



The gun battle arrives in Indiana

Mayor Bloomberg's TV ad targets Sens. Coats, Donnelly

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana is one of 13 states where the gun legislation debate is playing out on TV screens. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg has announced a new \$12 million television ad campaign that will push senators in key states, including U.S. Sens. Dan Coats and Joe Donnelly, to back gun control efforts, including comprehensive background checks.

Bloomberg announced the ad campaign by Mayors Against Illegal Guns on Saturday, just days after Senate Democrats touted stronger background checks while acknowledging insufficient support to a ban of assault-style weapons.

"While I think we are going to win this, celebrating in advance isn't the right thing to do," the mayor said on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday. "We've got to go out, we've got a lot of work ahead of us. But I don't think we should give up on the assault



Mayor Bloomberg's TV ad is running in Indiana where he hopes to influence U.S. Sens. Dan Coats and Joe Donnelly (pictured, upper right).

weapons ban. But clearly, it is a more difficult issue for a lot of people I don't know that reflects the NRA's power. It may be just that people have different views about assault

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GOP Members react

By **MARK SCHOEFF JR.**

WASHINGTON - Republicans in the Indiana congressional delegation assert that the GOP should maintain its principles but be more open to those who disagree with some of them – echoing a recent national party overhaul plan.

"Conservative values are good for everyone," said U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon, R-8th CD. "We need to [say] that in a way that doesn't alienate anyone; that doesn't put litmus tests on people's views and exclude them from the Republican Party."



"You are at real risk with running in conflict with what has always been thought to be the essence of state police power."

- Justice Anthony Kennedy, on Wednesday in the DOMA case



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A 100-page report released last week by the Republican National Committee, "The Growth and Opportunity Project," largely made the same point. It offered a sober, sometimes scathing, assessment of the party's shortcomings that led to the loss of House and Senate seats in 2012.

The document said that the party has driven away young and minority voters and that it reached "all time lows" in public perception. "We have become expert in how to provide ideological reinforcement to like-minded people, but devastatingly we have lost the ability to be persuasive with, or welcoming to, those who do not agree with us on every issue," the report states.

It goes on to recommend dozens of changes in messaging, campaign mechanics, fundraising and outreach to various demographic groups.

U.S. Rep. Luke Messer, R-6th CD, said that the report is "very balanced and candid." The self-analysis could help the party expand its appeal beyond the elderly and married couples. "It wouldn't be a good growth strategy to simply wait around for the young to get old and the single to get married," Messer said. "We need to grow our base."

The report by the national Republican Party reminds Messer of one that the state GOP wrote in 2002, when he was the party's executive director and Jim Kittle was chairman. That blueprint was meant to be catalyze the "rebirth" of the state party in part by increasing African Americans and Hispanic support.

Messer said that the effort was "modestly successful" and demonstrated that follow-up is central to party improvement. "The key is that the outreach not just be symbolic," Messer said. "It needs to be organized, persistent and include the investment of meaningful resources over time."

Hispanics should be a natural

constituency for Republicans, according to Messer, because by and large Latinos are family oriented, hard working and socially conservative. But they voted overwhelmingly Democratic in 2012.

"We don't have enough trust with that community for them even to listen to us," Messer said.

The GOP report acknowledges that the party also has significant ground to make up with other demographic groups that don't include white males.

"We can and should be the party of young people, minorities, women and anyone else who shares our belief in free enterprise and limited government," U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks, R-4th CD, said in a statement. "My own campaign benefitted from support from many of these same groups because we took the time to have honest and real conversations about the issues they cared about. It takes hard work, but it's a commitment our party must make."

The GOP's "limited government tent ought to be big enough to include differing opinions on social issues, immigration or even tax-and-spending issues," Messer said.

That accommodation extends to same-sex marriage, a topic that was tackled by the Supreme Court this week. Messer emphasized that he supports traditional marriage between a man and a woman. "Our party must be big enough to include a diversity of opinions, but my view hasn't changed," Messer said.

None of the lawmakers who talked to HPI suggested that Republicans should alter their policy stances. U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski, R-2nd CD, said that the party's insistence on cutting federal spending resonates in north central Indiana.

"The feeling I'm getting is that people are very glad they have a clear choice on the budget," Walorski said. As she travels around the district – and goes to her local supermarket



each Saturday – she said that people are less concerned about party labels than the direction that Congress is going.

This is especially true of the women Walorski meets. They are most often concerned about the economy. “They want to know what I’m doing to make sure they have more money in their pockets,” Walorski said.

That’s a general theme from all constituents.

“They want to know what I’m doing for them,” Walorski said. “They’ll tell me I’m doing a good job or ‘I

don’t agree with that.’”

Bucshon also stressed that he’s an “honest, straight shooter” about his own political views when talking to voters but that he tries to demonstrate that they’re all his constituents.

“We’re working on everyone’s behalf regardless of who you are,” he said. ❖

Schoeff is HPI’s Washington correspondent.

Guns, from page 1

weapons than they do about background checks. Ninety percent of the people want background checks, period.”

National Rifle Association CEO Wayne LaPierre called Bloomberg’s rhetoric on gun reform “reckless” and “insane” when he appeared on NBC’s Meet the Press.

“He’s going to find out that this is a country of the people, by the people and for the people and he can’t spend enough of his [money] to try to impose his will on the American public. They don’t want him in their restaurants, they don’t want him in their homes, they don’t want him telling them what food to eat – they sure don’t want him telling them what self-defense firearms to own. And he can’t buy America. He’s so reckless in terms of his comments on this whole gun issue.”

Donnelly’s office has told the Washington Post’s Plumline blog that the freshman Democrat is open to a bipartisan compromise on background checks that help keep guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill while protecting 2nd Amendment rights. Asked if this means Donnelly is open to expanding background checks to all private sales (with exceptions like family members), spokeswoman Elizabeth Shappelle replied: “Yes.”

On Jan. 16, Donnelly told WISH-TV, “I’m a supporter of the 2nd Amendment and I am also a dad. I think it is absolutely critical our children know they can go to school and be safe and we can go to a workplace and be safe.” Asked about background checks, Donnelly said, “I think we can tighten those up,” adding that he is flexible on background checks.

“While we have 2nd Amendment rights, we have responsibilities,” Donnelly added.

On Tuesday in Fort Wayne, Donnelly said, “I want to make sure that people with, say, a felony or dealing with mental illness cannot get their hands on weapons that can cause so much destruction,” he said during a visit to Fort Wayne. “And so we’re trying to put together a piece of leg-

islation that will reflect that.”

Coats, who has an “A” rating from the Indiana chapter of the NRA, reacted to President Obama’s gun legislation on Jan. 16 by saying, “The Newtown shooting was a horrific tragedy that had an impact on all Americans but especially every parent, teacher and student, and it



Mayor Bloomberg’s Independence USA PAC propelled U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly to a special election win just across the Indiana line in the 2nd CD in Illinois.

is right for our country to reflect on how we can prevent such events in the future. As we learn more about the President’s proposals, we must protect 2nd Amendment rights and ensure the federal government does not punish responsible gun owners. I will not support legislation or executive actions that would affect gun ownership rights for law-abiding citizens, including any assault weapons ban. Laws alone cannot eliminate all acts of violence. As Americans we need to examine a culture that increasingly glamorizes violence and determine how we can better identify and address mental illness in our society.”

Coats spokeswoman Tara DiJulio told HPI on Wednesday, “Sen. Coats wants to see what the final legisla-



tion is." On the expanded background checks proposed in the Senate bill, DiJulio said that Coats believes "more needs to be done on existing laws."

In 1991, Coats voted for the Brady Bill and background checks, according to the "OnThe-Issues" website.

The ads come to Indiana after Bloomberg dropped \$2.2 million in the Illinois 2nd CD special election to replace U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., which borders just to the west of the Indiana State-line. Much of that money was spent in the sprawling Chicago TV market, which covers the northwestern corner of Indiana.

In doing so, Bloomberg helped elect former state legislator Robin Kelly, who defeated former Rep. Deborah Halvorson in a race that became a focal point in the ongoing gun debate since the massacre in Newtown, Conn. Bloomberg's super PAC, Independence USA PAC, spent big to defeat Halvorson, who received an "A" rating from the National Rifle Association during her one term in Congress.

The \$2.2 million spent on behalf of Kelly was more than all of the other candidates spent.

Bloomberg is not a completer stranger in Indiana political races. In October 2012, the mayor made a \$15,000 donation to the state Senate campaign of Democrat Tim DeLaney, who lost to State Sen. Scott Schneider.

U.S. Rep. Marlin Stutzman, R-Howe, chairman of the House Republican Study Committee's 2nd Amendment Initiative, responded to Mayor Bloomberg's television ads by saying, "Here in Indiana, responsible gun owners value the 2nd Amendment and know that Mayor Bloomberg's knee-jerk reactions on everything from sodas to firearms aren't going to solve the problem."

On his Facebook page, Stutzman, who owns an AK47 assault rifle and a number of other guns, said, "As the President continues his aggressive gun control campaign,



New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg (top) and NRA CEO Wayne LaPierre traded shots on NBC's "Meet The Press" last Sunday. The Bloomberg ads began running in Indiana two days later.

Republicans need to stand and defend our right to bear arms now more than ever. The President's out-of-touch agenda is based on misinformation and will infringe on the freedoms of everyday Americans. The Republican Study Committee's 2nd Amendment Initiative will help equip conservatives in Congress to defeat the President's crusade for ineffective and unconstitutional gun controls. I look forward to working with my colleagues to protect the constitutional rights of law-abiding citizens to defend themselves. The RSC has held the line on conservative, common-sense principles for years and I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with my colleagues in this cause."

Former Fort Wayne Mayor Paul Helmke, who headed the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence from 2006 to 2011 and is now a professor at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs in Bloomington, told the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, "If Congressman Stutzman and others would be actually willing to discuss the issue and have an open mind on the issue and learn about the issue, then it could be positive. What kind of background or understanding does Congressman Stutzman have

about violence in cities like Fort Wayne and urban areas? I came to the gun-control issue as mayor, as much as anything, when we had an increase in shootings. After hiring police officers and working with the faith community and others, I still realized how weak the gun laws were in the country."

Helmke still owns a home in Stutzman's 3rd CD.

South Bend Mayor Peter Buttigieg recently announced he was joining Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a nationwide coalition of over 900 Democratic, Republican, and Independent mayors.

"This is totally compatible with support for the Second Amendment," Buttigieg said in his recent State of the City address. "In fact, 74% of NRA members agree with us that anyone purchasing a gun should have to pass a criminal background check. While we take the steps I have described here at home, Congress should make it easier for us by applying common sense at the national level."

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Mayors talk common themes in their State of City addresses

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – They innovate. They motivate. Cajole. Brag. Quote colleagues, scholars and presidents. They define benchmarks and praise allies and enemies.

In an annual tradition in most of Indiana's cities, mayors deliver their state of the city addresses in their city council chambers, at service clubs or churches. Their citizens watch as they define success, claim victories over the past year and lay out blueprints for the future.

In South Bend, second-year Mayor Peter Buttigieg talked about process. "Action requires three ingredients: Leadership, resources, and purpose. It takes a team capable of delivering, the resources to deliver with, and a clear set of priorities on what it is we will deliver," he said last week.

In Kokomo, second-term Mayor Greg Goodnight observed how his city stands out. "Last year, I began this address by pointing out that our city, for the first time in decades, was 100 percent debt-free," Goodnight said. "I am proud to say that one year later it is still true. We owe nothing from the general fund, from our TIF district or from EDIT dollars. Kokomo is the only second-class city in the entire state that can say this. What's more, we have accomplished this while building our cash reserves, not depleting them."

That observation stands out, given that just five years ago – as Chrysler and General Motors faced bankruptcy and liquidation – Kokomo was on the brink of an economic disaster.

"In November 2007, a few months before we came into office, the city's property tax cash balance was \$5 million in the red," the Democrat said. "In November of last year, it was \$9.8 million in the black. That's a swing of nearly \$15 million. We came into office saying we should have a 15-percent reserve and we've accomplished this during the worst recession our entire nation has faced in nearly a century. At a time when many cities across the Midwest and the nation were struggling just to keep the

lights on and the streets paved, we improved our standards by cutting costs, building our infrastructure and increasing efficiency."

Second-year Evansville Mayor Lloyd Winnecke's address on Tuesday night was to renew his battle against methamphetamine, while underscoring infrastructure improvements. He cited a new cloverleaf interchange coming to the Lloyd Expressway, a proposed new hotel for the downtown, an IU Medical School program and better parks.

"We've been successful in demonstrating to the NCAA that Evansville is ready for additional events and a new convention hotel is integral to making it happen," Winnecke said of the new Ford Center that came on line replacing Roberts Stadium, which will become the site of a new park.

And for second-term Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, it was articulating a drop in crime, millions of dollars in neighborhood improvements and the conversion of the city bus fleet to hybrid and natural gas vehicles.

"Since oil and gas prices are determined elsewhere in the world, the only way we can protect our national security interests is to reduce our dependency on oil and find alternative energies to power our transportation needs," said Ballard. "So in early December, I signed an executive order to move Indianapolis' entire city fleet to post-oil technology by 2025. We will be the first city in the nation to do so. This would be a huge breakthrough. It would save taxpayers \$6 million a year. And, it would dramatically reduce our largest use of oil in the city."

There were several common themes. Buttigieg talked about reaching out to work with neighboring Mishawaka and St. Joseph County and Republicans like Govs. Mike Pence and Mitch Daniels. Ballard lauded the man he defeated in 2007 – former Mayor Bart Peterson – for instigating the charter school education reforms. Winnecke put the welcome mat out to people throughout the world.

"In order to promote economic development, cities must be welcoming to all people," he said.

In a similar vein, Goodnight noted the construction of an international student dorm. "In August, Kokomo-Center Schools opened a new residence hall for international male students," Goodnight said. "This initiative has been so successful that Kokomo Schools already plans to expand it by opening a second facility for female students this fall. This project allows Kokomo to host new students



Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight highlighted the fact that Kokomo has no debt, the only 2nd Class city in Indiana with that distinction.



from around the world; it is a great opportunity, and one that would not be possible without these dormitories. If this program did not exist, it would be a loss for the visiting students; but even more, it would be a loss for us and for our children."

Indiana of a century ago found city leaders suspicious of "outsiders" and even companies from out of state. Today, we find mayors welcoming people from different nations and creeds.

Here are some other highlights from the speeches these four mayors have given this year:

Mayor Buttigieg

The South Bend mayor noted, "In every department, and in the mayor's office, I have set exceptionally high expectations, drawn and retained exceptionally capable leaders. These leaders are helping me to establish the organizational culture of this administration: High-tempo, creative, innovative and people-oriented. No matter how good your team and how strong your resources, in order to take action you must have clarity of purpose. Last year, honing and refining priorities established throughout community conversations of 2011, our shared purpose and mission came into even clearer view. The goal remains as simple as it is challenging: To ensure that South Bend is a safe, well-connected community where everyone can thrive."

Buttigieg sought to place South Bend in a global context. "To put it simply, connectedness is the currency of success in today's economy," he said. "That's why we have been reaching not only beyond city limits and county lines, but also party lines. Last year we traded in partisanship for partnership, teaming up with Gov. Daniels and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, and within weeks we were celebrating the creation of over 60, good-paying, union jobs at a new Hubbell-Raco facility on the Northwest Side, with local and state support. We look forward to sustaining this partnership with the new administration, and I have spoken with Gov. Pence about more ways to work together to create jobs in our area. You can care about



Evansville Mayor Lloyd Winnecke (top) and South Bend Mayor Peter Buttigieg.

the values that make you a Democrat, and also care enough for our economy to know when to reach across the aisle to get something done."

Mayor Goodnight

He acknowledged something that HPI has pointed out over the years: That being a mayor is one of the toughest political jobs in America. "In January of 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson spoke before well over a thousand delegates at the National League of Cities' annual convention in Washington, D.C.," Goodnight said. "Think about what the president had on his agenda that day: The Vietnam War. The Civil Rights movement. Rampant inflation. And yet, in that speech, President Johnson said, 'When the burdens of the presidency seem unusually heavy, I always remind myself it could be worse. I could be a mayor!'"

"Well, rather than viewing this job as a burden, I am reminded every day when I speak to our citizens that even though it is difficult at times, it is a privilege to serve as mayor of this great city," Goodnight said. "I want to take a moment tonight to thank the people of Kokomo for their continued support and for allowing me to serve as your mayor."

Goodnight also was in an outreach mode. "That is why we partnered with Howard County government and the towns of both Russiaville and Greentown on a \$600,000 brownfields grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. This grant will allow us to test properties in need of development, leading to cleanup and re-use. We are also excited to see that our Urban Enterprise Association is working to renovate homes and rehabilitate neighborhoods in our city's core. By cleaning up blighted properties, they encourage others to improve their own properties, making our community cleaner and safer while increasing everyone's property values."

And Goodnight quoted former Indianapolis Mayor Bill Hudnut: "Cities die from the inside, and are reborn the same way."

Mayor Ballard

The mayor of Indiana's biggest city made this observation: "It has been nearly 36 years since Elvis left the building."

That was a precursor to his initiative of building on the old Market Square Arena site – a place, as most of us



know, where Elvis Presley performed his last concert. "After nearly 12 years and two false starts, the time is right – and the economy is ready – for the city to take another serious shot at redeveloping the former site of Market Square Arena," Ballard said. "So Monday, my administration will go to the marketplace seeking plans and proposals to turn the north lot of the former MSA site into something better than surface parking. We know there is a lot of interest. We've already been approached with some interesting ideas. But make no mistake, I want to be bold."

Ballard talked about the impact of the charter schools. "It is vital to our city's economic future – and to the future of our children – that we improve the educational outcome for students at our schools," he said. "Indianapolis is off to a great start. Our 26 mayor-sponsored charter schools now serve 8,500 students and we have 11 more schools on the way. Eighty-two percent of mayor-sponsored charter schools received an "A", "B" or "C" in the state's grading model."

The mayor highlighted the "RebuildIndy" program, noting that \$560 million has been pumped into neighborhood infrastructure in the past 30 months. "That has given us the ability to triple the amount of repaving we could do," he said, and instead of fixing just six to 10 bridges as we would normally do in that time period, we've done 53! And instead of demolishing an average of 400 abandoned homes over that time period, we have taken down nearly 2,000 and counting.

Mayor Winnecke

Winnecke talked about the methamphetamine crisis that has seen the city deal with 111 meth labs, as well as the federally mandated combined sewer overflow costs. "While the need is present and the mandate is clear, I will make sure the federal government recognizes the financial burden that will be placed on ratepayers," Winnecke said. "Affordability is an issue that I can and will fight for on the citizens' behalf."

The mayor listed successes on the job creation front in his first year, citing expansion projects at Professional Transportation Inc., SealCorp USA, Wayne Supply and Berry Plastics. He lauded the 200 volunteers in his monthly litter pickup program, who have collected 20,000 pounds of trash. And he discussed his own *modus operandi*.

"It is my nature," Winnecke said of seeking to solve every problem "immediately." But he said the nature of the job is teaching him to "exert patience and make smart, strategic decisions that ultimately benefit the city, in the long term, to its maximum potential." ♦



2013 Mid-Session Report Executive Summary

Top 10 Legislative Issues with Municipal Impact



SB 528 – Gaming (Boots, Davis)

- Changes current distributions of gaming revenue resulting in significant losses of revenue to gaming communities and a 20% drop in revenue to non-gaming communities.
- IACT Position: Oppose



HB 1544 – Tax Matters (Turner, Hershman)

- Changes the caps on the common areas of rental properties from 3% to 2% which results in a loss of \$17 M in property taxes statewide.
- IACT Position: Oppose



SB 376 – Limits on Annexation (Buck, Mahan)

- Prohibits a municipality from annexing territory that would result in an increase in the total assessed value of the municipality by more than 15% in a year.
- IACT Position: Oppose



HB 1307 – Extraterritorial Rates (Braun, Merritt)

- Allows ratepayers of water and sewer that reside outside of the municipality boundary to petition the IURC for review of rates when their rates are 50% higher than inside users.
- IACT Position: Oppose



HB 1313 – Regulation of Rentals (Speedy, Holdman)

- Puts a one year moratorium on any new rental housing inspection programs which require a landlord to obtain a permit or license or pay a fee. Sends issue to Study Committee.
- IACT Position: Oppose



SB 325 – Redevelopment Comm. (Kenley, Cherry)

- Makes various changes to the redevelopment statute.
- IACT Position: Oppose



SB 365 - Utility Lines (Crider, Koch)

- Allows municipal agreement with a utility for the relocation of the utility's facilities during a major highway, street, or road project and requires that the agreement must include a date for relocation.
- IACT Position: Support



HB 1001 – Budget Bill (T. Brown, Kenley)

- Removes half of current appropriation from MVH funds for State Police, giving cities and towns an estimated \$12-13 M more per year for local road and streets.
- IACT Position: Support



SB 496 – Meth (Yoder, McMillin)

- Makes various changes to law, including reducing amount one can purchase of medications containing meth-making ingredients (pseudoephedrine and ephedrine) in a year to 61.2 grams.
- IACT Position: Support, hope for stronger language in 2nd half



HB 1011 - Mass Transit (Torr, Miller)

- Creates metropolitan transit district (MTD) and allows eligible counties to vote on local public question for mass transit.
- IACT position: Support

Stay up to date during the Legislative Session!



Criminal code reform likely to pass despite Gov. Pence's reservations

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The reform of Indiana's criminal code is still on track for passage despite some reservations by Gov. Mike Pence.

HB1006 underwent "tweaks" this week in what State Rep. Greg Steuerwald has described as a "monumental task" that has seen an alignment of conservatives, liberals and moderates, prosecutors, public defenders, the Department of Corrections and law enforcement.



"We're trying to differentiate between people we're afraid of and people we're mad at in the most effective way," said Steuerwald, a Republican from Danville who chairs the House Judiciary

Committee.

Indiana's prison population increased 47% between FY 2000 and FY 2010, from 19,309 to 28,389, according to the Justice Reinvestment Project of the Council of State Governments Justice Center. Over that same period, spending on corrections increased significantly, with appropriations from the state's general fund for the Indiana Department of Correction increasing 37%, from \$495 million to \$679 million. If existing policies remain unchanged, the prison population is projected to continue to grow, and the state will need to expand prison capacity at a significant cost to taxpayers.

The Indiana Department of Correction projects that between 2010 and 2017, the prison population will increase 21%, from 28,474 to 34,794. Increasing the capacity of the prison system to absorb the additional people incarcerated is estimated to cost the state approximately \$1.2 during that period, including construction and annual operating costs.

HB1006 expands four felony sentencing thresholds to six. Steuerwald said that classification expan-

sion will allow for more precise sentencing as well as make sentencing "more proportional to one another." Currently, he said, A to B felonies carry penalties ranging from 6 to 50 years.

After the House passed, by an 87-13 vote, the sprawling legislation that seeks to reform Indiana's criminal code for the first time in three decades, Gov. Pence raised flags over the reduction of some illegal drug sentences.

"I think we need to work on reducing crime, not reducing penalties," Pence said during a news conference last week. "I think this legislation, as it moves forward, should continue to send a very strong message to the people of Indiana, and particularly those who would come into our state to deal drugs, that we are tough and we're going to stay tough on narcotics in the state."

The bill would reduce penalties for dealing less than 10 pounds of marijuana from a felony to a misdemeanor. Advocates of the legislation note that those convicted of rape serve less time than non-violent drug dealers.

"The average member of the public would look at our code today and say, 'I can't believe the guy with an eight ball of cocaine in his pocket is behind bars for 30 years, and the guy who raped my grandmother got seven,'" Andrew Cullen of the Indiana Public Defender Council told the Indianapolis Star.



House Judiciary Chairman Greg Steuerwald is optimistic HB1006 will pass despite reservations expressed by Gov. Pence and new inmate projections by the DOC.

Pence's stance on this issue should not come as a surprise. In his gubernatorial debate with Democrat John Gregg and Libertarian Rupert Boneham in Fort Wayne last October, the candidates were asked about legalizing medical marijuana.

"I would not support the decriminalization of marijuana. I've seen too many people become involved with marijuana and get sidetracked. We need to get more serious about confronting the scourge of drugs," Pence said. He called marijuana a "gateway drug."

Steuerwald said Pence's concerns are not likely to derail the legislation. Asked if HB1006 would likely see the kind of emphatic support in the Senate as it did in the House, Steuerwald said, "Very much so. We're moving along."

"I agree with the governor," Steuerwald said. "That is one of the areas that need to be tweaked." He called the reduction of penalties for a person dealing with 10 pounds of marijuana



“pretty extreme.”

Later today, the Senate is likely to increase felony and misdemeanor penalties.

He added that there were between five and seven other areas that will undergo revisions in the Senate this week as well as with conferees later in April. “The governor mentioned one,” Steuerwald said. “We’re going to work on others.”

In a Senate hearing on Tuesday, DOC Deputy Commissioner Randy Koester threw a new wrinkle into the equation when he projected the state’s prison population could grow by 70 percent in 20 years if the bill becomes law, according to a report by Maureen Hayden, the CNHI bureau chief. She reported that Koester’s remark caught supporters of the bill by surprise.

Republican State Sen. Brent Steele of Bedford, a key sponsor of House Bill 1006, sharply questioned the validity of the DOC numbers both during the hearing and afterwards, when he likened the projections to “ninja smoke.”

When Steele pushed Koester for the information used to make the projections, including the average length of sentence served by offenders by felony level, Koester said he didn’t have the information with him, Hayden reported.

Steuerwald told HPI on Wednesday that LSA analysis shows that DOC populations “will drop and then flatline,” adding, “We will actually not have to build a new prison for 15 years.” He added, however, that inmate populations forecasts are “very difficult” to make

That tweaking is expected to continue well past the April 29 sine die of this session and Gov. Pence’s probable signature. The law wouldn’t take effect until July 1, 2014. “We did that on purpose,” Steuerwald said. “This is so huge and has so many aspects, we realized going in there will be



State Rep. Matt Pierce is part of a bipartisan effort to pass the first criminal code reforms in three decades.

changes.”

State Rep. Matt Pierce, D-Bloomington, observed, “Republicans and Democrats have found out there’s a smarter way to reduce crime and limit repeat criminals.” He noted that many Class D felons – a number Steuerwald puts at about 12,000 a year – come through the Department of Corrections “for only a few months.” That is not enough time to work them into a program.

“We are reworking the system,” Pierce said, saying HB1006 will increase penalties for violent offenders and predators while working to be “smart on crime” with lower level offenders who tend to be small-time drug dealers and addicts who resort to

crimes like theft to pay for their habits. “Until we find a way to keep them sober and to keep them coming through the system,” Indiana will remain one of the few states where the prison population continues to grow, he said.

Steuerwald calls the legislation “a victim’s rights bill” that will require many offenders to serve at least 75 percent of their sentences.

The reduction of some drug possession, low level dealing and related crimes such as theft will see sentences reduced. Steuerwald points to Texas as a state that has turned to substance abuse programs and inmate residential centers that have saved taxpayers \$443 million, according to Criminal Justice Magazine. It has allowed Texas to sidestep building a \$550 million prison.

“The No. 1 goal is to deal with the worst felons in the most effective way, and the lower felons in the most effective way,” Steuerwald said. “Proportionality is the most important aspect. I expect full support. We’ve got prosecutors, the Supreme Court, public defenders, Department of Corrections on board. This has been a four-year project that has involved thousands of man hours. It’s been a monumental task.” ❖



Pence claims authority for Medicaid expansion

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana lawmakers don't need to approve legislation related to a Medicaid expansion because Gov. Mike Pence already has authority to negotiate with federal officials, his administration's top human services official said Wednesday (Bradner, Evansville Courier & Press). That was the assessment of Debra Minott, secretary of the Family and Social Services Administration, as she fielded questions from the House Public Health Committee. The panel has been working on a bill that would set parameters



for an expansion of Medicaid through the federal health care law. If the state opts to go forward with an expansion, around 400,000 more Hoosiers would qualify for government-funded health insurance. But the state would only do so using the health savings account-based Healthy Indiana Plan as a vehicle, Pence has said.

"We don't want to leave an impression we're expanding a broken system," Minott said.

The committee's chairman, Republican Rep. Ed Clere of New Albany, said he expects lawmakers to advance legislation that would instruct Pence's administration to negotiate within certain parameters with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on how Indiana can expand its Medicaid program and still get a federal match that amounts to 100 percent in the first three years and slowly steps down to 90 percent of the cost of the expanded population.

He underscored the narrow time frame — the legislature adjourns its 2013 session in 33 days, he told Minott — and said he wants Pence to help lawmakers figure out what should go in the final draft of Senate Bill 551, which currently instructs Pence's administration to ask federal officials to block grant the Medicaid program to Indiana.

"This is a major policy decision," Clere said. "And I'll be disappointed if the legislature decides not to weigh in with substantive and meaningful legislation."

SENATE LIMITS NUMBER OF VOUCHERS: The Senate Education Committee passed a smaller expansion of the state's voucher program Wednesday after accepting an amendment to reduce the bill's overall scope (Kelly, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). The panel accepted an amendment to House Bill 1003 from Sen. Luke Kenley, R-Noblesville, who was critical of the proposed changes at a hearing last week. The bill also was reassigned to Senate Tax and Fiscal Policy for further review. Usually bills with a cost go

to Senate Appropriations, which Kenley chairs. "This is a significantly lower cost than the original bill," he said. Indiana started its voucher program two years ago and now 9,300 students receive a state-paid voucher, which sends \$37 million to private schools. There are income restrictions, and children must currently spend at least one year in public school before being eligible. The Indiana Supreme Court found the program constitutional on Tuesday. House Bill 1003 formerly included a number of changes, the largest being that incoming kindergartners would have been immediately eligible for the program without first attending public school. Kenley said that move would have essentially opened up the program completely over a 13-year-period and the eventual new cost to the state would have been about \$200 million a year.

HOUSE DROPS ULTRASOUND REQUIREMENT: A bill regulating abortion-inducing drugs administered at Indiana abortion clinics will advance to the House floor after passage in committee Wednesday (Smith, Indiana Public Media). When the bill passed the Senate, it required women receiving the abortion-inducing drug known as RU-486 to undergo an ultrasound prior to taking the drug. Changes in the House committee Wednesday would require the ultrasound to be offered but allow women to turn it down. The bill now only forces changes at one Indiana location — a Planned Parenthood clinic in Lafayette. That facility, the only one in the state which dispenses RU-486 but does not perform surgical abortions, would have to adhere to surgical abortion clinic requirements like door size, room size and equipment standards. Planned Parenthood says the new regulations would be unnecessary and may cause the clinic to stop dispensing the drug. But Attica Republican Representative Sharon Negele, the bill's sponsor, says she wants clinics that dispense the drug to be prepared for potential complications. "What type of facility would I want it to provide? What type of follow-up care? That's why I chose to sponsor this bill, because I want these safeguards in place for my daughter and her friends," she says.

MATALIN OPPOSES AG GAG BILL: Republican pundit Mary Matalin is lobbying Indiana lawmakers to oppose a bill banning filming at Indiana farms and factories (Associated Press). The longtime Republican operative says that Indiana's "ag-gag" bill would punish whistleblowers reporting animal cruelty. Groups representing Indiana farmers and manufacturers have been pushing a bill that would ban covert filming of their operations. They say they have been unfairly targeted by overzealous activists. Matalin recorded the spot for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals opposing the measure. PETA released the spot Wednesday. Matalin is the latest in a string of celebrities PETA has called on to lobby against the measure. "No Doubt" bassist



Tony Kanal and former "The Price is Right" host Bob Barker wrote letters to Republican House Speaker Brian Bosma opposing the bill.

ECKERTY SAYS ROCKPORT NO LONGER FEASIBLE:

An Indiana lawmaker who opposes a 30-year contract with the developers of a proposed \$2.8 billion coal-gasification plant told a House committee Wednesday that the surge in U.S. shale gas production has driven down natural gas

prices, leaving synthetic gas projects unfeasible (Carden, NWI Times). Sen. Doug Eckerty, R-Yorktown, also told members of the House Utility Committee that the 30-year contract contains a "financial imbalance" that would saddle Indiana ratepayers with any losses incurred by the plant proposed for the Ohio River city of Rockport. The House panel heard testimony from Eckerty and several plant opponents, including environmentalists, Indiana Farm Bureau and representatives of Evansville's Vectren Corp. ❖

A dose of reality comes to Cal Township debate

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE — Just when you are about to lose all faith in government, someone reaches deep and comes up with a dose of reality.



Such is the case with the outrageous proposal by the town of Griffith to secede from Calumet Township.

The Griffith folks argue that they pay far more in property taxes for public assistance than its residents receive.

The Griffith town fathers are right in that the residents pay far too much for public assistance. They also are wrong about pulling out of the township and joining another. It may be the worst scenario

on local government that I have heard in my many years.

Because Republicans took control of Griffith with their pledge to run away from Gary and Calumet Township, the Republican-controlled General Assembly embraced the secession move.

Because there was tremendous opposition from Calumet Township Trustee Mary Elgin to allowing Griffith to depart, the Legislature gave the issue a new face.

Rather than simply allowing Griffith to secede, legislators decided to have the town's residents vote as to whether they want to leave Calumet Township.

Of course it would have passed easily. Few would vote against having their taxes reduced. And the reality is that they would just like to let Calumet Township's biggest patron, Gary, fend for itself.

But even with the sugar-coating, it became clearer that changing the face of government wasn't the way to go.

Enter Sen. Brandt Hershman, R-Buck Creek, who decided it was wrong to allow units of local government to shop around for their best deal.

There will be no secession, Hershman said. Instead, Hershman's proposal would force Calumet Township to rein in spending on public assistance.

What his proposal would do is freeze the township's spending when its assistance level reached 10 times the state average.

Under Hershman's plan, Griffith residents still would save money, but not nearly as much as they would through secession.

While Hershman brought a bit of reality to the issue, it isn't the ultimate answer that Griffith or Calumet Township or the rest of the state needs.

Indiana needs to take a bold step when it comes to helping the poor.

The state needs to go back and look at the recommendation of the Kernan/Shepard Commission on Local Government.

One of the myriad of recommendations was to eliminate township government and turn its operation over to county government.

That is well and good but needs to be taken to one more level.

The total cost of public assistance in any county ought to be shared by all county residents.

To penalize those, like Griffith, who live in a township with massive amounts of public assistance is wrong. And while it likely will never happen, public assistance ought to be taken to another level and require the cost to be spread around the state.

Perhaps Hershman will create an interim study commission to look at the public assistance issue this summer.

It makes sense. The issue isn't going away. ❖

Rich James has been writing about state and local government and politics for more than 30 years. He is a columnist for The Times of Northwest Indiana.



Kubacki makes a ‘baby step’ on immigration

By **MAUREEN HAYDEN**
CNHI Statehouse Bureau

INDIANAPOLIS – When Republicans in the Indiana General Assembly decided earlier this year to put off a vote on locking the state’s same-sex marriage ban into the state constitution, it sent a signal that GOP leaders were evolving on the issue of marriage equality.



Could they now be ready to evolve – at least a little -- on the issue of immigration?

State Rep. Rebecca Kubacki of Syracuse hopes so. In 2010, Kubacki (whose maiden name is Espinoza) became the first Hispanic Republican elected to the Indiana General Assembly.

Just a few months later, she voted for a GOP-backed bill that barred the state’s public universities and colleges

from granting in-state tuition for the children of undocumented immigrants, no matter how long they’d been living here.

It’s a vote she now regrets. Defenders of the bill said it would send a message that Indiana would no longer be a “sanctuary” for immigrants who were in the U.S. illegally. But Kubacki came to see the bill as unnecessarily punitive, especially for those students, many brought here as small children, who were forced to drop out of college because they couldn’t afford to pay the tripled cost of out-of-state tuition.

She’s sponsoring a bill this session that would roll back that 2011 law for students who were enrolled in college when it went into effect, describing it as a “baby step” toward immigration policies that make more sense.

Some of her GOP colleagues are horrified by the bill, even if they think it’s the fair thing to do. They’ve seen how anything less than a get-tough-on-immigration stance can kill a candidate in a Republican primary.

But Kubacki sees room for movement. She may be right, if you consider how some of the staunchest anti-immigrant Republicans on the national level are changing their discourse.

The starkest example came earlier this month

when U.S. Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky -- a Tea Party Republican if there ever was one – reversed his long-standing opposition to legalizing the status of illegal immigrants. In a speech to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Rand told the nation’s 11 million illegal immigrants that if they want to work in America, “then we will find a place for you.”

Said Rand: “Prudence, compassion and thrift all point us toward the same goal: bringing these workers out of the shadows and into becoming and being taxpaying members of society.”

The shift in attitude may be coming less from the heart than the head, as Republicans nationally are working to shore up their eroding support among Hispanics.

But Kubacki also credits people like herself: Socially and fiscally conservative Americans of Hispanic heritage who are becoming more politically active in a Republican party long seen as old, white, and male. “The tent is getting bigger,” Kubacki said.

In explaining to me why she wants to roll back that 2011 bill, she talked about what it was like to grow up as the child of migrant farm workers. She, like her parents, was an American citizen, but she was forced to attend the “migrants’ school” set up in a trailer behind the main school where all the other children got to go. Her mother told her: “That’s just the way it is.”

“I can remember thinking as 7th grader, there is



State Rep. Rebecca Kubacki speaks before the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns last week at the Statehouse. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howe)

nothing I can do,” Kubacki said. “I couldn’t change that. Fifty years later, I find myself in sort of that same situation. But now I can say: ‘There is something I can do.’ We’ve got to figure out how we can help these kids; how we can help them become productive citizens.” ❖

Maureen Hayden covers the Statehouse for the CNHI newspapers in Indiana. She can be reached at maureen.hayden@indianamediagroup.com



Is the GOP toast?

By **JACK COLWELL**

SOUTH BEND – Is the Republican Party toast? You would think so, listening to the political analysts and strategists, including those who prepared a harshly critical self-appraisal for the Republican National Committee.



The contention that the GOP should be changed to GOT (Grand Old Toast) is based on how poorly the party is doing with the very groups that are growing in numbers and thus are likely to have even more impact in future elections.

With blunt self-criticism, the Republican report referred to dwindling electoral votes and concluded: "Public perception of the party is at record lows. Young voters are increasingly rolling their eyes at what the party represents, and many minorities wrongly

think that Republicans do not like them or want them in the country. When someone rolls their eyes at us, they are not likely to open their ears to us."

To make matters worse, the GOP is split over how to proceed - push for even more uncompromising conservative candidates with Tea Party fervor or turn instead to more moderate candidates with messages more appealing to younger voters and those in the political middle ground.

Is the Republican Party toast?

In contemplating this, I thought of a New York Times analysis on Nov. 3, 2011, just one year before the presidential election. The headline was:

"Is Obama toast?"

President Obama had suffered through a miserable summer of 2011, with Republicans in Congress able to stymie him at every turn as the economy continued to be weak. The Times analysis found Obama "a slight underdog," likely to be a one-termer if the economy was stagnant in 2012.

Republicans were optimistic about a 2012 election sweep, just as there now is such Democratic optimism about future sweeps. Some Republicans, so confident and with such disdain for Obama, actually were suggesting that the president wouldn't even run for re-election.

Things change. Often quickly.

Is the Republican Party toast?

Washington pundits were writing about that possibility after Obama won the presidency in 2008 and Democrats captured control of Congress.

What happened?

In 2010, there was a Republican tsunami, with the GOP capturing control of the House and able to frustrate Obama at every turn, leaving him in a weakened position in which suddenly there was the question of whether he could win another term.

These swings back and forth in our two-party system aren't new.

After the Republican debacle in the 1964 election, with Barry Goldwater trounced throughout most of the nation, political analysts speculated about whether the GOP would linger only as a narrow, regional party able to win only in the South. Lyndon Johnson even carried traditionally Republican Indiana. Well, that didn't start a trend. No Democrat was to carry Indiana again until Obama did in 2008.

Things changed quickly as Democrats tore themselves apart over Vietnam. Rioting at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago helped Richard Nixon win the presidency.

Nixon grew in popularity, in no small measure because of contrast with the hapless effort of George McGovern to lead the badly split Democrats. Nixon was re-elected in 1972, losing only Massachusetts and the District of Columbia.

Soon Nixon was toast. Watergate. Resignation. Jimmy Carter was elected president.

Things changed again. Carter was a one-termer, defeated by Ronald Reagan. And Reagan went on to be re-elected in a 1984 rout in which Walter Mondale won only Minnesota and the District of Columbia.

Things continued to be depressing for Democrats. George H.W. Bush won in 1988 and looked so strong for re-election in 1992 that the most formidable potential Democratic contenders didn't bother to run. Guy named Bill Clinton ran.

Well, you get the idea. Things change. Often quickly.

When will they change now for the GOP?

It will depend on many factors. The most important are whether Democrats stay united and whether Republicans get united.

Will Republicans continue to tear themselves apart in primaries? Will Democrats start to do that?

Will Republicans pay attention to that critical report and improve their brand?

Will President Obama suffer some setback that hurts the Democratic brand?

We don't know. But we do know that neither party has a monopoly in being perceived as toast. ❖

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



Unemployment data demands attention

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS - "Here's a fact for you," said Seymour Semaphore, who knows my interest in statistical realities. "Four of the five Indiana counties with the lowest average unemployment rates over the past 24 years border Indianapolis."



"That's no surprise," I lied.

It was, in truth, something I never thought about. I was not, however, going to give Seymour the gratification of seeing the gaps in my knowledge about Indiana trivia.

"People who move to places like Hamilton, Hendricks, Johnson and Boone counties," I guessed which four he had in mind, "are often moving out of Marion County because they have the financial security (i.e. a job) to take

the risk of moving to a higher cost location or lifestyle."

"Shrewd reasoning," he said, seeing through my ruse.

"Rapidly growing counties often have little unemployment," I stated with great confidence. "They often do not have major, old-line employers who can cause significant layoffs. Economic distress is more widely distributed in such places and may be of shorter duration."

"Then," Seymour said, "How do you explain Dubois County among those five? That southwestern county had an average unemployment rate of just 4.2 percent compared with the state's 6.1 percent from 1990 forward."

I paused and posed as I pondered. Finally, I said, "I don't know. How would you explain it, Seymour?"

"It's the people," he said. "Dubois County has that German and Amish heritage; those people know how to work and they work through hard times."

"Those are very flattering, positive prejudices," I said. "Your views might be taken as affirmative bigotry. I would rather think in terms of specific industries or the adaptability of individual firms than the reputed characteristics of groups."

"Are you aware of which counties over those years had the highest unemployment rates?" Seymour asked.

"No I'm not," I answered honestly, "But I would guess that four of the five highest are south of I-70. That's where much of the long term economic distress shows up in our state."

"You win that one," Seymour conceded. "Crawford

County had an average unemployment rate of 11 percent for those years, followed by Fayette and Orange just under 10 percent, with Lawrence at 9.5 percent.

"What about our industrial counties? I asked. It seems they would be high on the list."

"The smaller industrial counties (Wayne, Grant and Miami) came in at 8 percent, but Howard was 7.4 percent, Madison, Lake and Vigo were 7.1 percent. Delaware, Elkhart and St. Joseph were in the 6 percent range. Then you get down to the 5 percent range with Vanderburgh, Floyd and Marion."

"This is important information for our legislators," I said. "They should know the longer term circumstances of the places they represent rather than going on current information and misinformation. The remedies for long term problems are far different from those applicable in the short term."

"Do you think they are interested?" Seymour asked eagerly.

"Not," I answered, "Unless you can find a sexier, more stimulating presentation than the one you just made to me." ❖

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2007

"The Best Indiana Political Reporter: *Howey Political Report* editor Brian Howey."

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Congress falls short on national security

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – Wherever you stood on Sen. Rand Paul's 13-hour filibuster to delay John Brennan's confirmation as CIA director, or on the Senate's confirmation hearings for Brennan and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, they all serve as a reminder of just how feeble Congress has proven to be when it comes to foreign policy.



This wasn't immediately obvious, of course. Paul's speech questioned whether there are limits on the President's power to use drones to kill Americans who've been declared "enemy combatants." But the CIA and military have been using drones overseas for years and this was the first time Congress really pondered the issue. That's a measure of its dereliction, not of stepping up to the plate. Why has it taken so long to see significant congressional review of the President's power to use drones?

Meanwhile, if you followed the confirmation hearings, you'd have to conclude that Congress thinks U.S. foreign policy centers on Israel, Cuba, and the destroyed consulate in Benghazi, Libya. On the long list of significant foreign policy issues confronting the White House — the rise of China, a war looming with Iran, increased tensions on the Korean peninsula, the fragmentation of Syria, Libya, the spread of Al Qaeda to northern Africa — there's mostly been silence from the Congress. Our strategic framework agreement with Iraq? The agreement we're negotiating with Afghanistan? The key issue of when, where, and how we commit American forces abroad? Congress has been missing in action.

This is not how it's supposed to be. Our Constitution gives Congress strong levers for dealing with foreign policy. It has oversight of the executive branch, and can hold hearings and demand information. It has the power of the purse, and with it the ability to explore key issues of behavior and policy before approving the budget. It has the power to declare war, and to raise and maintain an army and navy. In the Senate, it has the confirmation process, which allows senators to probe and evaluate policies.

Yet for the most part, Congress prefers deference to executive power. Most of its members, who know that

their re-election rests on domestic issues, don't bother to gain the expertise or develop the political will to become potent and valuable foreign policy contributors, as the Constitution intended. Institutionally, Congress likes leaving decisions to the President and then blaming him if they turn out to be wrong — or it tries to have it both ways, as with Benghazi, cutting funds for State Department security and then criticizing the department for not having enough security.

The executive branch is hardly blameless. The White House, whether under Republican or Democratic control, typically sees Congress as a nuisance and an obstacle to be overcome, not a partner.

Yet that's a reason for Congress to try harder, not to fold. Our system is based on the premise that better policy emerges if the President and Congress work together. It depends on Congress to hold executive policies up to the light and to weigh in with its own concerns.

To do this, members need to be fully informed both about the complexities of foreign issues and about what the administration is doing. They need to make robust oversight commonplace, asking executive-branch policymakers to spell out and justify policies and their implementation. They need to use the power of the purse to grant or deny funds if their views are not taken into account. They need to develop the expertise — both among themselves and on staff — that would allow them to be both critic and partner in the development of foreign policy.

And above all, those members who do understand the ins and outs of foreign matters need to press Congress to set aside its reluctance to affect foreign policy. That is where the real failings lie — not with individual members, but with how Congress acts as an institution in the formulation of American foreign policy.

Developing American foreign policy is complicated, confusing, and sometimes frustrating. But our country is at its strongest when it is unified and speaks with the voice not just of the President, but of the American people's representatives in Congress. It's time for Congress to shoulder its responsibilities on foreign policy. ❖

Lee Hamilton is Director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.



Eric Bradner, Evansville Courier & Press: Gov. Mike Pence always knew on an intellectual level that Mitch Daniels would be a tough act to follow. His first nine weeks in office, he is finding out just what that means in practice. From the outset, Pence understood his fellow Republican's legacy. Daniels had turned Indiana's budget deficit into a hulking surplus and reformed the state's government at lightning speed, allowing him to depart for Purdue University as a popular and powerful figure. Pence also grasped the internal party politics. He called his predecessor "the best governor in America" and was careful not to risk alienating the operatives, lawmakers and business officials who helped Daniels along the way by criticizing the work they had done. What Pence might not have fully known at his campaign's outset is that along with what Republicans consider a lot of good, Daniels left behind, as the old movie title goes, the bad and the ugly. It's that the cost of Daniels' accomplishments that now threatens to derail the top item on Pence's first-year legislative agenda. Citing Indiana's surplus, the new governor wants to lower the state's individual income tax rate from 3.4 percent to 3.06 percent a move that would save average taxpayers a little less than \$100 per year and cost the state \$520 million in annual tax revenue. The old governor, though, built that surplus by making tough decisions through the economic downturn. Pointing to his own budget proposal, Pence likes to tell groups he addresses that Indiana can afford to both fund its priorities and cut taxes. No one who's paid attention to the state's finances is taking Pence's argument seriously, though, because they see his budget as a half-hearted effort to actually fund those priorities. Nor are they swayed by Pence's Washington, D.C.-style argument that increasing spending in those areas amounts to growing the size of Indiana's government.

Pence's problems were on clear display last week during his speech in front of a Statehouse gathering of Indiana Association of Cities and Towns members. "I'm advocating we lower the income tax across the board by 10 percent for every Hoosier in the city and on the farm, on a permanent basis," Pence said. He paused and looked up as if he expected applause, but was met with silence. "And I know we might have some disagreement on this from some in this organization," he said adding, as one person clapped, "apparently not all." This all helps to explain why the word "context" has been uttered so frequently by House Speaker Brian Bosma, the Indianapolis Republican who has balked at Pence's tax cut proposal and favors more funding for schools and roads and pumping \$197 million into retiring some of the state's debt proposals for which he's been blasted by the Koch brothers-funded Americans for Prosperity in television and radio advertise-

ments. Lawmakers spent eight years in Daniels' shadow, giving the former governor much of what he wanted and then going home on weekends to complaints that their local schools were strapped for cash and their municipal-level friends were taking it on the chin. Those lawmakers' desire to reassert their authority, combined with Pence's failure to top 50 percent in last year's gubernatorial election, gives the new governor nowhere near the clout that his predecessor had when he left. ❖

Abdul-Hakim Shabazz, Indianapolis Star: At the Statehouse, conflicts of interest and deep ties between lawmakers are lobbyists are commonplace. Matthew Tully's series look at the culture of conflict and coziness that, in many cases, impacts the way legislation is written. If you haven't taken the opportunity to read my colleague Matt Tully's column on the relationships between lawmakers and lobbyists you really should. And then after you read it ask yourself if you could come up with a better system. I will tell you no. My good friend Matt basically says that lawmakers and lobbyists are too close. Lobbyists have access that the average Hoosier doesn't get and too many lawmakers work in industries that they also regulate. Well, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but this is what happens when you have a part-time, citizen legislature. Unless you are willing to go to a system that consists of public funding of political campaigns and full-time elected officials, this is what you are going to get. ❖

Dave Bangert, Lafayette Journal & Courier: Call it a terrific moment of Whac-a-Mole down at the Statehouse. At one hole, a majority in both General Assembly chambers used Senate Bill 213 to hammer down cities, towns and counties that tried to force employers to offer employees wages, benefits or working conditions that "(exceed) the requirements of federal or state law, rules or regulations." In other words, the measure headed to Gov. Mike Pence's desk after a final vote Monday in the Indiana House would keep cities from passing living wage bills and the like. At another hole, up popped this bonus: The bill might wind up wiping out a mess of human relations ordinances that cover sexual orientation, gender identity and anything not covered under federal or state anti-discrimination laws. That unintended consequence — which seemed to stun the bill's sponsors when pointed out as a possibility by Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard's office earlier this week — could affect Lafayette and West Lafayette. Both cities' human resources ordinances include sexual orientation as a protected class, and West Lafayette adds gender identity. Funny things happen when the Statehouse tries send home rule back into its hole. ❖





McDermott looks to wean Hammond of gaming funds

HAMMOND - The need to wean the city off its reliance of gaming revenue was central to Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr.'s State of the City address he gave Wednesday to a packed audience at Hammond City Hall (Chelsea, NWI Times). McDermott said he expects casinos to one day be approved and built in downtown Chicago and the south side of Chicago. "We need to be ready for it," said McDermott, explaining the city needs to prepare in the event its funding

from Horseshoe Casino takes a drastic hit. McDermott outlined the steps his administration has taken to close the city's

\$12 million budget gap, notably the approximately \$4 million in increased revenue the city will receive from new water contracts with Chicago Heights and Calumet City — two of its largest Illinois customers. Sweeping changes to the health care coverage offered by the city will save approximately \$3 million a year, in part, by requiring employees to contribute more for their plans. McDermott pledged in the address to push for the renewal of the College Bound program, which he began in his first term in office. However, the scholarship program currently is funded by gaming revenue, so McDermott said the city may explore using water sale proceeds to provide long-term funding past the program's original 10-year commitment. The budget shortfall comes as the city continues to grapple with shrinking property tax revenue, and in 2012, an 88 percent property tax collection rate. Last year, the city received \$24 million in prop-



erty tax revenue, down 40 percent from when McDermott took office. McDermott said his administration has saved money over the years, including a more than 30 percent reduction in the total manpower in the city.

Judge won't dismiss ISTA suit

INDIANAPOLIS - For the second time, U.S. District Judge Sarah Evans Barker has rejected a motion for dismissal of the Secretary of State's lawsuit seeking to recover losses allegedly sustained by schools through securities violations by the Indiana State Teachers Association and the National Education Association (WIBC). The teachers unions are accused of commingling and misusing funds they had promised to invest with a guaranteed rate of return. The Securities Division believes ISTA unlawfully took money from its members' schools when it offered securities in the form of a health plan. A trial is scheduled for October 28, 2013 in Judge Barker's court.

Gay rights demonstration

INDIANAPOLIS - The rainbow-tinted flags waved wildly above Harry Thomas' head Wednesday night as nearly 100 gay-rights supporters roared in approval of calls for marriage equality on the Indiana Statehouse steps (Indianapolis Star). The Carmel man shared many of their sentiments. "I'm straight, enthusiastically so," said Thomas, 58. "But I don't hurt people that aren't hurting me. And the fact that Indiana is still on the wrong side of this irritates me." Thomas' concerns come amid a nationwide debate as the U.S. Supreme Court examines the issue of gay marriage, with Indiana leading the way against it. State Attorney General Greg Zoeller has argued

he wants to defend the rights of states to determine marriage laws, and has voiced support for California's gay marriage ban. That had demonstrators outside the Statehouse disappointed Wednesday, but many argued that mounting support for marriage equality soon would become too difficult to ignore.

Bankruptcy filings down 17%

INDIANAPOLIS - Personal bankruptcy filings continue on a downward trend in Indiana. Bankruptcy attorney Mark Zuckerberg says personal filings are down about 17 percent from last year (Indiana Public Media). Zuckerberg says in the past, people would file Chapter 13 to save their homes, but now there are many government programs that allow people to hold onto their homes without filing bankruptcy. He says the downward trend could reverse come October when the eight-year waiting period on Chapter 7 filing expires. "We do have a lot of repeat filers but the reasons why they're filing is not because they're trying to manipulate the system," Zuckerberg says. "Maybe somebody had a heart attack and they had no insurance or poor insurance we file a bankruptcy for them, we get rid of their medical bills and then they have another medical condition. You know, that's beyond their control."

Jackson County official arrested

INDIANAPOLIS - The former director of the Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District has been arrested on charges related to the misuse of district funds. Rebecca E. Lauster, 50, of 408 S. Francis St., Brownstown, surrendered to police at the Jackson County Jail.