



Personal beliefs and Pence's dilemma



Eric Miller sets off RFRA firestorm for Pence, results in business rebellion

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – “I’m a Christian, a conservative and a Republican in that order,” is the way Mike Pence has summed up his political and personal bearings.

Over the past week, these elements of the Indiana governor have created a crisis of epic proportions, not only for his political career, but for the nearly seven million



Gov. Mike Pence at the RFRA signing ceremony last Thursday. It was remarks by Advance America’s Eric Miller (behind Pence in lower photo) that set off the crisis gripping Indiana today.

Hoosiers who have witnessed in horror the sullied image of their state conveyed to a worldwide audience.

While there are discriminatory pockets of Indiana

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Fixing our reputation

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE – It is simply not possible to legislate the details of the inevitable tensions between culture and faith.

The disingenuously named Religious Freedom Restoration Act has generated a great deal of well-deserved calumny by Hoosier businesses. They argue that it weakens the state’s economy and point to business relocation, tourism and the ability to attract talent to the state as the chief victims of this unpopular law. I fear it is far worse than that.

Indiana has a \$300 billion economy and the actual boycott, which looks to be primarily in



“A lot of people are heartsick about this. For those of us who feel like we spent years building up a great business climate for the state, you hate to see anything damage it in the way it has.”

-Purdue President Mitch Daniels



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travel, probably runs into the tens of thousands of dollars. Business relocation to our state is likewise overhyped, never amounting to 5 percent of new jobs. Moreover, the only deal we have clearly lost is the chance to pony up \$20 million in incentives to the perennially unprofitable Angie's List. These effects will be immeasurably small, especially because the boycott and political pressures will force Indiana to make real changes in RFRA. The real damage is elsewhere.

The injury to Indiana's reputation will be harder to fix. The chief problem is that we are now forced to defend something that didn't need defending; the goodwill, tolerance and hospitality of Hoosiers. Still, the real consequences of the RFRA act lie elsewhere than the measured economy; they involve trust between people and government.

A free economy relies almost wholly upon trust. Without trust, contracts are meaningless scraps of paper and trade comes to a grinding halt. The RFRA is exactly the type of legislation that erodes trust between businesses and households. It is simply not possible to legislate the details of the inevitable tensions between culture and faith. This law divides us unnecessarily, corrodes the public discourse and lessens trust between Hoosiers of goodwill, whatever their opinions.

Second, when it is all said and done we will have wasted perhaps a quarter of this legislative session on this law and its aftermath. We actually have serious, long-term problems in Indiana that will remain unaddressed as a consequence of this. So, trust in our leadership is needlessly and deeply weakened.

Of course the law defenders will say that it has been mischaracterized by a liberal media. Maybe so, but



in truth, this law is so confusing that its authors cannot agree on its purpose. Nor can they explain it clearly to a national audience. As a consequence Indiana openly invites the ridicule and derision of a skeptical public. The bottom line is this: If you cannot explain your own laws effectively, don't complain if others do so for you.

What is most saddening is not the erosion of trust or greater burden placed on business, but the absolute lack of purpose in RFRA. Religious freedom is alive and well in Indiana. That which is not at risk does not need restoration. Worse still, both sides are busy contriving false victims and martyrs. We need to more aggressively and courageously avoid being distracted by those who would dishonestly divide us. I pray that this debacle gives stronger voice to those leaders who argued against this folly.

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RFRA Firestorm, from page 1

– as well as the other 49 states – the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the hurried, clandestine signing ceremony Gov. Pence conducted last Thursday and the optics it created have unleashed a frontal assault on the state. Pence posing with Advance America’s Eric Miller, who then in his 15 minutes of national fame reinforced the notion that the legislation was created to “protect florists, bakers and wedding photographers from for refusing to participate in a homosexual marriage, among other examples” was a policy bomb that has ignited an array of political fallout. That resulted in a firestorm that has Pence being branded a “bigot” by some of his fellow governors.

That these actions came just as the national media descended into Indianapolis to cover the Final Four has laid bare the failures of the governor’s policy and brand management.

It has blown wide open the once subterranean fissures in the Indiana Republican Party between the economic and social wings, and it has the political and policy establishments bracing for a “fix” of a law coming at 9 this morning that Pence sees as one of “perception,” while critics view it as a stamp of approval on the second class status of gays and lesbians who are about 10% of our population.

“Clearly, clearly, there’s been misunderstanding and confusion and mischaracterization of this law, and I come before you today to say how we’re going to address that,” Pence told about 100 state and national press on Tuesday morning. “I don’t believe for a minute that it was the intention of the General Assembly to create a license to discriminate or right to deny services to gays, lesbians or anyone else in this state. And it certainly wasn’t my intent. But I can appreciate that that’s become the perception, not just here in Indiana but all across this country, and we need to confront that and confront it boldly in a way that respects the interests of all involved.”

This was a man-made crisis, created by what the Indiana Chamber has defined as “unnecessary legislation” that has resulted in more than 2,500 news stories and commentaries (and growing) that may be doing irreparable harm to the once proud Indiana brand. While Gov. Pence has aimed his economic development establishment at luring life science, advanced manufacturing, high tech industries, and matching regional employment needs with what has been an under-prepared workforce, it is the corporate class that has sounded the alarms and gone into rebellion.

The obscured story in all of this is the HIV epidemic that has hit Scott County. On Wednesday, the Huffington Post reported that its sole HIV testing clinic, operated by

Planned Parenthood, closed in Scottsburg due to funding cuts for a facility that had never conducted an abortion. It was then-U.S. Rep. Pence who led a Capitol Hill assault on Planned Parenthood, which was quickly picked up by social conservatives in the Indiana General Assembly that crafted a law banning that organization. While the courts ruled the law unconstitutional, Planned Parenthood of Indiana



Gov. Mike Pence answers questions at Tuesday’s press conference. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

received a total of \$3.3 million in funding from government contracts and grants. By 2014, that funding had dropped to \$1.9 million, forcing five clinics to close. In addition, it comes as personal income has precipitously declined, 20% of Indiana children live in food-insecure homes, and infant mortality has spiked.

The events of this past week now call into question some of the most conspicuous tenets of the social conservative movement that Pence has led: That this is a “Christian nation,” when the forefathers strove to create the separation between church and state; that abortion trumps all other policy issues; that the collective poor health of Hoosiers is all about individual decisions; that low taxes and shareholder profits are paramount to the general well-being of the population.

Arizona lesson lost

The fallout for Gov. Pence is that his political brand has been seriously damaged. This comes for a governor who won office with a mere 49% of the vote. In that 2012 campaign, Pence avoided any discussion about social

issues, and in his first legislative session kept his policy emphasis on tax cuts and the regional education work councils. But in 2014, the battle over HJR-3 was waged with Pence vowing support. When language in the amendment changed, keeping it off the 2014 ballot as a referendum, the family groups quickly indicated last summer they would seek the RFRA. Many Statehouse observers viewed it as a "consolation prize" for the family groups.

While HJR-3 was unsuccessful in gaining ballot access, the other national story at the time was Republican Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer vetoing SB 1062, the Arizona version of RFRA in February 2014. "To the supporters of the legislation, I want you to know that I understand that long-held norms about marriage and family are being challenged as never before," Brewer said in vetoing the bill.

"Our society is undergoing many dramatic changes. However, I sincerely believe that Senate Bill 1062 has the potential to create more problems than it purports to solve. It could divide Arizona in ways we cannot even imagine and no one would ever want. Religious liberty is a core American and Arizona value. So is non-discrimination."

"I call them as I see them, despite the cheers or the boos from the crowd," Brewer said, criticizing what she described to CNN as a "broadly worded" bill that "could result in unintended and negative consequences."

This was the topical lesson that Gov. Pence chose to ignore.

Pence cited the U.S. Supreme Court Hobby Lobby decision as the impetus for his signing. "Last year the Supreme Court of the United States upheld religious liberty in the Hobby Lobby case based on the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act, but that act does not apply to individual states or local government action," he said at the sRFRA signing ceremony. But scanning the web, HPI could not find Pence addressing the Hobby Lobby case only until the signing ceremony.

Severe fallout

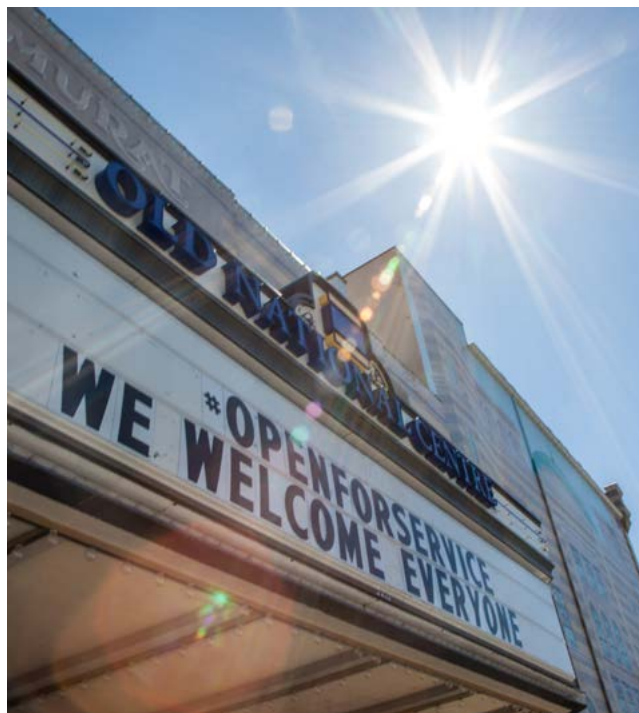
The fallout has been severe. A day after a front page

IndyStar editorial demanded "Fix This Now," columnist Matt Tully wrote that Pence is in over his head. "Pence was never meant to be a governor. A partisan and dysfunctional Congress that lives on bright line divisions was his home for 12 years, and that's where he belongs, in a place where a person can rise high by talking well and digging in and not really doing much. A place where, for the most part, you are not held accountable for results. Being a governor is different. It's about being a leader who is forced every day to think pragmatically, who knows that doing no harm is high on the list of requirements, and who understands that the job is at its core about making sure your state's people have a better chance of earning a decent living or getting a great education tomorrow than they do today. In recent days, Fortune magazine listed former Gov.

Mitch Daniels among "the world's 50 greatest leaders." At the same time, Pence, the man who followed Daniels into office, has once again been exposed as a stunningly ineffective leader."

CNN's Eric Bradner observed on Wednesday: "Pence found himself confronting a new political reality

in a country where battles over gay rights now appear to have a clear winner. And by signing a law that Republicans had thought offered sturdier ground – religious liberty – than the same-sex marriage debate they're close to losing, Pence brought on the force of a fully realigned coalition. Instead of remaining in a tense partnership with social conservatives, fiscally focused Republicans and businesses that now see opposing gay rights as far too costly broke away from their traditional GOP allies and flatly rejected Indiana's law. They'd also planted an important flag, making clear that they'd come to view the legislation as a new, coded proxy for the same old issue. That such a view hardened so quickly only further infuriated conservatives who feel their religious freedom is under assault."



Gov. Pence had a rocky performance on ABC's "This Week" on Sunday when he ducked a question on gay weddings. Meanwhile, businesses such as The Murat in Indianapolis made clear they would take anyone's money. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

And Lafayette Journal & Courier columnist Dave Bangert observed in Monday's editions: "If there was any faith that Pence could start reeling this situation back in, it quickly disappeared Sunday when the governor flatly told Stephanopoulos: 'George, look, we're not going to change the law, OK?' If it seemed impossible to make things worse, Pence found a way in the course of those five minutes on Sunday. He couldn't answer simple yes-or-no questions when given access to a national TV audience to debunk whatever misunderstandings and misperceptions he saw out there. Stephanopoulos wanted to know, yes or no: Would the law allow a florist to deny service for a gay wedding, as Advance America's Eric Miller boasted on his organization's website? (Miller was a damning bit of evidence in this debate, standing as a centerpiece of the class photo during Pence's private signing of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act on Wednesday.)"

The corporate rebellion

It has been the Indiana business community, joined by their national counterparts, who have led the rebellion, thus exposing the Indiana GOP's social/fiscal wing divisions. "The legislation in Indiana, and there are some bills being considered in other states, is not just pure idiocy from a business perspective, and it is that, the notion that you can tell businesses somehow that they are free to discriminate against people based on who they are is madness," said Marriott CEO Arne Sorenson. He joined Apple CEO Tim Cook, Subaru's director of corporate communications, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and local employers, including Alcoa, Cummins, Eli Lilly & Co., and Salesforce, Angie's List, Anthem, Dow AgroSciences, Eli Lilly and Co., Emmis Communications, IU Health, Roche Diagnostics and Salesforce Marketing, who signed onto a letter in opposition of the act.

But Pence is not the only Hoosier leader with fingerprints here. Senate President David Long was an original author of RFRA who handed it off the Sen. Dennis Kruse. The Indiana General Assembly has two Republican super majorities, but two-thirds of the two chambers were elected in 2014 with the lowest voter turnout in the United States. The Hoosier population is not connected to its political establishment. Scenarios that we currently witness today, and a 2016 election cycle which could yield the first



Gov. Pence during his Tuesday press conference, while national network TV trucks have surrounded the Indiana Statehouse. (HPI Photos by Mark Curry)

female presidential nominee (Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Carly Fiorina), and an Indiana Senate race that could help determine Senate majority just four years after a \$50 million race for the other seat, has the potential to re-engage apathetic Hoosier voters.

John Gregg, the 2012 Democratic nominee who lost to Pence by 2.3% of the vote, told the National Journal that he is receiving messages from a broad swath of the population in the wake of the crisis. "This has only heightened my consideration of it," Gregg told National Journal. "I have had a number of calls from non-traditional supporters wanting me to take a look at it. And by that I basically mean a lot of business people, a lot of moderate Republicans have called, emailed, and texted. I can't even begin to tell you."

Last week after Pence signed RFRA, Gregg observed on Facebook, "All around the state I said to LEAVE SOCIAL ISSUES ALONE. Why we continue to ignore our problems is beyond me. So why are they doing this? I believe they do it because they don't want us to look at their failure to govern the state in a responsible manner."

Democrat Baron Hill told HPI Wednesday he is reevaluating the governor's race (See page 14).

Bottom lines

The damage to the Indiana brand is impossible to calculate at this early point. By Monday state Chamber President Kevin Brinegar and his staff had fielded more than 500 angry calls, many from out-of-state business owners threatening to boycott Indiana, CNHI's Maureen Hayden reported. VisitIndy marketing chief Chris Gahl counted 2,500 news stories on the controversy, and that continues to grow daily. Add in the denouncements from some of Indiana's biggest corporations, from the NCAA's Mark Emmert, who has threatened to pull events as well as evaluate the impact on its workforce, to the protests from university presidents, to the spreading resolutions expected from dozens of city councils around the state, to the demonstrations popping up around the state, and this is an unmitigated policy and political disaster.

At Tuesday's press conference, Pence was asked "Do you think that business that have deeply

held beliefs, Christian beliefs, that are right, good-thinking people of America and Indiana, should have to supply services to gay and lesbian weddings?"

Pence responded: "I don't support discrimination against anyone. The question that you pose, though ... We're dealing here in a free society with always a careful balancing of interests. And the facts and circumstances of each case determine the outcome. What this legislation does ... is provide a framework for determining whether or not government action puts a substantial burden on a person's religious liberty. Now it is counterbalanced against whether there is a compelling interest. ... And what courts have found, without exception over the last 20-plus years, is that the state has a compelling interest in combating discrimination. And I support that interpretation."

That is the opening General Assembly leaders should seize in ending this crisis. If this is missed, the political damage may extend well beyond Gov. Pence and into the legislature.

It will take months, if not years to understand the damage.



Gov. Pence exits his Tuesday press conference at the Indiana State Library. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

"The fix" is expected today. Legislative leaders have been advised that "ambiguity is not our friend." Many see the only way out is the addition of sexual orientation to Indiana's civil rights laws. Leadership is signalling a clarification "trailer" bill in what will likely be a tumultuous day.

As for Gov. Pence, the personal and political implications often stated by his priorities, left him unaware, as he acknowledged on Tuesday. "Was I expecting this kind of backlash?" Pence asked. "Heavens, no." ❖

Business leaders to join Bosma, Long at 9

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana House Speaker Brian C. Bosma (R-Indianapolis), Indiana Senate President Pro Tem David Long (R-Fort Wayne) and Indiana business leaders will hold a press conference 9 a.m. ET today in the House Chambers to discuss the clarification of Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Indiana business leaders, including: Jim Morris, vice chairman, Pacers Sports and Entertainment; Bart Peterson, senior vice president of Corporate Affairs and Communications, Eli Lilly and; Scott McCorkle, CEO, Salesforce Marketing Cloud.

"We've had a very productive discussion, and it's my hope that we meet our goal tomorrow of coming to a successful conclusion," said House Speaker Brian Bosma (Kelly, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Indiana Chamber of Commerce President Kevin Brinegar said the issue of

gender identity was hanging up some lawmakers. That term refers to a person's sense of their own gender, regardless of their gender at birth. "There are some words, I'm not clear if they are in or out," Brinegar said. "That would make a big difference." LGBT supporters are pushing for a full repeal of the law. Brinegar said there might be enough votes to do so, but the question was whether those supporting the law would show up to give the chambers a quorum to operate. Bosma said, "I think repeal is a mistake. It infers there is something wrong with the RFRA law." State Rep. Ed DeLaney, an Indianapolis Democrat, posted Wednesday on Twitter that "we are very close to having enough Republican votes to repeal (the law.)" (Evansville Courier & Press)

Advance America's Eric Miller, announced strong opposition to the proposed drastic change to Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act. "The Indiana General Assembly should not destroy in less than 36 hours the Religious Freedom Restoration Act that took over 65 days to go through the legislative process earlier this year," Miller stated. ❖

‘Education session’ turns into culture war

By **MATTHEW BUTLER**

INDIANAPOLIS – If one wanted to deploy patented English understatement, Sunday morning through Thursday morning could be described as somewhat eventful in Indiana politics. Last week’s death of Rep. Earl Harris, Sen. Dan Coats deciding not to seek reelection, and the announcement Eric Holcomb will run for that seat would have made for a busy news cycle alone.



However, a cloudburst erupted on March 26. The precipitation? An unabated deluge of national shock, mockery, and scorn.

The horizon did portend these past seven days of inclement political weather. Last year’s HJR-3 same-sex marriage ban

proved not only a legislative distraction for over a month during a short session, but proved especially divisive. Enough Republicans broke to help defeat the process; it all proved moot with federal court rulings soon after.

The political fallout in the short term only benefited the social conservative wing of the state’s Republican Party, however. Motivated, they successfully primaried two House members and returned a strict traditional marriage plank into the party platform. In a November election in which the state experienced the lowest voter turnout in the nation (28%), Republicans easily swept all three statewide offices and padded both their legislative super majorities.

Despite the marriage setback, social conservatives could look back on a year of vindication. Emboldened, they had their 2015 legislative goal identified before the new year. In the post-same sex marriage and Hobby Lobby landscape, they were adamant Indiana needed a Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). With 103 total Republican votes, SB 101 overcame the opposition of all the Democrats and five House Republicans. When it came time to make the RFRA bill law, poor staging and narrative would spiral into a political storm tantamount to a F5 tornado.

The bill signing was behind closed doors; the administration released a single photo of Gov. Pence with the authors, monks, and habited nuns. If not for pride and vanity, the wider public, and nation, \ might not have learned who were the strongest political backers of Indiana’s new RFRA law: Curt Smith, Micah Clark, and Eric Miller. All three stood immediately behind the governor, smiling for a second photo which they could not resist posting to social media in triumph. The image would connect the dots and give visual substance to the growing

perception that Indiana’s RFRA was passed to please those with a record of anti-LGBT activism. How those proceedings were handled is almost inexplicable.

In October Smith told HPI the new legal reality of same-sex marriage would necessitate that Indiana protect religious conscience in the marketplace through a RFRA law. Clark and co-author Sen. Scott Schneider publicly echoed this rationale before passage and, now most infamously, Miller said the new law would allow Christian businesses to deny service to homosexual marriages.

The funnel cloud was thus formed and the storm grew in strength. Thousands of Hoosiers marched on the Statehouse in opposition on Saturday as boycotts, cancellations, and warnings from business leaders grabbed headlines. The day before, Indiana Chamber of Commerce President Kevin Brinegar and Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, among others, met with Gov. Pence pleading with him to control the worsening situation. Gov. Pence’s opportunity at damage control came on Sunday morning.

Instead, he decided to batten down the hatches and try to ride out the storm with a succession of non-answers to yes-or-no questions posed by “This Week” host George Stephanopoulos. Pence appeared to be clearly avoiding the crux of the issue, whether the law would allow discrimination by private businesses against gays and lesbians. Asked if additional legislation should amend the law, Pence said no, that only clarifying language was needed. This RFRA version was fine, he added, just misunderstood by many and intentionally misconstrued by some. Pence’s remarks and demeanor failed to appreciate the gravity of the situation. The growing national perception was that Indiana had just passed a law that would shield bigotry in the name of religion. The public relations maelstrom had fully engulfed the state.

On Monday, Speaker Brian Bosma and Senate President Pro Temp David Long held a nationally covered press conference. Because Pence “did not answer questions clearly,” Bosma acknowledged the issue must be tackled head on with additional clarifying language. It was the first instance in which legislative leadership would appear to assume the reins of the entire situation. Both asserted the RFRA law could not allow discrimination and if it did, they would not have passed it. However, their sense of urgency appeared somewhat lacking with a timeline that extended into next week and little in specifics were offered. It seemed to leave things hanging while the state’s cities, universities, and corporate citizens were speaking out vehemently.

Pence’s Tuesday press conference was the highest-profile event of the week. It was carried live by cable news; network evening news would later lead with it. Most importantly, Pence did what he did not on Sunday: He stated he was against discrimination of gays and lesbians and that the law by itself would not allow it. “I don’t support discrimination against gays and lesbians or anyone else,” he said with a conviction absent on Sunday. “I abhor discrimination. No one should be harassed or mistreated

because of who they are, who they love, or what they believe.”

Pence called for resolution by the end of the week: “We will fix this and we will move forward.” But, as Democrats would later phrase it, he “doubled down” that the law was not flawed but rather misunderstood. Later Tuesday, Pence told Sean Hannity’s radio show: “I stand by this law. The law doesn’t need to be fixed. We need to fix the perception.”

By Tuesday questions and discussion about Indiana’s RFRA law were becoming more sophisticated. Almost everyone had dispensed with the canard it “mirrored” other RFRA’s. It has substantive differences from the federal version and almost all other states’. It can apply in civil suits when the government is not a party whatsoever and to a broad swath of all types of for-profit entities. It’s of course here where the worry centers. Only Texas’ and South Carolina’s RFRA’s extend that far whereas those of Louisiana and Pennsylvania expressly forbid that broad an application. When asked why there were, indeed, differences, Pence punted: “You would have to speak to the Indiana General Assembly and the members who crafted the legislation.” Again and again, Indiana’s RFRA proponents belabor the idea that the original federal version was drafted by Democrats, had near unanimous passage, President Bill Clinton signed it, and it’s been the law of the land since 1993. The times, however, had changed.

As Wednesday dawned, the national press trucks still ringed the statehouse, the news of economic repercussions mounted, and the RFRA crisis entered its sixth day. It was evident legislative leadership was now preoccupied by issue. “Hoosier hospitality still exists. All are welcome. We will fix this,” read flyers quoting Bosma being passed out by his staff.

Tuesday afternoon, Bosma firmly seized the reins on CNN early Wednesday morning: “It’s no longer time to justify or defend, it’s time to fix it.” It stood apart from how Pence wanted to “fix” the situation. The House Speaker told a national audience he and Long were engaged in a collaborative effort with a variety of stakeholders to formulate a trailer bill for SEA 101. He even mentioned they were consulting with LGBT leaders. On Monday, leadership seemed surprised when they had to answer no whether such leaders were consulted for the original bill. National media seemed aghast at that response.

For the rest of the day Bosma seemed to be out in front. After a long a midday caucus, he and Long spent the afternoon in the Speaker’s office with business leaders like IMS President Mark Miles. Pence’s chief-of-staff Jim Atterholt, a former legislator, also stopped by. More finalized draft language sent members back into caucus shortly

after 5, and they did not emerge until 7:45. Meanwhile, Pence did not get any help from his national Republican colleagues. Jeb Bush backtracked his supportive comments of Pence and Indiana’s new religious liberty law. Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson declined to sign a RFRA bill, stating it was went far beyond the federal model. Perhaps with an eye on Indiana, Hutchinson’s explanation was attuned and sensitive to shifting attitudes on LGBT rights.

Wednesday evening Bosma said their trailer bill would “fix the misperception that this law would allow someone to be denied services, goods, facilities, public accommodations, to any Hoosier and that’s what we’re focused primarily on.” Draft language shown to The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette that night echoed this phrasing.



The RFRA law would not “authorize a provider to refuse to offer or provide its services, facilities, use of public accommodations, or goods to any member of members of the general public on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, age, national origin, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or United States military service.” One could argue some of the Democratic amendments defeated along largely party lines in both the House and the Senate fulfilled this purpose. Passage of a key amendment could have perhaps led to bipartisan support, a hallmark of other states’ RFRA’s, and allayed fears the law would shield discrimination. It could have drastically changed the narrative and perhaps prevented this entire episode.

Top management from the Indiana Pacers, Eli Lilly (Bart Peterson), and an IT firm are scheduled to appear with Bosma and Long this morning. They will present the anxiously awaited RFRA “fix” and a conference committee for the vehicle SB 50 will be held immediately after. One can assume key concerns of businesses have been addressed, at least partly. It’s unclear whether Hoosiers and the wider country will perceive it as sufficiently corrective after the last seven days. Expectations might have shifted.

Late Wednesday, a lobbyist told HPI that RFRA completely sucked the oxygen out of the statehouse this week. Lawmakers only wanted to talk about RFRA. Major corporate clients who have millions of dollars on the line through other bills only wanted updates on RFRA. Committee meetings were delayed because of deliberations over the RFRA fix. Once hearings were held, they concluded at breakneck speed so that members could get back to RFRA. The senate committee hearing for the proposed repeal of the common construction wage (HB 1019) passed almost completely unnoticed Tuesday morning; any other week it probably would have been the top story.

Remember, this was supposed to be “an education session.” And, this week was supposed to be about the Final Four and how Indiana is a world-class host. ❖

Never has an issue united so many

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE – Never, perhaps, has a single issue brought such unity to Northwest Indiana as has the state’s so-called Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Republicans, Democrats, business, industry, academia, the private sector and politicians in other states have come together to condemn the legislation signed into law last week by Gov. Mike Pence.



Perhaps the most publicly damning act came from Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who sent more than a dozen letters to Northwest Indiana businesses urging them to move their operations to Chicago.

“Gov. Pence’s act is wrong. It’s wrong for the people of Indiana, wrong for the individuals who will face new discrimination and wrong for a state seeking to grow its economy,” Emanuel said. Emanuel added that Pence is taking Indiana “back to the 1960s.”

The Indiana legal community is virtually united in saying that Pence is wrong in claiming that the critics of the law are misguided.

Ivan Bodensteiner, acting dean of the Valparaiso University School of Law, said, “The reaction the legislation is getting is exactly what it should get. It was aimed at people some disapprove of and want to give some freedom to act on their hostility and discriminate,” Bodensteiner said. “The legislature ought to be ashamed of itself and repeal the law.”

All Northwest Indiana legislators voted for the law, but only Sen. Ed Charbonneau of Valparaiso has spoken publicly since the controversy erupted. While Charbonneau defended the law, none has publicly criticized what he or she voted for. But not all local Republicans are silent on the issue.

The Porter County Republican precinct organization has canceled its annual Lincoln Day dinner that was slated for April 9. When Pence canceled his appearance, the Porter County Republicans called off the dinner because they couldn’t find another speaker on short notice.

Republican Valparaiso Mayor Jon Costas said that while he believes the legislature and governor enacted the law in good faith to protect religious rights and clarify legal standards, he said the perceived need for the legislation fails to outweigh the confusion and uproar it has created. Also in Valparaiso came the creation of a grass roots campaign under the banner “Valparaiso Is Open for Business.”

Valparaiso University President Mark Heckler con-

demned the law, saying the school cultivates “an environment in which all are free to engage in open dialogue and expression while treating one another with dignity and respect.”

Purdue University President Mitch Daniels issued a statement commenting on the school’s openness. But Daniels, who preceded Pence as governor, didn’t condemn the law because of the university’s policy to stay out of political skirmishes.

But the most critical comment coming out of NWI came from Hammond Mayor Thomas M. McDermott, who said Pence should resign. “For the good of Indiana, governor, please step aside and let new leadership fix the harm that you’ve caused all of us that are proud to call ourselves Hoosiers,” McDermott said. ❖

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

A GOP disaster of biblical proportions

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – Several years ago I was sitting at a railroad crossing waiting for a high-speed train to cross the highway. When it comes to trains I try to stop when



the lights start flashing. I don’t wait for the crossing arms to block my way. As I sat there I could see a car rushing up to the crossing at high speed. It was obvious that the driver was either oblivious to the danger or willing to risk his life to save some time. It was a surreal experience as the speeding train smashed directly into the side of the auto.

The driver never stood a chance.

What was amazing about this experience was that it could not have taken more than seven seconds from the time that I saw the car approaching the crossing and the resulting fatal train accident. To me, it seemed like an eternity as I helplessly watched the car approach and mumbled, “No, no, no!”

Last week bore some of the same characteristics of the fatal train crash and my inability to do anything more than mumble, “No, no, no!” when Indiana became the 20th state to pass a religious freedom restoration act.

To say that the passage of Senate Bill 101 has become a political disaster of biblical proportion is not an overstatement. The passage of the bill, its signing into law and the resultant firestorm of condemnation from around the United States and world is just short of breathtaking. This is the sort of watershed event that makes history books and shakes the political landscape like a 9.0 earthquake. The impact may be both short-term and long-lasting in its effect.

There are three things that I would like to examine in regard to SB 101; the bill itself, the political fallout and what I feel is the best way out of this mess.

First, the bill. As far as the legislation goes, this bill was not needed. It was a bill in search of a problem that just did not exist. Section Two of the Indiana State Constitution reads: "All people shall be secured in the natural right to worship ALMIGHTY GOD, according to the dictates of their own consciences." Further, Section Three reads: "No law shall, in any case whatever, control the free exercise and enjoyment of religious opinions or interfere with the rights of conscience."

The Indiana Constitution looks pretty clear and unambiguous and has served us pretty well since 1851.

Why then, would Republicans risk the wrath of a significant segment of the public to craft a bill that says substantially the same thing as the State Constitution? And, pray tell, exactly what religious freedoms have been trampled upon that needed to be restored? You see, that is the precise problem with this bill and exactly why the religious right loves it and much of the public hates it. Senate Bill 101 is just about the most befuddled, inexact and non-descriptive piece of legislation ever to be passed in Indiana.

The religious right, still stinging after the defeat last year of HJR 3, the definition of marriage amendment to the Indiana Constitution, needed to see some love from the Indiana Legislature and Gov. Pence. I believe SB 101 was a premeditated act to appease a significant group of people who provided both money and muscle to carry Indiana Republicans to super majorities in both the House and Senate. Frankly, the religious right of the Republican Party never understood how they could fail to force passage of HJR 3 with such large majorities in both houses. Well, the religious right helped dump a few Republican legislators in 2014 who they felt were unreliable, and that served notice in every nook and cranny of the legislature that you better go home with the boy who brought you to the prom.

To me, SB 101 is the dream of litigators everywhere. The fact that it cites no specific acts of religious

rights that have been usurped, nor any that are destined to be usurped, just leads me to the conclusion that the ultimate meaning of this legislation will be determined by the courts and a bunch of highly paid attorneys. It seems ironic to me that the inexact and undefined nature of this legislation may eventually come back to haunt those who foisted it on us in the first place. Being hoisted with one's own petard was definitely not on the agenda.

Now to the fervent, loud and massive outcry against the legislation. You know whenever you've been taken to task by the Constitutional likes of Miley Cyrus, Charles Barkley and Ashton Kutcher, you've had a bad week. No way to put it for Republicans except by using the word calamitous and disastrous. I don't like to use those words too often. I usually save those for discussions of Obamacare and the President's foreign policy.

Unfortunately, those words best fit the situation now facing Gov. Pence and Republicans in the Indiana Legislature. The words of a childhood song come to me, "Nobody loves me,

everybody hates me, I guess I'll go eat worms." Eat worms we are and eat worms we shall! I fear there are many media-induced worm dinners ahead of Republicans in the foreseeable future.

The typical member of the public, and I have spoken to many of these people over the past several days, has not read the legislation. If they did, they would notice that the words gay, homosexual, lesbian, transgendered, butcher, baker or candlestick maker do not show up in the document. Why then are people calling me and demanding to know why Republicans just passed a bill to discriminate against gay people? These people have allowed local, state and national media, along with celebrities to tell them what is in the bill. For God's sake, where were these people when the Affordable Care Act was discussed?

Does SB 101 allow discrimination against gay people? I don't know. We'll have to let the courts tell us over a period of years. In the meantime, the Republican brand has been severely damaged and the public revulsion to the legislation, right or wrong, may lead to major election blowback on the horizon. It is unfortunate that much of the great progress that our state made under Gov. Mitch Daniels could be wiped out by backlash over such a ham-handed piece of legislation.

How do Gov. Mike Pence, the Indiana Legislature and the Republican Party dig themselves out of this sewer of a problem? There aren't a lot of options here. First, Republicans need a "come to Jesus" moment, literally. Try reading the parts in the Bible where you love your neighbor and treat people as you would like to be treated. Second, Republicans need a figurative "come to Jesus"



moment. The governor, the leadership of the legislature, the Republican members of the legislature and the Republican Party faithful must come to complete and unwavering realization that they are facing an Armageddon-like disaster that threatens the existence of Republicans in Indiana. No explaining, no complaining! Just fix the problem as quickly as possible.

The problem will not be fixed by passing a hurried piece of legislation that tells the public that, "We weren't aiming this at gay people, really." The public will see through it and the media will just make it worse.

This mess, and it is the messiest of messes, will only be cleaned up by granting immediate and full protections to gay, lesbian and transgendered people. This

means civil unions and all that goes with it. In addition, Republicans in the legislature will need to take actions that prevent any further attempt to abrogate the right of any human to pursue their own brand of Hoosier happiness as is guaranteed by the First Section of the Indiana Constitution. Any action short of this will be the equivalent of taking aspirin for a brain tumor.

Republicans have already been blindsided by the speeding passenger train. Let's hope the 2016 freight train doesn't roll over us before we've cleared the wreckage. ❖

Dunn is chairman of the Howard County Republican Party.

Indiana getting the wrong worldwide look

By **MAUREEN HAYDEN**
CNHI Statehouse Bureau

INDIANAPOLIS – Chris Gahl saw the firestorm ignited by the divisive "religious freedom" law coming when he took a call last week from irritated organizers of GenCon, the capital city's biggest convention.

Besides threatening to cancel an event that draws 50,000 gaming fans, organizers vowed their followers would unleash a barrage on social media calling for gamers everywhere to boycott Indiana to protest the measure signed into law by Gov. Mike Pence.



"That's the moment I knew that this issue was not going to go away," Gahl said. "I knew this would get worldwide attention."

It has. But not in the way that Gahl, the marketing chief for Visit Indy, wanted to see just days before his city hosted one the biggest sporting events in the nation: the NCAA Men's Final Four championship.

The uproar over a law that critics fear would allow businesses to deny services to gays and lesbians, under the cover of religious belief, has reached epic proportions, playing out in the media and online.

By Wednesday morning, Gahl had counted 2,500 new stories on the controversy, including a flurry generated when CBS's Final Four analyst Charles Barkley called on the NCAA to move the Final Four out of Indiana because of what Barkley called its "anti-gay" law.

Gahl, along with a small army of Indianapolis boosters, is now scrambling to mitigate the public relations damage done by the controversy with this message: "No matter what a signed piece of paper says, it doesn't kill

Hoosier Hospitality."

In a city that attracts thousands of out-of-state visitors every year to large-scale conventions and major sporting events, Gahl hopes it'll work. His organization has partnered with others, including the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce and the Indiana Sports Corp., which manages the Final Four host committee, on a campaign focused on a message of inclusivity and welcome.

They've taken to Twitter with the #IndyWelcomesAll hashtag, and recruited local politicians and celebrities to post Facebook messages with the same theme. About 2,000 volunteers will flood downtown Indianapolis this weekend, trained with the hospitality mantra.

On the front doors of shops, bars and restaurants in and around downtown are "This Business Serves Everyone" stickers, designed by local technology entrepreneur Josh Driver, who said he was horrified when he saw the backlash to the law unfold. "I thought, 'What can I do to help the small businesses in Indy that are really going to be hurt by this?'" Driver said. "I knew we needed something to offset the damage."

Pence acknowledged the damage done to the state's reputation at a Tuesday press conference, during which he defended the law and blamed critics and the media for having "grossly mischaracterized" its intent and impact. But he also expressed surprise at the storm of negative publicity the law generated, which includes mockery from late-night TV comedians. "Was I expecting this kind of backlash? Heavens, no," Pence said.

Both the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce and the Indiana Chamber of Commerce early on opposed the legislation, known as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The organizations saw the measure as both unneeded because of current anti-discrimination laws and unnecessarily inflammatory.

Their early warnings about the potential fallout went unheeded. By Monday, five days after Pence signed the bill, state Chamber president Kevin Brinegar and his

staff had fielded more than 500 angry calls, many from out-of-state business owners threatening to boycott Indiana.

The calls echoed those that were made by mayors in San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Seattle, and other big cities, along with the Connecticut governor, barring their employees from being reimbursed for attending work-related events in Indiana. And some mirrored Marc Benioff, CEO of the Silicon Valley cloud computing giant Salesforce, who barred his employees from traveling to Indiana.

Brinegar's response has been two-fold: He's asked for patience as Republican legislative leaders promise to "fix" the law by adding some non-discrimination language. And he's marshaled forces around the state, asking Chamber members to reach out to customers, clients and contacts worldwide to plead with them to "not let what we all hope is a temporary setback become a permanent liability."

Indianapolis Chamber's Michael Huber is doing similar work with Republican Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard. "We knew that it would be bad, which is why as an organization representing over 2,200 businesses we were against it," Huber said of the law. "But the reaction to it has been worse than we anticipated."

The long-term fallout concerns business owners like Scott Wise, whose Scotty's Brewhouse in downtown Indianapolis is often crowded with out-of-towners. "Downtown Indianapolis is built on conventions and sporting events," Wise said. "I worry the downtown businesses may suffer the most."

As the controversy over the law grew, Wise took to Facebook. He both decried the law as offensive and sought to reassure out-of-staters that Indiana was indeed a welcoming place. Wise also said that as a devout Christian, he wanted people offended by the law to know: "Our governor's thoughts don't represent mine."

His Facebook post garnered 400,000 views, read by people from around the world, he said. On Friday, as Final Four fans stream into the city, his employees will be wearing T-shirts bearing the #Equality hashtag and the message: "Love Each Inside Out." He'll donate sales of the T-shirts to a local organization that supports lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Hoosiers.

Wise said he's trying to find some good in a situation that's been bad for Indiana. "It's given me a chance to stand on my soapbox," he said. "I'm glad to do it." ❖

Maureen Hayden is the CNHI state reporter in Indiana. Reach her at mhayden@cnhi.com <<mailto:mhayden@cnhi.com>>. Follow her @MaureenHayden.

2104 wasn't a good year economically

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana will be safe for another year. We will retain our regressive social agenda as the General Assembly stays busy passing meaningless, divisive legislation. Although politicians of all stripes recognize the need to attract progressive, educated people, our leaders insist on doing nothing of consequence to strengthen the underpinnings of the Hoosier economy.



Just last week, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis released data contradicting the empty assertions that 2014 was a great year for Indiana's economy. In terms of personal income growth, our state ranked 45th in the nation (or sixth from the bottom). Indiana grew by 2.5 percent (before accounting for inflation) while the U.S.

advanced by 3.9 percent.

The sluggishness of Indiana's economy followed a well-established trend: In the early years of recovery from a recession, Indiana does moderately well compared to the nation. Yet when the national economy loses the initial thrust of recovery, Indiana falters.

For instance, in 2011, Indiana had a 0.10 percent lead on the nation in growth of personal income (6.32 percent over 6.22 percent). The next year, Indiana's advantage dropped to 0.03 percent, then fell to -0.22 percent, and, in 2014, fell again to -1.43 percent.

We could say, "Well, that was just the influence of the farm sector where earnings fell by 40 percent in Indiana last year, yet dropped merely 17 percent nationally." However, farm earnings account for just 2.6 percent of Indiana's total earnings and 1.2 percent nationally. Farming cannot bear the blame for our lackluster performance.

The weakness in Indiana's economy, compared to the U.S., was widespread in 2014. Private, non-farm earnings in the nation grew by 5.0 percent, but only 3.3 percent in the Hoosier state. Construction earnings advanced 7.8 percent nationally, but fell by 3.1 percent in Indiana.

Yes, in 2014 manufacturing earnings grew by 4.4 percent in Indiana compared to 3.6 percent nationally. But we are hard-pressed to find other important sectors where Indiana fared better than the U.S. Our earnings growth did not match those of the nation in wholesale or retail trade, transportation and warehousing, finance and insurance, education and health care services to name a few major sectors. We trailed the country in professional, scientific and technical services (3.8 compared to 6.4 percent) as well as in information services (0.2 compared vs 4.6 percent).

Of course, it is no surprise that earnings from state and local government services within our Hoosier Holyland were flat (actually down 0.01 percent) while growing nationwide by 1.4 percent. With pride, Indiana can be cheaper than our sister states in compensating public workers.

All this was achieved with typical Hoosier lassitude. This way we don't worry about new construc-

tion blocking streets or old sewer and water pipes being replaced. Our kids are too busy preparing for yesterday's challenges to dream about the opportunities of tomorrow. All the while, the majority in our legislature works hard to restore 19th century conformity. ❖

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

Quayle talks about 'the other Dan'

By **JACK COLWELL**

SOUTH BEND – Former Vice President Dan Quayle talked with pride about the political career of the man once known only vaguely to many Indiana voters as "that other Dan."



In a phone call, Quayle discussed the decision of Sen. Dan Coats not to run for reelection in 2016. Quayle called it "the right decision for him," but a loss for the Senate. Quayle said that serving in the Senate "is just not as fulfilling" as it was back when he served there. "Things have changed so much," he said. And he wasn't suggesting that so much more divisiveness and gridlock is a change for the better.

Surprised by Coats' decision? "Not really," Quayle said. He knew Coats was "weighing the pros and cons." He found it understandable that Coats, considering age by the end of another term and fundraising and campaigning demands of elections today, decided it was time to step aside "after a great career."

The former vice president recalled with pride getting Coats involved in congressional activity, convincing him to leave an insurance company post in 1976 to become district representative for then 4th District Congressman Dan Quayle. In the same 1980 election when Quayle was elected to the Senate, Coats was elected to the 4th District House seat. When Quayle was elected vice president in 1988, Coats was appointed to take Quayle's Senate seat.

Quayle said Gov. Bob Orr, who made the appointment to fill the vacancy until a special election, pondered naming Quayle's wife, Marilyn, herself quite knowledgeable about politics. "I told him, 'That's really not going to work,'" Quayle related. "I said, 'You should appoint Dan Coats.'"

Orr did, rejecting the possibility of several Republican officials better known statewide than Coats. The appointment was only until a 1990 special election to fill the final two years of the term to which Quayle had been elected. With that special election looming, Coats wasn't well known outside the 4th District. He was known by many voters, if known at all, as "that other Dan," the guy who took Dan Quayle's Senate seat when Quayle became vice president.

Quayle said he wasn't at all surprised when Coats won the special election and then a full six-year term. Coats also had defeated a better known figure to win the Republican primary for that House seat in 1980 and then won five House terms. It was ability, not just luck, said Quayle: You can't just luck out that many times.

After declining to run for a second full Senate term, Coats was ambassador to Germany and did some lobbying. Then he ran again for the Senate, winning his present term in 2010.

Quayle, who resides in Phoenix and is chairman of global investments for Cerberus Capital Management, with headquarters in New York, received a call from Coats the night before his announcement of declining to seek reelection. "He said he was letting just a few people know ahead of time and said he also needed to reach Mitch Daniels," Quayle related. "I said, 'That's no problem. He's right here in my house.'"

Daniels, former governor and now president of Purdue University, was at the Quayle home for a Phoenix area Purdue event. Marilyn Quayle is a Purdue graduate.

Quayle said he jokes with Coats that "you guys just don't want to run against each other," referring to how possible Coats vs. Evan Bayh races never materialize, with one or the other deciding not to run. Both apparently have decided not to run in 2016.

While Coats made "the right decision for him," Quayle said, the possibility of losing wasn't a factor. Quayle said he was confident that the guy once known as "that other Dan" was positioned to prevail decisively over any Tea Party challenge in the primary and win re-election. ❖

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

Cardwell elected chair; Hill eyes governor race

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Gov. Mike Pence appeared before the Indiana State Republican Central Committee, making the case for Jeff Cardwell to head the state GOP. The committee then elected Cardwell, a former Indianapolis city councilman who then headed Gov. Pence's faith-based office, as chair to succeed Tim Berry.

"Jeff Cardwell has been my friend for 30 years and he is the right person at the right moment to lead the Indiana Republican Party," Pence said.

In a March 19 Howey Politics Indiana Interview, Cardwell said he would conduct a listening tour of Indiana, vowed to upgrade the GOP's technical infrastructure and vowed to be inclusive. "We are entering a new season and a new time. The culture is changed," said Cardwell. "I want to move forward to getting new people involved, young people, college Republicans, really people from all walks of life. Just as spring season is upon us, this is just a new season. It's different. It's time to look at new opportunities."

When the RFRA controversy surfaced, there had been talk of delaying Cardwell's vote. That issue has divided the Central Committee and some members questioned whether Cardwell's loyalty would lie with Gov. Pence, or the party. Cardwell apparently convinced the Central Committee that latter was the case.

No vote totals were released.

Cardwell takes the reins of the GOP at a tumultuous time. U.S. Sen. Dan Coats will retire in 2016, likely setting off a contested primary, and Pence faces a potentially bruising reelection campaign. Asked about protecting the legislative super majorities, Cardwell told HPI, "If you're focused on helping people and what's best for Hoosiers, then all the rest will take care of itself. How do we move Indiana forward? How do we provide economic opportunities? How do we continue to build on the foundation? We've had a lot of great leaders. I am honored to have this opportunity, because a lot of people have done this before me. How can we help people? I don't think we need to over-complicate it."

Cardwell has also been a senior adviser to Pence. "I offer opinions and several people offer opinions," Cardwell said. "Just because I offer an opinion doesn't



mean he accepts it. He wants to hear opposing opinions. We don't always agree. What I have been most impressed with is there are so many talented people on his team."

U.S. Senate race: Holcomb kicks off

A week ago, Republican Eric Holcomb kicked off the 2016 U.S. Senate race, just 48 hours after incumbent Dan Coats announced he would not seek reelection. Since then, what would have been the marquee political story in Indiana has been almost completely obscured by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act controversy. Capitol Hill Republicans have been watching the Statehouse meltdown with a sense of shock and awe.

For the record, Republican U.S. Reps. Todd Young, Todd Rokita, Susan Brooks and Marlin Stutzman are all exploring runs. So are State Sens. Mike Delph and Jim Merritt. On the Democratic side, former congressman Baron Hill appeared to switch from a gubernatorial showdown with John Gregg, but that has all changed since the RFRA meltdown.

HPI asked Hill if he was on the gubernatorial track, or the Senate track. "I wish I knew," Hill said. "I had been pivoting toward the Senate race. But in the last few days, I'm reconsidering. I'm on calls. I'm in meetings. A lot of people have reached out."

If Hill opts back into the gubernatorial race, that appears to leave the Senate race to either Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., or State Rep. Christina Hale, a name we floated almost a month ago, with virtually no feedback. That changed late last week when she told Fox59, "It's very flattering but yes, I am considering it. We have a lot of problems and I want to be part of the solution."

Last week, Holcomb's campaign kickoff seemed like a virtual Daniels administration reunion. The former Indiana Republican chairman and deputy chief of staff under Gov. Mitch Daniels told several hundred cheering that his work for Sen. Dan Coats had exposed him to the Republican "with impeccable integrity." He said that immediately after Coats made the decision not to seek reelection, "I began to receive encouragement from many quarters, which brings me to the purpose of today's gathering. The solutions to America's most daunting challenges cannot be found in the promises to simply printing more money or kicking the can down the road for others to inherit. The facts speak for themselves. Our economic recovery from this latest recession has been the slowest since World War II, weighed down by disheartened folks dropping out of our workforce altogether, stagnation of income directly tied to crushing federal policies and regulations. We have an \$18 trillion national debt that will become the inheritance to young folks who aren't even of age yet to vote. It will simply be an anchor too heavy for them to reel in."

Holcomb continued, "This campaign will be about what we are for, not simply about what we are against. This campaign will seek to attract people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives and experiences. We will

welcome and engage them. This campaign will be about Indiana's voice and anyone who knows me knows, this campaign is going to have some fun along the way." Holcomb cited five points he will emphasize in the campaign. "I want that same proven, passionate solutions-oriented approach in Washington," Holcomb said. "Our campaign will focus on five key goals and we'll search for real solutions to compliment them."



Holcomb listed "keeping America safe, because we know security can never be achieved by the weak and withdrawn." He cited creating an America that is a "global jobs magnet" saying the nation puts businesses at a "disadvantage with its bloated tax code," regulations and a myriad of mandates "all flowing down from Capitol Hill. That's got to change." His third point was "honoring our commitments" saying citizens have lost confidence because the U.S. has neglected its military veterans. "They see an IRS that targets people and their affiliations."

Holcomb called for "respecting the rule of law" while citing President Obama's immigration executive order. "No unlawful executive order can ever replace the constitution," he said. "We need to return to the days when legislators legislated and executives executed. Finally, we will seek to engage the next generation of leaders," Holcomb said, "just like I did in the U.S. Navy." He asked for young people to invest in "a cause bigger than themselves."

Reps. Brooks and Rokita both made statements indicating they are looking at the race. "Over the last 48 hours, I, like other Republican leaders across our state,

have been receiving encouragement to consider running for this open seat," Brooks said. "It's not a decision to make quickly or lightly. I will take some time in the near term to talk to Republicans around the state about what they are looking for in our nominee for 2016."

Rokita, R-Indianapolis, who has won two statewide races for secretary of state, said, "Over the last few days I heard from all kinds of friends across the state encouraging me to consider running for the U.S. Senate. I want to talk with Hoosiers about whether my

experience as your secretary of state and now my leadership in the U.S. House can best be utilized in the U.S. Senate."

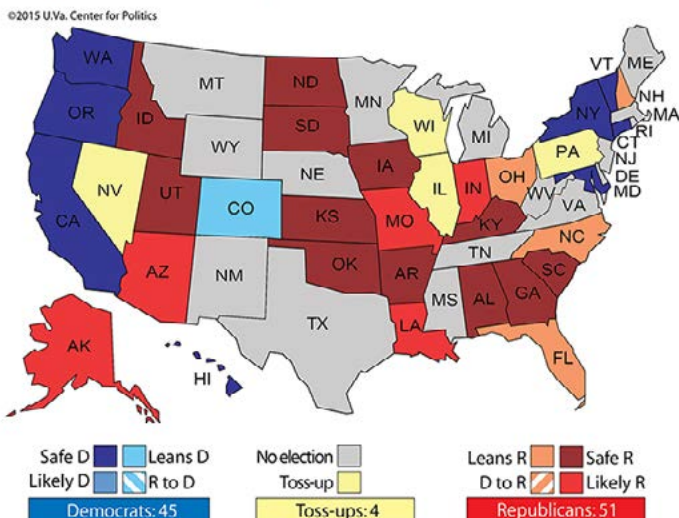
Governor: Gregg to make decision?

Democrat John Gregg is hinting he may kick off his rematch with Gov. Pence next week. Gregg wouldn't offer a hard answer on whether he intends to challenge Pence, but his website, greggforgovernor.com, is splashed with the text: "Big news is right around the corner." Gregg advocated for a full repeal of the religious freedom bill in a post on his Facebook page this week.

Sabato's Crystal Ball made this rating of the Indiana race this morning.

Most of the state governorships will not be on the ballot during the next couple of years, but there are a couple of Midwestern races that merit comment: We do not want to overreact to what has been a difficult week for Gov. Mike Pence (R-IN), who has come under fire from state and national business interests, the NCAA, and many others for signing a bill that some argue would allow local businesses to discriminate against gays and lesbians. Pence gave a disastrous interview to ABC's George Stephanopoulos last Sunday, during which he was asked six times to give a "yes-or-no" answer to a question about the effect of the law on gays, and his evasions were transparent. Remember, a governor only goes on a national Sunday show in these circumstances to clarify the facts (from his perspective) and to douse a raging fire. Pence succeeded only in turning a one-alarm fire into a four-alarm one. Since then, Pence has held a press conference insisting that criticism of the bill was inaccurate but that he wanted the legislature to clarify it anyway. The final outcome is indeterminate as we write this. This dustup prompted us to go back and look at Pence's upcoming gubernatorial reelection bid, assuming he doesn't run for president instead (a possibility that now seems a bit far-fetched). At least for reelection as governor, even after this embarrassment, Pence should be favored in 2016. Still, it is worth remembering that he only won in 2012 by about three points over former state House Speaker John Gregg (D), who might run again. Our Safe Republican rating was

Map 1: Crystal Ball 2016 Senate ratings



probably a bit too bullish for Pence, and we're moving the race from Safe Republican to Likely Republican, which still means that Pence is a clear favorite for reelection. He now has less room for error, however.

Mayoral

Carmel candidates debate

In a mayoral debate Wednesday, Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard and challenger Rick Sharp said they would support enacting a human rights ordinance to protect against discrimination for sexual orientation and gender identity (IndyStar). Brainard and Sharp also said the state's "freedom of religion" law needs to be fixed to ensure it does not allow discrimination. "Growing up in a little town in Indiana, one of the first things we were taught as kids was that you treat everyone fairly and equally," Brainard said. "I think he stated it well," Sharp said. "I abhor discrimination in any form." The moment of agreement was fleeting. Brainard and Sharp found little else in common during the 90-minute debate sponsored by The Indianapolis Star at the Carmel library. They disagreed on whether the city had accrued too much debt during its massive redevelopment. They disagreed on how the city should move forward with development deals. They even disagreed on how much cash Carmel owes. Brainard wants a sixth term to continue his vision to redevelop the city, including finishing City Center, starting Midtown and building a roundabout-style interchange at 96th Street and Keystone Avenue.

Brown, Lienhoop debate in Columbus

Columbus Mayor Kristen Brown says her record of success should set her apart from her primary challenger, Councilman Jim Lienhoop. The two republican candidates debated Wednesday night in a packed lecture hall at Indiana University-Purdue University Columbus (Indiana Public Media). Lienhoop says he's running on three main platforms, economic development, controlling spending and how we get along. He referenced Brown's 100% city department head turnover rate during her first term. "I think we can do a better job of setting the tone at the top, this is a small town and you need to learn how to live in a small town," he says. Brown says she was not elected to be a keeper of status quo saying people were looking for changes in city government and she has kept that promise. "There's never been a group of more connected people standing behind me calling the shots, the voice of the people of Columbus is from every walk of life," she says. The debate ended with a lightning round of questions. Lienhoop hesitated before saying yes to including sexual orientation and gender identity into the Columbus civil rights code. Brown said the question is too complicated to answer yes or no but earlier when referring to the religious freedom act said she does not discriminate..

Mayor Henry seeks RFRA repeal

Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry said he wants Gov. Pence and legislative leaders to "reach a swift but decisive resolution" on the RFRA. "I am deeply concerned about the perception of intolerance the nation now has of Hoosiers and our state due to Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act," Henry said on Wednesday. "Now is not the time to jeopardize the positive momentum Fort Wayne is experiencing in economic development and quality of life. Fort Wayne's local ordinance already makes it unlawful to deny goods or services to anyone based on race, sex, color, religion, disability, ancestry, national origin, place of birth, age, or sexual orientation. I know Fort Wayne residents and businesses do not stand for discrimination and welcome all to live, work, play and visit here. This ongoing controversy is impeding progress to move our city and region forward. I call on Gov. Pence, Sen. Long, Speaker Bosma and the members of the General Assembly to reach a swift but decisive resolution to this mess so we can continue to invest in the future of our community without distraction."

Mayor Costas calls for repeal

Valparaiso Mayor Jon Costas called on Indiana lawmakers Wednesday to immediately repeal the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and to offer an apology (Emery, NWI Times). "The right thing to do is a full repeal," he said. "The best pathway to resolution is for legislators to rescind the action and to issue an apology." Costas said he did not agree with the path being taken by Gov. Mike Pence and the General Assembly to simply clarify the existing law. Legislative leaders have yet to detail the specifics of any clarification, or when the House and Senate might act on it. Costas, a Republican, joins many of the state's Democrat leaders who are calling for a full repeal of the law. The mayor's comments also echo a growing chorus of opposition from Valparaiso residents. ❖

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YOUR FRIENDS ALL HANG OUT HERE... DO YOU?

Adam Wren, Politico: With the black marble of the Indiana House behind him, Gov. Mike Pence in January trumpeted a laundry list of accomplishments achieved in the first half of his first term: Two balanced budgets. A falling unemployment rate. More than 100,000 new jobs created. It seemed the predicate for a potential 2016 run. "Tonight, there are 49 other governors across this country who wish they could be me!" Maybe then. Not anymore. Not three short months later, amid the biggest crisis of his political life, that line rings comical. At least three of those 49 governors Pence taunted—from Connecticut, New York, Washington and counting—have banned non-essential government travel from their states to Indiana in just the six days since Pence signed Senate Bill 101, the controversial Religious Freedom Restoration Act, in a behind-closed-doors ceremony March 26. But Pence is in trouble, because there is already collateral damage. At least ten national conventions are threatening to pull out of commitments to meeting in Indianapolis, according to city tourism officials, who have spent late nights talking down convention organizers in attempt to keep a grip on the industry that brings in \$4.4 billion annually and supports 75,000 jobs. Comedian Nick Offerman and indie band Wilco scuttled upcoming engagements here. Even NASCAR, not known for leftie or social justice bonafides, expressed disappointment in the legislation. And just days before the NCAA Final Four Championship is set to tip off, a different kind of March Madness has settled over the city. NCAA President Mark Emmert expressed doubts about maintaining its Indianapolis headquarters—a short walk from the Statehouse. ❖



Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, TIME: In the 1987 movie Moonstruck, Nicolas Cage plays a contentious man who, when confronted with his unreasonable and unjust behavior, shouts in defense, "I ain't no freakin' monument to justice!" That line echoes in my head when I think about Indiana's hypocritical and anti-American Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). At its core, rather than being a monument to justice, RFRA is a step toward establishing an American version of Sharia law. I know that sounds hyperbolic, in the tradition of, "If Obama is re-elected, the terrorists have won" or "If the pipeline isn't approved, you're Nazis because Hitler once nixed a pipeline." However, in this case, the comparison is not so crazy. Sharia law, when imposed on a population by force, makes a single religion's teachings (often a single sect of that religion's teachings) the law of the land. The mission is to force everyone to follow the teachings lest they be punished. Although RFRA supporters aren't physically assaulting people, they certainly are attempting to punish those who don't follow their own very specific interpretation of God's teachings. The U.S. Constitution is one of the greatest documents ever written because it has a clearly articulated mission of creating a country in which all people are

given equal opportunity and equal protection in order to seek those opportunities. Simple, but sublime. One major component to the spirit of the Constitution is that we don't promote any single religion above any other. To favor any religious teaching just based on popularity contradicts the spirit of the mission of the Constitution and is as direct an attack on the principles of this country as was the firing on Fort Sumter. Indiana's RFRA is also unfairly tarnishing the image of Christians. Christians have been at the forefront of fighting for equality since this country was founded. They were on the front lines of abolition, the Civil Rights movement, and in expanding LGBT rights. They risked their careers, families, and lives. Refusing service isn't an expression of Christian love, but an example of shaming. Jesus's Sermon on the Mount is a revocation of some of the harsher judgments of the Old Testament ("an eye for an eye") in order to embrace all people as fellow travelers on the path to salvation. While most Christians want to help people along that path, Indiana's RFRA supporters want to set up road blocks. Indiana is roughly 80% Christian, so whom exactly is this law protecting? What religion is being "restored"? Practitioners of Christianity in Indiana are not in jeopardy of losing their right to worship or practice their faith. That means the only reason to pass such a law is to allow people to extend the practice of their faith to include discriminating against those who don't share their values. That's the kind of thinking that drove Christians out of Europe to found this country. ❖

Jon Webb, Evansville Courier & Press: If you Google "Mike Pence young," every resulting picture shows him with gray hair. That's weird, right? I know Pence was once a young man. He didn't fall from the sky middle-aged. Surely he's not an extraterrestrial sent to Earth to conquer America's 38th-largest state, because that would be an odd science fiction movie. Plus, aliens study mankind for years before making their move. Pence, on the other hand, doesn't seem to know how humans will react in any situation. First, he was shocked when his effort to institute state-run media drew comparisons to Putin. And on Thursday, Earth exploded. The so-called "religious freedom" bill Pence signed into law is the most recent example of ... I can't do it. I can't write about the God-forsaken religious objection law that's sparking Twitter calls (from a Star Trek actor!) to #BoycottIndiana. The law is just a few days old, and already the Internet is awash in furious screeds from both sides. Not even Pence knows what the point of it is. He admitted that much during a radio interview with Greg Garrison, when he couldn't name any court cases that rendered such a law necessary. This is the biggest story to come out of Indiana in a long time. Drafting a law to protect Christians in Indiana is like drafting a law to protect nerds at the premiere of "Star Wars." ❖

Arkansas RFRA vetoed by Gov

LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson (R) said Wednesday morning he will not sign a controversial religious liberty bill, saying he wants lawmakers to recall the bill and change it so that it more closely resembles federal law (Washington Post). "This is a bill that in ordinary times would not be controversial," he said during a news conference.

"But these are not ordinary times." A similar bill in Indiana prompted a firestorm in that state, as critics — including the NCAA and Apple chief executive Tim Cook — assailed a law that critics said could be used to let businesses discriminate against gay couples. But on Tuesday, several hours after Indiana Gov. Mike Pence (R) said his state would "fix" the bill in response to the controversy, Arkansas legislators overwhelmingly voted to approve their own version of the law. "This legislation doesn't allow anybody to discriminate against anybody, not here," State Rep. Bob Ballinger, a Republican who sponsored the bill, said in a telephone interview before it was passed on Tuesday. "The bill does just the opposite. It focuses on the civil rights of people believing what they want to believe, and not letting the government interfere with that."

Costas, 200 march in Valparaiso

VALPARAISO — Nearly 200 Valparaiso University students and area residents marched to City Hall Wednesday to protest Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (NWi Times). Earlier in the day, Mayor Jon Costas called for a full repeal of the law. Student Christina Crawley, who helped organize the march, said although the group is grateful to Costas for calling for a repeal, they

also would like the city to offer full protection for LGBT residents. "Costas' announcement is greatly appreciated and welcomed," Crawley said. "He is playing his part in solving the problem, we just need others to do the same. We would still like it explicitly said that no local government funding will go to businesses supporting the law." Marchers filed down Lincolnway, carrying signs stating "We are open for business to all Hoosiers" and "Freedom of religion is not freedom to discriminate."



Bishops write against RFRA

INDIANAPOLIS— Indiana's five Catholic bishops are reacting to the state's religious objections law with a statement saying no Hoosiers should face discrimination, whether it's over their sexual orientation or for living their religious beliefs (Evansville Courier & Press(. Indianapolis Archbishop Joseph Tobin and Bishops Charles Thompson of Evansville, Donald Hying of Gary, Kevin Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend and Timothy Doherty of Lafayette released a joint statement Wednesday supporting "efforts to uphold the God-given dignity of all the people of this state while safeguarding the rights of people of all faiths to practice their religion without undue burden from the government." They say every person should be treated with dignity and respect and that the rights of one person should never be used to deny the rights of another. Indiana has approximately 750,000 Catholics

Author cancels Notre Dame speech

SOUTH BEND — Writer and filmmaker Sherman Alexie has canceled a planned appearance this month at the University of Notre Dame, citing Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration act as the reason

(South Bend Tribune). Alexie had been scheduled to speak at Notre Dame late this month. "I won't be doing any gigs in Indiana until they repeal the hate law they just passed," Alexie said in an interview in *The Stranger*, a weekly publication based in Seattle, Wash. Alexie is a poet, writer and filmmaker who lives in Seattle. Some of his best known works are "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian" and "Smoke Signals," a 1998 film.

Wayne Co. wades into RFRA

RICHMOND - Wayne County commissioners Wednesday afternoon waded into the fight over the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, approving a resolution affirming their commitment "to equality under the law for all of (Wayne County's) citizenry" (Richmond Palladium-Item). The resolution was in direct response to the "debate and critical comment" that is taking place across the state and the nation concerning the bill passed recently by the Indiana Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Mike Pence..

West Lafayette resolution coming

WEST LAFAYETTE - Steve Dietrich of the West Lafayette City Council filed a resolution Wednesday to re-emphasize the city's commitment to inclusion of residents and visitors from "all walks of life," including members of the LGBT community (Lafayette Journal & Courier). Dietrich is an at-large representative on the council. "Just with all the confusion and the controversy of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, I just thought it was important to affirm the steps West Lafayette has taken," he said. West Lafayette Mayor John Dennis said he supported the resolution. "I think that the resolution comes from (Dietrich's) heart and his belief system, and I think it reflects ... the true spirit of the city of West Lafayette," he said..