



Crouch's collaborative approach to policy

Lieutenant governor prepares to enter '24 gubernatorial race

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

EVANSVILLE – To understand Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch's governing philosophy, one only needs to look south of the Ford Center to the beautiful Stone Family Center for Health Sciences that houses the Indiana University School of Medicine's southernmost regional campus.

In 2012, then-State Rep. Crouch was in the process of dealing with a rare career setback. When Ways & Means Chairman Jeff Espich retired, she sought that influential perch. Speaker Brian Bosma tabbed Tim Brown instead. There were no sour grapes, with Crouch calling Brown's selection "really the best decision, and, the best for me long-term."

Four years prior, Dr. Steven G. Becker had reached out to Rep. Crouch. The IU School of Medicine was housed on the nearby University of Southern Indiana campus. It



was the only regional medical school without its own facility. "He believed they could elevate the School of Medicine to get more people from this area if it had its own cam-

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MitchFest at Purdue

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

WEST LAFAYETTE – In mid-May 2003, in what Howey Politics described as "Mitch Mania during Mitch Week," it was President George W. Bush who coined the political slogan for a Hoosier generation.

Daniels was the man of the hour when President Bush came to the Indiana State Fairgrounds. In the most overt political moment of the speech, Bush lauded Daniels, his departing OMB director, who was seated near U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh, Gov. Frank O'Bannon, Mayor Bart Peterson, and U.S. Reps. Mike Pence, Steve Buyer, Dan Burton, Chris Chocola and Julia Carson. Bush noted that



"A massive fraud of this type and magnitude allows for the termination of all rules, regulations and articles, even those found in the Constitution."

- Former president Donald Trump, on 'Truth Social' last weekend.

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"my man Mitch" was in the audience. "Mitch Daniels has been a good friend, a close adviser and I'm going to miss him. Washington's loss will be the gain of the people of Indiana. He's a fine man," Bush said.

Thus, "My Man Mitch" became the 2004 Hoosier Republican battle cry after being shut out of the governor's office for 16 years.

It appeared to come full circle at Tuesday's "MitchFest" at Purdue University. Bush was back, conducting an hour-long Q&A at the Elliott Hall of Music with the out-going Purdue president. Following that was a departure celebration, with the Memorial Union backdrop featuring iconic Daniels imagery, from his Harley-Davidson to holding a Purdue band baritone horn. In this star-studded gathering, the word amongst the throng centered on what "informed and reliable" sources had told Howey Politics last week: That Mitch Daniels is pondering a 2024 U.S. Senate run.

During the Elliott Hall Q&A, Based in Lafayette's Dave Bangert reported: Daniels told Bush about how the state had positioned itself for the highest per capita foreign direct investment in the country. Daniels told Bush that no one got out of one of these lectures without a sales pitch. Bush's reply: It kind of sounded like Daniels was running for governor, again. Daniels shook his head no and formed an "X" with his index fingers to an applauding crowd.

According to multiple informed and reliable sources milling around the Memorial Union cocktail hour, once Daniels departs Hovde Hall on Dec. 31, he will gather his brain-trust in Florida in January. Despite President Bush's gubernatorial remark, these sources say a gubernatorial run

is off the table. What is being considered is the open U.S. Senate seat that Mike Braun is vacating. It's the Senate seat that Daniels' old boss Dick Lugar had held for 36 years.

Said one Daniels confidante, "He's got to make a decision quickly" as the field that includes U.S. Reps. Jim Banks, Victoria Spartz and possibly Attorney General Todd Rokita and Rep. Trey Hollingsworth gathers. Another told HPI, "He's too valuable to just be serving on corporate boards."

No decision has been made, these sources tell Howey Politic Indiana. But in the next breath, they say the former governor is "intrigued" by the potential Senate soapbox, coming as the Donald Trump era begins to wane.

For on this very night some 600 miles to the south, Donald Trump's Hooveresque wrecking ball gashed the Republican Party once more. GOP nominee Herschel Walker's embarrassing Georgia Senate loss to Democrat Raphael Warnock meant that for the second consecutive cycle, Trump's absurd candidate endorsements had prevented a Republican Senate majority, forging instead a 51-49 Democrat advantage.

That loss came after a month during which the former president met with Nazi and white supremacists Ye and Nick Fuentes at Mar-A-Lago, and last weekend, called for the "termination" of the U.S. Constitution that Trump says kept him out of a return to the White House.

In a post-Trump vacuum, many Hoosier Republicans salivate over "My Man Mitch" or "The Blade" bringing his rhetorical skills and asset management techniques to the upper chamber.

These were on full display at the Memorial Union Tuesday evening after a resounding performance by the Purdue Varsity Glee Club. Daniels opened his 16-minute remarks by quoting an old country song, "How can I miss you when you won't go away?" The attendees howled with laughter.

Purdue Board of Trustees President Mike Berghoff in introducing Daniels, said, "It's been 10 years of full-on, non-stop, high energy, innovation, change, progress, reinvention. The list of accomplishments is long." Berghoff said that 10 years of frozen tuition "has saved families over a billion dollars." He mentioned Purdue Global aimed at older students and the three Purdue Polytech high schools in Indianapolis and South Bend, and the transformation of the State Street corridor from a state highway to a boulevard.



Berghoff noted that Purdue was recognized by Fast Company, the advertising industry's beacon, for two consecutive years. "It's the only university to be recognized as a brand that matters," he said. "If you become a brand that matters like Coca-Cola, Ford, General Electric, you put Purdue University in that category. The work that Mitch has done with this leadership team has reconstructed and redefined who Purdue is. We are now a national, public university."

Daniels discussed his 10-year legacy at the helm of Indiana's land grant university, including that of a confident communicator, or as Daniels put it, "Spread the word; share the news ... telling people who should have known all along what a great institution this is.

"**I like to think we added a few features over the last 10 years,**" Daniels said. "I believe we've stood for value at a time when many people have been questioning is higher education really worth it. We worked on that every day. That little catch phrase in the video – higher education is the highest proven value – that's one thing we're really all about.

"So we tried to enhance the quality and control the cost," Daniels continued. "We stood for excellence in scale. We did not accept that there was a tradeoff between bringing education to more people. The original assignment of land grant universities like ours is open the doors. In fact, we've grown 30%, and the quality of performance and graduation rates, everything has gone up. We're one

of the biggest engineering colleges anywhere, No. 4 in the national rankings and we're bigger than the top three put together.

"We are producing for this nation the kind of talents on which our future and success so heavily depends.

"And we said in this world and this economy the most precious asset a state could hope to have is a research-based, STEM-strong university, like ours. This was our moment, and therefore our duty to become not just a producer of great talent and new research . . . but also an economic engine in our own right to attract businesses to this area and to this state who would want to be near a source of research, near a source of talent and near a source of faculty brilliance and, symbiotically as they came here they would produce for us new opportunities, internships and jobs for our graduates, research opportunities for our faculty and a more vibrant atmosphere around this campus."

Daniels mentioned mayors Tony Roswarski and John Dennis for helping transform the "west end of this campus" from tired strip malls and ancient Dairy Queens to the burgeoning Discovery Park with tenants like Saab and Rolls-Royce reshaping the skyline and on a recent forum, wowed U.S. Secretary of State Tony Blinken and Commerce Sec. Gina Raimondo. "You just wait, there's more coming," Daniels said. "Some of it pretty soon."

Daniels concluded, saying, "In the last job and this one, I've told people 'I'm not going to sweat the retirement theory. I'm gonna push'."

He quoted an obituary for Ohio University founder and abolitionist Zephron Cutler: "At his passing, the local paper wrote, 'In every sphere and every relation of life, he was a useful man.'

"I like that," Daniels said, "That would be a good thing to be, a useful man I've tried to be." Or, Daniels noted, a young boy from Oyster Bay observed on the death of President Theodore Roosevelt in an assigned essay: "He was a fulfiller of good intentions."

"This world is full of people with good intentions," Daniels concluded. "But, not all of them fulfilled. At Purdue, we fulfill them."

The Hoosier body politic now awaits Daniels' next chapter of intentions. ❖

Crouch, from page 1

pus," Crouch explained of Dean Becker.

A local advisory group formed, along with a consortium of Evansville area medical interests. "The advisory committee was meeting at USI one evening in 2012 and one of the members said to me, 'You know, Suzanne, you're on Ways & Means. We need money to start this

project and you can get that done, can't you?"

"I'm like, yeaah, maybe," Crouch replied.

At the beginning of the 2013 session, she went into Speaker Bosma's office and, "I had a whole list of projects I wanted funding for in Evansville and one of those projects was the IU School of Medicine, \$2 million."

Bosma added it all up and said, "Suzanne, that's \$22 million."

"I said, 'I've been here for eight years and have never asked for anything, so divide it by eight and it's not that much,'" Crouch said. "That's how we got the funding to start the project. Right after I went in to Speaker Bosma, IU President Michael McRobbie came in to talk about IU's budget and Speaker Bosma says, 'Rep. Crouch was just in here and she wants \$2 million for the IU School of Medicine.'"

This was news to President McRobbie. But local attorney Patrick A. Shoulders was president of the IU Board of Trustees and was emphatically for the facility. "He fast-tracked it, got it through, approved by the Board of Trustees before the end of the session so that the funding could be included," Crouch said. "That's how the whole thing got started."

Dr. Becker, concerned about emerging medical "deserts" and a lack of area medical school residency slots, now presides over this new state of the art facility, housing programs from IU, USI and the University of Evansville. Along with a consortium of regional hospitals Deaconess and Ascension/St. Vincent's in Evansville, Jasper Memorial and Good Samaritan at Vincennes, it is now providing close to 100 medical residency positions annually, a number expected to multiply rapidly in the coming years. About 60% of those residents will set up practices in the area.

Becker and the community had a vision that this was to be a collaborative model, unique to the United States. There isn't another medical school facility with three different institutions. "Suzanne was one of four or five people who was critical in making this happen," Dean Becker explained. "Suzanne is a problem solver. She makes things happen."

Crouch & GOP's glass ceiling

Lt. Gov. Crouch is expected to officially kick off her 2024 campaign for governor next week. If she's successful, she would not only become the Republican Party's first credible female candidate for governor, but the GOP's first female gubernatorial nominee. If she wins in November 2024, she would become the first Hoosier woman at the pinnacle of power.

In past eras, the lieutenant governor was the heir apparent. In the television age of Hoosier politics, Republican Lt. Gov. Robert Orr of Evansville, and Democrats Frank

O'Bannon of Corydon and Joe Kernan of South Bend, ended up on the second floor office of power. In 1968, Democrats nominated Lt. Gov. Robert Rock, but he lost to Secretary of State Edgar Whitcomb.

That came to an end in 2003 when Gov. Kernan, assuming office after the death of Gov. O'Bannon, nominated Kathy Davis as the first female LG. She was followed by Republican Lt. Govs. Becky Skillman and Sue Ellspermann. Of this group, only Skillman mounted a campaign for governor and it was brief, measured in weeks. Gov. Mitch Daniels and U.S. Rep. Mike Pence were pondering presidential runs, and the GOP powers that be anointed Pence as the gubernatorial nominee in 2012 to clear the Indiana lane for Daniels.

Lt. Gov. Crouch has, politically, conducted herself more like Orr and O'Bannon did. She has crisscrossed Indiana's 92 counties while holding a sprawling administration portfolio that includes agriculture, rural affairs and tourism.

Orr and O'Bannon made it clear that they were going to seek the top spot. But while Orr and O'Bannon were able to clear the fields in 1980 and 1996, Crouch finds herself facing two and possibly three self-funders in the 2024 May primary. U.S. Sen. Mike Braun has filed his candidacy, Eric Doden of Fort Wayne has been running for a year and is already airing digital campaign ads. The third is retiring U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth, who has been telling county chairs he could drop \$10 million of his own money into a nomination fight.

Asked about the potential field of the sitting lieutenant governor running against three self-funders, Crouch said, "One of the strengths 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."

"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



Lt. Gov. Crouch checks out the Grand Carousel at the Mesker Zoo. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

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 in having people invest in me as a candidate."

She learned that lesson the hard way. She ran for Vanderburgh County auditor in 2000, along with her husband Larry Downs investing \$2,000 to \$3,000 in the race. "I lost," she said. "After that I said, 'You know, I'll never do that again. If I can't convince people I'm a good investment for them, I don't deserve to win.'" She won the office in 2004, beginning 10 years in local government before she ran for the Indiana House in 2014.

Indiana's dire fiscal condition prompted her run for the General Assembly. "Indiana was not in a good fiscal position," she recalled. "When the state delayed payments to local schools, governments and universities because they didn't have enough money to pay the bills and make those payments on time, that's what motivated me to run for state representative. Go to the state level and turn things around. And for the past 17 years I've been a part of that effort.

"So today, Indiana is in sound fiscal condition," she said of the state that ended the fiscal year with a record \$6.1 billion surplus. "The next chapter in Indiana's history is going to be quality of life. Why? Because quality of life is how we grow our population and our economy. It used to be that people followed businesses. Today, businesses are following people."

How does Crouch win the primary?

HPI asked Lt. Gov. Crouch, how do you win a primary?

"You have a plan," she began. "You have enough resources – \$8 million to \$9 million. That will make me competitive. There will be about a million primary voters and I need to demonstrate that I am the person who is best prepared to lead them into the future." She has the support of GOP financier Bob Grand.

Crouch explains, "A governor's race is different from a senatorial race or congressional race. It's more about likability. It's more about what type of person people trust. Are you that type of person that people see leading us forward into the future? And improving their lives? It's what you can do for them. As a candidate, it's important to draw upon the experience I have. A candidate has to have the experience to demonstrate to the people they have the experience to lead them forward; they have accomplished things that have made life better for them. It's about relationships.

"I would argue that no one has the relationships that I have," she said. "Being a local elected official, being a county auditor ... I've been there. I understand their

challenges. As a legislator I've been in the House and now I'm president of the Senate. I understand the legislative process. I understand relationships are needed to accomplish things in the General Assembly.

"And then being in the executive branch, understanding how state agencies work, and how they can work better," Crouch said. "You can have a vision for the state of Indiana, but if you don't have the relationships to make that vision a reality, that's all it ever is, a vision.

"I would suggest I have a vision for Indiana and I have the relationships to make that a reality. That's how you end up becoming the governor of the State of Indiana."

Crouch's issues

Crouch intends on basing her campaign on early childhood education after co-authoring the state pilot program in 2013 while serving in the House. "I'm a big proponent of early childhood education as we continue to grow our population and continue to grow our workforce and improve the quality of life in our state. We have to ensure that our communities are safe, that law enforcement has the support and resources to keep our communities safe and keep our families safe. It's about safety in our homes, our businesses and our economy.

"Then we have to transform government," she said, noting a recent study showing that rural Indiana counties are paying 35% more for services than urban and suburban areas. "We can streamline it, we can consolidate functions and make it more useable for the

public. No one will have a greater understanding of how government works and how government can work better for people; and government needs to work for people. If we focus on those building blocks, we will be able to enjoy the quality of life that will prompt people to not only visit Indiana, but want to move to Indiana. We want to attract talent."

She also cites recent white paper reports from Governor's Public Health Commission report and a second from the Behavioral Health Commission. "These are incredibly important components to quality of life," she said. "The cost to Hoosiers for untreated mental illness is estimated to be \$4 billion a year. Not only is it a quality of life issue, but an economic factor to our success as Hoosiers."

Collaborative roots

Crouch notes that the Evansville area is known for



Lt. Gov. Crouch shows off a gift from Wee Care students at Central HS. (HPI photo by Brian A. Howey)

collaboration. "We have one 911 system, one central dispatch, one library, one school corporation," she said of the city and Vanderburgh County. "When I was in local government, there were 13 interlocal agreements with the county and city on how they operated. It is a unique county in that way."

Evansville Mayor Lloyd Winnecke, an unabashed Crouch supporter and friend for more than 40 years, calls the region's collaborative nature "our secret sauce."

"I know there is collaboration everywhere, but it's so natural here because of deep personal relationships," Winnecke told HPI. "That's the foundation of every piece of collaboration. Even if there is a slight disagreement of direction, it all gets worked out. For the medical school to be there, so many things had to happen.

We had to acquire the property, we had to do all the infrastructure, the car dealership had to relocate before they could start building. It really was a matter of making phone calls and having meetings. It's easy collaboration because of personal relationships."

Robert Koch II, who founded the renowned charter Signature School in Evansville, calls Crouch a "stabilizing force." She brought Regional Cities funds to help establish the downtown campus. "We wouldn't be here in this building had it not been for her helping us on the Regional Cities with funds that helped us kick off this fund drive," Koch explained. "We're counting on her helping us with the new I-69 bridge. The work is not done."

As for Crouch, Mayor Winnecke explains, "She understands our needs." He adds, "She's been through the legislative process and now she's in the administration. She understands how the sausage is made and she understands the importance of creating good public policy so that sausage really benefits everybody. So you can call Suzanne and say, 'Hey, can you talk to Sen. So and So?' And she gets it. It's an easy phone call to her. She's also very, very accessible."

Crouch on early childhood learning

HPI was supposed to link up with Lt. Gov. Crouch at Wee Care and upon arriving was to be in the parking lot of Evansville Central High School. Waiting with Crouch (without any entourage or staff) was Evansville/Vanderburgh School Supt. David Smith.

Wee Care is exclusively for children of EVSC

employees, providing early learning experiences for kids as young as six weeks through age five. Because of the EVSC's commitment to early learning, the district now has more than 30 early learning classrooms and more than 650 pupils enrolled. While part of the program is aimed at retaining female employees, another part – Ramp/AmeriQual – is aimed at at-risk teenage mothers.

"Instead of dropping out, they stay in school and we provide child care so the mom can stay in school, graduate, and the child can be in a loving, safe environment," Smith said. "They're both in school at the same time."

Supt. Smith said that students in the Ramp/AmeriQual program do "four hours

of work, four hours of school. They can also get industry qualification. The graduation rates have been phenomenal because none of them was predicted to graduate."

Crouch adds, "Because you can invest early on in children or you can pay later. They've chosen to invest early. You all invested and dedicated a certain percentage of your bonds to early childhood education. You had the option to do that. They're just not taking kids and having them in the classroom, trying to teach them and leave them. They are trying to catch them early on to try and get the skills to be successful and then identify those who are in danger of not graduating, and get them into the workforce. It's pretty phenomenal."

Epilogue

We ended up at Mesker Zoo where Mayor Winnecke and Lt. Gov. Crouch took a ride on the Grand

Engelbrecht Carousel and then stopped by Penguins of Patagonia exhibit. The mayor says the carousel is the park's most popular attraction. Crouch would later feed fish to Humboldt penguins.

Throughout this balmy mid-October day, the coming themes of the Crouch campaign kept surfacing: It's all about collaboration, quality of life, and personal relationships. It's about businesses following people.

Those are, potentially, the makings of a governor.



Robert Koch II and Evansville Mayor Winnecke with Crouch at the downtown Signature School.



Braun's Senate work speaks to primary voters

By MARK SCHOEFF JR.

WASHINGTON – One of the high points of Sen. Mike Braun's four-year tenure on Capitol Hill was forcing a vote last summer on his plan to balance the federal budget. The measure, which was defeated, 64-35, illustrated Braun's typical approach. He's a reliably conservative but not particularly effective legislator.



As he prepares to run for governor in 2024, it may not matter that the first-term Republican often finds himself among three dozen or so right-wing colleagues who are usually on the losing side of votes in the Democratic-majority Senate. His work is likely to appeal to GOP primary voters.

"He hasn't had a lot of success on bills," said Chad Kinsella, an associate professor of political science at Ball State

University. "They try to make a statement as opposed to getting passed. He's filed bills that speak to that base in the primary."

Braun gets credit from a budget expert for pressing the idea of fiscal sustainability.

"I congratulate the senator for making this his hallmark position," said G. William Hoagland, senior vice president at the Bipartisan Policy Center.

But Braun is better at crafting balanced budget rhetoric than he is at constructing a plan that would actually reduce federal spending.

A big flaw is that Braun pledged not to touch Social Security and Medicare, Hoagland said.

"There is no way you can talk about balancing the budget or bringing the debt to GDP level down without talking about Social Security and Medicare," said Hoagland, who worked from 1982 to 2003 on the Senate Budget Committee and from 2003-07 as the top budget aide to then-Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. "You're going to have to raise revenue or reduce benefits."

Braun's approach would reduce the deficit significantly over 10 years but not eliminate it.

"I think his budget plan needs some work, if it's ever to be given serious consideration," said Hoagland, a Hoosier whose Covington farm has been in his family for more than a century.

Braun's office ignored an HPI interview request.

As a congressional back-bencher, Braun has the latitude to engage more on messaging than substance. He wouldn't have that luxury as governor, an executive position that often involves working with the legislature and other officials to solve problems.

It's not clear from his Senate work whether Braun has governing ability. One proxy for that skill is how well he can reach across the aisle to advance legislation. Braun's record is mixed.

The Senate approved over the summer a climate bill that Braun co-wrote with Democratic Sen. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan. The Growing Climate Solutions Act would help farmers generate and sell carbon credits. The House has not acted on the measure.

Braun has worked with Democratic Sen. Cory Booker on food and nutrition issues. He's also signed letters with Democrats prodding regulators to reform certain rules.

Overall, Braun stays on the far right of the Senate political spectrum. He was the 73rd most bipartisan senator in 2021, while his fellow Republican Hoosier senator, Todd Young, came in at 13, according to the Bipartisan Index produced by the Lugar Center and the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University.

The contrast between Braun's and Young's policy approaches is pretty sharp considering they're in the same party. Young has consistently cast tough bipartisan votes that risked his political standing. Yet, he avoided a primary opponent last spring and easily won reelection to a second term in November.

For instance, Young co-wrote legislation with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. that significantly boosted spending on the U.S. semiconductor industry, an effort that is already benefitting Indiana. Braun and most other Republicans in the Hoosier congressional delegation opposed the bill.



Young also was among a handful of Republicans who backed gun safety legislation earlier this year and the recent measure that codified same-sex marriages. Young explained his stance on each with essay-length statements that went into detail about his thinking.

Braun cast more traditional GOP votes on those issues and stayed in the minority. He also was on the losing end of an attempt to unseat Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., after the midterm elections in which Republicans failed to capture the Senate despite favorable political conditions. Young backed McConnell.

It's possible that Young would make a better governor than Braun based on the criteria of achieving legislative victories. But emphasizing message over substance

during his Senate career may not hurt Braun in a gubernatorial campaign.

Braun can argue he pushed conservative principles and was stymied by the Democratic Senate majority.

"At some level, that's all he needs," Kinsella said.

"[Primary voters] are not thinking about who would be good at using executive power. It's not about civics. It's about appealing to that base." ❖

McDermott will seek 6th term; eyes '24 INGov

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS – On Election Night, Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. sounded like a politician ready to call it quits. He lost in a landslide to U.S. Sen. Todd Young, his second defeat for federal office in two years after winning five mayoral races. He raised just \$1.6 million after Senate races the previous decade had all topped \$50 million.

"That night I just wanted to convey that Todd Young had won and I just wanted to wish him the best," McDermott told Howey Politics Indiana/State Affairs last week. "I wanted to show that I'm a man who believes in the Constitution, believes in the transfer of power and I just wanted to get that through. I was trying not to cry and then when I got off the stage, and Pastor Brooks got up on stage and said how proud he was of me and I lost it. I was so embarrassed. Tears were pouring down my face."

With Election Day retreating in history, McDermott now is determined to stay relevant, keep the Indiana Democrat Party "grinding" as he put it, and will seek a sixth term in 2023 while positioning himself for a gubernatorial run in 2024.

Of his Election Night tears, McDermott said, "I wasn't sad. I'll be honest, Brian, when I filed I was prepared to lose. I was very prepared that I was probably going to lose. The whole campaign I thought I was going to lose. What I get mad at myself about is that I actually started to believe I could win. I was prepared to lose in the beginning, but when Roe v. Wade decision came down



Internal Braun poll released

Political firm Mark It Red conducted a poll for Sen. Mike Braun. According to a memo released by the campaign, Braun won in potential matchups against Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch and Fort Wayne businessman Eric Doden with a 37-point lead and 42-point lead, respectively. The campaign's poll shows Braun winning 47% of the vote in a theoretical race, compared to 10% for Crouch and 5% for Doden. ❖

and SB1 was passed I really believed I had a chance to beat Todd Young. I really did."

McDermott lost to Young 1,088,428 to 702,873, or 58.7% to 37.9%. He carried only three counties, Lake, Marion and Monroe. He was out-raised \$15 million to \$1.6 million.

Democrat strategist Simon Rosenberg surmised what had happened on Nov. 8: "It was two elections – a bluer one inside the battlegrounds, a redder one outside."

McDermott told HPI, "My name ID started out at less than 5% and it's obviously a lot higher now that 700,000 people voted for me. It doesn't get better until we start grinding our message. It doesn't get better if people like myself say 'It's hopeless; I'm done.' I've seen Democrats do that and that's part of our problem. If I walk away, that bench gets even thinner."

Here is our election post-mortem with Mayor McDermott:

HPI: We were watching whether there was going to be a wave of female and young voters in Indiana. It didn't happen here but in blue states it did.

McDermott: I agree with you. There were signs there for me. I was watching what Beto (O'Rourke) was

doing in Texas. I think he's the best politician. I was trying to emulate what Beto was doing in Texas. It was obvious he was a lot more effective than I was. His style of politics where he was kind of shocking, he was blunt and he was doing town hall meetings getting both Republicans and

Democrats to show up. That's how we're going to have to do it. As a party, we need someone to go after the red parts of the state. I stand here now a month after losing and I look what I accomplished? My name ID was less than 5% when I started this race. My name ID is a lot higher than that now. I had 700,000 people vote for me.

That's a starting point if I ever wanted to do that again.

HPI: What are some of your observations after this campaign?

McDermott: I'll be honest, Brian, I was pleasantly surprised by the Democratic structure; the bones of the Democratic Party, the chairman, the Congressional district chairmen, the county chairmen; they were excellent. They really are. There were parties that were energized and well put together. The parts of Indiana you expect to do well are Democratic areas like Lake and Marion counties, but those parties weren't as well organized as parties that I saw in the red counties because they have to fight for every vote and they know that. When you're in Democratic parts of Indiana, they expect to get the votes. They don't have to work as hard. I definitely noticed that and that would echo across all the (statewide) candidates. The Allen County Democrats? They're awesome. Vanderburgh County Democrats? They're awesome. Harrison County Democrats? They worked so hard. The places you'd expect people to be demoralized and they were way more organized better than the places in Indiana you'd expect to be well organized. It's almost backward thinking. We're not getting the turnout we should be getting in St. Joseph County. I lived in St. Joseph County and it's not a red county, but we're losing it. In Lake County, not enough Democrats were showing up.

HPI: After what I called the "Bayh dominoes" fell in 2010, I watched Democratic river counties along the Ohio and Wabash go red. Now we're watching Democrat strongholds like St. Joe, LaPorte and southern Lake County voting Republican.

McDermott: You're dead right, Howey, everything you said I agree with. It is discouraging, particularly in Lake County. South Lake County, Porter County and LaPorte County are tough for any Democrat. I think most of our problems come from Washington, D.C. The most liberal part of our party is what Hoosier Republicans are echoing. Even though Tom McDermott doesn't feel the same way as AOC, I get labeled with her as a Democrat. It works in Indiana and that's what they beat us with.

HPI: That's a branding problem, right?

McDermott: Yeah. Yeah! The Democratic Party in Washington, D.C., has almost ... no, not almost, they've given up on Indiana so that the messaging is hurting us here. They're focused on places they need to win and instead of spending millions of dollars in all of the states, they spent \$150 million in Pennsylvania. They could have spent 10% of that in Indiana and it would have made a difference. I could have gone up on TV earlier and going up on TV earlier helps the entire ticket. Maybe Destiny (Wells) could have made it closer; maybe Destiny wins if

they spend a couple of bucks here. Destiny had the same problem I had; nobody in DC wants to spend a penny in Indiana right now. Democrats in Indiana are important, too.

HPI: Talk about fundraising. I kind of figured you could raise \$3 million to \$5 million. You were substantially below that. Why?

McDermott: Early on I was trying to convince Democrats that I had a chance. I would call up people who reliably donated to the party, and they would say, "Who are you running against?" and I would say, "Todd Young." And they would say, "I wish you were running against Mike Braun." I would say, "Well, I wish I was running against Mike Braun." I would rather not run against Todd Young. In running against Todd Young, instead of people giving me \$2,500, they would give me \$500. That's how it started out. And then when Roe v. Wade was overturned, things changed. You could tell people started to believe I could win. We were getting \$16,000 to \$20,000 a day. In the eight weeks leading up to Election Day, we were getting the money we needed. If I had had that kind of money in April or May I could have gone on TV in the summer and it would have made a difference. I didn't get that kind of money until late. I was getting money but it wasn't nearly what we needed.

HPI: Now what? What needs to change? We're essentially a one-party state.

McDermott: I agree.

HPI: I know the party is going to focus on local races this coming year, but what does the party need to be doing in the interim?

McDermott: We excel in mayors. The mayors are mostly Democrat. Obviously next year is about city elections. We have to be very aware, Jennifer McCormick has got to be very aware; she saw what I went through. You've got to realize whoever gets the nomination in 2024 for Senate you could lose; it's likely you will lose. I'm of the opinion, Brian, that it doesn't get better until we keep grinding our message into the Hoosier public. Democrats represent Hoosiers better than Indiana Republicans. I honestly believe that. But it doesn't get better if people like myself just walk away. We've seen people do that. That's part of our problem. I hear people say, "They have a lack of a bench." Maybe that's true, but if it's a lack of a bench, I'm on that bench. If I walk away, the bench gets even thinner. So I feel it's a responsibility to keep on grinding.

HPI: So when Pete and Chasten Buttigieg moved to Traverse City, I suspect there were high-fives at the Indiana GOP headquarters. It's like they're creating a state where liberals and moderates simply flee, moving to the coasts, Chicago or Michigan.

McDermott: I have many friends in the LGBTQ



community that are saying, "I don't feel safe in Indiana anymore." I'm not trying to be alarmist by saying that. These are conversations I've been hearing from friends who have been Hoosiers their whole life. It certainly doesn't get better with Democrats moving away. I'm not moving anywhere. I've spent 20 years in the public eye and the one good thing I can say is that Hammond residents have been wonderful to me. They're proud of me.

HPI: What's next for you?

McDermott: I'm running for mayor again. I don't believe I've said that anywhere else. There are no opponents who are announcing. I feel good about my chances of getting reelected. That doesn't mean I'm taking my eye off of other offices. My whole career I've been interested in running for governor and I will concede that's something that definitely interests me. I realize the U.S. Senate seat is vacant now. But if that was an open seat, that would be a totally different race. I think I left a good impression on Hoosiers and if I ran in '24 I would have natural advantages that no one could match. In a Democratic primary, outside of Jennifer McCormick because she was a statewide herself, in a Democratic primary I would be tough to beat.

HPI: I understand a good part of the education community is lining up behind McCormick. Do you see her as a real player, even though she's a former Republican?

McDermott: I think that's her weakness. I'm not saying she's weak. I think she's a great lady and a candidate. I think it's awesome she's part of our party. I want to make it clear if she's the Democratic nominee, I would proudly support her. But she has to run in the primary to become the nominee. I know I'd be strong. It would be a great race. And, Brian, I'm of the opinion that part of our problem as Democrats is the party always tries to clean up primaries. In Lake County, we have Democrats running against each other all the time. What the primary does is we pick the right person. If we pick that person and put them before voters in November, we have a better chance of winning. I don't think primaries are a bad thing. If I run for governor or senator and someone primaried me, I would have no problem with that. Let's go! I'd rather lose in May than November.

HPI: What about Joe Donnelly? I had several conversations with him before he left for Rome and he's leaving his options open when it comes to 2024.

McDermott: I don't think Joe Donnelly is running for governor, I really don't. If he did, he'd be a great candidate, but I don't see it. Since Joe left, the world has changed. Since Roe was overturned, I've had many Democratic women tell me they would never support a pro-life



Democrat. Hundreds of Democratic women have told me that. The party changed since Joe left. I know how he feels about this issue because I'm close to Joe. He's a pro-life Democrat and that's tough in a modern Democrat Party. The next governor's race is going to be about SB1, I guarantee you that. After two years of SB1 in effect, that's what the Democratic primary is going to be about.

HPI: Does the Democrat gubernatorial nominee need to be running on the idea of holding a constitutional amendment on abortion?

McDermott: I'm not sure that's required, but I can tell you in my opinion, it's imperative the Democratic nominee is pro-choice. It's imperative. We need to be aligned with women on that issue. That's the only way we can get the support of women. One of my problems in my race is when SB1 went into effect, it was confusing. A lot of people thought it was lifted. But SB1 is going to come back and it will be in full effect in two years. That's going to be a big issue and if Joe Donnelly came back, that would be tough for him. And I love Joe. I just think it would be tough for him to give up an ambassadorship and come back and run in a primary.

HPI: So you're running for reelection. Then next November, you look at the lay of the land and make some decisions about 2024?

McDermott: I don't think I would ever lose in November in Hammond. As red as Indiana is, my city is not red. I don't think there's a Democrat in Hammond who's going to run against me. So after I win the primary, I come out this summer and start getting signatures. I know what that entails now, I've been through it. If I'm going to make another statewide run, you'll see me this summer getting signatures. You get them done early so you don't have to worry about it when it's cold out.

HPI: How do you correct the money front?

McDermott: If you run for the U.S. Senate you have to be a self-funder, or you have to have Joe Biden or someone in Washington kiss you on the cheek. I raised \$1.6 million and that was all small donations. It was hard. If you're going to run for the Senate, you need help from the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and they didn't help me a bit. If I was running for governor, all the money I raise in my mayor's account can be transferred into a statewide account.

HPI: How much do you have in your mayor's account right now?

McDermott: About \$20,000 (laughs). I haven't raised any mayor's money in over a year. If I run for mayor of Hammond, I don't need to raise much money. If I did make the decision to run for governor, I would start raising money. You're going to have to have at least \$1 million by the end of the year if I'm going to run for governor. I think I can do that. ❖

Indiana voter turnout dropped 20% from 2018

Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS – Electorate engagement wasn't as high as hoped, with just 41% of Indiana's registered voters going to the polls for last month's midterm elections, a nearly 20% drop in turnout from the 2018 midterms (Muñiz, Indiana Capital Chronicle).



Indiana Election Division results show Hoosier voters turned out at the lowest rates in Decatur,

Tiptecanoe and Marion counties, with turnout percentages of 24%, 32% and 34%, respectively. They voted at the highest rates in Crawford, Spencer and Union counties, at 51% turnout for all three.

It's the latest data point in a long-running trend of low turnout when compared to the rest of the country.

"There are some states, historically, that have high turnout and some that have low turnout. And Indiana is one that turnout has been historically on the lower side ... and 2022 was a bit lower than usual," said Chad Kinsella, an associate professor of political science at Ball State University. But midterm turnout has been lower before. While 51% of registered voters cast a ballot in 2018, just 30% did so in 2014, according to the Election Division.

Kinsella said that age, income and education are the biggest factors in explaining turnout—with older, wealthier and more educated people being more likely to vote. "Older people live out in those rural counties and they tend to vote more often," he said. "... A lot of those people with money are going to live outside of the city limits." Indiana's most rural counties generally had higher turnout than their urban counterparts in Election Division voter statistics, when matched against one Purdue University study. And that's born out in Kinsella's own research: In precinct-level Delaware County data, he said, turnout was lower near Muncie and higher in suburban and rural areas.

Governor

Doden releases policy video

Republican gubernatorial candidate Eric Doden says he will implement a "Regional Cities Initiative". Indiana communities are competing on a national and global stage. Competing successfully means competing as regions, and too many of our regions are still trailing their national competitors. Working with Gov. Mike Pence, we implemented the Regional Cities Initiative, a partnership between the state, local government and the private sector. This plan generated more than \$1.2 billion in investment across three regions, transformed communities, made our state a national leader once again and created opportunities for countless Hoosier families. "As

your governor, we're going to implement Regional Cities 2.0 and take this proven plan to all of Indiana's regions," Doden said. "Today, we are launching a new digital policy ad highlighting our plan."

Brian Gamache, the former director of communications and research with the Todd Young campaign, is joining Doden's gubernatorial campaign as his campaign manager (Importantville).

Mayors

Muncie: Mayor Ridenour seeking 2nd term

Mayor Dan Ridenour officially began his bid for reelection Tuesday (Penticuff, [Muncie Star Press](#)). The first term chief executive of Muncie government made the announcement in front of an assembled friendly crowd at Elm Street Brewing Company. Ridenour, a Republican, cited his administration's accomplishments, including balancing city financial accounts, which he said were overspent by over \$3.3 million, while also paying off over \$4.4 million in city debt, "without increasing taxes."

Evansville: Winnecke endorses Rascher for mayor

Natalie Rascher is seeking the Republican nomination for Evansville mayor in the 2023 election, joining a field with Vanderburgh County Commissioner Cheryl Musgrave, who announced her candidacy before Mayor Lloyd Winnecke announced he was retiring (WLFV-TV). "With Lloyd stepping down I saw that as an opportunity to bring that next generation of leadership to our city," Rascher said. Winnecke announced back in July he would not be seeking a fourth term as mayor. "While we were considering of course the run, and a few close friends knew, we wanted to make sure we were really ready to go and have everything set up before announcing that," Rascher said. Rascher is currently a senior advisor at the accounting firm Clifton Larsen LLP. Rascher has already garnered the official support of Mayor Winnecke. "It's certainly an official endorsement of Natalie," Winnecke said. "I think it's really exciting to cultivate and support a new generation of leaders." Rascher has previously run for City Council.

Bloomington: Griffin declares for mayor

Bloomington's deputy mayor Don Griffin, Jr. filed paperwork on Dec. 2 to register as a candidate for Bloomington mayor in the 2023 election. Griffin will be the third democratic candidate to officially express interest in becoming the city's next mayor (Tara, Indiana Public Media).

Elwood: Mayor Jones seeking third term

Mayor Todd Jones has announced that he will seek a third term as mayor of the second largest city in Madison County (Anderson Herald Bulletin). Jones, a Democrat, ran unopposed in both the 2019 primary and general elections. In 2015, Jones defeated Marty Bevington in the primary election and defeated Republican Dan Tucker in the general election by a 3-1 margin. ❖

U.S. leader favorables

By **CRAIG DUNN**

CARMEL – In my most recent Howey Politics column I discussed several ways that I have evaluated political horse flesh in my career. The first is to look at the likability of a candidate using a poll to test both the favorability and the unfavorability of a candidate. Ideally, when you subtract the unfavorable results from the favorable results, you should have a positive number.



This past week, RealClearPolitics.com published the results of a poll that looked at the net favorability of our United States political leaders. The individual results and the results as a group result were very revealing.

First, let's start with the Big Guy, the chairman of the board or whatever Hunter Biden is calling his father these days. President Biden's favorable ratings were

42.4% and his unfavorable ratings were 52.0%. His net unfavorable results were -9.6%. Those were the kind of numbers that made Lyndon Johnson call it quits in 1968.

Joe Biden's understudy with the type of personality that would cause Dale Carnegie to smack her in the kisser, Kamala Harris, piled up even more dismal results. After looking at her poll results, there is a good chance that even her husband gave her the thumbs down. Her favorable results were 37.3% and her unfavorable results were 51.8%. Her net favorability ratings of -14.5% are numbers are the kind of polling that might make your mother ask for your resignation for Mother's Day.

Leading the results of political leaders in the category of voted most likely to not be invited over for Christmas is Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. He is a tough person to understand. The Democrats hate him because of everything he has done, from stifling liberal initiatives to ushering through a bevy of conservative federal judges. That makes sense and I get it. However, he is just about as equally disliked by conservative Republicans who view him as an impediment to their burn-it-down-if-we-can't-win attitudes. McConnell's favorable number was a dismal 19% and an unfavorable rating of 59%. I believe that even the most astute political advisors would tell you that you have problems when your net favorability is -40%. One can only assume that the reason he gets reelected in Kentucky is because he brings the bacon for the folks back home.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi naturally has her share of detractors. I'm sure most Republicans who were polled gave her the thumbs down. Other than Hillary Clinton, I'm not sure I can think of another Democrat politician who can generate the same kind of animus as Nancy. As a Republican, I don't like Nancy Pelosi, but I grudging-

ly respect the hell out of her. She has been an extremely effective speaker for all the reasons that I admire her. She never loses her focus on advancing the liberal agenda and never, ever allows facts or inconvenient truths to dissuade her from her political goals. That's why I am a little surprised at her poll numbers. Her favorability is at 34.5% and her unfavorability is at 54.5% for a big fat -20%. She has lied with the best of them and done virtually every despicable political act you can think of, and this is the thanks she is shown by even her own party.

House minority leader and possible future speaker Kevin McCarthy did not fare much better than Pelosi. His favorable rating was 21.7% and negative rating was 39.3 for a -17.6%. Since the Republicans in the House of Representatives have done absolutely nothing in the last four years as a result of no bipartisan cooperation between parties and Pelosi's iron grip on the workings of the House, one can only assume that McCarthy takes much of the blame for being in charge of the misfits and reprobates who make up a vocal chunk of the Republican caucus. Still, as his lone bright spot, since only 39.3% view him as unfavorable, it still puts him well ahead of the -54.5% for his counterpart, Nancy Pelosi. A small and pyrrhic victory for sure.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer had his share of detractors. Polling found his favorable number at 30.3% and unfavorable at 44.3%. A -14 net unfavorable tells me that Schumer is disliked by both Republicans and a healthy number of Democrats. The Democrats back home in New York love the guy, because just like Sen. Mitch McConnell, he brings a big piece of our federal deficit back home in the form of a goodie bag of dole-outs and government largess.

This brings me to the one political leader who had a positive net favorability rating. Republican governor and potential 2024 presidential candidate Ron DeSantis had favorable impressions of 41% and negative impressions of 36%. His net favorable rating of +6% may look anemic to the untrained eye, but when stacked up against the competition, he looks downright angelic. Democrats have few reasons to like the governor who destroyed their party in a formerly purple state, but they do. Many Democrats so liked the job that he was doing in their state that they switched parties in the 2022 mid-term elections. It's nice to see that not all political leaders are categorically despised.

I gave up quite a long time ago thinking that I could have any demonstrable influence on who could or would run for political office in the Republican Party. Even as a member of the Indiana Republican State Central Committee and a delegate to the Republican National Convention, I realized that I was just window dressing in a great political production that had long ago been decided by big money and the unseen hand of political influence exercised in back rooms.

As I look at these national polling numbers on net favorability, I can only hope and pray that the captains and kings of the Republican Party will realize that there is no

way that Donald J. Trump will be given a second chance as president and will work in unity with each other to allocate the effort and resources necessary to snuff out the life of an election campaign by Trump while it is still in the cradle. They would be doing the Republican Party and the

United States a tremendous favor. Sometimes, you just have to take out your own trash. ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County GOP chairman.

Why is Braun opting for INGov race?

By JACK COLWELL
South Bend Tribune

SOUTH BEND – Sen. Mike Braun is running for governor. Gov. Eric Holcomb could run for senator. Congressman Jim Banks also may seek that Senate seat.

They all are looking at 2024. They all are Republicans, and by no means the only ones pondering races for governor or senator. How about Mitch Daniels as he completes a decade as Purdue president?

Some questions?

Q. Why did Braun decide to run for governor instead of re-election as senator?

A. He didn't like the Senate, with its slow pace and limited opportunities as just one of 100 legislators. The Senate didn't seem to like him either. He wasn't with coalitions that could get some things done. So, he prefers an executive office, governor, perhaps better suited for the



wealthy businessman.

Q. Why did Braun make his decision so soon?

A. Making his intentions clear could scare off other potential candidates for the Republican nomination.

Q. Why would other Republicans be afraid to challenge someone who hasn't exactly earned high marks in his Senate term?

A. Braun showed that he will use his personal wealth to win elections. He wasn't well known when he ran against two congressmen for the Senate nomination back in 2018. He beat them. Then, with ample funding, he defeated U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly. Money isn't everything, but it sure is something.

Q. What else does Braun have going for him?

A. Donald Trump.

Q. Would Trump support him, and would Trump support still mean much?

A. Yes. And yes. All-out support from Trump during the 2018 campaign helped Braun defeat Donnelly. In the Senate, Braun has been in tune with the Trump base. Trump would endorse him. And Trump retains popularity in Indiana, at least among potential GOP primary voters.

Q. Was Braun forming a finance committee for governor a big surprise?

A. No. Braun had been talking about governor. And when he was one of the few Republican senators to oppose retaining Sen. Mitch McConnell as their Senate leader, that signaled what he was going to do.

Q. How so?

A. If he planned to stay in the Senate, why would he oppose the man sure to remain a powerful leader? But if he was going for governor with an eye on the Trump base, it made sense to oppose McConnell. Trump detests McConnell. And the feeling is mutual.

Q. Any others who might run for the Republican nomination for governor?

A. Absolutely. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch is expected to run. Eric Doden announced his candidacy back in 2021. Congressman Trey Hollingsworth, who didn't seek reelection, could now run for governor, with his own personal wealth to finance a campaign. Atty. Gen. Todd Rokita has been eyeing the race.

Q. How about on the Democratic side?

A. There has been speculation that Donnelly, now ambassador to the Vatican, could return next year to run for governor. The poor showing of Democrats in the election this fall makes that seem less attractive for him, but he has taken on tough races in the past. Jennifer McCormick, a former state school superintendent, who was elected as a Republican, was disappointed with lack of Republican support for education and is a possible Democratic nominee. Also a possibility is Hammond Mayor Tom McDermott. He bravely answered the party's call to take on the thankless task of running against Todd Young.

Q. Will Holcomb run for the Senate?

A. He certainly could. He reached the two-term limit for governor after winning twice by landslides.

Q. Others for the GOP Senate nomination?

A. Congressman Jim Banks, just reelected in Indiana's 3rd CD, looks at running for the Senate in '24 after losing his bid for House Republican whip. If he can't progress in House leadership, he could advance his political career with a move to the Senate. Congresswoman Victoria Spartz has talked of a Senate race. Rokita could run for senator instead of governor.

Q. Anybody else?

A. Yes, the elephant in the room. A big contender if he chose to run. Mitch Daniels.

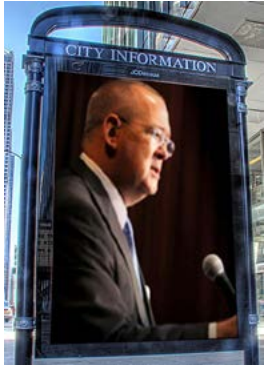
Q. Wouldn't the two-term former governor be more likely to run again for governor, if anything, after leaving Purdue?

A. Howey Politics, in touch with sources close to Daniels, reports that they find Daniels, ruling out governor again and instead pondering a Senate run. ❖

Inflation will make legislating hard in '23 for General Assembly

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – One of the more challenging aspects for any state's legislature next year will be how it deals with the effects of inflation. This is one area where an economic model can help; in this case, the simpler the model, the better.



Suppose your state is a wholly self-contained island economy, with a fixed amount of currency in circulation. Here, prices are set by supply and demand for individual goods or services. Then, suddenly, a helicopter appears and drops across the countryside an amount of cash equal to the full amount of currency in circulation.

Folks scurry to the drop zone, and some are able to really stuff their pockets, while others get just a few dollars.

All of a sudden there is twice the amount of money chasing the same amount of goods. So, prices rise. This is not because these goods have become more expensive, but rather the value of money has declined. That is inflation.

This example is so simple that it almost seems silly, but it isn't. If you understand this, you understand inflation. Moreover, this simple model allows economists to build pretty effective mathematical models to link inflation to the growth in the money supply. These equations can be used to know where we are in an inflationary cycle, and how much more interest rates might need to increase.

We can make the model more complicated if we wish. For example, we could note that the effect of inflation wasn't even across people or products. Some items were highly prized, so the price rose more quickly. Other items were not, and so they saw a smaller price increase. Some products were sold by firms in more monopolized markets with some control over prices. Others were sold in competitive markets where firms had little pricing power. That would cause different levels of price increases. We could make the model more complex by having our island trade with other islands facing inflation, or a pandemic, or a war.

These parts of the model require more math, and, yes, they explain more of the complexity of our current world. But, if you really want to understand inflation, the simple part is enough.

There's a lot of blame cast about inflation, which is normal in politics, but an honest appraisal lays the blame pretty evenly across both parties. Both the Trump and

Biden administrations, and Congress, contributed mightily to inflation. So did about half of states. Indiana's stimulus bills this summer helicoptered about 10% of the money into our economy than the Biden Administration did. So, yes, these contributed to inflation.

The budget challenges faced by legislatures are twofold. The first challenge lies in figuring out how much of the current and future tax revenues are simply due to inflation, and how much is due to changes in the economy. Fortunately, Indiana has a very thoughtful approach to forecasting tax revenues. The technical budget forecasting work used by Indiana's General Assembly delivers what is probably the "best-of-class" predictions. So, I'm pretty confident that Indiana will have as good a forecast as any state will have for the next two years.

That's good news about our estimate of the actual tax dollars we'll be receiving over the next two years, with a nearly certain slowdown and inflation. The large budget surplus Indiana now enjoys will act as a buffer over the next biennium. However, at least two-thirds of that surplus is simply due to inflation. All the extra revenue is simply what economists call "money illusion," which occurs when we don't perceive the effects of inflation on wages and tax revenues.

The size of the money illusion is huge. With at least 12% unanticipated inflation over the two-year biennium, the total extra revenue that should be held by Indiana's state and local governments is roughly \$8.7 billion. A better way to think of this is that this amount is simply the shortfall of state and local spending caused by inflation. This puts in context the state's current excess tax dollars. All of a sudden, they don't look so robust, or solely as the result of fiscal probity.

The second challenge lies in figuring out which parts of government have been hardest hit by inflation. Of course, it's harder to estimate this in the public sector than in the private sector. The police department and schools cannot raise their prices or wages when demand changes. Because of inflation, every state and local worker in Indiana has faced a pay cut. For some, like teachers, the combined salary reduction by the end of this school year may well approach 14% of their annual salary. In contrast, the average worker in Indiana has suffered an inflation-induced pay cut of just 1.9% since the summer of 2021, and that is likely to be closer to zero by next summer.

The hardest hit institutions of government are those that are labor intensive and have less flexible levels of labor. This is particularly hard on schools and universities, but also policing, jails and other "hands on" services. The challenge lies in figuring out ways to ensure these occupations don't experience an exodus of workers. For many of them, moving to the private sector is far more lucrative. The sticker shock from this inflation will be enormous. Take education as an example.

Accounting for inflation, Indiana spends roughly the same per student today as we did in 2010. That has

Indiana ranking about 38th nationally on education spending per student today. As a share of our state's economy, our spending has been in steady decline since 2010.

The challenge for the General Assembly is that just to get back to the 2020 per-student level of spending will require an additional \$1.03 billion per year over the biennium budget. To raise K-12 spending back to the same share of GDP that we spent in 2010 will cost an additional

\$1.91 billion over each of the next two years. All this combined means that this will be an enormously difficult General Assembly session. ❖

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.

Where have you been, Hoosier?

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – I looked up from my computer screen and was surprised to see Elvin Elfenhausen, my friend and confidant from Santa's Workshop. "What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I've been assigned to the CIA," he responded. Noting my quizzical look, he added, "the Continuity in Address division of SClause, LLC.

"We knew it was coming," Elvin continued. "Each year more orders, more households worldwide. The hassles of licenses to park on rooftops, regulations about no-fly zones, and product liability insurance. The workshop needed year-round, experienced people. It went beyond the purposes of our Elves Union."

"You mean?" I asked in my fully nasal imitation of Fred Allen. "Yes," he sighed. "We incorporated in Bimini with an address in Fickle, just off I-65 at the Frankfort exit. We have an HR division and a strategic plan."

"Oh, how the mighty have fallen," I whispered. "And, delighted as I am to see you, why are you here?"

"To find out about our address list and update our data base," he answered. "We hacked into your internet connection and have known what you download for years. But we don't know what you do with all those data."

"I understand your concept of privacy," I said. "Well, I'll tell you what I can. The latest from the Census Bureau are survey data for 2021. For the population aged one year and older, 86.7% were living in the same house as a year earlier. That ranks 25th in the nation, almost the median state, Missouri, where the figure is 86.6%.

"If you add in those living in a different house, but in the same county, the percentage rises to 93.5%, just a bit higher than the U.S. median state of 93.2%. Then when you add in those living in the same state, but no longer in the same county, you get 97.3% of Hoosiers over age one were also Hoosiers in 2020. By comparison, for the median U.S. state the figure was 96.4% of persons over age one."

"Strange," said Elvin. "We always think of Indiana as place of homebodies, but it's not really very different from most American states. We won't have to change our delivery guidelines for Indiana; what works elsewhere will work here as well."

"Hoosiers pride themselves on being as close to ordinary as humanly possible," I said.

"But," Elvin asked, "How many of the people you're calling Hoosiers were actually born in Indiana?"

"Two out of every three," I answered. "We're the 11th most nativist state at 67.5% after Louisiana's leading 78.0%. The median state is 58.9%"

"That's more like the Hoosier state we imagine," Elvin said. "See you next year at the North Pole, unless we move because of climate change. Is there room for us in Fickle?" ❖

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Purdue's Brohm to Louisville

WEST LAFAYETTE – Four years after turning down his alma mater to remain at Purdue, Boilermakers football coach Jeff Brohm cannot say no a second time. Brohm, who recently led Purdue to the first Big Ten title game in program history, is in "process of finalizing a deal" to be the Cardinals coach, according to ESPN's Chris Low (IndyStar). The Louisville job opened Monday when coach Scott Satterfield left to take the Cincinnati job.

News of Brohm's pending departure comes four weeks before Purdue's Citrus Bowl date with LSU. Purdue is making its fourth bowl appearance in the past six seasons under Brohm. It is unclear if Brohm will coach the team there. Brohm was 36-34 in his six years at Purdue, and the Boilers are coming off back-to-back winning seasons for the first time since 2006-07. Brohm signed a two-year contract extension in April that included two longevity bonuses totaling \$1.5 million and more money available for assistant coaches. If Brohm were to leave for another coaching job, he would owe Purdue \$1 million. ❖

Sprinkling in truth makes vaccine lies believable

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News Bureau

ANDERSON – “Died Suddenly” starts with a warning: “This film is not suitable for children.” To be perfectly honest, the film’s not suitable for adults either.



Produced by radio show host Stew Peters, this so-called documentary claims the COVID-19 vaccines are part of a depopulation scheme cooked up by global elites in support of a plot to take over the world.

Jonathan Laxton, a medical researcher at the University of Manitoba, told the website MedPage Today the film’s “blatant lies” were designed to scare people away from the vaccines. “I think it’s so over the top that it actually won’t convince anybody who doesn’t already believe it,” he said.

Katie McCarthy of the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism isn’t so sure. The film is dangerous, she told the website PolitiFact, because it takes “bits and pieces of truth and twists them to promote a misleading narrative.”

Released simultaneously Nov. 21 on Twitter and Rumble, the film has been viewed more than 12 million times. It features Ryan Cole, a physician known for promoting false claims about the COVID vaccines and cancer.

MedPage Today interviewed Katrine Wallace, an epidemiologist at the University of Illinois-Chicago School of Public Health who has posted on TikTok and Twitter to debunk several of the film’s claims. She says the film follows a consistent pattern.

“A lot of the tropes in this video are rehashed,” she said. “They just throw everything at the wall because something is going to appeal to someone’s emotions.”

Eric Burnett, a physician at Columbia University’s Irving Medical Center, said the film’s assertions don’t hold up to scrutiny. “I see a lot of blood clots in the hospital,” he told MedPage Today. “Just looking at those blood clots from the movie, they look like very common postmortem blood clots, and I feel like it was just the shock-and-awe value of using these images of

blood clots taken out of context to scare people.”

The film shows a large clot being removed during heart surgery. Burnett used a Google search to discover the scene had been captured in 2019, long before the vaccines made their debut.

As for the cancer claims, Laxton said Cole began pushing those in April 2021, just a month after the COVID vaccines became widely available. He called it “biologically implausible for any carcinogens or cancer-causing agents to suddenly produce cancer within a month of exposure.”

Experts say the constant fight against misinformation and disinformation can be exhausting. Wallace said she never imagined herself beating down conspiracy theories, but she thinks more researchers and healthcare professionals should join the crusade. “The more voices we have that are sensible voices,” she said, “the more we get the right information out there, the better. Because people believe this.”

Burnett said he found it particularly troubling to see trained physicians trafficking in nonsense. “If it’s just some random person like your conspiracy theorist uncle who’s saying this stuff, that’s one thing,” he said, “but when there’s a doctor who has credentials, those credentials carry a lot of weight.”

The lies are not without victims. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the United States has recorded nearly 100 million COVID cases and just short of 1.1 million deaths. All of this in spite of the availability of vaccines that are proven safe and effective.

Perhaps emblematic of the film’s dishonesty is its display of an essay from HuffPost. “My kind, compassionate son died unexpectedly,” the headline reads. “This is what I want you to know about grief.”

Given the topic of the film, you might assume this mother’s son had fallen victim to the side effects of a COVID vaccine; maybe cancer or one of those enormous blood clots. His death, though, was nothing like that. He died in a traffic accident. ❖

Kelly Hawes is a columnist for CNHI News Indiana. He can be reached at kelly.hawes@indianamedia-group.com. Find him on Twitter @Kelly_Hawes.



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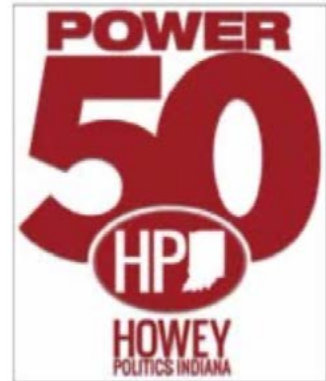
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It's time to weigh in on the 2023 Power 50 list

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – We began 2022 with a double hangover from the previous year when the pandemic and the insurrection dominated topical news. These ongoing events and GOP dominance greatly shaped this 2022 HPI Power 50 List, with the only Democrat on the top 10 being U.S. Transportation Sec. Pete Buttigieg.



The 2023 HPI Power 50 will likely be dominated by mayors seeking reelection, General Assembly budgeteers putting together the final biennial fiscal plan under Gov. Eric Holcomb, and developing 2024 gubernatorial and U.S. Senate races.

There are also smoldering issues still afoot, including the emerging 2024 presidential race, fallout from the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol insurrection, and Indiana's SEA1 abortion restrictions that have twice been derailed by court injunctions.

In formulating the 2023 Power 50, this annual exercise we've conducted since 1999 is designed to forecast who will likely drive events and news in the coming year.

This is a non-mandatory reader participation exercise. Feel free to make nominations, or do what a couple dozen of you have done in past years, which is to come up and submit your own list. Send them along to me at howey@stateaffairs.com or bhowey2@gmail.com.

We'll publish the 2023 Power 50 on Thursday, Jan. 5.

Here is the 2022 HPI Power 50 List:

1. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett
2. Gov. Eric Holcomb
3. Chief of Staff Earl Goode
4. Senate President Rod Bray
5. U.S. Transportation Sec. Pete Buttigieg
6. U.S. Sen. Todd Young
7. U.S. Sen. Mike Braun
8. U.S. Rep. Jim Banks
9. House Speaker Todd Huston

10. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch
11. House Majority Leader Matt Lehman
12. Mike Pence
13. Ambassador Joe Donnelly
14. Health Commissioner Kris Box and Chief Health Officer Lindsay Weaver
15. White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain
16. Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer
17. U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth
18. Attorney General Todd Rokita
19. Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl
20. Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr.
21. U.S. Rep. Andre Carson
22. Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett
23. OMB Director Cris Johnston
24. Purdue President Mitch Daniels
25. Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry
26. Evansville Mayor Lloyd Winnecke
27. Indiana Gaming Commissioner Greg Small
28. INDOT Commissioner Joe McGuiness
29. Secretary of State Holli Sullivan
30. Indiana Health Association CEO Brian Tabor
31. U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon
32. U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski
33. U.S. Rep. Frank Mrvan
34. Cam Savage and Kevin Smith

35. Commerce Sec. Bradley Chambers
36. Terre Haute Mayor Duke Bennett
37. Right to Life President Mike Fichter
38. Noblesville Mayor Chris Jensen
39. Republican National Committee Members John Hammond III and Anne Hathaway
40. U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz
41. U.S. Rep. Jim Baird
42. Education Sec. Katie Jenner
43. Senate Appropriations Chairman Ryan Mishler
44. House Education Chairman Bob Behning
45. Club For Growth President David McIntosh
46. Matt Huckleby
47. Marty Obst
48. Indianapolis Council President Vop Osili
49. LaPorte Mayor Tom Dermody

50. Birch Evans "Beau" Bayh ❖



Pandemic, mob, Roe & 2024 shape list

2022 HPI Power 50 list is a hangover from last year and a glimpse at the 2024 cycle

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY** in Indianapolis and **MARK SCHOEFF, Jr.** in Washington

One year ago today, a mob of insurrectionists ransacked the U.S. Capitol while chanting "Hang Mike Pence." A year ago on New Year's Day 2021 there were 9,578 pandemic Hoosier COVID-19 deaths while there was hope that the vaccine on the way promised to protect our friends, families and communities while fully reopening society.

Today, Indiana's pandemic death toll stands at 15,171, and the University of Washington's Health Evaluation and Metrics site is projecting 25,931 deaths by April 1. This is before the Omicron variant fully invades the state, which has a 52% fully vaccination rate, one of the lowest in the nation.

Big Democrat mistakes

By **JACK COLWELL**
SOUTH BEND – Two big political mistakes by Democrats in Congress, compounded now by seeking to blame it all on Sen. Joe Manchin, leave the shaky Democratic chances of retaining control of the House near zilch. And they depend on Donald Trump successfully backing really strange GOP Senate nominees to keep the 50-50 balance in that chamber.

Big mistake No. 1 for Democrats was thinking they were operating from a position of strength after Trump was defeated.

With Joe Biden in the White House, Kamala Harris able to break ties in the 50-50 Senate and a Democratic House



As for the insurrection, an Axios-Momentive Poll revealed that 57% of Americans expect another violent confrontation similar to the U.S. Capitol insurrection.

Continued on page 3



"We can either be loyal to Donald Trump or we can be loyal to the Constitution, but we cannot be both."

- U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney

Niki Kelly, Capital Chronicle: Amidst the oath-taking and speech-making of Organization Day, the Indiana Senate changed a rule related to floor decorum that threatens to shut down debate in the chamber, especially the voice of the minority party. To fully understand the new rule, let me give you an idea of how debates on controversial bills sometimes have gone up until now. Generally, any legislator who speaks on a bill can be questioned about what he or she said at the microphone. So, if a Senator supports or opposes a bill and states their position during debate another Senator can ask the first Senator to yield to questions. And then there is a back-and-forth between the two. Generally – but not always – it is Democrats in the minority asking questions. A Senator can simply decline to take questions but there is some unwritten rule that it is disrespectful. I have only seen it happen a few times in more than 20 years. I will be the first to admit that many of these dialogues are tedious and full of leading questions whose sole purpose is to score political points in a debate. They generally don't add to the discourse. ❖



John Krull, Statehouse File: At last, Donald Trump told the truth. He said he had no intention of honoring the oath he took when he became president of the United States nearly six years ago. That was when he put his hand on the Bible and pledged: "I, Donald John Trump, do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States." He made that vow in front of God and everyone. He swore a sacred oath that he would preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. Skeptical observers doubted from the beginning that Trump ever meant it. Nothing in the man's life history indicated that he ever had read America's foundational charter, much less that he felt bound to meet the responsibilities it imposed on him. His story had been that of an adolescent locked in a man's body, a being incapable of self-discipline and self-sacrifice, two essential qualities for performing any duty, including the awesome one of being the leader of the free world. He was the guy who refused to honor marriage vows, who ducked out on legitimate debts either by declaring bankruptcy or just disavowing any sense of obligation, who evaded military service and who always found someone else to blame for his many failures and screw-ups. The notion that he could pledge himself to anything other than his own narrowly defined interest was absurd. But some people swallowed his line. Many others in the Republican Party thought, mistakenly, that they could use him to achieve their goals without compromising themselves, their principles and their reputations. They were wrong. Trump gave away the con a few days ago when he posted on Truth Social: "Do you throw the Presidential Election Results of 2020 OUT and declare the RIGHTFUL WINNER, or do you have a NEW ELECTION? A Massive Fraud of this type and magnitude

allows for the termination of all rules, regulations, and articles, even those found in the Constitution. Our great 'Founders' did not want, and would not condone, False & Fraudulent Elections!" ❖

Charlie Sykes, The Bulwark: I have a confession to make: This story still haunts me. Back in the before times, I was a huge fan of Bill Bennett, and regarded him as a friend and mentor of sorts. I won't go into all the sordid details, but I admired his critiques of the humanities, higher education, and (God help me) his emphasis on character and "virtue." So his embrace of Trump felt especially soul-crushing. This is what I wrote in "How the Right Lost Its Mind": Pre-Trump, former education secretary William Bennett had argued eloquently that: "It is our character that supports the promise of our future – far more than particular government programs or policies." Bennett, the author of the "Book of Virtues" and one of the most prominent virtucrats of the Right, emphasized the importance of the president as a role model. "The President is the symbol of who the people of the United States are. He is the person who stands for us in the eyes of the world and the eyes of our children." But during the [2016] presidential campaign, Bennett reversed himself, saying that conservatives who objected to Trump "suffer from a terrible case of moral superiority and put their own vanity and taste above the interest of the country." In August 2016, Bennett wrote an essay making the case for overlooking questions of character in choosing a president. "Our country can survive the occasional infelicities and improprieties of Donald Trump," Bennett wrote. "But it cannot survive losing the Supreme Court to liberals and allowing them to wreck our sacred republic. It would reshape the country for decades." Like Bennett, most conservatives have been willing to make the trade-off: they were willing to inject toxic sludge into the culture in order to win a political victory." ❖

David Brooks, New York Times: What happens if the 2024 election is between Donald Trump and somebody like Bernie Sanders? What happens if the Republicans nominate someone who is morally unacceptable to millions of Americans while the Democrats nominate someone who is ideologically unacceptable? Where do the millions of voters in the middle go? Does Trump end up winning as voters refuse to go that far left? The group No Labels has been working quietly over the past 10 months to give Americans a third viable option. The group calls its work an insurance policy. If one of the parties nominates a candidate acceptable to the center of the electorate, then the presidential operation will shut down. But if both parties go to the extremes, then there will be a unity ticket appealing to both Democrats and Republicans to combat this period of polarized dysfunction. The No Labels operation is a \$70 million effort, of which \$46 million has already been raised or pledged. ❖

Griner swapped, in U.S. custody

WASHINGTON — The White House has secured the release of American basketball star Brittney Griner, according to a U.S. official. The release was in exchange for Russian arms trafficker Viktor Bout, nicknamed the “Merchant of Death,” according to a source familiar with the deal (Politico). The swap, which marks a major diplomatic achievement for President Joe Biden, brings an end to an ordeal that began when Griner was arrested in Russia on Feb. 17 for possession of vape cartridges containing hash oil. Griner had recently been moved to a Russian penal colony nearly 300 miles from Moscow to serve her nine year sentence.



Jan. 6 report coming on Dec. 19

WASHINGTON — The House panel investigating the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol is planning to release its final report and hold a “formal presentation,” which could include a hearing, the week of Dec. 19. Specifically, members are eyeing the date of Dec. 21, according to sources familiar with the panel’s proceedings. While the committee has changed its plans in the past, this is the first time the panel has indicated a specific date for the release of its final report (NPR). Earlier in the week, while discussing the panel’s work with reporters Chairman Bennie Thompson said the report is “quite lengthy.” The report is expected to include information that hasn’t been made public during the previous hearings, and the committee also plans to share hundreds of transcripts of the over 1,000 witnesses it interviewed. Former President Donald Trump, the central player in the panel’s investigation into the violence that erupted on the U.S. Capitol on

Jan. 6, was subpoenaed by the panel in October. Trump has not cooperated.

Klump selected as U.S. magistrate

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — A former nuclear scientist and veteran federal prosecutor has been selected to serve as a U.S. magistrate judge in Indianapolis, it was announced Wednesday. The selection of Assistant U.S. Attorney M. Kendra Klump by the federal judges of the Southern District of Indiana was announced by Zachary A. Myers, U.S. attorney for the Southern District. “AUSA Klump is a phenomenal leader and dedicated public servant,” Myers said. “... The entire district will benefit greatly from her passion for public service and the rule of law.” Klump joined the U.S. Justice Department as a prosecutor in the Northern District of Ohio in 2012. Before attending the University of Michigan Law School, she worked as a nuclear scientist for the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Man sentenced for threats to mayor

EVANSVILLE (WFIE-TV) — The man who threatened Mayor Winnecke has been sentenced to two years of probation for intimidation. David Hippensteel must also complete mental health counseling. He’s also ordered to have no contact with Mayor Winnecke and Annette Ussery. He must also have an escort with him the entire time he’s in the civic center.

Hill accusers must pay \$11k

INDIANAPOLIS — Court documents show Indiana General Assembly lawyers have requested three of former Attorney General Curtis Hill’s accusers pay more than \$11,000 for court costs (Burgess, WIBC). That number comes from the court proceedings associated with the lawsuit against the Indiana House of Repre-

sentatives and Senate. Three former staffers sued, claiming Hill groped them at a post-session party in 2018. Their suit claimed the General Assembly failed to protect them. Federal law allows judges, when requested by a lawyer in a case, to charge certain parties in a legal case with covering the costs of court-appointed staff or obtaining documentation. The lawyers for the three former staffers are reviewing the request.

House to pass same sex marriage

WASHINGTON — Today, the House is poised to send a bill protecting same-sex marriages to President Biden’s desk, marking one of the last major legislative achievements during the tenure of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), who is stepping down from leadership next month when Republicans take control of the chamber (Washington Post).

Rokita files 2 suits against TikTok

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana has filed two separate lawsuits against TikTok this week, according to Attorney General Todd Rokita (WRTV). The first lawsuit alleges that TikTok is misleading and presented itself as an application that is safe and appropriate for children ages 13-17. It also alleges to only contain “infrequent/mild” sexual content, profanity and drug references. “The TikTok app is a malicious and menacing threat unleashed on unsuspecting Indiana consumers by a Chinese company that knows full well the harms it inflicts on users,” Rokita said. “With this pair of lawsuits, we hope to force TikTok to stop its false, deceptive and misleading practices, which violate Indiana law.” The bill would require that people be considered married in any state as long as the marriage was valid in the state where it was performed. It is designed to protect marriages if the Supreme Court reverses course on the issue.