



Metrics undermine the ‘Indiana miracle’

9 years of GOP gubernatorial rule, legislative majorities don't bring prosperity

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – For several years now, it's been called the "Indiana Miracle" and touted across the nation. Beginning with then-Gov. Mitch Daniels, Indiana became a bastion of low taxes, balanced budgets, a fully financed 10-year road plan, and job creation.

With the torch passed to Gov. Mike Pence, the theme is now taking "Indiana from good to great."

But some of the metrics are disturbing and may no longer support some of the claims, and that was reflected in Gov. Pence's national Republican radio address last Saturday. The "good to great" talk was shunted aside as Pence made his case against Obamacare, telling Americans, "Everywhere I go in Indiana, I meet business owners and workers who are in survival mode."

Pence's address comes with the state mired in an 8.4% jobless rate – the 16th consecutive month it's been



above the national average, which stands a full point lower at 7.4%.

The address came a day after a Ball State University study revealed that Indiana's per capita income has

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Pencing on the Ritz

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Craig Hartzler is a long time Statehouse veteran who has seen and heard a lot, but what appeared late last Friday afternoon was something he had never witnessed: An Indiana governor standing in front of his desk.



Fridays are normally what we in the business call "bad news dump" days. But last Friday, Gov. Mike Pence went to Warren Central High School and announced a new state agency, the Center for Education and Career Innovation, that is designed for "collaboration."



“Change does not come from Washington, it comes to Washington.”

- President Obama, on 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King's March on Washington



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It was supposed to be the kind of initiative that would earn the fledgling administration above-the-fold news coverage of an activist nature.

What it turned out to be was an awkward freshman dance, with the governor's office and the superintendent's lobbying press releases at each other throughout Friday afternoon. After the final release by the governor's office, Gov. Pence walked over to see Supt. Ritz, who was in French Lick. That's when Pence and Hartzler came face-to-face.

By the end of the news cycle, the story was this: The governor and Supt. of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz weren't on the same page. The CECI was a bolt out of the blue, with Ritz's team pointing out in a late morning press release, "Partnerships require communication. Unfortunately, Superintendent Ritz learned about the creation of this new agency through news reports, rather than from Gov. Pence. Superintendent Ritz has met with the governor on many occasions, including as recently as two days ago. However, neither he, nor his office, mentioned the creation of this new agency until this morning."

The Ritz team was offended when it learned of the Pence press conference from Gerry Dick's "Inside Indiana Business" well before Pence education adviser Claire Fiddian-Green left a voice mail for Ritz chief of staff Hartzler.

In fact, Pence and Ritz strolled without staff from the Government Center South to her Statehouse office the previous Monday following the second Work Council meeting. Sources told HPI that Ritz complained to the governor that his recent education appointees had treated her in condescending fashion.

Some press reports described the CECI as an "end-around power grab" and the creation of a new education bureaucracy. It prompted Senate Minority Leader Tim Lanane, D-Anderson, to say, "We already have a

duly designated public official, democratically chosen by the people to lead education in our state, namely, the superintendent of public education. If the governor has ideas on how education can better align with job creation, I'm sure the superintendent would be thrilled to hear them. But we should be careful not to exclude nor undercut the chief educational officer's duties to ultimately lead our state's educational efforts."

In talking with key players in both the governor's and superintendent's offices, HPI has learned of the relationship growing pains between the new Republican governor and the new Democratic superintendent. It comes as the state has been jarred by reports of 40% of core 40 students graduating from Indiana high schools need collegiate remediation, that tens of thousands of mid-level tech jobs go unfilled because of an inadequately trained post-high school workforce, of declining per capita income with many areas in the state mired in 1970s and 1990 levels, and the A-to-F scandal left over from Supt. Tony Bennett's administration.

The new agency Pence unveiled might just be a panacea for a state that had eight different disparate agencies working on education and workforce issues at a time when the jobless rate is a persistent 8.4%, employers complain about an unprepared workforce, and the top graduates from Indiana's renowned research universities fleeing the state with their freshly signed diplomas.

But the rollout was a clunky effort in communications, both within the Statehouse and externally. The headlines focused on the new agency, but the details in the latter part of the pyramid painted a picture of the rookie governor and superintendent awkwardly learning steps to the dance.

And relevant to the discussion is this: In November 2012, Ritz won her race over Bennett with 1,332,755 votes and a clear majority, while Pence



defeated Democrat John Gregg and Libertarian Rupert Boneham with 1,275,424 votes, or 49% of the vote.

By the middle of this week, high ranking Pence administration sources told HPI that Pence and Ritz had met and had a “great meeting” lasting about an hour. That was the result of Pence and Hartzler’s meeting late last Friday. It was time to clear the air.

Informed sources in both camps, speaking to HPI on background, told of regular chief-of-staff level talks between Bill Smith of the Pence office and Hartzler during the legislative session. Those had become more spaced out (timewise) during the summer.

When the biennial budget was hammered out, sources told HPI that both the Pence and Ritz regimes had worked, testified and signed off on a new formula that included four funding streams for the State Board of Education (the oldest entity, though unelected, which formulates education policy that the superintendent executes), the Education Round Table created under Gov. Frank O’Bannon, and the two Pence-era initiatives that include the Indiana Works Councils and the Career Council. Ritz’s DOE has an \$8.5 million budget, and the agencies now making up the CECI have a \$5.8 million budget.

A high-ranking Pence administration source told HPI, “This was the subject of budget hearings and DOE was very involved. It was not a surprise to anyone those funding streams were moved.”

There were four other “silos” that Gov. Pence gathered and moved into the new CECI: Commission on Higher Education headed by Commissioner Teresa Lubbers, the Department of Workforce Development, the Indiana Charter School Board, and the Education Employee Review Board.

Pence administration sources told HPI that the new agency was part of the Pence campaign “Roadmap” developed in 2011 and was the white paper for his gubernatorial campaign. “When you look at those in totality – eight agencies focused on education and workforce – the governor felt that the only way to provide the proper pipeline was this agency to provide a unified vision,” a Pence source told HPI. More importantly, there is \$300 million in federal and state funding that spills through these agencies, and that funding is not resulting in enough students ready for college or sub-bachelor degree jobs. A Pence source said that



Gov. Pence and Supt. Ritz talk after the Aug. 19 Work Council meeting at Government Center South.

prep vocational teachers “teach what they want” and not what the regional market needs.

But the way this new amalgamation was described by Leslie Weidenbener in the Louisville Courier-Journal was this: The education department answers to the state superintendent, who answers — at least to some degree — to the State Board of Education. The board is now part of the Center for Education and Career Innovation, which reports to the governor and is also home to the Indiana Education Roundtable, which advises the Board of Education. And the center is also home to the new Indiana

Works Council and the Indiana Career Council, which are meant to coordinate education efforts and career training.

Pence administration officials were surprised by the reaction from the Ritz office on Friday morning. “We were meeting daily,” one high-ranking Pence administration source told HPI. “We were having detailed conversations. The new agency is going to hire two DOE staffers. They knew we would be extending offers. The level of detail we were providing was very high. On the morning of the announcement, we clearly communicated all the details to Craig Hartzler. He confirmed back with us in a voice mail.”

Asked why Gov. Pence didn’t tip off Supt. Ritz during their Monday stroll back to her office, a senior Pence official told HPI, “Because we had been in communications with their team in general terms. We were working on details and a lot of people didn’t have all the details.”

So that may have been the missed protocol opportunity for the Pence administration. From the Ritz perspective, if the governor was seeking a way to break down silos and set a stage for collaboration, both elected officials should have been at least aware of the announcement.

Republican majority House and Senate communication sources told HPI that Speaker Brian Bosma and Senate President David Long were given a heads up on the Pence Friday presser late Thursday afternoon. Bosma and the Indiana Chamber of Commerce quickly released statements Friday morning lauding the new agency.

By this past Monday, Pence and Ritz huddled for an hour. Both offices called the meeting productive. Which is a nice ending to the story, where the most important question must be: How are we going to best serve Indiana students and employers? ❖



Indiana metrics, from page 1

dropped from 30th to 40th in the U.S., with paychecks languishing at 1996 levels. In some counties such as Starke and Miami, the wages are at the 1975 level.

In addition, the state's infant mortality rate at 7.7 per 1,000 is a full percentage point above the U.S. rate.

The suicide rate among Indiana's middle-aged population surged nearly 54 percent from 1999 to 2010, an increase nearly twice the national rate and one of the highest among the 50 states, according The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which reported in May that Indiana's suicide rate among people ages 35 to 64 rose from about 12.7 suicides per 100,000 residents in 1999 to about 19.5 suicides per 100,000 in 2010. Indiana's nearly 54 percent suicide rate increase over that time frame was the nation's eighth-highest.

Some 40% of Core 40 high school graduates in Indiana need to take remediation courses in colleges and universities, including 7% of honors students.

One in three graduates from Indiana's public colleges left the state – and the ones with the most advanced degrees were the most likely to leave – according to a study from Indiana University and the Indiana Workforce Intelligence System, Indiana Public Media reported. The report tracked the payroll records of students who graduated in 2000 with various levels of education to determine what percent remained in the state after five years in the workforce. "These figures document a significant net loss of human capital from the state," the study's authors write.

With nine years of Republicans occupying the governor's office, and five years with legislative majorities, the party is facing a potential "pottery barn" political reckoning in 2014, and certainly by 2016 if these numbers don't improve. That is, with their stewardship over the budget, education and job creation, and with super majorities in both the House and Senate, they will soon own it.

Pence says Indiana on right track

Speaking before the Indianapolis Kiwanis last Friday, Pence challenged members to help recruit entre-

preneurs to the state. "There's a great sense of optimism, there's reason to be encouraged as Hoosiers, but this is a difficult time for too many in our state," Pence said. "These are the economic revenue forecasts upon which we built the fiscal integrity that our state currently enjoys. They are cautious, they are careful, but they are optimistic."

Pence cited four categories: An "honestly balanced budget," fully implemented tax cuts, a moratorium on regulations, and \$800 million in additional road funding for the coming biennium.

In Hobart on Wednesday, Pence met with local Realtors and said, "Since we took office there has been steady job growth and our state has been adding jobs every month, even though unemployment remains stubbornly

over 8 percent," Pence said (NWI Times). "I want to see where the young people can graduate from high school and can have an industry certification or even an associates degree right that day." Pence was enthusiastically received by Realtors, who gave their biggest applause to the subject of tax cuts and Indiana's top rankings for business-friendliness.

Additionally, the education reforms of 2011 that expanded charter schools, initiated vouchers, new teacher and

school evaluation standards, and an effort to attract non-traditional mid-career administrators and superintendents have not fully kicked in. In 2013, Pence created career councils with the goal of establishing economy-based vocational programs. Speaker Brian Bosma worked with Minority Leader Scott Pelath to create Work Council legislation, and Bosma has identified the "opportunity gap" with highly degreed college graduates fleeing as his top priority in the coming 2014 session.

As HPI has noted before, the IHS Global Insight analysis as part of the April revenue forecast projected "peak employment" in 2014 and 2015 with a jobless rate of 7.7%, which would still count about 250,000 Hoosiers out of work. There have been at least that many jobless since the Great Recession began in 2009.

Should that continue, will there be political consequences?

Our analysis is a big "perhaps."

First, the Indiana Democratic Party still slumbers. It

Indiana Unemployment History

Date	National Unemployment Rate	Indiana Unemployment Rate	Indiana Unemployed
July 2013	7.4%	8.4%	265,427
June 2013	7.6%	8.4%	264,672
May 2013	7.6%	8.3%	262,795
April 2013	7.5%	8.5%	267,621
March 2013	7.6%	8.7%	275,397
February 2013	7.7%	8.7%	275,839
January 2013	7.9%	8.6%	272,718
December 2012	7.8%	8.3%	262,181
November 2012	7.8%	8.4%	265,671
October 2012	7.9%	8.4%	265,435
September 2012	7.8%	8.5%	267,618
August 2012	8.1%	8.4%	264,931
July 2012	8.2%	8.4%	263,059



has been unable to attract Congressional candidates in the two most competitive Congressional Districts, the 2nd and the 8th. Bill Bailey, former state representative and Seymour mayor, appears to be mounting a 9th CD challenge to U.S. Rep. Todd Young. Legislative challengers who could cut into the 37-seat Senate and 69-seat House majorities have been inconspicuous to date.

As for 2016, former governor and U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh, 2012 nominee John Gregg and former congressman Baron Hill made the rounds at the Indiana Democratic Editorial Association convention last weekend. Bayh and Gregg possess the name ID and approval to potentially wage a tough challenge to Gov. Pence should he seek reelection. Gregg told HPI he met "at length" with Bayh, adding, "He did not mention coming back and running."

Gregg cited the Ball State income study and said, "The legislature in Indianapolis did not create jobs. I'm not seeing jobs and we're slipping in per capita income. They used to cite the 'Massachusetts Miracle' and it became the 'Massachusetts Muck.'"

Democratic Chairman John Zody reacted to the Ball State study, saying, "Mitch Daniels promised Hoosiers he'd increase per capita income when he was elected in 2004. Mike Pence keeps saying job creation is his top priority. The data clearly show that these guys are all talk, no action. Simply put, these guys had their chance to get Indiana's economy back on track, and they failed."

Second, there are structural problems that extend far beyond Indiana's borders, and well into the ether of the Internet. In a New York Times "Great Divide" analysis published last Sunday, authors David H. Autor and David Dorn note that computerization has cut sharply into mid-level employment. "In the four years since the Great Recession officially ended, the productivity of American workers – those lucky enough to have jobs – has risen smartly. But the United States still has two million fewer jobs than before the downturn, the unemployment rate is stuck at levels not seen since the early 1990s and the proportion of adults who are working is four percentage points off its peak in 2000. This job drought has spurred pundits to wonder whether a profound employment sickness has overtaken us. And from there, it's only a short leap to ask

whether that illness isn't productivity itself."

Computers and workforce

Autor and Dorn ask: Have we mechanized and computerized ourselves into obsolescence?

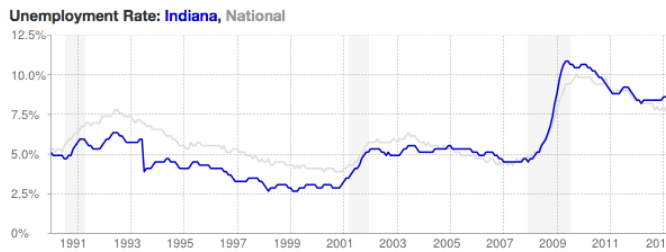
And they respond: While intuitively appealing, this idea is demonstrably false. In 1900, for example, 41 percent of the United States work force was in agriculture. By 2000, that share had fallen to 2 percent, after the Green Revolution transformed crop yields. But the employment-to-population ratio rose over the 20th century as women moved from home to market, and the unemployment rate fluctuated cyclically, with no long-term increase. Labor-saving technological change necessarily displaces workers performing certain tasks – that's where the gains in productivity come from

– but over the long run, it generates new products and services that raise national income and increase the overall demand for labor. In 1900, no one could foresee that a century later, health care, finance, information technology, consumer electronics, hospitality, leisure and entertainment would employ far more workers than agriculture.

Autor and Dorn continue: A starting point for discussion is the observation that although computers are ubiquitous, they cannot do everything. A computer's ability to accomplish a task quickly and cheaply depends upon a human programmer's ability to write procedures or rules that direct the machine to take the correct steps at each contingency. Computers excel at "routine" tasks: Organizing, storing, retrieving and manipulating information, or executing exactly defined physical movements in production processes. These tasks are most pervasive in middle-skill jobs like bookkeeping, clerical work and repetitive production and quality-assurance jobs. Logically, computerization has reduced the demand for these jobs, but it has boosted demand for workers who perform "nonroutine" tasks that complement the automated activities. Those tasks happen to lie on opposite ends of the occupational skill distribution.

"The good news, however, is that middle-education, middle-wage jobs are not slated to disappear completely," they write. "While many middle-skill jobs are susceptible to automation, others demand a mixture of tasks that take advantage of human flexibility. To take one prominent example, medical paraprofessional jobs – radiology technician, phlebotomist, nurse technician – are

Unemployment Rate	July 2013	Month/Month	Year/Year
National	7.4%	-0.2	-0.8
Indiana	8.4%	0.0	0.0



Note: Recessions shown in gray



a rapidly growing category of relatively well-paid, middle-skill occupations.

Salary and dividend divisions change

Noah Smith, writing in the Atlantic Magazine, observed: For most of modern history, two-thirds of the income of most rich nations has gone to pay salaries and wages for people who work, while one-third has gone to pay dividends, capital gains, interest, rent, etc. to the people who own capital. This two-thirds/one-third division was so stable that people began to believe it would last forever. But in the past ten years, something has changed. Labor's share of income has steadily declined, falling by several percentage points since 2000. It now sits at around 60% or lower. The fall of labor income, and the rise of capital income, has contributed to America's growing inequality.

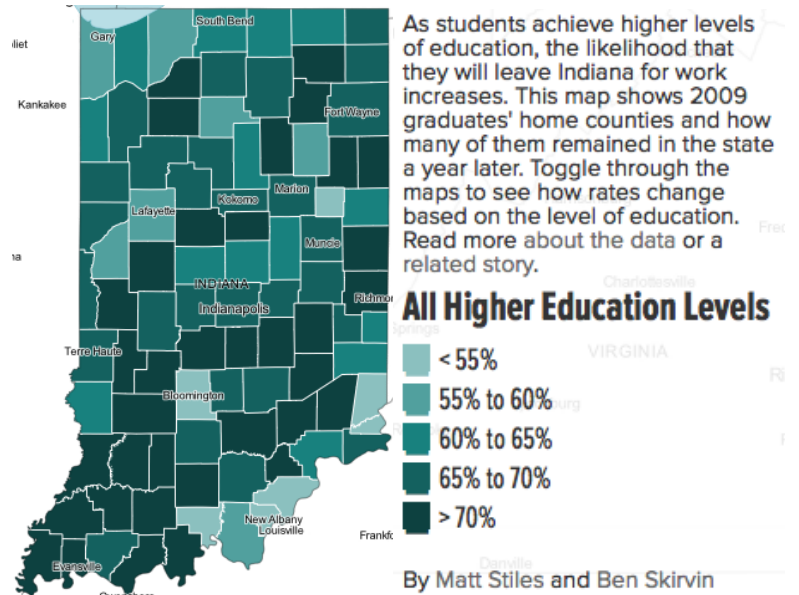
Smith answers with "The big question" which is: What do we do if and when our old mechanisms for coping with inequality break down? If the "endowment of human capital" with which people are born gets less and less valuable, we'll get closer and closer to that Econ 101 example of a world in which the capital owners get everything. A society with cheap robot labor would be an incredibly prosperous one, but we will need to find some way for the vast majority of human beings to share in that prosperity, or we risk the kinds of dystopian outcomes that now exist only in science fiction.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, the productivity of the U.S. economy grew 80 percent from 1979 to 2009.

That prompted Indiana AFL-CIO President Nancy Guyott to observe, "Unfortunately though, the hourly wage for the typical worker grew by only 10.1 percent. In the past several decades the gap between economic productivity and compensation for the typical worker has grown – a sharp contrast to the postwar period. Meanwhile, the top 1 percent has grabbed nearly 60 percent of all income gains in the last 30 years. Today, most of America's workers are working longer hours, taking on multiple jobs, and producing more goods and services. Yet their wages have not kept pace, despite record setting corporate profits."

That is a point that Democrat Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight and Republican Marion Mayor Wayne Seybold have confirmed. A number of citizens in their cities are working two or three part-time jobs. "Some of them are finding that preferable," Goodnight told me. "They are not just working for one boss. They can control what they do and when they do it."

Guyott notes that stagnant wages have impacted middle-class families' buying power, further impeding our



nation's economic growth. "This isn't happening due to uncontrollable changes," she said. "It's being driven by policy. Our minimum wage has been permitted to languish to ever lower levels of buying power. Our nation has pursued trade and tax policies that incentivize sending good jobs overseas. The jobs our economy has been creating are all too often those that come with low wages, and lower benefits. And as we know all too well, the union movement, a primary mover of making work pay for the workers, has been under assault."

Lag time in political reforms

It comes after Indiana quickly phased out the death tax, and lowered corporate and financial institution taxes. The middle class received an anemic income tax cut.

Ball State Prof. Michael Hicks notes, "Per capita income is a strong measure of standard of living, and its increase will have laudable effects on the states' citizens. However, changes to policies and programs have long and variable lags. It is nearly certain that no policy, no matter how ambitious, effective or wide reaching, will achieve measurable income goals over the term limit of a governor."

That may set up an epic battleground in 2014, when economic and social policy collide to create its own political weather. Three years after Republican majorities rammed home "right to work" legislation, Hoosiers still find Great Recession jobless rates and declining personal income. One could only wonder if Gov. Daniels and Treasurer Richard Mourdock had prevailed in the summer of 2009 with their view of the liquidation of General Motors and Chrysler, and with it the collapse of the vast supplier networks and companies like Cummins Engines. Those employers have kept the Indiana jobless rate and personal



income out of free-fall.

Legislative Republicans and Gov. Pence are now preparing a marriage amendment battle, something Eli Lilly and Cummins believes will only fuel a further "opportunity gap," which runs counter to the 2011 argument that

lawmakers should do everything they can to produce more jobs, and keep more graduates here.

In these furrows of policy and politics, the seeds for the next two election cycles will be planted. ❖

Indiana really has a 'local' control problem

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE – Indiana's problem is not that the overall business climate for investment is poor (it is great) or that we have too few students graduating from college with the right degrees (they are) or that people outside Indiana don't know how great these things are (they know).



The problem is not statewide (we have 12 counties growing much faster than the nation as a whole). These are just facts.

I also don't believe that the overall problem is one of rapid technological progress or any of the national (and hopefully transient) problems in labor markets. To test this analysis, ask

yourself the following question: "If the U.S. unemployment rate dipped to 5% and the economy appeared to fully recover, how many Indiana counties would then prosper?" I'd say, only the same dozen that do now while the U.S. economy languishes.

The problem in my judgment is that too many places in Indiana (and the Midwest) do not offer desirable places for educated, middle income or higher households to live. More than half our public schools appear to perform below the national average, and one can drive for long distances before finding a small town or community which has made a thoughtful sustained effort to craft a place that would attract new residents. To attract middle to upper class families in any numbers you need good schools, a few recreational opportunities and a community in which home values will rise (a home is for many of us our biggest direct investment).

This is a really a local, not state problem.

Almost all our local economic policies target business investment, and masquerade as job creation efforts. We abate taxes, apply TIF's and woo businesses all over the state, but then the employees who receive middle class wages (say \$18 an hour or more) choose the nicest place to live within a 40 mile radius.

So, we bring a nice factory to Muncie, and the employees all commute from Noblesville, in a familiar story repeated across the Midwest.

To be fair, the good times bred an instinct in many Midwest communities that the 'factory' was the ultimate goal of an economic development policy. Many of the third or fourth generation Hoosiers in middle-sized towns came here for jobs. That was perfectly predictable in the generation after World War II. Our communities were very homogenous, and consumption choices from cars and clothes to recreation and church were far more alike than today. Place mattered less, and amenities did not rise to high levels of importance.

As Americans became richer, schooling and community amenities matter more. This is an iron law of economics, that the share of income we spend on some goods rises as we get richer. Education and amenities (like health care and recreation) are two of these things. So, the Midwest built its small towns long before the quality of a place made much difference in migration or incomes.

Today, quality of place matters deeply, and we are, in many places, unprepared to deal with it.

I am a pretty apolitical guy, but credit the GOP with the policies which make Indiana's state business climate strong, and perhaps fix many school problems (that will take a further generation). They have not done much to empower local government to fix their own problems.

I give credit to the Democrats for focusing on community development efforts.

But, both parties have been complicit to some degree in the long march towards centralizing power at the state and federal level that has weakened the capacity of local government to address their problems. It will take some serious assistance, both technical and financial, for a state like Indiana to help most communities emerge from the dire straits they are in. Even then, many places face a dismal future.

So, I judge the problem to be almost wholly microeconomic in nature, not the problem of some national economic policy or outcome. And, as long as our leaders keep saying that they hold a silver bullet which will radically alter many local economies, we'll delay the hard work of fixing broken places across the state and region. ❖

Hicks is director & professor of Economics, Center for Business and Economic Research at Ball State.



Big brother steps out from behind the blackboard

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE – Ah, back to school. And Big Brother is watching on the local and state levels.

It's all very interesting, but scary.

Did you know parents in some Northwest Indiana school districts can hop on the computer and monitor just about everything their kids are doing, or not doing, in school?

Interesting, but I guess it makes me glad I'm no longer a student

And, what happened in Indianapolis last week makes me glad I'm not state Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz.

Big Brother Mike Pence, who also serves as governor, made a power grab that essentially gave him control of the state's education system, leaving Ritz with little to do but clean blackboards.

And Ritz learned about it after the fact.

Guess I'm not surprised. It was just a matter of time.

Indiana Republicans have been seething ever since Ritz, a Democrat, defeated Republican Superintendent Tony Bennett last November.

Tony was the hatchet man for Republicans who fought to take control of the state's education system by stripping teachers of power and allowing state dollars to slip away from the public schools.

The only question after Bennett's defeat was how the Republicans were going to strike back. Were they going to ignore Ritz or render her powerless?

We found out last week.

Pence announced the formation of the Center for Education and Career Innovation, which will work with a plethora of state agencies to improve education. Ritz's office isn't one of them.

Pence said, "By creating a focal point for bringing together and deploying critical resources, the agency will deliver real change in Indiana, benefiting Hoosier

families, employers and taxpayers, and ultimately, impacting every Hoosier across the state."

I'm not sure, but I think he just created the Garden of Eden.

Pence added, "CECI will hold students, adult workers, educators, schools, higher education institutions and workforce programs accountable for their progress." Isn't Ritz responsible for many of those things?

If you don't think this was all contrived, consider that House Speaker Brian Bosma and Indiana Chamber of Commerce chief Kevin Brinegar issued statements of support before Pence had finished speaking. Ritz, meanwhile, was left to pound the chalk out of erasers.

Senate Democratic Leader Tim Lanane said adding another level of bureaucracy will do nothing to help education.

"When it comes to our children's education, politics must be set aside and all stakeholders must work together. That seems to have been lacking in this instance," Lanane said.

Maybe Lanane and I are wrong. If so, Big Brother ought to come clean and sponsor legislation to make the superintendent an appointed position and step out from behind a bureaucratic curtain called the CECI. ❖

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.



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.

The Washington Post
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2007

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

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



Ellspermann listening tour an impressive endeavor

By **SHAW FRIEDMAN**

LAPORTE – It will be interesting to see what ultimately comes out of the lieutenant governor’s “listening tour” that is now about halfway through the state’s 92 counties. If there is follow-up and follow-through, as promised, Sue Ellspermann could emerge as a highly effective lieutenant governor.

I suspect I’m not the only local official impressed with the amount of listening she actually does for a statewide elected official. As a county attorney, I was one of several county, city, town and state legislative officials invited to the latest stop on her tour, which was held in LaPorte on Tuesday, Aug. 27.



Like many, I’ve attended facilitations and problem-solving meetings over the years. But Ms. Ellspermann, who built a successful consulting business doing problem-solving for clients, has clearly put her considerable talents to work on the road with this tour.

Like many good conveners, she opened by learning as much about the participants as she could. Yes, she utilized the by-now familiar SWOT approach to facilitations – identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – but she did so in a highly effective way that brought participants into the process.

The lieutenant governor seemed acutely aware that the constant slighting of Northwest Indiana by the previous state administration has been a sore spot for many in LaPorte County, and she seemed to handle that issue head-on. I think elected officials of both political stripes are hopeful that Northwest Indiana may fare better now than during the Mitch Daniels administration, which seemed to have a visceral distaste for “The Region” with its heavily Democratic leaning politics and where organized labor still holds a great deal of sway. Daniels, who made a career as a political brawler of the first order, never hesitated taking a swipe at a region that never embraced his brand of privatizing, let-them-eat-cake politics.

Perhaps coming from a region of the state that is as equally distant from Indianapolis as LaPorte County is (Ms. Ellspermann hails from tiny Ferdinand, at the southern tip of the state) helps give her some perspective on how

the far north and far south often felt like forgotten stepchildren in a Daniels administration that seemed preoccupied with the care and feeding of the heavily Republican donut counties near Indianapolis, to the exclusion of Democratic-leaning regions.

Ellspermann’s business and problem-solving background may prove very useful for her in the lieutenant governor’s office. It appears she’s been given a decent portfolio of assignments and issue areas by this governor and it will be interesting to see what kind of freedom she’s given to help influence policy.

Certainly her background in having worked with social service agencies gives some encouragement to those who are concerned that state government has over the past eight years increasingly slighted local non-profits and been downright stingy in its support of the aged, the infirm and the disabled.

As LaPorte County Commission President Willie Milsap put so well in welcoming the lieutenant governor, even the notion of a listening tour is a tremendous gesture and a reach-out to previously forgotten and neglected parts of Indiana. Milsap said in a letter to her and her staff that he hoped the tour represented a change in attitude “from what this county received from the last governor, who said the northwest region was not a good sandbox for business or new jobs.”

Taking a cheap shot at an entire region certainly doesn’t seem to be Ellspermann’s modus operandi. Her economic development background seemed to have her sympathizing with efforts to showcase shovel-ready sites in our region and help promote both tourism and other forms of job creation.

Time will tell if the sheets that were pasted to the wall and tallies of those present who assigned priorities to various opportunities are followed up on by the lieutenant governor and her staff.

But the LaPorte County edition of the listening tour represented a hopeful change for those of us thirsting for a fair shot for our county and a chance for the residents to be recognized again as equals by state government. The proof will be in the pudding. When it comes to actually seeing a fair share of state tax dollars returned to the area, rather than us serving as a donor county for the already prosperous suburbs around Indianapolis, we’ve still got a long way to go. ❖

Shaw R. Friedman is a LaPorte attorney who is former legal counsel for the Indiana Democratic Party.



DeMint brings his defund tour in search of headlines

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - Earth to Jim DeMint, earth to Jim DeMint: Your party lost the U.S. Senate in 2012.

Your party lost the rubber match and the White House in 2012.

The spectacle Hoosiers got to see in downtown Indianapolis Monday night was the former South Carolina senator and chief of Heritage Foundation - the very organization that created the idea of "Romneycare" which was a precursor to Obamacare - make his case to defund the latter.



But it was really a headline hunt, which is prologue to a witch hunt. The U.S. Senate is 55-45 Democratic and President Obama signs any legislation that passes Congress into law. Most Hoosiers learn that by the 5th grade. But DeMint and his merry band of defunders find themselves on a multi-city P.R. blitz with the intention of changing public perception on the Affordable Care Act.

"It's our hope we can be a part of helping people understand that we can still stop this," DeMint told the media on Monday. "The power of the purse belongs in the House of Representatives. I haven't seen this kind of energy since the tea party movement in 2010."

A real U.S. Senator - Indiana's Dan Coats - provided the state with a reality check over the weekend during an op-ed piece for the Indianapolis Star. "Here's the hard truth: President Obama will not overturn his signature legislation so long as he is president and the Democrats have control of the Senate," Coats said, repeating an assertion he made last June to Howey Politics Indiana. "Along with these political realities, refusing to pass legislation to keep the government funded will not stop Obamacare from going into effect. The majority of the law is considered 'mandatory spending' and operates outside of the annual appropriations process."

DeMint has his disciples, including U.S. Rep. Marlin Stutzman, R-Howe, and the first House Republican to sign on to the House defunding efforts in the heady days when there was real chatter about forcing the government shutdown since 1995, which turned out to be a debacle for the GOP. "I hear a lot of people saying 'We don't care how you stop it, just stop it,'" said Stutzman, who has straddled the line between defunding and a potential government

shutdown.

The energy going into the defund movement won't alter Obamacare. But it could stoke up the heat on House Republicans who still remember their U.S. government lessons from grade school. There is talk about GOP congressmen and women being "primaried" by the fanatics at Heritage and Club For Growth. That kind of talk was a precursor to Indiana Treasurer Richard Mourdock's Republican primary defeat of U.S. Sen. Dick Lugar in May 2012. Perhaps the final lesson from that exercise should be reviewed by the GOP fringe.

"I see no chance the Senate will pass it," U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, D-Granger, said in Fort Wayne about the health care defunding proposal. "I see no chance the president would ever agree to it. And so I don't quite know where this ship is going." ❖

RSC bars Heritage from meetings

WASHINGTON - The Republican Study Committee — a group of 172 conservative House members — has barred Heritage Foundation employees from attending its weekly meeting in the Capitol (National Journal). The conservative think tank has been a presence at RSC meetings for decades and enjoys a close working relationship with the committee and its members. But that relationship is now stretched thin, sources say, due to a series of policy disputes that culminated with a blowup over last month's vote on the the farm bill. RSC Chairman Steve Scalise, R-La., told Heritage officials of his decision last month. The acrimony can be traced to a pair of summer showdowns over agriculture policy. Heritage Action, the lobbying arm of the right-wing think tank, called for the bill to be split into two pieces—one dealing specifically with agriculture policy (called a "farm-only bill") and another legislating the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the food-stamp program known as SNAP.

Members of the RSC agreed. In fact, Rep. Marlin Stutzman of Indiana sponsored an amendment that would accomplish exactly what Heritage Action and other outside groups were advocating: splitting the farm bill. Stutzman's amendment failed, however, and Heritage Action issued a key vote alert warning lawmakers to vote "no" on the farm bill. (If they voted "yes," members faced consequences, anything from a demerit on their Heritage Action "scorecard" to a 30-second radio ad launched back in their districts.) The vast majority of GOP lawmakers, including many conservatives from rural districts, ignored the outcry from the right and voted for the bill. But in the end, 62 House Republicans sided with Heritage Action, enough to help Democrats defeat a bill that they denounced for its steep cuts to safety-net programs. ❖



Racing change from Bill Garrett to ‘The Butler’

By **MAUREEN HAYDEN**
CNHI Statehouse Bureau

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Many years ago, when I was a high school senior visiting college campuses, I met with an adviser at Indiana University whose job included recruiting new students. The conversation somehow turned to IU basketball and the undefeated season the team had just completed. The adviser, an elderly white woman with a visible sense of privilege, volunteered that she hadn’t been a fan for years.



In her mind, IU basketball (and therefore the university itself) was ruined the day a Shelbyville teenager named Bill Garrett was recruited for the team. He was both a star student and a star player – earning the “Mr. Basketball” title given annually to the state’s top high school player.

But he was also black. In joining the IU team in 1947, Garrett broke a color barrier established by what’s been described as a “gentlemen’s agreement” among Big Ten coaches that barred black players from the conference.

In her mind, Garrett was a threat to her seemingly secure world.

I was thinking about that conversation during a visit to the nation’s capitol last week where events were under way to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington and the landmark “I Have a Dream” speech by Martin Luther King Jr.

While there, I saw the new movie, “The Butler,” which tells the story of the 20th Century civil rights movement through the eyes of a black butler in the White House who served seven presidents. I saw the movie, which is based on a real story, in a theater in D.C.’s Chinatown neighborhood, surrounded by a racially diverse audience.

For me, one of the striking lines in the film came toward the end, when the main character, played by Forest Whitaker, observes how little we acknowledge our troubled history

as a nation founded on the self-evident principle of equality.

“Americans always turn a blind eye to our own,” says Whitaker’s character, during a visit to some former slave quarters. “We look out to the world and judge. We hear about the concentration camps, but these camps went on for 200 years in America.”

During the war that brought an end to slavery, Indiana mustered a massive number of volunteers, about 210,000 men, to serve in the Union forces. That’s easier to acknowledge and celebrate than the fact that racial segregation remained a critical part of our identity for decades after.

During the 1920s, the most powerful Ku Klux Klan organization in the nation was in Indiana. The Grand Dragon moved the white supremacist organization’s national headquarters to Indianapolis in 1922, the same year that Klansmen in the Indiana General Assembly passed a bill that created “Klan Day” at the Indiana State Fair, complete with a nighttime cross burning. By 1924, a Klan-backed slate of candidates had taken control of the Indiana General Assembly and the governor’s office and had set their sights on the state’s congressional delegation.

The organization based on the premise that native-born whites were superior in character to all other races started to lose its popularity only after its Grand Dragon was convicted of raping and murdering a young white woman. The national organization officially disbanded in 1944, just three years before the teenage Bill Garrett broke through IU basketball’s color barrier.

The real ignorance of that university official I met those many years ago was her failure to understand that the world only spins forward.

Consider this: Within a decade, the majority of people under 18 in the U.S. will be minorities. Like the rest of the nation, Indiana is on trend toward greater diversity as the numbers of blacks, Hispanics, Asians and other minorities are rising at a faster pace than whites. New census data released earlier this year showed the trend may accelerate in the years to come as the most racially and ethnically diverse age-group, Hoosiers under five, grow up.

It’s up to us to decide: Will we see diversity as a threat to our seemingly secure world? Or embrace it as a strength?



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Q&A on the abysmal rating of Congress

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Congress has abysmal approval ratings, just 14 percent in an August Gallup poll, 12 percent in a recent Wall Street Journal poll. And there was that poll earlier in the year showing that cockroaches were regarded more favorably than Congress.

You may have some questions about what this means.

Q. Are most members of Congress terrified they'll lose in their districts in the 2014 fall elections because of all this disapproval?

A. Not really. Most aren't worried.

Q. Every poll also shows the public wants no more eye-gouging partisanship and gridlock in Congress. So, will the members finally cooperate to do something about the economy, jobs, immigration and the deficit rather than continue

their public-be-damned stubbornness?

A. Bet on stubbornness.

Q. Wait. They aren't doing what the public wants and their institution is less popular than cockroaches. But they aren't going to change and they aren't worried about re-election. Does that make sense?

A. Sense? Remember, we're talking about Congress. What they're doing may not make sense in terms of the national interest. However, it makes perfect political sense for incumbents who regard their own re-election as the most important consideration of all.

Q. It makes political sense to engage in partisanship and stalemate?

A. Yes. With a polarized public that tends to blame one side or the other for all that's wrong, it doesn't matter if Congress is unpopular, provided your side, your party, has a "safe" majority in your district. Your only real worry is in your own party primary. But if you're sufficiently nasty, negative toward the other side, the zealots in your primary won't try to oust you in the primary. You'll be renominated and then be a cinch in the fall.

Q. But both sides vote in the fall. Couldn't a nasty, negative image bring defeat then?

A. Polls also show that voters, though expressing dislike of Congress, want members of their own party to win. They put all the blame for stalemate on the other

party. They don't mind eye-gouging and may even applaud it if it gouges the "villains" on the other side. And redistricting lessens chances of losing in the fall.

Q. Yeah, but can redistricting make everybody in one party safe?

A. No. In fact, well calculated redistricting makes some districts safe for the other party. With redistricting now plotted with precise voter data and computers, there are very few "swing" districts where the outcome in the fall is really much in doubt. Nate Silver, the numbers genius whose 2012 election forecasts were almost perfect, estimates there are only 35 such really competitive districts left out of the 435.

Q. How could that be?

A. Largely because of redistricting. But also due to geographic political patterns, with Republican districts, especially in the South, becoming even more Republican and Democratic districts, especially in some parts of the Northeast and Midwest, becoming more Democratic.

Q. How can redistricting have so much effect?

A. Say a Republican-controlled state legislature after the census is drawing the map for 10 congressional districts. They could put as many potential Democratic voters as possible into three "safe" Democratic districts, carefully carving out seven "safe" Republican districts. A Democratic-controlled legislature would do just the opposite.

Q. They can do this?

A. Look at Republican redistricting in Indiana and Democratic redistricting in Illinois.

Q. This brings stalemate?

A. Sure. When members have no real fear for the fall and are concerned mainly about a challenge in the primary - a Tea Party challenger coming from the right in a Republican primary, a more liberal challenger coming from the left in a Democratic primary - an incumbent doesn't want to be seen as too moderate, too willing to compromise. Thus, no compromise. No jobs bill. No budget agreement. No tax reform. No immigration solution. Nothing.

Q. Isn't there something?

A. Yes. Republicans voting 40 times to repeal Obamacare, even though they know they can't do it. Democrats saying they won't consider changes in Social Security and Medicare, even though they know some long-range changes are essential. And members looking forward to what they consider essential, re-election. Also, they did pass a bill naming a bridge. ❖

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





Huber's Chamber climb was not ordinary

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — Michael Huber is the new president at the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce. His is not the ordinary climb up the ladder. He has not moved from one chamber to another, ever increasing the size and scope of his responsibilities.

Instead, Huber comes via the political route to the top. He spent three years with the Daniels state administration in the Office of Management and Budget, plus a stint with the Department of Administration.

Then he signed on with the Ballard city of Indianapolis where he was responsible for enterprise development, rising to deputy mayor for economic development. Before joining the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, he seems to have been in a holding pattern as senior director of commercial enterprise at the Indianapolis Airport Authority.



As a good administrator, with an MBA from the IU Kelley School of Business, he has already announced his intention to roll out a new strategic plan for the Chamber. If it already has such a plan, it is neces-

sarily obsolete when new management comes on board.

Huber has a tough assignment. His predecessor, Scott Miller, welded together three wings to fly the Chamber to new heights. One wing is designed to bring new businesses to Indianapolis; another is to work on the same task, but with a regional orientation.

The third wing, the Business Ownership Initiative (BOI), exists to help new and expanding small businesses understand how to function better in today's complex economic environment. [In the interest of full disclosure, I am a member of the BOI board.]

On top of this configuration of functions, the Chamber is supposed to be what chambers have been for more than 100 years: A spokesman for the business community and an organizer of civic efforts for the benefit of the wider community.

The Indianapolis Chamber, in recent decades, has been a progressive voice in Indiana. Blessed with a strong market position, Indianapolis has been able to work on programs that are beneficial beyond its borders.

However, the rest of the state often sees Indianapolis as a greedy octopus, reaching out in all directions

to dominate its neighbors. One task for the local chamber, therefore, is to demonstrate real regional interest and a generous understanding of the many smaller communities of the state.

This is not easy to do when the rest of the state is fundamentally hostile to the leading growth center of the state. That hostility is consistent with the long-term anti-urban bias Hoosiers have exhibited and with the contemporary competitive atmosphere concerning economic development.

The absence of a state policy on economic development addressing geographic competition is a handicap. Perhaps, Michael Huber has some friends in the Pence administration that can help.

Clearly, Huber must satisfy the traditional expectations of a chamber executive. In addition, he needs to navigate a vessel with three flapping wings and set an example for other chambers statewide caught in similar circumstances. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an independent economist, writer and speaker.

Obama says gridlock not due to race

WASHINGTON - President Obama late Wednesday dismissed the notion that partisan gridlock on Capitol Hill is the result of his stature as the country's first black president, instead accusing Republicans of a "habit" of attempting to "delegitimize" Democratic presidents (The Hill).

Obama noted that he had shared a stage at the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington earlier in the day with President Clinton, and he remembered "him having a pretty hard time with the Republicans as well."

"There does [seem to] be a habit sometimes of just Democratic presidents generally being — efforts being made to delegitimize them in some fashion," Obama told the PBS NewsHour. "And that's fine because, you know, politics is — is not — is not bean bag, as they used to say — it's not a noncontact sport. And I don't worry about it personally."

Obama did say that he had observed a resistance to "any change in the status quo, particularly when it came to economic opportunity," but chalked that up "less to ... my race" than sentiments that "the government's the problem instead of the solution."

"I think it — it doesn't have to do with my race in particular; it has to do with an effort to make sure people who might otherwise challenge the existing ways that things work are divided," Obama said. ❖



Doug Ross, NWI Times: President Barack Obama and I talked about higher education Thursday -- not to each other, mind you, but at the same time. Obama talked about college affordability, the start of a long conversation. I talked about the merits of living on campus versus commuting from home. The president's latest crusade is to bring to higher education the same kind of accountability already brought to K-12 schools. The White House issued a fact sheet Thursday that should interest all Hoosiers. The average cost for in-state undergraduate students living on campus at public colleges and universities was \$20,736 in Indiana, the report said. Exacerbating the problem is declining state funding for universities. Even if the actual dollar amount doesn't decline, the proportion of state support to total college costs has dropped sharply, from 47 percent 25 years ago to 25 percent today. Obama's plan calls for boosting state support. Some colleges have responded by freezing tuition and cutting costs, including faculty positions. Indiana has already begun one of Obama's higher education initiatives, to tie college funding to performance. Higher-performing institutions would be rewarded financially. That adds to the pressure on college administrators to control costs while increasing results.. ❖



Deroy Murdock, Evansville Courier & Press: At his Aug. 9 news conference, President Barack Obama spoke with journalists in the White House East Room about Republicans and Obamacare. "At least they used to say, 'Well, we're going to replace it with something better,'" Obama said. "There's not even a pretense now that they're going to replace it with something better." Unless Republicans want Obama to keep spouting such nonsense, they must craft and at least pass through the GOP House one single bill that would scrap the health-care reform law and put something far better, and Republican, in its place. Republicans are 1,000 percent correct to try to defund, repeal and replace Obamacare. With its employer mandate postponed for a year, most health-insurance exchanges are far from ready for their Oct. 1 debut, medical premiums zooming to the moon, and its 10-year price tag soaring from \$940 billion at enactment to \$1.8 trillion today, Obamacare has become both unworkable and a knee-slapping mockery of its official title: the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. American patients and taxpayers alike should applaud GOP efforts to derail this runaway train and safely run it out of town, before it barrels onto Main Street with its gears stripped. That said, congressional Republicans badly need to plant their rumps into some hard chairs and unify around a solitary GOP alternative to Obamacare. They should endorse its elements, pledge to adopt it if they

win the Senate, and constantly sell it as the best means to prevent this looming disaster. ❖

Dan Carpenter, Indianapolis Star: Today, my final day of employment at The Star, happens to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. My passage also comes as Nelson Mandela, one of the most significant figures of the two centuries in which I have worked, nears the end of his life. It is marked, as well, by the reign of a black president, something barely dreamt of when I joined the staff of an African-American newspaper three years after Rev. Martin Luther King. Jr. was gunned down. And it has waited long enough for me to see marriage equality, not just civil rights for individual gay Americans, gather a momentum that seems irresistible even in the face of opposition as fierce and sanctimonious — if not as violent — as that which an earlier generation of once-second-class citizens endured. It is easy to wax sentimental about the history a journalist of my age, living in an era when new telephones and nude celebrities are front-page news, has been there to chronicle and interpret. It is just as easy to observe the role of money and votes in waking the "better angels of our nature," and wax cynical. The key to landing between those unhealthy extremes is to recognize the power of ordinary people — fed-up, faithful, fighting fear and, yes, sometimes fighting violently — to bring the powers that be to a point where they must "grant" rights that the Creator already took care of. ❖

Jeff Woods, Nashville Scene: We bet they're fist-bumping all over Lamar Alexander reelection campaign headquarters today. Just look at all the fabulous media coverage they generated by releasing their polling showing the senator with sky high approval ratings and beating the pants off all comers. The Washington Post declares, "Internal poll shows Sen. Lamar Alexander in strong position," and everybody seems to think Alexander will dance to victory against those wacky tea partiers. "Tennessee waltz?" MSNBC chortles. "Poll says Alexander can withstand Tea Party challenge." Seriously? To borrow from Sarah Palin, will that lamestream media never learn? Anyone who thinks any poll taken so many months before any election is all that meaningful should take a look at what happened to Indiana Sen. Richard Lugar. At the end of 2010, he was his state's most popular politician with a 66% favorable rating. The tea partier Richard Mourdock was at 14%. By April of 2012 in their Republican primary, Lugar trailed Mourdock by 5 points, and the senator wound up losing 61%-39%. All it took to bring down Lugar was a few million dollars worth of negative TV ads from outside conservative groups. ❖



Pence cites ‘miracle of Mount Baldy’

MICHIGAN CITY — A 6-year-old Illinois boy who survived being buried alive returned to Michigan City, Ind., to thank those who came to his “miracle” rescue (NBC News). With his teddy bear in hand and his family by his side, Nathan Woessner stood next to Indiana Gov. Mike Pence at a ceremony Wednesday that honored the



team of 139 rescuers who saved the boy. Woessner was swallowed by a sink hole 11 feet down in a sand dune at Mount Baldy in the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, the tallest moving sand dune in the federally protected lakeshore, on July 12. The team of rescuers spent more than three hours using their hands and later machinery to save him – a rescue that Pence called the “Miracle on Mount Baldy.” “This rescue occurred because of swift thinking, because of collaboration and because of individuals who were willing to come together on behalf of one lost child,” he said at a ceremony Wednesday that honored the rescuers with an Act of Heroism award. All 139 names were read aloud during the ceremony. Woessner was hospitalized for two weeks after he was rescued, but his

since recovered. “The story that could have ended in tragedy had a happy ending because of those gathered here today, and it still continues,” Pence said.

Boehner seeks Syria explanation

WASHINGTON - Speaker John A. Boehner sent a letter to President Barack Obama Wednesday seeking a “clear, unambiguous explanation” of how a strike on Syria fits into U.S. objectives and questioning the president’s legal authority to do so absent Congressional authorization (Roll Call). The Ohio Republican makes clear he believes the consultation with Congress so far has been insufficient, and it comes as numerous House members have signed on to a letter to Obama demanding Congressional authorization before strikes. “It is essential you address on what basis any use of force would be legally justified and how the justification comports with the exclusive authority of Congressional authorization under Article I of the Constitution,” Boehner said.

Fast food strike today in Indy

INDIANAPOLIS - Fast-food workers in Indianapolis went on strike Thursday morning because they want more money per hour (WISH-TV). Workers walked off jobs in call for \$15 an hour and the right to form a union without interference from employers or unfair labor practices. They are part of the 33,000 fast-food workers in Indianapolis. Workers participating are employed at McDonald’s, Taco Bell, Cinnabon, A&W and Sweet Factory. They say the \$200 billion fast food industry is making record profits while its workers are forced to rely on public assistance just to afford the basics.

The current median wage is \$8.67 an hour and they say a professor from MIT says an adult with one child needs to make \$17.81 an hour full time in the circle city just to afford the basics. They were at the McDonalds at 16th and Meridian streets Thursday morning and will be at Circle Center Mall striking at Taco Bell, A&W, Cinnabon and Sweet Factory Thursday afternoon and a McDonald’s on U.S. 31 Thursday evening.

CIB to give Pacers another \$11 million

INDIANAPOLIS - The Capital Improvement Board of Marion County is prepared to give Pacers Sports & Entertainment another \$11 million to offset losses from operating Bankers Life Fieldhouse (Olson, Indianapolis Business Journal). CIB President Ann Lathrop said Wednesday afternoon that the \$11 million payment could be delivered in July 2014, after the current agreement with the Pacers expires. All told, the Pacers will receive \$21 million from CIB next year, including money it will receive for repairs to be made to the fieldhouse. The CIB board voted 8-0 Wednesday afternoon to approve the funding.

Allen Co. to revamp polling sites

FORT WAYNE - If a proposed plan to reorganize and consolidate polling locations is approved, more than half of Allen County voters can expect some changes during next year’s elections (Sade, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). More than half of the voters in 172 precincts would have new locations if the plan is approved, Beth Dlug, director of elections, said Wednesday during a presentation to the Allen County Election Board.