



Spartz denounces 'fraudulent' GOP

Congresswoman's Westfield town hall finds her taking on leadership, questioning Biden on Ukraine

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

WESTFIELD — Walking in the hallway past the Indiana Senate, John Ruckelshaus felt two massive hands grab his shoulders, spinning him around. He came face-to-face with an exasperated Senate President Pro Tem David Long, who gave him a new charge: Manage then-State Sen. Victoria Spartz.

The Republican Spartz had seemingly come out of nowhere to win a Senate District 20 caucus in September 2017 to replace the powerful Senate Appropriations Chairman Luke Kenley — this coming in a world where retiring legislators often hand-select their successors.

Spartz was like a political meteor, appearing over



the horizon in 2017 to win an Indiana Senate seat. Like Donald Trump, she tapped into the populist "burn it down then re-build it" approach to government. When that turned into a political cul du sac, she opted up the food chain and into Congress, where she became a lightning rod. Politico featured a story calling her the worst member of Congress to work

for with the highest staff turnover.

Spartz defeated Noblesville Council President Megan Wiles 54-39 on the sixth ballot of a five-person field that included Carmel Council President Sue Finkam.

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Trump's retribution

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — As things stand today, former President Donald J. Trump is the prohibitive favorite to win his third Republican presidential nomination next year. He leads the Real Clear Politics national polling composite by a resounding and unprecedented 53%. He leads Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis by 33% in Iowa and Nikki Haley by 31% in New Hampshire.

Despite accumulating 91 criminal charges in four jurisdictions, Trump's polling numbers among Republican voters are actually going up.

And he is picking up steam. U.S. Sen. Mike Braun endorsed him last week, saying: "Donald Trump is a businessman and outsider. Together we took on



"No spending cuts; \$6.1 billion for Ukraine and \$0.0 for southern border. This short-term spending bill is the latest example of D.C. kicking the can down the road and spending money we don't have. I'm a no."

- U.S. Sen. Mike Braun, on a bipartisan Senate C.R. bill.



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HPI, HPI Daily Wire \$749

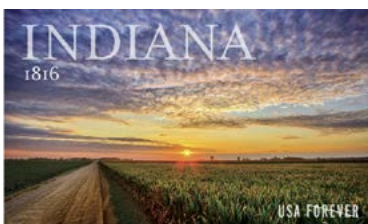
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1926-2019



the Washington swamp with a historic victory in the 2018 Indiana Senate race. We installed constitutional conservatives on the Supreme Court who have protected the unborn and our 2nd Amendment rights, and we disrupted the cozy, self-serving Washington elites who are bankrupting our country. Donald Trump is the candidate capable of returning us to the America First policies that delivered unmatched prosperity and security for the American people. I give Donald Trump my endorsement for President of the United States."

Bankrupting the country?
The national debt increased \$7.8 trillion during President Trump's four years in office to \$28 trillion, amounting to \$23,500 in new federal debt for every American.

On Sept. 24, Trump urged congressional Republicans to shut the government down this week-end. "The Republicans lost big on Debt Ceiling, got NOTHING, and now are worried they will be BLAMED for the Budget Shutdown," Trump said on his social media platform, Truth Social.

"WRONG!!! Whoever is President will be blamed. Unless you get everything, shut it down."

For 35 days in late 2018 and 2019 when Trump was in the White House and Republicans held congressional majorities, Republicans shut the federal government down over a \$5.7 billion impasse on funding for the Mexican border wall, something Trump had repeatedly insisted that Mexico would pay for.

A 2019 CBS News poll found that 71% of Americans considered the border wall "not worth the shutdown" and a Washington Post/ABC News poll found that 53% of Americans blamed Trump and Republicans for the shutdown, compared to 34% who blamed Democrats and 10% who blamed both parties.

In 2013, the congressional Republican majority forced a 16-day government shutdown under President Barack Obama. According to a Washington Post/ABC News poll

conducted several months afterward, 81% of Americans disapproved of the shutdown, 86% felt it had damaged the nation's image in the world and 53% held Republicans in Congress accountable.

That ill-fated shutdown prompted then-U.S. Rep. Marlin Stutzman of Indiana to tell the Washington Examiner, "We're not going to be disrespected. We have to get something out of this. And I don't know what that even is."



TRUMP VOWS TO TAKE AIRWAVES AWAY FROM COMCAST... Investigate MSNBC for 'TREASON'... Suggests Gen. Milley should be EXECUTED... As Prosecutions Move Forward, Threats and Concer Officials warn MAGA will seek own 'retribution': DID DON BREAK THE LAW BUYING GUN?

We all know what happened afterward: Republicans lost the White House and U.S. Senate in 2020.

A few days after Braun's endorsement of the former president, Trump on Truth Social suggested that Gen. Mark Milley, the outgoing chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, should be executed. He cited Milley's phone call to reassure China in the aftermath of the Jan. 6 insurrection as "an act so egregious that, in times gone by, the punishment would have been DEATH."

Actually, Milley had two calls to Chinese Gen. Li Zuocheng, the last one two days after the attempted U.S. coup d'etat that President Trump instigated. Milley's call on Jan. 8, 2021, was conducted with the knowledge of then-Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Defense Secretary Mark Esper, and acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller, according to Politico.

"My task at that time was to de-escalate," Milley told the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing of the calls that were revealed in Bob Woodward and Bob Costa's book "Peril." Milley told senators that the "specific purpose" of his phone calls to Li "was generated by concerning intelligence which caused us to believe the Chinese were worried about an attack by the U.S."

Politico reporter Kyle Cheney posted on X Sept. 23: "One question I have about Trump's overnight attack on Milley: Is [Milley] on the government's witness list for Trump's DC trial? He was a key Jan. 6 committee witness who said Trump privately admitted losing the election. The reason it matters if Milley is a potential trial witness (which Trump would know based on discovery) is the part of his release conditions in which he specifically swore not to tamper with or intimidate witnesses."

Milley told CBS "60 Minutes" in an interview airing Sunday, "I've got adequate safety precautions. I wish those comments had not been made, but they were. And I'll take appropriate measures to ensure my safety and the safety of my family."

Last weekend, Trump called for the investigation of NBC and affiliates for treason. "They are almost all dishonest and corrupt, but Comcast, with its one-side

and vicious coverage by NBC NEWS, and in particular MSNBC, often and correctly referred to as MSDNC (Democrat National Committee!), should be investigated for its Country Threatening Treason," Trump wrote. "I say up front, openly, and proudly, that when I WIN the Presidency of the United States, they and others of the LameStream Media will be thoroughly scrutinized for their knowingly dishonest and corrupt coverage of people, things, and events.

"They are a true threat to Democracy and are, in fact, THE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE!" Trump ranted. "The Fake News Media should pay a big price for what they have done to our once great Country!"

MSNBC "Mornin' Joe" host Joe Scarborough accused Trump of extending "an invitation for his people to step up and assassinate" leaders like Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Milley. "That's not a dog whistle," Scarborough said. "That is an invitation. Just like 'come on Jan. 6, it's going to be wild.'"

Donald J. Trump is openly conveying to his supporters — and all of us — what his intentions will be if he is returned to the White House in 2024. ❖

Brian Howey is senior writer and columnist for Howey Politics Indiana/State Affairs. Find Howey on

Spartz, from page 1

Spartz had helped found the Hamilton County Tea Party seven years earlier and was chief financial officer of the Indiana attorney general's office, but to many she was an unknown.

Kenley barely knew Spartz, but told The IndyStar, "Victoria has a very good resume and appears to be a very capable and accomplished person."

Since 2017, the unconventional Spartz has taken an improbable course into the politics and military affairs spanning two continents and the NATO alliance. She has flitted from the Indiana General Assembly to Congress. Along the way, she has come into conflict with an array of leaders. In the past week, she castigated U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and President Joe Biden. She drew national attention with a House Judiciary Committee exchange with Attorney General Merrick Garland.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, the only native Ukrainian to win a U.S. House seat has been Spartz. But by the end of that first year of the war,

she publicly feuded with Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley and Andriy Yermak, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff, accusing him of secretly supporting the Kremlin while misusing billions of U.S. military aid.

At a town hall in Westfield on Saturday, Spartz urged McCarthy's dethroning, while suggesting the U.S. Senate had become a nursing home. She warned a



standing-room-only group of constituents that Garland's Department of Justice will be rounding up and jailing American Republicans. "It's oppressive," Spartz told the crowd of over 100 gathered at the Westfield City Hall. "It's like tyranny, a tyrannical agenda moving into the country. We are moving into very dangerous territory. I came from socialism and communism and a lot of this resembles what I lived through and it breaks my heart."

As Garland sat before her earlier this year in Congress, Spartz characterized the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol insurrection as protesters who were "a lot of good Americans from my district came here because they are sick and tired of this government not serving them. They came with strollers and the kids."

In the aftermath, Spartz compared the FBI searching her district for Jan. 6 participants to the KGB, telling Garland: "People showed up, you know, FBI agents, to people's houses. You had, in my district, in my town, FBI phone numbers all over the district. People are truly afraid."

Then there's Ukraine, which is in a standoff with Russia while a growing number of congressional Republicans are opposing further U.S. funding for the war. At a time when many expected Spartz to be a rallying point to help her native country fend off genocidal Russia, she instead announced last January that she wouldn't seek the open Indiana U.S. Senate seat or a third term in the 5th Congressional District.

"Unfortunately, we have a very weak foreign policy," she said Saturday morning in Westfield. "We have a lot of weak leaders from both parties." She portrayed President Zelenskyy's Ukraine as a "very corrupt country. They have brave people dying on the front line with a very corrupt government; with a very bad history."

And instead of standing and fighting, Spartz suggested Biden look for an exit strategy. "Now they have to figure out ultimately how they are going to get out of this situation," she said in Westfield. "Millions of lives are destroyed the longer this war continues. He [Zelenskyy] is failing Ukraine, this president, and you have to figure out how to get out of this bad situation."

An unconventional path to power ...

Some 17 years after immigrating to the U.S. at age 22, Spartz won an Indiana Senate seat in a GOP caucus and then was elected to a full term in 2018. But by early 2020, Spartz had alienated Senate leaders like David Long with combative behavior toward staff and an affinity for going rogue. There were mayors in Senate District 20 who encouraged Hamilton County businessman Scott Baldwin to challenge her in the primary.

Though former State Sen. Ruckelshaus believes the Senate Majority Campaign Committee would have backed a Spartz reelection bid, word on the street was that Spartz faced a daunting primary. Facing that, what was Spartz to do?

Run for Congress!

When U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks announced she was retiring in June 2019, Spartz shifted from an Indiana state Senate reelection bid to the crowded 14-person race for the 5th Congressional District.

She convinced Club For Growth President David McIntosh, who had lost the Republican primary for the seat to Brooks in 2010, to back her candidacy. While Spartz anted up \$900,000 in personal loans, the Club pumped \$2.7 million into her campaign and supplied her

with polling. Club For Growth paid for attack ads against GOP contenders Carl Brizzi and Beth Henderson, and Spartz won the primary with 41% of the vote. That November, she defeated Democrat Christina Hale by 4%.

Sen. Spartz became Congresswoman Spartz. Washington, D.C.; Kyiv; Brussels and the Pentagon would be her new china shop ... until she decided in January to move on.

With her decision to end her congressional career, there doesn't appear to be a future political landing spot, unless she attempts to wrest her 5th Congressional District seat back sometime down the road.

There likely won't be an open Senate seat for



the rest of this decade; the GOP's gubernatorial bench is deeply stocked.

Judging from the Westfield town hall, she is beloved by many; detested by a distinct minority and fearless while saying the silent parts out loud.

... And an unconventional exit

Piecing together this part of the Spartz puzzle came from an array of Indiana Republican sources.

Even though U.S. Rep. Jim Banks was in the process of clearing a potential U.S. Senate field that included former Gov. Mitch Daniels, Spartz began showing up at the offices of GOP county chairs. Some of them described the congresswoman's pitch as being "combative," "unrealistic" and "overthetop."

When McIntosh and Club For Growth decided to back Banks, funding a TV ad aimed at keeping Daniels out of the race, Spartz had had enough. Not only would she not run for the U.S. Senate, she decided not to seek a third term, even though the fate of the Ukraine War was hang-



ing in the balance.

"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."

So abrupt was the congresswoman's decision that her husband, Jason, was heard at a recent Hamilton County Republican Lincoln Dinner saying that he had just bought a condo in Washington the day before she announced she wasn't going to run.

"It's not an easy job, running every two years, being attacked, raising money. It's really, really hard," Spartz said while in Westfield. "The country is very polarized. A lot of good people don't want to go into politics anymore. You and your family just get dragged through mud. You get attacked all the time."

When she was accused by a constituent at the town hall of not responding to his quest to keep his restaurant open during the pandemic, Spartz said, "And listen, you don't have to worry. I'm not running again."

McCarthy and government shutdown

After receiving a standing ovation, Spartz began her town hall in Westfield describing the current situation in Washington during a rambling 20-minute opening statement that sometimes veered from almost sing-song verbiage to intermittent laughter. It was like a Trumpian stream of consciousness, playing out at a district level. For all her word salads, a tormented logic emerges through Spartz's Slavic accent.

"I was ultimately frustrated by my speaker," she said of McCarthy. "We Republicans in the House have to take responsibility. Washington, D.C., has been governed, not by leadership but by crisis, for a very, very long time. Unfortunately, it's a very bad way to govern."

She blasted the continuing resolution scenario in the House to keep the government funded as "lazy" but said she would support those congressional Republicans in

exchange for adding "structures" to the budget process as well as an "enforceable debt commission."

She described McCarthy as a political beast. "Try to govern in a normal way and learn from your mistakes," Spartz said. "Kevin is not used to that. He came from these political machines, all his life in politics; he never had a real job. He came from a different cloth, he [doesn't] really have to deliver. His mentality is different, so he has to get some reality checks, right? I don't know how many," she said, prompting laughter from the crowd.

Spartz predicted a government shutdown would begin Saturday. "If we're going to be shutting down the government, we have to say why, OK?" she said. "That will look very bad for Republicans. I will be honest with you, we will be attacked. Shutting down the government in reality is not as tragic and bad, OK? All essential services will be provided. People will get back pay, it usually takes two to four weeks. When you have a shutdown, Democrats will drag you through mud. We give them a lot of ammo. We tried to govern normally and we did not succeed. Some of my colleagues say, 'We have to force this thing.'"

Spartz added: "It won't be the end of the world; we will resolve it. In the end, we will fund the government, but it will be a matter of how much drama we want to go through."

"This is probably going to be the end of Kevin," Spartz predicted, referring to the House speaker. "This is just politics and Democrats probably have the winning hand by now."

The beef with Garland

On X, formerly known as Twitter, Spartz's office posted excerpts from the Sept. 20 House Judiciary Committee hearing with Garland. "I was not very happy with him and am disappointed with the Department of Justice," she said to a round of applause in Westfield, specifically citing the Durham Report on the DOJ's probe of President Donald Trump on the Russia collusion issue.

At the U.S. Capitol committee hearing, she told Garland: "We're talking about [the] justice system. I don't

question — you're probably not a bad person. I don't know you. But what I'll tell you, you are in charge of the department. And people right now feel — you know, I look at [the] Durham report. And I called on the FISA [Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act] violations of ... millions of Americans, right?" Spartz likened it to the KGB, the former Russian secret service and intelligence agency.

"What he is doing is very destabilizing," Spartz said in Westfield's City Hall of Garland's actions. That is very frustrating and very dangerous for the country ... both sides have very frustrated people. That's how our adversaries can destabilize the country. They know if we fail, everything will be controlled by them. If America doesn't stand, everyone is screwed. China and Russia will take over the world."

A constituent in the front row at the Westfield City Hall praised the congresswoman. "You actually get it," the woman said of the DOJ's prosecution of former President Trump. "It's the oppression. My mother came from Czechoslovakia. This is oppression. I didn't think they'd start coming for Republicans. They are going to come for you if we don't stand up and do something about it. That's why I am here, to fight the oppression."

Spartz responded: "It's so hard to get out of that oppression. Very hard. You go through a lot of bloodshed to get your freedoms back. You lose them and then Americans go through a lot of bloodshed. This is terrible, living in a free country and thinking something like that can happen."



Taking on Zelenskyy and the war

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Spartz made several trips to Kyiv, the Ukraine capital, and Bucha, then famously crashed another congressional delegation to the war-torn country in March.

Spartz had expressed interest in joining the congressional delegation, CNN reported, but wasn't invited to attend the trip, which consisted primarily of House Foreign Affairs Committee members, a panel on which Spartz is not a member. She flew to the Ukraine border with Poland and linked up with lawmakers. CNN reported that her surprise appearance was initially viewed as a welcome addition — albeit an unusual one — as lawmakers sought to rally Western support for Ukraine.

THE VICTORIA SPARTZ FILE



Title: U.S. Rep. from Indiana's 5th Congressional District

Age: 44

Hometown: Nosivka, Chernihiv Oblast, Ukraine

Current residence: Carmel.

Education: Born Viktoriya Kul'heyko, Spartz earned a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Business Administration from Kyiv National Economic University. She earned a master's in accounting from the Kelley School of Business of Indiana University — Purdue University Indianapolis.

Career path: Spartz immigrated to the United States in 2000 at the age of 22 and became a U.S. citizen in 2006. She held a certified public accountant license from 2010 to 2021 and a real estate broker license from 2003 to 2020, both from the state of Indiana. She was a founding member of the Tea Party of Hamilton County. She served as chief financial officer in the Indiana Attorney General's office before her appointment by a Republican caucus to the Indiana Senate in 2017. She was also an adjunct faculty member at the Kelley School of Business in Indianapolis and has owned real estate and farming businesses.

Electoral: Spartz was elected to Congress in November 2020, defeating Democrat Christina Hale 50% to 45.9%, with Libertarian Ken Tucker receiving 4%. Spartz was reelected in 2022, defeating Democrat Jeannine Lee Lakes 61.1% to 38.9%.

Family: Married in 2000 to Jason Spartz; two daughters.

But members who were part of the official trip told CNN that Spartz was "argumentative," "accusatory" and "unhelpful" during key meetings with NATO members, generals and government officials, sparking concern that her presence was doing more harm than good.

"She crashed our CoDel [congressional delegation]. She was like a bull in a china shop," one GOP lawmaker told CNN. "I don't know if it was pent-up frustration or she didn't feel like she was getting enough proper information, but she was just accusatory and rude."

U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., told CNN that the topic of Spartz came up in multiple meetings and dinners when she was in Kyiv later and that she received a text message from a member of the Ukrainian parliament saying that Spartz has ruined her reputation in Ukraine.

"All the senior leaders were talking about it.

They're upset about it," Slotkin said. "They don't understand why she's doing this."

Spartz told CNN: "This accusation is a cowardly misrepresentation of facts by some jealous members or staff since we had a very productive bipartisan CoDel in March. I did not come to Congress to get paid for my travel vacations or dinners, but rather get things done. I have always been willing to spend my own hard-earned money to help with causes I care about."



gresswoman asking where the money is being spent. There's a limited amount of money; a limited amount of resources and you have to make sure it goes to proper places. I can only do so much but ultimately I am just a congressperson. He's [Biden] the president. That's my position and we'll have to hear from

According to one Howey Politics Indiana source, the Pentagon became alarmed when Spartz used her cellphone while in Ukraine, which was being monitored by Russian intelligence. That set up the prospect of a Russian missile killing a member of Congress, which could have triggered NATO's Article 5.

Then in July 2022, Spartz wrote Biden expressing concern over Zelenskyy's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak. Spartz asked the Biden administration "to brief Congress on the performed due diligence and oversight procedures related to" Yermak, who she wants to address allegations of impropriety surrounding Russian and Ukrainian defense in the war and anti-corruption efforts. .

"As President Zelenskyy works very hard to build alliances with the West and our country, it is our responsibility to inform him if we might have any concerns with key people around him," Spartz said in the letter. "It is also our obligation to the brave Ukrainian soldiers and strong Ukrainian people fighting this fight for freedom and international order for all of us."

Oleg Nikolenko, a spokesman for the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, alleged that Spartz was "trying to earn extra political capital" with her letter to Biden. Spartz's comments were "cynical" and "baseless speculation," Nikolenko said.

Spartz responded to Nikolenko's Facebook post, making a series of allegations against Yermak, saying that the chief of staff "had not properly handled peace negotiations with Moscow prior to the war, sought to prevent Ukraine from properly preparing for the conflict and delayed urgent military equipment purchases," according to The Hill.

"I encourage the Ministry to consider my statement with the kind of seriousness these questions about Mr. Yermak demand, instead of launching ad hominem attacks as they have thus far," Spartz said. "Ukrainians and Americans will be better served by our governments responding with due diligence — not defensive platitudes."

At the Westfield town hall, Spartz told her constituents, "I've been bitching and I was dragged through mud over accountability. 'She's pro-Kremlin because she's pro-accountability.' I was shocked, shocked! I'm a con-

[the] president on this."

She also accused Biden of failing to properly explain the Ukraine mission to the American people.

Spartz and Milley

After her allegations against Yermak, Spartz requested a meeting with Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley to discuss her concerns. Spartz told CNN that her meeting with Milley "was not my first meeting with him" and that "I give him credit for his willingness to listen."

At Westfield, Spartz told her constituents: "We have politics in the military and I told Gen. Milley this is total bullshit. You should not politicize it. Me and him have a lot of meetings. He is very unfriendly and I am generally a very passionate person. I'm not sure he can handle me, OK? I wanted him to hear some of the things he doesn't like to hear. He always has his own explanations. I was very aggressive and distrustful of him. I don't think he's a bad American, he's just too political. There's a problem with [the] Department of Defense. No audit in years. We are giving them too much money, although I don't mind higher pay."

Spartz and Trump

During the town hall, Spartz did not endorse Trump for the 2024 presidential nomination, but she told her constituents, "I don't agree with every position President Trump has, but he had the backbone to move the country and he had the backbone to move on some issues at the very top. Some things he will never get credit for because he says stupid things and I told him myself. When I meet with him I bitch about how he can be better."

She added: "Republicans and Democrats just hated him. They spent so much time taking him down any way possible, which wasn't good for the country. It's all bullshit, it's all bullshit. I am so sick and tired of fraudulent Republicans, I'll be honest with you."

Most of her Westfield constituents applauded. ❖

Shreve, Hogsett spar over downtown

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Downtown became the focus in the race between Democrat Mayor Joe Hogsett and Republican challenger Jefferson Shreve, who wants to reopen Indiana’s original roundabout — Monument Circle — to vehicular traffic.



Shreve announced his vision for the future of downtown Indianapolis on Tuesday. Shreve said he would bring developments and strategic initiatives downtown to make it a vibrant and thriving hub for residents, students, businesses and visitors alike.

“Indianapolis is currently falling short of its full potential. We are lagging behind peer cities like Columbus and Nashville,” Shreve said. “In May 2020, we lost hope in Mayor Hogsett when he was absent as portions of our downtown burned during riots. He was absent for several days after the riots. And he has been absent on many milestone decisions since then.”

Shreve made his announcement in Monument Circle. As part of Shreve’s plan, he will reopen the circle to vehicular traffic. Shreve said his decision comes out of conversations with the business community in and around the circle who have seen a drop in revenue since Hogsett closed it. “Monument Circle has gone from a bustling epicenter to a place where business owners vacate leases and people no longer feel safe,” Shreve said. “Once Spark concludes, it’s time to roll up the artificial turf and allow cars and more people to circulate around the Circle again.”

Other highlights of Shreve’s downtown vision plan include:

- Transforming downtown with Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis’ split by maximizing the opportunity of having two research 1 universities in the city. These universities, along with IU Hospital, will anchor a biotech and STEM corridor that reaches from Lafayette to Bloomington. Shreve said this growth will necessitate the creation of housing, dining, retail and entertainment options, contributing to a more vibrant downtown.

- Addressing vacant space by repurposing underutilized commercial properties into housing and modern office spaces to meet the demands of the growing downtown population as a result of having two universities. According to Shreve, he has an extensive real estate background and understands how to build and repurpose properties to their maximum potential.

- Revitalizing the city-county building so it is at full capacity and can support the Indianapolis City Market.

Shreve said he will also improve communication with vendors at the food hall so they’re aware of pending closures rather than concealing details like Hogsett has.

- Preserving the downtown heliport because it plays a critical role in emergency response as IU Health uses the heliport as its lifeline base of operations. Cities including Austin, Texas, Nashville, Tenn., and Columbus, Ohio, all have heliports. If Indy gives up the heliport land, our city will never get it back. There are too many future opportunities with the heliport, according to Shreve.

- Addressing aggressive panhandling through a comprehensive approach to create a safe and welcoming downtown, which includes doubling down on support for government and charitable programs that provide shelter and assistance to those in need.

- Beautifying downtown so it is welcoming to visitors the way it was when the city hosted the Super Bowl a decade ago. Shreve proposes offering small grants to property owners who seek to improve their buildings and their facades. A revitalized interest in downtown will bring back businesses we’ve lost under Hogsett’s administration said Shreve.

“It’s time for a new direction. A fresh set of eyes. We need a business-oriented, creative approach to finding solutions that make downtown Indianapolis the thriving destination it once was,” Shreve said. “It’s time to be exceptional again.”

Hogsett campaign manager Blake Hesch reacted, saying: “In the last 24 hours, Mayor Joe has displayed real leadership by announcing the construction of our city’s first low-barrier homeless shelter and his decision to bring hundreds of City-County employees back downtown to boost the local economy. Indianapolis residents deserve the opportunity to compare Mayor Joe’s \$9 billion dollar Downtown Resiliency Strategy with whatever Jefferson’s plan happens to be, but in order to do that our Republican opponent must provide more details than today’s 500-word vision statement.”

Marion County Republican Party Chairman Joe Elsener said: “Our city and downtown have been without a leader with a vision at the helm for too long. Mayor Hogsett was absent when our downtown was burning and has been absent as our business owners and residents have worked to rebuild. Today, Jefferson Shreve laid out a plan to capitalize on the opportunity the IUPUI split affords, revitalize the city-county building, repurpose vacant space, address aggressive panhandling, and bring our city back to the standard it held only a few years ago. Jefferson continues to show he has a vision for a thriving Indianapolis and is the leader our city needs.”

Horse Race Status: Leans Hogsett.



Carmel: Democrats say race is tight

Democratic sources are telling Howey Politics Indiana that this race between Republican Sue Finkam and Democrat Miles Nelson is in a “statistical tie,” according to internal polling. They also note that on Aug. 9, incumbent Republican Mayor Jim Brainard attended a fundraiser for Nelson at the home of Indianapolis Business Journal Publisher Mickey Mauer on the same night that U.S. Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind., had a fundraiser for Finkam. The Nelson campaign has spent more than \$40,000 on digital ads and three mail pieces have been sent. Our Democrat source said that Nelson is also benefiting from the controversies in Fishers surrounding Mom’s for Liberty, library book banning and school board takeovers. “Moderates and independents don’t want that Fishers crazy in Carmel,” the source said.

Nelson airing 2 ads

Nelson began airing two new 30-second ads. “The ads, named ‘Development’ and ‘Crown Jewel’, follow the introductory ad, ‘My Dad for Mayor,’ that debuted two weeks ago,” according to a news release. “Development’ highlights Nelson’s commitment to protecting our neighborhoods, defending our schools and his track record of working alongside Mayor Brainard to move Carmel forward. ‘Crown Jewel’ frames what’s at stake for the future of Carmel schools by highlighting the struggles in neighboring Fishers, where extreme partisans took over the school board in the last election. Carmel’s schools are nationally ranked for their academic performance and are a key driver of our local economy. The next mayor must be willing to lead on defending them from increasingly political attacks. Each of these ads are well supported by targeted five-figure media buys on digital, streaming, and social platforms across the city. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Finkam.

Evansville: Mayoral town hall

The Indiana Democrat African American Caucus hosted a townhall for the Evansville mayoral candidates last weekend. Libertarian Michael Daughtery and Democrat Stephanie Terry participated. Republican candidate Natalie Rascher was supposed to appear, but in a statement said she was never sent confirmation details.

Terry was endorsed by the Plumbers and Steamfitters. “Stephanie has been an elected official and leader for the past 12 years. She is a true champion for the working men and women of the city of Evansville and the members of Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 136,” said the union’s Business Manager John Bates. “On behalf of the Local 136 members we are proud to endorse Stephanie Terry as our next Mayor of Evansville.”

Terry also released her public safety plan. “With a background in local government, I know that public safety is the first job of city government. That’s why ensuring safety in our community is a top priority in the Forward Together plan,” Terry said on her website. “As Mayor, I will work with my team to take a broader look at what really goes into

public safety — from developing a holistic approach to policing, engaging with the community through outreach programs, and leveraging federal funds to provide new mental health care services.” **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

Fort Wayne: Braun fundraiser for Didier

U.S. Sen. Mike Braun, R-Ind., will host a fundraiser for Republican nominee Tom Didier at 6 p.m. Oct. 6 at the Hilton Garden Inn on Diebold Road. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Henry.

Terre Haute: Bayh ad for Sakbun

Former Indiana Gov. and U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh endorsed Democrat Brandon Sakbun in a video.

“I’m pleased to support Brandon Sakbun,” Bayh said.

“He’s young, he’s idealistic, he’s hard working, and he served our nation in the U.S. military. He’s got an

agenda for Terre Haute’s future: Clean and safe streets, good schools, a growing economy with good paying jobs. He’s going to be a great mayor.”

Sakbun says, “Thank you, Gov, together, we can turn Terre Haute around.” Bayh responds, “Amen.”

The mayoral forum

sponsored by Indiana State University was canceled due to a power outage. Sakbun and Republican Mayor Duke Bennett debate at 7 tonight. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Bennett.



Muncie: Robinson cites Ridenour mistakes

Democrat nominee Jeff Robinson sent out a mailer this week detailing “costly mistakes” by Mayor Dan Ridenour. “This week, many received my mailer questioning if Muncie could afford four more years of our current mayor’s costly mistakes and imprudent decisions,” Robinson said. “I wanted to take the time to explain each scenario a little further so that you have complete facts and know that when I say I’m for transparency, I mean it. In May of 2020, at the request of Dan Ridenour, who had appointed himself the director of the Muncie Redevelopment Commission (MRC), Delaware Advancement Corp. (DAC) purchased the property located at 316 W. Washington St. It was a small parcel no more than 1/5 of an acre that had been purchased in 2018 for \$27,000 by Robert Ratchford. The price that DAC paid by way of the mayor (also the director of MRC) was \$100,000. \$75,000 of which came from the mayor’s Economic Development Income Tax (EDIT) funds. No appraisal was performed and Mr. Ratchford reaped a nearly 400% return on his investment. This would just be a story of buying low and selling high in most cases.

Horse Race Status: Tossup.

Governor

Doden against school district consolidation

Republican gubernatorial candidate Eric Doden is calling on the Indiana Chamber of Commerce to end its support for school district consolidation in rural Indiana, State Affairs reported (Martin, State Affairs). In a letter, the Fort Wayne businessman labeled the business group's position as "damaging." For years, the Indiana Chamber has advocated for fewer school districts across Indiana. The Indiana Chamber re-upped its position last month when it released its long-term economic development plan. and communities." More than half of Indiana's school districts have fewer than 2,000 students.

Beckwith defends Rokita

The lone candidate for lieutenant governor, Republican Micah Beckwith of Noblesville, has come to the defense of Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita. Beckwith, a pastor, is defending Rokita over professional misconduct charges filed against him by the Indiana Supreme Court's Disciplinary Commission on Sept. 18. The charges stem from comments Rokita made regarding the investigation into OB-GYN Dr. Caitlin Bernard. The comments, in which Rokita referred to Bernard as an "abortion activist acting as a doctor," were made to Fox News commentator Jesse Waters last summer. "The latest display of unfair prosecution are the charges being brought against our Attorney General Todd Rokita for doing a television interview," Beckwith said in a letter to the editor of The Times of Noblesville. "How dare he inform the public?!"

General Assembly

Maxwell to be sworn in today

State Sen.-elect Randy Maxwell, R-Guilford, will be sworn in as state senator for Senate District 43 at noon today in the Indiana Supreme Court.

Ex-Rep. Jacob seeking Sandlin's Senate seat

Former state Rep. John Jacob is aiming for a return to the Legislature by seeking to replace state Sen. Jack Sandlin following his death last week, State Affairs reported Jacob announced his intentions Monday in a Facebook post that simply said: "I plan to run for State Senator, SD36 in the upcoming caucus. Please pray!"

State

Morales names Renner as election director

In a news release, Indiana Secretary of State Diego Morales introduced a new election director Dustin Renner. Renner is the former deputy legislative director with the Association of Indiana Counties and a chief deputy clerk for Bartholomew County. Renner will provide technical assistance to county clerks and the clerks' as-

sociation. He will be representing the Secretary of State's Office on the Statewide Voter Registration Core Team. He is responsible for working with Ball State University's Voting System Technical Oversight Program to help facilitate compliance with post-election audits and election equipment. He will assist with election related legislation.

Senior Statehouse Reporter Tom Davies and Senior Investigative Reporter Ryan Martin contributed.

Presidential 2024

Seven Republicans in muddled debate

The Republican presidential debate last night at the Reagan Library in southern California was notable for a few things (Politico Playbook): There were sharper barbs at Donald Trump from almost all of the seven candidates who made it onto the stage. The debate was marred by the moderators frequently losing control.

Mike Pence's Line of the night: "Well, first, let me say I'm glad Vivek pulled out of his business deal in 2018 in China — that must have been about the time you decided to start voting in presidential elections."

Biggest anti-Trump

jab: "My former running mate, Donald Trump, actually has a plan to start to consolidate more power in Washington, D.C., consolidate more power in the executive branch. When I'm president of the United States, it's my intention to make the federal government smaller by returning to the states those resources and programs that are rightfully theirs under the 10th Amendment of the Constitution."

Most awkward line: "Chris, you mentioned the president's situation. My wife isn't a member of the teachers union, but I gotta admit I've been sleeping with a teacher for 38 years — full disclosure."



Trump in Michigan for UAW strike

Republican Donald Trump railed against electric vehicles during a campaign stop in suburban Detroit Wednesday night, saying they're too expensive, aren't capable of traveling far enough and would spur job losses for Americans, according to the [Detroit News](#). Trump said: "Your current negotiations don't mean as much as you think." Trump argued that regardless of the outcome of the strike, the bigger threat to employees was the shift to electric cars and trucks, which he described as a "hit job" on Michigan and Detroit. "You can be loyal to American labor or you can be loyal to the environmental lunatics," Trump said at one point. "But you can't really be loyal to both. It's one or the other." ❖

Mayor Mueller runs against apathy

By JACK COLWELL
South Bend Tribune

SOUTH BEND – South Bend Mayor James Mueller, the Democratic incumbent, is seeking a second term in a race against apathy.



“No one seemed to know there was an election,” Mueller said of the reaction when he began campaigning in neighborhoods right after Labor Day.

Mindful of the upsets of Democrats in St. Joseph County last fall, when apathetic Democratic voters stayed home in droves, Mueller, though highly favored to win, said he will wage a full-scale campaign this fall. He plans TV and

digital appeals and mailings and continued door-to-door campaigning.

Those efforts will be aimed at more than just an impressive win over the Republican mayoral nominee, Desmond Upchurch, whose guilty pleas to criminal charges in the past have left him without usual Republican organization support. He has scant funding.

Mueller hopes as ballot leader to bring along to victory Democrats who ran as part of his team in the May primary, Bianca Tirado for city clerk, and city council candidates who would support administration initiatives in his second term. He experienced difficulties with a city clerk who wouldn't work with the mayor and council during his first term.

The mayor said a poll taken for his campaign in August showed him with a 66% approval and 27% disapproval ratings, high marks that should bring easy reelection if those approving his mayoral work also cast ballots for him. He said a breakdown by party showed approval ratings of about 80% among Democrats, 60% among independents and 40% among Republicans.

The poll rating among Republicans is significant. There's no way for a GOP upset in South Bend, a city where no Republican has been elected mayor since 1967, if there is no strong Republican dislike of the mayor and that is coupled with favorability among Democrats and independents.

Did the poll test an Upchurch vs. Mueller matchup? “We did, but we don't talk about that,” Mueller said. Presumably, that's because the results could leave Democratic

voters overconfident and at home again on Election Day. Upchurch, seeking to become the city's first Black mayor, said he remains hopeful of winning. He said he finds expressions of support for his contention that he should be evaluated as he is now, at age 46 and after two decades in the Army, rather than when he was charged with assaulting a girlfriend and larceny involving a credit card over two decades ago in his home state of North Carolina. He pleaded guilty in both cases. He served no jail time.

Upchurch publicly disclosed the two cases after becoming aware that information about his past had become known to both the Republican and Democratic organizations.

He said he still isn't receiving funding help from the Republican organization or invitations to some party events. His problems with the party go back to when he was the Republican nominee for county auditor in 2022. Although he came within 1 percentage point of winning, party critics say he would have won in a time of Republican upsets if he had campaigned more actively.

The two mayoral candidates will appear in a virtual forum Monday sponsored by The South Bend Tribune.

Mueller said he is confident that he can prevail in discussions of what he sees as the top concerns of the voters. He cited full staffing of the police force after years of shortages here and across the nation, expanded infrastructure programs and plans for more affordable housing.

Upchurch could present dissent on the mayor's handling of those concerns.

But will even Republicans listen now to the nominee who ran unopposed for the party's mayoral nomination? It's not Upchurch's fault that nobody else ran for the nomination. But his faults in the past leave

Republicans with a ticket leader not effectively leading.

If Upchurch has been written off in his own party, Mueller isn't in a race with him but in a race against apathy. ❖



Jack Colwell has covered Indiana politics for over five decades for the South Bend Tribune. Email him at jcolwell@comcast.net.

Spending and debt

By **SABRINA HAAKE**

GARY — Complaining about the nation's budget deficit after partying like drunk sailors on leave is bad theater — more farce than substance.



After Republicans added an obscene \$8 trillion to the nation's tab under the Trump administration, the Freedom Caucus, the most conservative of factions within the House, forced a debt ceiling showdown only four months ago. Now the same thirsty clowns are back, blaming Democrats for decades of deficit both parties built equally.

The Freedom Caucus has twice blocked the GOP's Pentagon spending bill, one of 12 annual spending bills, from even coming up for debate, in a major rebuke to House Speaker Kevin McCarthy. It also rejected a 30-day stopgap measure to allow more time to work it out. "We're not interested in a continuing resolution that continues the policies and spendings of the Biden, Schumer, Pelosi era," the Freedom Caucus Chair Scott Perry recently said of McCarthy's request for a 30-day stopgap measure. "We're here to put our foot down ..."

It's hard to decide what's worse, the drama or the hypocrisy. They are not mutually exclusive.

The Freedom Caucus says it will "fight with everything that we have." Calling its budget demands the "no security, no Funding" plan, the caucus isn't worried about a government shutdown. It's all about MAGA messaging on a nation they fervently wish was in decline. According to Rep. Clay Higgins, R-La., a government shutdown would be "small compared to the principle battle that we're in. We are not going to casually fund the decline of our country."

To address the "decline," the conservative members' plan demands an overall reduction in spending levels, including cuts in aid to Ukraine; a bill to construct more walls at the southern border and restrict asylum seekers; an end to "woke" policies in the military like abortion accommodations; and the elimination of the "unprecedented weaponization of the Justice Department and FBI" by cutting DOJ funding. Caucus enthusiasm is unhindered by the lack of evidence tying President Joe Biden to former President Donald Trump's many criminal indictments, the fact that Trump tried to turn the DOJ into his personal weapon, or by Trump's explicit promise if he is reelected, "to appoint a real special prosecutor" to target "the Biden crime family."

McCarthy, who made the mistake of bargaining with hijackers to get his speakership in the first place, parrots the caucus's interest in reducing the nation's spending, which, he says, is like a family earning \$24,000 a year, but spending \$35,000. "The greatest threat to our nation's

future," McCarthy now says, is "our national debt."

Too bad McCarthy and the Freedom Caucus couldn't find such fiscal restraint during the four years Trump was in office. Despite full hibernation during the Trump years, their fiscal restraint was only triggered when a Democrat entered the White House.

Although the federal deficit has grown through evenly divided Democrat and Republican presidencies since 2001, former Republican Congressman David Jolly observed that a quarter of the nation's total current debt — about \$7.5 trillion — happened during Trump's single term: "Roughly 25% of our total national debt incurred over the last 230 years actually occurred during the four years of the Trump administration."

As Trump so sagaciously observed, "This is the United States government ... you never have to default because you print the money."

McCarthy and the Freedom Caucus ignore that the national debt is driven by tax policy as much as spending. Following the Trump administration's colossal \$2.3 trillion tax giveaway to corporations and the nation's wealthy, Trump reminded his rich donor friends, "You all just got a lot richer."

Boy, did they ever. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office calculated that, over the next 11 years, Republicans' tax cuts will continue to increase the national debt by another \$1.9 trillion.

The national debt now sits at \$33 trillion, and for all their bluster about cutting entitlements, Republicans can't seem to stop gushing money for their donors.

Republicans reduced the top corporate tax rate to 21% from 35%, gifting corporations a 40% reduction in their tax burden in 2017. This largesse did not trickle down to anyone except superyacht makers and corporate investors who, instead of raising employee salaries or expanding production lines, used the windfall to fatten themselves through the repurchase of their own stock. It's a largesse we still continue to pay for, but the no security, no funding plan makes no mention of clawing back their gifts to the rich.

With limited time remaining until Oct. 1, the start of the new fiscal year, Congress will have to pass a continuing resolution, or a short-term extension on government funding, to buy more time for lawmakers to work out a spending package.

Here's hoping McCarthy takes a cue from the Senate, works out a bipartisan budget thrilling to no one and brings a vote on a continuing resolution to keep the government running to call his tormentors' bluff. If the clown car shuts down the government, at least the nation will know the names of the passengers. ❖

Sabrina Haake is a trial lawyer who lives in Gary and represents municipal clients in Chicago. Reach her on Twitter @SabrinaHaake.

Comparing Indiana to non-income-tax states

By **LARRY DEBOER**

WEST LAFAYETTE – Indiana has an individual income tax to help pay for state services that raises about \$8 billion a year, which is 36% of total general fund revenues. Most states have income taxes, but eight states do not: Alaska, Florida, Nevada, South Dakota, Tennessee,



Texas, Washington and Wyoming do not collect individual income taxes to fund their state governments. How do they get by? What do they do instead?

Let's compare the state revenues and expenditures of those eight income-tax-free states to Indiana's numbers, using U.S. Census Bureau data. Its "Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances" collects budget information from all the states and

sorts the numbers into categories so comparisons can be made. The most recent published numbers are for fiscal year 2021.

We'll use combined state and local totals, instead of just state budgets. That's because states without state income taxes might provide more services through local governments, funded with local government revenues. And let's limit the comparison to the general fund since Indiana's state income tax is used that way.

We'll use per capita numbers, not total dollars. That's because Texas and Florida's populations are way bigger than Indiana's, while South Dakota and Wyoming's are way smaller. Comparing total revenue and spending won't tell us much. It makes more sense to divide revenue and spending totals by state population to get dollars per person. Indiana's population is 6.8 million, which means the state income tax raises about \$1,200 a person.

Start with spending. Indiana's direct general expenditure is just under \$10,000 a person, according to census data. Florida, Nevada and Tennessee spend at least a thousand dollars less than that. One way to get by without an income tax is to spend less. Perhaps these states provide fewer government services, or possibly they've found economies and efficiencies to deliver the same services at lower costs. You can't tell from budget numbers.

Alaska and Wyoming spend more than Indiana does, nearly double per person. The data only hint at the

reasons. There are big numbers in the "other tax" and "other miscellaneous revenue" categories. Property taxes per person are much higher too. It's got to be taxes on oil. Alaska and Wyoming raise big money from severance taxes. Draw your state's boundaries around the oil fields, tax it as it comes out of the ground, and you won't need income taxes.

That leaves South Dakota, Texas and Washington. The first two spend a little less per person than Indiana, while Washington spends about 20% more.

Texas property taxes per person are over \$1,000 more than Indiana's. Another census source, the American Community Survey, shows 2022 median real estate taxes for homeowners in Indiana at \$1,467. In Texas, it's \$4,050. Property taxes fund local governments, and in Texas, 55% of total general spending is done by locals, compared to 47% in Indiana. Texas largely uses local property taxes instead of state income taxes to fund its government.

South Dakota has higher property taxes too, but relies on sales taxes even more. It raises \$500 a person more than Indiana in general sales taxes, even though the combined state and local sales tax rate averages 6.4%, which is less than Indiana's 7%. But South Dakota is famous for making lots of goods and services taxable, including groceries, prescription drugs, and many business and personal services. According to the Tax Foundation, South Dakota has the third-broadest tax base in the country. Indiana ranks 18th. According to the Urban Institute's Tax Policy Center, South Dakota taxes 61% of overall

household spending, while Indiana taxes 37%.

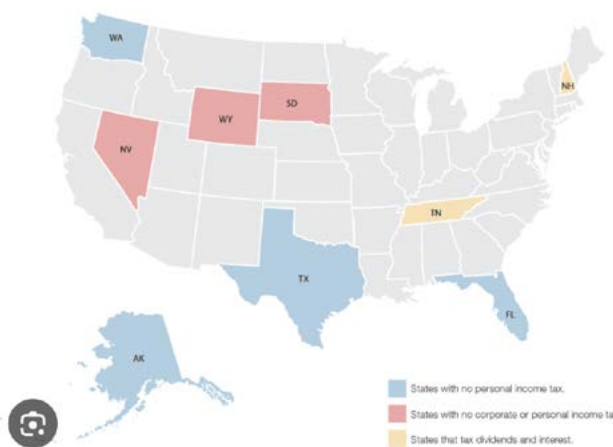
That leaves Washington. Washington also uses more property taxes, but again, sales taxes stand out. General sales taxes per person are 2½ times as high in Washington as in Indiana. Washington's state rate is 6.5%, but its local rates tack on 2.8% on average, for a combined 9.3%

sales tax rate. That's the fourth highest in the country. Washington's local governments account for 54% of total spending, because of all that local sales tax revenue.

And that's how eight states get away without using income taxes. Could Indiana become the ninth? ❖

Larry DeBoer is a professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University.

States With No Personal Income Taxes



Don't expect the UAW to grow

By MICHAEL J. HICKS

MUNCIE – The United Auto Workers strike against GM, Ford and Stellantis (Chrysler) is now a week old, with little evidence of progress towards a resolution. But it is always difficult to judge the progress of negotiations, so anything could've happened between my penning this column and you reading it. While we wait for news from the UAW and the Detroit automakers, it is worthwhile to reflect on the state of American unions.



Over the past 60 years, private sector unionization rates have fallen from almost one in three workers to about 1 in 20. — a surprisingly complete collapse of something that was an important American institu-

tion in the middle of the 20th century. Today, private sector unions are largely peripheral institutions in both labor markets and in politics.

Public sector unions are more important and fraught with more complexity than private sector union relationships. Unions representing public workers are more politically active and represent a very different set of employees, from sanitary workers to professors and physicians. They also represent about 40% of local government workers and 30% of state workers nationwide.

The cause of the decline among private sector unions really stems from the fact that union participation failed either to make U.S. firms more productive or to deliver better outcomes for workers. I suspect most of this failure is due to the antagonistic relationship between employers and unions. That result is not the hallmark of nations with more durable unions, such as Germany. But there are other explanations, such as U.S. unions focusing on broader political goals unrelated to labor outcomes for their workers.

There is disagreement among researchers on these issues, but what is not in dispute is simply that unionized companies in the U.S. failed to remain competitive, and so they downsized. That act cost union jobs and made it more difficult for unions to extend their representation to other employers. Despite all the news about the current strike, there is no evidence of a resurgence in the UAW or other industrial unions today.

Over the coming decade, it is certain that there'll be fewer automobile manufacturing jobs than today, perhaps far fewer than expected. This attrition will happen regardless of the result of the UAW strike. The UAW's labor action is high stakes, but the national consequence of the strike will be far more muted. Even if the UAW achieves all

its goals, its membership will continue to languish.

Despite the poor prognosis for the UAW, unionization in the U.S. might see more favorable conditions. We are in the midst of almost unprecedented changes to the nature of work, and there are reasons to suspect unions will find ways to expand their influence. Three types of occupations are especially susceptible to unionization.

The first of these are smaller, boutique occupations, such as the Writer's Guild of America, which represents most TV and movie writers. A strong organizing effort can yield significant benefits for its members. Its membership is currently on strike, and having an effect on the industry. I can imagine several other occupations successfully organizing in the coming years, but these still represent a small share of workers.

The expansion of remote work also means that onsite workers might find themselves with significantly expanded labor market power — especially within some health professions. I would imagine that nursing and other allied health care occupations are ripe for unionization.

Public-sector unions are the most likely to see significant growth. Indiana is a prime example of the growing likelihood of successful organizing. In inflation-adjusted terms, wages for teachers are lower now than they were two years ago. Salaries for state and municipal workers and those at state universities are all lower now than they were a decade ago. I work in a business college where unions would normally be held in low esteem. But I would be unsurprised if the college today voted to unionize, though I wouldn't support the move.

Tighter labor markets make it easier for workers to unionize, particularly for lower-wage work, which might be why Starbucks and other restaurants have seen more organizing activities. We also live in an unusual political climate where leaders of both parties are interested in courting unionized workers making it easier for union organizing efforts, even if there's no fundamental change in the political direction of unions.

Of course, the fact that we might be in a period of increased union activity does not mean the outcomes will be good for workers, bad for businesses or have any effect economywide. It would be remarkable if private-sector unions ever again approached 10% of the workforce. Even a decade of good news for unions would leave them a shell of their former glory.

The weakness of unions also tempers the effect of anti-union efforts. My research on right-to-work legislation, published in the *Cato Journal*, finds only modest employment effects. Right-to-work laws boosted employment modestly in states adopting them, but only when existing unions were strong. The weaker unions are, the less right-to-work matters for the overall economy. Although, if you own a business in a heavily unionized industry, unions are likely to be an unwelcome presence.

There are also factors working against unions. In the modern workplace, it is easier to judge the individual

productivity of workers. Highly efficient workers will have less desire to unionize because the goal of unions is to move all workers to "average" wages.

Automation also eases the demand for labor. Most of the factory jobs lost since peak employment in 1979 are due to the automation and digitization of the workplace. There is no slowdown in labor-saving technological expansion. Occupations that are most susceptible to automation are less likely to successfully organize.

The current UAW strike may last for some time, but in the end, it will be far less important than strikes of a half-century ago. If unions are to be a force once again

in the American economy, it will be through the difficult work of convincing workers that union membership is beneficial. Right now, it is difficult to convince workers to pay union dues and risk strikes. There is precious little good news for union organizers anywhere. Nothing that happens in Detroit is likely to change that. ❖

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.

How legislators divide us

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – None of what follows is a commendation nor a condemnation of the redistricting done by the Indiana House and Senate for drawing their districts as they pleased. They had constraints arising from shifting populations, the guidelines of the law and court cases, the career aspirations of their continuing members and the power objectives of their dominant party.



tor.

Redistricting is a complex process. In the Indiana House, by my calculations, 68 counties did not have sufficient population entitling them to an exclusive representative. The balance of our 92 counties (24) was large enough to have at least one exclusive legisla-

tor. How was this resolved? Of those 68 counties, 37 shared a representative with other counties but had only one representative to contend with. That left 31 small- and midsize counties split among two or more representatives. Then there were 24 counties with populations large enough to require more than one representative.

For example, House seat 55 represents parts or all of six counties (Decatur, Fayette, Franklin, Ripley, Rush and Union). At the other end of the spectrum is Marion County with 16 representatives, of whom only two are shared with other counties.

If we look at population per representative, Wayne County tops the list with about 66,600 residents with just one representative. This statistic contrasts with Newton, Pike and Pulaski where these counties of fewer than 14,000 people apiece were divided between two represen-

tatives each.

The story is similar in the Indiana state Senate where 80 counties did not have sufficient population to have an exclusive senator of their own. With redistricting, 63 of those 80 were not split and had but one senator to contend with.

Madison was the largest unsplit county and shared a senator with neighboring Hamilton County. Seventeen counties were split such that their interests were represented by two or more senators.

Marion County, with the state's largest population, was represented by nine senators, of whom four were shared with adjacent counties.

From the point of view of the 50 senators, 14 had only one county to represent and 15 had two counties. Eight senators had five or six counties in their portfolios.

These observations raise two questions: First, why aren't the Senate and House districts consolidated? If the House districts are each half the population of a Senate district, that Senate district could be overlaid on two House districts. It leaves the legislators room for partisan play but would simplify life for voters.

Second, is it best for voters of a city or county to have as few legislators as possible or is there safety in numbers? Are the interests of St. Joseph County diluted with five representatives and four senators where four and two, respectively, are required on the basis of population?

It might be useful to have answers to these questions before the next round of redistricting. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at morton-jmarcus@yahoo.com. Follow him and John Guy on "Who Gets What?"

The Menendez mess in New Jersey

By J. MILES COLEMAN

CHAROTTESVILLE, Va. – In 1999, then-former Gov. Edwin Edwards (D-LA), who had spent a not-insignificant chunk of his 16 years as governor in and out of court, quipped, “People say I’ve had brushes with the law. That’s not true. I’ve had brushes with overzealous prosecutors.”

At the time, Edwards was being accused of taking part in a bribery scheme involving riverboat casino licenses – he was later found guilty and served nearly a decade in jail.

At a press conference Tuesday, it was New Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez (D) who found himself in the hot seat. On Friday, the three-term senator, who is running for reelection next year, was indicted on federal corruption charges. During a search of his home, federal agents found roughly \$500,000 in cash stuffed in envelopes along with gold bars and other luxury items that the Manhattan U.S. Attorney’s office alleges were bribes the senator took in exchange to help Egyptian interests.

Menendez, like Edwards, is no stranger to the courtroom: A year before his 2018 reelection, a corruption case against him ended in a mistrial. Menendez has urged the public to afford him the presumption of innocence. In what seemed like an echo of Edwards’s quote from 1999, Menendez criticized the prosecution, “Remember, prosecutors get it wrong sometimes. Sadly, I know that.”

While many of his colleagues, at least those from his home state’s delegation, acknowledge that Menendez is presumed innocent until proven guilty, they have still called on him to resign. Over the weekend, Gov. Phil Murphy (D-NJ) as well as seven of the nine Garden State Democrats in the House called for his resignation. An eighth Democrat, Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D, NJ-12), a longtime friend of the senator’s, called the charges “very concerning” but stopped short of explicitly calling for him to step aside. Lastly, Rep. Rob Menendez Jr. (D, NJ-8) has defended his father. While national Democrats are treading more lightly, some prominent figures have said Menendez should resign – among them are former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D, CA-11). Earlier today, Menendez’s home-state colleague, Cory Booker (D-NJ), joined in on the chorus of calls for him to step aside. But Menendez is showing no signs of stepping down voluntarily.

Menendez’s intransigence prompted a bold move from Rep. Andy Kim (D, NJ-3): On Saturday, the three-term member from South Jersey announced that he’d run for Senate. Though other Democratic challengers may emerge, Kim’s early move may help build statewide name recognition. Kim can also credibly claim to have been ahead of the curve throughout the recent Menendez

saga – he was the first major New Jersey Democrat to call for the senator’s resignation.

We don’t know exactly what type of, or if any, behind-the-scenes politicking went on before Kim’s announcement. Still, it stands to reason that Kim – a non-machine politician in a state still influenced to some degree by machine politics – would have wanted to have some ducks lined up before mounting a challenge to his senior senator. One of the notable voices calling for Menendez’s resignation was 1st District Rep. Donald Norcross. Norcross represents the Camden area and has a brother, George, who is known for controlling a South Jersey political network (although the latter recently said he is taking a step back from politics as the strength of his ma-

chine has waned). For Kim, South Jersey may make for a nice statewide launching pad, while the Norcross machine could try its hand at picking Kim’s successor in the House.

In North Jersey, though, Menendez has built a durable machine of his own, with a base in Hudson County (Jersey City). Menendez’s pull was evidenced in last year’s NJ-8 primary, when no big-name Democrats ran against his son for an open seat. Although Menendez appears to have lost support from local Democratic parties in several key counties, he could still theoretically win a primary if his support in Hudson County holds, especially if more candidates enter the race. The party line system, one of New Jersey’s electoral quirks that has long been disliked by good government advocates, is the main reason why county-level parties hold outsized sway in the state.

Aside from Kim, two names to watch going forward will be Reps. Josh Gottheimer (D, NJ-5) and Mikie Sherrill (D, NJ-11). In 2016 and 2018, respectively, the two moderate Democrats flipped historically GOP districts in suburban areas of North Jersey, and both have been routinely mentioned as future statewide candidates. Gottheimer recently confirmed that he’ll fundraise with the younger Menendez (who could get a primary challenge from Hoboken Mayor Ravi Bhalla), making it seem less likely he’d challenge the elder. In addition to the Senate race, an open 2025 gubernatorial race looms, and Gottheimer and Sherrill could both hypothetically have their eyes on that race as well (Jersey City Mayor Steve Fulop, another Democrat, announced a campaign for governor months ago).

Looking past the members of the House delegation, New Jersey First Lady Tammy Murphy is apparently giving the Senate race serious thought. Assuming he goes ahead with his reelection plans, a crowded primary would offer Menendez his best chance of eking out renomination.

For now, though, in a contest where Kim and Menendez are the main players (there are a few other minor candidates running), the former would seem to have a clear electability argument. We might say, though, that despite the baggage he’d bring to a general election, we’re skeptical Menendez would actually lose his seat in



such a blue state. A general election featuring Menendez may still become a money pit for national Democrats, similar to what Ohio's contest was last year for Republicans. Democrats are playing a ton of defense across the national Senate map this year -- a single dime spent in New Jersey would be one dime too many.

In 2018, with his 2017 mistrial verdict in the rearview mirror, he took a lukewarm 62% in the primary against an underfunded challenger. In the general election, Bob Hugin, a wealthy businessman who positioned himself as a moderate, dug deep into his own pockets and self-funded virtually all of the nearly \$40 million that his campaign spent. Still, Menendez won by double-digits, 54%-43%.

While Menendez got the job done in 2018, he still ran behind House Democratic candidates. That year, Democrats won the House popular vote 60%-39% in New Jersey, as they took all but one of the Garden State's 12 seats -- this was especially stunning considering that, before 2016, the state's delegation was tied at 6-6. But in the Senate race, Hugin carried all six districts that were GOP-held earlier in the decade.

In 2018, the anti-Trump wave in the House struck New Jersey especially hard, and that likely provided a bit of a boost to Menendez up the ballot. The only three counties where he beat Booker's 2014 margins were all wealthy, college-educated counties that have trended Democratic in the Trump era. As the Senate nominee, Kim may at least be in a better position to boost the rest of the Democratic ticket. Although he was dealt a generous hand in redistricting and got a friendly seat for 2022, he has a proven track record of garnering crossover support. As a challenger in 2018, he ran about 10 points ahead of Menendez in 2018. Two years later, as an incumbent, he was reelected by 8 points as his district very narrowly stuck with Donald Trump, making him one of just seven House Democrats to win a Trump seat that year.

New Jersey is tough sledding for any Republican running in a federal statewide race, but one potentially high-profile challenger is Rep. Jeff Van Drew (R, NJ-2), who is reportedly considering the race. Van Drew, a long-time Democratic state senator, came to the House as part of the aforementioned 2018 wave but defected to the GOP after a little less than a year in Congress, when Democrats were first moving to impeach Trump. Since switching sides, Van Drew has been a reliable vote for party leadership. Hugin, Menendez's 2018 foe, now chairs the state GOP. Meanwhile, Mendham Mayor Christine Serrano Glassner is the only somewhat credible announced Republican.

If this were an earlier era, perhaps Menendez would feel more compelled to resign, given the seriousness of the indictment. But simply riding out the storm has proven to be an increasingly successful template for officeholders. In early 2019, after pictures from his old yearbook that appeared to be racially insensitive surfaced, most major Virginia Democrats called for Gov. Ralph Northam (D-VA) to step aside. But Northam, staying put,

vowed to make reconciliation a theme of his governorship and eventually left office with positive approval ratings. As he was on his way to his 2016 win, Donald Trump faced countless calls to relinquish the GOP nomination as aspects of his past came to light -- and we know how that election went. So, we may now just be in an era where the public is just more tolerant of, or at least numb to, these types of political shenanigans. The other consideration for Menendez is that resigning from office could be part of some sort of plea deal later on down the road -- we wonder if something similar will happen with embattled Rep. George Santos (R, NY-3).

In any case, we are keeping the New Jersey Senate race as Safe Democratic for now, but we'll continue to monitor the state of the primary.

As we alluded to earlier, with Kim taking the plunge against Menendez, the South Jersey NJ-3 is now an open seat. Burlington County, a Biden +20 county that is in Philadelphia's orbit, makes up the majority of the district. The district also takes in a few municipalities in Trenton's Mercer County, and includes an arm into Monmouth County, which is the reddest part of the district. The result is a seat that is a little less blue than New Jersey as a whole. Both parties have several prospects who could run in the district, though the Democrats have a stronger bench of legislators who are considering the race. Still, without a strong incumbent in Kim, we are moving the seat to the edge of the playing field and downgrading it from Safe Democratic to Likely Democratic.

P.S. Utah still safe Republican

Going back to the Senate just briefly, if Menendez has a reputation as one of the chamber's problem children, one of its most strait-laced members has also been in the news lately. Earlier this month, Sen. Mitt Romney (R) announced that he would not seek a second term representing Utah. Romney's announcement would seem to mark the end of one of the most unique careers in American politics today: in the course of less than a decade, he went from the party's standard bearer to, at times, what seemed like a voice in the wilderness against Trumpism.

While Romney may have had some trouble securing renomination, he cited age -- given his still-youthful appearance, it is easy to forget that he is 76 and would be in his eighties at the end of another term -- and the need for new blood as his reason for retiring.

In any case, Utah Republicans have won every Senate race since 1974 by double-digits, although last year, Independent Evan McMullin held Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) to a margin of just over ten points. ❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: Todd Young waged a lonely battle the other day. On Sept. 11, the Republican senior U.S. senator from Indiana delivered the Constitution Day convocation talk at Franklin College. Mindful of the date's significance and the setting, Young spoke about the ways the terrorist acts on Sept. 11, 2001, were an assault on constitutional principles and the role Founding Father Benjamin Franklin — the inspiration for the college's name — played in shaping those principles. Near the beginning of his talk, Young spoke of the threats that the grand American experiment in representative democracy faces. "No foreign army, however mighty, will ever destroy it," he said. Then came the first eye-opener in his talk. "Our Constitution's greatest tests will always come from within ... when society-wide transformations stress our system and cast doubt on our long-held values," Young said. Although the senator never spoke Donald Trump's name, the allusion to the former president and the many challenges he presents to constitutional governance was clear. Even though he referenced the terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon 22 years ago and our intensifying economic rivalry with China, Young did not refer to either as our greatest threat. No, the greatest threat to our nation, he argued, is ... us. Young's proposed defense against that threat was just as surprising. He said we needed more figures like Ben Franklin in leadership and in our midst. That said, the virtues Franklin possessed — his devotion to reason and scientific inquiry, his determination to understand and respect all points of view, his pragmatism — likely would make him a pariah in political circles these days. It was Franklin's placating voice that calmed Jefferson's pique over changes made to the latter's first draft of the Declaration of Independence. And it was Franklin's steadying presence that encouraged the drafters of the Constitution to seek out compromises — some inspired, some tragic — to the thorny disputes separating the young states. Those Franklin qualities now would render him suspect in a political and cultural environment in which showing even a modicum of respect for differing opinions is viewed as either heresy or apostasy. Young's implied argument was that we Americans are poorer for this. He's right about that. ❖



Nataliya Bugayova, Institute for the Study of War: Ukrainian forces have adapted. Ukraine's military decision-making is sound. Now is not the time for Western doubt but for the West to embrace Ukraine's way of war and commit to sustaining Ukraine's initiative on the battlefield. The summer 2023 Ukrainian counteroffensive faced a major challenge after Russia had months to build up its defenses in occupied Ukraine. The culmination of Ukraine's 2022 counteroffensives — the first being the liberation of

Kharkiv, followed by the Kherson offensive, attributable in no small part to the delayed provision of Western military aid — allowed Russia to build its defense in depth and prevented Ukraine from launching a third phase of its counteroffensive in winter 2022–2023. But the Ukrainian forces have done what successful militaries do — they have adapted and are now advancing. Ukraine recognized the realities of Russian defenses much faster than Western policymakers, who were expecting a rapid Ukrainian breakthrough. ISW previously wrote in July that Ukrainian forces had adapted their tactics after they encountered initial setbacks and were increasingly successful in using small infantry assaults backed by precision fires to make inroads against Russian defenses. Ukraine's ingenuity is yielding results. Ukraine maintains the battlefield initiative and its forces are advancing in Zaporizhia Oblast and near Bakhmut. Ukraine continues to liberate its territory and people and is slowly but steadily breaking through an incredibly formidable Russian prepared defense. Additionally, Ukrainian asymmetrical tactics in the Black Sea are preventing Russia's Black Sea Fleet from operating freely, forcing Russia to reposition naval assets, and increasingly challenging Russian forces in Crimea. The West must reinforce its military and diplomatic commitments and lean in to help sustain Ukraine's battlefield momentum. Ukraine is still facing an existential challenge from Russia, which requires Western aid to militarily defeat. ❖

Tom Nichols, The Atlantic: Every nation needs parties of the left and the right, but America's conservative party has collapsed—and its absence will undermine the recovery of American democracy even when Donald Trump is gone. The American right has been busy the past few days. The Republicans in Congress are at war with one another over a possible government shutdown that most of them don't really want. Representative Paul Gosar of Arizona (channeling the warden from *The Shawshank Redemption*, apparently) railed about "quislings" such as the "sodomy-promoting" Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and said he should be hanged. Normally, this is the kind of carnival of abominable behavior that would lead me to ask—again—how millions of Americans not only tolerate but support such madness. But today I'm going to ask a different question: Is this the future of "conservatism"? The immediate problem America faces is that it no longer has a center-right party that represents traditional conservatism, or even respects basic constitutional principles such as the rule of law. The pressing question for American democracy, then, is not so much the future of conservatism but the future of the Republican Party. ❖

Holcomb calls impasse ‘avoidable’

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric Holcomb said state officials have been preparing for the possibility of a federal government shutdown starting this weekend, although he called the prospect “avoidable” (Davies, [State Affairs](#)). The Republican governor told reporters Wednesday that he didn’t expect immediate disruptions of state government operations even if congressional Republicans and President Joe Biden can’t reach a deal by Saturday’s shutdown deadline. “This is avoidable if cooler heads prevail,” Holcomb said. The governor specifically cited concerns about continuing SNAP benefits, commonly known as food stamps, for some 600,000 Indiana residents, along with worries for federal workers in the state who could have their paychecks stopped. “That’s not to say there won’t be disruption and I hope it’s avoidable,” Holcomb said. “For a state like Indiana that prides ourselves on providing certainty and stability and predictability and continuity, that’s what we seek with our federal partners and that would be interrupted.”



Indiana eyes health stockpiles

SPEEDWAY — Indiana’s health leaders Wednesday told a commission that analyzes the nation’s biodefense capabilities how the federal government can better help the state respond to the next pandemic (Meeks, [State Affairs](#)). Members of the Bipartisan Commission on Biodefense, a privately funded entity, traveled to Indianapolis Motor Speedway this morning to hear testimony from Gov. Eric Holcomb and other state officials concerning the state’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges they faced in formulating that response. Expert testimony helps the commission form recommendations it

later passes on to Congress and the White House. Former U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks, a member of the commission, said it believes the threat of pandemics can be mitigated in the next 10 years if the country adopts the National Biodefense Strategy and Implementation Plan, the latest version of which was released in October. But to do so will require states to buy into the same notion. “We had over 25,000 deaths in Indiana, and we learned that we must do better,” Brooks said before turning to testimony from state officials. In the early days of the pandemic, securing personal protective equipment proved difficult as states wrestled for shares of a dwindling national stockpile.

Holcomb said the state would have more confidence in a similar situation if it knew what the stores of the national stockpile are. “The citizens, most importantly, deserve to know what that is,” he said. Former State Health Commissioner Kristina Box, who helped lead the state’s pandemic response in the role, said the state is “seriously considering” establishing its own “strategic state stockpile” of personal protective equipment and other needed supplies.

Supremes rule on PAC donations

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Supreme Court has ruled that state law prohibits corporations from giving money to super PACs — siding with an organization that has asked federal courts to find such limits unconstitutional (Davies, [State Affairs](#)). The Supreme Court’s opinion released Monday comes in a case first filed in federal court in 2021 by the Indiana Right to Life Victory Fund, which argues state law violates the U.S. Constitution by not allowing the fund to receive unlimited corporate contributions toward independent expenditures in political races. The group’s lawsuit is now pending with the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago, which ruled in April that it couldn’t determine the constitutional-

ity of Indiana’s law without knowing whether it actually limits corporate contributions — and asked the state Supreme Court to weigh in on that question. The 4-1 state Supreme Court decision found that one section of Indiana’s campaign finance law permits corporate contributions only to specific types of political organizations listed in other sections. That list does not include super PACs as that law was largely written before the U.S. Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision in 2010 that led to creation of such groups. “Corporate contributions to PACs are limited to contributions that are statutorily authorized, which do not include contributions to Super PACs for independent expenditures,” said the opinion written by Justice Derek Molter. Chief Justice Loretta Rush and Justices Mark Massa and Geoffrey Slaughter concurred with the opinion. Indiana Right to Life Victory Fund attorney James Bopp, who was one of the lawyers who pushed the Citizens United case, has sought to have the state limits declared unconstitutional.

Governor orders tribute to Sandlin

INDIANAPOLIS — Governor Eric Holcomb has directed residents of Marion and Johnson counties to place their flags at half-staff (WRTV). Holcomb is asking residents of the two counties to place their flags at half-staff on Friday, Sept. 29 in honor of State Sen. Jack E. Sandlin. Sandlin died unexpectedly on Sept. 20.

UAW strike likely to expand Friday

DETROIT — The United Auto Workers union says it will announce on Friday how it plans to expand its strike against Detroit’s three automakers (AP). The union says President Shawn Fain will make the announcement at 10 a.m. Eastern time.