly

into the conflict and could be targeted with nuclear weapons, with a new poll reflecting a level of anxiety that has echoes of the Cold War era. Close to half of Americans say they are very concerned that Russia would directly target the U.S. with nuclear weapons, and an additional 3 in 10 are somewhat concerned about that, according to the new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Russian President Vladimir Putin placed his country's nuclear forces on high alert shortly after the Feb. 24 invasion. Roughly 9 in 10 Americans are at least somewhat concerned that Putin might use a nuclear weapon against Ukraine, including about 6 in 10 who are very concerned. "He is out of control, and I don't think he really has concern for much of anything but what he wants," said Robin Thompson, a retired researcher from Amherst, Massachusetts. "And he has nuclear weapons."

U.S. Senate

McDermott on Trump, Putin

After learning that Donald Trump is reaching out to Russian President Putin for "dirt" on Hunter Biden, Hammond Mayor Tom McDermott issued the following statement: "When will U.S. Senator Todd Young condemn this? The former president is calling on a dictator to attack a sitting U.S. president. A real Marine would put country first, party second. It looks like Young has his priorities in reverse."

Young flags illegal immigration

U.S. Sen. Todd Young voiced his concern Wednesday after the U.S. Border Patrol said they're nearing one million encounters with illegal immigrants at the southern border within the last six months (WIBC). "This week, we learned that within the next few days the U.S. border patrol will have had over 1 million encounters with illegal immigrants. Just over the last six months," said Young. "This is indeed a crisis." Young noted that number is larger than the population of Marion County, which is slightly below one million, according to the 2020 census. "Notably, the Biden administration has presented a budget. It shifts money away from border protection. It increases money to help move people through the system. Not so that we can stop illegal entries, but so that immigration officials can more quickly stamp the hands of those who can ultimately get through."

Congress

9th CD: Houchin endorsed by Anthony

The Susan B. Anthony List's Candidate Fund PAC has endorsed Erin Houchin for Congress in Indiana's Ninth Congressional District. The SBA List is a network of 900,000 pro-life Americans nationwide, dedicated to ending abortion by electing national leaders and advocating for laws that save lives. "Erin Houchin is a longtime leader in the fight for unborn children and their mothers and a

member of our National Pro-Life Caucus. We couldn't be prouder to endorse her for Congress," said Hon. Marilyn Musgrave, SBA List's vice president of government affairs. Houchin served in the Indiana State Senate from 2014-2022 and was a member of SBA List's National Pro-Life Women's Caucus. Houchin said, "I have been proud to defend the unborn in the State Senate and will absolutely do the same in Congress."

Barnes-Israel spent \$58K on TV

Republican 9th CD candidate Stu Barnes-Israel has purchased \$58,080 with 700 gross rating points in the Louisville TV market. Republican Mike Sodrel has spent \$68,974 in the Louisville cable market and \$12,083 in the Indianapolis market.

3rd CD: Pompeo appearing at Banks event

U.S. Rep. Jim Banks announced that 70th Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is coming to Indianapolis to appear at a fundraiser for his reelection campaign for Indiana's 3rd Congressional District. He will speak at noon Saturday April 9 at an undisclosed location. "We are honored to have President Trump's secretary of state come to Indiana, and I am grateful he will be supporting me in my campaign for re-election," Banks said.

5th CD: Lake calls Hall 'DINO'

Democrat Jeannine Lake is calling her primary opponent a "DINO" because he voted on the 2016 Republican primary. "He's been in the Grand Ole Party for most of his adult life and voted with the Republicans in 2016," Lake said. Hall responded with tweets: "I'm a Democrat, in 2016 I voted for John Kasich in the primary because I was concerned about what a Trump presidency would mean. I've voted in every Dem primary since then. I worked for Dem Mayor Joe Hogsett since 2015, and am the only candidate who has worked for another Dem. That's the only time I've voted in an R primary. So the claim that I've been a Republican my entire adult life is flat out false."

General Assembly

Banks stumps for Rep. Leonard

It's that time of year again – when politicians start knocking on doors to campaign for reelection. Third District U.S. Congressman Jim Banks recently lent his help to state Rep. Dan Leonard, R-Huntington, who has a primary matchup with Lorissa Sweet in May (Kelly, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Sweet is a Wabash County councilwoman seeking the House District 50 GOP nomination. There are 40 contested GOP state legislative primaries, the most in several decades. Leonard said he didn't knock on doors two years ago because of COVID-19 but is glad to be back talking to citizens. He called it the most effective way to communicate with constituents. Banks walked with Leonard for about two hours, using an app

to target Republican primary voters. Many times, people want to talk about federal issues that state lawmakers don't control – inflation, gas prices, Ukraine. But last week was different. Leonard heard from a lot of people who opposed Gov. Eric Holcomb's veto of a transgender sports bill that would ban transgender girls from participating in K-12 girls sports. He also let them know they would be receiving a \$125 taxpayer refund check soon because of higher-than-expected state revenues.

Presidential 2020

Trump statement

Statement by Donald J. Trump (Howey Politics Indiana): "I hear that VERY low-rated 'Morning Joe' and his psycho wife, Mika, think that I should not be asking Russia what the \$3.5 million that Hunter and Joe got from the Mayor of Moscow's wife was for. In time, Russia may be willing to give that information. The Fake News is also saying I called Putin a "genius," when actually, and to be precise, I called his build-up on the Ukraine Border before the war started genius because I assumed he would be easily able to negotiate a great deal for Russia. The U.S. and NATO would agree to give Russia what they wanted. Unfortunately, and tragically, Putin went too far, acting on the WEAK Foreign Policy of the Biden Administration. The Fake News said I called him a genius during the war. No, I was describing the great negotiating posture he had prior to the unfortunate decision to enter Ukraine and fight. There was nothing "genius" about that!"

Pence to unveil platform today

Former Vice President Mike Pence is taking another step toward running for the White House in 2024 — and leaning into his split with former President Donald Trump. Pence is releasing a 19-page policy platform on Thursday aimed at casting himself as a figure of the future and moving the country "forward to ensure that the best days for the greatest nation on earth are yet to come." It's the kind of statement most prospective presidents would make, but in this case it's also an implicit swipe at Trump, who is focused on relitigating the 2020 election as he weighs a comeback bid. "Elections are about the future, and frankly the opposition would love nothing more for conservatives to talk about the past or to talk of the mess they've made of the president," Pence said on a Wednesday afternoon conference call with [POLITICO](#) and several other news outlets, where he previewed his policy agenda." Pence also released a self-narrated video titled ["The Freedom Agenda."](#) ❖

HPI Horse Race Indiana House Ratings

- HD 7: State Rep. Jake Teshka, Sarina Williams, and Timothy Jaycox: **Likely Teshka**
- HD 11: State Rep. Michael J. Aylesworth, Andrew R. Boersma, and Pierce Fischer: **Safe Aylesworth**
- HD 20: State Rep. Jim Pressel and Heather Oake: **Likely Pressel**
- HD 21: State Rep. Tim Wesco and Stephen Gray: **Safe Wesco**
- HD 22: State Rep. Curt Nisly and State Rep. Craig Snow: **TOSSUP**
- HD 31: State Rep. Ann Vermilion and Andy Lyons: **Safe Vermilion**
- HD 33: State Rep. John (J. D.) Prescott and Brittany Bridges Kloer: **Leans Prescott**
- HD 45: State Rep. Bruce Borders and State Rep. Jeff Ellington: **Leans Borders**
- HD 47: State Rep. John Young, Luke Campbell, Scott C. Strother, and Robb Greene: **Safe Young**
- HD 49: State Rep. Joanna King and Amy Rainey: **Likely King**
- HD 50: State Rep. Dan Leonard and Lorissa Sweet: **TOSSUP**
- HD 52: State Rep. Ben Smaltz and Curt Hammitt: **Safe Smaltz**
- HD 53: State Rep. Robert W. Cherry and Meghan C. Carver: **Safe Cherry**
- HD 56: State Rep. Brad Barrett and Mark A. Pierce: **Safe Barrett**
- HD 59: State Rep. Ryan Lauer and William M. (Bill) Nash: **Safe Lauer**
- HD 60: State Rep. Peggy Mayfield and Brittany Carroll: **Likely Mayfield**
- HD 65: State Rep. Chris May and John Lee: **Likely May**
- HD 72: State Rep. Ed Clere, Jackie Grubbs, Tom Jones: **Likely Clere**
- HD 79: State Rep. Matthew S. Lehman and Russ Mounsey: **Safe Lehman**
- HD 81: State Rep. Martin Carbaugh and David Mervar: **Likely Carbaugh**
- HD 85: State Rep. Dave Heine, Stan Jones and Chris Pence: **Safe Heine**
- HD 88: State Rep. Chris Jeter and Chrystal Sisson: **Safe Jeter**
- HD 90: State Rep. Mike Speedy and David Waters: **Safe Speedy**
- HD 91: State Rep. Robert W. Behning and David Hewitt: **Likely Behning**
- HD 93: State Rep. John Jacob and Julie A. McGuire: **Leans Jacob**
- HD 25: Kent Abernathy, Becky Cash, Douglas Rapp, and Matthew D. Whetstone: **Leans Whetstone**
- HD 32: Suzie Jaworowski, Paul G. Nix and Fred Glynn: **Likely Glynn** ❖

Residential share of property taxes rising

By **LARRY DEBOER**

WEST LAFAYETTE – Here’s one way to think about property taxes: The local government sets its budget, subtracts all other tax revenue, and raises the remainder with the property tax levy. The assessor measures the value of all the parcels of taxable property inside the boundaries of the government. Then the government measures the share of each parcel in total assessed value. That is the share of the levy that the owners must pay.



In other words, your property’s share in the total value of property is your share of the property tax levy. We use property value shares to divvy up responsibility for funding local government.

Real life is more complicated, with deductions, credits, several ways to estimate value, and state limits on the levy and on tax bills. Still, knowing what’s happening to the values of property, compared to the total, tells us a lot about who pays property taxes.

We’re particularly interested in the share of property taxes that residential property owners pay. That’s owner-occupied primary residences, known as homesteads, and rental housing. Why a special interest in residential property? For one, lots of people pay these taxes. Homeowners with a mortgage pay directly through their lenders; those who rent pay through their landlord. For another, all these people are voters, which interests the General Assembly. And that’s why the share of property taxes paid by residential property owners will be getting some attention. The residential share is going up.

Start in 1998, just before the Indiana Supreme Court threw out the old assessment system. That year residential property owners paid about 36% of the property tax levy.

The old assessment system undervalued older homes. The new market-value-in-use system did not. With the reassessment for taxes in 2003, the residential share jumped to 45%. By 2007 the share was up to 47.8%, mostly because business inventories had been eliminated from property taxation.

Then came the big reform in 2008. Homeowner deductions were increased, school general fund property taxes were replaced by state aid, and a constitutional amendment was proposed

to limit tax bills. The amendment was approved in 2010, creating the circuit breaker tax caps. Most of the tax cap credits went to homeowners and rental housing owners. Local governments acted too, adopting more local income taxes for property tax relief.

By 2011, residential taxes were down to 42% of the total, a tax bill reduction of about \$500 million. Many owners of other types of property saw their tax bills increase.

The residential share remained within a couple of tenths of 42% for five years, through taxes in 2016. Then the share began to rise. It was 42.7% in 2017, 43.8% in 2019, and last year the residential share was 45.7%.

What’s going on? Partly it was the decline in farmland values. Corn and soybean prices fell, and eventually this caused farmland assessments to drop. Those taxes shifted to other taxpayers.

It was also the more rapid increase in home prices. Home price increases hit 3.8% in 2015, the highest rate in 14 years. Prices rose more than 5% in 2018 and after. Those were the biggest increases since the 1970s.

Home prices in 2015 were measured by assessors in 2016, and those assessments were used for taxes in 2017. That’s when the residential share of property taxes began to rise.

The economy was expanding and mortgage rates were low, yet home construction lagged. As late as 2019 Indiana home building permits were less than two-thirds of what they averaged between 1996 and 2006. Demand for houses was increasing faster than houses were being built. Prices increased.

That was before the pandemic. In 2021, Indiana home prices increased 13.5%. Those home prices will affect tax bills in 2023. The residential share will keep rising. Policy Analytics, a consulting firm, projects the residential share at 48.2% in 2023.

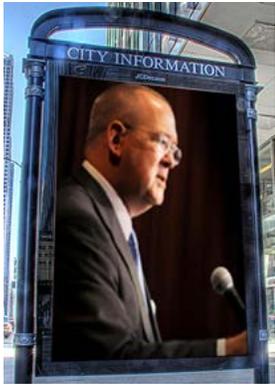
The property tax is a tax on the value of property. If your property’s value rises faster than your neighbors’, your share of the property tax levy will increase. That’s what’s been happening to owners of residential property. I’m guessing that legislators are paying attention. ❖

Larry Deboer is a professor of Agricultural Economics at Purdue University.

A tough couple of decades for Indiana

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – The 21st Century has been terribly unkind to Indiana’s economy. Indeed, over the next few paragraphs I will lay out the case that it has been the worst two decades in the state’s economic history, and that prospects for the next two decades are even poorer.



I write this because I believe our political debate about tax and spending would benefit from greater honesty about the subject. I also want to make clear that it is an error to blame one political party or the other for the poor state of the Hoosier economy. Bad luck as much as bad policy has played a role. Adjudi-

cating the past is helpful only in focusing on the present and future.

Today, Indiana has about 75,000 more jobs than we had in 2000, and about 155,000 more residents. But, over the same time, the Indianapolis metro area has about 190,000 new jobs and 200,000 new residents. So, not all of Indiana is doing poorly, and these bright spots blind many to the much broader troubles. Our growth is happening in just a few places, in one large metropolitan region. Everywhere else in the state is either stagnating or in decline.

The slow job and employment growth signals a poor economy, but it masks an even deeper problem. Most of Indiana’s job growth this century has been in low-wage work. In our largest industry, manufacturing, the only job growth this century has been among workers without a high school diploma. This is an appalling track record that should crush any suspicion that Indiana is having success in advanced manufacturing. Hoosier factories have a worse educational profile today than they did in 1998, the first year of this data source.

Of course, the educational attainment decline in manufacturing has other effects. After adjusting for inflation, wages among Indiana’s manufacturing workers are the same as they were in 1998. Wages for new workers are slightly lower over the same time. Worker productivity among Indiana’s factories grew at half the national rate since 2010, reflecting a structural shift away from a broad manufacturing economy. The job growth is coming at the bottom end of the educational and skill level, which bodes very ill for our biggest industry.

During the long recovery from the Great Recession, the largest job growth came among those without a high school degree. The national conditions could hardly

be different. Nationwide, more than eight in 10 new jobs have been to college graduates. So, Indiana is abruptly diverging from the national economy in education and skills. One consequence of this is that over the past decade Hoosier incomes have dropped more relative to the nation as a whole over than in any time in history.

These sorts of changes do not turn around overnight. There are simply no policy initiatives or fortunate economic conditions that would suggest the Indiana economy will begin to grow at or near the national average. We are behind, and we’re slowing down. So what happened?

Indiana entered the first part of the 21st Century unprepared for a big loss of manufacturing jobs and the economic dislocation that accompanied it. There was very little of Indiana to recommend to businesses or residents. Taxes weren’t high, but public services were nothing to brag about. Heavy union presence in made many places unpalatable to large employers. But, as the jobs left, taxes rose abruptly. By 2006, Hoosier manufacturers were paying the 38th highest taxes in the country, and homeowners were being clobbered by rapidly growing property taxes.

To be fair, the state’s policymakers were long warned about unfriendly business conditions, poor public services and high taxes. Economists in the 1990s were pretty clear about the state’s problems, but political leaders told themselves and their supporters happy stories and brushed aside the criticisms about deeper economic problems. By the mid-2000s, the loss of factory jobs and broad disruption provided an opening for major political change.

Gov. Mitch Daniels swept into office to accomplish just that. He reformed taxes, pushed state and local government to perform better and gave Hoosiers school choice. He set ambitious standards for college completion and per capita income growth. My research concluded that Indiana suffered a far easier Great Recession than it should have because of these policies.

The Pence Administration remained fiscally prudent, but also added policies that acknowledged remaining challenges. He expanded Medicaid through the Healthy Indiana Plan (HIP) and he instituted one of the more thoughtfully developed programs in the nation, the Regional Cities Initiative. Gov. Holcomb continued these policies, including a major new adjustment to the regional cities work in the READI grant.

Somewhere along the way something soured.

First, there was a push to introduce more vocational education options for Hoosier high school students. This was smart in theory; college is not for everyone, and a high school curriculum that prepares only for college will shortchange many students. However, in practice, it was a grave mistake that saw vocational education choices pushed to kids as young as 11 or 12. The aspirational goals of higher education set by Mitch Daniels were so diluted that we saw a rapid decline in the share of our kids heading off to college.

We are now in year five of that decline, which was exacerbated by COVID. Not all the impact was caused by bad messaging to kids or curriculum changes. Beginning in 2010, spending on education began to decline. It dropped in inflation-adjusted terms and on a per-student basis, both for K-12 and post-secondary education. From 2010 to 2019, state spending on education shrank from 3.24% of our gross domestic product to 2.76%.

If we spent the same share of GDP on education that we did in 2010, our budget would be \$1.8 billion higher per year. And, the state just passed a tax cut that will trim a further \$500 million per year from schools and colleges. It is worth noting that spending on TANF and Medicaid rose by 50% over the same time. We are good at spending money to treat the symptoms of poverty, but doing poorly at spending to treat the cause of poverty.



New population data provocative

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Dottie Data called to share her observations about the latest population estimates released last week by the Census Bureau. “I downloaded every county in the U.S.,” she said excitedly. “Whatcha wanna know?” she said, imitating a carnival barker.

“First and foremost,” I said, “tell me about Indiana and how we fared in 2021.”



“Indiana,” she intoned, “added 20,341 persons to its number in 2021, for a 0.3% increase that translated in a 21st place ranking among the 50 states.” “What?” I asked. “Isn’t that a puny percent increase?”

“No way, pal,” she responded. “The U.S. grew by just 0.12%. If you recall, we still had lots of folks dying from COVID last year. Yet, births did exceed deaths nationwide and in Indiana.”

“But certainly,” I said with certainty, “there were states that had better growth experiences than Indiana.”

“You bet,” Dottie declared. “Idaho, Utah, Montana and Arizona topped all states as people fled to the hills from COVID.”

“Hmm,” I **hmmmed**. “Are those all conservative, western mountain states growing with folks escaping the contagion of the liberal Pacific coast.”

“That’s a foxy analysis,” Dottie said. “The biggest percent losers were New York, Illinois and Hawaii. Make up whatever story you like there.”

“And Indiana?” I asked. “We all know about the

Together, I believe the modest push away from college preparation and the much larger budget cuts set the stage for more problems. As readers of this column know, the quality of public schools is the prime element of relocation decisions by families. In 2018, the Republican Congressional Joint Economic Committee published a study of brain drain that revealed Indiana was in the midst of its worst decade in history. There’s no evidence of improvement. And, as Indiana begins the COVID recovery, we do so with an economy with worse underlying basic conditions, which bodes poorly for the decades to come. ❖

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growth of the four Indianapolis metro area counties, Boone, Hamilton, Hendricks and Hancock where growth topped 2%. At the bottom of the list were declining rural counties – Pulaski, Jay, Knox and Pike,” Dottie said.

“However,” Dottie continued, “the interesting stuff is in the details. Indiana had 58 of its 92 counties gaining population, some with more births than deaths, some with more deaths than births while some counties had more people moving in and some had more people moving out.

“**It’s that interplay** between natural increase and net migration that drives population change,” she concluded. “That gets pretty complex,” I said ponderously.

“Bingo, buster,” Dottie confirmed. “The Census estimates that of these 58 counties gaining population, only 11 had an excess of births over deaths (natural increase) and more people moving in than moving out (positive net migration).”

“You’re telling me 81 Hoosier counties had negative natural increase or negative net migration, or both?” I said. “That’s painful.”

“Yes,” Dottie answered, “if you think population growth is good. But there are many Hoosiers who will tell you more people is not what their community wants or needs. Remember, many people move to the suburbs or return to small towns and rural areas to enjoy less density.

“They’re not hostile to people,” Dottie said. “They just prefer a different lifestyle from those who find the larger cities desirable. Or they may feel, with today’s technology, more people are damaging to our environment.”

What could I say to that? ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com. Follow him and John Guy on “Who Gets What?” wherever podcasts are available or at mortonjohn.libsyn.com.

Braun's view of SCOTUS seems skewered

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI State Bureau

ANDERSON – U.S. Sen. Mike Braun was trying to explain his position on judicial activism when he stepped into a controversy over interracial marriage.



The junior senator from Indiana later said he misunderstood the line of questioning.

"Let me be clear on that issue," he said in a written statement. "There is no question the Constitution prohibits discrimination of any kind based on race. That is not something that is even up for debate, and I condemn racism in any form, at all levels and by any states, entities or individuals."

The whole thing started as the Republican Braun was discussing *Roe v. Wade*. He saw the nearly 50-year-old decision as an example of judicial overreach, he said, and he would favor overturning the ruling. "So I think this would be bringing it back to a neutral point to where that issue should have never been federalized way out of sync, I think, with the contour of America then," he said.

A reporter asked Braun whether he would apply the same reasoning to decisions such as *Loving v. Virginia*, the 1967 Supreme Court ruling that struck down laws banning interracial marriage.

"When it comes to issues, you can't have it both ways," Braun said. "When you want that diversity to shine within our federal system, there are going to be rules and proceedings, they're going to be out of sync with maybe what other states would do. It's the beauty of the system, and that's where the differences among points of view in our 50 states ought to express themselves."

The reporter asked the question again, just to be sure. Would Braun be OK with the Supreme Court leaving the issue of interracial marriage to the states to decide? "Yes," Braun said, "I think that is something that if you're not wanting

the Supreme Court to weigh in on issues like that, you're not going to be able to have your cake and eat it, too. It's hypocritical."

Let's sort through what Braun was saying. He talked about the "contour of America" at the time of the abortion ruling, suggesting the decision was out of step with the country.

It's hard to be sure where the country lined up on the abortion issue when *Roe v. Wade* was decided in 1973. What we can say is that abortion at the time was illegal in most states.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that in 1972, the year before the ruling, 130,000 women performed their own abortions or obtained illegal ones. Thirty-nine of those women died.

By 1975, when Gallup first asked about the issue, most Americans were saying abortion should be legal "only under certain circumstances." The rest were about evenly divided between the absolute pro-choice and the absolute pro-life positions. Each camp totaled about 20%.

So what about interracial marriage? What was the "contour of America" on that topic at the time of *Loving v. Virginia*?

In 1958, the year Richard Loving, a white man, married Mildred Jeter, a woman of mixed African-American and Native American ancestry, a Gallop survey found 4% of respondents supported interracial marriage. The year after the Supreme Court issued its ruling, that number had risen to 20%.

So would Braun say the 1967 ruling was within the "contours of America," or was that ruling also out of step? After all, when the Supreme Court decided the case in 1967, it overturned laws that had been on the books in 16 states.

This sort of thing isn't unique in American history. It's not hard to find cases where the Supreme Court issued a decision that went against the common wisdom. If sheer numbers are to be the determining factor, how much support should it take to overturn an unjust law? Is a simple majority enough? ❖



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Time change issues and the Mangus compromise

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND — The U.S. Senate just did something that the Indiana General Assembly couldn't do in a century of legislative disputes over how to set the clocks.

The Senate gave unanimous approval for a time bill. Unanimous approval for putting the nation permanently on daylight saving time. No changing clocks to spring ahead and then fall back.



No concern about some northern areas experiencing pitch darkness until about 9 a.m. on some winter mornings.

In the long Indiana legislative history of battling over where to locate time zones and if or when to observe daylight saving time, a unanimous vote was as likely as unanimous approval of a resolution urging victory for either IU or Purdue in their Old Oaken

Bucket football game.

Indiana lawmakers often were split over time bills right down to adornment. Actually, back in Hoosier history, a split once continued in the Indiana House after adjournment. A filibuster prevented a vote on a time bill until the official midnight deadline to adjourn the session. But proponents of the bill moved back the hands of the official clock in the chamber. And the bill passed in early morning hours, with the official clock saying it really wasn't too late.

The Senate unanimous? It's another case of the official record showing something not exactly real.

The sponsor of the bill pulled a fast one on fast time.

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., lead sponsor, called for discharge of the bill from the Senate Commerce Committee, which hadn't approved it. He asked for unanimous consent that his substitute version be agreed to and that the proposal be considered read a third time and passed.

No senator objected. Thus, it passed in a slick move that took an estimated 14 seconds. No hearings. No debate. No roll call vote.

Seems that most sena-

tors, including opponents of the bill, didn't know what was happening. Or if some of those on the floor had come across a notice of the sponsor's intent to seek discharge of the bill, they thought somebody was ready to object to unanimous consent and force a regular route toward consideration.

Rubio knew he had a quick shot at quick approval, with Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., a bill supporter, then presiding. He moved quickly. So did Sinema. Without pause, she ruled: "Without objection, so ordered." She then raised her fists in celebration.

So, there it was. A bipartisan move by senators from two states with public support for the bill.

Florida, "the "Sunshine State," has some lengthy daylight even in winter and no concern of it being dark really late in winter mornings. Arizona, one of two states not observing daylight time, now is out of whack with TV schedules and commercial dealings with other states half of the year. The bill lets Arizona keep its present time and avoid any clock moving problems with other states.

The time bill now goes to the House, where its fate is uncertain.

Hoosiers will be split again on whether to have year-round daylight saving time. But the Indiana legislature will have no voice this time. Congress will decide.

Some Hoosiers would like not having to change clocks. Some would dislike it dark until after 8 a.m. in the winter, fearing danger for kids going to school in the dark. Others would welcome more light in late afternoon.

South Bend often has been in the middle of time zone disputes, sometimes put in the Central Time Zone, now on Eastern Time.

Once in chaotic time history, South Bend and Mishawaka were on different times.

The late state Rep. Dick Mangus, R-Lakeville, once offered a satirical compromise: Move clocks ahead a half hour for daylight time. He wanted to make a point about the nonsense in debate. He did. But he got no unanimous vote. Only in the U.S. Senate was that possible. ❖



Colwell is a columnist for the South Bend Tribune,

The politics in the fastest growing counties

By **KYLE KONDIK**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – Last week, the United States Census Bureau released its latest population estimates, tracking changes from 2020 to 2021. The headline finding, as summed up by the New York Times, was that “2021 was the slowest year of population growth in U.S. history.” The pandemic is a major reason why; so too are longer-term factors, such as declining birth rates.

A major highlight of the report was the population declines in several counties covering the nation’s largest cities. The top 10 counties in numeric population decline included 4 of New York City’s 5 boroughs (all of them except what is by far the smallest borough, Staten Island); Chicago’s Cook County; Los Angeles County; several counties in Northern California’s Bay Area; and Miami-Dade in Florida. Pandemic-related migration -- meaning people moving out of these expensive counties to cheaper places -- likely explains at least some of this decline.

As Map 1 illustrates, there are still lots of places that are growing, particularly in the Sun Belt and out west. The 10 counties that added the most people included a number of mainly exurban counties in Florida, California, Utah, and Texas as well as the biggest overall gainer, Phoenix’s Maricopa County.

In terms of biggest percentage gains, we identified about five dozen counties from across the country that one. Have at least 100,000 residents and two. Grew by at least 3% or more from the April 2020 census to the July 1, 2021 census estimates that the Census Bureau reported last week.

Table 1 shows the counties that satisfied these two criteria. They are divided by state, and listed within states in order of their percentage growth in population from biggest to smallest. We also included how these states voted for president in both the 2012 and 2020 presidential elections. The voting habits in many places changed from

the 2012 to the 2016 election and then endured, to a large extent, in the 2020 election, so that’s why we picked 2012 and 2020 for this table.

Many but not all of these counties could be described as exurban. We know that a lot of exurban places are historically very Republican, which is clear from the table: 61 of these 63 counties voted for Mitt Romney in 2012. Collectively, the group was still strongly Republican in 2020, as Donald Trump still carried 56 of the 63. Close to 2/3rds of the counties (40 of 63) saw their Republican presidential margin decline from 2012 to 2020. However, that still means that more than a third of these fast-growing places (23 of 63) saw Trump run ahead of Romney in 2020.

Let’s go state by state and explain where these various counties are.

Alabama: Limestone is part of the Huntsville area, a growing region in the northern part of the state with an abundance of high-tech jobs thanks to the presence of the federal government’s Redstone Arsenal; Baldwin is along the Gulf Coast in the Mobile

area.

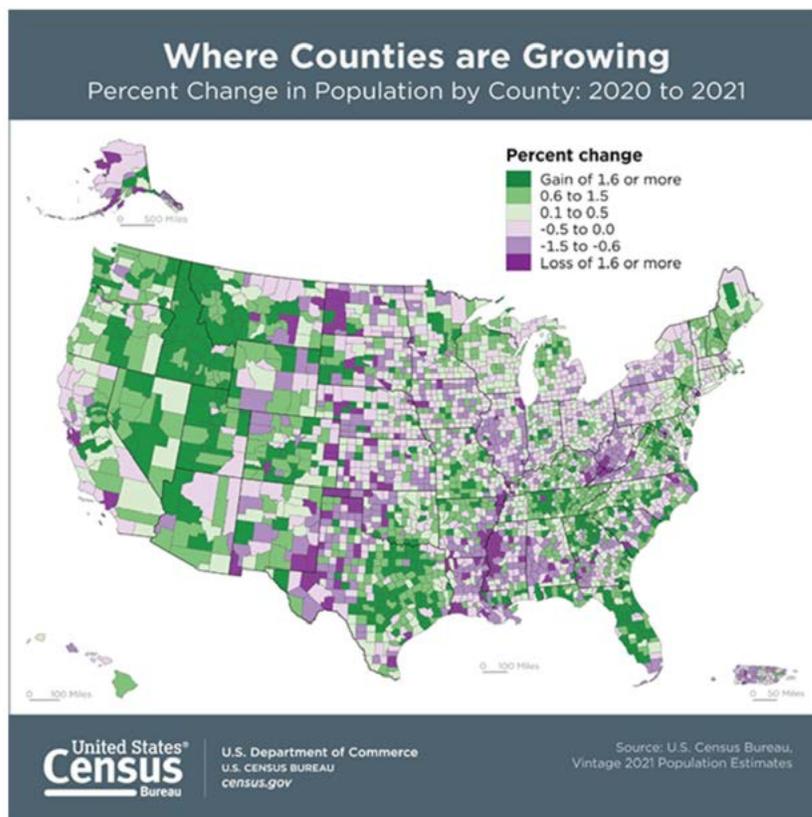
Arizona: Pinal contains some creeping exurbs of both Phoenix and Tucson.

Arkansas: Benton is in the state’s northwest corner and is home to Walmart’s headquarters.

Colorado: Located on the northern border with Wyoming but also extending down to the orbit of Denver, Weld made news recently for attempting to secede from Democratic-trending Colorado and join deep red Wyoming. Douglas is also in Denver’s orbit (a bit closer in) and is one of the most Democratic-trending areas among these counties on this list.

Delaware: Sussex is the southernmost of the First State’s three counties, and it contains both agricultural and beach areas. The First Family’s beach home near Rehoboth Beach is in Sussex.

Florida: The fast-growing Sunshine State has 14 of the 63 counties on this list. St. Johns



and Flagler run along the Atlantic Coast south of Jacksonville. Sumter, in Central Florida, contains The Villages, the sprawling retirement enclave (Sumter has the highest percentage of residents 65 and older of any county in the country). Pasco, Polk, Hernando, Charlotte, Lee, Sarasota, and Manatee are all on or are closer to the Gulf Coast side of Florida and many have markedly high percentages of residents 65 and over. Lake and Osceola are in the Orlando area; Santa Rosa is in the panhandle in the Pensacola area; and St. Lucie is on the Atlantic Coast, a bit up from Palm Beach.

Georgia: Forsyth, Paulding, and Cherokee are all exurbs in Atlanta's orbit.

Idaho: Ada contains Boise, Idaho's biggest city. Canyon is just west of Ada. Kootenai, in the northern Idaho panhandle, contains Coeur d'Alene and is relatively close to Spokane on the other side of the state border with Washington. Bonneville is in eastern Idaho. These 4 are not only Idaho's fastest-growing counties; they also are the fast-growing state's 4 most populous counties, period.

Iowa: Dallas contains some western Des Moines suburbs.

Maryland: Frederick contains a city of the same name and could be considered something of an exurb of both Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

Montana: Flathead in northwest Montana and Gallatin, which contains the city of Bozeman, in southwest Montana.

North Carolina: Brunswick is a retiree-heavy county in southern North Carolina; Johnston is in Raleigh's orbit, while Moore is between Raleigh and Charlotte.

Ohio: Delaware contains some of Columbus's northern suburbs/exurbs.

Oklahoma: Canadian covers some western Oklahoma City suburbs/exurbs.

Oregon: Central Oregon's Deschutes has the city of Bend, a growing tech hub that is home to some Silicon Valley telecommuters.

South Carolina: The beach town of Myrtle Beach lies in Horry, on the North Carolina border along the Atlantic Coast. Lancaster contains some areas in the orbit of Charlotte, which is just across the North Carolina border, while Berkeley holds some of greater Charleston.

Tennessee: Williamson and Rutherford are both adjacent to Nashville's Davidson County. Montgomery and Maury are also somewhat close to Nashville, but each is separated from Davidson by another county.

Texas: Like Florida, the Lone Star State is well-represented on this list: It also has 14 of these 63 counties. But unlike Florida's fast-growing counties, many of which are not really suburbs or exurbs of large cities, these Texas counties better fit that definition. Half of these counties are adjacent to either Dallas or Tarrant (Ft. Worth) counties: Kaufman, Rockwall, Parker, Ellis, Collin, Johnson, and Denton. An 8th, Hunt, is adjacent to some of these other DFW satellites to the Metroplex's east. Hays, Williamson, and Bastrop border Austin's Travis County. Comal

is between Austin and San Antonio, and Montgomery and Fort Bend border Houston's Harris County.

Utah: Utah County borders Salt Lake County and contains Provo, home to Brigham Young University. The state's other 2 counties on this list are further from Salt Lake City: Cache on the state's northern border and Washington in its southwest corner.

West Virginia: Berkeley in the eastern panhandle, which is in some ways becoming a distant exurb of Washington, D.C.

As these brief descriptions hopefully make clear, this is a more complicated list than just "exurbs." The exurban moniker does a good job of describing these places in some states, specifically Texas, but not Florida. Interspersed in this list are a lot of retiree-heavy communities, many of which are also coastal (that describes many of the Florida locales). A handful of these counties contain booming but still not very large cities, like Bentonville, AR and Bend, OR.

Politically-speaking, there are some notable observations:

- Nearly all of the Texas counties listed saw their Republican performance erode from 2012 to 2020. To the extent that Texas is becoming competitive and/or will become competitive in the future, Democrats will need these trends to continue, particularly as they potentially lose ground in traditionally Democratic South Texas.

- Meanwhile, Trump's margins were better than Romney's in nearly all of the Florida counties included here: The only exceptions were Santa Rosa in the panhandle and St. Johns, an exurban county of Jacksonville (and he handily carried both anyway). The army of retirees moving to Florida paired with Democratic weaknesses among Latino voters in places like Osceola -- the only county on this list carried by both Barack Obama in 2012 and Biden in 2020, albeit by a reduced margin for the latter -- has helped push the state rightward relative to the nation.

- In 2012, Texas voted about 17 points more Republican than Florida. By 2020, the gap between the two states was just a bit over 2 points. The differing trends in the two states' respective fast-growing, substantially populated counties are a big reason for the tightening of that gap in recent years, and it seems possible that Texas could eventually become more competitive than Florida (the last time Florida voted more Republican for president than Texas was 1988).

- Iowa and Ohio are two Midwestern states that have zoomed rightward in recent years. That's because pro-Democratic shifts in their two big suburban counties listed here, Dallas in Iowa and Delaware in Ohio, have not been nearly enough to counteract huge Republican shifts in many other counties in their states, many of which are losing population (as Map 1 shows) but still collectively have more than enough people to counteract any pro-Democratic shifts elsewhere. And, as it is, Trump carried both Dallas and Delaware in 2020 anyway. ❖

Jamelle Bouie, New York Times: “You would be OK with the Supreme Court leaving the question of interracial marriage to the states?” “Yes,” said Senator Mike Braun of Indiana while fielding questions from local media on Tuesday. “If you’re not wanting the Supreme Court to weigh in on issues like that, you’re not going to be able to have your cake and eat it, too,” he said. “That’s hypocritical.” Braun walked this back, of course, undoubtedly aware of the damage it could do if he let it stand. “Earlier during a virtual press conference, I misunderstood a line of questioning that ended up being about interracial marriage,” he said in a statement to NBC News. “Let me be clear on that issue — there is no question the Constitution prohibits discrimination of any kind based on race, that is not something that is even up for debate, and I condemn racism in any form, at all levels and by any states, entities or individuals.” As damage control goes, this was unpersuasive. It’s not just that the questions he originally answered were clear; it’s that Braun’s answer was consistent with what he had said throughout the news conference. His argument to reporters was that the existence of certain rights, and the particular shape they take, was best left to the states. He used abortion and marijuana legalization as examples. It was then that a reporter asked if this applied to interracial marriage. Senator Braun’s mistake was not that he misunderstood the question; it’s that he understood it all too well. The world he and his colleagues are working toward is one in which the national government defers the question of civil and political rights to the states. And it is in the states, free from federal oversight, where people like Braun can exercise real control over what you might do, how you might live and who you might love. It’s freedom for some and obedience for the rest. ❖



Ken de la Bastide, Anderson Herald Bulletin: This past week, Indiana’s U.S. Sen. Mike Braun made national headlines for all the wrong reasons. During a conference call with members of the Indiana media, Braun initially made the comment that he didn’t support judges making policy decisions as it pertained to abortion laws. Braun, an advocate for states’ rights, said that decision should be left up the states. He was then asked about a U.S. Supreme Court case in which the high court struck down state laws banning interracial marriage. The reporter asked the question a second time, and Braun again stated the decision should be left to the states. Most Americans probably don’t want to see state lawmakers passing legislation that would prohibit interracial marriages. Out of all of this, there is one certainty: Every time Braun runs for elective office, his Democratic Party challenger will broadcast his comments on interracial marriage. It will be the linchpin of campaigns against Braun. But what took place this week could potentially have repercussions on the 2024 election cycle in Indiana.

Most political observers in the Hoosier State expect that in two years, Braun will forego a second term in the U.S. Senate to run for governor. Since current Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb can’t seek a third term in that office, the opinion has been that Braun would run for the state’s highest office and Holcomb would seek the Senate nomination. That is expected to change as a result of this week’s events. Now, most observers believe that Braun will seek a second term in the U.S. Senate. So where does that leave Holcomb in two years? Does he challenge Braun in the primary election for the Senate nomination, or decide to run for a seat in the U.S. House? History has a way of repeating itself, and Braun and his supporters have to be concerned about what 2024 might hold for his future. ❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: “For years, elected officials here have touted Indiana as “a state that works.” They chose the word deliberately. For decades now, the focus — almost the entire focus — of the state’s leaders was on economic development. That context has defined almost every important discussion or debate in Indiana during the 21st century. Whether the argument was about education, the environment, marriage equality or public transit, the jousting focused on whether the policy question involved would attract jobs and investment in the state. Growth was the point and little else mattered. Until now, that is. As the just concluded session of the Indiana General Assembly and other recent incidents demonstrate, many — perhaps most — of the state’s leaders now have a new set of priorities. They’re more interested in fighting culture wars, settling old scores and finding ways to please narrow special interests. Even the Indiana Chamber of Commerce indicated as much. The chamber’s session-end report said the organization’s lobbyists spent more time and energy trying to knock down bad and growth-destroying ideas than they did advancing a jobs and development agenda. The drama surrounding two high-profile bills illustrates the chamber’s point. Indiana’s foot soldiers for the gun lobby worked tirelessly to push a measure through that would allow Hoosiers to carry firearms without securing permits. The Indiana State Police and other law-enforcement officials opposed the bill. So, according to polling even in the districts of the lawmakers pushing the measure, did the public. But the gun merchants wanted it.” Gov. Eric Holcomb, who is pondering a Republican primary contest in a U.S. Senate race two years from now, decided alienating the rabid gun wing of his party wasn’t worth it. He ignored his own state police officers and signed the bill into law. “The governor vetoed another measure, one that would have banned transgender girls from participating in girls’ sports. This particularly mean-spirited bill sought to appease ignorant bigots at the expense of people who already have suffered much more than their share. Holcomb was right to reject it. ❖

Biden to tap petroleum reserve

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is preparing to order the release of up to 1 million barrels of oil per day from the nation's strategic petroleum reserve, according to two people familiar with the decision, in a bid to control energy prices that have spiked as the U.S. and allies have imposed steep sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine (AP). The announcement could come as soon as Thursday, when the White House says Biden is planning to deliver remarks on his administration's plans to combat rising gas prices. The duration of the release hasn't been finalized but could last for several months. The people spoke on the condition of anonymity to preview the decision. High oil prices have not coaxed more production, creating a challenge for Biden. The president has seen his popularity sink as inflation reached a 40-year high in February and the cost of petroleum and gasoline climbed after Russia invaded Ukraine. Crude oil on Wednesday traded at nearly \$105 a barrel, up from about \$60 a year ago.



Changes to state COVID dashboard

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Department of Health on Wednesday made major changes to its COVID-19 dashboard, which it has been using since early in the pandemic to provide the public with coronavirus-related data (IBJ). The department also said it would shrink the dashboard's publication schedule from five days a week to three days—Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The department published data seven days a week earlier in the pandemic. Officials said it made the changes "to align with national reporting measurements and better reflect the impact

the pandemic is having on communities and health care systems." The dashboard at www.coronavirus.in.gov no longer includes the state's county and advisory metric map, daily COVID case counts or a daily positivity rate. Instead, it displays a seven-day average of cases and indicates whether that number is trending up or down.

Sen. Mrvan honored by Chamber

HAMMOND — Former state Sen. Frank Mrvan, D-Hammond, was honored by the Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday for serving the people of Hammond in city and state government for more than 50 years (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). "I wish I could do it for another 20 years. I've loved every minute of it. I've done a lot of good. I probably did a few bad things. But I can look anybody in the face and say I did an honest job."

Bloomington sues over 2019 law

BLOOMINGTON — The City of Bloomington has filed a lawsuit claiming a 2019 law that limited the city's comprehensive annexation effort is unconstitutional (Zaltsberg, [Indiana Public Media](#)). The law nullified contracts in which the city extended sewer connections to properties that agreed not to oppose annexation. The law passed by the General Assembly in 2019 voided contracts that were more than 15 years old. The net effect of the new law was that the city succeeded on annexing only two of seven areas it sought to annex, because property owners who had contracts for sewer service fought the annexation. A city news release about the lawsuit said if the law is struck down, five areas would be annexed instead of two.

Services set for Capt. Tomkiewicz

FORT WAYNE — Funeral

arrangements have been set for a Fort Wayne Marine killed in a NATO exercise crash earlier this month ([WANE-TV](#)). The body of 27-year-old Capt. Matthew J. Tomkiewicz will arrive in Fort Wayne on Saturday at 1 p.m., according to the One Warrior Foundation, which works with the Veteran community. A "Celebration of Matthew's Life" will be held Sunday at Parkview Field, according to his obituary from D.O. McComb and Sons. The celebration is not open to the public.

Putin advisers shielding info

WASHINGTON — Russian President Vladimir Putin's advisers are shielding him from how badly the invasion of Ukraine is going, top U.S. officials said Wednesday, as the conflict raged on despite peace talks and the number of Ukrainians who have fled their country topped 4 million ([Washington Post](#)). Putin's advisers may be afraid to deliver bad news to a leader who has been willing to take increasingly extreme measures against people who dissent within the Russian system, U.S. intelligence officials said. "We have information that Putin felt misled by the Russian military, which has resulted in persistent tension between Putin and his military leadership," White House spokeswoman Kate Bedingfield said. "We believe that Putin is being misinformed by his advisers about how badly the Russian military is performing and how the Russian economy is being crippled by sanctions because his senior advisers are too afraid to tell him the truth."

Chicago emerging as lead DNC site

CHICAGO — The Windy City has emerged as a "city of interest" as the Democratic National Committee considers potential hosts for its 2024 national convention — and Mayor Lori Lightfoot, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker and Sen. Tammy Duckworth are "coordinating on a plan to make it happen."