



Nominal Braun lead in self-funder race

Senator has \$800K money lead over Crouch & Doden, but self-funders have a short shelf life in office

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — At first glance, the 2024 Indiana gubernatorial race features two candidates, Republicans Mike Braun and Eric Doden, who fit the description of a "self-funder." As this race reaches its second financial reporting deadline, both candidates appear to be reaching beyond their own checkbooks.

It's also worth noting that Hoosier self-funding politicians have had a short shelf life in office.

Sen. Braun will post \$2.22 million raised and \$4.6 million cash on hand. Doden raised \$1.7 million during the first half of this year and had \$3.8 million cash on hand. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch will report raising \$1.11 million



so far this year and will also have \$3.8 million cash on hand. A fourth Republican, former Attorney General Curtis Hill, entered the race this past week via Fox News, and had a beginning balance of \$22,426 and a cash balance of

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IUPUI's amicable divorce

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

CARMEL — For the past half-century, the state's two Big 10 universities shared the Indianapolis market with a Frankenstein approach that yielded "IUPUI." Last month, Indiana and Purdue universities participated in a cordial divorce, with the two universities going their separate ways, albeit while preparing to live across the street from each other (better for the kids).



Former Purdue President Mitch Daniels credits IU President Pamela Whitten for creating this new paradigm. "I had thought for a very long time, even before I got to Purdue, there might be some better configuration of the campus downtown than what we had," Daniels explained to Howey Politics Indiana



"We will stand for liberty and freedom today, tomorrow and for as long as it takes. We will not waver. Our unity will not falter, I promise. If I sound optimistic, it's because I am. NATO is stronger, more energized and united."

- President Biden, to NATO in Vilnius, Lithuania Wednesday

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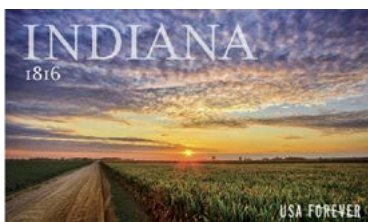
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Jack E. Howey
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from his office at the Liberty Fund in Carmel. "It served us well, but it was a treaty at the inception."

That occurred in 1969 when, at the behest of new Indianapolis Mayor Richard Lugar, a new urban university was forged, albeit with the two universities protecting turf and legacy. Daniels joined the Lugar administration in 1971. "I was close enough to hear the stories. The original idea that Mayor Lugar had was an urban university of Indianapolis," Daniels explained. "Purdue and IU were not interested in that new rival. So out of that, and I always described it as a treaty, they gave birth to IUPUI. Again, it served well.

"But I had thought for a long time, and I was hardly the only one, there might be a better way forward. There is also a lot of interest in the central Indiana community to a genuine, R-1 tech presence, which IUPUI did not represent. There was some good quality faculty and some research was happening there, but not the kind the city needed. The Battelle Study found us to be the biggest city in the nation that didn't have a genuine R1 university."

That Battelle report released in 2015 observed: "For continued success, Indianapolis needs to take more strategic advantage of the strong concentration of talent in its urban core, leading to a nationally competitive range of opportunities for regional growth and innovation in life sciences, information technology, agricultural innovation, advanced manufacturing, and other 'advanced industries.'"

BioCrossroads CEO David L.

Johnson said of the Battelle study in 2015, "The Indianapolis region has a lot going for it — exceptional legacy companies, a collaborative community and a growing entrepreneurial ecosystem, but as this study shows, we need to do more to increase our talent pipeline and to form more innovation-driven companies across the advanced industries. Our ability to compete on a global level requires two factors — talent and innovation. Talent begets innovation, but it also needs a physical hub to thrive — and we really don't have that place here yet."

Daniels took the helm at Purdue in 2013 after two terms as Indiana governor. "I had tried the idea on the IU administration more than once and there was just not interest," Daniels said. "But when Pam Whitten was chosen, we spoke right away and I congratulated her. We got together very shortly after she had been named and after the pleasantries, the first thing I asked her was, 'Would you be willing to consider doing something different in Indianapolis where we have this thing called IUPUI?' And Pam said, as many had before her, 'Yeah, what the heck is that?'"

"It was always confusing to people," Daniels said of the joint campus that prompted the early derivative phonic "OoeyPooey." "I give her full credit. She was open to the idea and then her board was open to the idea and off we went."

So this was two years in the making?

"Yes," Daniels responded.

"Tons of back and forth, trying to make certain what we came up with was beneficial to both schools and to the community. At Purdue, we opted ... this is not a regional campus. It will be fully a part of Purdue University. The faculty here will be fully part of the engineering, computer science, perhaps other faculties up there. Their work will be integrated. I'm very hopeful it will give us a new option for students. We've been turning away some tremendously qualified applicants at Purdue, principally from other states, even after 30% growth.

"That next cohort that we couldn't accept could really be terrific students and some of them may have the option to come here or start here," Daniels added. "What may be more common is that students who do two or three years at Purdue may choose to finish or do a year on the urban campus down here, and have a job in the Indiana economy while they're doing it."

"I think IU will have a clearer definition around health care and so forth, as is their focus," Daniels said. "I'm sure they'll do some imaginative things, too, that were just unlikely to happen under the old structure."

Gov. Eric Holcomb told HPI in June that Whitten and the IU Board of Trustees decision to rethink the Indy campus was nothing short of "courageous."

Whitten said last August when the IU trustees signed off on the split, "This is an historic moment for Indianapolis, for IU, and for our entire state. In addition to expanding our science and technology programs, we plan to grow across the board, create more opportunities for students, and become even more deeply integrated with the Indianapolis community."

When this amicable divorce was signed in June, both current university presidents were ecstatic. "IU's goal is nothing short of building one of the nation's pre-eminent urban research universities, one defined by students transformed, discoveries made and communities strengthened," Whitten said. "Through this agreement we will unlock the remarkable potential of both institutions to meet the needs of our city and state. I am grateful for our many partners at Purdue University, and to the extensive state and community leadership, that have made today's progress possible."

Daniels's successor at Purdue, President Mung Chiang, added, "Today's announcement launches transformative growth for our state's land grant university, and Boilermakers are excited to serve the people, business and communities of Indianapolis. Purdue will invest in, partner with, and together grow the tech-driven economy in Central Indiana. We thank all of our partners at Indiana University, and the many government, civic and business leaders who have been with us throughout this process.

New opportunities for Purdue University in Indianapolis are limitless."

Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett said, "Like so much in our city right now, IUPUI has grown in ways that require a new approach, not to mention more space. After more than a half-century as a duo, these educational icons of the Hoosier state will now double the gift they provide to this city as separate institutions. They will now serve as two magnets for talent, helping to build an Indianapolis population with more education and earning power."

Legislative leaders, who in the past obstinately sustained the IUPUI status quo, are fully on board now. House Speaker Todd Huston explained, "Over 50 years ago, state and city leaders called for the creation of a world-class research university in Indianapolis because they knew

it was vital to the economic growth of the region. That's still true today, and I'm fully supportive of these changes which will fuel the next wave of growth for the campus, Indianapolis, Central Indiana and our state. This critical initiative could be a major force behind Indiana's talent pipeline for years to come."

Senate President

Rodric Bray added, "Indiana is home to some of the finest higher education institutions, not just in the Midwest but in the nation. The action taken today demonstrates a commitment to collaboration that will result in an even brighter future for our students and state."

Eli Lilly CEO David A. Ricks explained, "As a proud graduate of both universities, I'm excited to see this natural transformation of their Indianapolis presence. The world needs more graduates who are ready for STEM careers, and this evolution offers the promise to unlock the full potential of our state university institutions and their graduates. This change will also increase the opportunities for our great state institutions and their faculty to collaborate with Indy-based global science and technology companies to solve some of the world's most pressing scientific, technological and health challenges."

Daniels called it a "great brain gain of possibility" in a state that has been battling "brain drain" for years as a significant percentage of IU and Purdue graduates got their diplomas and headed for the coasts.

"Imagine some outstanding electrical engineer from Oregon who comes down and works in one of the IT startup companies here, or works for Salesforce or Lilly's IT department to capture that talent in the future," Daniels explained. ❖

Brian Howey is managing editor of Howey Politics Indiana/State Affairs. Find Howey on Facebook and Twitter @hwypol.



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\$20,140.

The lone Democrat in the race, former Republican Superintendent Jennifer McCormick, said in a June 5 filing that she had a beginning balance of \$42,289 and had a cash balance of \$34,926. She has yet to file her mid-year report and her campaign told HPI today its report will be filed by deadline.



Large donations gush in

Money has been gushing into the Braun, Crouch and Doden campaigns over the past six weeks, including a \$600,000 check from Doden's father, Daryle Doden of Fort Wayne, who owns Ambassador Enterprises. That comes atop two \$50,000 checks from Doden and his wife Maci on Dec. 27.

"We are grateful for the support of so many Hoosiers for this home-grown campaign and our bold vision for Indiana," Doden said. "Our state needs more than tired political platitudes and Washington gridlock; Indiana deserves a governor committed to moving our state forward and improving the lives of all Hoosiers."

Doden raised \$1.74 million in 2023's first fundraising period and has raised more than \$5.1 million since entering the race, with 91.5% of his donors being Hoosiers.

Doden reported \$895,000 in large campaign donations in addition to his father's \$600,000 check since May. Braun reported \$777,000 in large donations during that period while Crouch posted \$370,000.

Big checks for Crouch include \$25,000 from Elaine and Eric Bedel, Jason Schroeder, Mark Shublack and Billy Bean of Fort Wayne. U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon contributed \$25,000 while U.S. Rep. Greg Pence added \$35,000. "The support given to Lt. Gov. Crouch by Hoosiers in her run for governor is truly humbling," Robert Vane, a campaign spokesman, told HPI on Wednesday. "As neither a self-funder nor a politician who can transfer monies from one account to another, the \$1.11 million the Crouch campaign raised so far this year is both exciting and heartening. With 94% of our donations coming from within Indiana and more than \$3.8 million cash on hand, the campaign is only just getting started."

Braun received \$50,000 each from Bob Loquercio of Illinois, Hoosier PAC, Scott Weaver, Daniel Tarr and Stuart Reed. "As the conservative Main Street entrepreneur running for governor, I am thankful to have the strongest grassroots supporters in Indiana, and that's how we set another Hoosier fundraising record by raising \$2.2 million and having \$4.6 million in the bank," said Braun. "These resources will help us talk to Hoosiers about the conserva-

State Rep. Chuck Goodrich (left) chats with Madison County Prosecutor Rodney Cummings in Kokomo in May. Goodrich has loaned his 5th CD campaign \$1 million. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howe)

tive and Main Street approach I will take in running this state. Which includes improving our schools and implementing conservative economic policies so that Indiana's economy is once again the model for America."

Doden received \$50,000 each from Scott Sorenson, Hoosier Investment, John Hennessey, Deborah Gabe, RTT Investments, WTL Prospects, Tim Ash, Philip Gruce and Lawren Garatoni. He also received \$35,000 from Card Associated Athletic Fund, \$25,000 each from BKT, RH Auto, Billy Bean, Ryan Rans and Black Gold Ventures, as well as \$10,000 from former congressman Jack Hiler.

Self funding and Goodrich's \$1M loan

OpenSecrets describes a "self-funder" as a candidate (or family members) who put in more than \$500,000 into a campaign. Indiana has had four self-funders — Braun and U.S. Reps. Trey Hollingsworth and Victoria Spartz in recent cycles — as well as the current 5th CD candidate, State Rep. Chuck Goodrich, R- Noblesville.

Goodrich, who is CEO of Gaylor Electric, has loaned his campaign \$1 million, according to the Federal Election Commission filing. Goodrich was elected to the Indiana House in 2018 and sources tell HPI that he yearns to run for governor sometime beyond the 2024 cycle. He had reported no other contributions. Goodrich is facing Madison County Prosecutor Rodney Cummings, Matthew Peiffer and Siddharth Mahant, according to the FEC filings. Others exploring the race include former state senators John Ruckelshaus and Mike Delph, who is currently serving on Spartz's staff, and former U.S. Senate candidate Mark Hurt.

Braun fit that description when in 2017-18 he spent \$10,531,496 in personal funds to win the GOP primary against U.S. Reps. Todd Rokita and Luke Messer, and then the general election when he defeated U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly. Braun's \$10 million represented 57.15% of his total funds, according to OpenSecrets. In the 2018 cycle, 41 candidates spent more than \$1 million of their own money and nine won.

In 2016, Hollingsworth won a multi-candidate 9th CD Republican primary after spending \$3,142,150 of his (and his father's) money, representing 88.36% of his total war chest. In the 2016 cycle, 23 candidates spent more than \$1 million of their own money. Of these, five won.

In 2020, Republican Spartz won a crowded 5th CD Republican primary and then the general election against Democrat Christina Hale by spending \$1.143 million of her own money, which represented 36.5% of her total contributions. In the 2020 cycle, OpenSecrets reports that 36 candidates spent more than \$1 million of their own money and of these, nine won.

Short tenures for the rich

The interesting aspect of Hollingsworth, Braun and Spartz is that their congressional tenures were all short. Braun will serve just one term in the U.S. Senate. Hollingsworth served just three terms, while Spartz is opting out after just two.

Spartz's decision not to seek a third term was curious. She was the first Ukrainian-born member of Congress. After Russia invaded her native country in February 2022, she was a frequent visitor to her war-torn homeland, sometimes crashing codels. She was critical of President Zelenskyy's administration, with his chief of staff pushing back on her critiques that became so alarming that President Biden arranged for a special backgrounder session for the congresswoman.

Spartz announced earlier this year she wouldn't seek a third term at a time when Ukraine's battlefield fate remained undetermined, and there were growing calls among the House GOP conference to stop funding the war effort (see Page 20). It came after she dabbled in a potential run for Braun's open Senate seat. "I won a lot of tough battles for the people and will work hard to win a few more in the next two years," Spartz said in a statement. "However being a working mom is tough and I need to spend more time with my two high school girls back home so I will not run for any office in 2024."

Braun entered the Senate hoping to, as Politico put it, "invigorate the staid chamber, pledging to serve a maximum of two terms, and even shake up its dress code along the way." The 68-year-old Braun decided being an executive at the Indiana Statehouse would be a better career fit.

"I've never been a believer in seniority, or just purely time being the measure of success," Braun told Politico. "When I measured what I could accomplish in six more years here, I think I can do more by going back home."

"A loss for us, a gain for Indiana," said U.S. Sen.

Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. "It takes forever to get anything done. Mike is more of a business, action-oriented guy."

When Hollingsworth ran in 2016, he vowed to serve no more than four terms. "I ran for Congress to return this government to the people from the career politicians who had broken it, and I will be damned if I become one in the process," he wrote of his decision. "I want to be the change I want to see in this world, so, as I contemplate how I can work for you in new and better ways in the future, I won't run for reelection this year. You deserve a member of Congress totally and completely focused on the 9th District, and, though I have remained committed to that promise these three terms, now I will fight for you and us in different ways."

Hollingsworth sponsored a constitutional amendment in 2021 to limit members of the House to four terms and senators to two terms.

Hollingsworth added, "I have made it a point of pride to spend time talking with Hoosiers every week. As a congressman, I made it a priority to do what many politicians don't do: Listen. And when you listen, you learn. I heard the palpable anger in the voices of my constituents at Washington — a Washington that is broken, a Washington that isn't solving problems, but most of all a Washington that isn't working for them. That feeling is real because the problem is real; I see it every week. The problem of politicians using their office to catapult themselves to another office, to a committee assignment, or to a high-paying lobbying job is the misaligned incentive that tears at the most fundamental promise of democracy; elected officials represent electorates."

There has been speculation that Hollingsworth could join a ticket with Braun, as well as others suggesting that Rep. Pence might join a Crouch ticket.

INGov Horse Race Status

The perception heading into this open gubernatorial race was that it would be Braun's to lose. Or as one

GOP operative told me last November, Braun was starting on third base.

Braun is the state's sitting junior senator and is the first to seek the governorship from the Senate since Democrat Thomas Henricks moved from the Senate in 1869 to the governorship in 1873. Others who have served in the Senate after the governorship include Democrats James Whitcomb, Joseph A. Wright, Samuel Ralston, Evan Bayh and Republican Henry Lane (who was elected governor in 1860, took office and served two days before appointing himself as senator, making way for Gov. Oliver P. Morton, who then went to the Senate after two terms).

Braun remains a nominal favorite, sitting with about an \$800,000 cash lead as of June 30 with \$4.6 million, and a personal fortune he has tapped into before.



Both Crouch and Doden are at \$3.8 million. Crouch told HPI last fall that she believes \$9 million raised would put her in a competitive primary position. Doden isn't as famous as Crouch and Braun, but he is using his Fort Wayne and IEDC contacts to leverage some big checks from supporters, suggesting this could be a true three-way race.

But we've seen this play out in the 2018 Senate primary, when Braun used early personal money to decisively defeat Reps. Rokita and Messmer by going up on TV six months before the primary. Braun won't have the surprise factor he had in 2018, but the question is whether Crouch or Doden will be able to match early TV buys and keep the race competitive.

Crouch has been rolling out almost daily endorsements, lending to the perception that she has wide support. But with no credible public polling (and beware of internal campaign surveys as well as information from rumor-mongering bloggers), there is no way to gauge where this race currently stands.

The latest twist came with former Attorney General Curtis Hill's entry into the race. He was defeated for renomination at the 2020 Republican Convention by the current AG, Rokita, after he was suspended from the bar due to sexual groping allegations. In August 2022, Hill finished second to Rudy Yakym in the 2nd CD caucus replacing the



late U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski, 205-86. While that first ballot decision wasn't close, the fact that Hill mustered about 25% of the total caucus vote suggests he still has some support among social conservatives.

Asked about whether a cloud from the groping allegations hangs over his head, Hill told WANE-TV on Wednesday, "I think I enter this race with a direction to move forward. I have been the subject of attacks. I've been a target since day one. When I first was elected, I had more votes than anyone in the state of Indiana, and that didn't go unnoticed, particularly from some of my Republican friends. And as a result of that, and the fact that I do stand up to the status quo, I've been targeted and that's part of the political process. I think people have come to understand that. There were seven investigations and or lawsuits that all resulted in dismissal. That's something that doesn't get reported much. So the issues that were brought up have been addressed."

The current parlor game is who does Hill hurt, if anyone? Will he siphon off support from Braun that could impact a close race? Will another conservative male in the race open up a better lane for LG Crouch?

Hallway rumors persist that Commerce Sec. Brad Chambers is still pondering entry. But he is largely unknown and would likely be a third self-funder. ❖

Hogsett wins symbolic gun reform council votes

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS — Mayor Joe Hogsett was channeling his inner Tom Petty after the City-County Council passed two sprawling gun reforms proposal. A defiant two-term mayor said that his city won't back down, despite a 2011 state law that prohibits cities from regulating guns.



"Tonight's Council votes on Proposals 149 and 156 prove that Indianapolis and its leadership won't back down from taking bold steps to protect residents and neighborhoods," Hogsett said. "The community is saying enough is enough. Let's get the guns out of the hands of the people who have no business having them."

The council passed the two ordinances on 18-5 party line votes. The ordinances would make an extensive



list of "semiautomatic assault weapons" illegal to "buy, sell, possess, carry, brandish, or discharge"; raise the legal age to purchase a firearm to 21, and require a license to legally carry a handgun.

"I applaud the Council's bipartisan support for funding our partnership with U.S. Attorney Zach Myers, holding the worst of the worst offenders to account," Hog-

Davies, Meeks join State Affairs Pro

The State Affairs Pro Indiana team has added two reporters to ramp up its Statehouse coverage for you — and you may recognize them. Tom Davies, formerly of The Associated Press, joined the Indiana Pro team on Monday, and Jarred Meeks, who was most recently with Hannah News Service, joined Indiana Pro on Tuesday.

Davies is a veteran Indiana journalist who has been involved with coverage of state government and politics since the 1990s. Before joining State Affairs, he spent more than 22 years as a reporter and editor with the Indianapolis bureau of The Associated Press. He most recently was the AP's Indiana Statehouse correspondent, covering legislative sessions since 2011. Davies also spent several years as an editor, helping coordinate and lead the AP's Indiana news, business and sports coverage. Davies' previous experience includes editing and reporting roles at The Times of Northwest Indiana and the Muncie Star Press. He got his start in journalism as a newspaper carrier for his hometown Shelbyville News before attending Ball State University and graduating with majors in history and journalism. A longtime board member and past president of the Indiana chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, Davies has been the chapter's contest chairman for over a decade, with proceeds from the chapter's annual statewide journalism contest going toward more than \$50,000 in college scholarships for student journalists. He's also a past president and former member of the Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame's board of directors.

Meeks was an editor and reporter for Hannah News Indiana and co-author of Indiana Legislative Insight, Indiana Education Insight, and Indiana Gaming Insight. Before that, he was a managing editor for Current Publishing, covering Zionsville, Indiana. He graduated from Purdue University and grew up in Lebanon, Indiana. We're excited to have them join our team, ensuring you'll get the latest news from the Statehouse floors daily. You can reach Davies at tdavies@stateaffairs.com or on Twitter @tomdaviesind. Meeks can be reached at jmeeks@stateaffairs.com or on Twitter @jarredsmeeks.



Jarred Meeks



Tom Davies

sett continued. "I also wish to thank those who approved our common-sense gun safety measures, including a ban on semiautomatic assault weapons, increasing the purchasing age to 21, requiring handgun licenses, and removing the concealed carry of firearms. Tonight we are sending a clear message of where we stand about the causes of gun violence and the proliferation of illegal weapons on our streets."

The campaign of Republican nominee Jefferson Shreve reacted, with spokeswoman Jennifer Erbacher saying, "It's remarkable how much Joe Hogsett has to say now that it's an election year." Shreve will unveil his public safety plan at 11:30 p.m. today at the Vanguard, 6319 Guilford Ave.

Indiana Democrats said in a statement: The Indiana Democratic Party is reminding Indianapolis voters that there is only one candidate for mayor with a plan to address gun safety: Mayor Joe Hogsett. Republican mayoral nominee Jefferson Shreve continues to deflect when asked whether he has a plan to address gun violence in the city of Indianapolis. NRA member Shreve didn't show up to either Indianapolis City-County Council committee meeting to tell Indianapolis directly how he would tackle gun crime. But he was more than willing to defend hotelier profit margins at a council committee meeting just a few weeks before. Shreve's no-plan, no-show approach stands in sharp contrast to Mayor Joe ... His plan ... passed

unanimously out of committee, even receiving praise from Republican councillors."

Hogsett airs attack ad

Hogsett for Indianapolis released a new ad, entitled "No Thanks," which has begun airing on cable and network television across the city, as well as on digital platforms. The ad features Indianapolis women discussing Shreve's statements and advertisements released during his unsuccessful 2016 campaign for the Indiana State Senate. This included two television ads that highlighted his pro-gun, anti-choice stances: "The Conservative Republican We Can Count On" and "From the Ground Up." Both ads were recently deleted from all of Shreve's social media



accounts after they were discovered and provided to the press. Portions of the ads are referenced throughout "No Thanks," along with statements made on Shreve's now-deleted campaign website. "It's easy to understand why Mr. Shreve hasn't been campaigning the last few months – he's been too busy desperately trying to hide his conservative record from voters," said Cordelia Lewis Burks, campaign chair. "Despite his willingness to do, say, and spend anything that might get him elected, Indianapolis voters aren't interested in giving the gun lobby and Republican supermajority a corner suite in the Mayor's Office."

Mayors

West Lafayette: Easter to run unopposed

Democratic mayoral nominee Erin Easter will run unopposed in the upcoming general election (Obermiller, WLFI-TV). Candidates had until the end of June to file for candidacy. Because no one else did, Easter only needs to obtain one vote to become the city's next mayor. Easter, who currently serves as the West Lafayette director of development, is hoping to build on a foundation that has already been laid. Easter was hired by Mayor John Dennis in 2018 as the city's deputy director of development. Dennis, who will not seek reelection due to an early-onset Alzheimer's diagnosis, quickly backed Easter's campaign when she announced that she was running for mayor. Assuming Easter garners her vote, she will take office at the end of 2023.



West Lafayette's Erin Easter, Kokomo's Tyler Moore and Jeffersonville's Mike Moore will be unopposed in November.

Kokomo: Mayor Tyler Moore unopposed

Republican Mayor Tyler Moore is a shoo-in to win his reelection bid. That is, if he can simply vote for himself (Kokomo Tribune). Moore will run unopposed in this year's general election as no Democratic, independent, third party or write-in candidate has filed to run against the incumbent by the June 30 and July 3 deadlines, according to the Howard County Clerk's office. The lack of competition in the mayoral race is historic for the city, marking the first time since at least 1900 Kokomo has not had at least two candidates for mayor on the general election ballot, according to Tribune and other local newspaper archives. It may be the first time ever, but specific election results and how many candidates ran in each election prior to 1900 could not easily and definitively be determined by the Tribune. Moore won in 2019's general election by a landslide, beating Democratic candidate Abbie Smith. The former county

commissioner set a record for most votes received by a Kokomo mayoral candidate with 9,928. That beat the previous record set in 1963 by Republican John Miller.

Jeffersonville: Mayor Mike Moore unopposed

Mayor Mike Moore will serve a fourth consecutive term in office as he is officially unopposed in the municipal election (McAfee, News & Tribune). The Republican incumbent was unopposed in the May primary, and no challengers will appear on the fall ballot. Clark County Voter Registration Clerk James Crowder confirmed to the News and Tribune on Wednesday that no other candidates have filed to run against the mayor, who was elected in 2011. Monday was the deadline for the Democrat or Republican parties to fill a vacancy on the fall ballot and for the Libertarian party to select candidates

through a convention. Moore said he is "grateful" that he will serve another term. He emphasized his bipartisan approach to office, saying that "if you just try to cater to people of your own party, you're going to fail. To be a Republican mayor in a [majority] Democrat city is an honor. We've always tried to take politics out of running the city. I have great relationships with both Democrat city council members and Republican, and at a time when our country is severely divided, I think the success of Jeffersonville has been putting politics aside and working with everybody. I'm honored to represent the city as mayor, and I'm overwhelmed and grateful that I have this job, and I understand what a privilege it is," Moore said. "I'm enjoying every minute of it. I'm glad that the people of Jeffersonville are happy and that we can move forward without getting into political bickering."

Evansville: Rascher cleared on complaint

Republican mayoral candidate Natalie Rascher has been cleared of any wrongdoing following a complaint filed against her in March about her position on the Vanderburgh County Alcohol Beverage Commission (Loesch, Evansville Courier & Press). The complaint, filed by former deputy prosecutor Neil Thomas, alleged

Rascher previously accepted campaign donations from a bar owner while she was an acting member of the local alcohol beverage commission. Thomas also questioned local bars and liquor stores displaying campaign signs for Rascher's current run for mayor. The Indiana Roll of Attorneys shows Thomas' law license is suspended from a disciplinary action dating back to 2011. According to the Indiana Alcohol and Tobacco Commission, Rascher has been cleared of any wrongdoing and was notified the investigation has closed due to insufficient evidence. The response from ATC officials was sent via Stephanie McFarland, whose firm manages media relations for the organization. Rascher responded to questions during the League of Women Voters of Southwestern Indiana's Mayoral Candidate Forum in the Browning Room at EVPL Central Thursday afternoon, April 13, 2023. McFarland's firm took over that duty in late April. Her firm also handled media relations for Cheryl Musgrave's primary campaign, during which her opponent was Rascher. The campaign lasted until May 2 when Musgrave lost the primary election. Rascher told the Courier & Press she was grateful the "baseless claim" was resolved quickly.

Carmel: Finkam endorsed by FOP

In a tweet Tuesday, Sue Finkam, current Carmel city councilor and Republican candidate for mayor of Carmel, announced the endorsement of Carmel's FOP Lodge 185 (Howey Politics Indiana). "The Carmel FOP Lodge 185 is once again proud to announce the endorsement of mayoral candidate Sue Finkam in the upcoming general election," read a release. "Sue demonstrated her tenacity and drive for success in the primary election. She won a hard-fought campaign through prioritizing public safety, transparency, and listening to what Carmel residents want from their next mayor."

Finkam said in a statement, "Crime prevention and public safety will be my number one priority as your next mayor. We must ensure all of our public safety departments are fully staffed, trained and equipped to keep our schools, neighborhoods and parks crime-free."

Finkam was a Carmel Pride sponsor and spoke at the June 25 event: "Over the past few days, our community has been rocked by an inappropriate quote used by a local group. The message was unacceptable and directly hurt members of our community. It does not reflect my views and values nor those of our overall community. It was unfortunately further amplified on social media, and it damaged our city's reputation on the national and global stage. I care deeply about this city we call home. Throughout my career and in this campaign, I have focused on issues and policies that unify our community, rather than divide it. Eight years ago, in 2015, I voted to support our city's first anti-discrimination bill that bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, while also protecting religious freedom. I am proud of that vote and the seeds of inclusion that were planted. I am also proud that I will be receiving the endorsement from the national Log Cabin Republicans,

who are working hard to make the Republican Party more inclusive."

U.S. Senate

Potts enters Democrat race

Indianapolis Councilor Keith Potts became the second announced Democrat to seek the open Indiana U.S. Senate seat on July 5. He joins former legislator Marc Carmichael. Potts was elected to the Indianapolis City-County Council in 2019, defeating the Republican incumbent with more than 60% of the vote. "Having served on the Indianapolis Council, I've seen government at its best, delivering results for our community," Potts said in a statement. "But in Washington, I see our freedoms under attack, whether the right for Americans to make their own healthcare decisions, the belief that the American dream is possible for every generation, or our democracy itself, Hoosiers deserve a senator who will make Washington work for them



and fight for a vision of the future." If elected, Councilor Potts would be the first openly gay man elected to the U.S. Senate. Democrat U.S. Senate candidate Carmichael welcomed Potts into the race on Thursday. "Unlike Congressman Jim Banks who threatens potential primary opponents with ugly personal attacks and threats I want to welcome Keith Potts to the Democrat US Senate primary in Indiana," Carmichael said. "More voices from more perspectives make for a stronger Democrat Party. I look forward to working with Keith to take the Democrat's positive message to Indiana voters into 2024 and I will accept their decision in the May 2024 primary as to who they want to carry the fight to Jim Banks going forward."

Banks to keynote GOP dinner

The Indiana Republican Party announced that U.S. Rep. Jim Banks will keynote its state dinner on Aug. 10, at the JW Marriott in downtown Indianapolis. The evening will also include the graduation ceremony of the 2023 cohort of the Indiana Republican Diversity Leadership Series, a seminar and leadership training program that provides the preparation and resources to increase the engagement of minority Republican leaders across the state. Bowie Mayor Pro Tem and City Councilwoman Roxy Ndebumadu, the youngest woman elected to serve on the Bowie, Maryland, City Council and the first African

American woman to represent her district, will address the graduates. This will be the program's third graduating cohort. "We're excited to announce Indiana's own Congressman Jim Banks as the keynote speaker for our upcoming state dinner and to celebrate the newest graduates of the Indiana Republican Diversity Leadership Series," stated Kyle Hupfer, chairman of the Indiana Republican Party. "Congressman Banks is unabashedly a proud Hoosier conservative and unafraid of a fight."

Rust to self-fund

John Rust, a businessman who has launched a Republican Senate campaign in Indiana to challenge Trump-endorsed Rep. Jim Banks (R-IN), was long a Democrat voter before voting on a Republican ballot several years ago (Breitbart). Rust, who sources say plans to self-fund his campaign, is the heir to Rose Acre Farms — a Hoosier State egg empire — which saw two of its employees murdered in the 1970s and '80s, and the cases remain unsolved. He officially filed his paperwork on July 1, the Indiana Capital Chronicle reported. Voting records obtained by Breitbart News show that Rust was a Democrat during at least the tail end of the George W. Bush administration through the majority of former President Barack Obama's years as commander-in-chief. He voted in Democrat primaries in 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012, Indiana Statewide Voter Registration System records show.

Presidential 2024

Biden having a real good week

President Joe Biden is having a good week. A really good week, actually. Yesterday, the latest consumer price index numbers revealed inflation cooling to 3% — its lowest rate since March 2021 (Politico Playbook). In Washington and on Wall Street, that's spurring hopes that the economy may be finally turning the corner. (Though the Fed is likely to raise interest rates again later this month, the new CPI numbers "really fortify the argument around July's hike being the last of this campaign," David Wilcox, senior economist at Bloomberg Economics, told the WSJ.) In Biden world, it's the latest in a "string of economic developments that's bolstered the administration's confidence it can set the U.S. on a glide path without first plunging it into a downturn," our colleague Adam Cancryn reports. Top Biden advisers are reluctant to be seen as taking a full victory lap. Even as they hit the road touting "Bidenomics," they have their eyes to three big potential storms on the horizon: (1) the mass resumption of student loan payments coming this fall; (2) a likely government shutdown later this year; and (3) the possibility that additional interest rate hikes could still push the economy into a downturn. Biden is in Finland today, meeting with Nordic leaders after a NATO trip with "undeniable wins," our colleagues Alexander Ward and Jonathan Lemire write: (1) Turkey ended its blockade

of Sweden joining the alliance, and (2) Ukrainian President Zelensky, initially apoplectic about NATO's reluctance to invite Ukraine to join the bloc, ultimately hailed the summit as a "significant security victory."

Key inflation numbers at new 3-year low

Key inflation data released Wednesday showed the year-over-year rate at another new low since the onset of the pandemic — a fresh sign that the economy is on the mend (Politico Playbook). The headline number: The consumer price index was at 3% for the month of June, compared to the year before. The benchmarks:

- This is a significant improvement from the May figure, which sat at 4%.
- This is a major improvement from last year's peak of 9.1% in June.
- The last time the CPI was near 3% was all the way back in March 2021.

Biden approval at 40% in Reuters Poll

President Biden's public approval rating held steady at 40% in early July, close to the lowest levels of his presidency, as economic worries continued to trouble Americans, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll this week.

Pence campaigns in Evansville

Mike Pence was in Evansville Wednesday, appearing at a private campaign event on Main Street (WFIE-TV). "I know we can bring this country back but it's going to take new leadership in the Republican Party and the White House," Pence said, adding he has received an "outpouring of support" from Indiana and added that he and his wife Karen are "working our hearts out" seeking support from Hoosiers. He was endorsed by Gov. Eric Holcomb last month, but that has yet to translate into much overt support in the state.



Christie says Trump fears jail

GOP presidential candidate Chris Christie said Tuesday that former President Trump goes to bed every night thinking about the threat of going to jail over his 37-count federal indictment in the classified documents case. "And I'm telling you, no matter what he says no matter how he's bragging and going on and on, about him not being afraid, he goes to bed every night, thinking about the sound of that jail cell door closing behind them," he said. "So the point of all that, really is to say, when push comes to shove, I'm not so sure [Trump] won't take a plea. Because if that's the only way he knows he can avoid prison, I think he just may," he added. ❖

303 Creative case echoes Plessy v. Ferguson

By **SABRINA HAAKE**

GARY – In 1896, the Supreme Court issued one of the most shameful decisions in U.S. history, Plessy vs. Ferguson. Plessy upheld “separate but equal” public accommodations, barring recently freed black people from “white” accommodations including lodging, businesses, and schools, and justified the hateful scourge of Jim Crow laws.



It would take more than 50 years of social upheaval and civil rights demonstrations before the Court finally admitted it was wrong. In 1954, in Brown vs. Board of Education, the Court overturned Plessy, ruling that separate public accommodations vio-

late the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment, which holds that no state can “deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

Last week in 303 Creative LLC, the Supreme Court’s conservative majority resurrected separate but equal in public accommodations by re-casting discriminatory conduct as “free speech.”

In 303 Creative, the Court ruled that web design services – a public accommodation by the court’s definition – are “creative expressions” entitled to a “free speech” carve-out from antidiscrimination laws. Writing for the majority, Justice Gorsuch repackaged a web designer’s religious objection to gay marriage as a superficially anodyne “pure speech” question, concluding that requiring web designers to serve same sex couples would be “coercing” them to make “statements” with which they disagreed.

The Court has now conflated discriminatory acts into “creative expressions” under the 1st A. The ruling involved wedding websites and gay couples, but its application is nowhere so confined. Web designers can now refuse service to any group (gay, black, interracial, etc.) doing something that offends their personal beliefs, and can also advertise that those groups “will not be served.”

Dissenting Justices Sotomayor, Kagan, and Jackson presented decades of Supreme Court precedent holding that antidiscrimination laws in commerce don’t target speech, they target conduct, the act of discrimination.

The dissent also disagreed that web designs are pure protected “speech.” Professional web design incorporates standard commercial elements: Interfacing, streaming, code, navigation, photos, consultation, music, and messaging. A custom website does not convey the developer’s personal beliefs, it conveys an underlying commercial message. Finally, the designer chose to sell her websites to the public, a public accommodation protected under the anti-discrimination laws of the state, laws that

don’t apply to religious organizations but do apply to for-profit businesses.

Rejecting these arguments, the majority focused exclusively on the designer’s “speech” rights – not a word of concern for groups who will be denied service – and sarcastically dismissed the dissent’s “separate but equal” warning.

The procedural history alone reveals a majority eager to set national policy, not a good look for Federalist Society jurists who claim to reject judicial overreach. First, SCOTUS took the case prophylactically, before the designer had even begun her web design business. Foundational “standing” in the case was not based on any injury, imminent or otherwise; it arose from a fictional request for service.

Why would the Court embrace a flimsy, extrajudicial “pre-enforcement challenge” based on hypotheticals? To set policy.

Second, the state’s Anti-Discrimination Act prohibits public businesses from denying “the full and equal enjoyment” of their goods and services to any customer based on his race, creed, disability, or sexual orientation. Discussing literal “public accommodations” like inns and hotels, Gorsuch suggested they were historically prohibited from discriminating only because they enjoyed market monopolies. There is no known case that limits anti-discrimination to monopolies; Gorsuch seems to think there should be, implying that small businesses can turn away groups they don’t like.

Third, Gorsuch summarily dismissed Sotomayor’s “separate but equal” objections as “pure fiction,” delivering a tutorial on how you, too, can legally refuse to serve people you don’t like. There’s virtually no profession that lacks “creative expression.” Under the Court’s reasoning, any professional who engages in “expressive conduct” (chefs, architects, administrators, etc.) can recast discriminatory bias against whomever as protected speech. Simply “express” your beliefs in the normal course of business, the Court will conflate your speech with your service and voila! – discrimination is protected speech.

If you run an inn, write on your kiosk that homosexuality is a sin. Your speech will be protected by the 1st A, with the added bonus that gay patrons would rather sleep in their car than lodge there. If you get sued, stress the expressive elements of your business, from your choice of furnishings, colors and fabrics to marketing, including the fanciful words you inscribe on the bibles in each room. Because your curated rooms are your “statement” of expressive conduct, letting gay lodgers sleep in them conveys personal approval of homosexuality, a statement the state cannot coerce you into.

Concluding her dissent, Sotomayor describes a “sad day” for civil rights, coming just as hundreds of anti-LGBT laws have been introduced throughout the country, and a major candidate for U.S. president has made gay persecution his campaign focus. But the tragedy of 303 Creative isn’t that bigots are getting away with bigotry. It’s

that the high Court relegated certain individuals to second class status without so much as a glance at the 14th Amendment, just as it did last year in Dobbs.

The Court's right-wing bloc has delivered the goods to the dark money that put it there, with a clear

advertisement of its own. Equal Protection: Women and minorities need not apply. ❖

Sabrina Haake is a trial lawyer who lives in Gary. Reach her on Twitter @SabrinaHaake.

The courage of student Northwestern journalists

By JACK COLWELL
South Bend Tribune

SOUTH BEND – Student journalists at The Daily Northwestern taught a lesson to their university's president and showed the value of journalists — not as enemies of the people, but as enemies of those in power who seek to hide the truth.



The prestigious Poynter Institute praised the reporters at the Northwestern student newspaper for "some of the best reporting anywhere" in disclosing sickening details of sexualized hazing of football players.

Northwestern President Michael Schill sought to hide the scope of the situation with a laughable two-week suspension in summer vacation time for coach Pat Fitzgerald. Just a little haz-

ing problem. Nothing Fitzgerald knew about. No details to keep the story in the news or detract from fall practice and a "Go Cats!" season.

It might have ended there if not for the enterprise of student journalists in conducting interviews and obtaining substantiating information about the abuse, described by one source as "just absolutely egregious and vile and inhumane behavior." If you wish, read the stories for the naked truth.

Schill, confronted with the details — all of which he already knew from a private investigation the university commissioned — quickly decided "upon reflection" that he perhaps "erred" with a suspension so short.

The president, worried about keeping his own job as the story and criticism spread nationally, fired Fitzgerald.

The Daily Northwestern students didn't set out to get Fitzgerald fired. They set out to find and report the truth about the findings in the secret report on the lengthy hazing investigation. Let the chips fall where they may. And the chips might not have fallen so heavily on Fitzgerald's head if Schill had disclosed details, including any that showed Fitzgerald lacked knowledge about the seriousness

of what happened with his team, and if Schill had imposed a realistic penalty, suspension for games, not just a couple of summer vacation weeks. Anger over the coverup made it impossible to save Fitzgerald.

I'm proud of those Northwestern students. I say that in the context of teaching journalism courses for 20 years at the University of Notre Dame. Journalism students are taught to seek and report the truth, even when that won't necessarily be popular.

Journalists around the nation expressed admiration for the work of those students.

The Chicago Tribune editorialized in praise for how they "proceeded to do their job and spoil Schill's weekend. In vivid detail, the student newspaper detailed the allegations, which include ritualistic, even sexualized, humiliations . . ."

Graduates of Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism joined in expressing pride at the students uncovering what others in the news media hadn't found and what the university president thought he had hidden.

Poynter has a particularly significant quote from Michael David Smith, managing editor of Pro Football Talk: "When you're a college kid at the student newspaper, you know you're going to face blowback if you report something critical of the football team. I'm so impressed with these Northwestern student journalists for having the integrity to report this story."

If they go on in journalism, perhaps in expanded digital rather than diminished printed forms, they will again experience the wrath of powerful people who don't want wrongdoing reported. They also will receive acclaim elsewhere when they find and report the truth.

A growing problem is that there are fewer newspapers with resources to find that truth.

A decade ago, would it have been a Chicago newspaper, Tribune or Sun-Times, or a TV channel rather than a student publication breaking the Northwestern story?

There, no doubt, is undetected corruption and other wrongs in cities, counties and states that would have been uncovered in the past by newspapers now out of business or with severely diminished staffs.

Yes, there are problems. But certainly not with student journalists at Northwestern. They provide hope for the future. ❖

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Northwestern parts ways with football coach Pat Fitzgerald



Human capital is the source of prosperity

By MICHAEL J. HICKS

MUNCIE – The economic view of growth is pretty simple. People and businesses are attracted to places based on three factors—local productivity, quality of life and the responsiveness of housing supply to population growth. Every regional economics class in an American university will cover these three topics. Students will learn the reasoning behind this model — the math theory behind the ideas. They'll then read the empirical research — the statistics that test the theory. This is my summary.



Productivity differences between places in the U.S. are explained almost exclusively by differences in educational attainment

and population density. Well-educated, high-density cities and towns are very productive. That means their GDP per worker, or GDP per resident, is very high. Decades ago, the amount of business capital a region possessed drove much of productivity differences. So, in the 1950s, Indiana's factory-rich landscape made us a relatively productive place.

Today, the link between business capital and regional productivity has largely disappeared. We now rank between 32nd and 40th in productivity, depending on the measure. To be sure, capital still matters in less-developed nations, but in the developed world, brainpower, not machine power, has been the dominant source of productivity differences for half a century. So, policies that nurture human capital produce more productive places.

This change continues to confound many policymakers, who remain wedded to the belief that prosperity is just one new factory away. It reminds me of Keynes' famous quote on that phenomenon, "Practical men who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist."

A half century ago, productive places typically had low quality of life. That is changing, and today there is a convergence between highly productive places and places with high quality of life. So, most households and business no longer need to choose between a place that is good for business and good for families. Successful places increasingly do both.

Measuring quality of life is a bit more difficult than measuring productivity, but it is as conceptually easy. The most common approach involves two steps. First, create a statistically identical house in each city by controlling for all the specific home features like number of rooms and year

of construction. Then, measure how much more or less people are willing to pay for that home than its construction characteristics suggest. That is a measure of how much people value these homes. If they pay more, it is a nice place. If they offer less, it is less appealing.

The second step is to do the reverse for labor markets. Create a statistically identical worker in each city by controlling for education, age, occupation and other factors. Workers who demand a wage premium to live in that city may find it unattractive. If they are willing to accept a lower salary, they may prefer the location. Combining these two measures yields a county or citywide measure of quality of life.

This measure of quality of life indicates where people prefer to live, but it does not tell us what they prefer. The best way to ask that question is simply to find which amenities best predict the quality of life measure from housing and labor markets. Several co-authors and I have done this work across the nation and in the Midwest. The results are partially predictable, but they also hold some huge surprises.

Natural amenities like mountains, lakes and rivers are appealing, but have only a modest effect on household and business location decisions. Weather matters, but again, not very much. The migration to warm places that accompanied the invention of air conditioning appears to have run its course. Families do prefer private amenities, such as good groceries, fitness centers, recreational facilities and the like. Here, variety seems to matter substantially.

The biggest predictor of quality of life differences across the country are public services. The share of the economy allocated to education is the number one attractor for families. Number two nationwide is crime rate. Good, well-funded schools and low crime rates explain more variation in quality of life than does all natural amenities combined. Yes, parks, broadband, nice restaurants and mountain views matter, they just matter far less than safety and good schools.

The final puzzle to all this is the responsiveness of housing supply to population change. Places that grow their housing supply with population change tend to do much better. At the same time, places that shrink their housing supply to match population decline tend to do better. This symmetry is as frequently ignored as it is important. This simple framework explains most differences in economic growth between places in the United States, and has been doing so for half a century. The policy implications of this are gobsmackingly clear. To grow, cities should push educational attainment as hard as possible, ensure families have safe places to live, and create an environment that allows new businesses to meet customer demand for goods and services. It stands to reason then that this view would dominate state and local economic development policy.

For Midwestern states, the urgency of this is even greater than for elsewhere. Our economies were built on

the notion of capital-intensive industries that attracted workers from around the country. That is no longer the case, yet the muscle memory of capital incentives dominates the way we think about economic growth. It has left us saddled with a history of ineffective policy approaches.

Even when we give lip service to quality of life, there is a surprising resistance to investing in those things that most influence household and business location choices. I suspect most of this opposition is driven by the belief that low-tax and low-spending efforts will attract more business capital and that this in turn will boost productivity. This view is sadly mistaken.

Indiana's workers are only 74% as productive as those in high-tax California, and unsurprisingly, earn only 74 cents for every dollar they do. Ohio, Wisconsin and Michigan find themselves in nearly the same circumstance. I know everyone likes to ridicule Illinois, but their workforce is 15% more productive than Hoosiers, and their wages 15% higher. It is past time to suppose that low taxes and business investment drives economic

growth in the developed world. Instead, it is educational attainment. Quite simply, the share of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher explains a full two-thirds of productivity differences between states.

Capitalism has drawn more people from poverty than all other economic systems combined. It is unabashedly the economic system of prosperity. Two hundred years ago, productive land was the most important form of capital. A century ago, business capital was the most important. Today, human capital is what matters. Economic development policies that focus on human capital will yield productive places, with good quality of life and responsive housing markets. Anything other than this will continue up to disappoint. ❖

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.

Whose dream is it?

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Who dreamed up the American Dream of homeownership? Was it a homebuilder, a mortgage banker or a real estate broker?



Homeownership is subsidized by governments, advertised as a desirable form of holding assets and believed to be an indicator of moral character. Actually, it is just an archaic extension of the powers afforded the favorites of the monarch. In the 18th Century, when this nation was formed, land ownership was the principal source of income and a basis for the right to vote.

Renting was an indication of poverty and a road to continued indigency traveled by persons with poor manners and dubious reputations. Hoosier legislators openly and regularly express their concern for homeowners. Renters, however, are a breed apart, akin to feral cats, to be fed only outside the back door.

Indiana, in 2021, had 71% of its single- and multi-family housing units occupied by owners. That compares with 65% nationally. In part, this difference was the result of a greater Hoosier emphasis on building or offering owner units during the past decade. Between 2011 to 2021, 87% of Indiana's increase in occupied units was for homeowners compared with 73% nationwide.

It's easy to imagine owner-occupied units as single-family homes and rentals as apartment houses. However, we've seen condos and single-family units go from owner to rental and rental apartments become

owner-occupied condos. Owner or renter is not a permanent condition.

These data from the Census Bureau also provide numbers by race and ethnicity. In 2021, 24% of white Hoosier households (not persons) were rentals. Among Black or African American Hoosier households, 62% were rentals.

That spread between Black and White households of 38 percentage points is greater than the 32-point spread 10 years earlier. If being a renter is a worse condition than being a homeowner, then Black Hoosiers are not seeing an improvement in their housing status.

Contrast these results with those for Hispanic Hoosier households. In 2021, 41% of Indiana's Hispanic households were rentals, while only 24% of white, non-Hispanic households were rentals. That's a spread of 17 percentage points which is better than the 2011 spread of 21 points.

Add this factor: In 2011, homeownership for Black Hoosier households was slightly ahead of that for their national counterparts (0.8% points), but fell behind the nation to minus 1.2% points in 2021. Meanwhile, the comparable figures of Hispanic households improved by 2.2% points compared to the national condition.

Why is the "American Dream" better realized by Hispanic Hoosiers than by Black Hoosiers? Why is the "Dream" improving for Hispanics and deteriorating for Blacks? Should anything be done about these discrepancies, or should we, as is often done these days, just blame it on COVID and forget it? I think not. ❖

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

Demographic blunders by Chinese communists

By CRAIG DUNN

CARMEL – One of the responsibilities that I have as a professional investment advisor is to constantly be looking to the future, trying to spot trends, new developments and cultural swings that may affect the average investor's billfold.



While I have never been an overwhelmingly enthusiastic proponent of the economic power of China, my reasons have generally been built on the personal belief that a bureaucratically managed economy coupled with unreliable and manipulated currency and markets would inevitably deny China a lasting place as a premier powerhouse.

I have believed, and still do, that free people and free markets are the critical ingredients to long-term robust economic growth. But now I have another more powerful reason for doubting the viability of the China miracle and that reason is anchored in both the laws of nature and mathematics.

In my youth, it was not infrequent nor unusual to hear China referred to as a population time bomb. An increasing birthrate incentivized by post-Mao food supplies threatened to bring a nasty Malthusian end to the Chinese Communist dreams of world domination. After all, food is the ultimate political weapon and if you import substantial amounts of food just for daily survival, then you cannot flex your military muscles without fear of the food weapon being used against you.

Because of the Chinese fear of uncontrolled population growth holding a metaphorical razor at its throat, the Communist bureaucrats in the inner circle of power decided to adopt a One Child Policy. Thirty-five years ago, a bunch of aging power-hungry men decided that they could manipulate the national birthrate of China without any adverse complications.

The Chinese Communist Party determined that it could dictate its people's reproduction rates with a policy that featured forced abortions, heavy fines and housing evictions for One Child Policy violations. You must give the CCP credit for their success in heavy-handedness. As far as reducing the birth rate is concerned, the plan was a success. Unfortunately, that old immutable law of unintended consequences has raised its ugly head and now the Chinese Communists are in a world of hurt.

Unintended consequence number one is that since the Chinese have a poorly developed system of old age support, the primary burden of caring for the elderly falls

squarely on their children. In addition, because of a society with significant gender inequality, the value of a male child in supporting his parents far exceeds the economic value of a daughter. Because of this, Chinese parents went through the thought process of, "Well, hell. If we can only have one child, we better make it a boy, so we'll have someone to take care of us when we get old."

Old Mother Nature tends to dish out a roughly equal number of girl and boy babies, so the Chinese people were forced to use abortion as their means of sex selection for their sole child. The boys won and the resulting impact has seen the birth rate of male babies rise to 104.65 versus every 100 female babies born. This may seem like a fairly insignificant number, but in a country of 1.4 billion people, that quickly leads to over 37 million excess males who would like to find a girlfriend, but their Match.com profile never gets a response.

Yes, the Chinese ruling elite not only depressed the growth of the population curve, but the depression of growth tipped over the top and has now developed into a full-fledged population collapse. Economic statistics are notoriously unreliable for China, but the numbers they provided the United Nations in 2022 show a birth rate of only 10.62 million. This is the lowest rate since 1949, in the depths of a great famine. This represents a rate of 7.5 births per thousand people versus a current death rate of 20 deaths per thousand people.

See where I'm going. The numbers just don't add up for long-term success.

Of course, the CCP has reversed its course and will now allow up to three children per family. Just imagine the conversation in the typical child-rearing-aged household. "Good news honey. The government now says that we can have three children that we can't afford instead of just one." Wife's response: "Bad luck for you. I have to work to support my family, then raise the children and take care of your parents too. I'm not even sure that I want one child." And so, the perfectly made plans of the Communist Party have been squashed.

The numbers are staggering. In the numbers provided to the United Nations, the Chinese show that there are now two times as many people in the 15-19 age bracket as there are in the age 5 and under bracket. The answer is simple. Fewer people have fewer children. This is why China has the oldest population in the world and this isn't good news.

What's the big deal with all of this, you ask? China has become an economic powerhouse by being the low-cost manufacturer of the world. However, since 2000, Chinese labor costs have risen by a factor of 15. This is the fastest rise in the cost of labor in the history of the world! Unskilled labor roughly equals demand and there is a tremendous skilled labor shortage. China is in a difficult position of needing to transition its entire economic premise from the manufacturer of least cost to the manufacturer of best value and that will not be easy. Decades of low-quality Chinese manufactured goods, excused by

consumers because of low cost, will find much resistance as time goes on. India, not China, is the new kid on the block and no one is controlling its population.

Other Far East nations, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, have also seen birth rates decline and populations age, but these countries have skillfully made the transition to increased productivity through mechanization and through offshoring elements of production. The big question is whether China, with a monolithic bureaucratic economy led by an omnipotent dictator, can respond to free markets with very little idea of how free markets work.

China is not a complete house of cards, but it has

many more problems ranging from societal to economic that are virtually insurmountable.

Picture this: There are respected economists and geopolitical strategists who believe that the China with a population of 1.4 billion today will become a nation of less than 700 million sometime near 2050. That is staggering and creates massive problems for the Chinese at the same time as it creates opportunities for the rest of the world, including the United States.

More on this to come. ❖

Craig Dunn is the former chairman of the Howard County Republican Party.

Dementia claims still cling to President Biden

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI Indiana

ANDERSON – This week's column comes in response to a reader's note about President Joe Biden's mental acuity. "Would love to see your spin on that," he wrote.



When I responded that all the talk about the president's mental state was mostly a product of right-wing propaganda, my reader expressed surprise.

"Not to spar with you, but you really think his mental state is solid?" he wrote. "Please explain all the constant gaffes. You are way too smart

of a guy to not recognize that he is losing it."

Claims that Biden is suffering from dementia have been making the rounds in conservative media for years.

In advance of a debate against Donald Trump in Cleveland leading up to the 2020 election, Fox News' senior political analyst Brit Hume said that despite his handicap, Biden might actually do OK.

"Elderly people experiencing memory loss and other problems associated with age can go for periods, for hours at a time, and be just fine," Hume said. "I don't think there's any doubt Biden's senile, but that doesn't mean it's going to show up tonight. ... And now that the expectations for him have been set so low, you know if he comes out and doesn't drool and gets through everything pretty well, it could end up being quite a boost for him."

It's worth noting that Hume and Biden are roughly the same age, and Hume, who had been making similar pronouncements for more than a year, noted along the way that he himself was seeing traces of memory loss.

"I know what it feels like," he said.

In an interview with PolitiFact, Donald Jurivich, chairman of geriatrics at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences, called Hume's assertions "a shameful display of ageism and ignorance."

Kenneth Langa, professor of medicine at the University of Michigan Medical School, told PolitiFact nearly everyone experiences some slowing of brain function with age. "It is possible that Biden may have more difficulties finding some words and speaking smoothly than when he was younger," Langa said. But that does not mean Biden is "senile," Langa said, or even that he has "mild cognitive impairment."

PolitiFact noted that Kevin C. O'Connor, Biden's doctor since 2009, had issued a summary of the candidate's medical and surgical history in 2019 describing him as "a healthy, vigorous, 77-year-old male, who is fit to successfully execute the duties of the presidency."

O'Connor said pretty much the same thing after this year's physical, adding that the president had undergone an "extremely detailed neurologic exam" that found no signs of neurological disorders such as stroke, multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease.

Of course, none of it has done much to change public perceptions. A Washington Post-ABC News poll in May found that more than six in 10 Americans believe Biden lacks the mental sharpness or physical health to serve effectively as president. Only a third say he is in good enough physical health for the job. The survey results underline our nation's political divide. Among independents, about seven in 10 say Biden lacks the mental sharpness and physical health to serve effectively. That number drops to one in five among Democrats, but among Republicans, it's more than nine out of 10.

How will this play out in next year's election? In an interview with MSNBC, Biden suggested he should be returned to office precisely because of his age. "Because I have acquired a hell of a lot of wisdom and know more than the vast majority of people," he said. "And I'm more experienced than anybody that's ever run for the office. And I think I've proven myself to be honorable as well as also effective." ❖

Electoral College tipping points

By J. MILES COLEMAN and KYLE KONDIK

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – A little over a month ago, we wrapped up a series that examined the relative “lean” of each state in presidential elections since 2000. One state that we paid special attention to in that series was Wisconsin. In 4 of the previous 6 presidential elections, the Badger State has been decided by less than a percentage point.

OK, so Wisconsin is usually a competitive state, which isn’t very surprising – so where’s this going?

Well, Wisconsin is also notable because it was the “tipping point” state in the last two elections. Essentially, the tipping point state is the state that pushes the winning candidate over the 270 electoral votes required to become president. Using the 2020 election as a template, let’s imagine all the states – and the District of Columbia – on a continuum, ranging from most Democratic to most Republican. Starting out with DC, which gave Joe Biden an 87-point margin, we’ll put 3 electoral votes in the Democratic column. The bluest state is Vermont, which went to Biden by 35 points and is also worth 3 electoral votes. So it is next, bringing his cumulative total up to 6 electoral votes. After repeating this several more times, we’ve added Pennsylvania, which brings Biden up to 269 electoral votes. Though we are sticking purely to Electoral College math for the purposes of this article, a 269-269 tie would have kicked the election to the House -- Republicans, controlling a majority of delegations, would have almost certainly voted to keep Donald Trump in power. So Biden needed at least one more electoral vote.

Moving along the continuum, the next most pro-Biden state was Wisconsin, which he carried by less than a percentage point. With the addition of Wisconsin’s 10 electoral votes to the aggregate total, Biden is now at 279, enough to claim the presidency. In this sense, Arizona and Georgia, the two closest Biden-won states, are essentially just “gravy.” Although they can hardly be described as insignificant electoral prizes, Biden could have won the presidency without them.

As an aside, the concept of the tipping point state is not related to the order in which states are called on Election Night, although the 270 threshold is key in both scenarios. In 1976, for example, ABC News declared Jimmy Carter the winner after Hawaii’s 4 electoral votes bumped his total up to 272. Similarly, on Election

Night 2008, several outlets were able to call the presidency for Barack Obama at 11 p.m. sharp, or immediately after polls closed in four deeply blue Pacific Coast states that were collectively worth 77 electoral votes.

With that distinction nailed down, Table 1 considers the tipping point states for Electoral College winners in postwar presidential elections, as well as their deviation from the national popular vote each year. On Table 1, positive margins are pro-Democratic and negative margins are pro-Republican (which is not a commentary on the parties, but just makes comparison easier).

In 1948, California was several decades away from taking on the navy shade of blue that we know it for today. As Harry Truman surprised political observers to win a full term as president that year, he carried California by less than half a percentage point, which put him over 270 electoral votes on our continuum. But Truman’s national popular vote margin over Republican Thomas Dewey was considerably more comfortable – he prevailed by just under a 50%-45% vote, or 4.5 percentage points. With that, the Electoral College would have had a 4-point pro-Republican “bias” in the context of 1948.

In presidential elections since 1948, the tipping point states have tracked closer to the national popu-

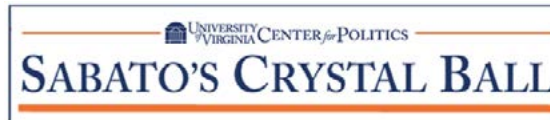


Table 1: Tipping point states in postwar presidential elections

Year	Electoral College winner	Decisive state	National popular vote D-R margin	Decisive state D-R margin	Bias
1948	DEM	CA	4.5%	0.4%	-4.0%
1952	GOP	MI	-10.8%	-11.5%	-0.7%
1956	GOP	FL	-15.4%	-14.5%	0.9%
1960	DEM	MO	0.2%	0.5%	0.4%
1964	DEM	WA	22.6%	24.6%	2.0%
1968	GOP	OH	-0.7%	-2.3%	-1.6%
1972	GOP	OH	-23.2%	-21.6%	1.6%
1976	DEM	WI	2.1%	1.7%	-0.4%
1980	GOP	IL	-9.7%	-7.9%	1.8%
1984	GOP	MI	-18.2%	-19.0%	-0.8%
1988	GOP	MI	-7.7%	-7.9%	-0.2%
1992	DEM	TN	5.6%	4.7%	-0.9%
1996	DEM	PA	8.5%	9.2%	0.7%
2000	GOP	FL	0.5%	-0.0%	-0.5%
2004	GOP	OH	-2.5%	-2.1%	0.4%
2008	DEM	CO	7.3%	9.0%	1.7%
2012	DEM	CO	3.9%	5.4%	1.5%
2016	GOP	WI	2.1%	-0.8%	-2.9%
2020	DEM	WI	4.5%	0.6%	-3.8%

lar vote. In the 1950s, Republican Dwight Eisenhower came out on the winning end of two bouts with Democrat Adlai Stevenson. Though Eisenhower's 1956 victory was more comfortable than his 1952 win, as he increased his popular vote margin from 10.8% to 15.4%, he had a less efficient coalition his second time around. In 1952, Michigan, the tipping point state, was slightly more Republican than the national vote, while in 1956, Florida was about a point more Democratic than the nation.

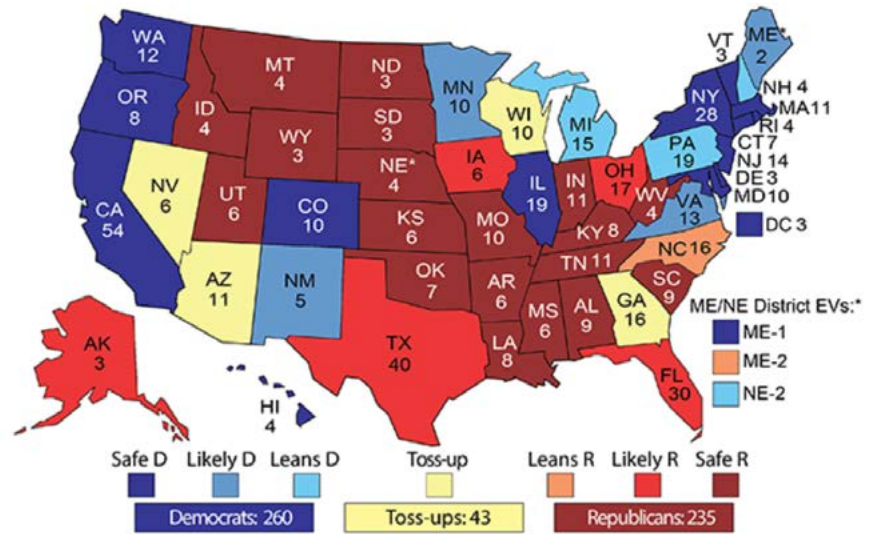
In 1956, Missouri, then a prime bellwether state, was notable because it was the sole Eisenhower-to-Stevenson state, although the Democrat carried it narrowly. But by 1960, Missouri seemed to regain its swing state image. In another narrow result, it backed the winning Democrat, John F. Kennedy, and was the tipping-point state that election – its result mirrored the national vote closely. Four years later, Washington state was the tipping point state in Lyndon Johnson's landslide. The Electoral College had a Democratic bias in 1964 in part because the Deep South, where resentment over Johnson's civil rights legislation was apparent, acted as something of a "sink" for Republican nominee Barry Goldwater's votes.

During his first – and unsuccessful – run for the presidency, in 1960, Ohio backed Richard Nixon over Kennedy. But in both of Nixon's successful elections, 1968 and 1972, Ohio was crucial. In his close 1968 win over Democrat Hubert Humphrey, it had a 1.6-point pro-Republican bias. Then, four years later, under a completely different electoral environment, Ohio remained the tipping point state: as the then-incumbent Nixon won in a 49-state landslide, Ohio assumed a 1.6-point bias in the Democratic direction.

In 1976, 11 states were decided by less than 2 percentage points, the most of any election that Table 1 considers. The tipping point state that year was Wisconsin – on the ABC Election Night footage linked to above, Wisconsin happened to be called right before Hawaii came in, pushing Carter over 270 in their count. Four years later, the tipping state was just south of Wisconsin. As Ronald Reagan ousted Carter, the state where he was born (Illinois) had a nearly 2-point pro-Democratic bias.

From 1984 to 1992, the Electoral College had a narrow but persistent Republican bias. In 1984 and 1988, the key state remained in the Midwest, as Michigan was the tipping point state. Then, in 1992, Tennessee provided Bill Clinton's 270th electoral vote – this may also have vindicated his selection of Al Gore, a Tennessee senator, as his vice presidential pick, as Gore was considered a somewhat unconventional pick at the time. But by 1996, the modern coalition of red and blue states was beginning to align and the tipping point state that year was Pennsylvania, which, unlike Tennessee, is a present-day swing state.

Map 1: Crystal Ball Electoral College ratings



This brings us to 2000. Florida, which was hotly contested – both in the context of pre-election politicking and post-election legal fights – gave the presidency to George W. Bush even as he narrowly lost the popular vote. Though the Electoral College had a slight (but obviously critical) pro-Republican bias in 2000, it is worth noting that Gore was an especially strong candidate for Florida -- in relative terms, no 21st century Democratic nominee has come within 2 points of matching his performance there. In 2004, as Bush won the national popular vote by a 51%-48% margin, the Electoral College's bias shifted to favor Democrats: John Kerry's 2.1-point loss in Ohio, the tipping point state that year, was less than his 2.5-point popular vote loss. Still, in 2004, Ohio was within half a point of the national vote tipping point states in the Obama and Trump eras would see higher deviations.

In both of Barack Obama's elections, Colorado was the tipping point state – and in each year, it was about 1.5 points more Democratic than the nation. Last week, in our inaugural 2024 Electoral College ratings, as we outlined our expectations for a competitive election, we placed Colorado in the Safe Democratic column – so it is not well-positioned to be the tipping point state again.

This is of course cold comfort to Democrats, who lost in both 2000 and 2016 despite their candidate winning more votes than the Republican nominee nationally, but the Electoral College actually had a Democratic bias in the 2004-2012 period.

Despite his complaints the Electoral College was biased against Republicans, Donald Trump clearly benefited from the system in his own coalition. In 2016, Hillary Clinton essentially traded working class voters in states like Iowa and Ohio for college educated white voters in states like Georgia and Texas – the former group flipped against her after supporting Obama twice and while she got closer in the latter group, it wasn't enough to win their electoral votes. ❖

Dan Coats & Tim Roemer, IndyStar: While many Americans are thinking about summer vacations and backyard barbecues, our nation's adversaries overseas are already planning ways to disrupt next year's presidential election. It's no secret that foreign countries including Russia, China and Iran have escalated their election meddling efforts in recent years in an attempt to destabilize our political system, sow discord and undermine trust in our democracy. We recently learned that several government agencies were hit in a global cyber-attack after universities and state governments fell victim to similar attacks in recent weeks, with early indications telling us that a Russian ransomware group is likely responsible. That is why we must bolster our cybersecurity defenses and call on Congress to allocate required resources to modernize and strengthen our critical election infrastructure before voters cast their ballots in 2024.

The current threat environment has become increasingly complex, and top election and cybersecurity officials are already sounding the alarm about potential cyber attacks that could threaten the security of our presidential elections. This is especially true for many jurisdictions, particularly rural communities, who lack the funds to replace old and outdated technologies. As the capabilities of our adversaries grow and become more menacing, it is vital that our election officials have the resources they need to keep up and protect our democracy.

Congress can and must act this year to defend our national security, safeguard our freedom to vote and send a message to anti-democratic regimes around the world that the United States will not tolerate any attempt to harm our electoral processes and erode faith in our democracy. States and local jurisdictions already shoulder the majority of the costs required to administer elections, but the federal government also has a responsibility to pay their fair share. The Congress and the Biden Administration have recently agreed to a bipartisan debt ceiling agreement with some specific reductions in spending. The White House has recommended \$1.6 billion for this investment in cyber and election protection. Instead, paying attention to the fragile fiscal environment on Capitol Hill, we resolutely believe that an increase of \$325 million (over last year's modest \$75 million) invested in national security against China and Russia is pragmatic, proactive and fair.

Regular, predictable federal funding will help officials upgrade their election systems and defend against cyber and physical security threats, while also ensuring that voting remains accessible and every ballot is counted fairly and accurately. Already, the Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party, chaired by Congressman Mike Gallagher, R-Wisconsin, with ranking member Raja

Krishnamoorthi, D-Illinois, has displayed true collaboration in public hearings this year and a recent bipartisan set of preliminary recommendations would address the rising challenges associated with China's aggressive foreign policy goals. ❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: Jim Lucas doesn't get it. That's not surprising. The Republican state representa-

tive from Seymour long has taken pride in being clueless, insensitive and self-absorbed. He's the sort of guy who found astronomy a huge shock when he learned the sun was the center of the solar system. And not Jim Lucas. For other men, what happened to him on May 31 might have served as a wake-up call. He was drunk that night. He got behind the wheel of his truck, lost control of it on a state highway and careened down an embankment onto I-65, taking out guardrails in the process. His descent down the embankment left him going the wrong way on the interstate. He continued going the wrong way, exiting the freeway by driving up the entrance ramp. His truck by this time had only one functioning wheel. He hid it behind a local business, then began walking down the road. That's where he was when the police picked him up and arrested him. He spent part of the night in jail. His blood alcohol level was nearly 25% over the legal limit. Toxicology reports also found that he had significant amounts of THC—the active ingredient for marijuana—in his blood. So, the lawmaker likely was both drunk and high while driving that night. He received a sweetheart deal from the local prosecutor. Lucas escaped jail time, paid about \$3,900 in damages and had his driving privileges suspended for 180 days, along with his right to carry weapons. After he received his light wrist slap from the prosecutor, Lucas trotted off to appear on right-wing talk radio, where he dismissed the whole thing as nothing more than a "hiccup." Fortunately, a good local newspaper in Lucas' district – The Republic in Columbus – did the digging the prosecutor should have done. A reporter there found an earlier Lucas drunk driving arrest and guilty plea from 1988. He also reported on the toxicology findings. Lucas responded to the first report by demanding to know if the reporter had proof – the reporter did – and then lashing out at the journalist for some unspecified transgression against the greater good. He also blasted the reporter for publishing the facts about the THC in Lucas' blood that night. In that post, he said he exhibited "horrible judgment" that night and proclaimed that he "owned" responsibility for his actions. Nonsense. If he had taken responsibility for what he'd done – and that he very likely could have killed someone that night – Lucas would have started by apologizing, humbly and with genuine contrition, to the citizens of his district for betraying their trust. ❖



Lobbyists spent \$20.7M last session

INDIANAPOLIS — By nearly all metrics, school choice advocates walked away from the 2023 legislative session as winners (Lange, [State Affairs Indiana](#)). Lawmakers approved a massive expansion of the state-funded voucher system, enabling roughly 97% of Indiana students to use state money to attend the school of their choice. Likewise, charter schools will receive millions of dollars in future years, in some cases siphoning away money historically dedicated to traditional public schools. One clue as to why school choice advocates were successful this year could be in the data compiled and recently released by the Indiana Lobby Registration Commission showing how much each lobbyist spent trying to persuade lawmakers between Nov. 1, 2022, through April 30, 2023 — the period covering the most recent legislative session. Hoosiers for Quality Education, a school choice advocacy group, and its affiliate reported spending a combined \$433,754 on lobbying over the course of six months, hundreds of thousands more than any organization spent lobbying for their own interests. Most of that stemmed from spending on a massive public-facing advertising campaign arguing that charter school students were being unfairly underfunded. Altogether, lobbyists spent \$20.7 million compensating lawyers, purchasing facetime via pricey meals and professional sporting event tickets or pursuing other lobbying-related expenditures, based on numbers provided by the commission at the close of June.

House GOP want to defund Ukraine

WASHINGTON — A group of right-wing House Republicans pushing to load up the annual defense bill with

socially conservative policies on abortion, race and gender have another demand: severe restrictions on U.S. military support for Ukraine ([New York Times](#)). The pressure raises the prospect of a divisive floor fight over America's backing for the war effort just as President Biden tries to rally European allies to support Kyiv in its conflict with Russia. The group's proposals on military aid stand no chance of passing the House, where there continues to be strong bipartisan support for backing Ukraine's war effort, or going anywhere in the Senate. But the far right's insistence on casting votes on the matter anyway has further imperiled the defense legislation and transformed what is ordinarily a broadly supported measure that provides the annual pay raise to U.S. military personnel and sets Pentagon policy into a partisan battleground that has placed Republican divisions on display. The House on Wednesday began debating the \$886 billion measure, sidestepping the rifts as Republican leaders toiled behind the scenes to placate ultraconservative lawmakers who are demanding votes to scale back Ukraine aid and add social policy dictates. But those disputes will eventually have to be resolved to pass the bill, which had been expected to receive approval on Friday — a timetable that is now in doubt as the hard right threatens to hold up the process.

Biden walks a fine line at NATO

VILNIUS, Lithuania — The negotiations about Ukraine's glidepath toward NATO membership had come down to the wire, and Biden administration officials believed they had finally found a compromise: a vow to ease Kyiv's membership process, once the wartime situation allows it ([Washington Post](#)). Then Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky weighed in with a tweet blasting the draft offer as far too little. It crashed President Biden's careful balance between two constituencies: his own conviction that

a U.S. misstep in Ukraine could start World War III, and the voices channeling Kyiv's desire to join the fast track to NATO membership. Zelensky's intervention midway through NATO's high-stakes summit here made members of the U.S. delegation "furious," one official said. And it crystallized a broader tension facing Biden as Ukraine's counteroffensive runs up against entrenched Russian defenses: The United States is by far Kyiv's biggest military backer. But Biden faces an increasing challenge holding together the transatlantic alliance, as other countries increasingly push plans for helping Ukraine that rush past the lines the White House believes could trigger a Russian escalation. "President Biden has really stressed the importance of unity in the alliance in the face of Russia's aggression, and he has noted many times that [Russian President Vladimir] Putin was betting that NATO unity would crack," national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Wednesday. "We believe it will continue to be a bad bet, but unity doesn't mean every ally sees every issue exactly the same way."

ILEarn scores remain flat

INDIANAPOLIS — The latest ILEARN results show more work needs to be done to boost Indiana's students' proficiency in math and English language arts ([WTHR-TV](#)). Ninety-nine percent of students in third through eighth grade took the ILEARN test. Results looked at student growth and compared it to learning trends before the COVID-19 pandemic. Officials with the Indiana Department of Education went over the latest test results Wednesday. "Specific conversations and concerted efforts are needed to best support their learning," said Dr. Charity Flores, chief academic officer with IDOE. Forty percent of students are at or above proficiency in math and English. But middle school students who were not proficient in math and English language arts before the pandemic are not recovering as fast.

