



Hoosier Democrats losing courthouses

County strongholds are narrowing after 3 dismal election cycles

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

NASHVILLE, Ind. – Jim Oliver had been the prosecutor of Brown County for 16 years, and Sheriff Rick Followell was seeking reelection. Both were washed out of office in the November election.

“They had a D beside their name,” said Nashville Town Board President Bob Kirlin. “It was a bad year to be a Democrat.”

Brown County is somewhat of a swing county with its mixture of locals, those working at Indiana University, Columbus or Indianapolis. But beyond the hills of Brown, the Indiana Democratic Party is facing a precipitous decline at the local level. Democrats did fine in Indianapolis and Monroe County where they swept the local county slate. But in other Democratic strongholds, such



Barack Obama speaks to a spellbound crowd at Roberts Stadium in Evansville on April 22, 2008. He would lose the Indiana primary two weeks later, win the state in November, and set in motion a devastating sequence for Indiana Democrats. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

as LaPorte County, the local Democratic ticket saw straight ticket voting fall from the 5,000 range to 2,700 and they lost two county council seats, a county commissioner and

Continued on page 4

Dem's permanent erosion

By **RUSS STILWELL**

BOONVILLE – What a difference an election makes. Make that the last three Hoosier elections that saw the Republican political straw crush the camel's back in Southwest Indiana. Democrats got blistered in 2010, disfigured in 2012 and by the time 2014 came about, it really didn't matter anymore. The show was over.



I have lived in Southwest Indiana all of my life and have been active in every congressional, state and local race in my area for a very long time. Congressional races in our region were won and lost by both parties on a rotating basis for nearly a decade. The “Bloody



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- Rev. Charles Harrison, who is filing a mayoral committee



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8th" Congressional District was a rollercoaster of winners and losers for years. We had five different congressmen from 1972-82.

The districts were drawn by Republicans in the 1970-80's and by Democrats in the remaining years through 2010. Why the swings and so many changes? Why so solidly Republican today? And why have nearly all the legislative districts changed from solid Democrat to safe Republican?

If you were a Democratic candidate in 1974 you won. Simple as that. It was the Watergate landslide; 1976 was different, but when Ford pardoned Nixon, it helped Democrats. It returned to normal in 1978 and the Reagan sweep in 1980, where Republican U.S. Rep. Joel Deckard prevailed.

1982? Who really won that election? Democrat Frank McCloskey, after a six-month recount, was declared the winner by a four-vote margin by the Democrat-controlled U.S. Congress. McCloskey, the former mayor of Bloomington, continued to win until the Republican wave hit in 1994. That's when Newt Gingrich took his party to the majority. John Hostetler won competitive elections in the Democrat-drawn map until the popular Vanderburgh County Sheriff Brad Ellsworth won in 2006 by 20-some points. Again in 2008, Democrats were on the rise with the Obama machine and Democrats prevailed at the congressional, Statehouse and local level.

And then the worst year for Democrats in nearly a century hit Indiana and virtually every other region of the nation in 2010. Heart surgeon Larry Bucshon won the 8th District seat. Republican state legislative and local candidates won. They won with Democrat-drawn maps. And they won big! Change was coming and it was not the change that Obama promised and that so many had hoped for.

In 2008 and through much of 2009, the "hope and change" of the Obama presidency prevailed. But with the partisan Democrat passage of the Affordable Care Act that hope and change became desperateness and all-out disgust. Folks did not

like Obama and they didn't like his policies. Attitudes changed during the second year of the Obama presidency and they were felt at the ballot box in 2010 and beyond. And it was felt from the White House to the courthouse.

The Republicans were united in their message while Democrats ran away from the president and his policies. They didn't defend his record. The outcome was obvious. The Republicans took over Southern Indiana in such a way that it is not likely to change for decades, or until another national event occurs similar to Watergate.

This top-down disgust with the national Democrats and the President continued through the 2012 and 2014 elections. It was felt at the national, state and local level.

From my perspective, it's kind of hard to imagine why the voters continued this pattern in 2014. I think that Ed Rendell, the former governor of Pennsylvania, summed it up best: "Democrats did a piss-poor job in messaging from top to bottom." Instead of defending the President's record of economic policies that just might have saved our financial and labor markets, Democrats let the Republicans browbeat them on hot button issues.

Any casual observer of politics and policy would know that our economic climate under Obama was immensely better than when he took office. Unemployment down from double digits to 6 percent. Millions of jobs created. The automobile industry went from the brink of disaster to one of unparalleled growth.

Our interest rates and the price of gasoline were at historic lows. The stock market, our 401K's and our financial markets were at all-time highs. And we had ended two unpopular wars that began under a Republican administration. There was a lot to talk about. But as Rendell so succinctly noted, "we did a piss-poor job" of defending or messaging. We turned our backs to issues worth talking about and let the hot button issues and Obama bashing prevail.

This is one's person prospective on what has changed reliable Democrat voters to reliable Republican voters in Southern Indiana. And this change will likely continue for a very long time.

For a long time Democrats were elected regularly at the state and local level in most of the Southern Indiana counties. In some counties, it was a rarity to even have one elected Republican. Today, most of these counties have Republican control at the county level and the voters cast their votes for Republican legislative candidates as well. As we say in the south, "How come?"

Because these mostly white, typically conservative voters identify with the Republicans on hot-button issues. And they changed their voting habits to match their conservative beliefs. If you go to a bar, a union hall, other places where politics come up in our Southern Indiana counties, you will find similar general attitudes.

They hate Obama, are likely pro-life, distrust foreigners, don't believe in welfare, complain about high taxes, despise immigration reform and let you know that the color of Obama's skin has nothing to do with their observations. Really?

How do you compete against those odds? And these are not just Republicans. They are Democrats (so they say) and they either just don't vote or vote for the Republicans and those that espouse their values.

When you compound these hot-button points of view with Republican-drawn congressional and legislative maps, you have a recipe of disaster for Democrats. It will be a lengthy wait before they ever rise in the south again. The GOP controls the maps, they have unlimited campaign funds and their message resonates with the southern voters!

Even though Indiana ranks near dead last in income growth, personal income per capita and every imaginable economic statistic that effects middle and lower income households, these households vote against their economic interests for the Republican message. They have embraced hot button and easy-to-understand issues while ignoring the long term negative effects of Republican policies that do not favor working and middle class families. It's hard to imagine, but it is the fabric of where we live.

These are the households that used to elect Democrats. These are the voters who Democrats won elections with. And now these voters either don't vote or pull the Republican ticket more often than not.

There were other trends that caused this massive shift from Democrats to Republicans in the south. There have been population shifts to the suburbs from the Evansville and Louisville areas into neighboring counties. These suburban transits have heavily favored the Republican brand. Democrats were competitive during this voter migration, but it was just a matter of time before the sheer

numbers rendered these counties and the legislative seats to non-competitive status.

When I was defeated in my reelection bid in 2010, my internal polling three weeks before the election showed that I could be in trouble. My election numbers were great but my reelection was troubling. Nearly 67% of the voters thought I was doing a good job, they trusted me to do the right thing and liked me by similar margins. And my negatives were single digit. In political terms, these were numbers "to die" for. But it didn't make any difference.

But voters were prepared to not vote for me and that is exactly what they did. It is nearly impossible to change attitudes. Polls don't take a swim through the river of pent up "feelings." They deliver raw numbers. The pent-up feelings of the voters prevailed all across the south, and it continues today.

A couple of months after the disastrous 2010 elections, Howey Politics Indiana asked me for my thoughts. I said that it would be nearly impossible for the House R's to keep 60 seats and that there was not enough political talent in the state to keep them all. I went on to say the river counties (that would be the Ohio River) and Southern Indiana would have several competitive seats and things could get back to normal somewhat quickly. The river counties and southern Indiana had historically been conservative, but somewhat reliably Democrat, at the local and state-house level.

I went on to inform the Howey Report that, "Southern Indiana is a gun-toting, Bible belt conservative blue collar area that doesn't think kindly of folks who don't think like they do; and they will punish you at the ballot box every time from top to bottom." These voters sure proved this point in 2010-2014 when they linked the entire Democrat ballot with the unpopular president, Obamacare and hot-button issue.

A whole lot has changed since I made those ill-fated comments. What a difference the fragmentation of the Democrat caucus and a decided money advantage can make!

Talk about lack of political insight. Democrats are not going to rise in the south anytime soon. Southern Indiana has changed and looks to stay that way for a very long time.

I have always believed that Democrats cannot control the Indiana House or have quorum breaking numbers in the Senate without the South. It will not happen unless a strategy is designed and put in place, much like former Speaker Michael Phillips did when he took the House from 27 seats to a majority in a little over a decade.

As recently as 2008, House Democrats had a 19-5 Southern Indiana advantage. Today, that relates to a 20-4 Republican advantage. When you add the overwhelming



advantages of the Republican maps and ownership of the political money chest it could be decades before parity can ever be achieved.

Today, in many of our Southern Indiana counties a Republican only needs to put a name on the ballot, avoid a primary and win. They only need sign their declaration of candidacy and they are the immediate favorite. It wasn't that long ago, when this could be said of the Democrats.

Times are changing and hope is dubious. If you are a Southern Indiana Democrat that is not the "hope and change" you envisioned in the Obama election of 2008. Hope and change may be coming, and better days may be coming too. But those days are light years away in the Southern Indiana I call home. ❖

Stilwell is a former Democratic House majority leader and a frequent HPI contributor.

Democrats, from page 1

the sheriff.

In Vanderburgh County, Republicans won two of the three county council seats on the ballot, with two seats uncontested. While Democrats saw Sheriff David Wedding reelected with 59% of the vote, they did not contest Prosecutor Nicholas Hermann or county Assessor Bill Fluty Jr. and lost the auditor's race in a landslide.

In another traditionally Democratic stronghold, Vigo County, Democrats had a narrow 50.32% to 48.47% edge in straight ballot voting last month. That compares to a 17,631 (or 43% of all ballots) to 2,619 Democratic straight ticket advantage in 2006.

Statewide candidates Beth White for secretary of state and Mike Boland for treasurer carried 49% and 48% of the Vigo vote, while Republican State Auditor Suzanne Crouch won the county with 52%. Defeated State Sen. Tim Skinner topped Republican Jon Ford 10,874 to 10,306, and Rep. Alan Morrison won 53% of his vote in Vigo. Republicans did not run nominees for sheriff, surveyor and assessor, while Democrats did not contest Republican Prosecutor Terry Modesitt. Democrats carried three of the four county council seats and one commissioner.

While Lake County Democrats regained the one county office Republicans took four years ago, for the first time in modern history, Republicans now control four legislative seats. In St. Joseph County, South Bend Tribune columnist Jack Colwell raised a pre-election question as to whether this once-Democratic bastion was still so.

After the election, Colwell observed: The answer,

marked in the polling places, is that St. Joseph County is Democratic. But not very. Not at all in state office races. Only a smidgen in providing a margin in the congressional race. Yet, decisive enough to win the county offices and retain Democratic control of the county council. St. Joseph County voters gave Democratic congressional nominee Joe Bock the smallest county plurality for a Democrat in a congressional race in 68 years, just 563 votes. Two years ago, with voting higher in a presidential election, Democratic congressional nominee Brendan Mullen carried St. Joseph County by 21,438 votes. Democrats did carry all county races.

More indicative of a multi-cycle transformation came in Clark County, where Republican straight tickets out-performed Democrats for the first time in history, 5,007 to 4,300, according to a News & Tribune story by Matt Koesters. "I broke it down, and it was immediately apparent that there was a huge difference in straight-party Democrat versus Republican tickets in Clark County," Sheriff-elect and GOP Chairman Jamey Noel said of his unsuccessful 2006 run for sheriff. According to records provided by Clark County Voter Registration, just more than 8,000 straight-ticket Democrat votes were cast that year, versus just 5,645 Republican votes. "I knew that Clark County was pretty much a conservative county, and when we did

polling, it showed that," Noel said. "Clark County is hugely a conservative county if you take out the Democrat and Republican labels."

Koestrel reported: There have been times in Clark County when the Republicans didn't even bother to hold a primary election for lack of candidates. Noel made sure those days came to an end as he and his adjutants got to work trying to put together a slate, getting the word out and chipping away at the straight-ticket advantage held by the other side. "We'd sell the party, sell what we stand for, what our ideas are, what our principles are," Noel said.

Lugar defeat? Unlikely

By JACK COLWELL
SOUTH BEND - Could Dick Lugar, "statesman," become Dick Lugar, "communist," and lose in the 2012 Republican primary?
Yes. Could the six-term senator, hailed internationally as well as here for achievements such as deactivation or destruction of thousands of nuclear warheads once aimed at us on Soviet launchers, a senator so popular that Democrats didn't even field a candidate against him in 2006, be defeated by voters in his own party's primary?

The efforts soon proved fruitful. In 2010, Monty Snelling took the office of county auditor, while David Reinhardt captured the treasurer's office for the GOP. The momentum continued in 2012 with historic wins by Jack Coffman and Rick Stephenson to take control of the board of commissioners. "It's a lot of little pieces fitting together in that puzzle that, I don't want to say it makes it easy, because of the hard work that goes into it," Noel said. "Basically, if you get a Republican candidate that works hard on the ballot, they've got a good shot at winning races, whereas before that wasn't the case."

Butternut voter shift

This is the kind of change occurring in Indiana, particularly Southern Indiana, that mimics the political transformation of the Deep South that began in the Nixon era and solidified under Reagan-Bush. Butternut Hoosiers would vote Republican for president, but shift to Democratic candidates at the congressional, state legislative and local levels.

HPI has documented the sprawling and growing Republican power, from its control of the traditionally Democratic or competitive 8th and 9th CDs, to the five of six constitutional executive Statehouse offices including a 12-year gubernatorial hold, that only one Democratic state senator (Sen. Bob Stoops of Bloomington) and three state representatives represent Southern Indiana south of I-70, to the fact that Republican mayors occupy traditionally Democratic cities such as Jasper, Madison, Evansville, Jeffersonville, Scottsburg, Washington and Terre Haute.

David Bottorff, Association of Indiana Counties president, told HPI that about 80% of county officials - commissioners, councilmen, sheriffs, prosecutors, recorders, clerks, auditors, assessors - are Republican. On the city level, according to the 2011 municipal election results, 57 Indiana mayors are Republican and 47 are Democrat. Matt Greller of the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns told HPI that a decade ago, those numbers were reversed.

Indiana Republican Chairman Tim Berry confirmed not only Bottorff's county numbers, but added context. In 76 counties, Republicans now control the county board of commissioners with at least a 2 to 1 majority.

"In 2002, when I ran for treasurer, I won 80 counties and lost 12," Berry said. "Many of those were in southern counties which had been traditionally Democrat. They would vote for a Republican down ballot statewide, but they would vote Democratic at the county level. We didn't have the party built strong enough down there."

Berry said that in addition to Clark, Posey, Warrick, DuBois have transitioned from Democratic dominance

at the courthouse to Republican. Perry, Jefferson, Switzerland, Floyd and Crawford counties are still strongly Democratic, but Republicans are making inroads at the courthouse.

Berry said that initial GOP gains began in many of these counties in 2010. "That was a big achievement," Berry said. "In 2014, they are voting Republicans and retaining the ones elected in 2010 in office. This is an even bigger achievement. What we've seen over last few election cycles is Republicans have taken over all of the rural seats that used to be Democrat. The southern Indiana rural legislative seats are now Republican seats. We saw that continue with Erin Houchin and Mark Messmer" who were elected to Senate seats. "And we're seeing it as well with county elected officials getting reelected."

This began to change in 2008 when State Rep. Ed Clere upset longtime Democrat State Rep. Bill Cochran, then was extended by the Democratic Party's 2010 Evan Bayh disaster when he made an 11th hour decision to forgo reelection, then watched the 8th CD and a handful of longtime Democratic legislative seats go Republican. Republicans controlled the 2011 redistricting, and the super majorities of 2012 turned into the historic 71-29 Republican House super majority and 40-10 Senate super majority in 2014.

But the foundation for any party occurs at the local level, and the erosion of traditional county Democratic strongholds poses a huge challenge for Indiana Democrats.

Shaw Friedman, former LaPorte County Democratic chairman, told HPI, "We're just going through a rough patch and I expect those numbers to rebound. With any tide or surge it's going to have a huge effect on local government officials as well and this cycle was no different. Do keep in

mind, it wasn't that long ago (2008) that some were predicting the demise of the GOP because of micro-targeting and changing demographics, etc. These things are very cyclical and I have been around long enough to know that long term predictions about Democrats becoming endangered don't have a long shelf-life to them."

Indiana Democratic Chairman John Zody told HPI that his party is in a constant rebuilding mode. "When I became chair, half our county chairs were new," Zody said. "That means there were 40 to 50 new chairs. Everybody is a volunteer. Party building never stops. The organizations are always in transition. It never stops."

Zody said he surveyed party leaders and asked

114th Congress: House of Representatives map



what they needed. "We'll do that again at the end of this year or the first of the year. We're looking at what kind of program is necessary," Zody said. "We make sure we're responsive. There is never a call that doesn't go returned. The state party has to provide the resources."

Democratic Clark County Assessor Vicky Haire, who won her race last month, told the News & Tribune that Republicans are successfully attracting younger voters. "We can't seem to find that. There is something about the Republican Party right now that is very, very attractive to the young people. I don't know what it is. If I knew, I would be able to understand it a bit better."

Berry said that a number of Republican county chairs in Democratic dominated counties stepped up in 2010 and began rebuilding their organizations and emphasized candidate recruitment. "They've spent more time focusing on candidate recruitment," Berry said. "That was what happened in 2010. We proved to local candidates they could run and win in those counties. Voters are responding to message at both state and local level."

Democratic maps shrinking nationally

Charlie Cook, writing in his National Journal column this week, observed: "Although the national red-blue maps of the partisan makeup of the House, the governorships, and, somewhat less so, the Senate maps, are misleading in that they equate population with land area, the maps do illustrate where Democrats are strong and where they are not (interesting factoid: Only 14% of the land area in the U.S. is represented by a Democrat in the House). Increasingly, Democratic strength is concentrated primarily in urban areas and college towns, among minorities, and in narrow bands along the West Coast (but only the first 50-100 miles from the beaches) and the East Coast (but only from New York City northward). The South and the Border South, as well as small-town and rural America, are rapidly becoming no-fly zones for Democrats. Few Democrats represent small-town and rural areas, and the party is finding it increasingly difficult to attract noncollege-educated white voters."

As HPI has pointed out several times in the past year, Cook could be writing about Indiana.

According to Gallup Editor Frank Newport, "President Barack Obama's job-approval rating among white non-college graduates is at 27% so far in 2014, 14 percentage points lower than among white college graduates. This is the largest yearly gap between these two groups since Obama took office. These data underscore the magnitude of the Democratic Party's problem with working-class whites, among whom Obama lost in the 2012 presidential election, and among whom Democratic House candidates lost in the 2014 U.S. House voting by 30 points."

And Cook makes a similar point that HPI columnist Shaw Friedman makes, that Democrats emphasized health care when they should have prioritized pocketbook issues. "Governing is about making choices and facing

consequences," Cook writes. "Implicitly, to focus on certain things is to de-emphasize other things. The modern Democratic Party was effectively born during President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, reacting and dealing with the Great Depression. While books have been filled with the multitude of things that Roosevelt and his New Dealers did, if you boiled it down to its essence, it was helping people get back on their feet after the great stock-market crash of 1929 and the deep depression that resulted."

The party needs to connect the dots to find its way back to relevance. When Mitch Daniels won the governorship, he said one of his top priorities in 2004 was to raise per-capita income, and that hasn't happened yet. Can you blame the two Republican governors and the Indiana General Assembly? I'm not sure you can fully, because we've seen industries become productive, we've seen a lot of middle-level managers cut out, a lot of mergers and that kind of thing. Democrats need to be looking at various health metrics, education attainment and per-capita income and building future campaigns around that. ❖

Democrats missed economic messaging

By SHAW FRIEDMAN

LaPORTE – Democrats in recent cycles have won plaudits for our ability to use a good ground game to mobilize key supporters and get them to the polls. We've



perfected the art of early voting and even in Indiana, which makes registration so difficult (30 days prior, no same-day registration), we still tend to do pretty well in our ability to urge our supporters to cast an early vote.

Micro-targeting has helped as we have brought more and more young people, minorities and single women into the fold who could best be described as our base. Then why the complete,

unmitigated disaster that harkened back 20 years to a similar tsunami in 1994 that swamped our candidates and left us searching scorched earth for any hopeful signs in the face of massive losses?

Missing this year was a broad economic message to enthruse supporters and convert reasonable-minded independents. In my own county, we've used a straight party message or Punch 10 to help motivate voters and give them a reason to come out and support Democrats but were unable to link it this year to any overriding popu-

list message at either the state or national level.

I have said for years that an economic populist message is the one theme that bridges the gulf between working white males and women and minorities. It is the one constant that avoids the demoralizing and divisive social issues that Republicans have traditionally and skillfully exploited to their benefit.

An analysis released shortly after the election by Democracy Corps and the Voter Participation Center, which works to increase turnout among unmarried women who are a quarter of the voting age population, concluded that single women's support and turnout were woefully short this year because they "did not hear issues important to them: An economic agenda for working men and women."

Give the Republicans their due. They focused singlemindedly in laser-like fashion in ginning up anger against the president. I've told the story numerous times of Republican mailers that were sent in against beloved State Sen. Richard Young of southern Indiana putting the senator's face on the mailer with the president's and urging voters to "send a message to the president's man in Indiana, Richard Young." There's no evidence that Dick Young knew the president much less carried water for him on any issue in Indiana. But that didn't matter.

In the face of a GOTV campaign among Republicans that saw turnout in some Republican precincts in my county reach 45% while turnout in traditionally heavy Democratic precincts slumped as low as 17%, there's no path to win an election. The surge that was nationwide was particularly acute in Indiana, costing us seats in both the state senate and state house of representatives and also washing away some very talented county officials whose only sin this cycle was to have a "D" after their name.

As Washington Post columnist Eugene Robinson put so well, getting base Democrats to the polls, and that includes working white men along with minorities and single women, will take more than "a high tech system to identify, target and nag them. It requires compelling ideas."

Turnout across the country was historically low, the worst in 72 years, and Indiana has the embarrassing distinction of having the worst turnout at just 28%. We Democrats will lose every time if we can't motivate our base and give them a reason, particularly in bad weather, to go cast a vote.

ORPHAN STATE	AVG. RAW VOTER DECLINE, 2012-14
Mississippi	-52.4%
Utah	-51.0
New Jersey	-50.5
Missouri	-48.5
Nevada	-47.7
California	-47.1
Alabama	-47.0
New York	-46.8
Ohio	-46.6
Tennessee	-44.2
Delaware	-44.0
Virginia	-42.9
Texas	-41.7
Indiana	-41.4
Pennsylvania	-39.9
Oklahoma	-37.6
South Carolina	-36.8
Washington	-36.2
Vermont	-36.0
West Virginia	-34.8
New Mexico	-34.8
Wyoming	-33.7
Idaho	-33.3
Nebraska	-33.1
Montana	-24.0
North Dakota	-23.0

I say to my brethren, nay, I beseech them: We had better remember our history as champions of the working stiff, the little guy struggling to make ends meet. As journalist Bill Moyers put so well recently, "The great problems facing everyday people in America, inequality, stagnant wages, children in poverty, our degraded infrastructure and stressed environment, are not being seriously addressed because the political class is afraid to offend the people who write the checks, the corporations and the rich. Everyone else can be safely ignored."

NON-ORPHAN STATE	AVG. RAW VOTER DECLINE, 2012-14
Maryland	-37.0%
North Carolina	-36.1
Georgia	-35.2
Michigan	-34.9
Arizona	-34.5
Illinois	-33.4
Minnesota	-33.1
Massachusetts	-32.5
New Hampshire	-32.4
Connecticut	-31.8
Florida	-31.3
Iowa	-29.6
Rhode Island	-29.2
Kansas	-27.0
Louisiana	-26.4
South Dakota	-24.1
Wisconsin	-23.6
Colorado	-22.9
Kentucky	-21.9
Arkansas	-21.5
Oregon	-19.9
Maine	-17.3
Hawaii	-17.2
Alaska	-10.4

As Hoosier Democrats, we need to develop populist economic proposals that make it clear that we're the ones on the side of average, working Hoosiers.

Here are several easy-to-communicate issues we need to focus on: 1. How about challenging mal-distribution of state resources to already affluent suburbs around Indianapolis and say we want a fair share of state dollars and assistance going to working class communities. A case in point: The gold-plated Keystone Parkway in Hamilton County vs. crumbling bridges and pothole-laden roads and streets across huge swaths of northern and southern Indiana.

2. Go after certain corporate tax shelters and loopholes costing Indiana tax coffers hundreds of millions annually and dedicate that revenue to pay for free textbooks as 48

other states do. Let's make good on the late Gov. Frank O'Bannon's pledge nearly 20 years to ago to help out the middle class in Indiana by paying for textbooks.

3. Tell the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, "No more!" to its insistence that local option taxes or gas taxes be increased when it wants to enact more business tax cuts like eliminating the business personal property tax.

We want working families getting a shot at a reasonable job with a living wage, an affordable education and a decent retirement. That's the Hoosier dream and we better be willing to confront those who would stand in the way. That's the only way we Democrats are going to be able to excite our base and turn out voters. Let us vow never again to repeat what some are calling "the Seinfeld election," which was truly about "nothing." ❖

Shaw R. Friedman is a LaPorte attorney who served as general counsel to the Indiana Democratic Party and is a longtime HPI contributor.

Rev. Harrison prepares 3rd party mayoral run

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Rev. Charles Harrison will be filing an official exploratory committee this morning as a precursor to entering the Indianapolis mayoral race. To be decided is whether the United Methodist pastor will run as a Libertarian or an independent.

“When Mayor Ballard decided not to run, I felt there was a voice that would be missing,” Harrison told Howey Politics Indiana in an exclusive interview. “I just felt the voice of people in our community who have not really benefitted from the economic and growth in this city were not going to be heard. That’s really the population I deal with on a daily basis. The work that

I do as a pastor and certainly what I do with part of the Indianapolis Ten Point Coalition, that voice needed to be a part of the discussion and debate in Indianapolis. I feel I bring a lot of unique gifts that if I decide to run for mayor, will be beneficial to moving this city forward.”

Harrison joins a field that includes Democrats Joe Hogsett and State Rep. Ed DeLaney. Whether a Harrison candidacy creates a three-way race depends on a Republican emerging. To date, none has, with the party awaiting word on whether State Sen. Jim Merritt, former councilman Jeff Cardwell or Councilman Jefferson Shreve will make a bid. If they as did former senator Murray Clark, the GOP picture will remain cloudy just weeks before the February 2015 filing deadline.

Merritt told HPI on Wednesday that he will make a decision prior to Christmas. “I talked to Kyle Walker yesterday. I’m considering it,” Merritt said. “The party will solidify behind a candidate.” Asked if a Republican could win a 2015 race, Merritt said he has reviewed election returns since 1999 and stated flatly, “A Republican candidate can win.” Merritt called a potential Harrison entry race “an interesting point.”

Shreve was unavailable for comment Wednesday and Cardwell is traveling abroad.

Harrison played a key role in the Ten Point Coalition lining up support for Mayor Greg

Ballard’s 2011 reelection bid, where he defeated Democrat Melina Kennedy by just under 8,000 votes, despite the fact that Indianapolis is trending heavily Democratic.

When Hogsett kicked off his campaign last month, he did so under the outreaching statue arms of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy at the memorial that bears their names. It was a bow to the African-American community, but Harrison disagrees that Hogsett has their automatic support.

“I disagree that he has the pulse of the black community,” Harrison explained. “The breadth of the community is a diverse community. There are many in the black community who feel like they have no voice, particularly in the Democratic Party, and they have been shut out because Joe Hogsett represents the status quo. This has been a kind of a coronation of him. Basically the party has selected him to represent the Democratic Party and it has not been the voice of the people. I represent that segment within the African-American community that wants to see issues that are important to African-Americans become a priority in any administration in this city.”

“**I bring a unique** perspective on high unemployment in many low income communities,” Harrison continued. “I understand that many are dealing with that in my role as a pastor, and my work with Ten Point. I feel their pain. I would be their advocate to bring jobs to people who feel disenchanting and hopeless.”

Harrison laid out four points he said a future campaign would emphasize:

“One, we have to address the issue of the broken families,” Harrison said. “We have to address it because a lot of the young men who are getting involved in crime are coming from broken families and have no positive male role models. I would talk about those issues and the broken families.

“No. 2 is education. I supported the mayor’s pre-K plan because we have to open up the doors of opportunity so that all of our children are starting out on an even playing field. If kids are educated and get a quality education, we’ll get less teenagers and young adults involved in crime. They would see themselves with a future and have hope.

“The third piece, I would get neighborhoods and faith-based groups more involved in helping to address the crime problems. They have a unique perspective, they know the individuals, they know who is most vulnerable to get involved in crime. I would probably move to increase the crime prevention dollars back to the 2009 level of about \$5 million. I don’t think



we can police our way out of it and jail our way out of it. Police and community need to be working together along with the mayor's office.

"The fourth piece is I would work with the private sector in helping create jobs, particularly for those ex-offenders who have served their time in prison but who still feel they are serving time because the doors of opportunity are closed for them."

Merritt, who was an Indiana University fraternity brother of Hogsett, said that he talked with the former district attorney earlier this week. The senator said that he and Hogsett agreed to wage a positive campaign should he enter the race. Merritt said that his potential candidacy would emphasize crime, education and economic development.

On Ballard's pre-K plan that passed the City-County Council on Monday, Hogsett said, "Tonight is an example of what happens when local leaders put aside the need to score a political win and focus on achieving a victory for children across our city. I applaud Mayor Ballard and the full council leadership for their collaboration on this program. At the same time, I call on our state leadership to follow Indianapolis' lead in exploring ways to provide broader and fuller access to early childhood education."

Harrison grew up in Jeffersonville and was a pastor in New Castle before moving to Indianapolis in 1993. He is senior pastor at Barnes United Methodist Church on 30th Street. ❖



Bloomington Mayor Mark Kruzan greets then U.S. Rep. Baron Hill at Monroe County Democratic headquarters in October 2010. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

including raising \$20,000 a day to reach his \$12 million to \$15 million cash goal, and he's unafraid.

Hill, a member of Indiana's Basketball Hall of Fame, said politics is like sports. "You've got to de-hypnotize yourself from your mental limitations and think big things," he said. "And that's the kind of candidate I'd be if I get the chance to do this."

Hill, 61, seems physically ready for a grueling campaign likely to include a primary race with a fellow Democrat or two. He runs three to four miles a day.

"From a political perspective I look at this as a very uphill battle," he said. "But I've been encouraged by people I respect who feel like this is very winnable."

Hill declined to say who those key encouragers are. And he's not ready yet to reveal the name of the person who would be his chief fundraiser, other than to say it's somebody with "Indiana roots." But he is ready to talk about why he thinks Republican Gov. Mike Pence is vulnerable just two years after winning the office with less than 50 percent of the vote.

"Most people I've talked to feel like the governor's head is not here in Indiana, it's out in Washington, D.C.," Hill said, referring to Pence's possible presidential aspirations and his visits to key primary states such as Iowa and New Hampshire. "So he's created an opening."

He's convinced Pence is also vulnerable on issues of public education and poverty. Pence supports the state's school-voucher program, the largest in the nation, which funnels state education dollars into private schools. And while the current governor touts the state's declining unemployment rate, Indiana, according to a state Chamber of Commerce report, has gone from having the 12th lowest poverty rate in the nation in 2000 to the 15th highest rate of poverty rate now.

"This is the story that needs to be told," Hill said. "And that's why I'm very seriously contemplating a run."

Contemplation may not turn to declaration until early next year. After Hill left his D.C. job as vice president

Hill's '16 governor aspirations go beyond just a flirtation

**By MAUREEN HAYDEN
CNHI Indiana Statehouse**

INDIANANAPOLIS – After his 2010 defeat in his bid to return to Congress, Baron Hill briefly flirted with the idea of running for Indiana governor but quickly backed down.



There's no flirtation this time.

Hill has left his lucrative job with a Washington, D.C.-based lobbying firm, moved back to Indiana to live here fulltime, consulted with fellow Democrats

across the state, and calculated the financial commitment to knock off an incumbent governor.

Hill hasn't declared his candidacy – yet. But he says he knows what it takes to run a successful campaign,

for the global lobbying firm, APCO, in October, he became self-employed as a lobbyist working for the Bloomington-based Cook Group, a medical device manufacturer, and still has some work to do for them.

On Tuesday, as he was chatting at a hotel coffee shop about his possible gubernatorial run, Hill was waiting for a call from the White House to talk about ending the medical device tax brought about by the Affordable Care Act.

Before the conversation started, Hill was watching a video on his iPhone of a young grandson who lives in Michigan. Hill's three daughters and his wife, a public school math teacher, have given him their blessings to run. That makes it easier to make the decision. So, too, he said, does his prior campaign experience. As a member of the moderate "Blue Dog Democrats," Hill represented the 9th Congressional District from 1999 to 2005, when he lost to a Republican; and from 2007 to 2011, when he lost again.

He served as a member of the Indiana House of Representatives from 1982 to 1990, during which time he helped elect a Democratic majority in the House. In 1990, he lost a bid for a U.S. Senate seat, but made a name for himself by walking the length of the state to meet voters.

"It was grueling to do that," he said. "But I'm used to grueling work."

That helps, said Ray Scheele, Ball State University political scientist. Hill has accumulated "many positive attributes for conducting a competitive campaign," Scheele said.

But the task would be daunting, given Indiana is a Republican stronghold, Scheele said. In November, voters returned super-majority control to the GOP in the General Assembly. All but one statewide office is held by Republicans.

Scheele also said Pence's favorability ratings appear to have "improved substantially" from his narrow victory over Democrat John Gregg in 2012. Ball State's recent Hoosier Survey, an annual poll of the electorate, had Pence with a 62 percent approval rating.

"However, politics can change very quickly," said Scheele.

Other political observers concur with Scheele's assessment. Howey Politics Indiana publisher Brian Howey noted that Democrats in Indiana have lost power in their traditional stronghold in Southern Indiana, where Hill won five of the seven Congressional races he ran in.

"Hill will have a Congressional record to defend, along with his 2008 endorsement of Barack Obama, as well as his vote for Obamacare," said Howey. "And he will have to reactivate his labor base."

Ed Feigenbaum, editor of Indiana Legislative Insight, said Democrats don't have a deep bench from which to pull: "Baron Hill is one of less than a handful of Democrats who could run in 2016 who has actually waged a statewide campaign and know what it requires," Feigenbaum said. "That said, his last statewide campaign was in 2000."

Still, Hill has appeal in rural Indiana. He's from the small southern Indiana town of Seymour, where he played on the same high football team as singer John Mellencamp. "He hails from a part of the state where Democrats have been viewed as conservative and salt of the Hoosier earth," Feigenbaum said.

Republican strategist Pete Seat questions whether Hill's appeal will translate to younger Hoosiers and those who've moved into the state since Hill's last statewide run. "The Democrat Party (in Indiana) is shrinking by the day," Seat said.

If Hill makes the decision to run, as expected, he'd likely face at least one competitor from his own party, John Gregg, the Democrat who came within three points of beating the better-funded and better-known Pence in 2012.

On Tuesday, Gregg told Howey Politics that Hill's decision won't impact his decision to run again: "I'm doing all the things a candidate should do. Not worried about Hill."

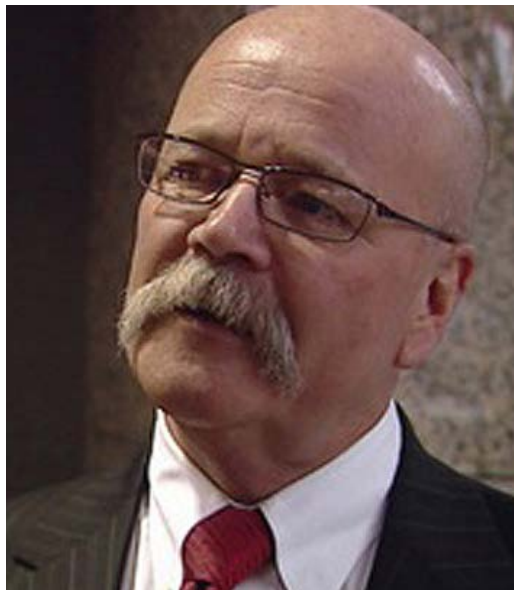
Gregg added, "If I go, I don't see anybody out there who can touch me in a primary other than (Evan Bayh) and he's said no. I'll continue talking with rank and file, labor, local government, Democrats and making appearances. I was the only Democrat other than Donnelly who was out on the stump

for candidates."

Hill says he'd like to avoid a primary fight, but won't let the prospect of one sway him. Nor he does sound worried about being an underdog in a general election race. He recalls facing doubters back in the 1980s, when he first told Democrats they could take on Republicans who controlled the Statehouse. His efforts helped flip the House their way.

"I remember people thought I was eating Dream-sicles at the time," Hill said. "I said you got to change the mindset: You've got to believe that you can do this." ❖

Maureen Hayden covers the Statehouse for the CNHI newspapers in Indiana. Reach her at maureen.hayden@indianamediagroup.com. Follow her on Twitter @MaureenHayden



2012 Democratic gubernatorial nominee John Gregg expressed confidence he will win a contested 2016 primary.

Inevitability and the 2016 president race

By PETE SEAT

INDIANAPOLIS – With the 2014 midterm elections now behind us, it's time to take a look at the 2016 presidential contest. So let's catch up on the latest.

Florida Senator Marco Rubio won't run for president if former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush does. But Bush, the brother of a former president and son of another, might not run if 2012 Republican nominee Mitt Romney does.

Then there's a decent chance 2012 vice presidential nominee Paul Ryan, recently selected to chair the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, won't run if either Bush or Romney runs. Another Wisconsinite, Scott Walker, the governor who has found himself on the ballot three times in four years (and prevailed each time), seems poised to run himself. But his decision might hold off other Midwestern governors from doing the same.



Oh, the speculative chess match of presidential politics. In addition to the required discussions with family and supporters about what a campaign may look like lies the political calculation about whether there exists a "path to the nomination" and a real chance at victory in November 2016. It's a conversation anyone considering a campaign for the highest office in the land must face. And while I can hardly claim to possess inside knowledge of the intimate deliberations that are surely taking place at this very moment at many gubernatorial and senatorial kitchen tables, those non-family political calculations evade the larger point: If someone wants to be president, they should just run for president.

How each candidate enters the race and the circumstances surrounding that decision are a real test of leadership. They won't have the luxury of a "wait-and-see" approach regarding Russia, China or Iran, so why make their decision based on who else may or may not also be on the debate stage come next summer? If a candidate believes deep down that they are the best person for the most important job in the world, and their family signs off, it shouldn't matter who the other candidates are.

What would have happened

if Barack Obama had come to the same conclusion as everyone else that Hillary Clinton was "inevitable" in 2008? What would have been if George W. Bush said, "You know what, Lamar Alexander has the education space wrapped up," and passed on a bid in 2000? How would the world of politics be different if Bill Clinton had let his "never heard of him" standing in early polls keep him home in 1992?

The people who ultimately win do it against all odds. Obama had no business winning the presidency. He has said as much himself. "A skinny kid with a funny name," wasn't exactly what we have come to know as presidential material. Bush was in a different boat altogether considering his family's pedigree, but he rightfully ignored concerns that "another Bush" was destined for failure just eight years after his father, George H. W. Bush, lost re-election. Clinton, a national laughing stock on The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson after a, well, lengthy keynote address at the 1988 Democratic National Convention, stood up, dusted himself off, and prevailed in winning two campaigns and potentially charted the way for his wife to follow in his footsteps.

The approximately 13,000 (give or take) candidates considering whether to mount a bid in the coming months should take these examples into account when making their decision. Demurring to others or whispering to the press that the field is weak as a rationale for running doesn't speak so highly of one's qualifications.

I want someone who runs strong out of the gate with a rock-solid case for why their candidacy is worth paying attention to and why they should be president. That inaugural introduction to the American people, that first day on the campaign trail, can mean everything if handled properly. Do we really want to see the announcement riddled with sentences about how someone is running only because another someone decided not to take the plunge rather than what they plan to do while in office?

That's why I give a lot of credit to Jim Webb. His Democratic Party is already coalescing around another "inevitable" Hillary Clinton candidacy but that didn't stop the former senator from Virginia from announcing an exploratory committee last week. He wants to be president, so he's running for president.

Some Republicans should look at his example and follow the leader. ❖

Pete Seat is senior project manager at the Indianapolis-based Hathaway Strategies. He was previously a spokesman for President George W. Bush, U.S. Sen. Dan Coats and the Indiana Republican Party.



Former U.S. senator Jim Webb of Virginia is preparing to enter the 2016 presidential race despite Hillary Clinton's "inevitability."

Sorting through the lessons of Ferguson

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – When it comes to the violence and riots in Ferguson, Missouri, I kinda, sorta, sometimes get it. I would be the first to admit that when I saw the rioters and looters running wild in the streets the following thoughts went through my mind:

1. Michael Brown was one big thug. 2. Michael Brown would not have been shot if he had stopped walking down the middle of the street in traffic. 3. Michael Brown would not have been shot if he had obeyed the police officer. 4. Stealing liquor, looting stores, burning cars and destroying property in your own neighborhood is not a very good way to honor Michael Brown's memory.



Yes, those were my first thoughts, but I wanted to search for a deeper meaning to the situation in Ferguson so that at least something might be learned from this all-too-common American tragedy.

First, I think it is important to remove the extraneous noise from the issue of Ferguson. Remove the usual suspects of the anarchists, Communists, occupy Wall Streeters and other professional purveyors of public mayhem.

Second, remove the pimps of protest, agitators like Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, who enrich themselves and their careers by rushing to the scene of any situation that involves a white person in a position of authority and a black person.

Finally, remove a 24/7 media that thrives by engineering mountains out of molehills. Or as Don Henley of The Eagles might say, "Bubble-headed bleach blond coming on at 5, she can tell you 'bout a plane crash with a wink in her eye." For the national media, Ferguson had it all, a dead young black man, a white police officer and an enraged community. Cue camera three!

With these elements removed from the situation, it might make it easier for us to determine the root cause of Ferguson and other volatile communities.

I don't believe that the average person in Ferguson, Missouri, be they yellow, black or white, condones the bullish and thuggish behavior of Michael Brown prior to his altercation with Officer Darren Wilson. I just can't imagine any mother pointing out the behavior of Brown to her young children and telling them that when they get older she wants them to be just like Michael. I believe that the average parent in Ferguson has a good sense of right and wrong and would not condone robbing a store or roughing up a shopkeeper.

I also don't believe deep down that the average citizen in Ferguson believes that Officer Wilson set out to gun down a young black man in cold blood just because he could. I think that if you changed the town to Beverly Hills and a white police officer shot and killed a white young man after he had robbed a store on Rodeo Drive and then struck the police officer when he was ordered to quit walking down the middle of Mulholland Drive, not one citizen of Ferguson would even raise an eyebrow.

Why then did Ferguson, Missouri erupt in flames and rioting? It is my opinion that Ferguson exploded because of two words, "hope" and "change."

Most large American cities have areas of a huge number of citizens who have never participated in the American dream. For those living in the abject poverty of urban America, the American dream more closely resembles a nightmare. Hunger, drugs, terrible schools, pregnant teens, absent fathers and a complete breakdown of societal norms are the bitter legacy of 50 years of failed government policies that leave the poor with mere subsistence but with no meaningful path to extricating themselves from their poverty.

It must be thoroughly depressing to be poor in the United States. Virtually every second of every day you are bombarded with advertisements and television programming that rubs your face in the mire of your existence. You get an overdose of visions of all of the things that you don't have and most likely will never have. In short, you begin to lose hope. When hope dies, there are inevitable social costs that rise from the grave.

In 2008, an inexperienced United States senator with a background of working in the inner city stepped into the political limelight and dangled the two words that the forlorn of our country could not resist, hope and change. Here was a black man running for president who promised that he would bring hope and change to the depressing existence of so many. The disaffected of Ferguson, Missouri, as well as millions of other poor citizens put faith in the flowery prose of Barack Obama and helped sweep him into the Oval Office with their votes.

The reality of President Barack Obama was far different from the promises of candidate Barack Obama. The first hope and change offered by President Obama was to bail out Wall Street and the big banks. Next, Obama put forth a stimulus plan that enriched solar and wind companies along with a litany of other Democratic interests. Bailing out the auto companies came next.

Finally, Obama spent his last dime of political capital by forcing through the Affordable Care Act, thereby sinking the Democrat majority in the 2010 elections.

What do the poor of Ferguson have to show for six years of Obama rule and trillions of additional dollars in deficit spending? Nothing. Well, I guess they could pull out their Obamaphones and call someone to complain, but no one in Washington would answer. The poor are still poor, the hopeless still hopeless and the American Dream still unattainable for most in Ferguson.

The unfortunate byproduct of flashing hope and change in front of people and then cruelly snatching it away is a simmering disappointment and anger just looking for a way to be expressed. The shooting of Michael Brown was merely the unfortunate spark that ignited a powder keg.

Until we, as a nation, come together to offer a viable plan to move the poor from little more than animals in a government run zoo to hopeful productive lives, the problems of Ferguson will be seen with increasing fre-

quency. It should be in the best interest of each political party and the American people as a whole to work for a longterm way to lift people from poverty and restore their hope. Unfortunately, the theft of hope has become our worst crime statistic. ❖

Dunn is chairman of the Howard County Republicans.

Pence, legislature poised to help cities

By **MATTHEW BUTLER**

INDIANAPOLIS – Two weeks ago I wrote that education policy (and politics) will be the predominant issue facing the 2015 General Assembly. Nothing gets more local than questions regarding school corporation funding and consolidation, but another category that will compete at times for the front burner come New Year will be local government issues.



The challenges and opportunities facing our major and medium cities, the main drivers of Indiana's economy, are myriad and pressing.

They include funding major urban revitalization projects, tweaks to the business personal property tax and local option income taxes, reforming TIFs, rules concerning annexation, tackling the persistent meth and resurgent heroine problems, and fully funding community corrections. None of these is simple nor do they fall along any convenient partisan or even geographic lines. How they shake out in 2015 will shed further light on the governing dynamics of the two Republican super majorities and what role the yet-further-diminished Democratic caucuses can play when the former disagree internally.

Transformational projects

If urban revitalization was easy, then everybody would do it. My senior year at Purdue I took a course on the history of American cities. We read the canonical work "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" (1961) by Jane Jacobs. Not without its flaws, Jacobs' recommendations for lasting and substantive urban renewal remain the lodestar for much of today's efforts. A refutation to top-down urban planning that often stressed new high-rise

buildings discretely set apart from business, Jacobs argued vibrant downtowns required four key elements. First, she posited a cityscape should always be "permeable" to pedestrians as well as cars. We call it being walkable today.

Second, she stressed "mixed primary" use, which is residential and commercial not just occupying the same blocks but often the same buildings. In regard to urban buildings, Jacobs said a vibrant city needed "mingled building age." Historic buildings should be well-maintained to give a sense of place and heritage, but always make room for new construction and amenities. And, finally, Jacobs said there must be a sufficient density of people around most hours of the day and night to both augment public safety and attract varied businesses. With these elements, people would want to live, work, and raise a family there; it would have, to use the current buzz term, a "quality of place."

Over the past 20-some years Indianapolis and Carmel have invested heavily into their downtowns and the payoff has been self-evident. The same can be said for a lot of the state's cities, but blight and stagnation remain all too common within Hoosier city cores.

One of the latest bright spots has been Kokomo under Mayor Greg Goodnight; he's borrowing heavily from the Jane Jacobs' playbook. "Baby boomers and millennials want to live in urban areas with mixed-use neighborhoods," he told the Kokomo Tribune earlier this week. Goodnight has stressed during his administration making Kokomo walkable along with mass transit and cycling options. Achieving a desirable "quality of place" is the guiding principle and Goodnight is convinced investments in urban revitalization will draw and retain talented young adults and thus reap dividends in the form of new businesses they create and attract.

The catalyst of public investment is leading to more young people living and doing businesses in the center of Kokomo. The marquee projects include renovated historic building facades, a new baseball stadium, a new trolley bus line (with riders), a Heritage Trail, and other people-attracting amenities. Besides deftly using federal grants as seed money for projects, an important policy tool has been a partnership between the city and Howard County in providing rent abatement grants and low-inter-

est loans for businesses that locate and stay in downtown Kokomo. The Indiana Association of Cities and Towns' executive director Matt Greller sees an example worthy of emulation and praise: "Kokomo has made the choice to invest in a vibrant downtown. There has been public investment which has made the downtown drastically different than it was 10 or 15 years ago," he told the Kokomo Tribune.



Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight (center) during a groundbreaking for the new downtown YMCA.

As Goodnight extols the importance of "quality of place" to cities, he feels Hoosier mayors are getting inadequate assistance from the Statehouse. "One of the major themes...that I believe is at the heart of our state's problem, is the lack of an urban policy from the governor's office or the legislature," Goodnight told a November meeting of the Indiana Economic Forum. "In fact, most of the time they have an anti-urban policy. Most Hoosiers live in cities. Most of the economic activity is in cities. Yet, the state government continues to attack or hamstring municipal government."

Officials on the local level could point to variety of recent policies at the capitol: The latest effort to eliminate the business personal property tax which raises \$1 billion statewide for local governments, apparent apathy over how property tax caps are squeezing local budgets, passage of only a severely restricted Central Indiana mass transit bill last year, and not allowing local control over food and beverage taxes. Goodnight will undoubtedly expound on these issues at today's BGD Legislative Conference; he will sit on a panel titled "The Ongoing Tension Between State and Local Government."

The Pence administration would disagree and could point to a number of efforts to help cities and towns, like the nationally recognized Stellar Communities program. Targeted toward smaller cities and towns, it has designated eight pilot communities' revitalization efforts as "stellar" since 2011.

This year a \$40 million proposal from Huntingburg and \$28 million proposal from Wabash were selected; both plans focus on walkability, mixed-use, and a higher density of population downtown. The cities are raising much of the money themselves, publicly and privately. As for outside assistance, being "stellar" doesn't assure anything; the state basically provides assistance in applying for federal grants.

"The transformational projects proposed by both communities are examples of the positive economic impact that can be achieved through thoughtful planning and broad-based public and private sector commitment," Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann described the program in August.

The 2015 General Assembly provides an opportunity for the state to make a substantive commitment to invest in urban revitalization. With last year's HEA1035 authored by then-Rep. Steve Braun, who has joined the Pence administration to lead its workforce development efforts, legislators required the Indiana Economic Development Corporation to begin what's called the Regional Cities Initiative. It's a strong indication the program will have backing from the governor.

It studied the economic potential of the state's regional metropolitan areas, looked to peer cities for guidance, and proposed solutions to improve quality of place in order to attract and retain people. It found what many already knew: Hemorrhaging population and talent is reaching crisis proportions for much

of the state. "Outside of the Indianapolis MSA, none of Indiana's cities is consistently ranked in the top 200 of places to live in America, a key reason for the state's lack of in-migration," the report released in October states.

"If Indiana communities want to grow, they need to create communities that are attractive to a young, diverse and educated population (though certainly not to the detriment of their existing residents). Site selectors cite the increasing importance of community image and reputation, especially relative to their ability to attract talent, and of course talent is always at or near the top of what companies are looking for."

Like the Stellar Communities Program, the IEDC will call upon cities to plan and make ambitious proposals for urban revitalization. It's forecasting a \$1 billion impact over the next eight years for the effort. Hundreds of millions dollars are going to be needed from state coffers to assist local public and private funding. IACT sees this as a critical moment in which to start truly "transformational projects" to staunch the loss in population and high-paying jobs across much of the state. Indeed, it will be one of their top legislative priorities come January.

As Greller told HPI recently, "This is a big deal for us."

The approach looks to cities as regional economic drivers. Suburban and rural areas feed off their nearby cities. During this budget year there is probably no program that will have more sticker shock in terms of cost. Again, hundreds of millions of state dollars are going to be needed. Indiana has wisely stressed making the state a great place to do business in terms of tax and regulatory structure. The other side of the equation must also be addressed. Now we see if lawmakers are willing to make substantive investments in "transformational projects" that attract and retain the younger people businesses want. Moreover, will there be political will to transform Indiana into a much better place to live, raise children, and grow old? This will be a story that plays out over the next several years and it isn't getting near enough attention.

Meth and heroin

The House Republicans have highlighted public safety as one of their top goals this coming session. The persistence of Indiana's meth problem and the alarming surge in heroin will be on many lawmakers' minds. Local governments are struggling to keep up.

In April HPI published an in-depth report on the extent of the meth problem. In 2013 we led the nation in meth lab busts (1,808) and Hoosier lawmakers are deeply divided on possible legislative solutions. Reps. Ben Smaltz and Wendy McNamara indicated they would try yet again to pass some form of a prescription requirement for pseudoephedrine (PSE) cold medicines, one of the key ingredients for meth cooks. In April, McNamara said she was considering a compromise bill for this session that would require a prescription only after a person purchases three boxes within a 12-month period. Currently, the state limits purchases over the counter.

Last session's Courts and Criminal Code Chairman Jud McMillan held a hearing but refused to allow a vote on Rep. Smaltz's prescription requirement bill citing an almost certain refusal to consider the issue across the hall in the Senate.

With McMillan joining the House Republicans' leadership team, new Committee Chairman Tom Washburne might be willing to give the bill the chance to advance to the House floor. This could be one of several contentious issues that do not fall neatly along party lines and might need significant Democratic support to pass out of committee as well as both chambers.

What we do know, however, is that there is significant bipartisan support from Indiana's mayors, prosecutors, and sheriffs for some form of PSE prescription requirement. Lost in the shuffle of HJR-3 crowds was their flooding the Statehouse to testify on the meth emergency they are still facing in their communities. Traction this year will depend on building a bipartisan coalition of legislators knowing they have strong local support on the issue.

Earlier this autumn, Speaker Bosma told HPI he understands concerns of overly burdening those with chronic allergies, but he does not oppose a PSE prescription requirement in principle. Asked about the same in April, Gov. Mike Pence told HPI, "We've talked about that; all options are on the table. We'll be looking in the budget session for resources and policies that will continue to give Indiana the tools we need to protect our kids from the scourge of meth."

We can be certain that committee rooms this coming year will be hearing of yet another scourge in our communities, heroin. Its criminal and public health implications for our communities cannot be ignored. In a two-month period this autumn Connersville had 36 heroin overdoses, six of which were fatal. A very likely proposal will be to help provide all first responders across the state with Narcan, the heroin overdose antidote. ❖

Toll road lease is a huge success

By ERIC HOLCOMB

INDIANAPOLIS – Having worked for Gov. Daniels back in 2005, I vividly remember the toll road lease conversation, as I was responsible for organizing all the coalitions of supporters eager to benefit from important upgrades to our aging infrastructure neglected for years by prior administrations.



Now, everyone is entitled to their personal opinion and mine is as follows. After eight years of record-breaking road construction all across Indiana, some folks still just don't get it and some probably never will.

For example, the recently announced bankruptcy of the Indiana Toll Road operator prompted a high-ranking Democratic office holder to dub the 2006 public-private partnership a "mess of epic proportions" (NWI Times, Oct. 14, 2014). That made me wonder if he was just playing politics or if he didn't understand the contract, similar to any other highly regulated utility.

The facts illustrate a very different picture than he paints, as does a string of misrepresentations parroted by a LaPorte County Democratic operative and a liberal think tank, the Center for American Progress. The former has shared little by way of actual facts, relying instead on a single report conducted by a professor at William & Mary University in Virginia, a tiresome tactic of lease opponents on the left. The latter has suggested "Indiana has many ways to raise money to fund its infrastructure needs without resorting to complex and uncertain lease agreements" (IndyStar, Oct. 25, 2014). In Washington-speak, this means raising your taxes.

The toll road lease itself and the subsequent road and bridge construction program, known as Major Moves, were both brilliantly negotiated by Gov. Daniels, and his timing was impeccable. There hasn't been a slam dunk deal since and there probably never will be again on this transformational scale. To be blunt, we were overpaid. Indiana was paid \$3.85 billion dollars cash, up front, and as a result we were immediately able to move forward on road projects held for up for decades due to lack of funds.

One of my favorite and little discussed areas of the deal was the fact so many strange bedfellows from across the vast political spectrum came to understand just how life-changing leasing the toll road would be for Indiana. Union building trade hard hats stood on the same stage

with realtors, chamber members, small business manufacturers, and courageous legislators, all championing Major Moves as the “jobs vote of a generation.” It’s something that seems almost unthinkable given the current political climate, but a no-brainer’s a no-brainer and there was no more waiting on convincing the small group of prosaic minds stuck in the past.

Most Hoosiers will soon appreciate driving on I-69 from Indy down to Evansville and up to South Bend on a traffic-light-free U.S. 31. They’ve already zipped across the now safe and completed Hoosier Heartland Highway from Lafayette to Fort Wayne and all the way to the Ohio state line. We’ve reaped the local rewards from the \$150 million distributed to every Indiana county for local road upgrades. Employees at Honda and Amazon, agribusinesses throughout Indiana, and Crane Naval Warfare Center have all benefitted from our state’s ability to build and pay for the infrastructure we needed, not just hoped to someday have. Hoosiers have enjoyed a level of unprecedented statewide connectivity that has helped drive our statewide economic growth and magnetic ability to attract and retain important businesses right here at the Crossroads of America. While the rest of the country struggled with an infrastructure crisis, Indiana instantly became the envy and exception, winning awards for solving a problem while shifting the burden away from the taxpayer.

Most importantly for me, the agreement was forged with Hoosier priorities in mind. We first paid off the toll road itself that was losing money when the state was operating it and then invested every cent in our longterm infrastructure plan. We even created a \$500 million dollar Next Generation Trust Fund that earns interest for future projects and requires the operator running the toll road to pay sales and income taxes, if they make any money.

Conditions for the toll road upkeep were spelled out clearly in the contract all the way down to how many minutes road kill can lie dead on the road, how much snow can accumulate, adding another lane, a new police



Gov. Mitch Daniels launches a Major Moves project near Kendallville.

post, 25 new troopers with vehicles, and the user friendly E-ZPass technology, again, all on the dime of the operator. The contract even places limits on the amount that toll rates can be increased without state approval, giving elected representatives of the people final say on what users could be charged.

A small gallery of critics share a deep disdain for innovative public-private partnership solutions and continue to try to turn back Indiana’s infrastructure progress. These pro-patronage politicians pine for the old “government-always-does-it-best” model and have no problem racking up hundreds of millions of dollars in debt and empty promises. That’s simply not good enough in Indiana anymore because Hoosiers know a good deal when they drive on one.

Yes, the current toll road operator has gone belly up, but since the lease was buttoned down so tightly, there is no future risk to taxpayers.

The beauty of the deal is that state government can now

weigh its options, even while private investors conduct their feasibility studies and counties tinker with the idea of pooling funds to manage the road themselves. The state could assume toll road management again, but that seems a shortsighted approach given the success of the public-private partnership in managing and maintaining the road in the most effective and efficient way. The county management scenario, too, seems unlikely, as a majority of the toll road seven counties have already withdrawn their support for some kind of regional multi-county consortium.

Cynical politicians can continue to lament good governance and all the 600-plus road projects Hoosiers drive on every day. But at a time when folks feel that government gets so little right, those on the ideological left seem downright detached when they play to their base by taking potshots at a government-brokered deal while offering no alternative plans to move Indiana forward.

Maybe that’s something these naysayers can think about the next time they are flying down U.S. 31 and only have to stop for a cup of coffee. ❖

Eric Holcomb was a senior aide to Gov. Mitch Daniels.

Sizing up South Bend, Mishawaka mayors

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Political focus shifts now to the 2015 city elections. And what a difference there is from the mayoral political situation in South Bend and Mishawaka exactly four years ago, back when focus was on the approaching 2011 city elections.

On this date in 2010, Steve Luecke, longest serving mayor in South Bend history, still had not announced whether he would seek for another term.

Some Democrats, convinced that Luecke would step aside, as indeed he did, were talking up the prospects of a 28-year-old Rhodes Scholar with a name they had trouble pronouncing. This Pete Buttigieg had just lost to Richard Mourdock – that Richard Mourdock – for state treasurer. There were more experienced Democratic elected officials ready to run if Luecke didn't. Buttigieg was impressive to those who knew him. But he wasn't widely known.



On this date in 2010 in Mishawaka, Mayor Dave Wood had been in office for only about three months. Wood had been picked by Republican precinct officials to replace Jeff Rea, who resigned to accept leadership of the St. Joseph County Chamber of Commerce. Nice guy, everybody said of Wood, but could he stand up to an expected tough challenge from Craig Fry, a veteran Democratic state representative?

Surprises were ahead.

Buttigieg faced three other serious contenders for the Democratic nomination. He impressed more and more voters, particularly with determination to spur economic development and tackle decades-old problems in South Bend.

Buttigieg seemed to be pulling ahead; looked as though he would win if he got a little over a third of the vote in the four-candidate race. He got 55 percent.

He won so big by also impressing Republican voters who

crossed over to the Democratic primary to vote for him. One vote analyst calculated that Buttigieg got as many as 3,000 Republican votes, way more than the 655 votes in the Republican primary for the GOP mayoral nominee.

Fall election? No doubt. Buttigieg won with 74 percent. He carried all 91 precincts in which votes were cast in South Bend. Every precinct. Even strongly Republican precincts in South Bend's 5th District.

In Mishawaka there was a surprise, too, not so much that Wood won. Republicans usually win for mayor in Mishawaka, just as Democrats usually win the mayoral race in South Bend. The volume of Wood's landslide, however, was astounding. He won with 76 percent. He also carried every precinct in which votes were cast in his city. All 45 precincts. Even in the strongly Democratic parts of the city.

Why? Mishawaka voters liked the new low-key mayor and disliked the harsh negative attack on him by Fry.

While there have been changes in the mayoral political situation in South Bend and Mishawaka since this date four years ago, some things politically in both cities in 2015 are likely to go on as they have for decades.

No Republican has been elected mayor of South Bend since Lloyd Allen won in 1963 and 1967. Since 1963, Mishawaka has elected only one Democrat as mayor, Bob Kovach for one term in 1979. There's no sign that the trend will be broken in either city.

Buttigieg, with patriotic welcomes home after active duty as a Navy Reserve officer in Afghanistan and hailed for the economic development emphasis he promised, is expected to win again the Democratic mayoral nomination. Republicans, searching for a nominee, apparently haven't found one for a serious challenge to Buttigieg.



Wood, with ability to get along with a Democratic-controlled council and with a nice-guy image surviving the rigors of governmental challenge, is expected to win again the Republican mayoral nomination. Democrats, searching for a nominee, apparently haven't found one for a serious challenge to Wood.

Surprises? You never know in politics. But Buttigieg and Wood are known for surprising landslides, not for being surprised by tough challenges or tough opponents. ❖

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

Mixed economic news for Indiana counties

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – In mid-November, Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann (the LG) and Eric Doden, President of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), spoke at the annual Conference of the Indiana Economic Forum (IEF) in Carmel. The next day, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) released county level data on wages and salaries and employment.

What a shame the data could not be released before they addressed their audience. Then they could have pointed with pride to the fact that Indiana's 2013 average wage per job increased by 1.1 percent, faster than the nation's 0.8 percent rise. Our rate of growth ranked 26th in the nation and right in line with South Carolina, Wyoming, Florida and Texas. We exceeded the growth rates of all four of our bordering states.



The average job in Indiana paid \$460 more per year in 2013 than in the preceding year.

This ranked 30th in the country and was 16 percent above the nation's \$397 advance.

The audience would have had warm feelings from that news. Only now, reading this column, would anyone have to bother with some pin-pricking of the Hoosier balloon.

We know the nation's numbers are often distorted by what happens in our largest state, California, which has 11 percent or one in every nine jobs in the country. Last year, average wages in the Golden State fell by \$661, a 1.1 percent decline, which was the worst performance in the nation.

When we drop California from our calculations, \$100 is added to the increase of the average wage for the U.S. Now, Indiana's advance of \$460 per job slips from 16 percent above to 7 percent below the national average. Additional perspective comes by factoring inflation into the picture.

With a 1.5 percent increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the year 2013, Indiana was not one of the 17 states advancing fast enough for wages per job to outpace inflation. Hoosier workers lost buying power in 2013. Undoubtedly, the LG and the President of IEDC would have noted half (46) of Indiana's 92 counties had increases in average wages per job last year that beat U.S. inflation (1.5 percent).

This left 46 counties that did not see real average wages rise. Of those 46 lagging counties, 16 saw nominal or actual average wages per job fall in 2013. Of our 92

counties, only 28 saw wages and salaries rise faster than the increase in jobs thus generating an increase in wages per job in excess of inflation.

These were the real winners; they included Gibson, Elkhart, Jackson and Shelby counties. Just seven counties were losers across the board. They lost in wages and salaries paid, in jobs, as well as in average wages per job; thereby they also lost to inflation. These included Bartholomew, Jay, Lake and Harrison.

While the news had its positive elements, there were also important negatives deserving attention. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist, writer, and speaker who may be reached at mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com.



Pence, Zoeller sue over Obama exec order

INDIANAPOLIS – in a letter to Attorney General Greg Zoeller, Gov. Mike Pence directed that the State of Indiana join 17 other states in a lawsuit seeking to have President Obama's executive order that unilaterally changed American immigration laws without input from Congress ruled unconstitutional. Governor Pence issued the following statement regarding Indiana's participation in the lawsuit:

"While reasonable people can differ on ways to improve our nation's broken immigration system, the President's unilateral action was an unacceptable end run around the democratic process and joining other states in pursuing legal recourse to challenge this action is the right thing to do. This lawsuit is not about immigration. It is about denying states such as ours the opportunity to be represented in policy making through our elected members of Congress.

"This lawsuit seeks to have the federal courts restore the rule of law and proper balance to our constitutional system of government. I encourage the President to rescind his executive order and immediately begin to work with Congress to pass legislation that will secure our nation's border and update our immigration laws. That is the proper way to deal with this or any other issue our nation faces." ❖



David Coker, Evansville Courier & Press:

Several days before the violence last Monday night in Ferguson, Missouri, a friend of mine who frequently visits the St. Louis area called with a lot on her mind. Having closely watched the violence in the streets of Ferguson last August in response to the shooting of Michael Brown, she was bracing for a similar, almost predictable response. "I think St. Louis could easily become another Detroit," she told me, "right now, I would not go within 50 miles of the place." For the past seven years, I have personally spent my Monday afternoons working with impoverished children of all races at the Dream Center, a faith-based, after school program for at-risk kids who live primarily in the Jacobsville Center City neighborhood. So, it was with some consternation and concern that the two of us witnessed the intense violence, burning, looting and rioting that occurred on Canfield Street and elsewhere in Ferguson, after St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Bob McCullough announced that a 12-member grand jury found insufficient evidence to bring charges against Officer Darren Wilson, a white Ferguson police officer, for shooting the black teenager. The ongoing controversy highlights some rather disturbing facts which hover like dark clouds over where we are as a nation and the manner in which issues of race are being covered by the news media. It also dramatizes how compartmentalized we are when it comes to covering public issues and the extent to which we seem to have lost the vocabulary to rationally deal with the issues of poverty and race in this nation. ❖

Jill Long Thompson, NWI Times: I'm going to start today by stating the obvious — agriculture is critical to our rural economy. This has been true for more than two centuries, and will likely be true for centuries to come. But now I'm going to share an observation that may seem less obvious. Today agriculture is even more critical to the economy of rural America than it was 20, 30, or even 50 years ago. Why do I believe this? First let's consider one of the biggest threats to rural communities: Population decline. According to a study cited in a recent article by the FDIC, more than half of all U.S. rural counties lost population between 1980 and 2010. In Indiana, school consolidation has re-emerged as a serious policy topic. Many smaller school districts are facing the challenges of population loss, which causes the education cost per student to increase. And if a school closes, the problem of declining population becomes even more pronounced. And the issue isn't just how many people are leaving rural America; the issue is also who is leaving rural America. An FDIC article referred to counties with "pinched waists," where the populations aged 20 to 45 are smaller than the populations younger or older than this group. When communities lose people between the ages of 20 and 45, they lose vitality. This is generally the most productive period of people's lives. When they leave, they take with them their ingenuity



and their productivity, leaving the communities to languish. What's the cause of population decline in rural America? One of the causes, of course, is advanced methods of production agriculture. One farmer can now perform the same amount of work that it took many to perform in the past. But jobs on the farm have been disappearing since the tractor replaced the horse. So why have so many people left rural communities in recent years? One significant reason is the loss of rural manufacturing jobs. And the steepest declines in manufacturing earnings occurred in low-skilled sectors, such as textile and apparel. So why then would I say that agriculture is now more critical to the health of rural America than it used to be? Well, the obvious answer is that it's the only game in town for many communities. In fact, according to the USDA, rural communities

that were more farming-dependent fared better during the recession and recovery than communities that were less farming-dependent. Driven by strong global demand for food, commodity prices remained high, and agriculture remained strong where other industries, like manufacturing, faltered. Will rural America ever look like it did when I was a little girl growing up on my family's farm? No. Will some rural communities die out? Sadly, yes. But will many rural communities survive and thrive? Absolutely. And why? Because the global economy provides unprecedented opportunities for agriculture and for the communities in which agricultural enterprises are carried out. ❖

Jerry Davich, Post-Tribune: Now that a grand jury has made its long-awaited decision on the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, I'm curious about the grand jury of public opinion on comedian Bill Cosby. More than two dozen women have now come forward with allegations that they were sexually assaulted by the 77-year-old actor, comedian and entertainment legend, most taking place decades ago, with some cases involving date-rape drugs. Did he? Could he? Or are all of these charges baseless, filed so long after the fact that they're surely fictional? After all, this is Dr. Cliff Huxtable we're talking about here, who hurdled race barriers in this country and who's been held in high esteem by most Americans for a half century. He's our generation's Mark Twain, a master storyteller who as lovable as he is funny. I mean, who doesn't enjoy, respect and appreciate Cosby? Or should I say who didn't enjoy, respect and appreciate him before these mounting allegations? I watched him perform live at a local casino boat and he floored me with his wit, humor and comedic pacing. He's like our collective grandfather. But no more. I think there must be some truth to these allegations, even if they came out decades after the alleged rapes and sexual assaults. And I don't buy the line I'm hearing from many people, mostly men, claiming the charges must be false because of their timing. A rape is a rape, period, whether it's revealed two hours or two decades later. ❖

Curry says he didn't see report

INDIANAPOLIS - Marion County Prosecutor Terry Curry said Wednesday his office was never given an investigative report that concluded there was substantial evidence to support criminal charges against former Indiana schools Superintendent Tony Bennett (IndyStar). But Inspector General David Thomas insists he told Curry that the prosecutor could seek "ghost employment" charges against Bennett. He also forwarded his office's complete investigative records to both Curry and federal prosecutors, he said. The Associated Press on Tuesday revealed that an investigation by the Indiana inspector general's office into Bennett's use of state resources during his 2012 re-election campaign found more than 100 possible violations of federal wire fraud law by his office. Bennett has not been charged, and he has consistently denied any wrongdoing. On Wednesday, Curry, whose office is tasked with investigating public corruption at the Statehouse, said he first learned of the February 2014 report through the AP news story. "While our office was provided with an investigative report in November 2013, the IG never provided this additional February 2014 report to our office for review," Curry said in a prepared statement. "I have requested a copy of the February 2014 report and supporting documentation from the Office of the U.S. Attorney, and our office will review this information once those materials are provided by that office." Thomas, however, told AP that he sent Curry a letter on Feb. 27 notifying him that 12 binders of material would be forwarded to his office. A copy of the letter was provided to The Associated Press Wednesday. A 95-page report completed by the inspector general's office in February contrasted sharply with the 8-page document released in



July, which found minimal violations and resulted in a \$5,000 fine. By the time the final report was issued, "we had concluded that we would decline prosecution on those issues," Curry said. "At that time, we were unaware of the February 2014 report and remained so until this week's news story." Meanwhile, the U.S. attorney's office, which prosecutes federal crimes, has remained mum on the topic. An agency spokesman declined to comment on the matter Wednesday. And a spokesman for Indianapolis mayoral candidate Joe Hogsett, who was the U.S.

attorney at the time of the report, said he likely would not be able to comment, either. "Joe can't comment on a matter that may or may not still be an ongoing federal investigation," spokesman Thomas Cook said.

Ritz, SBOE spar over failed schools

INDIANAPOLIS - More struggling schools would be eligible for earlier state intervention, and the State Board of Education would assume more control over the process, under recommendations approved 9-2 by the board Wednesday (Kelly, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). But the Indiana General Assembly would still have to approve major parts of the proposal - including who controls millions in federal school improvement funds. Wednesday's board discussion over changes to the state turnaround process for chronically failing schools was full of anger and tension. It boiled down, once again, to who controls education policy in the state - the Indiana Department of Education, run by elected Democrat Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz, or the Republican-dominated and appointed State Board of Education. Ritz presented data showing that her approach to improving schools is working and that a major overhaul isn't needed. "There is some defensiveness because some of your proposals take

away authority from the department and give it to the state board," Ritz said. "I'm saying I'm already doing the work." Board member Cari Whicker, of Uniondale, had a particularly heated exchange with Ritz in which she complained that Ritz was speaking to her "as if I'm a child being reprimanded."

Indiana abortion law stuck down

INDIANAPOLIS - A federal judge has ruled against an Indiana law that changed the state's classification of abortion clinics to include sites that only perform drug-induced abortions (Associated Press). District Judge Jane Magnus-Stinson released a ruling Wednesday saying the 2013 law violated equal protection rights by treating a Planned Parenthood clinic in Lafayette differently than physician offices that provide the same medications. Opponents have maintained the law was aimed at shutting down the Lafayette clinic.

Kenley questions RDA funding

INDIANAPOLIS - The Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority is in for a tough fight to keep the \$10 million a year in state funding it has used over the past decade to build major infrastructure projects in Lake and Porter counties (NWI Times). RDA President Bill Hanna confronted skepticism Wednesday from state Sen. Luke Kenley, R-Noblesville, as Hanna explained to the Kenley-led State Budget Committee how the money invested by the state has helped leverage an additional \$650 million for region projects. "You're asking the state to give a straight-up economic subsidy to this one region. Generally, we do not do this," Kenley said. "Why can't you just work through the IEDC? Why should we just shovel out \$10 million a year extra to you guys?"