



The Daniels political era passes

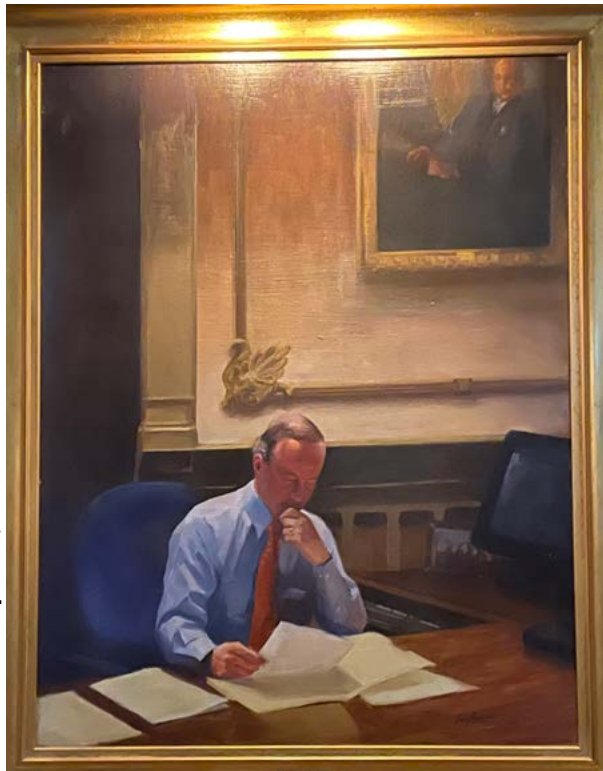
Dysfunction in DC persuades the former governor to take a pass on the Senate race; Trump endorses Banks

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – When it came to a decision, Mitch Daniels determined that spending the next eight years campaigning and serving in dysfunctional Washington, D.C., with congressional gridlock was the ultimate deal breaker.

Thus on Tuesday, the former two-term Indiana governor and Purdue University president slammed the door on a political comeback. “I’ve decided not to become a candidate for the U.S. Senate.

With full credit and respect for the institution and those serving in it, I conclude that it’s just not the job for me, not the town for me,” Daniels said in a statement Tuesday morning.



Daniels added, “I have often expressed a preference for the citizen servant approach to public life. I believe that politics and government are worthy pursuits, which men and women of good will should undertake if they can, not as a life’s work or an end in itself, but to try to ensure that the important realms of society – the private economy, our voluntary associations, local communities and neighborhoods, and especially families – can all

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Specter of nuclear war

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The war that begins casually almost always ends in a dramatically escalated fashion. The American Revolution began with ragtag militias in Massachusetts and ended up with the French Navy forcing the British to surrender at Yorktown. The American Civil War had Union and Confederate forces marching row by row into slaughter, particularly with the introduction of the Gatling gun in 1862. Submarines and guerilla warfare evolved during this five-year conflict.

World War I commenced with an assassination and ended with the invention of tanks and air corps. World War II began with Polish cavalry facing German Panzer tanks. It ended with two American



“Jim Banks is running for the U.S. Senate from the Great State of Indiana. Jim Banks is respected by all, will never let you down, and has my Complete and Total Endorsement.”

- Donald J. Trump, endorsing U.S. Rep. Jim Banks for the U.S. Senate.



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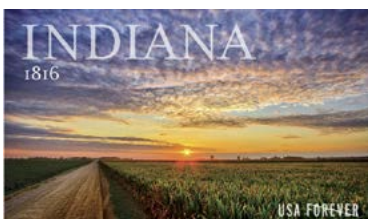
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Jack E. Howey
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1926-2019



atomic blasts that forced Japan to surrender unconditionally.

I conjure these events and images because here in 2023, we find ourselves once again on the nuclear straight-razor in a war that began conventionally. Russian President Putin invaded Ukraine, figuring the former Soviet republic would fold in a couple of weeks. Russian commanders packed their dress uniforms in anticipation of a rain of rose petals from "liberated" Ukrainians.

Ukraine, with a so-far united NATO supplying increasingly more sophisticated and lethal arms, is now facing a long, genocidal slog as Russian forces unleash an onslaught of missiles and Iranian drones aimed at hospitals, power plants, schools and civilian apartment complexes. Russia is using poorly-trained conscripted troops as literal Wagner brigade cannon fodder in Donbas.

Last month, former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, a top ally of President Putin who now serves as deputy chairman of the Security Council, posted on Telegram: "It never occurs to any of the lowlifes to draw an elementary conclusion from this: The defeat of a nuclear power in a conventional war can trigger a nuclear war. Nuclear powers have not lost major conflicts on which their fate depended."

That is just one in a continuum of reckless nuclear saber-rattling from the Putin regime as it flounders in its war with Ukraine, a conflict it picked and is now losing. The Guardian reported that the Kremlin is now deploying Pantsir defensive missile intercept systems around Moscow and

near Putin's dacha.

The Daily Beast reported that Ukrainian authorities are now saying that Russia's biggest cities are bound to suffer attacks. "Internal escalation of the war in Russia is inevitable," said Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to the Ukrainian president, told The Daily Beast.

Two weeks ago, President Biden, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and NATO agreed to send Abrams and Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine. The German Leopards will be delivered in a couple of months, in time for an expected Spring offensive that could determine the fate of this brutal war. These tanks have the ability to do what the first key advocate of this armored vehicle during World War I – First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill – envisioned, which is to break across trenched "no man's land."

When this conflict began a little more than 11 months ago, there was a recollection of the 1943 massive tank battle for control of the Kursk salient, where a thousand Red Army and Wehrmacht tanks mauled each other in what is now Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. Eighty years later, history is poised to repeat, albeit on a smaller scale ... we think.

This past week, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists announced that its 2023 Doomsday Clock has been set forward to the closest to catastrophe it has ever been, just 90 seconds before midnight.

The horrific war in Ukraine "has increased the risk of nuclear weapons use, raised the specter of biological and chemical weapons

use, hamstrung the world's response to climate change, and hampered international efforts to deal with other global concerns," the Bulletin stated. "Russia's thinly veiled threats to use nuclear weapons remind the world that escalation of the conflict – by accident, intention, or miscalculation – is a terrible risk. The possibility that the conflict could spin out of anyone's control remains high."

"No one can do this alone, but everyone can do something," said the Bulletin's President and CEO Rachel Bronson. "We hope that the moving of the clock is a motivator that we all need to pay attention to these key issues."

Eric Schlosser, author of "Command and Control: Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Accident, and the Illusion of Safety and Fast Food Nation" writes in The Atlantic: "Several scenarios for how Russia might soon use a nuclear weapon seem possible: (1) a detonation over the Black Sea, causing no casualties but demonstrating a resolve to cross the nuclear threshold and signaling that worse may come, (2) a decapitation strike against the Ukrainian leadership, attempting to kill President Volodymyr Zelensky and his advisers in their underground bunkers, (3) a nuclear assault on a Ukrainian military target, perhaps an air base or a supply depot, that is not intended to harm civilians,



and (4) the destruction of a Ukrainian city, causing mass civilian casualties and creating terror to precipitate a swift surrender — the same aims that motivated the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

"Any response by the Biden administration would be based not only on how Russia uses a nuclear weapon against Ukraine but also, more impor-

tant, on how Russia's future behavior might be affected by the American response," Schlosser adds. "Vladimir Putin can determine if, when, and where a nuclear attack occurs in Ukraine. But he cannot control what happens after that. The consequences of that choice, the series of events that would soon unfold, are unknowable. One thing is clear, after all my discussions with experts in the field: We must be ready for hard decisions, with uncertain outcomes, that nobody should ever have to make."

Should we be losing sleep over this reckless rhetoric of the despot Putin and Dmitry Medvedev as this war worsens?

Well, perhaps.

This is not a situation for overt panic, but reasonable concern. It means having discussions with your family, friends and co-workers about what to do, where to go, and how to communicate should such a crisis develop. ❖

Mitch Daniels, from page 1

flourish.

"My one tour of duty in elected office involved, like those in business before and academe after it, an action job, with at least the chance to do useful things every day," Daniels said. "I have never imagined that I would be well-suited to legislative office, particularly where seniority remains a significant factor in one's effectiveness, and I saw nothing in my recent explorations that altered that view. Had I chosen to compete, given my age, I would have done so on an explicitly one-term basis. I would have returned any unspent campaign funds to their donors, closed any political accounts, and devoted six years to causes I think critical to the long-term safety and prosperity of our country."

Daniels's decision capped more than a month of speculation after key ally Mark Lubbers tipped off Howey Politics Indiana/State Affairs that he had moved away from a potential third bid for Indiana governor to consider the



Senate race.

At this writing, U.S. Rep. Jim Banks is the sole candidate to announce for the Senate seat being vacated by Mike Braun, who is running for governor. "As I've said before, I respect Gov. Daniels and I learned a lot from him when I served in the Statehouse," Banks said in a statement Tuesday morning before meeting with former British prime minister Boris Johnson. "I'm excited about the early momentum and support for our campaign but we've got a long way to go. Over the next two years, I'm going to work hard every day to make my case to Hoosier voters that I'm best prepared to be their conservative Senator in Washington."

"I have the utmost respect for the years of service Gov. Daniels has given to Indiana and wish him well in the future," said NRSC Chairman Steve Daines. "I'm looking forward to working with one of our top recruits this cycle, Jim Banks, to keep Indiana red in 2024."

U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz had expressed interest before Daniels explored a bid, and might do so again. Informed and reliable sources close to Attorney General

Todd Rokita tell Howey Politics Indiana that he likes his current job and will likely seek reelection in 2024.

In addition to Spartz, the other potential factor in the race is Gov. Eric Holcomb, who said in December that he has not ruled out a Senate bid, but such a determination would not come until the Indiana General Assembly sine die expected in late April. Holcomb was a Senate candidate in 2016, facing then-U.S. Reps. Todd Young and Marlin Stutzman, when Gov. Mike Pence selected him to finish the term of Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann, who resigned to become president of Ivy Tech. Holcomb went on to win a gubernatorial caucus by the Indiana Republican Central Committee when Donald Trump chose Pence to be his vice president nominee.

Asked about a potential Senate candidacy in mid-December, Holcomb responded, saying, "We'll see."

"I've been involved in some campaigns that have been 16 months, and I thought that was early. And then I've been involved in some that took about 106 days, and I thought that was rushed," Holcomb said. "I'm going to do the job I've got. That's somewhat liberating. I'm very comfortable with that."

Indiana Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl reacted to Daniels's announcement, saying, "His announcement today shows that there's little room in today's Indiana Republican Party for candidates who don't pledge allegiance to Donald Trump before anything else. Daniels's 'no social issues' mantra would have had a tough time winning a GOP primary in Indiana and the knives were already drawn from groups saying that Daniels was a relic of the past."

Daniels is, arguably, the most cunning and influential Hoosier Republican of the 21st Century. After turning down Gov. Robert Orr's offer of Vice President-elect Dan Quayle's Senate seat in 1988, he defeated a Democrat incumbent governor in 2004 on the way to two transformational terms. After the GOP failed to retake control of the Indiana House in the 2008 election that saw him win in a landslide, Daniels rectified that by setting in motion a strategy that not only had Republicans retaking the House majority in 2010, but redrew maps the following year that have resulted in Republican super majorities since 2014.

After leaving the governor's office in January 2013, he was named president of Purdue University by a board of trustees that he had appointed.

In the Feb. 23 edition of Howey Politics Indiana, we'll publish a special report looking back on the historical

impact of the Daniels administration a decade after leaving office, just as we did in 2006 on Gov. Evan Bayh and 2013 on Gov. Frank O'Bannon.

Last week, Daniels was on Capitol Hill talking with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, as well as Sens. Todd Young, Mitt Romney, Tim Scott and Daines. It was prelude to the most burning question in Hoosier – and American – politics, which is whether My Man Mitch would make a political comeback.

He seemed uncertain, telling Politico, "I'm not the least bit worried, honestly, about losing an election. I'm worried about winning it and regretting it for six years. I say this with great respect for those who do it. But you know, that doesn't mean it fits me or fits me at this time of my life. So that's what this field trip's about."

Daniels told The Hill, "I've always had action jobs, so I've always had great admiration and respect for people who follow the legislative path, but it's not something I've done or, frankly, seen myself doing. I'm just testing all that now because I've been asked to. People I admire have asked me to think about it, so I'm thinking."

A Club for Growth TV ad that began airing in January was designed as a preemptive strike to keep him out of the race. The ad derided the former governor as a politician with "no fight left," describing the former Purdue president as "an old guard Republican clinging to the old ways of the bad old days."

Among background chatter as Mitch Daniels considered (then ditched) a run for Senate: He'd skip a GOP primary, run as an independent (Bangert, Based in Lafayette). Daniels said he never considered that: "The election wasn't the issue. They might have made it ugly, but they wouldn't have made it close."

For Daniels, a return to politics in 2024 could have paired him up on the ticket with former president Donald J. Trump, who is the current frontrunner for the GOP presidential nomination.

In his statement, Daniels said, "I've likewise tried to keep in mind President Reagan's observation that some people seek public office to be something, others to do something. My one tour of duty in elected office involved, like those in business before and academe after it, an action job, with at least the chance to do useful things every day. I have never imagined that I would be well-suited to legislative office, particularly where seniority remains a significant factor in one's effectiveness, and I saw nothing in my recent explorations that altered that view.

"Had I chosen to compete, given my age, I would have done so on an explicitly one-term basis," he continued. "I would have returned any unspent campaign funds to their donors, closed any political accounts, and devoted



Then-Gov. Mitch Daniels with then-Indiana Republican Chairman Eric Holcomb at City Market. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

six years to causes I think critical to the long-term safety and prosperity of our country."

He listed such issues as "saving the safety net programs, so that we can keep promises we have made to older and vulnerable Americans and avoid a terrible national crisis of confidence and betrayal" as well as firmly confronting "the aggression of a would-be superpower who holds in contempt the values of personal freedom and individual dignity central to our national success and our view of a just society." He also lists securing the U.S. borders "without depriving the nation of the talent and energy that grateful immigrants can bring."

Daniels concluded, saying, "And I would have tried to work on these matters in a way that might soften the harshness and personal vitriol that has infected our public square, rendering it not only repulsive to millions of Americans, but also less capable of effective action to meet our threats and seize our opportunities."

"Maybe I can find ways to contribute that do not involve holding elective office," he said. "If not, there is so much more to life. People obsessed with politics or driven by personal ambition sometimes have difficulty understanding those who are neither. I hope to be understood as a citizen and patriot who thought seriously, but not tediously, about how to be deserving of those labels and simply decided the U.S. Senate was not the only way."

One such opportunity could be in the arena of Major League Baseball, where Commissioner Rob Manfred's contract is up this summer. Daniels is related via marriage to Hall of Famer Billy Herman. He is also close to former President George W. Bush, a former co-owner of the Texas



Purdue President Daniels with "Hillbilly Elegy" author J.D. Vance in February 2017. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

Rangers. Multiple sources have told HPI that if that opportunity presented itself, Daniels would jump at that opportunity.

Of the 10 baseball commissioners, Kennesaw Mountain Landis and Ford Frick are native Hoosiers.

Trump, Sen. Vance endorse Banks

U.S. Sen. J.D. Vance (R-OH) endorsed Rep. Banks for Senate in Indiana. "We need more leadership in Washington like Jim Banks. Jim puts the interests of our own country first, like working to secure our border

from illegal immigration and illicit drugs and fentanyl, standing up against Big Tech censorship and fighting for America First trade policies that support working families with job creation right here at home," Vance said. "Jim Banks will be the conservative force against Joe Biden's woke, inflationary agenda that wants to make mass amnesty a grim reality, make our communities less safe and harder for middle and working class families to put food on the table. Jim is a product of the American Dream, like me. He represents the new wave of young conservative leadership of the Republican Party, and I look forward to working with him in the U.S. Senate."

Former President Donald Trump on Wednesday endorsed Banks, saying, "Jim Banks is running for the United States Senate from the Great State of Indiana. I know Jim well, have seen him tested at the highest and most difficult levels, and WIN!" Trump wrote on Truth Social. "Strong on the Border, Crime, our Military and our Vets, Jim will fight for low taxes and regulations, Sanity in Government, and our under siege 2nd Amendment. Jim Banks is respected by all, will never let you down, and has my Complete & Total Endorsement!" ❖

Mayor Henry files for record 5th term

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

FORT WAYNE – Mayor Tom Henry had announced last summer that he would change course and seek an unprecedented fifth term. Then came his DUI arrest and guilty plea last fall and news that his wife, Cindy, was battling pancreatic cancer in October.

So one of the big political questions leading up to Friday's noon filing deadline was whether Henry would



continue with his political plans. That answer came Monday when he filed for reelection.

"I'm proud of the progress we've made to showcase Fort Wayne as the country's best mid-sized city by nearly every measure," Henry said. "And now is not the time to make a change. We can be proud of what together

we have accomplished, but we still have work to do. I'm energized by the momentum felt throughout every part of our city and want to see through completion the exciting initiatives we've begun and those we will announce this year.

"The pandemic and economic uncertainties have shown us the importance of steady leadership and direc-

tion," the Democrat mayor said. "What we need now, more than ever, is executive experience and an administration that knows how to get things done. I'm motivated and committed to continuing to lead this great City."

Republican Councilmen Tom Didier, who defeated Henry for city council in 2003, and Jason Arp have filed. Jorge Fernandez, a substitute teacher, has filed as a Democrat.

When Didier announced his candidacy last June, Allen County Republican Chairman Steve Shine told WANE 15 that Didier is the presumptive nominee for mayor in the Republican party. "He has a deep, deep knowledge of city affairs, he has great connections with the neighborhoods, not just the third district, but all neighborhoods," Shine said. "He knows how city government runs. And because he has a record, he will be judged by his record, and it's one that he and citizens around Fort Wayne can be very proud of."

Henry says his administration will continue to focus on public safety, neighborhood improvements, good stewardship of taxpayer money, and the economic prosperity the city has enjoyed during the mayor's previous terms in office. "

Lafayette: Roswarski challenger emerges

Lafayette Mayor Tony Roswarski, heading toward a run for his record-tying sixth term in 2023, will have some competition. Benji Milanowski, a nurse with the Tippecanoe County Health Department, filed Monday to run for Lafayette mayor as a Libertarian (Bangert, Based in Lafayette). Milanowski, a 39-year-old Purdue graduate, said Monday that he hasn't had a problem with Roswarski's performance as mayor. But he said he saw the Nov. 8 election as an opportunity. "To be perfectly honest, I'm running largely just so that people are aware that there are other options," Milanowski said. "I don't have any serious forethought that there's going to be a huge turnout of Libertarians or anything of that nature. But I just want people to know there are these other alternatives and to please find what fits them appropriately." Milanowski is a Valparaiso native who came to the community as a Purdue student. He earned two Purdue degrees, including one in nursing. The 2023 municipal campaign will be his first run for political office. He said his campaign will include talking about Libertarian takes on conservative fiscal policies and more liberal social policies. "In the history of Lafayette and its mayors, they've largely done a good job," Milanowski said. "I honestly feel that way about Tony Roswarski, as well. He's done admirably. I'll say I think I would do certain things differently. And I look forward to letting people know that." As of Monday, no other candidates have filed to run for mayor.

Indianapolis: Shackleford on Nichols

State Rep. Robin Shackleford, who is challenging Mayor Joe Hogsett in the Democratic primary, told



WRTV she was "horrified" at the brutal Memphis, Tenn., police slaying of Tyre Nichols. "I thought how could we have officers of the same race treat someone with no humanity?" said Shackleford. "What are we doing here in Indiana that would prevent us from having that same type of interaction happen?" In 2021, state lawmakers unanimously passed a bill dealing with law enforcement in the wake of George Floyd's death and called for police accountability. "What we got was de-escalation training. We also got chokeholds being defined as a deadly weapon. If an officer got found with misconduct, he could be decertified. Another thing that we got is if an officer goes from one agency to another, their record will follow them," said Shackleford.

Evansville: Terry files for Democrat mayor

Democrat Stephanie Terry filed Tuesday at the Election Office where she formally began her candidacy for Evansville mayor (WFIE-TV). Terry says her main focuses are improving education, working on public safety by addressing poverty and mental illness, providing support to small business, and improving equity and diversity throughout the city. She also wants to improve the sidewalks. Terry is the first the Democratic candidate to run for mayor since 2015. "Number one I think the opportunity has presented itself," says Terry. "I definitely think this year a woman is going to take that office. I think that's going to be something that again that's historic and



an opportunity again for fresh perspective to lead the city." The other declared candidates are Republican Vanderburgh County Commissioner Cheryl Musgrave and Natalie Rascher. Terry's early endorsers include former Evansville Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel. There was no Democrat challenger to Mayor Lloyd Winnecke in 2019. Winnecke is not seeking reelection.

Winnecke told HPI on Wednesday that Rascher has

raised \$100,000 and drew 230 people at a women's luncheon. "Since declaring Dec. 3, Natalie is enjoying a groundswell of support. She has my backing."

Terre Haute: Bennett progress 'exploding'

Halting a population decline and increasing personal income are among immediate goals for the city of Terre Haute, Mayor Duke Bennett said Thursday in a 2023 City Update (Greninger, Terre Haute Tribune-Star). Bennett is seeking a fifth term and so far Pat Goodwin has filed as a Democrat. Goodwin ran as an independent in 2019, losing to Bennett by just 216 votes. "We really need to invest in ourselves: Parks, infrastructure which is connected with street improvements, new gateways [at I-70 and U.S. 41 and Indiana 46/U.S. 40] and workforce development and housing," said Bennett during his update. "We need to build more houses, make this a place people want to be and increase household income through better job opportunities. That is where we will all be successful," Bennett said.



Plymouth: Mayor Senter to retire

The city of Plymouth will have a new mayor next year for the first time in a decade and a half. Four-term incumbent Mark Senter will not seek another term (Peterson, WNDU-TV). As a detective for the Indiana State Police, Senter worked on the Pelley murders and others, yet he's leaving his current job in politics, in part, because people are mean. "It's time for somebody else to step up. I just turned 67 myself and, you know, things have changed in the last couple years with social media and the way people are. They can be mean," Mayor Senter told 16 News Now. We had a murder here two years ago, of a nine, of an 11-month-old and I got this awful email, that just was very nasty."



Senter says being mayor has been like riding a roller coaster. Ten days into his first term he was faced with serious flooding and says three of the five worst floods in Plymouth history came on his watch, although that helped clear a path to create what he calls his "baby" River Park Square, a community gathering point that now hosts the Mayor's Month of Music event. "I think

people can just get out and they can relax. We don't have an ordinance that says you can't have beer in our parks. You can bring your beer or wine and have a good time and sit with your friends you haven't seen, in a different setting."

East Chicago: Copeland to seek reelection

Mayor Anthony Copeland joined the growing list of municipal officials seeking reelection this year. Copeland filed his candidacy papers in January. He is being challenged in the May 5 Democratic primary by Clemmie T. Jones Jr., an East Chicago Democrat, and East Chicago City Clerk Mary Leonard Morris who filed her own mayoral candidacy last month.

Carmel: Nelson files a Democratic nod

Carmel City Councilor Miles Nelson officially launched his Democratic mayoral campaign this week. "I love this city and what it's given to me and my family. I'm extraordinarily passionate about the people who live here, and the ways we support one another," Nelson said. "Under the leadership of Mayor Brainard, we have seen remarkable population growth and development as Carmel has transformed into a city that leads our region in nearly every quality of life, safety, recreation and inclusivity measure. We are nationally recognized as one of the best places to live in the country. I'm running for mayor so we can continue to keep Carmel moving forward."

Zionsville: Stehr touts 15-year plan

Republican John Stehr shared a three-part comprehensive plan for the next 15 years for the town of Zionsville. Stehr unveiled his "Zionsville 2040" goals in a series of videos on his campaign's social channels. "When I set out to run for mayor, I did it with a purpose – I want to make Zionsville more competitive with nearby Central Indiana towns when it comes to economic growth while preserving the charm that is uniquely 'Zionsville,'" Stehr said. "The goals and priorities outlined in my 'Zionsville 2040' plan are how my administration will achieve that purpose." Stehr's 'Zionsville 2040' includes specific goals in three priority areas: Public Safety, Growth and Economic Development, and Marketing and Communication. The Stehr campaign released three videos addressing each priority area over the course of several weeks. "Each of these priority areas: Public Safety, Growth and Economic Development, and Marketing and Communication, are a reflection of the conversations that I have had with literally thousands of people throughout my campaign so far," Stehr said. "As the campaign continues to progress, I look forward to continuing to share my vision for Zionsville's future and hearing more from my neighbors about the Zionsville they imagine for the next generation."

Charlestown: Jackson declares for GOP

Republican Ruthie Jackson will challenge Charlestown Mayor Treva Hodges in the 2023 municipal election

(News & Tribune). Jackson, the president of the Charlestown City Council, has filed to run for the mayoral seat. Hodges, the Democratic incumbent, has held the seat since 2020 and is seeking a second term in office. The Republican is serving her fourth year on the city council, and she has been council president for three of those four years. Jackson is also the deputy trustee at the Charlestown Township Trustee's Office, and she is the director and founder of the North Clark County Outreach Center, a local food bank. "I'm a hometown girl," Jackson said. "I have put my heart and soul in Charlestown in different aspects of the town. I just think it's time. I never had aspirations to be mayor, but being on the city council and seeing that side of it, I just think it's time that I offer the city what I have to offer."

Governor

Crouch testifies for SB 1

Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch testified in front of the Senate Appropriations Committee in support of Senate Bill 1, legislation which will strengthen the direction Indiana takes in assisting Hoosiers suffering with behavioral health issues, including mental illness and addiction. Authored by Sen. Michael Crider, R-Greenfield, SB 1 will transform the current 988 Crisis Hotline into 988 Response Centers and direct Indiana's Family and Social Services Administration to apply for support from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to expand the network of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC) in Indiana. It is unusual for a sitting Indiana governor or lieutenant governor to testify in front of a committee on behalf of a specific piece of legislation. "As co-chair of the Indiana Roundtable on Mental Health, I could have justified speaking on behalf of this bill. But for personal reasons, I was compelled to testify," said Crouch.

Crouch touts 'next chapter' in Terre Haute

Lt. Gov. Crouch stopped in Terre Haute on Wednesday to tout past and future state projects, but she also acknowledged that the state had many residents that still needed significant help to improve their lives ([Terre Haute Tribune-Star](#)). Hosted by the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce at the at The Red Barn at Sycamore Farm, Crouch opened by saying that she saw "great things" happening in Vigo and Sullivan counties. "You've been ready to explode," she said. "You're doing it now." She said in the past 17 years, the state has turned itself around fiscally, attributing some of its advances to the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs' efforts to expand broadband to Hoosier residents. She added that another \$268 million will connect an additional 75,000 Hoosiers and businesses to the outlying world Crouch declared that the "next chapter in Indiana's history will focus on quality of life," adding that is a way to attract talent to local communities.

Braun releases report on his Senate accomplishments

U.S. Sen. Mike Braun released a [report detailing his Senate office's accomplishments](#) for the 117th Congress (2021-2022) including leading 19 bills that became law, responding to over one million constituent requests, and introducing measures to stand for Hoosier values in Washington. Individual reports on his top issue areas including protecting the unborn, supporting our veterans, and tackling the opioid epidemic can be found on Senator Braun's website under Working for Hoosiers. "Hoosiers sent me to D.C. to get results, and I'm proud to say that in the last two years I've led 19 bills to be signed into law, responded to over one million requests from Hoosiers, and stood up for Indiana values of faith, family, and community in Washington."



RNC

Hupfer loses RNC vice chair on 3rd ballot

INGOP Chairman Kyle Hupfer lost the Republican National Committee vice-chair vote on third ballot to South Carolina's Drew McKessick 90-76 (Howey Politics Indiana). Indiana RNC Committeeman John Hammond III on Hupfer losing 3rd ballot for RNC vice chair: "Kyle did an exceptional job and almost got there." Hupfer serves as general counsel for the RNC. Earlier on Friday at the Republican winter meetings in California, Ronna McDaniel was easily reelected chairwoman. She received 111 votes, while Harmeet Dhillon received 51 and pillow guy Mike Lindell received four.

RNC resolution calls for abortion 'offensive'

Score one for the anti-abortion advocates who want the party to get more forceful, not moderate, on the issue: A new RNC resolution calls for Republicans to "go on offense in the 2024 election cycle" (Politico Playbook). The document also urges federal and state legislators "to pass the strongest pro-life legislation possible," with language indicating six-week abortion bans. It came before Axios reports that the Biden administration is considering declaring a public health emergency that would free up resources to help people access abortions.

RNC report doubles down on election fraud

A new internal report prepared by the Republican National Committee proposes creating a permanent infrastructure in every state to ramp up "election integrity" activities in response to perceptions within GOP ranks of widespread fraud and abuse in the way the country selects its leaders (Washington Post). The report, prepared by the RNC's "National Election Integrity Team" and obtained by The Washington Post, reveals the degree to which Republicans continue to trade on former presi-

dent Donald Trump's false claims that Democrats and their allies rigged his defeat in 2020. The report suggests building a massive new party organization involving state-level "election integrity officers" and intensive new training models for poll workers and observers, all based on unsubstantiated claims that Democrats have implemented election procedures that allow for rigged votes.

Presidential 2024

Trump slips in Bulwark Poll, but has GOP grip

"A large majority of GOP voters is ready to move on from Donald Trump. But a devoted minority might not let them." "This," writes Sarah Longwell in The Bulwark, "is the Always Trump faction of the Republican party. And they are why the GOP could be sleepwalking into another Donald Trump catastrophe." Here's the bottom line from a new poll by The Bulwark and GOP pollster Whit Ayres of North Star Opinion Research: Donald Trump has slipped to his lowest point since he emerged on the political scene almost eight years ago. He remains a formidable force, to be sure, with a lock on approximately 30% of likely Republican primary and caucus voters nationally. But a majority of the GOP is ready to move on. The Bulwark/North Star Opinion Research poll is consistent with several other polls that have found Trump fading with voters and losing to Florida Governor Ron DeSantis in head-to-head match-ups. In each of three scenarios polled, Trump's weakness is evident. But, as the pollsters emphasize, he has a tight grip on between 28 and 30% of the GOP primary voters. In a head-to-head match, DeSantis leads Trump 52% to 30%, with 15% undecided and 3% saying they would not vote if those were the only two options. With DeSantis, Trump, and "another candidate," DeSantis got 44%, Trump got 28%, and the generic "another candidate" got 10%, with 17% undecided. In a 10-candidate field, DeSantis got 39%, Trump 28%, Mike Pence 9%, Nikki Haley and Liz Cheney 4% each, and five other candidates registered at 1%. In this scenario, 13% of the respondents were undecided.

Biden approval at 41% in AP poll

More U.S. adults disapprove than approve of the way President Joe Biden has handled the discovery of classified documents at his home and former office, a new poll shows, but that seems to have had little impact on his overall approval rating. The new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds 41%

of Americans say they approve of how Biden is handling his job as president, about the same as the 43% who said that in December. In the new poll, 77% of Democrats approve of how Biden is handling his job, while 91% of Republicans disapprove, both little changed since late last year.

Home folks not sold on Mike Pence

On a drizzly day in December, Indianapolis talk radio host Rob Kendall railed against Mike Pence on his radio show, "Kendall & Casey." "For 20 consecutive years, Mike Pence has been in public office. What is the signature accomplishment of Mike Pence? Anyone? Anybody?" he asked (Menge, Chicago Crusader). Kendall didn't hold back when asked in January what he thought of Pence maybe running for president in 2024. "He accomplished next to nothing while he was governor," he said. "He got saved by Trump. And, what else is he going to do? What applicable skill set does he have and what has he done in the private sector his entire life?" Of course, he could get some other kind of job. "Yeah, but Mike Pence doesn't do a job in the sense where like he produces things," Kendall said. "If you told Mike Pence he had to turn a profit on a Wendy's near

a crowded interstate for a week, I don't think he could do it." Even Republican Party loyalists in Indiana seem to have tired of Pence. "I'm much more DeSantis than I am Pence," says Chris Callaway, a former county GOP chairman in Monroe County.

Pence says 'mistakes were made' with docs

Former Vice President Mike Pence said Friday that he takes "full responsibility" after classified documents were found at his Indiana home (AP). In his first public comments since the discovery, Pence said, "Let me be clear: Those classified documents should not have been in my personal residence," Pence said at Florida International University. "Mistakes were made, and I take full responsibility."

Haley to declare on Feb. 15

Cementing what has been in the works for months, former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley will formally announce she is running for president and will seek the Republican nomination for her party's 2024 ticket, The Post and Courier has learned. According to an invitation soon going out to her backers, Haley's advertised "special announcement" will come Feb. 15 in Charleston. ❖

STATE AFFAIRS PRO



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Senate health panel passes health plan

Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS – The Indiana governor’s proposal for a broad expansion of county-level public health programs won its first endorsement from state legislators on Wednesday (Davies, AP). The state Senate’s health committee voted 12-0 in support of a bill laying out the responsibilities that local health departments would have if county officials accept a major increase in state funding being sought by Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb. State Health Commissioner Dr. Kristina



Box, several medical organizations and business groups urged lawmakers to support the plan, pointing to Indiana’s poor national rankings in areas such as smoking, obesity and life expectancy. The governor’s plan would direct \$100 million in the next state budget year and \$200 million in the following year toward boosting Indiana’s county public health department funding from its 45th-place national ranking. The state now directs about \$7 million a year to county health departments, which are primarily funded by local taxes.

Pandemic hammered Indiana hospitals

Indiana hospitals experienced their most difficult financial year since the beginning of the pandemic last year, according to a new analysis by Kaufman Hall. Record-high hospital expenses coupled with losses in operating income left Indiana hospitals with cumulative negative margins in 2022.

According to the report, Indiana hospitals operated on a -2.0% median operating margin last year, declining 22% compared to pre-pandemic levels. Expenses for labor, medical supplies, drugs, and other purchased services rose \$3.2 billion during this time due to inflation and other external factors, outpacing revenue. The median hospital operating margin for the state of Indiana was at or below the national median each year, the report found.

Meanwhile, Indiana hospitals experienced negative operating income for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic in 2022, losing \$72 million. In addition, total operating income for Indiana hospitals fell \$1.2 billion below pre-pandemic levels. As a result, Indiana hospitals saw significant declines in days cash on hand — a key measure of cash reserves. In 2022 alone, Indiana hospitals experienced a nearly 20% median decline in their number of days cash on hand compared to 2021. “These findings underscore the existential financial and operational threats Indiana hospitals continue to face,” said Erik Swanson, senior vice president of data and analytics at Kaufman Hall.

Indiana hospitals faced a host of other related challenges in 2022 according to the report, including workforce shortages and increased labor costs.

House passes teacher scholarship bill

Indiana lawmakers and education leaders are pushing for increased funding to help more professionals and particularly people of color afford a teaching degree (Comber-Willen, Indiana Public Media). The legislation, supported by members of both parties, comes as schools across the state continue to struggle with a shortage of teachers and paraprofessionals. House Bill 1637 aims to recruit and retain diversity among educators in Indiana by providing increases in three scholarship funds, two of which are geared towards minority educators. This includes a boost from \$7,500 to \$10,000 for Next Generation Hoosier Educators Scholarship recipients, an annual scholarship amount increase from \$4,000 to \$10,000 for William A. Crawford Minority Teacher Scholarship recipients and an annual scholarship amount increase from \$4,000 to \$5,000 for Earline S. Rogers Student Teaching Scholarship for Minorities.

Affordable housing bill passes W&M

Lawmakers opted not to include an explicit price tag for a program designed to incentivize affordable housing construction throughout the state before passing the bill through the House Ways and Means Committee Wednesday (Downard, Capital Chronicle). House Bill 1005 now goes to the full House. Rep. Doug Miller, R-Elkhart, helmed a task force that approved 16 recommendations to address the state’s housing shortage, and presented the bill before a committee last week. That panel approved the bill, recommitting the legislation to Ways and Means.

National Guard Court martial bill advances

A bill to make court-martialing and punishing Indiana National Guard troops easier passed the Senate with strong support. An identical version already passed the House too (Rayes, [Indiana Public Media](#)). One part of the bills faced opposition at every step – but not enough to change them. All 40 Republicans in the Senate voted to pass Senate Bill 279 while all nine present Democrats (one was absent) voted against it. The vote did not fall so purely along party lines on the House version. A few Democrats broke ranks and voted to pass House Bill 1076 and two Republicans voted against passing it in that chamber. Representatives for the Indiana National Guard told lawmakers in committees that there have been several sexual assault cases in recent years. They said the accused could only be separated from service because they were unable to convene court-martials.

Sen. Sandlin revives partisan school board bill

Indiana lawmakers are trying again to pass a Republican-backed proposal to make school board elections partisan despite opposition from school board members

and education advocates from across the state (Smith, Indiana Public Media). Candidates running for school boards would be required to identify as a Republican, Democrat or Independent, according to the legislation. Currently, Indiana is among 41 states where local school board elections are held without any party identification on the ballot for candidates. The bill's author, Republican Sen. Jack Sandlin of Indianapolis, said the impetus of the bill stemmed from his conversations with Hoosiers who feel their views have been "excluded" from school board

meetings. He contended during a bill hearing at the Indiana Statehouse on Monday that elected party officials have a "higher degree of responsibility" to voters. Forcing school board candidates to declare a party will provide greater transparency, he said. "I think that we need to reform our system. I think (partisan elections) is a system that will work." ❖



Hoosier farmland tax misery has company

By **LARRY DEBOER**

WEST LAFAYETTE – Farmland assessments for property taxes are going up. So are home, rental housing and business assessments. Property tax misery has a lot of company.

Farmland assessments start with a base rate per acre. The base rate is a statewide number calculated each year by the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance. The base rate for taxes this year is \$1,500 per acre, up 16% from \$1,290 last year. The DLGF just announced that the base rate for taxes next year will be \$1,900, a 27% increase. The base rate is adjusted for soil productivity and sometimes factors that reduce yields, to set the assessed value for each acre.



The base rate calculation is a capitalization formula. It effectively puts a fixed 8% in the denominator. That's the capitalization rate. The numerator averages two measures of income, cash rent adjusted for property tax payments, and operating income, which is corn and soybean prices, times yields, minus costs. The base rate calculation averages data from the most recent six years, with the highest value not counted. The base rate for this year's tax bill uses data from 2016 through 2021. Next year's base rate uses data from 2017 to 2022.

The big variations in this formula come from corn and soybean prices. The price of corn used in the calculation was under \$4 per bushel from 2015 to 2020. Soybean prices were near \$10 per bushel during those years. The six years of data used to calculate the 2022 base rate of \$1,290 used those prices.

Commodity prices jumped with the pandemic. The corn price used by the DLGF topped \$5 in 2021 and rose above \$6 in 2022. The soybean price increased above \$12 in 2021 and approached \$14 in 2023. The base

rate calculation for 2023 tax bills dropped the lower 2015 corn and bean prices and added the higher 2021 prices. For 2024, the lower 2016 prices are dropped in favor of the higher 2022 prices. Including higher prices in the average causes the base rate to increase.

This means that the base rate most likely will continue to increase for tax bills in 2025. All that's required is that commodity prices in 2023 be greater than prices were in 2017. The corn price was under \$4 in 2017 and the soybean price was in the mid-\$9 range. Needless to say, prices are higher now, so the base rate will rise for 2025. If prices don't fall back to pre-pandemic levels, the base rate will continue to rise through 2028.

Property tax bills will rise for most farmland owners. But they may not rise as much as the increase in the base rate. That's because other assessments are increasing too. The average taxable assessed value of homesteads – owner-occupied primary residences – has increased by 21% for taxes in 2023. Rental housing has an 18% increase, and business land and buildings are rising 10%. Only business equipment is rising slowly, at 2%.

Property tax rates are recalculated each year by dividing local government levies by the assessed value of taxable property within their boundaries. The levy is the revenue that local governments intend to collect from the property tax, and most of it is limited by a state maximum. That limit increased by 5% this year. If taxable assessed value rises by more than that, tax rates will go down. Assessed values are rising a lot more than 5% almost everywhere. Tax rates won't fall enough to erase the tax bill increase for most taxpayers. But tax bills won't rise quite as much as assessed values.

Think of it this way: Local governments set an amount to collect from property taxes, then divvy it up among local property owners, based on the value of their property. Your share increases if the value of your property rises more than your neighbors'. If everyone's property values increase at the same rate, shares won't change. Tax bills would increase no more than the increase in the levy.

Farmland tax bills will increase, but so will tax bills of homeowners and landlords. Farmland owners will have a lot of company to share the tax bill misery. ❖

Deboer is professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University.

Grave divisions face American democracy

By JACK COLWELL
South Bend Tribune

SOUTH BEND – A national survey by Notre Dame’s Rooney Center for the Study of American Democracy finds more than half of Republicans (52%) and more than a third of Democrats (36%) believe we are on the brink of a new civil war.



And the threat of violence to democracy is cited in two recent books.

One is by Jon Meacham, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, who likens conditions now to divisions just before the civil war. The other is by Luke Mogelson, a journalist who maintained close contact with Jan. 6 insurrectionists and even went with them into the Capitol.

Professor Matthew Hall, Rooney Center director, warned of dangers to democracy when the Notre Dame survey results were released in November. “Is it really as bad as it seems? The answer is yes,” Hall said.

To be clear, Hall wasn’t predicting a civil war. He was warning of the dangers to democracy when so many Americans now question democratic principles and find differences so great that they see civil war as a possibility.

Differences? Wow.

The survey found that 78% of Democrats thought the Jan. 6 hearings proved that Donald Trump was responsible for the riot, while 62% of Republicans believed they did not.

While 45% of Republicans said Joe Biden stole the presidential election, Democrats almost unanimously disagreed, with 75% strongly disagreeing.

There also were differences on voting rights. While 89% of Democrats said everyone should be allowed to vote, just 51% of Republicans agreed.

When asked about a statement that the true American way of life is disappearing so fast that we may have to use force to save it, 44% of Republicans, 22% of Democrats and 25% of Independents agreed. Scary.

In his bestselling new biography

of Abraham Lincoln, “And There Was Light,” Meacham describes angry divisiveness as Lincoln became president. He expresses concern for democracy now and says lessons can be learned from what happened back then.

He tells of the fear then that outgoing Vice President John Breckinridge, sympathetic to the Southern cause, might not carry out his constitutional duty of accepting electoral votes from the states for the presidential winner. But Breckinridge opened the certificates and declared the results showing Lincoln’s victory.

There also were fears then that a mob might attack messengers carrying the electoral results for the proceedings. A hundred plainclothes police were stationed along the route of the messengers from the Senate to the House.

Mogelson, normally a war correspondent, covered the violence in America leading up to and during the Jan. 6 insurrection. He writes about it in his book, “The Storm Is Here.”

He developed contacts with leaders of the Capitol insurrection and went in with them as they stormed the building, recording the events of that day.

In interviews afterward, Mogelson followed up with questions about future plans for other actions. To a question of what happens if Trump runs for president again in 2024 and loses again, an insurrection backer depicted a scene where “blood runs knee-high in the streets.”



In wars he covered abroad, Mogelson found real, understandable reasons for conflict over atrocities and land conquest. Here, he fears it would be “a war fueled not by injury but by delusion.”

Hall, Notre Dame professor of political science and law, isn’t predicting bloody civil war. But he warns of divisions posing a grave threat to American democracy. Democracy is neither inevitable nor easy, he says. It’s like a snowball that has to be pushed up the hill. “It’s effortful, it’s tiring, it demands a vigilance. And you take a break or you assume you are already up the hill, and it will roll down back on you.”

If there is no change in the hellish climate of myriad conspiracy theories and political hatreds, will democracy stand a snowball’s chance? ❖

Colwell has covered Indiana politics over five decades for the South Bend Tribune.

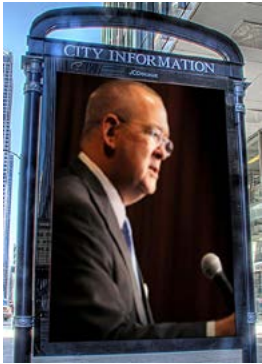
Notre Dame Prof. Matthew Hall is director of the Rooney Center and warns of the dangers facing American democracy.

The 2023 forecast

By **MICHAEL J. HICKS**

MUNCIE – In the past couple of weeks I've presented my 2023 economic forecast to groups here in Indiana and Ohio. My short-term economic forecast through 2023 and into 2024 is similar to that of the Federal Reserve. I'm predicting the U.S. dodges a recession in 2023 and faces instead what is often called a "soft landing."

There are good reasons why this forecast will be right and, of course, many reasons why it will be wrong.



My forecast uses a series of equations that attempt to capture economic relationships over time. For example, I have an equation that predicts new home construction given population growth and mortgage rates. Another predicts sales of consumer durables given personal income growth and credit card rates.

These equations work well when the underlying relationships don't change very much. Unfortunately, that's often not the case, especially in the wake of the huge post-COVID economic swings. However, forecasting this way is helpful because it allows us to really focus on those areas that have the most uncertainty or change.

The forecast of continued growth comes from these models, not a hunch or feeling. There are a few good data points that help explain why these sorts of models would suggest we'll dodge a recession. To begin with, the economy is currently growing well. GDP growth in the third quarter was at 3.2%, and the slowdown in the first half of last year was largely due to inventory adjustments. There's nothing happening right now that would suggest an immediate slowdown.

Following some huge swings during COVID, inflation-adjusted personal income, measured on a per person basis, has been rising since June. The personal savings rate has dipped, but much of that is probably due to consumers paying off credit card debt as rates rise. Household spending on goods and services remains relatively strong. All this is encouraging news that signals a downturn is not imminent.

The reason for worry about a recession is the Federal Reserve's response to high inflation. The tightening of the money supply, most obviously through higher interest rates, is designed to slow demand for goods. This would bring inflation back to the targeted level of between 2.0 and 2.5%.

The good news is that when measured from month to month, inflation has stopped. By some measure it has even slipped into deflation. While the year-to-year inflation is still high, the end of monthly inflation means that the rate should fall back to the targeted range by late

spring or summer. This means the Federal Reserve can slow their efforts to stop inflation, as they seem likely to do in the coming months.

The Fed always tries to achieve a soft landing, but labor market conditions today make it easier to do so for several reasons. First, the unemployment rate remains at her historic lows. Second, the excess demand for labor, as measured by job openings, is unusually large. It is larger than at any time for which we've had data, and probably larger than at any time in history. While this is uncomfortable for businesses, it makes a soft landing more likely.

The Federal Reserve's aggressive interest rate hikes have stopped inflation, without thus far increasing unemployment. The hope is that the Fed can continue to reduce the excess demand, but that reduction will be felt in the help wanted advertisements, not in actual hiring. That is the "soft landing."

Even with a soft landing, there will be some labor market effects. The past few months have seen significant wage growth for workers with the lowest income. Much of this is fueled by workers changing jobs, not by general wage increases. In many industries, the only way to experience wage growth is through 'job hopping.' That opportunity may be coming to an end. Slack labor markets may slow the growth of remote work in some sectors, but it may grow opportunities in others. And, the end of tight labor markets might slow the pace of automation in the service sector. We won't know how these shake out for many months.

My prediction of a soft landing is shared by the Federal Reserve forecasters, as well as many academic and commercial forecasts. Still, there are model-based forecasts of a recession in the first half of 2023, and there are several reasons why a recession could still occur.

The economy is always plagued by short-term measurement error. In fact, the initial hesitance to believe the growing risk of inflation was because of significant underestimates of labor market strength in 2021. Today, we could be underestimating inflation or overestimating the strength of labor markets. If so, both the predictions of a soft landing and an end of inflation could be mistaken. But, the risk of measurement error is symmetrical. Labor markets could be stronger, and underlying inflation could be less than we now observe in the preliminary data releases.

China has reversed course on COVID policies, and reopened their economy. This will have uncertain effects ranging from lower prices for many of their exports, to higher global demand for energy and raw materials. It is best to view this volatility from China as an uncertain global shock to supply and demand. China's economy is troubled, and their political regime bizarrely uncertain. It is most likely that the world is turning away from that uncertainty, but the short-run effects of their reversal of their COVID policy is very uncertain.

The U.S. Congress seems poised for a showdown on the debt ceiling. Typically, these are political theater

with little effect, but this time could always be different. Also, the Russo-Ukrainian war remains an uncertain cloud on the global economy. Russia is losing, badly. A loss should end the Putin regime, so the end will be risky. At the very least, we should anticipate continued volatility in energy prices. Any of these factors could push a soft landing into a full-blown recession.

Finally, even a soft landing will see substantial slowing of demand for some products. This will be concentrated in manufactured items, from RVs to appliances. Thus, some parts of the country will feel as if they are in

recession. Other places will be largely untouched. If my forecast is correct, the Federal Reserve will have negotiated a difficult soft landing in the wake of difficult post-COVID volatility and inflation. ❖

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 in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University.

What is the value of a college education?

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — Politicians, including those in Indiana, are going down a perverted path believing that consumers should invest in education when the returns (income) on that investment justify the expenditure.

The idea that education is an investment has merit, but its value is more than just the earnings it provides. Education is a means of opening choices and transferring societal values between generations, a function often neglected or negated by parents.



It elevates consumption in the present and enhances consumption in the future. Students now are being counseled to go to those institutions and seek those majors which offer the greatest "value" for the "invest-

ment" of their dollars and time.

This approach to education is founded on thinking of people in terms of human capital, a concept analogous to physical capital (machines, buildings, et al). It is contrary to the humanity of students, faculty, and parents.

States now are rushing to develop databases to guide the choices of adolescents according to the statistical experiences of their elders. Young people are being directed toward schools and careers based on questionable information collected by many organizations and processed by state government agencies.

Aside from the exposure to corruption inherent in such a system, consistency over time is highly questionable. Faculty are mobile and good teachers are more mobile than poor ones. Students are likely to change their career preferences as they mature, acquire experience, and assume responsibility for themselves and others.

The market returns to education are unreliable.

How should students incorporate the future dynamics of the labor market, given the tendency of technological innovation to make jobs obsolete?

Today, long-haul truck drivers might have better returns on their training in the short run than English teachers. Over a lifetime, which job offers more satisfaction, security, occupational mobility, and greater earnings?

Much depends on the time-preferences of students and parents. How important is the fast buck? That is, if you have a high rate for discounting future earnings, long-haul truck driving might suit you best. However, with a low rate of discounting the future, you can be more comfortable with more distance rewards.

The current craze for gambling on stocks and sports, without any human interaction, satisfies a quest for action and immediate rewards. Education provides the knowledge and means for moderating that passion and advancing civilization.

Yet today, there is a movement to reduce the time spent at all levels of education from high school through college and graduate studies. This movement assumes knowledge is easily absorbed and utilized. Human capital, (labor inputs) can then be moved along a production line faster, using fewer resources, pressed into shape like a hamburger, and quickly sliced and fried like a potato.

Not in the world I know. ❖

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.

Florida college prep course seen as ‘woke indoctrination’

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News Bureau

ANDERSON – Manny Diaz Jr. calls a proposed advanced placement course in African American studies “woke indoctrination masquerading as education.” Diaz is Florida’s education commissioner, and he has the backing of his boss, Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis.



“What’s one of the lessons about?” DeSantis asked at a news conference. “Queer theory. Now, who would say that an important part of Black history is queer theory? That is somebody pushing an agenda on our kids.”

DeSantis also objects to “intersectionality,” a term civil rights advocate Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw uses to describe the way in which multiple forms of discrimination overlap in the experiences of marginalized groups or individuals. Crenshaw,

a professor at the UCLA School of Law, is a leading scholar in critical race theory, a subject that is currently banned from Florida classrooms.

“That’s the wrong side of the line for Florida standards,” DeSantis said. “We believe in teaching kids facts and how to think, but we don’t believe they should have an agenda imposed on them. When you try to use Black history to shoehorn in queer theory, you are clearly trying to use that for political purposes.”

J.B. Pritzker, the Democratic governor of Illinois, has an entirely different perspective. “For some, a course such as this may be one of the first times they see their own faces and experiences reflected back to them on the page,” Pritzker wrote in a letter to the course developer, the College Board. “They deserve the opportunity, alongside their classmates, to learn the honest and accurate history of the nation they live in now.”

In his own letter to the College Board, Diaz says the class outline violates Florida law. Pritzker calls that law racist and homophobic. “I urge you to maintain your reputation as

an academic institution dedicated to the advancement of students and refuse to bow to political pressure that would ask you to rewrite our nation’s true, if sometimes unpleasant, history,” he wrote. “One governor should not have the power to dictate the facts of U.S. history.”

The fight might well wind up in court. If Florida holds firm in its position, civil rights attorney Ben Crump promises a lawsuit, and he has already lined up the plaintiffs.

The class, in development for more than a decade, is now part of a pilot program at 60 schools across the country. The plan is to make it available to all schools for the 2024-25 school year.

The College Board says it will issue a revised course outline in time for the start of Black History Month on Feb. 1. “This framework, under development since March 2022, replaces the preliminary pilot course framework under discussion to date,” the statement said. “Before a new AP course is made broadly available, it is piloted in a small number of high schools to gather feedback from high schools and colleges. The official course framework incorporates this feedback and defines what students will encounter on the AP exam for college credit and placement.”

The statement didn’t suggest the new framework had anything to do with the objections coming out of Florida, but the Florida Department of Education cheered the news anyway.

“We are glad the College Board has recognized that the originally submitted course curriculum is problematic, and we are encouraged to see the College Board express a willingness to amend,” Alex Lanfranconi, a spokesperson for the agency, said in a statement. “AP courses are standardized nationwide, and as a result of Florida’s strong stance against identity politics and indoctrination, students across the country will consequentially have access to an historically accurate, unbiased course.”

Pritzker says his state will be watching to make sure the class gives students the full picture they deserve. If it doesn’t, he says, it might be Illinois that will be barring the course from its classrooms. ❖



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How we see start of '24 battle for U.S. Senate

By KYLE KONDIK

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – Democrats have considerably more exposure than Republicans in this cycle's U.S. Senate races – a point made plainly clear in our initial ratings of the 2024 Senate races.

First of all, there's just the basic math. There are 34 Senate races slated for next year so far – 33 regular contests, plus a special election in Nebraska, where newly-appointed Sen. Pete Ricketts (R) will be back on the ballot to defend the unexpired term left behind by Ben Sasse (R), who resigned to become the president of the University of Florida.

Democrats are defending 23 of these seats, while Republicans are defending just 11. That Democratic tally includes the three states with independents who caucus with the Democrats: Sens. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, Angus King of Maine, and Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

Democrats are defending all three seats they hold in states that Donald Trump carried for president in 2020 – Montana, Ohio, and West Virginia. Additionally, they are defending 5 more

in states that President Biden carried but by margins smaller than his national edge (roughly 4.5 points). Those are Arizona, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Of those, one is already an open seat – Michigan, where Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D) is retiring at the completion of her fourth term in office – and another is effectively open because of Sinema's decision to leave the Democratic Party. She still caucuses with Democrats, but it's become clear that she will have credible opposition to both her left and right if she seeks a second term. Rep. Ruben Gallego (D, AZ-3) entered the race on Monday.

So it isn't necessarily a stretch to say that Democrats are defending the top eight Senate seats likeliest to flip. This level of exposure may feel unusually significant at the start of a cycle, although Democrats were also

greatly exposed heading into the 2014 Senate elections – in our first update that cycle, we suggested that at least the seven most vulnerable seats were held by Democrats. Democrats ended up losing all seven of those seats, plus two more for a total of nine as Republicans flipped the Senate.

That was, of course, a Republican wave year – it is way too soon to say anything about what the environment will be in November 2024. But 2014 also was, to a great degree, a realigning election, as six of the nine Republican Senate flips came in double-digit Republican presidential states where Democrats were living on borrowed time in an era where presidential and Senate results are becoming more greatly correlated (Alaska, Arkansas, Louisiana, Montana, South Dakota, and West Virginia). The Senate map is now much better aligned with presidential results – just five of the 100 senators are from a different party than the one that won their respective states in the 2020 presidential election. The tricky thing for Democrats is that all three of those seats they hold are on the ballot this year (again, Montana, Ohio, and West Virginia).

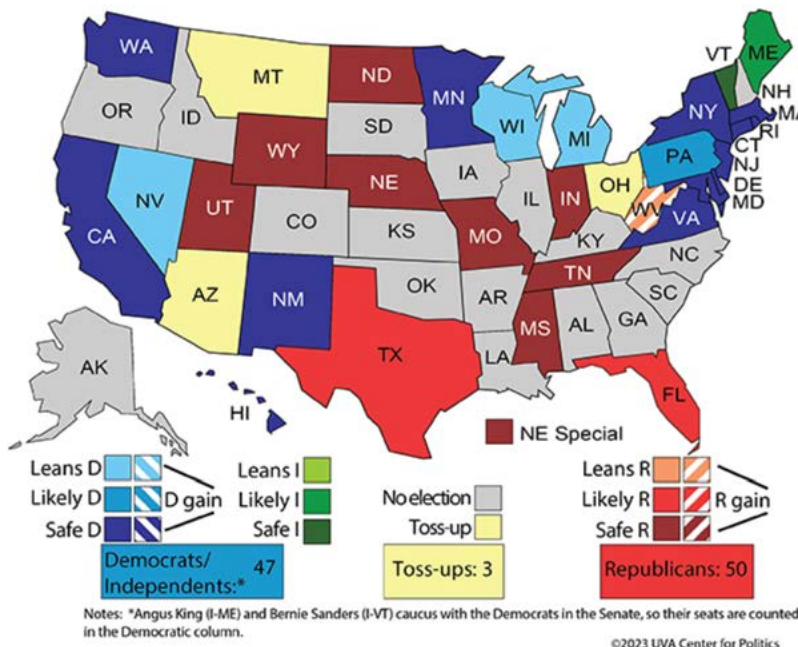
Democrats also were overexposed the last couple of times this map was contested: 2012 and 2018. They basically held the line in both cycles, netting two seats to expand their majority in 2012, and then losing just two net seats in November 2018, keeping them within striking distance of winning a future majority, which they did in 2020.

Despite the Democrats' level of exposure, we view the overall race for the Senate as a Toss-up. Republicans have a ton of opportunities but the burden of proof is on them to produce capable candidates after they just had a terrible slate in 2022. The presidential race will also have a large bearing on 2024 – in the past couple of presidential races, only a single state split its vote for president and Senate (Maine reelecting Republican Susan Collins while backing Biden in 2020).

The rating that likely stands out the most is West Virginia, where Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV) starts out in a Leans Republican race. It is fairly unusual for us to start an incumbent as an underdog, but we think it's war-



Map 2: Crystal Ball Senate ratings



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ranted in this instance. First of all, it is not at all clear as to whether Manchin will even be on the ballot again. Appearing on Meet the Press over the weekend, Manchin declined to say whether he will be running again. And West Virginia has just become so, so Republican; It backed Trump for president by roughly 40 points each time.

Manchin squeaked by with a roughly 3-point margin against a mediocre opponent, state Attorney General Patrick Morrisey (R), in the good Democratic midterm environment of 2018.

In a presidential year where the GOP nominee appears likely to win West Virginia by another landslide, we are skeptical of Manchin's ability to generate the immense amount of crossover he will need. Polling also suggests Manchin is relatively unpopular at home: Morning Consult's recent polling had his approval spread at just 40% approve, 53% disapprove. Manchin may face a stronger opponent in 2024, too: Gov. Jim Justice (R) is considering running. While Justice has some baggage from his business history that could hurt him in a hotly-contested campaign, he has good approval ratings, again per Morning Consult. Rep. Alex Mooney (R, WV-2), who is already running, would not be as formidable of a challenger, but he (or another Republican, like Morrisey) would benefit from West Virginia's heavy shift toward Republicans. The bottom line is that Manchin is going to be hard-pressed to win again – and, if he retires, this should be a fairly easy GOP flip.

Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Jon Tester (D-MT) start in the Toss-up category. Both of their states are Republican at the presidential level but are more competitive than West Virginia. Each benefited from beatable opponents in 2018: Brown's challenger, then-Rep. Jim Renacci (R), never really got going, allowing Brown to run well ahead of the other statewide Ohio Democrats that year, while Tester successfully painted then-state Auditor Matt Rosendale (R) as a carpetbagger from Maryland and won a closer race. Rosendale, who has since won election to the House, may very well run again, as might newly-elected Rep. Ryan Zinke (R, MT-1), who returned to the House following a checkered stint as Donald Trump's first Secretary of the Interior. We wouldn't regard Rosendale or Zinke as super-strong challengers to Tester, but both probably would be capable of getting the job done under the right circumstances (and perhaps others will emerge).

Brown has already announced his plans to run for a fourth term. His first prominent Republican challenger is state Sen. Matt Dolan, who won a somewhat respectable third place in last year's Senate primary. Dolan ran a bit closer to the center in that primary than his rivals, and he likely benefited from at least a little bit of crossover support from Democrats in what is effectively an open primary state (the GOP Senate primary was by far the most interesting race, which likely drew some non-Republicans to it). Dolan won't have the field to himself – Secretary of State Frank LaRose (R) appears to be gearing up to run, likely along with others. It is possible that Brown's even-

tual challenger may be stronger than Tester's, but we'll just have to wait and see how things shake out. Brown should be able to get at least some crossover support, but will that be enough to overcome a GOP margin of, say, 8 points for president (Trump's margin in both 2016 and 2020)? We don't know, which is why this is a Toss-up.

The Arizona situation is fascinating, given the possibility of a true three-way race. Gallego may have the Democratic primary field to himself, but that remains an open question – one possible contender, Rep. Greg Stanton (D, AZ-4), passed on a bid in advance of Gallego's announcement. Gallego is definitely positioned to Sinema's left, which may help him consolidate the Democratic base but could leave him vulnerable with the swing voters who ultimately will decide the race. But that also depends on whether Sinema runs, how national Democrats decide to handle the race if she does, and who Republicans nominate. Speaking of, the leaders of the Arizona Republicans' weak statewide 2022 ticket – gubernatorial nominee Kari Lake and Senate nominee Blake Masters – are both reportedly considering entering this race, among others.

We discussed Michigan in-depth in the aftermath of Stabenow's retirement, and the race starts as Leans Democratic despite it being an open seat in a swing state. The Democrats holding the other marginal Biden states – Sens. Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Bob Casey (D-PA), and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) – all begin favored to some degree, with Casey best-positioned (in our view) thanks to his longer track record and the possibility that Pennsylvania may be a very marginally better state for Democrats at the presidential level than Nevada and Wisconsin in 2024.

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) announced his reelection bid on Friday. He plus Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM) start in the Safe Democratic column, as Republicans would need very outstanding challengers and a strong overall political environment to really push any of them. Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) also starts in the Safe Democratic column. Sen. Angus King of Maine, a nominal independent who caucuses with Democrats, indicated in December he intends to run again. He starts in the Likely column.

Democrats actually held several of the seats Republicans are defending this cycle at some point within the last dozen years or so. Republicans flipped Nebraska in 2012, and then Florida, Indiana, Missouri, and North Dakota in 2018. But we're starting nearly all of the 11 seats Republicans are defending in the Safe category – many of these states are just no longer open to voting Democratic at the Senate level.

The pair of Republican-held Senate seats that are the most plausible Democratic targets, to the extent that any are plausible, are Florida and Texas. Both were close in the 2018 election – Sen. Rick Scott (R-FL) only knocked off then-Sen. Bill Nelson (D) by about a tenth of a point, and Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) beat Beto O'Rourke (D) by about 2.5 points . ❖

Niki Kelly, Capital Chronicle: Senate Bill 305 is universal school choice and would basically make moot the need for vouchers going to institutions. Instead, the state will give parents around \$7,500 per child to educate their child as they see fit outside of public school. They can send their kids to private school, decide to homeschool, or sign up for online instruction. Frankly, they could spend the money on a trip to Disney. Because there is no accountability or auditing in the bill. The fiscal analysis says it "will likely increase state expenditures" but doesn't explicitly name a cost, other than referencing the current state appropriation of \$10 million annually. That is the same number that the bill's author, Lebanon Republican Sen. Brian Buchanan, used repeatedly during a recent committee hearing. He estimates that money could fund 1,300 accounts. I have always praised the Legislative Services Agency for thorough fiscal reports on bills. That is why I was stunned to see such an incomplete fiscal for this bill beyond saying "students who are currently homeschooled or attending a nonpublic school without a Choice Scholarship, but would now switch to the ESA, would increase state expenditures by a much larger amount."

How many kids are we talking? There was absolutely no attempt to quantify the potential cost of the program. So, Indiana Capital Chronicle did it for you instead. The state already spends around \$240 million a year on vouchers for 44,000 private school students. Those costs and students would presumably shift over to ESA's, though no one is discussing how or why the two programs would even co-exist. But there are nearly 88,000 students enrolled in nonpublic schools, according to an Indiana Department of Education analysis. The National Center for Education Statistics puts that number at more than 115,000. If 50,000 of those remaining students received an ESA – why wouldn't they? It's free money to even incredibly wealthy parents – the annual cost would be around \$375 million. Let's hope the Senate Appropriations Committee – where the bill heads next – has a more robust discussion on cost because all I hear are crickets. ❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz, R-Indiana, made a good point. Her leader – Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Kevin McCarthy, R-California – has said he plans to prevent U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minnesota, from serving on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and block U.S. Rep. Adam Schiff, D-California, and U.S. Rep. Eric Swalwell, D-California, from sitting on the House Intelligence Committee. McCarthy's stated reasons for stripping Omar, Schiff and Swalwell of their committee assignments are flimsy. He cites Omar's controversial criticisms of Israel and unsubstantiated reports from a decade ago that Swalwell had been tar-

geted for recruitment by a Chinese spy. Schiff, the speaker suggests, simply isn't trustworthy. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-California, stripped U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Georgia, and U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar, R-Arizona, of their committee assignments. The circumstances, though, were different. Greene and Gosar either threatened another House member or made jokes about killing another House member – and then refused to apologize or express even minimal contrition. Even so, House Republicans at the time – Spartz among them – protested that Pelosi's decision was wrongheaded and set a dangerous precedent. Now, though, many of those same Republicans are arguing that, by their lights, two wrongs in fact do make a right. They are all for equating threats of murder with taking provocative political stands. Spartz will have none of it. "As I spoke against it on the House floor two years ago, I will not support this charade again. Speaker McCarthy needs to stop 'bread and circuses' in Congress and start governing for a change," Spartz said in a statement. The reference to "bread and circuses" is a telling one. It dates to the time of the Roman Empire. Roman emperors used bread and circuses to distract the public when they wanted to divert attention from imperial acts that were unpopular or to hide the fact that the emperor didn't know what he was doing. ❖

Charles Lane, Washington Post: You can't fight city hall. And you really can't fight the White House, Congress, Wall Street, Silicon Valley, and governments of various U.S. states and European countries — much less all of them combined. Or so one would conclude based on Akio Toyoda's Jan. 26 announcement that he is leaving his post as chief executive of Japan's Toyota Motor Corp., the world's second-largest automaker, as of April 1. The car industry's most prominent skeptic of the transition to electric vehicles, Toyoda — a grandson of the company's founder — had frequently expressed reservations about both the feasibility and necessity, in climate-change terms, of going all-electric in the short run. "Carbon is our enemy, not the internal combustion engine," he once said. Toyoda added that he speaks for a "silent majority" of auto executives who are also "wondering whether EVs are really OK to have as a single option." However, his move to board chairman, while turning over day-to-day control to a younger executive, signals that Toyoda's caution was untenable. Whether Toyoda spoke for a "silent majority" in the auto industry, he clearly spoke for more than just himself. Carlos Tavares, chief executive of Stellantis — whose brands include Chrysler, Jeep and Peugeot — complained just over a year ago about the decision to "impose" unrealistic EV production demands on the industry. ❖



9th CD GOP to censure in Floyd Co.

NEW ALBANY — The Indiana 9th District GOP will consider censuring two Republican members of the Floyd County Council (McAfee, [News & Tribune](#)). The 9th District GOP Committee will present hearings on Feb. 15 to consider action against Floyd County Council President Denise Konkle and Floyd County Councilman Jim Freiberger. Complaints filed by Heather Archibald-Peters, chair of the Floyd County Republican Party, relate to the two Republican council members voting for Democrat Brad Striegel as the council's vice president at the Jan. 10 organization meeting. The council members voted for Striegel to serve in the leadership position over Republican nominee Danny Short. Konkle and Freiberger shared documents with the News and Tribune sent on Jan. 26 by 9th District GOP Committee Chairman Jamey Noel. These include the hearing notice sent to the council members and the affidavit with Archibald-Peter's complaints. Archibald-Peters requests that both Konkle and Freiberger be censured by the committee. Although the complaint against Freiberger only calls for him to be censured, the complaint against Konkle asks that she be "removed from her elected precinct committeeman position and be blocked from placing herself on any ballot as a Republican nominee for a period of five years."



Klain exits; says Biden will run in '24

WASHINGTON — Ron Klain's departure from the White House on Wednesday was a tear-stained affair — the outgoing chief of staff cried, as did President Joe Biden and some of the dozens of "Klainiac" staffers on hand whose loyalty to Klain runs deep and spans years (Politico Playbook). But Klain made news on his way out

the door, effectively confirming that Biden would, in fact, run for reelection. "As I did in 1988, 2008 and 2020, I look forward to being on your side when you run for president in 2024," Klain told Biden in his farewell speech.

FBI searches Biden beach house

REHOBOTH BEACH, Del. — FBI agents on Wednesday are searching the Rehoboth, Delaware, beach home of President Joe Biden as part of an investigation into the previous discovery of classified documents at other locations connected to the president, his personal lawyer said ([CNBC](#)). The agents arrived Wednesday morning at Biden's home in Rehoboth. The Department of Justice is investigating the discovery of classified documents at a private office in Washington, D.C., that Biden had used while a private citizen, and at his residence in Wilmington, Delaware.

Spartz reverses course on Omar

WASHINGTON — Rep. Victoria Spartz (R-Ind.) said Tuesday that she'll support Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) in denying Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) a seat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, doubling back after she asserted last week that she wouldn't back the effort (The Hill). McCarthy has targeted Omar along with California Democratic Reps. Adam Schiff and Eric Swalwell for removal from their committee posts. But while the Speaker can block the latter two on his own, he needs a full House vote to keep Omar off Foreign Affairs. Spartz explained that she switched positions after McCarthy and other Republicans agreed to include language in the resolution to remove Omar that would allow for an appeal of the decision to House Ethics. "I appreciate Speaker McCarthy's willingness to address legitimate concerns and add due process language to our resolu-

tion. Deliberation and debate are vital for our institution, not top-down approaches," Spartz said in a statement.

Centene to pay state \$66 million

INDIANAPOLIS — Health care services company Centene Corp. will pay Indiana nearly \$66.5 million to resolve allegations that it overcharged the state's Medicaid program for pharmacy services, Attorney General Todd Rokita's office announced Wednesday (Muniz, [Capital Chronicle](#)). Centene admitted no liability or law-breaking in the settlement. "Companies must be held accountable for their actions," Rokita said in a news release.

DCS settles suit for \$1 million

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Department of Child Services has settled a federal lawsuit after an Indianapolis couple claimed the agency removed their children from their home under false pretenses ([WRTV](#)). The lawsuit claimed two minor children were taken from the home of Adam and Hope Huff in 2018 after the father was wrongfully accused of sexual misconduct with one of the children. "Despite the fact that Hope, who has a disability and is confined to a wheelchair, was never accused of any wrongdoing, DCS removed both children from her and required that her visitation be supervised," the family's attorney said.

Mueller calls special council

SOUTH BEND — South Bend Mayor James Mueller announced a special meeting of the South Bend Common Council on Feb. 6 ([WNDU-TV](#)). The Council will consider all items from the regularly scheduled meeting on Jan. 23 that was canceled due to a recommendation from the Public Access Counselor (PAC) regarding the state's Open Door Law.