



Lining up for 2024 INGov, INSen races

Daniels Senate run urged; Crouch will face self-funders; Donnelly keeping all options open

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – One chilly December morning during his first term, Mitch Daniels conducted a round of year-end press interviews at the Governor's Residence. Reporters gathered in a small, first floor office.



"Gov. Orr offered me a Senate seat in this room," Gov. Daniels said of the 1988 sequence when Gov. Robert Orr sought a replacement for Sen. Dan Quayle, the new vice president-elect.

Daniels turned the governor down. The timing was not right. His family had just relocated back to Indiana; his daughters were young. Gov. Orr would go on to offer the seat to U.S. Rep. Dan Coats.

Now, some 34 years later, out-going Purdue



University President Daniels may be coming full circle. Informed and reliable sources tell Howey Politics Indiana

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Dire health & surplus

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – In the television age of Hoosier politics there have been seismic reports that brought along middling change. The Indiana School Reorganization Act of 1959 reduced the number of school districts from 966 to 402, yet even today there are 53 school corporations with fewer than 1,000 students.



In 2007 came the Kernan-Shepard Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform, which had been convened by then-Gov. Mitch Daniels. The commission recommended 27 changes, ranging from child welfare funding to reorganization of school districts. It created one major shift: Property tax assessment duties were



"Yesterday the Senate debated on an improved version of the Respect for Marriage Act and I voted for it because it will bring the U.S. government closer to treating both groups with dignity and respect than we ever have in our history."

- U.S. Sen. Todd Young,

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Jack E. Howey
editor emeritus
1926-2019



moved from all but 13 of the state's 1,005 townships to county offices.

On Aug. 1, the [Governor's Public Health Commission released its 107-page report](#) in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. "It is clear that COVID-19 pandemic tested our public health system in a way that we have not seen since the 1918 influenza pandemic," the commission noted in its letter to Gov. Eric Holcomb, who created the body. "It became apparent to us as we dove deeper into this work that funding, governance structure, and workforce would be at the heart of many of the challenges of our public health system."

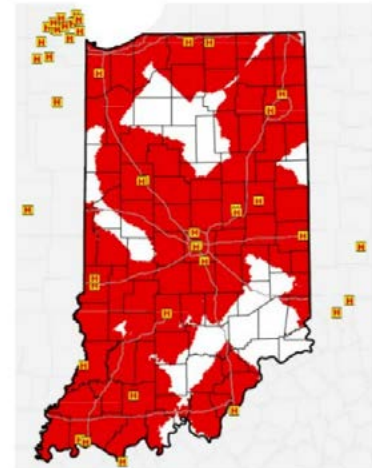
In its executive summary, the commission observed: "In fact, most of the life expectancy gains achieved during the 20th Century – approximately 25 of 30 additional years – are attributable to public health programs and interventions focused on preventing people from getting sick or injured in the first place and on promoting wellness by encouraging healthy behaviors."

The commission noted that the longevity gains of the last century, however, are threatened by contemporary public health challenges and the prominence of non-communicable diseases, especially:

- Rising deaths from drugs, alcohol, and suicide;
- Rising rates of adult and child obesity;
- Persistently high rates of adult tobacco use and teen vaping;
- Continuing risks from drug-resistant disease agents and infectious diseases such as measles, hepatitis, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, COVID-19, and others – each with the potential to spread rapidly across the state, across the country, and around the world.

"In fact," the commission observed, "life expectancy in Indiana has been declining since 2010, when it peaked at 77.5 years. Indiana's life expectancy in 2019 was 77 years, almost two years below the U.S. average of 78.8, placing us 40th in the nation. Of even greater concern is that difference between the Indiana county

Figure 20: Indiana Trauma Center 45 Minute Access Map



with the highest life expectancy and the county with the lowest life expectancy is almost nine years. This is clear evidence of the health disparities that exist across our state."

According to senior demographer Matt Kinghorn of the Indiana Business Research Center at IU, "In 1984, the life expectancy at birth for residents of Hamilton County was 1.1 years longer than for those living in Scott County. As of 2018, the gap between these two has grown to nearly nine years. In 1987, the difference between the Indiana county at the 75th percentile in this measure and that at the 25th percentile was 0.5 years. This gap has increased four-fold in the meantime and now sits at a full two years. More than two-thirds of Indiana's counties also had their peak life expectancy year in 2012 or earlier, and only eight counties set a new high in this measure in 2018."

Look no further than what the commission defines as an "EMS shortage." Indiana EMS runs have almost doubled, from 758,115 in 2018 to 1,258,158 in 2021. However, the number of ambulances and EMS providers has decreased in that same time. For example, in 2020, there were 1,789 emergency ambulances in the state, down from over 2,000 in 2018. Total EMS personnel have also declined, from 24,145 in 2018 to 23,070 in 2021.

A third of Indiana counties are more than 45 minutes from the

nearest trauma center. According to the IndyStar, in the last 20 years, obstetric units have closed in 16 Indiana counties, bringing the total to 33 counties without a delivery room. “We have 33 counties that either have no hospital, or their hospital has no obstetric services,” said Indiana Health Commissioner Kristina Box, who co-chaired the commission. “That lack of care in that community makes it more difficult for a woman ... there is a trend toward a statistically significant difference for maternal mortality.”

“As a rural general surgeon and county health officer, I have seen first-hand some of the gaps in public health service delivery,” said Dr. David Welsh, Ripley County local health officer. “These last two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the problems of the delivery of public health services in Indiana. This has especially affected rural communities.”

“Indiana ranks very favorably in economics, opportunity, education, and public safety,” said commission Co-Chair Luke Kenley. “However, our public health metrics rank us amongst the lowest in the nation. Business and industry require a healthy workforce for our Indiana economy to continue to grow.”

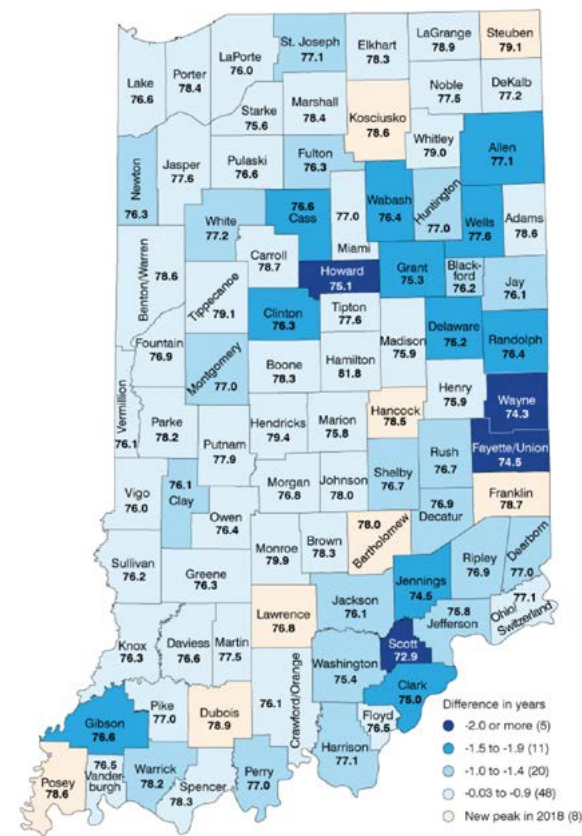
“I was somewhat shocked that we were so far at the bottom end of the scale in terms of having a healthy population,” Kenley, who was the long-time Senate Appropriations chairman, told IBJ. “When you see how little money was put into it, that appears to be a direct correlation.”

In its conclusion, the commission recommended \$240 million in increased annual spending to “lift funding for county public health departments to the national average.”

According to the Capital Chronicle, Indiana ranks 48th in the nation for public health funding, spending approximately \$55 per Hoosier on public health initiatives or \$36 less than the nationwide average of \$91 per capita. According to the IBJ, the overall health of Hoosiers has been steadily declining since the early 1990s, when Indiana ranked 26th in the nation for overall health outcomes. Today, the state ranks 40th overall in public health outcomes, with higher than average rates of obesity, smoking, infant mortality and maternal mortality.

In the upcoming 2023 biennial budget session, these proposals will get a robust debate. “I found it a little bit difficult to swallow,” said Senate President Pro Tem Rodric Bray. “I don’t see us spending \$480 million in this next budget on public health. I’m not even sure if we

Figure 2: Difference between peak life expectancy year and 2018 life expectancy by county



sent that kind of money to local health departments that they would be able to handle it well.”

House Speaker Todd Huston added that Indiana already invests in public health, adding, “It may not be as much as people like.” He said that if more money is allocated, it should “support actionable goals with measurable outcomes.”

Huston asked Public Health Committee Chair Rep. Brad Barrett and Ways and Means Committee Chair Rep. Jeffrey Thompson to do a “deep dive,” adding, “Some, not all, will be successful – or certainly entertained.”

These are the early skirmish lines expected when confronted with a gaping problem and solutions presented by a commission of experts.

But here’s a glaring

piece of information: Indiana finished the last fiscal year with a record \$6.1 billion surplus.

Not taking public health to, as Gov. Holcomb would put it, “the next level” is to dodge a central dilemma facing tens of thousands of Hoosier families.

Or as Grant County Commissioner Mark Bardsley put it, “Regarding public health, I’m not satisfied with adequate nor average; we need a foundational commitment that all Hoosiers have excellent public health services in every ZIP code throughout Indiana.” Grant County’s life expectancy is 75.3 years, six years lower than that of Hamilton County.

While big budget surpluses have been historically good politics in Indiana, Capital Chronicle columnist Michael Leppert says this towering budget surplus reveals an “absence of ideas.”

“The easiest way to understand why it is terrible is to first understand that simply having that money means our government isn’t doing its job,” Leppert wrote last July. “It is not teaching our children to be smarter. It is not making our families healthier. It is not making Indiana better.”

My comment to Sen. Bray and Speaker Huston is this: Hoosiers need you to be creative, innovative, and manage the state’s assets beyond building smooth roads, balancing budgets, low business taxes, and sending rebates back to taxpayers. Failure of imagination is not an option. ❖

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that while Daniels has ruled out a third gubernatorial run – moving from “disinclined” to “not” – he is now being urged to run for the U.S. Senate seat that Mike Braun is giving up to run for governor.

Braun filed his gubernatorial candidate papers with the Indiana secretary of state on Tuesday in a move that was widely expected.

According to our sources, the prospect of a “U.S. Sen. Mitch Daniels” had been in a normal universe “unthinkable.” But now key associates and friends believe the former governor, White House budget director and former aide to Sen. Richard Lugar could “bring credit to our state by finishing his public career” in the Senate as the Donald Trump era appears to be waning.

The Daniels braintrust views current Hoosier U.S. Senate prospects not up to the era when Lugar, Coats, Birch and Evan Bayh and Quayle were considered “Senate lions.”

Daniels allies believe there is a giant need for smart conservative voices in the post-Donald Trump Republican party. They believe “populist stupidity has run roughshod over sensibility,” leading to what one described as “a pronounced absence of respected leaders/voices.” The departure of U.S. Sen. Ben Sasse (a Daniels friend who will become the next president of the University of Florida) only widens the gap between Trump populists and what they view as “true conservatives” holding sway over the upper chamber.

One source tells HPI that “it remains to be seen” where Daniels lands on this, but adds, “At first glance, the idea is sort of interesting to him.”

Daniels concludes a 10-year stint at the helm of Purdue, vowing to “run through the tape” this month.

It is just one cog in the gathering Indiana gubernatorial and senatorial field of candidates who are drawing unprecedented interest from the highest rungs of Hoosier governance.

Here is how these two races are shaking out, with plenty of twists and curves to come:

Indiana governor

Sen. Braun filed his candidacy on Tuesday. “That filing did occur yesterday,” Braun told Politico on Wednesday in a brief phone conversation. “We’ll talk to you down the road.”

The next key day will be Dec. 12, multiple sources tell HPI. Sen. Braun and already-declared candidate Eric Doden are expected to have high-profile campaign events in Indianapolis.



Eric Doden (top) in a TV ad, and Rep. Hollingsworth at the 2016 GOP Convention.

Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch is expected to officially declare her candidacy in mid-December. She recalled a post-2020 HPI interview just after she and Gov. Eric Holcomb were reelected in a record landslide. “I said that decision would be based upon experience and timing; preparation and timing,” Crouch told HPI on Wednesday morning. “The preparation is there, having worked at local and state government. I don’t think any candidate knows government and how it can work with people as well as I do. The timing is key in any decision and here we are, and the timing seems right for a decision.”

Asked about the potential field of the sitting lieutenant governor running against three self-funders, Crouch said, “One of the strengths that I have that makes me a contender is my ability to raise money. I am not a self-funder. My husband and I can’t write a \$15 million check; we couldn’t even write a \$1 million check. Nor do I think we should. If I can’t convince people that I’m a good investment for them and that they should be investing in me, I probably shouldn’t be running for office.”

Crouch told Howey Politics that she expects to post \$3 million on her year-end campaign finance report, and expects to raise \$8 million to \$9 million by the 2024 primary. Her finance team is headed by Bob Grand.

“The money I raise comes from people all over the state and those are the relationships that I have,” Crouch said. “They know they’ve invested in me and they have a vested interest in me being successful. I knew that to be a contender, to be considered, I had to raise money. We’ll have \$3 million in the bank by the end of this year. That will establish that I am a very serious candidate, that I will raise the money and people will invest in me. I believe by the primary we’ll need \$8 million or \$9 million. That will be the goal. At the end of the day, I truly believe that having people invest in me as a candidate.”

A fourth potential candidate, out-going U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth, is said to be mulling a run. He has aligned with former congressman Luke Messer and has been making calls to county chairs, multiple sources say, and reportedly has said he could fund a campaign with \$10 million. Hollingsworth announced he wouldn’t seek reelection, saying, “I ran for Congress to return this government to the people from the career politicians who had broken it, and I will be damned if I become one in the process.” Hollingsworth said in his IndyStar op-ed that he said he would continue to serve the 9th District “in different ways,” suggesting a 2024 gubernatorial run when he would be a potential self-funder candidate.

Indiana has two of the wealthiest members of Congress: Braun, who the Center for Responsive Politics

reported had a net worth of \$136 million; and Hollingsworth, who was ninth on a Business Insider list with assets of \$74.6 million.

Braun self-funded his 2018 U.S. Senate race, though some personal loans brought a complaint and rebuke from the Federal Election Commission. He used a \$5.5 million loan to go up on the air early. According to FEC reports, of the \$19.66 million Braun raised for the 2018 cycle, \$11,569,962 came from loans made by the candidate. His campaign made a \$1,154,174 repayment to himself. The campaign had \$5.32 million in total itemized individual contributions.

The access to early money was decisive. "We had the airspace four months by ourselves," Braun said of the early personal loans that allowed him to pour 3,000 gross rating points into statewide TV that began in November, calling it "putting my own skin in the game." He added, "We knew that even if I set the world on fire with my fundraising, I would still have to put 85% in. That's pretty well played out, but what's played in my favor is their financing is cramped."

Some of the Senate GOP's right flank — Mike Lee, Ted Cruz, Rick Scott, and Braun are urging Minority Leader Mitch McConnell to go no further than a short-term continuing resolution to keep the government open, per Punchbowl's Jake Sherman. The group is pushing for Republicans to hold off on agreeing to longer-term funding levels until the party has taken over the House. And they don't want any other bills or legislative priorities tacked onto the CR, either.

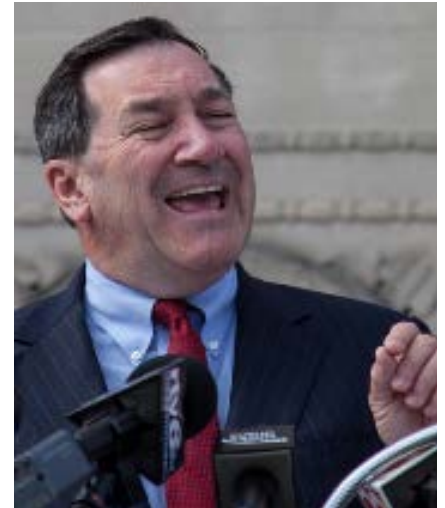
Indiana Democratic Party Chairman Mike Schmuhl said, "A Mike Braun administration would do nothing to improve the state's dismal quality-of-life, workforce, and education rankings, and coming up on 20 years of Republican state administrations, Hoosiers deserve honest leadership that will put an end to extremist politics and chart a course for a modern and better Indiana where everyone has the freedom to thrive."

Doden, the former Indiana Economic Development Corp. chair, is the first declared candidate. He has already produced a digital campaign video and is heavily advertising on Facebook. According to his last filing on the Indiana secretary of state website, Doden had a beginning balance of \$1.18 million, had raised \$1.4 million and had an ending balance of \$2.37 million. He has raised close to \$1 million from family members.

On the Democrat side, former Republican superintendent of public instruction Jennifer McCormick is preparing to run. She has not made any financial filings with the secretary of state. McCormick talked about a number of issues including education, reproductive health care and the economy in Fort Wayne in October when asked about a run for governor in 2024. "I'm asking them some simple questions," McCormick said (WPTA-TV). "Like what is on their radar that they want changes for in 2024 as I explore the governor's race." She defeated incumbent Democrat

Supt. Glenda Ritz in 2012.

Another potential candidate is 2016 lieutenant governor nominee Christina Hale, who has a job in the Biden administration since losing the 5th CD race to Rep. Victoria Spartz in 2020. Potential candidates once included Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett, who is running for a third term in 2023, and State Rep. Eddie Melton, who an-



Former Supt. Jennifer McCormick and Ambassador Joe Donnelly.

nounced a bid for Gary mayor last month. Melton and McCormick had conducted a statewide listening tour together.

But the key figure for Democrats is Ambassador Joe Donnelly, the former one-term U.S. senator who lost to Braun in 2018. Donnelly was appointed by President Biden to be the U.S. envoy to The Holy See.

Donnelly is prevented by the Hatch Act from conducting political activity. According to Indiana sources close to Donnelly, the ambassador "has been deeply involved this year in U.S.-Vatican relations, especially the Vatican's peace efforts in Ukraine. Joe has always tried to find the best way to serve his country and his state, and I know it's very important to him that Indiana has the brightest possible future."

Asked about a potential Donnelly gubernatorial candidacy, the Indiana source told HPI on Wednesday that the former senator "is keeping all of his options open" on any future political plans.

Donnelly raised \$17.17 million during his 2018 loss to Braun (who raised \$19 million), and reported \$173,873 cash on hand on Dec. 31, 2018, according to the FEC.

U.S. Senate

A Mitch Daniels candidacy would completely change this race. Going into this sequence, Braun not seeking a second term appeared to pave the way for a race among U.S. Reps. Jim Banks, Victoria Spartz and Hollingsworth and Attorney General Todd Rokita.

There has been speculation that Rokita might run for governor, but with Braun and other self-funders poised for entry, many believe he will take a look at the Senate

race. Braun defeated Rokita and Messer in the 2018 Republican primary.

Rep. Banks had told HPI last spring that Sen. Braun's decision would be key to his plans, which then included a potential run for governor or a House leadership post. Chris Crabtree from "Team Banks" said in an email to supporters this week said the congressman is "strongly considering a run for the U.S. Senate. As a Hoosier Republican leader, your thoughts are important to him as he considers this decision."

Last month, Banks lost a race for House GOP whip. Since then, multiple sources say that Banks is now setting his sights on the Senate race.

In the wake of his loss to Rep. Tom Emmer for whip, Banks said, "While we fell short in our campaign for whip, I promise I will continue to be a conservative fighter in the Congress. Next Congress, I will do everything I can to make sure Republicans keep our promises and advance a conservative and America First agenda. Our voters deserve a party that keeps its promises."

Banks has been an ally of House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, whose bid for House speaker may be upended by a defection of five Freedom Caucus Republicans. There has been some speculation that if McCarthy fails, Banks could mount a bid for speaker.

Banks had a \$1.35 million cash balance according to his last FEC filing on Oct. 19.

Banks would be expected to run in the Trump lane, as would Rokita. While a growing number of Republicans are now expressing skepticism about a third Donald Trump presidential run, Banks has remained an unabashed ally of the former president. "Donald Trump remains a very popular figure in the Republican Party in each corner of the country," Banks told "Fox News Sunday" in the aftermath of the Nov. 8 election. "I believe that Donald Trump was a very effective president for our country. I believe he could be a very effective president for our country again."

But that was before Trump had a Mar-a-Lago dinner with anti-semitic Kanye West ("Ye") and white supremacist Nick Fuentes.

Rep. Spartz has also been making the rounds to GOP county chairs saying she will seek the U.S. Senate nomination. Spartz's last FEC report showed she had \$1.65 million cash on hand. She lent her 5th CD campaign more than \$1.2 million in 2020.

"Rep. Spartz would consider running for Senate should Braun run for governor, and she would be well positioned to win the GOP nomination from a name identification, fundraising and ideological perspective," one Republican close to her told Politico in September. That Politico article noted that Spartz "has struggled to find her footing. She's faced massive staff turnover, leading one nonpartisan group's list of 'Worst Bosses' in Congress as a result." Spartz also has caused headaches for Republican leadership during Russia's war on Ukraine, her birth country. At the outset of the Russian invasion, the GOP conference

spotlighted Spartz's emotional accounts from family and friends who were being bombarded in air raids. However, as the war progressed, she became an active critic of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy even as his defense against Moscow won worldwide support, including from most other Republican lawmakers.

What about Holcomb?

The elephant in the room with regard to this race is Gov. Holcomb, who announced a campaign for U.S. Senate in 2015, was appointed lieutenant governor by Gov. Mike Pence in March 2016, and then was nominated for governor when Pence joined the Trump ticket that July. He then defeated Democrat John Gregg 51%-45% in a



U.S. Rep. Jim Banks with President Trump, while Rep. Steve Scalise comforts U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz.

campaign he described as "building an airplane in flight."

Multiple Republican county chairs HPI has talked with do not see a Holcomb bid for the Senate, despite a recent Ball State Hoosier Poll revealing that 65% of Republicans approve of his job performance, while 22% disapprove. Holcomb's overall job approval was 49% with 35% disapproving.

The on-going commentary is that Holcomb would not fare well in a GOP primary, with many citing his veto of a transgender bill as well as some of the COVID-19 pandemic mandates he signed off on. He did sign SEA1, the most restrictive abortion bill passed by a legislature since the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision last June. They point to the Republican Convention loss of Secretary of State Holli Sullivan last June as evidence that Holcomb is politically weakened. But while Holcomb's appointed candidate for secretary of state lost at convention, this race would be in a primary.

Holcomb won reelection with a record 1.7 million votes (56.5%) in 2020 during the pandemic, up from his 2016 victory over Democrat John Gregg with 1.397 million votes (51.4%).

But multiple GOP sources say that Holcomb is burnishing his credentials for a private sector or sports position once he leaves office in 2025. Holcomb did not respond to a text from HPI about whether he will seek the U.S. Senate seat.

As for Democrats, there is no apparent U.S. Senate candidate emerging at this early point in time. ❖

Hawkins concedes in HD71; Recount for HD62

Howey Politics Indiana

JEFFERSONVILLE – Jeffersonville Councilman Scott Hawkins has conceded to State Rep. Rita Fleming in HD71 (News & Tribune). “While I’m still unclear as to how the error occurred, I accept the results,” Hawkins said in the Facebook post. “We fought a long, tough campaign. I have literally [hundreds] of people to thank. It was an exhausting experience, but a rewarding one, from which I have no regrets.” The Clark County Election Board, a bipartisan group made up of Democrat Andrew Steele, Republican Mark Grube and Clark County Clerk Susan Popp, attributed

the error in the vote tallies to a memory card not reading properly on election night. In Clark County, Fleming received 9,156

votes, and Hawkins received 9,000.

In Floyd County, Fleming received 146 votes, and Hawkins received 76 votes.

Hawkins’ attorney, Zachary Stewart, said a request for a recount was not filed for the District 71 race, an option that was previously under consideration by the candidate. In his Facebook post, Hawkins wished Fleming luck as she

serves as state representative. “Inflation, education and workforce development are just a handful of the significant issues faced by our state,” he wrote on Facebook. “Work needs to be done. Results need to be produced — for the benefit of all Hoosiers.”

Dems seek HD62 recount

The Monroe County Democratic Party Chair David Henry says he will file a recount petition today for HD62’s race between Dave Hall, a Republican and Penny Githens, a Democrat (Indiana Public Media). After provisional ballots were added to totals earlier this month, Hall is leading Githens by 40 votes. The deadline for a county party chair to file a petition for recount would have been Friday, 17 days after Election Day. But the deadline was extended to Monday because of the holiday last week. The petition asks for a recount in all 43 precincts across Brown, Jackson, and Monroe counties to account for possibility of human error in counties like Monroe and Brown, which rely on paper ballots.

Statewides

Morales future is clouded

Secretary of State-elect Diego Morales might have easily clinched the Secretary of State race, but his future

is clouded by allegations of 2018 voting improprieties reminiscent of another Indiana elections chief convicted of voter fraud. Lawyers and election experts — including the special prosecutor who handled former Secretary of State Charlie White’s case in 2012 — expressed doubt that Morales would face a legal challenge in conversations with the Indiana Capital Chronicle. Political calculations, subjective residency rules, the staleness of the alleged acts, and differences between the two men’s circumstances complicate the issue, they said. Any entity that took it up, for example, would face intense public scrutiny, and possibly the closed-door wrath of leading Republicans. The party dominates Indiana government bodies. “Someone’s got to come forward, even law enforcement, to pick it up and say, ‘Hey, let’s look into this.’ If it doesn’t get looked into, somebody can say so, to the judge in Hendricks County, via a request for special prosecutor,” said Daniel Sigler, who served as one of three special prosecutors in White’s

case. The process is outlined in Indiana law. But otherwise, he said, it’s unlikely. “Usually, law enforcement agencies stay away from those kinds of investigations unless they’re asked or ordered to,” said Sigler, now retired. “[That] seems to be the way it happens — nobody wants to pick up the ball.”

Morales taps transition team

Secretary of State-elect Morales on Monday announced a 13-person transition team — co-chaired by a former state office holder — following his easy election night vic-

tory (Capital Chronicle). A news release said the team will offer organizational and logistical support and includes individuals with decades of experience in both the public and private sectors. Individuals interested in applying for a position within the new administration should send a letter of interest and their resume to transition@diego4indiana.com. Morales has named Barnes and Thornburg Partner Bob Grand as chairman of the transition team and former Secretary of State Ed Simcox as co-chairman. “Throughout the campaign, I witnessed Diego’s unparalleled work ethic and commitment as he made countless trips around the state to meet with voters,” said Grand. “I am confident Diego will take this drive and determination with him to the secretary of state’s office, and I am proud to serve as an adviser during this important time of transition.”

Mayors

Columbia City: Daniel to seek reelection

Mayor Ryan Daniel has announced that he would seek a fourth term as Columbia City’s Mayor. In July, Daniel posted a video on his campaign Facebook page announcing the same. “Our work hasn’t stopped since we hit the ground in 2012,” said Daniel. “Our community has energy, growth, and a focus on the future. I’m so honored to get to serve our City and hope that our administration’s



results have earned another four years of service to our residents." Mayor Daniel first took office in 2011 as the City's second-youngest mayor, and one of the youngest mayors in the State of Indiana. Since taking office in 2012, Columbia City has seen the construction of the Russel and Evelyn Fahl Aquatics Center, two new downtown pocket parks, utility infrastructure improvements throughout the community, expanded trails, restored roadways, new restaurants and shops, expanded government transparency, and Northeast Indiana's second-highest population growth rate (Census 2020). Further, in 2015, the City reworked the Long Term Control Sewer Plan saving almost \$10 Million dollars, and finishing the project five years early. More recently, Mayor Daniel has announced multiple grants totaling over \$3 Million that will expand the Blue River Trail to the new Columbia City High School, build the first phase of the new Eagle Park, and overhaul the Westgate neighborhood infrastructure. In 2022, Columbia City was also named one of the top 20 suburbs in the United States for affordability, jobs, and livability. "Every move we've made has been strategically focused on making our community better for current residents and attractive to visitors who may be future residents," said Daniel. "It has been one of my greatest honors to serve my hometown." More information can be found at: www.ryandanielformayor.com

Evansville: Winnecke, Musgrave rift widens

Unable or unwilling to make peace with Mayor Lloyd Winnecke, Cheryl Musgrave could find their rift morphs into an obstacle to her aspirations to lead Evansville. Winnecke, a Republican like Musgrave, said he will happily talk to any prospective candidate for public office, including Democrats. Asked if he could see himself actually supporting a Democrat next year while serving his final year as mayor, he didn't say no (Langhorne, Evansville Courier & Press). "I see myself supporting a candidate who has cast a positive vision for the city and who has leadership qualities that I can relate to," Winnecke said. The mayor provided further clarification Monday, saying by text that he expects to support a Republican to succeed him, but "I won't support anyone who runs a campaign that tears down Evansville and the work we've done during our time in office." It's the kind of language Winnecke uses to describe Musgrave. "You know, [Musgrave, currently a Vanderburgh County commissioner] made her announcement to run before I announced my decision," the mayor said when asked last week if he and Musgrave could reconcile. "That signaled to me pretty clearly that she's not someone who supports what we've accomplished or how we view leadership of the city."

Indianapolis: Meriweather 3rd Dem for mayor

Community engagement consultant Gregory Meriweather on Tuesday officially formed a candidate campaign committee to seek the Democratic nomination for mayor of Indianapolis, setting up a contested primary against incumbent Mayor Joe Hogsett and State Rep.

Robin Shackelford (Wooten, IBJ). Meriweather's new filing with the Marion County Clerk's Office officially upgraded his exploratory committee to an actual candidate committee to raise money for a mayoral run. The filing lists him as a Democrat. He did not immediately respond to IBJ's request for comment, but a video on his Facebook page says he will make some sort of announcement on Friday. In the video, Meriweather appeals to those who feel they have been overlooked or forgotten and asks them to attend his 5 p.m. Friday announcement at Martin University. "I'm a firm believer that in order for change to come, someone must take the risk for the people," Meriweather says in the video. "By all means, you know I have. I'm looking at this thing and I know that it's a lot of work and a lot of ridicule. But I'm willing to put myself out there for people to be heard, respected and seen."

Valparaiso: Murphy won't seek second term

First-term Republican Mayor Matt Murphy will not seek reelection in 2023 (DeVore, NWI Times). In a statement posted on the city's website Wednesday afternoon, Murphy said he made the decision after his family's small business, Jifco Products Inc., was acquired by Urschel Laboratories. Murphy said he was offered a position that will require his daily presence at the Urschel headquarters in Chesterton. "I will miss serving as mayor alongside an extraordinary group of men and women who made this ride so fun and enjoyable," Murphy said in his announcement. The lifelong Valparaiso resident and former city councilman was elected in 2019 after longtime Mayor Jon Costas retired. "I want to be abundantly clear: my focus hasn't changed now that I've made this announcement — we will continue full speed ahead to move our city forward in the new year as we have major projects happening all over Valparaiso," he said.

Presidential 2024

Pence recalls his 'Hoosier roots'

Former vice president Mike Pence praised his Hoosier roots and shared memories from his home state during a short talk at the Indiana Historical Society Tuesday evening (Smith, Capital Chronicle). The previous Republican Indiana governor additionally recalled critical moments in his career, from serving as a representative in the United States Congress and later earning the top seat at the Statehouse, to spending four years in Washington, D.C., as vice president to former President Donald Trump. Pence returned to Indianapolis to promote his new book, "So Help Me God," in which he recounts his journey of growing up in Columbus, Indiana, to the vice presidency. Pence also details personal conversations with Trump, both during their time in the White House and on the day of the U.S. Capitol insurrection.

Trump dines with Ye, Fuentes

Former President Donald Trump had dinner

Tuesday at his Mar-a-Lago estate with white nationalist Nick Fuentes and rapper Kanye West, a Trump adviser confirmed to CBS News on Friday. The former president said in a statement to CBS News that he did not know who Fuentes was, nor that he would be arriving with West, who is also known as Ye. "Kanye West very much wanted to visit Mar-a-Lago. Our dinner meeting was intended to be Kanye and me only, but he arrived with a guest whom I had never met and knew nothing about," Trump said in a statement to CBS News.

Pence calls for Trump to apologize

Pence on Monday said former President Trump was "wrong" to have dinner with white nationalist Nick Fuentes last week, but said he does not believe Trump is an anti-Semite or racist (The Hill). "President Trump was wrong to give a white nationalist, an anti-Semite and a Holocaust denier a seat at the table, and I think he should apologize," Pence told NewsNation in an interview. "With that being said, as I point out in the book as well, I don't believe Donald Trump is an anti-Semite. I don't believe he's a racist or a bigot," Pence continued. "He should denounce them without qualification."

Pence got big ABC ratings

Big ratings for @Mike_Pence's sit down with @DavidMuir: World News Tonight scored its most-watched telecast (9.191 million) in eight months.

Pence builds out campaign staff

Pence is building out his political staff, the latest indication that he's prepping a White House bid that will pit him against his former boss, ex-President Donald Trump (Politico). Ali Kjergaard, a spokesperson for outgoing Nebraska Sen. Ben Sasse, has been tapped to serve as communications director for Advancing American Freedom, a Pence-aligned non-profit organization that is serving as the former vice president's campaign-in-waiting. Those familiar with the hiring process say two additional communications officials are expected to be added sometime early next year. Pence's team is also looking to bring on fundraising aides. The staffing additions are the latest step Pence has taken toward launching a 2024 bid. Last week, he released a memoir and made an appearance at the Republican Jewish Coalition conference in Las Vegas, an event that attracted a handful of prospective presidential aspirants. The former vice president spent the last year campaigning across the country for Republican candidates in the mid-term election, including in early GOP nominating states like Iowa and New Hampshire.

Trump sees no poll bump

Since announcing his candidacy for president last Tuesday, Trump saw no polling bump in support — indeed, there was a slight dip in his support among Republicans and GOP-leaning independents. That's the topline take-

away from this week's POLITICO/Morning Consult poll, the first conducted since Trump officially announced his 2024 campaign. Forty-five percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents say they'd vote for him if the primary were held today. That's down by 2 points since last week, in a poll taken before Trump's announcement. Among Republicans: 60% feel that he should run for president (down 1 point since last week), and 37% say he should not (up 1 point). Among all voters: 63% of voters think he should not run for president (down 2 points from last week).

Dr. Adams hounded by 'Trump effect'

Former surgeon general Jerome Adams and his wife, Lacey, often find themselves talking about what they have named the "Trump Effect." It followed them from Washington to their home in the Indianapolis suburbs. They felt it when he was exploring jobs in academia, where he would receive polite rejections from university officials who worried that someone who served in the administration of the former president would be badly received by their left-leaning student bodies. They felt it when corporations decided he was too tainted to employ. Trump is "a force that really does take the air out of the room," Adams, 48, said (Washington Post). "The Trump hangover is still impacting me in significant ways." He said the 2024 Trump campaign "will make things more difficult for me." The former surgeon general's predicament underscores one of the givens of today's political environment: Association with Trump becomes a permanent tarnish, a kind of reverse Midas touch. Whether indicted or shunned or marginalized, a cavalcade of former Trump World figures have foundered in the aftermath of one of the more chaotic presidencies in modern American history. Lacey saw it coming. She said she "hated Trump" and did not want her husband to leave his comfortable life in Indiana, where he practiced anesthesiology and served as state health commissioner under then-Indiana governor Mike Pence, who was Trump's vice president when Jerome became surgeon general. Now Jerome bristles at his forever label as "Trump's surgeon general," an image sealed by his highly public role during the much-criticized early White House response to the coronavirus pandemic. Finally, in September 2021, Purdue University President Mitch Daniels, a former Indiana governor and Republican stalwart, hired Adams as the first executive director of health equity initiatives at the school.

Biden casts doubt on reelection bid

President Joe Biden cast doubt on his potential 2024 reelection bid Wednesday while speaking at the White House Tribal Nations Summit ([Washington Examiner](#)). Biden just finished delivering his speech when an unknown person in the crowd shouted "four more years" at the president. The president waved the comment off and thanked the person. "I don't know about that," Biden said. "Thanks – thank you."❖

Five things I ask potential candidates

By **CRAIG DUNN**

CARMEL – Throughout my political career, I have always applied four tests to any candidate who was vying for either my support or my vote. I've made mistakes on a few, but in general these tests have worked well.



The first, and most important, is a candidate's likability factor. You can call it charisma or personality, but how the voters perceive you as a person is going to help you go a long way in the game of politics, if the impression is favorable. I tend to ask myself, "Is this the kind of guy or gal that I would like to sit down, have a beer and discuss world events with? Is this the kind of guy or gal whom I would trust around my wife and

children? Is this the kind of guy or gal whom I would be happy if my children aspired to be just like them?"

Pollsters have a pretty good way of measuring the temperature of the voters on how much they like a particular candidate. It's the net favorability score. You ask voters when a name is given to them to indicate whether their impression of the candidate is very favorable, somewhat favorable, neutral, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable. You subtract the two unfavorable results from the favorable results and hope you have a positive score.

The second test I apply to a candidate is whether or not they are a person of substance. You can tell quickly if a candidate is all hat and no cattle when it comes to a reasoned and well-thought-out approach to issues. Do they understand the important issues? Do they have cogent ideas for how to deal with the issues?

The next test involves communication. Can this prospective candidate communicate with the voters through speeches, advertising and one-on-one encounters in a way to engender trust and support? You've got to be intelligent and understand the issues, but you better be able to communicate your message in a manner that your audience can understand.

The political battlefield is littered with the bodies of ultra-smart candidates who could not explain things in a way that the average voter could understand. You don't want to talk down to the voting public, but there is a reason that advertisers and political consultants aim their messages at a 12-year-old's comprehension. "Will this message play at Walmart on a Friday night or at the bowling alley on Tuesday?"

Voters are seldom as forgiving as the client I had who upon hearing the municipal bond analyst who I

had invited from California to speak to my clients, talked technically and totally over the heads of his audience, told me afterwards, "I didn't understand a thing he said, but he sure knew what he was talking about." Life is full of elevator speech moments when it comes to politics. You get about 30 seconds to convey a simple message and win a voter.

My final test when it comes to judging political horse flesh is evaluating whether a potential candidate is a hard worker. Running for political office is not an easy task and each and every person throwing their hat into the ring should be commended for stepping forward. The higher the office, the harder the work. It's about making voter contact on their doorstep, in small cafes, in auditoriums and at factory gates.

Work starts early and ends late each and every day. It is pure political sweat equity. Most candidates won't pay the price and the cost of political laziness is defeat at the polls. It is not just knocking on doors, stuffing envelopes and kissing babies. If you don't think it is hard work to ask someone to part with their hard-earned money in the form of a contribution, then you'll get an education. Those who can smile and dial and make the ask are miles ahead of those who just mail a return envelope and hope someone will donate out of the kindness of their hearts or from a call to civic duty.

Of course, there is a fifth test to the viability of a potential candidate, but most times we are well down the road before this comes to the forefront. Does the candidate have any skeletons lingering in their closet, just waiting to jump out at the worst possible time?

I used to have a canned little speech that I would give candidates. I'd say, "You don't have to tell me unless you want to, but you should ask yourself, is there anything in my past life or current life that if known by the public and published in the media would be damaging to my family, career or chance of being elected?"

You can bet that the higher you climb on the political ladder, the deeper dive your opponents will take into your past. We've repeatedly seen how these acts can blow up at the worst time and torpedo a viable candidacy. You must trust that each candidate is introspective and will understand that the truth will eventually be known. Unfortunately, most candidates for higher office get up in the morning and look in the mirror at senator so-in-so or president so-in-so and see nothing but the good things and none of the warts. This is a fatal flaw.

Republicans made quite a few mistakes in the 2022 mid-term elections and blew a tremendous opportunity to score a major victory across the land. If the political leadership had focused on the four or five tests of political viability, I believe that Republicans would have won up to six net seats in the Senate and an additional 30 seats in the House. Too many of our candidates were seriously flawed from the beginning to even stand a chance of winning. When you allow people who are fatally detached from reality to hand select candidates, you are asking for

trouble.

Let's hope that in 2024 we select our candidates based on their likability, substance, ability to communicate and willingness to work hard rather than rely on their fame, fortune or fables. This process of eliminating flawed candidates should begin now and should begin at

the top. A political party needs to eradicate the cancer before it spreads. ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman.

Democrats need to drop gerrymandering blame

By JACK COLWELL
South Bend Tribune

SOUTH BEND – Democrats need to stop blaming a Republican gerrymander for loss of the congressional election in Indiana's 2nd CD.



Even if Democrats had drawn the new districts after the 2020 Census, there is no way the district that includes St. Joseph County could have been drawn to provide Democratic flavor for the 2022 election.

The district is surrounded by heavily Republican vote strength.

What could be added in redistricting to give a Democratic congressional candidate a better chance?

Draw a narrow corridor along the Toll Road to Lake County to grab some Democratic precincts there?

That wouldn't stand up against a challenge. And even if it did, the 1st District, centered around Lake County, was targeted for an all-out Republican challenge. Democratic Congressman Frank Mrvan survived, with only 52.8% of the vote. Not the landslide of past elections there, when Republicans offered only a token challenge.

Also, taking some Democratic strength from the 1st District to help in the 2nd could have enabled Republicans to win there without making much of a dent in the big win by Republican Congressman Rudy Yakym.

How big did Yakym win?

He won even bigger than the late Jackie Walorski, who was entrenched in the district. He carried all 11 counties involved in district voting, including supposedly Democratic St. Joseph County, and getting 64.6% of the district vote. Walorski never carried St. Joseph County. Her landslide victory in 2020 was by 61.5%.

If Walorski had not died in that tragic accident, would she have won big? Of course.

The red wave that swept across Indiana, now in the category of one-party state, would have kept the 2nd District in Republican control even if Yakym hadn't run the

effective campaign that he waged, with backing of the Walorski organization and campaign financing for saturation TV.

A formidable task lies ahead for any Democrat seeking the Democratic congressional nomination in '24 and beyond.

Look at Yakym's winning percentages in the counties: Cass, 76.2; Elkhart, 68.9; Fulton, 75.7; Kosciusko, 78.3; LaPorte, 63.6; Marshall, 73.8; Miami, 75.8; Pulaski, 77.1; Starke, 72.0; Wabash, 74.9. And the killer, St. Joseph, 51.5.

Those counties will remain in the district for the rest of the decade, until the next redistricting in 2031.

Should Democrats just give up, let the nomination go again to anybody who happens to file, even if unknown, unprepared to run a congressional campaign and unlikely to attract any substantial funding and support in the district, from the state or from national sources of Democratic assistance?

They better not.

It is clear that one of the reasons Democrats suffered so many defeats in St. Joseph County was because party voters stayed home, unexcited about any of the races and uninspired by any Democratic ticket leader or other candidate presenting a message the stirred them from apathy.

Democrats need a congressional candidate to present the Democratic message loud and clear. One who could attract funding for the TV ads so vital in a sprawling district of some 3,700 square miles.

Paul Steury, the Democratic nominee this time, deserves praise for willingness to run and his sincere beliefs in issues of the environment. Nobody with better credentials would run. But he was not able to present a message that resonated anywhere.

There won't always be a red wave. Indiana not long ago elected Democrats for governor and senator. It was carried by Barack Obama in 2008.

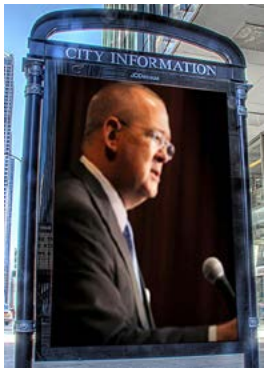
A candidate willing to take what looks like certain defeat for Congress in 2024 could build a base for future bids for Congress in a year less red or for other offices. A candidate with a resounding message could be the ticket-leader bringing back Democratic voters in St. Joseph County and elsewhere in the district.

Democrats should seek a candidate willing to lose but likely to win by losing. ❖

Economic optimism (and worry)

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE – Thanksgiving weekend is a fine occasion to take stock of our world and to consider honestly how our economy fares globally, nationally and locally.



The economy isn't everything, of course. Freedom, family and health matter more. However, strong economic growth is the best remedy for many vexing challenges.

In almost every way the past three decades have been unprecedented periods of growth. In just 30 years, the world economy lifted more people from desperate poverty than in the accumulated 30 centuries before that. The number of humans participating in free elections doubled, and today 60% of the world economy resides in free nations with civil rights and elected governments. These countries are mostly close allies with extensive trade and security agreements.

The remaining 40% of the world's economy is evenly split among tyrants and poor, unaligned nations. The balance of power between freedom and tyranny has never been this favorable. Moreover, the world's second largest authoritarian regime, Russia, is in the midst of nearly unprecedented military collapse. This offers sobering lessons for China and the world's other despots.

There is increasing evidence that the U.S. economy might be picking up steam for faster growth. These things are never certain and there are plenty of road-blocks, but the next few decades hold enormous promise. There's never been a better time to be alive.

Still, one aspect of our economy worries me – growing regional inequality. In fact, many readers who find me too Pollyannaish probably feel that way because they live in places that are stagnant, or in decline. That is all too common a feature of several modern economies, most especially the United States.

From the end of the Civil War until about 1980, American states and cities were becoming more economically alike. This "convergence" in economic jargon meant that poor places were catching up to rich places in terms of growth. Sometime after the 1970s, that convergence ended. For the past couple decades, poor places have become poorer, and rich places richer.

This "divergence" has helped fuel voter anger and drives different narratives about how the economy is performing. So, a person living in rural Ohio or Indiana has a much different economic experience than someone living in, say, suburban Boston or Austin. In most of the United

States, economic growth is healthy, but in many places it is moribund.

From the end of the Great Recession to now, average inflation-adjusted wages in the U.S. grew by 7% to \$32.58 an hour. However, in Indiana, wages grew by 4.1% to \$29.34 an hour. Conversely, in Massachusetts, wages grew by 13.9% to \$40.19 per hour. It is easy to see how folks living in Indiana might be terribly frustrated by the economy, while those in Massachusetts are pleasingly optimistic.

These differences highlight some of the basic issues causing regional inequality. Massachusetts is a high-tax state, and Indiana is a low-tax state, so prevailing wisdom would be that Indiana would be growing fast. However, Indiana has low educational attainment, which is now in sharp decline. In contrast, Massachusetts is a highly educated state with nearly twice the share of college graduates as Indiana. The fundamental observation here is that taxpayers – businesses and families – look for value in public services, not price. Today, education is of prime value.

Perhaps the only good news about the "divergence" in economic fortunes is that it has a strong policy component. Pure economic forces are difficult to alter, but those brought about by policies can change. Some of the policy variation between states comes from a fundamental misunderstanding about the factors that cause economic growth. Here's where economics can help.

For much of the 19th and early 20th centuries, differences in economic growth came about from variation in available capital investment. This is economic jargon for business equipment, buildings, and public infrastructure like rail systems, roads, bridges and ports. Capital brought economic growth and wealth accumulation. But, in the middle of the 20th Century, the focus of economic growth began to shift from machines to the human mind.

To be fair, economic growth was always caused by human ingenuity, but from about 1700 to 1950, the major innovations saved human and animal strength. In contrast, since the middle of the 20th Century, most innovations have all been about leveraging brain power, or human capital, as we economists like to call it. In the developed world, human capital has become the primary, and possibly only, source of growth.

Today the engine of prosperity is education-driven innovation. Still, far too many elected leaders continue to think of economic growth the way it was 75 years ago. To them, prosperity comes from increased business investment; more machinery, equipment and warehouses. This misunderstanding would be harmless except that this antiquated view of economic growth crowds out spending on the things that really matter – primarily education.

Since 2006, Indiana cut its tax rate on manufacturing from the 38th to fourth lowest. At the same time, the state cut spending on higher education from 0.69% of our GDP to 0.49% of GDP. We made the ninth deepest cuts to education in the nation. No state with educational

attainment as bad as ours was anywhere near our cuts or funding levels. So, what did Hoosiers get from these two highly different policy changes? We now have the smallest share of young adults heading to college in three decades, and 40,000 fewer factory jobs than in 2006.

It would be stunning if these data didn't motivate fundamental reassessment of economic and education policies. Thankfully, we have precedence for thoughtful re-assessment of funding priorities in Indiana. In 2017, the legislature recognized that the road-funding taxes were not sufficient to build and maintain adequate roads. So, they shifted gasoline sales taxes to roads, and indexed the gas tax to inflation. It was pragmatic and wise. But still, Indiana's educational outcomes are today far worse nationally than our roads have ever been.

Education funding in Indiana needs the same sort of focus. If we hope to enjoy the economic growth that is passing Hoosiers by, we must get another 10,000 kids to college each year. That won't happen without significantly more tax dollars being spent to prepare and support those students. Failure to do so will simply fuel regional inequality and leave Indiana as one of those poor places that grows poorer.

The choice is pretty simple, really. ❖

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

Are we a leading laggard, or lagging leader?

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – The most important economic measure is not jobs, wages, or taxes. It is that portion of the gross domestic product (GDP) produced by the private sector. Our jobs, our wages, our taxes are directly related to GDP. What we make, what we do, determines how we live.



Over the past 10 years, 2011 to 2021, Indiana's GDP (not adjusted for price changes) grew by 42%, 30th in the nation, which advanced by 52%. But we're happy; Kentucky was 31st, Wisconsin 33rd, Illinois 37th!

Those data tell the surface story of our comparative growth. Yet, when we look deeper, the tale gets no better.

Yes, Indiana is a manufacturing state, the fifth largest manufacturing state in the nation. But manufacturing in the U.S. grew by 33% when the whole economy was growing by 52%. Indiana's growth in manufacturing was 26%, 36th in the nation.

But we're happy; Ohio was 37th and Illinois 42nd!

Within manufacturing nationally, the shift of relative growth and decline among 19 major industrial sectors was a modest 6.7%. Indiana's shift was 13%, almost double the national pace of turbulence among the sectors.

Perhaps the most successful Hoosier manufacturing sector was primary metals (steel and aluminum) where Indiana ranked first in total GDP and first in the amount of growth. In rate of growth, we ranked a respectable 12th at 70%, while the nation could muster only a 23% growth rate.

Primary metals raise an interesting question. Is it better to be leading in a lagging industry or should we aim to improve our lagging performance in a leading industry? For example, once upon a time, Indiana was a leader in what today are called computer and electronic products as well as electrical equipment, appliances, and components. The names of companies now gone or greatly reduced are to be found in the homes and memories of many.

Hoosier computer and electronic product firms saw a decline in GDP between 2011 and 2021 of 7.4% (ranking 40th among the states) while that industry grew by 40.5%.

Likewise, electrical equipment, appliances, and component manufacturing also advanced in the U.S. by a matching 40.0%; in Indiana, the industry managed a 15.5% increase (33rd in the nation).

Tomorrow's attention will be on motor vehicles, bodies, trailers and parts as electric cars and trucks overtake the petroleum putt-putts of today. Indiana ranked second in GDP in this sector in both 2011 and 2022.

Our growth rate, however, was low in the top half of all states (21st). Indiana grew by 57%, somewhat ahead of the U.S. rate of 52%. But if EVs are the future, how do we get into the top 10? Or are we content to be in the top half as long as our neighbors are not out-performing us? ❖

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

With another debt crisis, Congress must change

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News Bureau

ANDERSON – Late last year, Congress was staring down yet another deadline to avoid what pretty much everyone agreed would be a disastrous default on our nation’s debt.



For months, Republicans had been using the debt limit to attack the spending programs put forward by Democrats. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell was insistent that he would not be a party to any effort to mitigate what he described as “the consequences of Democratic mismanagement.”

Never mind that the debt had been building for decades and was actually the work of both political parties.

The Associated Press reported at the time that an analysis of U.S. Treasury Department records showed the debt had grown by nearly \$8 trillion just during the four years of the Trump administration. The nonpartisan Tax Policy Center estimated that as much as a quarter of that could be attributed to tax cuts approved by Republicans in 2017.

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and the Democrats pointed out that this was a bipartisan problem in need of a bipartisan solution, but Republicans didn’t see it that way. U.S. Rep. Kevin Brady of Texas more or less summed up his party’s position.

“Democrats have known this day is coming for two years and did absolutely nothing,” he said.

Schumer and McConnell eventually struck a deal. McConnell would round up enough votes to approve a one-time, fast-track process for raising the debt limit on two conditions: Democrats would have to pass the increase without a single Republican vote, and they would have to set a specific dollar amount for the increase.

Not everyone was happy about it. Republican Sen. John Kennedy, who voted against the arrangement, called it “a choice between voting for a heart attack or cancer.”

In the end, Democrats approved a new debt limit, and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. The economy had dodged another

bullet.

This drama hasn’t changed much through the years. Some version of it has been playing out periodically for more than a century.

First established in 1917, the debt ceiling has never really controlled federal spending or the amount the nation needs to borrow to meet its obligations. Those obligations have already been established.

The debt limit is more of a temporary brake on spending. It sets a limit on how much the Treasury Department can borrow until Congress takes further action.

For a long time, the limit was a date on the calendar, a time at which the Treasury Department would be forced to stop borrowing. Now, it’s a specific dollar amount, \$31.4 trillion.

As recently as June, the Bipartisan Policy Center estimated the Treasury wouldn’t run out of money until sometime in the third quarter of next year. Now, it’s saying that date might come sooner.

“The developments since we made our projection in June are likely to have pushed things forward from what they otherwise would have been, but we don’t really have a good sense of how much yet,” said Shai Akabas, the center’s director of economic policy.

Despite the cloudy forecast, he said, two facts are clear.

“First, the debt limit has manifestly failed to restrain federal borrowing,” he said. “Second, the limit has created periodic crises that have consumed Congress’ time and dragged the United States to the brink of defaulting on our obligations.”

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen offered a similar assessment when Congress was staring down the same sort of deadline almost 14 months ago.

“It’s become increasingly damaging to America to have a debt ceiling,” she said. “It’s led to a series of politically dangerous conflicts that have caused Americans and global markets to question whether or not America’s serious about paying its bills. It’s flirting with a self-inflicted crisis.”

In other words, we’ve seen this show before. It’s time for Congress to rewrite the script. ❖





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The 2022 election's split ticket states

By **J. MILES COLEMAN**

CHARLOTTSVILLE, Va. – In late August, as the election season was heading into its final stretch, the Crystal Ball surveyed the landscape and identified several states that seemed likely to split their tickets in this month's election — defined here as voting for one party for Senate and the other party for governor. Although the trend of split-ticket voting has generally fallen off in the last decade or so, a few promising prospects emerged among the 25 states holding elections for both Senate and governor.

The two most recent mid-terms, 2014 and 2018, each saw six split-ticket states. With most everything counted, 2022 fits that historical pattern exactly... sort of. Nevada, New Hampshire, and Vermont all sent Democrats to the Senate while electing Republican governors. Kansas and Wisconsin, meanwhile, reelected their Republican senators alongside their Democratic governors.

OK, so that's five states – wouldn't we need 6 for 2022 to match the previous couple of midterms? For now, we are putting Georgia in the "sort of" category. Though the race for Senate is going to a runoff next week, which we will likely have more to say on later, Sen. Raphael Warnock (D) finished ahead of his Republican opponent, former football player Herschel Walker. Gov. Brian Kemp (R), though, was reelected comfortably. So we'll include Georgia in the crossover category for now as we wait and see what happens next week.

With that, we'll take a closer look at the half dozen states that split their tickets between this year's Senate and gubernatorial races.

In August, we identified Vermont as the state most likely to split its ticket this year, and that was certainly the case: there was an 87 percentage point gap between the results of its two biggest races. In the open-seat contest for Senate, Rep. Peter Welch (D, VT-AL) won his bid for a promotion by just over 40 points – Welch will become only the second Democrat Vermont has ever sent to the Senate. The first was retiring Sen. Patrick Leahy (fellow Sen. Bernie Sanders caucuses with Democrats but was elected as an independent). Meanwhile, popular moderate Republican Gov. Phil Scott won a fourth term by 47 points.

One state over, several late pre-election polls suggested that an upset was brewing in the Granite State, but Democratic Sen. Maggie Hassan defeated her Trump-aligned challenger, veteran Don Bolduc (R), by 9%. In fact, Hassan's margin represented a slight improvement on Joe Biden's 53%-46% showing. On Election Night, Hassan's strength was an early sign that Democrats would beat expectations. Gov. Chris Sununu's (R-NH) result was down from the lopsided 65%-33% he scored in 2020, but he won

by a still-decisive 15 points.

As with other places around the map, there were ample signs of realignment in New Hampshire. Bedford, which sits just west of Manchester, was one of Mitt Romney's best towns in 2012 – it is also one of the most college-educated towns in the state. Hassan carried Bedford by 4 points while Sununu did a little better than Romney's 62% there – although, keep in mind that Sununu won the state by 15% while Romney lost it by 6. Both Sununu and Hassan's wins have some historical significance: Sununu is a rare 4-term governor and next year will mark the first time in the popular vote era that two non-freshmen Democrats will represent New Hampshire in the Senate.

In Wisconsin, as in New Hampshire, voters favored incumbents, although its results were both considerably closer. The Crystal Ball rated the Senate in Wisconsin as Leans Republican all cycle – Sen. Ron Johnson (R) held on, but only by 1%. Marquette University Law School pollster Charles

Franklin has several maps breaking down the result. Compared to 2016, when he won by 3%, Johnson's margins dropped in most of the state's more populous counties – on Franklin's map, a string of counties running up from Racine north to Green Bay is obvious. But Johnson made double-digit gains in several western and northern counties that are, by composition, rural and more elderly.

In the Wisconsin gubernatorial race, Gov. Tony Evers (D) won reelection by about 3.5 points (a comfy margin by state standards) against Republican businessman Tim Michels, who ran as a conservative populist. Michels underperformed Johnson in all 72 of the state's counties, generally running furthest behind in the western half of the state, an area that has some lingering down-ballot tendencies – Republicans picked up the open 3rd District there, but the result was closer than expected. While educational polarization has tarnished the bellwether status of some Wisconsin counties, Door County, which juts out into Lake Michigan, has maintained a decent record in recent elections: as Johnson carried it by less than 100 votes, Evers won it 52%-48%.

After a hard-fought campaign where his side came out on the losing end, Louisiana Republican Eddie Rispone's campaign manager lamented that, "It's hard to ask the voters to fire someone that they approve of." Despite Louisiana's red hue, it reelected Gov. John Bel Edwards (D) in 2019, who usually kept positive approval ratings during his first term. That seems like it may have been the case in Kansas this year. In a Trump +15 state, Republicans reportedly had trouble finding an effective line of attack against Gov. Laura Kelly (D). As with Edwards, Kelly was initially elected to succeed an unpopular Republican administration, something she reminded voters of in her messaging. The Senate race there, which was on no one's radar, brought better news for Republicans: GOP Sen. Jerry Moran won a third term by over 20 points, although the state's most populous county,



Johnson, flipped against him.

Despite being a fairly straight-party state in recent election cycles, Nevada reelected Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D) while narrowly ousting Gov. Steve Sisolak (D) – if Sen. Warnock prevails next week, Sisolak will be the only incumbent Senator or governor to lose reelection this year. In his (strikingly accurate) preelection prediction, state political analyst Jon Ralston cited candidate quality as a guiding factor when putting together his final calls. Sisolak’s opponent, Clark County Sheriff Joe Lombardo (R), had a base in the state’s most populous county, while former state Attorney General Adam Laxalt (R), Cortez Masto’s opponent, was not as strong of a candidate. It’s also possible that Nevadans who were frustrated over the state’s COVID lockdowns took their anger out on Sisolak, who was responsible for managing the state’s pandemic response efforts. As state mapper Alex Diaz shows, in Clark County – which cast about two-thirds of the state’s votes – Sisolak ran slightly behind Cortez Masto in almost every precinct.

Finally, we’ll tentatively include Georgia in our list of split-ticket states. While Gov. Brian Kemp won his race outright, taking just over 53%, Sen. Raphael Warnock finished at 49.5%, which was 1% better than Republican Herschel Walker. One area to watch in next week will be the often-discussed suburbs around Atlanta. The state’s redrawn 6th district was new for this cycle and was meant to take in some of the region’s redder suburban communities. As state mapper Jonathan Casas illustrates, keeping the GOP margins down in places like this will be key for Warnock. Walker carried the district by 14 points, but Kemp doubled that margin.

Some “almost” split ticket states

Aside from those 6 states, Arizona was the state that came closest to offering a split verdict. Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly’s comfortable 51%-46% win over Republican Blake Masters likely helped Secretary of State Katie Hobbs (D) prevail in the gubernatorial race – public polling pointed to a close race, though Hobbs generally trailed in averages. It may also be worth mentioning that, as a sitting statewide official, Hobbs had strengths of her own, and she faced an election-denying opponent in Republican Kari Lake (true to form, as the state is working to certify its results, Lake is contesting the outcome). In any case, Kelly was the first Democratic Senator that Arizona has reelected since 1988 and Hobbs will become the state’s fifth woman governor.

Several other states saw double-digit gaps between the percentage margins of their top-of-ticket contests but still voted straight party.

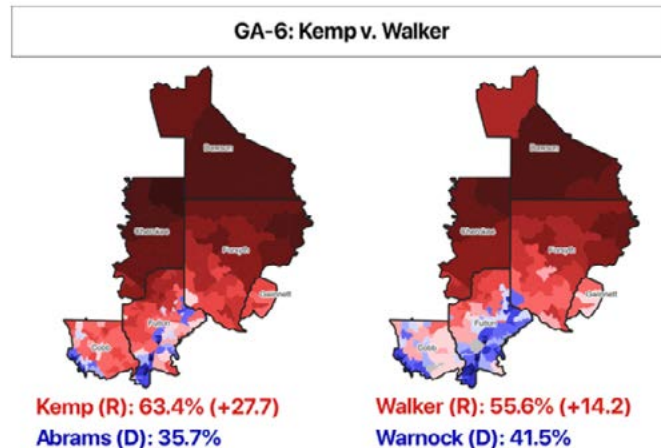
For much of this cycle, Republicans were excited about the possibility of winning Oregon’s governorship for the first time in 40 years. Instead, the 2022 contest turned out to be the latest in a line of competitive Democratic victories, as partisans seemed to come home to former state House Speaker Tina Kotek during the final stretch of the election. Kotek won by 3.5% – close, but not exactly a squeaker – while veteran Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) secured a fifth term by a 56%-41% spread.

New York, as we’ve pointed out in some of our post-election analysis, was one of the weak spots for Democrats this year. Gov. Kathy Hochul (D-NY) held off a spirited challenge from Rep. Lee Zeldin (R, NY-1) but her less-than 6-point victory was hardly anything to write home about. Indeed, Zeldin’s showing was the best for a Republican in an Empire State gubernatorial race since the days of former Gov. George Pataki (R-NY) – as an aside, Zeldin, who earned considerable goodwill from his party during his uphill run, is considering a bid to lead the Republican National Committee (although that may also be an uphill contest for him). Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) ran 7% better than Hochul but his 56% was uncharacteristically weak, especially considering he cleared 70% in 2016.

As expected, the Ohio Senate race was closer than it probably should have been, but Republican author and venture capitalist J. D. Vance beat Rep. Tim Ryan (D, OH-13) by a 53%-47% vote. In what was one of the clearest signs of the realignment, Vance carried Ryan’s homebase Mahoning County (Youngstown) by 3.5%. After the county gave Barack Obama over 60% both times he ran, Donald Trump came close to carrying it in 2016, then won it by 2% 2020. Meanwhile, suburban Delaware County, which sits in Columbus’s orbit and never gave Obama more than 40% of the vote, matched the state-wide vote almost perfectly. In the gubernatorial race, Gov. Mike DeWine (R-OH) was reelected by a 63%-37% margin – every Republican running for lower statewide office in Ohio won by double-digit margins.

So even in an era of more nationalized elections and greater straight-ticket voting, voters are still clearly splitting their tickets in a number of key races – sometimes, dramatically so. ❖

Map 2: 2022 gubernatorial and Senate results in GA-6



Carlos Lozada, New York Times: Mike Pence had a go-to line during his time as vice president of the United States. When his boss would ask him to carry out some task or duty — say, take an overseas trip or run the response to a pandemic — Pence would look President Trump in the eye, nod and say, “I’m here to serve.”

The phrase recurs in Pence’s new memoir, “So Help Me God,” which covers his years as a congressman, governor of Indiana and vice president, with a focus on Pence’s actions during the assault on the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. It is the tale of the loyalist who finally had enough, of the prayerful stand-taker who insisted that he did not have the power to overturn an election, no matter the arguments concocted by Trump and his air-quote lawyers. With rioters calling for his hanging and Trump tweeting that Pence lacked “the courage to do what should have been done,” the vice president turned to the aides and family members with him in an underground loading dock at the Capitol. “It doesn’t take courage to break the law,” he told them. “It takes courage to uphold the law.”

Pence has been busy promoting “So Help Me God” on television, distancing himself from Trump (urging him to apologize for dining with a Holocaust-denying white supremacist at Mar-a-Lago last week) and even teasing a possible White House run of his own in 2024. The book debuted at No. 2 on The New York Times hardcover nonfiction best-seller list, and the Justice Department is now seeking to question Pence in its investigation of Trump’s efforts to remain in power after the 2020 election. Clearly, the former veep is having his moment. Feel free to buy the book, but don’t buy the redemption tale just yet. Pence was indeed in the White House to serve, but he served the president’s needs more than those of the nation. In “So Help Me God,” Pence rarely contradicts the president, even in private, until the days immediately preceding Jan. 6. He rarely attempts to talk Trump out of his worst decisions or positions. He rarely counters Trump’s lies with the truth.

Most damning, Pence failed to tell the president or the public, without hedging or softening the point, that the Trump-Pence ticket had lost the 2020 election, even after Pence had reached that conclusion himself. Americans should be enormously grateful that the vice president did not overstep his authority and attempt to reverse the will of the voters on Jan. 6. But you shouldn’t get the glory for pulling democracy back from the brink if you helped carry it up there in the first place. And, so help me God, Pence did just that. Why wouldn’t Trump — a man Pence invariably calls “my president” and “my friend” — assume that his vice president would help steal the election? Pence had agreed to so much else, had tolerated every other national and personal indignity with that faraway, worshipful gaze. The irony is that Pence’s record of reliable servility was a key reason he was in position to be the hero at the end. And so the vice president became that rarest of Trump-era creatures: A dedicated enabler



who nonetheless managed to exit the administration with a plausible claim to partial credit. If Pence got to do the right thing on Jan. 6, it was because he had done the wrong one for so long. Throughout “So Help Me God,” readers find Pence still running interference for Trump, still minimizing his transgressions. When he quotes the president’s video from the afternoon of Jan. 6, in which Trump finally called on the rioters to stand down, Pence makes a revealing omission. Here is how he quotes Trump: “I know your pain, I know your hurt ... but you have to go home now, we have to have peace.” What did Pence erase with that ellipsis? “We had an election that was stolen from us,” Trump said in the middle of that passage. “It was a landslide election, and everyone knows it, especially the other side.” So much of Pence’s vice presidency is captured in those three little dots. ❖

Chasten Buttigieg, Medium: My marriage has filled this house with so much love it makes me want to be a better husband, father, and citizen every day. It’s called me to something bigger than myself while recognizing that my kids are now the most important thing in life, and I’d do anything to protect them. Our family and our union push me to make sure we leave our kids a country and a world they can thrive in so that they, too, can enjoy all of the love and light and happiness that Pete and I have known simply by falling in love with one another. We are fully aware that some desperately want to take this away. I hope that we can move on from these votes, these arguments, and these debates soon. I hope that our friends on the other side of the aisle will listen to over 70% of Americans and vote to protect families like mine and the unions that make us all better Americans. ❖

Gayle Robbins, Bloomington Herald-Times: The best Democrats can do is to hold onto 29 seats in the state House, quite a disappointment given what the party faithful were hoping for last summer, when some of the more optimistic (and unrealistic) were predicting that Democrats were going to turn Indiana purple. That’s not going to be the case, not at all. Indiana remains solidly red, and will remain so into the foreseeable future. If Jesus Christ himself returned to run as a Democrat, he’d need two or three miracles just to get 45% of the vote. If the current tally in the District 62 race stands, Democrats will actually be worse off in the House, still a distinct minority in the state Senate, and will again be without a single statewide office on their side of the ledger. Rural Indiana, which dominates the vote, showed no interest in anything Democrats offered — not women’s rights, not school safety, not public education in general, nor the environment in particular, nothing that would help to improve the state’s dismal showings in recent national rankings. Republicans seem comfortable with mediocrity. There are oases of enlightenment in this GOP desert where a Democrat can seek refreshment, and it’s there Democrats need to focus attention and commit resources. ❖

Discipline doctor, Rokita says

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Indiana's Republican attorney general on Wednesday asked the state medical licensing board to discipline an Indianapolis doctor who has spoken publicly about providing an abortion to a 10-year-old rape victim who traveled from Ohio after its more-restrictive abortion law took effect. The complaint alleges Dr. Caitlin Bernard violated state law by not reporting the girl's child abuse to Indiana authorities and violated patient privacy laws by telling a newspaper reporter about the girl's treatment. That account sparked a national political uproar in the weeks after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June, with some news outlets and Republican politicians falsely suggesting Bernard fabricated the story and President Joe Biden nearly shouting his outrage over the case during a White House event. Bernard and her lawyers maintain the girl's abuse had already been reported to Ohio police and child protective services officials before the doctor ever saw the child. A 27-year-old man has been charged in Columbus, Ohio, with raping the girl.



Jeffries ascent to top took years

WASHINGTON — The strategy behind Hakeem Jeffries' yearslong ascent to House Democratic leader, as his top allies see it, focused on making the outcome feel inevitable. And in the end, it did (Politico).. The New York Democrat culminated a remarkably frictionless climb of the party ladder on Wednesday, securing every vote and avoiding a single challenger. He became the highest-ranking Black congressional leader in U.S. history just 12 days after formally declaring his run. "He makes it look easy, what is difficult. That's another sign of a great leader," Rep. John Larson

(D-Conn.) said. That effortless appearance took work: Behind the scenes, House Democrats' biggest power transfer in two decades was hardly a shoo-in. Democrats across the caucus said Jeffries — along with his top lieutenants, Reps. Katherine Clark (D-Mass.) and Pete Aguilar (D-Calif.) — succeeded thanks to years of careful maneuvering to consolidate support from every influential bloc in the party.

Holcomb promotes Hyer at Licensing

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric Holcomb on Wednesday announced the promotion of Lindsay Hyer to executive director of the Indiana Professional Licensing Agency, succeeding Deborah Frye, who is retiring from the post (IBJ). Frye, who was named executive director in 2015, helped oversee the expansion of PLA's online services, which are used by 1 million annual customers who seek license applications and renewals. Frye's last day will be Friday. Hyer worked as the chief of staff for Indiana Secretary of State Holli Sullivan where she was senior adviser and oversaw all financial and operating activities for the office. The governor's office said Hyer managed the growth of the agency's portal, INBiz, which helps businesses ensure they are compliant with state laws and regulations.

Christine McVie dies at age 79

LOS ANGELES— Christine McVie, the singer, songwriter and keyboardist who became the biggest hitmaker for Fleetwood Mac, one of music's most popular bands, died on Wednesday. She was 79 (New York Times). Her family announced her death on Facebook. The statement said she died at a hospital but did not specify its location or give the cause of death. In June, Ms. McVie told Rolling Stone that she was in "quite bad health" and that she had endured debilitating problems with her back. Ms. McVie's commercial potency, which

hit a high point in the 1970s and '80s, was on full display on Fleetwood Mac's "Greatest Hits" anthology, released in 1988, which sold more than eight million copies: She either wrote or co-wrote half of its 16 tracks. Her tally doubled that of the next most prolific member of the band's trio of singer-songwriters, Stevie Nicks. (The third, Lindsey Buckingham, scored three major Billboard chart-makers on that collection.)

Gas prices are falling fast

WASHINGTON — The cost of gasoline is falling so fast that it is beginning to put real money back in the pockets of drivers, defying earlier projections and offering an unexpected gift for the holidays (Washington Post). Filling up is now as cheap as it was in February, just before Russia's invasion of Ukraine touched off a global energy crisis. AAA reported the average nationwide price of a gallon of regular Wednesday was \$3.50, and gas price tracking company GasBuddy projected it could drop below \$3 by Christmas. And all of that relief probably helped drive robust shopping over Thanksgiving weekend. "People are realizing that they might be back to spending \$50 to fill their tank instead of \$80," said Emma Rasiel, a professor of economics at Duke University.

Musk turns to Republicans

NEW YORK — Elon Musk's public musings over the past six months have cemented an unmistakable new reality: The world's richest man, and owner of the de facto public square, has become more and more Republican (Axios). It's a stunning transformation for the Obama-, Clinton- and Biden-voting CEO of the most successful electric-vehicle company on Earth. And it's one with major real-world implications, given the influence Musk now wields in shaping the rules of online public debate.