



Ellspermann, Simpson set for tickets

Gubernatorial tickets diversify over the past two election cycles

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - Republican gubernatorial nominee Mike Pence officially named State Rep. Sue Ellspermann to the ticket Monday morning. Hours later, WISH-TV reported that John Gregg would tap Senate Minority Leader Vi Simpson to his ticket, with the official announcement set for 2 p.m. today on the south steps of the Statehouse.

The selections continue a trend where the top of gubernatorial tickets have been diversified by gender. The move came after House Speaker Brian Bosma and Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman had urged the GOP nominee to consider a woman.

Simpson ran a brief gubernatorial campaign in 2003, pulling out after the death of Gov. Frank O'Bannon and then Gov. Joe Kernan's reentry into the race (See page 5).

"Sue Ellspermann has the



Republican ticket Sue Ellspermann and Mike Pence (top) on the campaign trail prior to her selection. In lower photo, Sen. Simpson and Gregg with former First Lady Judy O'Bannon.

integrity, business background and experience in state government that will make her a great lieutenant governor," said Pence. "She will be a tremendous asset as we work to bring more jobs to Indiana."

At a joint presser in Indianapolis, Pence added, "I chose Sue Ellspermann plainly and simply because she is the best person for the job. She is uniquely qualified to serve as lieutenant governor of Indiana. She has the values, the experience and the character to meet the demands of that office, and should the need arise, to lead Indiana as our governor."

"It has been my pleasure to work closely with Sue Ellspermann for two years now, both as a candidate and as a legislator, and I can say without reservation that she is an excellent choice for lieutenant governor," Bosma said. "As part of the Mike Pence team, Sue will offer her tireless and positive campaign efforts through the November election, and more

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'Smart, motivated, ambitious'

By **RUSS STILWELL**

BOONVILLE - Of all the Republican possibilities in our clearly Republican leaning state I was mildly surprised that Congressman Mike Pence chose Sue Ellspermann, the freshman legislator from Ferdinand to be his running mate. It's not that she is not a bright, hard-working issue-driven ambitious officeholder - she is - but because I'm not sure what she brings to the ticket.

Upon learning of the announcement, I called a long time political operative who knows Ellspermann fairly well. His comments were succinct:



"First, they ought to talk to Mitt Romney because he basically laid out so many of the premises in it. If they want an argument, they ought to start with him."

- U.S. Rep. Joe Donnelly, on defending his vote for Obamacare



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"It really speaks to the character of Pence that he would consider someone who is a complete novice and has zero qualifications for the job. Does anyone in the state of Indiana think that she is prepared to be governor of our state?"

Has there ever been a freshman legislator on the gubernatorial ballot in the Hoosier state?

I know Sue Ellspermann well enough to know that you should not ever underestimate her and her ambitions. She defeated me in my SW Indiana legislative seat fair and square in the 2010 elections. And she did so without the standard negative campaign mode of operation that most challengers rely on to win. Actually, we both signed a "no negative campaign pledge" and to the best of my knowledge we both held true to our pledge.

But make no mistake about it, the race for governor and lieutenant governor is not just another interesting legislative contest. The gloves will come off and the race for ideological purity will begin.

When folks ask me about Ellspermann, I often use different adjectives to describe her. Words like hard working, motivated, smart, ambitious and good on her feet. She can speak and work a room standing up, sitting down, using a podium, sitting in a chair or just walking through the audience.

When campaigning for the 2010 primary (more about that later), Ellspermann actually knocked on my front door looking for votes. My wife was cordial but said "no thanks" when offered her campaign flyer. My point is that she and her campaign team ran a most efficient campaign that had scores of volunteers and motivated supporters. When my latest poll in early October 2010 showed that I had a 66% job approval rating and a 66% positive name recognition (with low negatives) I almost quit reading the poll since these kind of numbers normally mean reelection. But after

continuing reading, the numbers reflected a different scenario.

Voters were prepared to "not vote for Russ Stilwell." And they did. She won by 800 some votes out of 20,000 plus votes cast. My message to those who say Ellspermann is not ready for the job: Do not underestimate Sue Ellspermann when it comes to a mammoth political challenge. She's focused, motivated, self-confident and more.

But there are and will be challenges for the Pence campaign with Ellspermann on the ticket. The first thing that comes to mind is how voters (Tea Party voters?) will react when they realize that she voted in the Democrat Primary Election in 2008. One can only assume that she voted for Obama or Hillary. That would give even main street Republicans pause, let alone the Tea Party types who seem to dominate the Republican party. Her Republican ideological purity might be questioned.

Other challenges that the Ellspermann nod will bring is the absolute disgust that organized labor has for her outspoken views on right-to-work. Now I'm not suggesting that these voters were going to vote for Pence, but many of these union members believe Sue Ellspermann is the right-to-work lightning rod. They follow her with protests at many of her campaign and other public appearances. This is a blip that a campaign does not want to have.

Ellspermann does bring ideological purity and single-messaging that would be consistent with Pence. She is an attractive female candidate who never sees a challenge she doesn't think she can overcome with her educational pedigree. She balances the gender portion of the ticket and is an ideological twin of Pence when it come to supporting business interests and unwavering disapproval of anyone who believes in a balanced view of women's reproductive health issues.

I would suggest that Ellsper-



mann's geographical location does not bring very much to the political table except for her home county. Like most state legislators, her name ID is mostly not well known and most folks will not know much about her. That is a dilemma. The Pence campaign can identify her and introduce her as a leading economic development proponent who brings experience and gender balance or the Gregg campaign can introduce her as an inexperienced freshman legislator that brings more of the same from a clearly right of center ideological campaign team.

At the end of the day it will be Hoosier voters who will make the choice. And like most every gubernatorial campaign in modern history, the LG candidate is mostly along for the ride. The first test of any pick for LG is that they do no harm. Ellspermann passes this first test, provided she is forgiven for wandering into the Democrat primary

election booth in 2008 to support Obama or Clinton.

Time will tell if she passes the others that will surely come as the campaign grinds it way to November.

The gubernatorial race has always been between the candidates running for governor, not the LG candidate. The Ellspermann pick for Republican LG in 2012 will not change this time-honored fact.

A freshman legislator from a southern Indiana rural community will not advance the Pence campaign nor will it hinder the campaign. It will only add gender balance with a candidate who is smart, motivated and ambitious. ❖

Stilwell is the former Indiana House Democratic majority leader.

Pence/Ellspermann, from page 1

importantly, she will bring her extensive private and public sector experience in economic development, education and agriculture issues to the table as our next lieutenant governor. Sue Ellspermann is the right choice for Indiana."

The two appeared in Ellspermann's hometown of Ferdinand Monday morning.

As HPI first reported in last Thursday's edition, Ellspermann's background in academics and business dovetailed nicely into Pence's requirements for a capable "heartbeat away" replacement, with legislative and business experience.

Ellspermann has had a successful career in engineering and management.

"Mike Pence's top priority is job creation," said Ellspermann. "As an engineer, I understand the importance of technical skills development in our workforce to attract high wage, high tech jobs to Indiana."

But Ellspermann appears to be quite compatible with Pence on key social issues, such as abortion. In her first two sessions, she was author of three bills related to the subject. This past winter, a bill she unsuccessfully wrote required doctors to examine a pregnant woman in person and document the gestational age. In 2011, she was co-author of a controversial bill that banned Medicaid payments to Planned Parenthood. Pence, as a congress-

man, ignited that issue against Planned Parenthood and it was then taken up in the Indiana Senate, then the House and Gov. Daniels signed it into law. That issue has brought criticism from Democratic nominee John Gregg.

She coauthored a law that requires the Indiana Department of Child Services be notified if abortions are performed on girls younger than 14.

As a freshman member of the Indiana legislature, Ellspermann has compiled a 100% pro-life voting record including support for the historic pro-life gains in the 2011 legislature. In 2011, Ellspermann was spotlighted by World magazine as an example of the new wave of pro-life women entering the policy arena. "Sue Ellspermann is a solid pro-life voice who is already established as a leader on life issues at the Statehouse," stated Indiana Right to Life President and CEO Mike Fichter. "Her energetic and enthusiastic support for advancing pro-life policies in Indiana is appreciated, and we

look forward to the perspective she will bring to communities across Indiana during this important election cycle."

The Gregg campaign reacted with a statement from campaign manager Rebecca Pearcey, who said, "Congressman Pence and his pick for lieutenant governor, State Rep. Sue Ellspermann, represent the Tea Party ticket. Instead of fighting for jobs and opportunity for Indiana, they have both spent their political careers fighting for an extreme social agenda which would have denied thousands of Hoosiers access to critical health care services. Indiana needs an administration with a jobs agenda, not a social agenda."





Part of the Republican wave

She was first elected to the Indiana House in 2010, upsetting Democratic Majority Leader Russ Stilwell. She was part of a GOP wave that established a 60-seat majority and allowed Gov. Mitch Daniels to forge education, labor, anti-abortion and government reform. She emerged as a key advocate for the controversial Right to Work legislation that prompted a five-week Democratic walkout in 2011 before it passed in February and Daniels signed it into law. She advocated for the law on WJTS-TV last December, saying, "It brings jobs. Many large companies use Right to Work as a first filter with their site selectors."

After HPI broke the Ellspermann angle, the Pence campaign received a number of recommendations on her addition to the ticket.

Sources say that Pence discussed having Skillman stay on into his administration, but she declined, saying it was time to move on. While Pence also eyed House Speaker Brian Bosma and others like Marion Mayor Wayne Seybold, Indiana's political parties appear to be settling into a trend of gender balance, similar to the way county and district party chairs are handled.

"Sue Ellspermann is a logical choice for a partner to Mike Pence," said Lt. Gov. Skillman. "She brings many strengths that are a great fit for the duties of lieutenant governor. I especially appreciate her passion for helping our small cities, towns and rural counties thrive and grow."

Throughout the weekend, Pence's original list of 12 finalists gradually winnowed down. Bosma acknowledged that he wasn't interested, as did Valparaiso Mayor Jon Costas. Sources told HPI that Elkhart County Prosecutor Curtis Hill was called by the campaign and told he wouldn't be joining the ticket.

The last two lieutenant governors - Democrat Kathy Davis and Republican Skillman - were the first two females hold the post in Indiana's 196 year history. Senate President Pro Tempore David Long reacted by saying, "During her tenure in the state legislature, she has shown a strong acumen for economic development and fiscal matters, as well as the ability to take a number of courageous votes during the most challenging of circumstances. She will prove to be an excellent partner for Mike Pence, and Senate leadership looks forward to working with her."

"Today, Mike Pence proved why he has the judg-

ment to be our next governor by selecting Sue Ellspermann as his running mate," said Indiana Republican Chairman Eric Holcomb. "Her integrity and work ethic serve as examples of what public service is all about. Whether in the private sector or as a state representative, Sue has always been a problem solver who puts her constituents first."

Gregg-Simpson ticket

Going into the 2012 election cycle, Simpson and Gregg were part of a Democratic establishment working group that wanted to keep the party from another divisive primary. Gregg emerged as the gubernatorial nominee and U.S. Rep. Joe Donnelly as the Senate nominee. Simpson

had kept in frequent communication with Gregg, but had not officially endorsed his candidacy. Simpson had expressed concerns to HPI about Gregg's conservative leanings.

After a year in the field, Gregg has encountered fundraising problems, posting only \$584,000 at the end of the first quarter. There have also been concerns in Democratic quarters that Gregg had ticked off labor with comments he made about Right to Work shortly after the short legislative session.

With the Republican Governors Association pumping \$1 million into the Pence campaign earlier this month, on top of the \$5 million the congressman had already raised, time is running out

for the Democrats to get into the game.

Simpson brings gender to the ticket, and Republicans will attempt to cast her as a "Bloomington liberal" (she represents Bloomington and Indiana University, but resides in Ellettsville).

Simpson, however, has a strong labor voting record, though during the Right to Work legislative process, her tiny Senate caucus was little more than a speed bump on the road to passage.

Where Simpson brings strength to the ticket is on women's issues. She was a vociferous opponent to the legislation that stopped Medicaid payments to organizations like Planned Parenthood. Simpson will attempt to invigorate those wings of the Democratic Party.

Finally, this becomes the "Southern Indiana" election, with both major party tickets stocked deep with candidates from from South. ❖



Senate Minority Leader Vi Simpson campaigns at the Working Man's Friend Pub in Indianapolis during her 2003 gubernatorial campaign. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)



It took a long time for Hoosier women to access the ticket

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

NASHVILLE, Ind. - It was, utterly, one of the most painful political episodes I have ever had to watch as a political writer.

State Sen. Vi Simpson was seeking the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 2003. A straw poll had been set up for the annual Indiana Democratic Editorial Association shindig at French Lick on Aug. 23. Simpson's opponent, former Indiana and Democratic National Chairman Joe Andrew, fresh off naming millionaire Bren Simon as his running mate a month earlier, paid more than \$50,000 to bring 1,100 United Auto Workers into the rally.

When Andrew and Simpson presented their case, she was treated with epic rudeness, despite her long record in the Senate as a faithful labor advocate. She pulled out of the straw poll, saying, "I ask for your support, not today, but in May, when it counts."

Andrew won the straw poll, 595 to 27, and he would say, "We carried 94 percent of the vote. That's not divisive.

Fifty-fifty would have been divisive. I've often said this campaign is a journey, and today makes it clear that it is a journey that Bren Simon and I won't be making alone."

UAW Chief Terry Thurman added the coda to the ugly event: "Today we became engaged in the campaign, a brass-knuckled brawl. And there's no one better at a brawl than labor." He accused Simpson of "sleazy, dirty politics," and added, "If you were getting your butt kicked, wouldn't you say it was meaningless, too?"



State Sen. Vi Simpson was grim after leaving a 2003 straw poll at French Lick. At top, Joe Andrew is cheered on by UAW members and Bren Simon at French Lick. (HPI Photos by Brian A. Howey)

Simpson was only the second woman to run for governor in Indiana history at that point, following Democrat Virginia Dill McCarty's unsuccessful run in 1984, losing the nomination to State Sen. Wayne Townsend, who then nominated Ann DeLaney as the first ticket female. That ticket lost its challenge to Gov. Robert D. Orr.

I remember watching a beleaguered Simpson with her son, Jason Kinney, absorbing the punishment – from fellow Democrats, no less. It had been an utter roller coaster, with an appearance by Simpson ally and former U.S. Rep. Frank McCloskey, bald from cancer chemo-therapy, just hours before the straw poll.



Simpson hugged him with great emotion and McCloskey would soon move beyond us all. That night, Gov. Frank O'Bannon gave the dinner keynote, describing architect Harrison Albright standing atop the West Baden Hotel dome as the supports were removed. Many speculated the dome would collapse. In his last public words, O'Bannon described a Democratic party in "ascent" and closed by saying, "I feel like I'm on that dome tonight."

Seventeen days later Gov. Frank O'Bannon suffered a fatal stroke, setting in motion the kind of gender change in Hoosier politics that no one could have foreseen, particularly after the Simpson campaign episode.

In early October 2003, Gov. Kernan chose former Indianapolis controller Kathy Davis as the first female lieutenant governor candidate. Kernan said she was chosen as the most qualified person on the list "who happens to be a woman."

A week later, Joe Andrew learned that his "running mate" – Bren Simon – had bolted and would support the now looming re-candidacy of Gov. Kernan, who himself had pulled out of the race in November 2002. O'Bannon's death had catapulted him back into the fight.

Simpson would step aside as Kernan signaled he was in, saying, "The next time a woman wants to run for higher office, I hope the three words she hears are 'come on in' and not 'you can't win.'"

Mitch Daniels would bring State Sen. Becky Skill-



Gov. Kernan and House members applaud the first female LG, Kathy Davis in October 2003 (top photo). The Davis appointment dramatically changed Indiana gubernatorial politics, as seen in May 2004 when Mitch Daniels brought Becky Skillman (lower right) onto the ticket, and she became the first elected LG. (HPI Photos by Brian A. Howey)

man to his ticket in May 2004. "Becky Skillman is the best possible choice for the constitutional post of lieutenant governor," Daniels said when he introduced her. "She brings experience in the General Assembly, whose cooperation we will need to effect real change. She brings a wealth of knowledge about local government and its pivotal role. She knows the small cities and towns that have been ignored by this administration, and which must no longer be forgotten but must be included fully in Indiana's comeback."

Six months after that, the Daniels-Skillman ticket would defeat the Kernan-Davis counterpart, making Skillman

the first elected LG.

It took only four years for Jill Long Thompson to take it to the top rung, defeating Jim Schellinger for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination by an eyelash in 2008, then diversifying her ticket by nominating State Rep. Dennie Oxley. Despite Barack Obama's 50 visits to the state in which he was awarded Indiana's 11 Electoral College votes, Long Thompson had trouble consolidating the Democratic factions after a bitter primary, particularly in some labor quarters, and lost to Gov. Daniels by 18%. Long Thompson was unable to gain traction on the money front, and was unable to sustain any sort of TV ad campaign throughout the fall of 2008.



And now, Republican gubernatorial nominee Mike Pence has brought State Rep. Sue Ellspermann to his ticket. So this establishes an important trend line in Indiana politics, with government following a long-standing rule in both parties that if a chair is a man, the vice chair is a woman, and vice versa.



2008 Democratic gubernatorial nominee Jill Long Thompson. She diversified her ticket by adding State Rep. Dennie Oxley. (HPI Photo by A. Walker Shaw)

With 51% of the population female, and with 31 of the 150 Indiana General Assembly seats occupied by women (10 in the Senate, 21 in the House, or about a fifth of the membership in each chamber), the ranks of females are increasing. They are climbing the political ladder.

Pence's pick of Ellspermann appeared to have placed some pressure on Democrat John Gregg to follow suit. Until the Simpson announcement was leaked, the buzz in Democratic circles centered around Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry, Lafayette Mayor Tony Roswarski and former congressman Baron Hill.

Gregg apparently responded with Simpson.

The longer term question is at what point is where a woman follows the path of Mc-

Carty, Simpson and Long Thompson and makes a credible run for the top job all the way through a November campaign? Neither Davis nor Skillman took that path. For Davis, the appointment to LG and subsequent loss did not give her the tools to compile the political IOU lists that previous lieutenant governors Robert Orr and Frank O'Bannon had in achieving the ultimate prize.

Skillman was placed in a box by Daniels, who did not give her the politically valuable Commerce portfolio, and while she was popular with rank and file Republicans, was considerably weaker politically than Orr or O'Bannon. She briefly entered the 2012 race, then stepped aside for the Pence juggernaut.

When we observe the fresh face, the considerable retail political skills, an impressive business resume, and her adroit involvement of explosive policy issues related to labor and abortion, Sue Ellspermann may be the individual who can bring it all together. It's an intriguing thought, considering that many Hoosier Republicans will urge Pence toward a White House run in 2016 should President Obama defeat Mitt Romney this fall.

We've come a long, way ❖

Democrats as GOP-lite is a plan of lousy politics

By SHAW R. FRIEDMAN

LAPORTE - Any Democrat looking at statewide office or the state legislature needs to think twice before embracing Republican calls for yet more budget-busting cuts in corporate taxes as a way to spur job growth. Not only is such a plan lousy politics, the evidence is overwhelming that there are far better ways to make Indiana attractive for economic development and job creation.

First the politics: Hoosiers, when polled, know there is a better, smarter way to grow new jobs than simply cutting Indiana's corporate tax rates, which only reduces

much-needed tax revenues that pay for education. Indiana's business tax climate is already among the 10 most favorable in the nation, according to the Tax Foundation. A recent survey taken by the Kauffman Foundation ranks Indiana the fifth least costly state in the country for hiring a new employee. If taxes alone made the difference, we would be swimming in new jobs and prosperity, rather than awash in unemployment.



We've got the benefit of a recent statewide poll conducted by the Benenson Strategy Group of 600 likely November 2012 voters which was run March 6-8. Hoosiers simply aren't falling for Republican trickle-down theory and neither should authentic Democrats who want to give the voters a choice. Fifty-seven percent of Hoosier voters polled said their view of the best way to create new jobs was "we should improve our schools and produce more skilled workers and engineers so companies will be able to hire the workers they need here." Compare that with just 37% of Hoosiers polled who believe "we should lower taxes and loosen government regulations that cut into business profits" as the way to increase jobs.

That's right – by a margin of 20% – Hoosier voters know that investing in education rather than slashing revenues needed to support schools is the way to go. Democrats need to give Hoosier voters credit and tailor our arguments and our campaigns accordingly.

The politics of pushing for more corporate tax cuts are lousy because the public understands that trickle-down doesn't work. Democrats need to be ready to make the case on why there is a better way to accomplish economic development and job creation than corporate tax cuts.



Tim Bartik, senior economist with the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, says that “corporate tax cuts don’t have a large enough impact on increasing wages for families.” Instead Bartik points out that other revenues have to increase to make up for the lost revenue from corporate tax cuts or other stimulative spending in the budget has to be cut to balance a state’s budget.

Indiana University economist Dr. Morton Marcus has been writing on these pages for years that the best investment for Indiana’s economic development is to invest in our high school age young men and women.

As Marcus puts the case, public high schools, their students and their programs “can set the tone for life in many communities.” We can’t continue undervaluing education and we need to “prepare young people for adult responsibilities.”

The former Kelley School professor says “this is the Indiana to which we hope to attract Illinois residents and businesses. Our workers struggle to receive justified compensation for injuries on the job. Our unemployed must make do with less generous payments than similar people in most states. Our schools are inadequate by most measures. Our local streets and roads are in poor to dismal repair. Our highway program is more than a generation behind. Ancient sewerage systems all over the state are in need of modernization. Public transit is on life support where it still exists.”

The literature is there for any Democrat ready to articulate an alternative vision. Dr. Amlan Mitra, professor of economics at Purdue Calumet, says his research shows that “tax cuts and incentives are unlikely to attract businesses, stimulate economic activity and create jobs in a cost effective way.” As he told the Post-Tribune on April 3, 2011, “there is little proof that state and local taxes are major factors in business location decisions.” As Professor Mitra makes clear, it’s important for elected officials to partner with education, “which is a major driver of economic development.”

Let’s continue looking at the data rather than right-wing GOP political dogma. Definitive studies cited by academics like Dr. Mitra, such as Bartik in 2003 and 1991, and Fisher in 1997 state conclusively that “state and local investments in public services stimulate economic growth and create jobs.” In sharp contrast, Republican orthodoxy on job creation relies almost exclusively on tax cuts. Says Dr. Mitra, “a skilled workforce, accessibility to raw materials, proximity to customers and quality public services such as schools, roads and highways, sewer systems, recreational facilities, higher education and health services are far more critical determinants.”

The bottom line is that no real Hoosier Democrat ought to buy into GOP claims that what is needed is simply more tax cuts for business. Repeating right-wing talking

points only accomplishes three things – it helps turn right-wing GOP ideas into right-wing GOP realities, it legitimizes bad ideas and it elects Republicans.

Advocating Republican-Lite policies not only disenchant our core voters, it won’t win us independents either. Hoosiers want and deserve a real contrast and we Democrats have to be bold enough and smart enough to articulate a real, defined choice for voters. The polling shows Hoosiers want a different vision for job creation than simply more corporate tax cuts. Let’s give voters a genuine alternative in November. ❖

Shaw Friedman served as legal counsel for the Indiana Democratic Party from 1999-2004 and is a regular HPI contributor.

Obama, Romney in dead heat

WASHINGTON - After months of aggressive campaigning on jobs and the economy, President Obama and Mitt Romney, his likely Republican challenger, are locked in a dead heat over who could fix the problem foremost on voters’ minds, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll.

The parity on economic issues foreshadows what probably will continue to be a tough and negative campaign. Overall, voters would be split 49 percent for Obama and 46 percent for Romney if the November election were held now. On handling the economy, they are tied at 47 percent. Despite flare-ups over issues including contraception and same-sex marriage, more than half of all Americans cite the economy as the one concern that will decide their vote in the fall, relegating others — such as health care, taxes and the federal deficit — to single-digit status. More than eight in 10 Americans still rate the national economy negatively, but there are strains of optimism as it continues to recover from the collapse of 2008. A majority of Americans — 54 percent — say they are more hopeful than anxious about the situation over the next few years, while 58 percent are bullish about their financial prospects.

But it is a rearview-mirror assessment that could hurt Obama’s chances for a second term. One key indicator has hardly budged this year: Asked where they stand financially compared with when Obama took office in January 2009, 30 percent say they are worse off, and only 16 percent say they are better off. There is not a widespread sense that things would be better had Romney been president for the past three-plus years, but for the incumbent it is a critical measure. On this question, Obama’s numbers continue to resemble those of George H.W. Bush, who lost his bid for reelection in 1992 amid a flagging economy. ❖



Take care, the bus doors are closing

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS - What do you care if the Hammond buses stop running? Hammond is up there in the northwest corner of the most northwest county in the state. In fact, what do you care if all the public bus routes in the state were closed down?



Will it hurt you if Indianapolis, Bloomington, or Evansville called a halt to bus service by the end of June? Does your employment depend on the buses running in South Bend, Fort Wayne, or Lafayette? If your answer to either question is NO, then why would you want to see the buses in those cities continue to run along with those in Terre Haute and Gary?

Hammond is likely to see its buses stop on June 30 because there is neither the political will nor the political courage in Lake County to keep them running. The Hammond buses are operated by the RBA (Regional Bus Authority) which runs out of money in just a few weeks. Hammond doesn't want to support its own buses. The Lake County Council sees no reason to raise taxes or fees to support public transit.

The standard argument of public transit opponents is "the fare box ought to cover the costs of services." That's a great proposition which happens to work for only limited services over high density routes for middle- and upper-income riders. Routes that serve the standard community and meet the needs of lower income riders require subsidies.

It does not matter if we help people get to work or to school, to shopping or medical appointments, public transit is expensive. But it is a bargain. Do we have a more prosperous society if the poor cannot get to their jobs? Do we have a healthier society if the sick cannot keep their appointments? Is our future brighter if students are closed out from attending classes because the buses do not provide service?

The RBA has 30,000 riders per

month. A relatively small allocation of funds from a small county income tax could keep Hammond, East Chicago and Gary services running. (The latter two are separately endangered.)

Or a diversion of funds from either the food and beverage tax or the hotel/motel occupancy tax could solve the problem. But Hoosier lawmakers at the state and local levels are not to be moved by reason nor are they likely to succumb to appeals on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged.

In Indiana it is considered imaginative to propose an end to the corporate income tax, covering the resulting shortfall of revenues with added taxes from consumers. That those added tax revenues, derived from Internet sales, would be dedicated to public transit does not fly.

More money for public transit does require more accountability by transit operators. It's time to look hard at feather-bedding and costly work rules. In addition, state regulations need to be examined to see how they impede efficiency.

But first comes the money and there is little time to deliver before the last bus closes its doors in Hammond. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an independent economist, writer and speaker formerly with the IU Kelley School of Business.

HOWEY
Politics Indiana

When Chris Cillizza of the *Washington Post* posed the question to readers across the nation - Who's the most influential political journalist in your state? - the answer in Indiana was this: Brian A. Howey of *Howey Politics Indiana*. Since 1994, *Howey Politics Indiana* has provided news, analysis and commentary from throughout Indiana and Washington D.C. Howey reaches the most influential insiders with his newsletters and the masses with his weekly newspaper column and www.howeypolitics.com.

Photo: Howey with Richard Lugar and Sam Nunn in Russia.

The Washington Post
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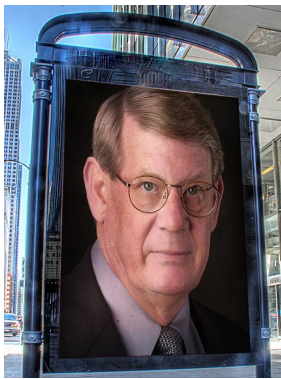


Rittenmeyer may be the ‘mayor of NW Indiana’

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE - No one yet is addressing Dennis Rittenmeyer as mayor. But for Northwest Indiana – a maze of municipalities in search of an identity – Rittenmeyer is about as close as anyone has been to being mayor of Northwest Indiana. Rittenmeyer has been named executive director of the newly formed One Region, One Vision for Northwest Indiana’s Quality of Life.

That’s a mouthful that needs some explanation.



One Region, One Vision is an initiative launched five years ago by the Times of Northwest Indiana. It is a wonderful goal, although it has lacked the substance to get anything of note accomplished.

The NWI Quality of Life Council, on the other hand, was started 20 years ago by the chancellors and presidents of the area colleges and universities. The Quality of Life Council, with a paid executive director, has identified

problems in the area and sought workable solutions. Yet the Quality of Life Council has had difficulty bringing together the diverse political and municipal factions that often look upon regionalism as a “four-letter word.”

The newly formed One Region, One Vision for Northwest Indiana’s Quality of Life could be the answer for an area that lacks focus for the common good. As a result, countless turf wars to benefit those holding office override efforts to unite Northwest Indiana.

Because the region can’t put a united foot forward, it suffers, particularly when seeking help from the General Assembly, which looks upon Northwest Indiana with a wary eye.

Downstate legislative leaders don’t know who to talk to in Northwest Indiana, largely because too many people wrongly profess to be the region’s voice, while in fact there isn’t one.

This could be changing.

While the One Region, One Voice for Northwest Indiana’s Quality of Life provides the leadership for a stronger region, Rittenmeyer could well be the best choice to make it happen. Consider that Rittenmeyer retired last year after 24 years as president of Calumet College of St. Joseph. He turned a struggling, urban operation into a viable part of higher education in the region.

Rittenmeyer not only has the time to pursue what’s best for the region, he is a fighter. Besides being a college president, Rittenmeyer may best be remembered as the man who championed a regional bus system. For more than a decade, Rittenmeyer shepherded the push for a regional bus system in the face of politically and racially driven opposition.

In the end, Rittenmeyer accomplished what he set out to do – write the blueprint for and win approval for a single, regional bus system. Unfortunately, NWI legislators and the Lake County Council failed to come up with a permanent funding source. Because local politicians care more about their futures than those who rely on buses, Rittenmeyer’s quest for a regional bus system, which is on life-support with temporary funding, is slated to go out of business at the end of June. I’m sure Rittenmeyer is thinking of that as he begins the new job to improve the quality of life in NWI without the benefit of bus service.

According to the Times, Rittenmeyer will coordinate the new agency’s “action initiatives,” which range from a regional health care council to the mayors’ roundtable and a chamber of commerce coalition. He also will facilitate quarterly “community conversations” designed to air issues of importance to the region.

If you slice through all of that bureaucratic blabber, it should become apparent that Rittenmeyer’s job is to bring the movers and shakers in both the public and private sectors to the table. It’s not really been tried before on this grand a scale.

And who knows, one of the first efforts might be to get the area legislators and local officials to agree on and pass a permanent funding source for bus service. That certainly would improve the quality of life for a region that talks about but lacks one vision. ❖

Rich James is the former editorial page editor and columnist for the Post-Tribune in Merrillville.



Digger Phelps dives into South Bend violence

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND - Digger Phelps doesn't have to do this. But he will.

The former Notre Dame basketball coach and present ESPN analyst wasn't deterred by some city council members seemingly more interested in political bickering and protocol than in supporting his efforts to curb South Bend's youth violence.



"I'm not interested in protocol and politics," Phelps says. "If I didn't follow protocol, then give me a technical. But we need to move together when we have kids killing each other."

Phelps, who has remained a South Bend resident, began his efforts after returning home from basketball's Final Four and being shocked by a Tribune article headlined: "City sees youth violence spike."

While statistics from early in the year show most crime down a bit, the many shootings in April and May signal escalating youth violence _ kids shooting kids in turf battles and retaliation. Perpetrators may have dropped out of high school, but they're still around, unable to get jobs but able to get guns, join gangs and deal drugs. Phelps long has promoted mentoring in South Bend schools.

And more mentoring is part of his efforts now _ only a part. He acknowledges that mentoring, though it can be so important in young lives, is a long-range help, not some magic wand to stop violence today.

In addition to seeking 500 additional mentors to reach kids still in school, Phelps is seeking to promote after-school programs and community policing that features cooperation of neighborhood watch teams and police.

His call for each Common Council member to recruit three neighborhood watch teams brought an angry outburst from one member complaining that proper protocol was for the request to come from the mayor or through a measure sponsored by a council member.

Actually, the call went out to the members from Council President Derek Dieter, a police officer who backs Phelps' efforts. So does Mayor Pete Buttigieg.

Phelps isn't talking about the type of "watch" in that fatal Florida shooting.

"This is not Florida. That was not community policing," Phelps says.

He wants neighborhood watch volunteers who wouldn't carry guns or try to enforce the law themselves or even summon police for arrests in most cases.

"The police are not looking to arrest everybody," Phelps says. While watch volunteers would call in police in cases of violence and drug operations, Phelps wants them to get to know what's going on and talk with kids who are heading for trouble.

He is adamant that watch volunteers reflect the makeup of the neighborhood, especially with black volunteers in black neighborhoods.

He learned the importance of this in heading Operation Weed and Seed in the administration of President George H.W. Bush. The goal was to weed out crime with concentrated federal and local efforts in some of the most troubled neighborhoods in the nation and then seed programs to bring economic recovery and prevent regression. One project in Hispanic neighborhoods wasn't working well, and Phelps found one reason was that there were no Hispanic community police officers, nobody who looked like, talked like or understood the folks there.

Why?

Phelps was told that Hispanics couldn't pass the police tests.

"Then change the tests," he demanded. If none of the many intelligent, capable Hispanics could make it, there was something unfair about the tests.

Phelps doesn't have to do this.

He's already is involved in many projects elsewhere.

In New Orleans, his efforts to turn troubled McDonough High School into a school with culinary training for jobs in that city's great restaurants brought such success that the state recently announced \$35 million in funding for the facility.

In Memphis, Phelps will be commencement speaker next week at the Soulsville Stax Music Academy Charter School, also in a troubled area, that he has helped to promote. All students in this first graduating class have been accepted for college.

Phelps doesn't have to do this in South Bend.

But one compelling reason is the advice of former Notre Dame President Theodore M. Hesburgh, who urged him after coaching days to do more than just work on TV and mentoring projects. Phelps says that Father Hesburgh, champion of civil rights, would want him to work now for a very important right for youths amid violence - the right to live. ❖

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



Eric Bradner, Evansville Courier & Press: Indiana's nearly all-male slate of statewide elected officials and its congressional delegation appears likely to see some female faces added. Those seats are dominated at present by Republicans, and it's three Republican women and one female Democrat who could hold major offices after the November election. If the gubernatorial candidate, U.S. Rep. Mike Pence, selects state Rep. Sue Ellspermann, R-Ferdinand, as his running mate, she'd be campaigning to replace outgoing Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman as the only female statewide officeholder. Meanwhile, two women who won congressional primaries earlier this month — former state Rep. Jackie Walorski in northcentral Indiana's 2nd District and former U.S. Attorney Susan Brooks in the suburban Indianapolis 5th District — will also appear on November's ballots. Since they are the Republican nominees in strongly Republican districts, both are likely to win those seats and head to Washington in January. The candidacies of these three women — Walorski, Brooks and, possibly, Ellspermann — could be especially important in a year in which gender politics could play a major role in several key races' outcomes. Typically, around 60 percent of men vote for Republicans, and around 60 percent of women vote for Democrats. In Indiana, a redder-than-average state, those numbers probably favor Republicans just a bit more. For Democrats such as U.S. Senate candidate Joe Donnelly and gubernatorial candidate John Gregg, there is no path to victory that does not count on winning the support of women who are independent or even moderate Republicans. Pence has been a champion of withholding government funds from organizations such as Planned Parenthood — a stance that is in line with anti-abortion advocates, but that Democrats call a strike against women's health and see it as a winner. Democrats hope to win on issues important to women. ❖

Paul Begala, Daily Beast: It stinks to be an incumbent officeholder these days. British Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservative Party lost nearly 300 seats in local elections. Nicolas Sarkozy of France is now properly addressed as Monsieur le ex-President. His partner in austerity, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, saw her Christian Democratic Union suffer what she called a "bitter, painful defeat" in the May 13 election. In Greece, the two major parties that have been running the country for decades were rejected by the voters. About the only elected world leaders who have been able to extend their hold on power are Russia's Vladimir Putin—whose party's recent victory was widely seen as fraudulent—and Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu—who cannily cut a deal to expand his governing coalition without an election. So unless you can rig an election or cancel it, you're in trouble as an incumbent.



The dirty little secret of campaigns is that there are usually just two messages. Either: Stay the Course or It's Time for a Change. When Barack Obama won 53 percent of the popular vote and carried 28 states, just 14 percent of Americans thought we were moving in the right direction. So it was obviously a Time for a Change election. When Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton coasted to easy reelections, the country's mood was undeniably Stay the Course. The election coming up in November is stuck in between. Americans don't know whether to forge ahead or swing back. Quick readers' guide to the 2012 polls: until the final two weeks, ignore the head-to-head horserace. It's an artificial question: "If the election were held today, would you vote for Mitt Romney or Barack Obama?" You can almost hear the poor person on the other end of the phone saying, "It's only May. We don't know Romney's running mate or his platform. We haven't had debates or even a campaign." Instead of obsessing about who's up and who's down, look at how folks view the direction of the country. When the "right direction" number creeps up close to 50 percent, the incumbent is going to win. But when it plunges, get ready to back the moving van up to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. At this writing, that all-important indicator is a middling 31 percent—almost precisely equidistant from both an outright rejection of Obama and an incumbent's safe reelection.. ❖

Larry Riley, Muncie Star Press: Last week, I looked at Delaware County Republican primary election results for possible answers to why more of that party's voters turned out than Democratic Party voters for the first time in a long time. With a deeper look at elections past, I think I found the last time GOP voters outnumbered Democrats in a primary here: 1976. That year, blue collar Democrats crossed over to vote for The Great Communicator, Republican Ronald Reagan. An estimated 200,000 Hoosier voters were believed to have crossed party lines that year to vote for Reagan. That's not the story of 2012. Can Democratic primary results tell us anything? For starters, while Republicans were finding more voters than ever, not only did fewer Democrats than Republicans turn out, the fewest Democrats turned out than in at least 35 years, more than a generation. Some of the answer has to be the national picture. Of course, nobody expected anything remotely close to the 2008 primary mega-turnout exceeding 27,000 Democrats, of which President Obama got 47 percent, or 12,972 votes. But incumbent Obama at the top of the ticket this month got merely 7,698 votes. That's only 60 percent of his 2008 figure and only 28 percent of that year's Democratic total. Could vast numbers of voters have concluded that putting a charismatic visionary and gifted orator in the land's highest office turned out to be a bad decision, given he had no experience running anything? ❖



Judge orders handwriting sample

SOUTH BEND - A former northern Indiana county Democratic chairman and three others have been ordered to provide handwriting samples to a special prosecutor investigating allegations of forged signatures being used on petitions to place Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton on the state's 2008 presidential primary ballot. The South Bend Tribune reports St. Joseph Superior Court Judge John Marnocha granted the request Monday by special prosecutor Stanley Levco. Marnocha ordered Butch Morgan and three former workers in the county voter registration office to provide handwriting samples as well as samples of writing not prepared for litigation purposes. Morgan has denied any wrongdoing. He resigned in October following 16 years as county chairman after the South Bend Tribune and the Howey Politics Indiana newsletter reported they had found hundreds of questionable signatures.



Obama tells NATO Afghan war will end

CHICAGO - President Barack Obama and leaders around the globe locked down an exit path from the war in Afghanistan, affirming Monday that they will close the largely stalemated conflict at the end of 2014, a strategy that means their troops will still be fighting and dying for another two-plus years (Associated Press). Gathered in Obama's hometown, the sprawling coalition of 50 NATO members and allies declared an "irreversible transition" that will

put Afghan forces in the lead of the combat mission by the middle of next year. Even in a backup role, though, the U.S. forces and all the rest will still face combat and attacks until the war's end. In essence, the partners, led by Obama, are staying the course, sticking with a timeline long established and underscoring that there will be no second-guessing the decision to leave. Since 2010, they have been planning to finish the war at the end of 2014, even as moves by nations such as France to pull combat troops out early has tested the strength of the coalition. Leaders presented it as a significant turning point in the war. It will be "the moment when throughout Afghanistan people can look out and see their own troops and police stepping up to the challenge," said the NATO chief, Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

Auburn soldier killed in Aghanistan

AUBURN - Sgt. JaBraun S. Knox, a DeKalb High School graduate serving in the Army, was killed Friday when his unit came under fire in eastern Afghanistan, the Department of Defense said Monday. Knox, 23, and Sgt. Michael J. Knapp, 28, of Overland Park, Kan., died from wounds received during the attack near the Pakistani border, the department said. They were assigned to the 1st Battalion (Air Assault), 377th Field Artillery Regiment, 17th Fires Brigade from Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state. Afghan officials said the two sergeants were killed by enemy rocket fire that also killed three civilians. Four others were wounded when the rocket struck the base in Nari district of Kunar province. The area is a haven for insurgents fighting along the poorly marked border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Knox's family was notified of his death on Friday. His remains

were received at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware on Saturday.

Pence defends on residency issue

INDIANAPOLIS - After residency questions sank the ambitions of three of Indiana's top Republicans, it seems natural that Democrats would look for a fourth score with the issue (Associated Press). U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar and former U.S. Rep. David McIntosh both lost primary battles earlier this month on questions of where they lived and whether they were properly registered to vote in Indiana. Former Secretary of State Charlie White was kicked out of office and sentenced to one year of home detention after he was found guilty of illegally voting in the 2010 Republican primary election. The fourth target of the residency question is now Republican gubernatorial candidate Mike Pence. But just as trying to stretch a double into a triple is usually asking for an out, stretching the rare triple into an inside-the-park home run is almost unheard of. One day after the primary earlier this month, Democratic gubernatorial candidate John Gregg did just that, criticizing Pence for raising his family in Virginia since his election to Congress in 2001. When asked about the importance of maintaining a residence in Indiana during a recent meeting with newspaper editors in Indianapolis, Pence paused before answering the question. "Well, I'm a lifelong Hoosier. I was born and raised in the state and everyone in my family is a Hoosier, except our son: he's a Boilermaker," Pence said with a pinch of snark, referencing his son's attendance at Purdue University. Then he laid down a clean, reasonable response: He owns two homes, one in Indiana and one in Virginia. He says he chose to raise his family in Virginia so they could stick together.



Lugar praises Ellspermann

WASHINGTON - U.S. Sen. Dick Lugar praised the selection of State Rep. Sue Ellspermann on the Mike Pence ticket, citing her as a graduate of the Lugar Series. "Cong. Pence has made an outstanding choice in State Rep. Sue Ellspermann," Lugar said. "Her background in economic and workforce development is exactly what Indiana needs right now. Hoosiers are going to be very impressed as they get to know her," Lugar said. "When the Lugar Excellence in Public Service Series began, we envisioned assisting highly skilled professional women like Sue Ellspermann making the transition from their careers to politics. Sue Ellspermann wasted no time in doing just that. She graduated from the Lugar series in May 2009 and announced in September she was running for the Indiana House. I had the privilege of hosting a kick-off event for her in Evansville on October 10, 2009. She went on to victory and has been an impressive legislator in her first term."

Legislators hear of IPS takeover

INDIANAPOLIS - The quarrel over the state takeover of four Indianapolis Public Schools has gone before a legislative study committee (WIBC). IPS Superintendent Eugene White told legislators he has no interest in obstructing the transition to outside school operators next fall. But he says IPS will exercise its right to compete for students. And he again complained the state seized the four schools despite improving scores and other extenuating circumstances. He says IPS ranks as the state's poorest school district economically. State law gives the state the option of seizing control of schools which don't show

progress for six years. State superintendent Tony Bennett quotes U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, saying consistently poor performance requires dramatic action. But Bennett says the state needs to focus its most intensive effort on the schools which are at neither the top nor the bottom of the performance rankings. He says the state's goal is to give schools the help they need before the acrimony of a takeover. The Indiana Department of Education has accused IPS of moving or swapping out equipment from the four takeover schools and creating bureaucratic obstacles for the operators and for teachers who choose to remain at those schools.

Notre Dame sues Obama over ACA

NOTRE DAME - Roman Catholic dioceses, schools and other groups sued the Obama administration Monday in eight states and the District of Columbia over a federal mandate that most employers provide workers free birth control as part of their health insurance (Associated Press). The federal lawsuits represent the largest push against the mandate since President Barack Obama announced the policy in January. Among those suing are the University of Notre Dame, the Archdioceses of Washington and New York, the Michigan Catholic Conference and the Catholic University of America. Notre Dame's president, the Rev. John Jenkins, said in a statement that the school decided to sue "after much deliberation, discussion and efforts to find a solution acceptable to the various parties." The university argued that the mandate violates religious freedom by requiring many religiously affiliated hospitals, schools and charities to comply. "We do not seek to impose our religious beliefs on others," Jenkins said. "We simply ask that the government not impose its values on the university when those

values conflict with our religious teachings." Other religious colleges and institutions have already filed federal suit over the mandate, but observers had been closely watching for Notre Dame's next step. The university, among the best-known Catholic schools in the country, has indicated past willingness to work with Obama, despite their differences with him on abortion and other issues. Notre Dame came under unprecedented criticism from U.S. bishops and others in 2009 for inviting Obama, who supports abortion rights, as commencement speaker and presenting him with an honorary law degree.

Skillman heads delegation to China

INDIANAPOLIS - Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman will lead a delegation of mayors, business and agricultural leaders on an economic development mission to China next month. This is Lt. Governor Skillman's second trade mission to China as lieutenant governor. During the trip, Lt. Governor Skillman will recognize Indiana's 25-year relationship with Zhejiang province. Indiana and Zhejiang began a sister-state relationship in 1987 under the leadership of Governor Robert Orr. "Governor Orr had incredible foresight to recognize the potential for growth Indiana stood to gain," Lt. Governor Skillman said. "Years later our partnership with China is strong, and there are opportunities for additional job growth and investment if the effort to maintain the relationship continues." The delegation will leave June 11 and return June 17. In Zhejiang, meetings will take place in Indianapolis' sister city of Hangzhou and Anderson's sister city of Yuhang. The delegation will also spend one day in Beijing. Delegates from Bedford, Decatur, Fort Wayne, Muncie and White County will meet with representatives from their sister-cities.