



HPI Interview: Mishler finance era set

Son of a legislator from Doc's hometown is just fourth Republican to hold appropriations portfolio in last half century

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – State Sen. Ryan Mishler becomes just the fourth Republican in a half century to take the reins of the Appropriations Committee, Senate President David Long having appointed him to replace out-going Appropriations Chairman Luke Kenley.

Long's sine die speech in April was a precursor to the coming change of the guard when he suggested Kenley and Tax & Fiscal Policy Chairman Brandt Hershman may have forged their last budget.



Kenley announced his retirement this month, and Hershman could be seeking the 4th CD once U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita officially joins the Republican U.S. Senate race.

Mishler is a son of a legislator, hails from Bremen and was first elected in 2004. Once on the fiscal track, he established working relationships with Kenley, Hershman and House Ways and Means Chairman Tim Brown. Since 1970, only Republicans Larry Borst, Robert Meeks and Kenley have chaired the appropriations portfolio in the Senate.

Mishler notes that while Kenley and

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A procedural Pence win

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Give Vice President Mike Pence credit for his tenacious pursuit of an Obamacare repeal and replace. When he intoned on Tuesday afternoon, "There are 50 years and 50 nays. The Senate being equally divided and the Vice president votes in the affirmative," Pence breathed new life in the health reforms that many believed were dead last week.

Just hours after the talks collapsed, Pence was back on Capitol Hill seeking support for a procedural motion. Some of us saw it as the classic definition of insanity (i.e. trying the same thing over and over seeking to get a different result).



"We're in! See you at the picnic on Aug. 12."

- U.S. Rep. Luke Messer, in a Facebook posting Wednesday unveiling his U.S. Senate campaign logo and website. He seeks to challenge U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly in 2018.



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But now we're hearing talk of a "skinney" Obamacare repeal and replace and Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has vowed to accept amendments from all 100 senators, including the evil Democrats.

Pence's victory on the procedural vote could be akin to the proverbial dog catching the car, or even the billionaire mogul capturing the presidency. Once it's captured, then what? A dog can't drive, and President Trump seems to be trying to prove on a daily basis that he doesn't know how to govern.

At the very moment he was beseeching Republican senators to give him a "win," Trump and Pence were undermining "beleaguered" Attorney General Jeff Session, a Senate alum. And as we've reported before, the Pence/Trump political wing is openly seeking primary opponents for recalcitrant Sens. Dean Heller and Jeff Flake. The Senate is a place which places high capital on decorum and honor. There hasn't been a physical caning on the Senate floor since Rep. Preston Brooks battered Sen. Charles Sumner on May 22, 1856.

While Republicans lost U.S. Sens. Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski on the procedural vote, Pence and Company were able to lure Heller, Rob Portman, Mike Lee, Jerry Moran and Mary Moore Capito back into the fold.

As the vote headed for a tally, the most riveting conversation occurred between McConnell and Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson, who finally voted yea as Pence looked on from the podium.

U.S. Sen. Todd Young said, "Nearly everyone agrees that doing nothing is not an option. Insurers have fled the individual market and premiums continue to rise without any indication the law's death spiral will stop. Ultimately, it is imperative that we fundamentally reform our healthcare system and my vote to proceed to debate allows us to begin

that process. I will continue to work with my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, to come up with a solution that provides long-term stability to our healthcare system and gives each and every Hoosier the opportunity to access quality and affordable insurance."

The real historic flash occurred as McConnell and Johnson talked, when U.S. Sen. John McCain returned to vote yea, just 11 days after having brain surgery.

It was McCain, who sported a scarlet red scar above his left eye and seemed tired, who stole the show, but in doing so upbraided his colleagues and President Trump.

"Right now we aren't producing much for the American people," McCain said. "We've

all played some role in it. Certainly I have. Sometimes I make it harder to find common ground. Sometimes I wanted to win more for the sake of winning. We need to learn to trust each other again. Stop listening to the bombastic loudmouths on the radio, television and the internet. To hell with them! They don't want anything done for the public good. Our incapacity is their livelihood.

"We've been spinning our wheel on too many important issues because we don't want to work with people on the other side of the aisle. We are getting nothing done, my friends, we are getting nothing done. Our health care system is a mess. Something has to be done."

He lamented how President Obama and Democrats pushed the ACA through in 2010 on a straight party line vote, and said, "We shouldn't do the same with ours. Why don't we try the old way of legislating in the Senate?"

He admonished McConnell, complaining that such social reengineering should include committee hearings, testimony from experts and interested parties, describing a process that would normally take months, saying Senate leadership came up "with a proposal behind closed doors



in consultation with the administration, then springing it on skeptical members, trying to convince them that it was better than nothing. I don't think that's going to work in the end, and it probably shouldn't."

And that is exactly what will unfold today.

As for Trump and Pence, McCain blasted the president who once said he didn't respect POWs. "Whether or not we are of the same party, we are not the president's subordinates," he said. "We are his equal!"

"I voted for the motion to proceed to allow debate to continue," he said. "I will not vote for this bill as it is today. It's a shell of a bill right now."

But just to show how surreal everything is in Washington, McCain did vote for the unsuccessful repeal and replace later that evening. As David Nather of Axios observed, "McCain was hard to read yesterday. On the one hand, he excoriated the Senate's process, calling instead for a return to bipartisanship and regular order — and in that part of his speech, he didn't sound like a guy too inclined to support a bill in the end. But he gave that speech just a few minutes after voting to go ahead with



the process he was criticizing, so don't put him in the 'firm no' column."

That column could be reserved for Capito, Johnson, Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski, Mike Lee, Jerry Moran and Portman.

What will happen in the Trump/Pence quest for a victory? "We're hours away from a series of votes that will culminate, we think, with a brand-new bill to repeal part of the Affordable Care Act," Nather writes this morning. "Of course, no one's seen it. Senate Republicans don't know where they're headed, but they're putting the pedal to the metal to get there. Here's where things stand this morning: McConnell is still working on the latest ACA

repeal bill, after two other versions have already failed. Like its predecessor, this one — "skinny repeal" — is also being written in secret with little to no outside input. This could all be over — somehow or another — in about 24 hours. Not because Republicans agree on any one policy, or even on the broadest set of principles about what's good or bad in the health care system, but because they'll run out of time."❖

Mishler Interview, from page 1

Brown were retired from their private careers, he is a single dad and president of Mishler Funeral Homes and Bremen Monument Company. When Gov. Otis "Doc" Bowen died, Mishler announced the passing and conducted the legendary governor's funeral. So Mishler will be in a unique position of juggling fatherhood, a career and one of the most important fiscal posts in the state.

As we do with all key General Assembly leaders, we conducted this HPI Interview with Mishler on Wednesday morning via phone. He was in Virginia where his son was in an AAU basketball tournament.

HPI: You're from Bremen. I'm assuming you knew Doc Bowen? What kind of influence did he have on your political career?

Mishler: Yes. I sure did. My dad was in the House years ago and he was the one who really convinced my dad to run for the House. He ran for the first time in 1980.



I've known Doc Bowen from a young age. When I decided to run, that was one of the first places I went. He had these index cards and he told about things to do as a candidate. His No. 1 rule was, "Never use your own money."

I sat there and I jotted down notes as he went over all these things. He knew everybody in town. And then I handled his funeral. He was great influence on my father.

HPI: Did you consult with him on issues once you were in the General Assembly?

Mishler: Not too much. It was more behind the scenes on when I ran, what to expect, things like that. I remember one conversation about the conditions of roads in the area. That was really the only political conversation we had.

HPI: You look at Doc's career as governor and Health and Human Services secretary under President Reagan, and the two key issues were taxation and health care.

Mishler: When people hear I'm from Bremen, that's the first thing that comes up. Doc Bowen. He never

forgot about his community. That was the most important thing we had. He delivered what we called "Bowen babies" and that was important to him. When I was in college on the West Coast (Southern Cal) I met his grandson, who was at Southern Cal. It's a small world.

HPI: When this change occurred, I noted that you were only the third Republican to hold the Senate Appropriations portfolio.

Mishler: Bob Meeks had it for four years, too. When I got elected, it was two to four years with Meeks and then it was Kenley.

HPI: Did you spend any time with Larry Borst?

Mishler: No, unfortunately. I met him one time after I got elected, but I never had an opportunity to get to know Sen. Borst.

HPI: One of my favorite stories is Borst having a putting green in his office and he used to dare lobbyists to putt for funding.

Mishler: (Laughs) So that's why everyone golfs.

HPI: But no one will say who's the best golfer in the General Assembly.

Mishler: Probably Wolkins.

HPI: In his sine die speech, President David Long suggested that both Chairmen Luke Kenley and Brandt Hershman may have crafted their last budget. You are replacing Kenley. How's your relationship with Sen. Hershman and do you expect his departure soon?

Mishler: When I first got elected, Hershman was my assigned mentor. I've always had a great relationship with Brandt. He's always been helpful. Years ago Sen. Long told me to learn everything I could from Luke Kenley. So when I went down the fiscal path, it was like following a legend around. He's obviously the best we've ever had. What a mentor to have on the budget in Luke Kenley. I'm just honored to have an opportunity to replace someone like that. I think that's a once-in-lifetime opportunity. I feel fortunate to keep a work relationship with Brandt. It was helpful to have both of them.

HPI: And how would you describe your relationship with Chairman Tim Brown over on House Ways & Means?

Mishler: He reached out to me as soon as Sen. Long appointed me. He said, "Hey, call me if you need anything." That's the thing, too, I've worked with these people over the last five or six years. So that's a good comfort zone to know. I've been in the room with them all this time. We've had a great working relationship. I like to tell the story of how we're in a hotel with the Budget Committee and he got a napkin out and started putting school funding together on a napkin.



Chairmen Brandt Hershman and Mishler.

HPI: What are your general philosophies?

Mishler: Obviously I want to keep a balanced budget and strong reserves. As a business owner, that's a general philosophy every day. Indiana is a fiscal leader in the country and I want it to continue to be. I want to keep our bond rating and remain the fiscal envy of the country.

HPI: What do you see as the biggest challenges between now and the next biennial budget?

Mishler: Health care is going to be the No. 1 issue in the coming years. Whether we remain in the ACA or it's changed, it's going to affect us one way or another.

That's probably going to be our biggest issue.

HPI: There was a provision in HEA1002 that allows for the transfer of funding from roads and infrastructure to areas like health care and potentially propping up HIP 2.0. Did you play a role in that?

Mishler: The House wanted to use all the sales tax on fuel for roads. The Senate elected to do that. I was one of those people because I felt if we had a downturn in the economy, it would really tie our hands. We wouldn't have any flexibility. That

was my biggest concern. So the compromise was: It all goes to roads, however, if there is a downturn, it can be used for three things, education, health care and child services. Those are probably the three most important issues.

HPI: And some of the most challenging issues we face.

Mishler: Correct. Correct.

HPI: We're probably closer to the next recession than from the last one. Any thoughts on what you may be facing in the next couple of years?

Mishler: That's why we have a strong cash reserve; the prime example of why we need to keep a strong cash balance to offset any downturn in the economy. You can't plan on that. You have to plan ahead. By keeping a strong cash balance you're playing ahead for the next downturn.

HPI: The state reserves are currently \$1.7 billion. Would you like to see that in the \$2 billion range?

Mishler: Yeah. I know people flinch when we say that.

HPI: Beyond fiscal issues, what have been your key issue areas?

Mishler: One has been school funding. I've been doing that for several years. That is a great challenge. As a parent of a child in sixth grade, I thought it was important. When I was asked to do that, I did. I really enjoyed traveling to different schools and learning about communities through school funding, which I think will help me with the budget. Fifty percent of our budget goes to schools and

K-12. I've spent probably 90% of my time on school funding over the last six or seven years.

HPI: Would you like to see universal pre-K?

Mishler: I'm not a big supporter of pre-K. I did support it when Gov. Pence wanted that program, but with the idea it was to get data. I didn't want to expand the pilot program because we didn't have the data yet. For me personally, I have never been real supporter of expansion of the pre-K.

HPI: I spent time with Gov. Holcomb this past month and he is signaling an all-out war on the opioid epidemic and will use political capital to fund it. What are your thoughts on that?

Mishler: It will be a funding issue. I think on the next budget he'll have to bring the data back. We'll have the flexibility to deal with this opioid crisis and I think by the next budget cycle the administration will have data for what we need to do. I don't think a lot of people know what direction to go.

HPI: Are there other fiscal issues you'd like to talk about?

Mishler: Road funding will be ongoing because we just started that. If we're talking long term that's something that we have to stay on top of. Back in 2003 they raised the gas tax and then just kind of let it go. So that's an on-going issue. Education is always important. In my area, it's the No. 1 issue. The roads were pretty popular, but education is still going to be an issue.

HPI: Do you believe we're seeing progress on Gov. Pence's Regional Work Councils?

Mishler: I was pretty active in technical education this year. We got aggressive. Sen. Eckerty and I worked with the work programs. The demand isn't meeting the needs; it's the categories that we have. This year we tried to pad those categories with larger grants. In north central Indiana we had more kids getting into hospitality and culinary which wasn't matching the area need, so we changed the grants to fill that need for manufacturing. We made a lot of changes this year. We did the eighth grade reach out, trying to get kids at a younger age to focus on a career – how they get trained, where the jobs are in that field, where the money is going. We need to start them

younger.

HPI: A Washington Post article this month cited the workforce shortage in the Warsaw area orthopedic belt, and it suggested that companies like ZimmerBiomet or DePuy might move.

Mishler: Some of the work may go elsewhere. Some of it went overseas and they're coming back because they can't find the workforce. Sourcing that out,



Sen. Ryan Mishler and out-going Appropriations Chairman Luke Kenley.

didn't work out. I think that's a problem everywhere. The orthopedic industries in Warsaw are in my district and I've watched that for years. They are having a hard time finding workers; they're going out of state. It's a recruiting game. Recruiters from other states are offering better benefits. We're seeing a lot more education reimbursements and things like that.

HPI: What is the future of Regional Cities? Gov. Holcomb wants it to continue but wasn't sure where the funding would come from.

Mishler: I think Regional Cities was a great opportunity for areas. Two of the regions were in my district. I think it's helped these regions. The issue is going to be, where does the funding come from. The tax amnesty program was great, but you can't have a tax amnesty program every year. So the issue is where do we find the funding? In my home area I've seen the improvements from that money. We're seeing the benefits of it, but for other areas, we have to figure out the ability to raise it. Does the state raise it? ❖

9th CD drawing in activist candidates

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Activist Democratic candidates are lining up for the opportunity to challenge freshman U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth. The latest is Bloomington attorney Liz Watson, self-described as a national advocate for working families.



She joins New Albany civil rights attorney Dan Canon, Bedford businessman Tod Curtis, and Indiana University associate

instructor Tom Pappas. These candidacies are forming as President Trump and Capitol Hill Republicans are trying to reform health care laws, with the Congressional Budget Office saying the House-passed plan would end health coverage for 22 million Americans and the Senate plan, 33 million. The so called “skinney” plan would leave 16 million uninsured. There have also been steep proposed cuts to Medicaid to the tune of \$880 billion over the next 10 years.

These issues could resonate if a passed Republican health plan guts the Healthy Indiana Plan 2.0 or crimps the Holcomb administration’s coming battle against the opioid pandemic jarring the state.

Hollingsworth voted for the American Health Care Act in May, saying, “The American people have lived with the burden of broken promises that Obamacare has left in its wake: Higher premiums than promised, fewer choices than promised, and less access than promised. The passage of the American Health Care Act brings relief as that burden is lifted and Obamacare begins to unravel and fall away. The American Health Care Act is built upon the foundation of conservative principles, such as free-market solutions, returning power to the states, and protecting those Americans with pre-existing conditions. Today, the American people’s goal of repealing Obamacare took physical form.”

But a recent Quinnipiac University poll found only 20% of voters nationwide approve of the AHCA. An NPR/Marist Poll in late June found

17% support the Senate GOP plan with 55% opposing. In the NPR/Marist Poll, 17% favored keeping Obamacare as is, while 46% want changes “so it does more.”

Watson said she has dedicated her legal career to the most important fights for working families, including legislative efforts to raise the minimum wage, strengthen protections for people to negotiate for their fair share, and create good-paying jobs. She is also a committed advocate for fairness for women in the workplace. She is teaching courses in law and policy at Indiana University.

“I’m running for Congress because I believe that if you work hard and play by the rules you should be able to get ahead. But today, too many hardworking families across Indiana’s 9th Congressional District struggle to keep their heads above water,” Watson said. “I want to represent the people in our district by fighting for better health care, good jobs and the best public education we can

provide for our children. It’s time to get to work for Hoosiers, and stop only serving the interests of a privileged, wealthy few.”

Watson served as the labor policy director and chief labor counsel for the Democrats on the Committee on Education and the Workforce in the United States House of Representatives. She also ran the workplace justice program at the National Women’s Law Center. Previously, she was the executive director of the Georgetown Center on Poverty, Inequality and Public Policy.

“We all want the freedom to be able to care for our families. This starts with good-paying jobs, affordable health care, high-quality child care, predictable schedules, and paid sick days and family leave,” Watson stated. “Special interests have been manipulating the rules of the economy in favor of the one percent for too long. If we work together, we can restore the American Dream for Indiana families. I will fight every single day I am in Congress for the people in our district.”

After graduating from Bloomington South HS and earning degrees from Carleton College and Georgetown University Law Center, Watson clerked for a federal judge. She also served as legislative counsel for Workplace Flexibility 2010 at Georgetown Law and she was an employment lawyer in private practice.

Canon lives in New Albany and practices law in Louisville. In announcing his candidacy earlier this month, he mentioned similar issues that Watson raised. Canon listed “good-paying jobs, a safe place to live, quality, affordable education and healthcare that doesn’t leave us bank-



Liz Watson and Dan Canon are two Democratic 9th CD candidates.

rupt.”

“These are things that matter most to regular people. But our current representative isn’t working on those issues,” Canon said in the release. “He’s an opportunistic multi-millionaire who came to Indiana just to buy a seat in Congress.”

Curtis, a Bedford orthodontist, said in announcing his candidacy, “Washington isn’t working for regular people. I am not a politician, but I am a leader who believes in standing up for Hoosier families. I want to build a strong middle class, provide world-class education opportunities for our kids, invest in our infrastructure and foster innovation that will spur job growth. Most importantly, I want to make sure that Indiana families, seniors, and those with pre-existing conditions can afford quality care. I’m determined and willing to ignore party politics and special interests and make the right decisions that are best for South Central Indiana, and our country.”

Last week, Curtis noted, “Instead, in the six months since taking office, President Trump has turned



Bedford orthodontist Tod Curtis

his back on the very people he promised to champion. Unfortunately, the president isn’t alone. Many in Washington have forgotten why they were sent there in the first place, probably because they’re too busy engaging in politics as usual and advancing personal agendas. Whatever the reason, this isn’t how we’ll solve problems and address issues that everyday Hoosiers care about: Healthcare, infrastructure, growing the middle class, and ensuring that our communities are safe. Hoosiers, and all Americans, deserve more. We cannot afford to wait around and watch Washington descend further and further into gridlock. We cannot afford for America to be led by out-of-touch politicians who, a mere six months into governing, have already forgotten who they’re in this for.”

Pappas, a Notre Dame graduate, said, “The United States is the wealthiest country in the world, but this wealth is not enjoyed broadly. When the top 0.1% of families own as much wealth as the bottom 90%, there is something drastically wrong with that statistic. If that is not appalling enough, almost one third of all American children live in poverty. This is not acceptable. We need to do better by our children and by their families.”

Pappas added, “Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour is a step in the right direction. No American worker should put in a 40-hour work week and still live

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in poverty. We also need to make sure that each stage of the economic ladder is able to support everyone. Teenagers and young adults need employment opportunities to step onto the economic ladder, and investing in infrastructure will put at least 13 million American adults to work repairing our roads, bridges, and other needs. The rungs on the economic ladder that made the Greatest Generation and Baby Boomers successful are today missing or need reinforcement.”



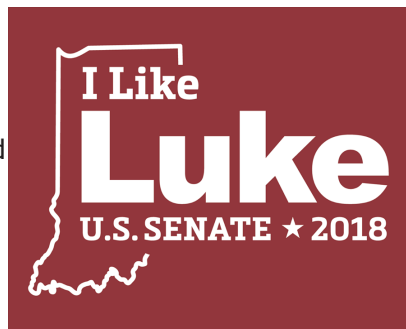
I.U. instructor Tom Pappas with his sons.

Pappas took aim at the Republican incumbent, saying, “Rep. Hollingsworth III epitomizes what is wrong with the current political situation. The wealthiest Americans can move to any district in the country, spend over \$3 million of their own money, and buy themselves power to advance their own interests. That is not democracy. We need to have a system that promotes small donations over corporate interests. We need a system that limits all donations, even by candidates to their own campaigns, to \$2,700 per election season. Representatives should be beholden to their constituents, not to their own interests or their rich friends, and our current system does very little to promote democracy.”

U.S. Senate

Messer says he’s in

“We’re in! See you at the picnic on Aug. 12.” U.S. Rep. Luke Messer said on Facebook at noon Wednesday, ending any speculation that he might pass on the Republican U.S. Senate race. He also unveiled a new U.S. Senate campaign logo. The campaign also launched a “I Like Luke” website at www.lukemesser.com which is now signing up campaign volunteers. He is expected to make a broader pitch at his annual picnic on Aug. 12 near Morristown. He joins Terry Henderson, Andrew Takami and Mark Hurt as announced candidates. U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita is expected to enter the race soon. Messer campaign finance chairman Greg Pence had stated in an email obtained by Howey Politics Indiana that there would be “big news” on tap today. “Stay tuned for some very exciting news from Congressman Messer tomorrow morning,” Pence said in an email sent on Tuesday. The day of



your hard work and support has arrived. Exciting times are ahead!”

U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly’s campaign manager Peter Hanscom reacted, saying, “Joe Donnelly has been an independent voice for Indiana in the U.S. Senate. Hoosiers know that Joe will always put them first, not party bosses, corporate lobbyists, or special interests in Washington. Despite Congressman Messer’s entry into the Republican primary, there’s still only one person on next year’s Senate ballot who is deeply connected to the Hoosier electorate and has a proven track record of working across party lines to deliver for Hoosiers, and it’s Joe Donnelly.”

Rokita poll shows small lead

The Rokita campaign released a GS Strategy Group Poll conducted July 16-18 of 500 likely Indiana Republican voters and in a head-to-head with Rep. Messer, showed Rokita ahead 28.2 to 20.4%. It showed Rokita’s favorable/unfavorable stood at 34.4/8% while Messer stood at 27.8% to 7.2%. Some 55.6% don’t know Rokita and 62.8% don’t know Messer. In a second sample that included Attorney General Curtis Hill, State Sen. Mike Delph, State Rep. Mike Braun, Andrew Takami, Mark Hurt and Terry Henderson, Rokita had a 20.6 to 13.6% lead over Messer, with 10.8% going to other candidates and 55% undecided.

Health reforms stand to dominate

Health reform will likely be a key issue in the emerging Senate race. After the Senate voted on a motion to proceed Tuesday, Indiana Democrats blasted U.S. Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita and their stance on healthcare. Both had voted for the AHCA in May, “While Senate Republicans have managed to find a path forward on their own health care bill, Congressmen Messer and Rokita haven’t changed their position an inch: They’re still staunchly behind the bill House Republicans passed,” the item began. “While the Senate drags itself, kicking and screaming, toward a health care overhaul, Congressmen Messer and Rokita are doubling down on their ‘mean’ health care bill,” said Will Baskin-Gerwitz, senior media strategist for the Indiana Democratic Party. “The sweetspot for a health care bill shouldn’t be one that increases premiums by thousands of dollars, or takes health care away from 23 million Americans. Republicans ought to start over and work with Democrats to pass a bill that strengthens our health care system instead of gutting it.”

Hoosiers for Rokita took at swing at Donnelly, saying, “Once again, Joe Donnelly has shown he stands with Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer in defending ObamaCare despite how disastrous it’s been for middle class families,

seniors and small businesses in Indiana. Joe Donnelly isn't moderate, and he isn't who he says he is. Joe Donnelly is a Washington liberal who puts ideology ahead of the real-world consequences of this failing law. Todd Rokita and Republicans are working to repeal ObamaCare, protect the most vulnerable, and improve choices and reduce costs for all Hoosiers."

Donnelly voted against the procedural vote, explaining, "I have said for years that there is bipartisan support for ideas to improve and strengthen the American health care system in a way that would reduce costs while improving access. I'm disappointed that the Senate has decided to make this a partisan process in an attempt to jam through proposals that would threaten the health and economic well-being of millions of Americans. I am going to continue to do everything possible to fight for quality, affordable health care for Hoosiers, and that is why I will be leading an amendment to protect Medicaid, including Indiana's HIP 2.0 program. I think we can all agree that our health care system can be improved, however that cannot be achieved by taking away health care from people or reversing the progress states like Indiana have made to provide affordable health care."

Rokita campaign claims momentum shift

Hoosiers for Rokita consultant Tim Edson released this memo claiming that the momentum in the Senate race

as shifted. "How much things can change in three months. The landscape for the potential Republican Senate primary has shifted dramatically," Edson said. "With the news that Todd Rokita raised over \$1 million in Q2 of 2017, beating Luke Messer by nearly \$500,000 and building a \$300,000 cash-on-hand advantage, the momentum has firmly shifted to Rokita among the potential candidates. Rokita's number was so big it even surpassed Todd Young's record setting second quarter of 2015. Money raised in Indiana: Rokita \$427,205/Messer \$191,296 Money raised from individuals: Rokita \$790,845/Messer \$227,296 of total raised from individuals: Rokita 76%, Messer 39%. Total raised April-June: Rokita \$1,041,714/ Messer \$578,185.

Edson continued: "The majority of Luke Messer's fundraising was from political action committees. Luke Messer sits on the Financial Services Committee. Financial Services is an "A" committee, allowing its members to raise much larger sums of PAC money than most other members of Congress. Serving in House leadership also helps Luke Messer on the PAC front. Over 60% of Luke Messer's second quarter fundraising came from political action committees. Unfortunately for Messer, PACs give to incumbents. Once Messer becomes a challenger to an incumbent senator, his PAC money dries up. Where Messer will get the money he needs to be competitive in a primary is a mystery. To distract from a very weak fundraising quarter, Messer has lashed out with ugly attacks and even released



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a phony poll downplaying his dangerous vulnerabilities. It is becoming clear that Todd Rokita is not only best positioned to win a potential Republican primary, but he is the best candidate to defeat Joe Donnelly.”

Messer’s Wikipedia page tampered with

The IndyStar reported on Tuesday: “A slew of recent edits to Rep. Luke Messer’s Wikipedia page closely align with his likely primary opponent Todd Rokita’s campaign attacks, setting off a new round of finger-pointing in what is expected to be one of the most hotly contested U.S. Senate races in the country. Over the past month, Messer’s page has been edited to emphasize his work as a lobbyist, his decision to move his family to Washington, D.C., and a controversy involving his wife’s lucrative part-time legal work for the city of Fishers. The edits were made under user names that make it difficult to identify the person behind the changes. But Wikipedia editing logs show that Messer’s page is the only one they’ve edited, suggesting they are more interested in influencing Messer’s image than providing objective information. The Rokita campaign has routinely criticized Messer in recent months as a ‘lobbyist turned politician’ who left Indiana for ‘one of the wealthiest suburbs of Washington, D.C.’ Messer’s campaign, meanwhile, has shot back, accusing Rokita of peddling negative stories and attacking Messer’s family. At one point, an official with the Messer campaign told the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette that ‘Rokita has a history of making unhinged comments.’ ‘Joe Donnelly and his allies are clearly good at editing websites...’ Rokita campaign spokesman Tim Edson said. ‘That said, most of what they’ve posted about Luke Messer’s record seems accurate.’”

Donnelly campaign manager Peter Hanscom laughed at the assertion that Donnelly’s campaign was behind the edits (IndyStar). “We have absolutely nothing to do with it,” he said. “It’s childish behavior. This is not the way you win a United States Senate seat.”

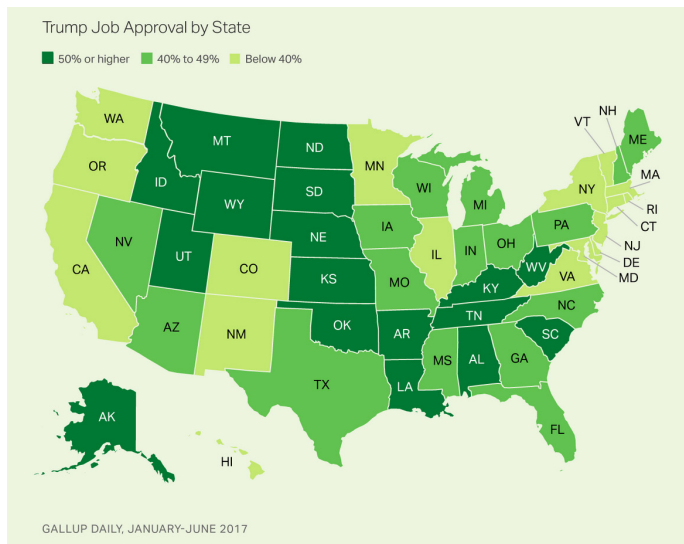
PAC money flows in

The three main rivals for a U.S. Senate seat from Indiana are collecting campaign funds from some of the same sources (Francisco, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). At least a dozen political action committees each contributed money to the campaigns of Donnelly, Messer and Rokita during the second quarter of this year. The campaign finance reports filed with the Federal Election Commission

show all three lawmakers received contributions from PACs representing medical companies Roche, Batesville-based Hill-Rom Holdings and Warsaw-based Zimmer Biomet, and defense contractors Lockheed Martin and Raytheon Corp., which has a plant in Fort Wayne. Other common contributors included PACs for Delta Air Lines, State Farm Insurance, Navient, the American Soybean Association, the National Apartment Association, the Advanced Medical Technology Association and the National Association of Realtors.

Presidential

Gallup released approve/disapprove numbers for President Trump in all 50 states, and he stood at 47% approve, 48% disapprove in Indiana. Trump, who has averaged 40% job approval since his inauguration, received approval ratings of 50% or higher in 17 states in the first half of 2017. Residents in an equal number of states gave him approval ratings below 40%. In 16 states, his ratings ranged between 40% and 49%.



Congress

6th CD: Siekman to run

Ohio County Democrat Lane Siekman announced he will seek the now open 6th CD as U.S. Rep. Messer runs for the U.S. Senate. “I am running for Congress in 2018,” Siekman said. “I have spent the past several months talking to voters, community leaders, party officials, and the voters of the 6th District and it’s time for a change. I don’t have all the answers but I am willing to listen and work for the residents of this district. I believe that we can do better for America.”

8th CD: Bucshon holds town hall

U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon on Friday faced a packed room of constituents, many of whom noisily took issue with the four-term Republican congressman’s views on health care, climate change and other issues (Martin, Evansville Courier & Press). But Bucshon also had his share of backers in the crowd of about 350, and the 90-minute town hall session, while volatile, never became unhinged as law enforcement officers watched from every corner. “This was the most turnout (for a town hall session) I’ve ever had,” Bucshon said afterward. “It was a little bit of a rambunctious discussion, but that’s all right. ... I believe in the process, and we had a good discussion tonight.” The divided crowd in the Southern Indiana Career & Technical Center seemed a microcosm of a split country. Bucshon was placed on the defensive about his

vote for the House version of legislation to replace former President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act. Questioners pointed to Medicaid cuts and projections that millions would lose care if the bill became law. Bucshon said the increase of Medicaid participation in recent years is due to high costs of private insurance, and he questioned the accuracy of Congressional Budget Office scoring of those who would be uninsured. "The Medicaid growth at the federal level is astronomical," he said. "The hope is that people will have an alternative to Medicaid, to take shackles off insurance companies to offer more affordable prices." Bucshon has said he doesn't support repealing ACA without a replacement. "It's a work in progress," Bucshon said. The congressman drew jeers by saying it's inaccurate that people are dying in the U.S. due to not having health care, because physicians by law must treat people regardless of their ability to pay. He also solicited reactions with his argument against a single-payer health care system. "I think it's a really bad idea to turn the system of health care over to the U.S. government," he said.

General Assembly

Murray to challenge Sen. Grooms

After the 2016 election, Anna Murray decided to stop talking, and to do something about her political frustration.

And Thursday afternoon, she made it official (News & Tribune). Murray, a Jeffersonville-based attorney who operates Anna K. Murray & Associates P.C., announced her plans to run for the Democratic nomination for SD46, the seat currently held by Republi-



Democrat Anna Murray kicks off her campaign in Jeffersonville against State Sen. Ron Grooms.

can Ron Grooms. She wants to improve the state's infrastructure, including expanding broadband; promote and encourage renewable energy use; increase the minimum wage to make it a livable wage; and make the state more welcoming to all faiths and ethnicities. "We need a diverse workforce," she said. "I want people to want to come to Indiana. We need to learn to accept people for what they are." She criticized Grooms for not supporting a minimum-wage increase, voting for right to work legislation and to repeal the common construction wage, and for not doing more to combat the state's growing drug problem. She also criticized the Republican super majority in the state legislature for raising the gasoline tax and placing tolls on

bridges. Ninth District Democratic Party Chairman Adam Dickey said Murray is the only Democrat to announce plans to run for the District 46 seat to this point.

SD 20 caucus Sept. 6

Indiana Republican Party State Chairman Kyle Hupfer officially called a caucus of eligible precinct committee members to fill a scheduled vacancy in the office of Senate District 20, the seat currently held by Sen. Luke Kenley. The caucus will be held at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 6, at the Ivy Tech Auditorium located at 300 North 17th Street, Noblesville. On Wednesday, July 12, Chairman Hupfer received official communication from Senate President Pro Tempore David Long that Senate Luke Kenley plans to resign his seat in the Indiana State Senate effective Sept. 30. The individual chosen at the Sept. 6 caucus will fill the remainder of Senator Kenley's term. Individuals interested in running in the caucus should contact the state party secretary at secretary@indiana.gop to ensure they file the proper forms prior to the deadline.

Schmidt announces for SD20 caucus

Long-time Hamilton County resident Dan Schmidt announced today that he will run in the Republican caucus to succeed retiring Sen. Luke Kenley in Indiana SD20.

Schmidt, who served in Gov. Pence's administration as a policy adviser on key areas including transportation, energy, and the environment, is a lawyer and a public sector strategy and management consultant. Schmidt works as a public sector strategy and management consultant serving public schools, state and local governments, and non-profit organizations. "My experience in law, business, and government has prepared me to effectively represent the interests of Carmel, Fishers, Noblesville, Westfield, and the surrounding communities in District 20," said Schmidt. "I have managed my own business, I have served in state government, and I know how to get things done."



Franke seeks rematch with Lucas in HD69

A Seymour resident who currently serves on the local school board is running again for a state legislative seat in 2018 (Seymour Tribune). Nancy Franke is seeking to unseat current District 69 State Rep. Jim Lucas, also of Seymour. This will be her second attempt to win the Republican nomination for the seat. She lost to Lucas in the primary election in May 2016. Lucas was unopposed in the November general election. ❖

Donnelly will face a torrent of attacks

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – You know Joe.

Most folks in this part of Indiana know Joe Donnelly. But millions of dollars will be spent to tell them that, really, they don't. That's the nature of political campaigns. And Donnelly is regarded as one of the most vulnerable Democratic senators up for reelection next year, providing extra incentive for Republicans to concentrate all out on defeating him.



The main reason national political analysts list Donnelly as so vulnerable is that President Trump won Indiana by nearly 20 percentage points. Trump turned Indiana into one of the reddest of red states, with Democratic candidates running statewide having no chance.

Donnelly would have had no chance if running in 2016.

He has a chance in 2018, with no presidential race overshadowing all else and in view of a high approval rating. A recent poll by Morning Consult, a polling partner with Bloomberg and other major media, found Donnelly with 53% approval, just 25% disapproval. Not bad, especially when compared with what the pollsters found in Kentucky for Republican Senate Leader Mitch McConnell, 41% approval, 48% disapproval.

But Donnelly's disapproval rating will go up substantially. Attacks on him, already begun and to be blasted next year with big spending on TV, will accomplish that. Republicans and PACs that back them must drive up disapproval of Donnelly if they are to win a seat they count on to keep control of the Senate.

Now, don't get the idea that Democrats and PACs that back them won't also resort to negative TV. They will. In fact, they already are drawing attention to the nasty things the two frontrunners for the Republican nomination, Congressmen Luke Messer and Todd Rokita, are saying about each other. Negative impressions from a heated Republican primary could help Donnelly. And it will

be heated if the two congressmen both reject "sure bet" reelection to the House and battle for the Senate nomination, with the possibility of the Senate for one, oblivion for the other.

Both Republican congressmen are reported to have high approval in their own districts, where they are known best. Either would be a formidable challenger to Donnelly. Either of course also would have higher disapproval ratings after suffering the slings and arrows of a fall campaign.

While Donnelly is well known in this part of the state, having served in Congress here before going on to the Senate, even those who have followed his consistent moderate Democratic voting record, will hear messages – loud, louder and then even louder – that they really don't know him. Negative works. Sometimes a lot.

One statement already from the National Republican Senatorial Committee says that "Joe Donnelly and Elizabeth Warren are two peas in a pod." He also is denounced for voting against confirmation of some of Trump's nominations.

It's ironic that progressive Democrats, some of whom may show up in the "disapproval" category in that poll, wish that Donnelly really was more like Warren and Bernie Sanders, less moderate, less willing to reach across the aisle. They aren't impressed that the Lugar Center rates him as second most bipartisan senator. That's not what they want. And while he has opposed some Trump nominees, they are distressed that he voted to confirm Neil Gorsuch for the Supreme Court.

Health care will be a key issue. Donnelly voted for the Affordable Health Care Act, Obamacare. He calls for fixing its flaws rather than sabotaging and repealing it. He has ridiculed both House and Senate Trumpcare proposals for replacement. Messer and Rokita both voted for Trumpcare in the House. They say health care is a mess because of the Obamacare that Donnelly voted for.

Donnelly calls for a bipartisan solution. More of that moderate approach. By election day, however,

what percentage of Hoosiers will identify him with and approve that moderate image? And how many will see Donnelly instead as really a wild-eyed liberal? ❖

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



Democrats need a big House field

By **KYLE KONDIK**
Sabato's Crystal Ball

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. - If Democrats do have a chance to win the House next year, it might be because they translated a currently big field of announced candidates into credible opportunities to flip not just some of the top seats on their list of targets, but also some seats that, on paper, might not seem like they should be competitive. If that's what happens, a big if at such an early point in the cycle despite President Trump's unpopularity and the usual midterm trends that favor the party that does not hold the White House, it would mirror what happened when the Democrats last won the House from Republican control in 2006.

That year, Democrats ended up netting 31 seats, but they were not exactly the 31 seats that many might have thought would flip going into the election.

Several embattled GOP incumbents from districts that Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry had won or came very close to winning in 2004 ended up eking out close victories in 2006, including Reps. Chris Shays (R, CT-4), Heather Wilson (R, NM-1), Deborah Pryce (R, OH-15), and Jim Gerlach (R, PA-6). Had one known before the election that all four of these Republican incumbents would have won, it would have been reasonable to question the Democrats' ability to net the 16 seats they needed to win the majority.

And yet, Democrats ended up gaining double what they needed, in large part because while they didn't win all of the most obviously competitive races, they won some upsets through good performances by unheralded challengers. For instance, then-college professor Dave Loebsack (D) surprisingly knocked off Rep. Jim Leach (R, IA-2) and social worker Carol Shea-Porter (D), who defeated a candidate backed by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in her party's primary, upset Rep. Jeb Bradley (R, NH-1).

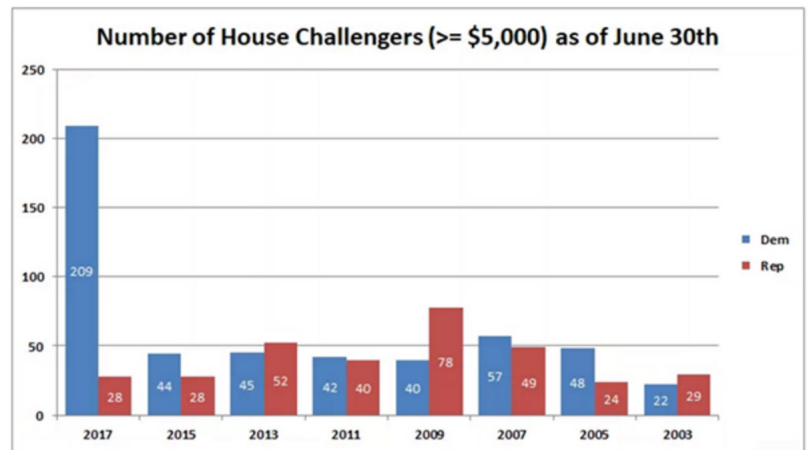
As we unveil our latest House ratings changes this week, we've been thinking about 2006 and the importance, to Democrats, of fielding as many credible challengers as they can. That's because even if there is a positive environment for Democrats next fall, they are not going to knock off every clearly vulnerable GOP incumbent. Many Republicans who sit in districts that Hillary Clinton won last fall are proven vote-getters who ran well ahead of President Trump last fall, like Reps. Mike Coffman (R, CO-6), Carlos Curbelo (R, FL-26), Barbara Comstock (R, VA-10), Dave Reichert (R, WA-8), and others. Democrats probably will have to beat some of these incumbents in 2018 to win the House -- or hope that some decide not to run for another term, like Clinton-district

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R, FL-27) -- but defeating all of them is unrealistic. Hence, the necessity of expanding the map.

The early returns for Democrats in that regard are favorable. Earlier this week, the Campaign Finance Institute's Michael Malbin, writing for the Brookings Institution, chronicled how many Democratic challengers have emerged so far. The numbers, particularly compared to recent cycles, are eye-popping. See Chart 1, which is reprinted with permission from Malbin's piece and uses Campaign Finance Institute data.

At this point in the cycle, Democrats have more than 200 filed House challengers who have raised at least a small amount of money (\$5,000 or more). That's more than the combined total of Democratic challengers at this point of the cycle in the last four cycles, and way more than either party has had in midsummer of the off year over the last decade and a half.

Granted, \$5,000 raised and being registered with the Federal Election Commission isn't a tremendously high bar, but the early wave of candidates is striking compared with previous cycles. Additionally, as Malbin writes, the candidates are not necessarily clustered in the same dis-



Source: Campaign Finance Institute

BROOKINGS

tricts: "So far, 105 different Republican incumbents have Democratic challengers with \$5,000. At this same time in 2009, only 50 of the Democratic incumbents were up against challengers with \$5,000."

However, there are some packed fields already, too.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee reserves the right to get involved in primaries: Will it do so in a major way next year? And, if the DCCC does, will it upset activists who distrust party leadership and believe that party bigwigs tilted the scales against Bernie Sanders in last year's presidential primary? If Democrats begin to recoil at party leadership, the Democratic establishment might have to navigate through the same intra-party battles that sometimes bedeviled Republicans in the Obama years. ❖

So who's really 'beleaguered'?

By **TONY SAMUEL**

INDIANAPOLIS – So who's really beleaguered, Attorney General Jeff Sessions or the whole Trump administration? The President's tweet calling Sessions "beleaguered" was funny because nobody really thought of Sessions as beleaguered until the President tweeted that he was. He had survived his day in front of the Senate



Intelligence Committee and from all indications is performing admirably in his role as AG. Or maybe Sessions was beleaguered and we just didn't know it, so President Trump wanted to make sure that we did.

The endless stream of CNN panelists make the case every night that it's the Trump administration that's beleaguered. Does the President himself feel beleaguered and should he?

It didn't really look like it at his Youngstown, Ohio MAGA Rally this week. He didn't seem stressed during his appearances for the administration's American Heroes Week. Nor did he struggle during the Foxconn jobs announcement to build a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Wisconsin to produce LCD panel products with an initial investment of \$10 billion that will create between 3,000 and 13,000 jobs. Donating his second quarter salary to the U.S. Department of Education seems like a very thoughtful act, not coming from someone besieged.

Time and time again, we've seen this President carry the full burden on his shoulders, during the campaign, the transition and the first six months of his Presidency. He did it again by himself announcing, again by tweet, after consultation with his generals, that the U.S. military will end transgender service in the military.

I think the real issue here is the perception of being beleaguered and maybe that's why the word came to the President's mind and then his tweet.

This goes to the heart of my primary concern as a Trump supporter – that the perception created by the media and intensified by Democrat attacks plus the lack of support from Republicans, has created a false reality that could feed on itself and cause real problems for Republicans, President Trump and all Americans. It could give Democrats the opening they need and may be able to take advantage of in both 2018 and

2020.

Most of the national media and the Democrat Party want us to think that the president and his administration are stumbling, bumbling and beleaguered. This is why we get fake news and coverage from the media that is way far out of proportion with what really matters to Americans. According to the Wall Street Journal, the top issues for Americans are health care (35%), jobs (13%), immigration (10%), climate change (10%) and Russia (6%). The top issues by percentage of coverage by the media are health care (4%), jobs (1%), immigration (0%), climate change (10%) and Russia (75%). This is astonishing if you really think about it.

The national media and national Democrats could actually get away with this if Republicans don't remember what got them control of the White House, Senate and House of Representatives. It was Donald Trump and his supporters. Folks we saw in Youngstown this week and folks we saw all around Indiana and the country last year.

Republicans in Washington need to get behind this President and stop jumping on and off the Trump Train like so many did during the campaign for their own political expediency.

This is why the President is concerned and feels the need to let everyone know. He does not have the backup he needs except from his great Vice President Mike Pence and a handful of folks that were with him from the start like Rex Early here in Indiana. Happy Birthday Rex!

I think like most true Trump supporters, I get him. I don't think he feels beleaguered, but I'm pretty sure that he thinks if others think so it's because the Russia "investigation" has been allowed to metastasize when it should have never even been born.


And that brings us back to Jeff Sessions. The President probably feels that if Sessions had nothing to hide, which he testified that he didn't, and because he knew from participating in the campaign that there was no collusion, then why should he have had to recuse himself? I agree that if Sessions was so sure that he did nothing wrong, then why recuse. This opened the door to a full six months of Russia coverage overshadowing any successes, like the ones from just this week mentioned above. The numbers from the WSJ prove this out.

So the President is upset at Jeff Sessions and probably others and I don't blame him. I think in the end, they will work things out and we will all move on. As President Trump himself said, "time will tell."

Samuel is president of Samuel Solutions and was vice chairman of the Trump Indiana presidential campaign in 2016.

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Trump commission puts Lawson in a bind

By **CHRIS SAUTTER**

WASHINGTON – Indiana’s Secretary of State Connie Lawson is in a bind. As a Republican member of the president’s election commission led by Vice President Mike Pence, she will be expected to toe the conservative line that voter fraud is a national epidemic. But as Indiana’s top election officer and a candidate for reelection next year, she will need to take a much more measured approach, if not one that is openly skeptical of Republican efforts to restrict voting rights.



President Trump established the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity in May after repeatedly asserting without proof that illegal voting by millions of immigrants and others cost him the popular vote against Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton. According to certified totals, Clinton won the popular vote by 2,864,974. Studies and state officials of both parties have found no evidence of widespread voter fraud.

Unsurprisingly, Trump has stacked the 12-member commission with conservatives who have long track records of advocating controversial voter restriction laws. Four in particular – Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, former Ohio Secretary of State Ken Blackwell, former Bush administration Justice Department official Hans von Spakovsky, and counsel to the conservative Public Interest Legal Foundation J. Christian Adams – are polarizing figures known for their fanatical work limiting voting. Tuesday Kobach was slapped by a federal judge for a “pattern” of misleading statements. Kobach was sanctioned by a magistrate in June for “deceptive conduct and lack of candor” in the case brought against him by the ACLU over the secretary of state’s push for proof-of-citizenship voter registration in Kansas.

In theory, Trump’s Election Integrity Commission exists to study policies and voting rules that either enhance or reduce public confidence in elections. A related purpose is to examine allegations of improper voting and faulty voter registration. Critics argue that the commission is actually an attempt to justify Trump’s baseless claims about voter fraud and, given the composition of the commission, its real mission is to push policies that further restrict access to the ballot.

Kobach, the co-chair of the commission, created a firestorm recently when he sent a request to all 50 states and the District of Columbia asking them to provide a list of voters’ names, addresses, partial Social Security num-

bers, voter history, military status and records of convictions. Fourteen states and D.C. have refused to comply with the request altogether while another 30 or more, including Indiana, have indicated a willingness to provide some information to the commission.

Meanwhile, the commission has been sued multiple times by a variety of public interest and civil liberties organizations claiming the request for voter information violates, among other things, federal law and voters’ constitutional privacy rights. However, a federal judge on Monday ruled the commission is free, for now, to collect the voter data, though states may still refuse the request.

Although Pence has stated that “this commission has no preconceived notions or preordained results,” neither Kobach nor Trump is countenancing such impartiality. Kobach, when asked by NBC’s Katy Tur about Trump’s claim of millions of fraudulent votes, responded that “we will probably never know” who actually won the 2016 popular vote in the presidential election. President Trump when addressing the commission at their inaugural meeting last week repeated claims of voting irregularities involving “large numbers of people in certain states.”

The Trump election commission is, in a sense, a culmination of Republican efforts that began in the early 1980’s to undermine voting rights for minorities. Many legal observers have characterized the current debates over voting lists, voter identification requirements, and early voting as a Republican ploy to reduce the number of Democratic votes by making it more difficult for eligible Democratic-leaning voters to vote.

Indiana’s Connie Lawson has her own history of supporting laws that restrict voting. As a state senator in 2005, she co-sponsored the nation’s first strict photo ID law. The U.S. Supreme Court rejected a challenge to the law in the 2008 case *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board*. However, 7th Circuit Judge Richard Posner and retired Associate Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens have both since repudiated the majority opinions they authored in the case. In a famous 2006 incident, the late Congresswoman Julia Carson was initially denied a primary ballot under Indiana’s ID law when she presented her congressional ID rather than a state-approved one.

Last summer, Lawson’s hyperbolic assertion that “nefarious actors are operating here in Indiana” triggered raids by state police of the offices of a voter registration group working to mobilize low income and minority voters. The massive investigation led to indictments of 12 workers not for fraudulent voting, but for submitting false registration forms, a common situation when such workers are required to meet quotas. Marion County Prosecutor Terry Curry made clear when announcing the charges that “these are not allegations of voter fraud nor is there any evidence to suggest that voter fraud was the alleged motivation.” Many observers called the raid a pretext to disenfranchise new voters likely to cast their ballots for Democrats and theorize that Pence encouraged Lawson to initiate the episode.

Critics of the commission have pointed to Kobach's recommendation to Trump that the National Voting Registration Act of 1993 be amended to, among other things, compel documentary proof of citizenship to support allegations that the commission has an anti-voting rights agenda.

Other recommendations are likely to include legislation mandating aggressive purges to remove voters from registration lists and national voter ID laws. While touted as anti-fraud measures, numerous studies have shown voter impersonation fraud is rare and that such laws would likely make it more difficult for eligible citizens, particularly minorities and students, to vote.

If Hoosier Democrats make Indiana's secretary of state race a priority, Lawson's participation in the commission is likely to become an issue. So far, Lawson is trying to maintain a public posture of evenhandedness. But if she ends up supporting the anti-voting rights agenda

of Trump, Kobach and the other right-wingers on the commission, it could cost her.

Lawson's loyalty to Republican leaders like former governors Mitch Daniels and Mike Pence is responsible for her rise in politics. And, Indiana Republicans benefited in 2016 by the end-of-the-campaign wave that resulted in the surprising election of Donald Trump, who won the state by 19%. But now Trump's approval/disapproval ratings in Indiana are underwater – 47%/48% – according to a Gallup poll released this week. The mid-term elections seem headed for a big Democratic year. Continuing her unswerving loyalty to party by allowing herself to be tied to President Trump's more controversial positions in 2018 could very well be a losing strategy for Lawson. ❖

Sautter is a Democratic media consultant based in Washington.

How much are clergy paid?

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Here we are a few months after your daughter's college graduation and she announces she wants to go into the clergy. Were you prepared for that? Did she prepare for that?

No doubt you and she are aware of what kind of income is available for those who have this calling. Nationwide, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found half the persons in the clergy made less than \$45,740, meaning the other half made more than that. This was the annual median wage for clergy in May 2016 when the survey was conducted.



That's not bad. It ranks right in the middle of 820 occupations covered by the survey, and just \$180 (or a mere 0.004 percent) below the annual median wage for 140.4 million American workers. There are 49,320 clergy in the survey and they are scattered all across the nation, in numerous religions and denominations. Each may have a distinctive arrangement regarding housing, pensions and other benefits making comparisons difficult.

Nonetheless, your daughter surely knew the 820 Hoosier clergy members would be earning less than their national counterparts. The median for Indiana clergy was \$43,520 or 4.8% less than the national figure.

That ranks 35th in the country, so she could improve her income by moving to Illinois, Idaho, Florida or Tennessee. Our Hoosier compensation for clergy ranks just above Mississippi and Louisiana, but there you get the bonus of crayfish, if that's to your taste. Naturally, the highest compensation is found in the District of Columbia where the clergy are desperately needed to tend to the spiritual concerns of politicians, favor seekers and lobbyists. There seems to be a 47% premium for tending to a flock in D.C.

Now I understand your girl has a mind of her own and must follow her own path. But did she consider serving society as a probation officer? The pay in Indiana is a little better by \$930 per year and the need is perhaps greater. She could have been an elementary school teacher and earned \$47,800 compared to \$43,520 in the clergy. Think of the value of shaping the minds and behavior of those sweet little children. As a secondary school teacher she, in time, would enjoy the median of \$50,360 in Indiana. Then she would discover how sweet little children's minds and behaviors manifest themselves as teenagers.

These, naturally are not starting salaries, but the median for all, regardless of length of service, hours of work, and other conditions of the jobs. Special education and career/vocational teachers do see somewhat higher rewards.

What's that? Oh, yes. Your daughter, in joining the clergy, has additional considerations beyond monetary compensation. But the same is true of teachers and many occupations. Firefighters and police officers, social workers and substance abuse counselors all understand their contributions to society. It is society that does not recognize nor honor those contributions adequately. ❖

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

Renewed hope for a Gary hospital

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE – Scott L. King was mayor of Gary when the University Park East project surfaced more than two decades ago. It was going to be a collaborative



effort between the city, the school city, Indiana University Northwest, the IU School of Medicine, Methodist Hospitals, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Northwest Indiana and Ivy Tech Community College.

It would have included single-family housing, expanded elementary education, after-school facilities and green space from IUN to the east.

At the time, it would have been the most far-

reaching development in the city in decades. And, it was intended to slow the rising crime rate in the Glen Park section of the city. The plans also included construction of a teaching hospital adjacent to the IUN campus. After all, there already was an IU medical school program affiliated with the IUN campus.

It was a grand plan that would have pumped life into the Steel City. The only problem was money. None of the planned participants had enough to move forward. And then King left office and hung out his attorney shingle.

Thanks in large part to the efforts of state Rep. Charlie Brown, D-Gary, Methodist Hospital Northlake Campus has been designated a Level III trauma center. It's something Brown had worked on since 1984. And now, there is renewed hope for the University Park plan – at

least in part.

Methodist Hospitals President and CEO Ray Grady has announced the potential merger with Franciscan Alliance, which could be a financial boon for the city of Gary. Franciscan is contemplating the construction of a \$300 million hospital off Interstate 80/94 near Indiana University Northwest. Grady said it would provide a substantial financial lift for the area once designated to be University Park East.

Negotiations are expected to continue between Franciscan and Methodist through the end of the year. Grady said that all the services that exist at the Gary hospital today would be included in the new facility. The proposal also could result in the new hospital being a teaching hospital.

The proposal would require modifications to a 1970s U.S. Office of Civil Rights consent decree that ensures equal services at the Gary and Merrillville Methodist Hospital campuses. ❖

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.

Photography With Punch
 Mark Curry On Indiana Politics
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The loss of faith in democratic institutions

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – There’s no shortage of threats to our democracy. Russian meddling in elections, the vulnerability of state voting systems to hacking, politicians’ assaults on the media, and political leaders’ growing fondness for policy-making in secret – all of these pose a real challenge to our system’s viability.

As worrisome as these are, there’s one problem that may be the greatest threat of all: Americans’ loss of faith in politics and democratic institutions. This has been building for decades, dating back to the Vietnam War and Watergate, and the long-term economic challenges – recession, inflation, widening inequality, the shifting nature of work, a series of financial crises – that grew out of that era. It’s rooted in our system’s apparent inability to overcome deep divisions in the country: Urban and rural, liberal and conservative, the mass of ordinary Americans and the elite, divides over race and ethnicity and gender politics and... well, you know the list as well as I do.



The truth is, in the face of this teeming, complicated, diverse society, our political institutions have performed inadequately. But if we’re not just to throw in the towel and declare representative democracy a noble failure, then we have to restore Americans’ faith in the processes of government. To do this, we have to pursue a range of reforms and goals, some of which will require years of concerted effort to achieve.

■ Broad-based economic growth, for instance, will be crucial. It may seem odd to start with this when we face so many political and structural problems, but when the bulk of people – not just the already-fortunate or the best-educated – sense that they have a chance to improve their lot and that of their children, that the economy offers opportunity to all, this lubricates a society. Economic growth that spreads its benefits to the broad mass of people solves a lot of problems and restores confidence in government.

■ Winner-take-all in politics is as damaging to society as its economic counterpart, yet over the last generation we’ve lost the ability to use the techniques of democracy: Civility, negotiation, compromise, transparency, respect for minority views and accountability. These are not just values, they’re tools that bring representative democracy to life. They ensure that diverse voices are included in policy-making, give legislation broad legitimacy, and help citizens understand and feel a stake in gover-

nance.

■ Restoring these values, though, will also require changing the political habits that define this era. The polarization and scorched-earth legislating that have come to reflect divisions in our society are deep-seated and destructive, and will need determined leadership at the highest levels to undo. This should be met at a variety of levels, including meaningful civic education that helps citizens understand their crucial responsibilities and that lays bare the system’s limitations and sets realistic expectations.

■ Finally, we should undertake a set of structural reforms to restore Americans’ faith that government is constructed fairly and is focused on the general welfare. Gerrymandering, which gives one party legislative and congressional seats out of all proportion to its actual popularity, must end. The machinery of our elections – outdated, fragile, lacking a paper trail, vulnerable to cyberattacks – needs investment. The outsized influence of money in politics continues to feed cynicism and public disengagement.

What I find perhaps most distressing is that many of these are deep-seated, longstanding problems that are evident to many Americans, yet we don’t see them being addressed. A voice or two might be raised from time to time in Washington, but no one maintains the effort.

Yes, the times make it tough. We have a struggling president, a Congress fractured by infighting, and political parties incapable of forging consensus among their diverse members. The to-do list I’ve laid out is long and daunting.

Sure, restoring faith in our system will take a sustained effort on the part both of our political leaders and our citizens, but I’m not saying it all needs to be tackled at once. What I am saying is that until Americans see that our political leaders recognize the erosion of faith in our political institutions that is undermining our system and are taking meaningful steps to address it, our distress will only grow. ❖

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Jon Webb, Evansville Courier & Press: At political events these days, you can categorize some people by their t-shirts. The hundreds who swarmed through the doors of the Southern Indiana Career and Technical Center for Larry Bucshon's much-anticipated town hall on Friday night didn't disappoint. Here are a few I saw: RESIST (progressive); "Ban idiots, not guns" (Second Amendment supporter); "Icky Trump" (anti-Trump; well, maybe. Icky Thump is the worst White Stripes album but it's not bad because it is, after all, a White Stripes album. So maybe it's an homage. Or maybe ...) There were a lot more. Progressives from groups such as Indivisible, the Women's March Continues and others packed the seats. But it was a diverse crowd, split along party lines. The night got louder and louder as the town hall wore on, but when Bucshon walked out, he was greeted with cheers and a partial standing ovation: like the president delivering the state of the union. Among his supporters was a large group of conservative Jim Tomes voters who showed up dressed alike. Weirdly, they all wore astonishingly accurate World War I uniforms. (Kidding! They all had on red campaign t-shirts.) At one point, Bucshon promised that the American Health Care Act, of which he was a prominent supporter, wouldn't take away coverage for anyone on Indiana's HIP 2.0 Plan, which is funded through the Medicaid expansion sparked by Obamacare. Several studies dispute that, including one from the Center for American Progress that says 8,800 Medicaid expansion recipients in the 8th District alone would lose coverage under the law.



Mike Allen, Axios: White House and Pentagon officials are providing virtually no details about President Trump's decision to ban transgender troops from the military for a simple enough reason: There aren't any. In the history of presidential decisions, this may have one of the biggest gaps ever between the amount of consequence, symbolism and resonance, and the quantity of internal deliberation or consideration: Trump jumped the gun with his tweets yesterday morning, surprising the Pentagon and leaving thousands of troops in limbo because there has been no guidance on whether the decision is retroactive. The tweets: "After consultation with my Generals and military experts, please be advised that the United States Government will not accept or allow ... Transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military. Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming ... victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail. Thank you." That was it: No press release, no white paper, no FAQ. The rule-making and guidance process is just beginning. And this is a policy that administration officials feel is virtually certain to be challenged in court on constitutional grounds. Something this big just isn't done this way. It's a victory for Chief Strategist Steve

Bannon, no doubt. But there wasn't a huge fight, or clear factions like on the Paris climate decision. Vice President Pence had little to no involvement. It wasn't on the radar of most of the West Wing's New York crowd. Defense Secretary James Mattis wanted to be deliberative for internal reasons, but his process was short-circuited by the tweets. ❖

Jonathan Last, Weekly Standard: As I write this, Jeff Sessions still has a job as America's attorney general, though for all I know, he could be gone by the time you read this. You can't label Sessions as some kind of globalist, malcontent, swampy NeverTrumper. He's an anti-establishment immigration hard-liner who seems to have signed on with Trump's presidential bid because he believed that Donald Trump was the one candidate who would build The Wall to protect America's southern border and put a stop to illegal immigration. Now Sessions' career is in tatters and, as Ann Coulter points out every day, the total number of Wall Miles built since Trump's inauguration stands at a nice, round zero. Which is where it's going to stay. Because The Wall was just another grift, like Trump University. (I've been saying for 18 months that the problem with Trump wasn't that he wanted to build The Wall—the problem was that it was an obvious scam and there was almost no chance he'd do it.) So with Sessions hanging on to his job by his fingernails, can we lay down some markers on whether or not it would be bad for Trump to fire Bob Mueller? Last week my Twitter buddy Allahpundit asked what the polling split would be on the subject of Trump getting rid of Sessions and/or Mueller. My guess was that, if you had polled this question three weeks ago, Republicans would have broken somewhere around 80-20 against. But now that Trump is publicly flirting with the idea, I'd guess that it's closer to 50-50. And if Trump were to pull the trigger tomorrow, I'd bet that by Monday it would be 70-30 in favor of the proposition. This is what I mean when I say that Trumpism corrupts.

Ross Douthat, New York Times: Donald Trump's campaign against his attorney general, Jeff Sessions, in which he is seemingly attempting to insult and humiliate and tweet-shame Sessions into resignation, is an insanely stupid exercise. It is a multitiered tower of political idiocy, a sublime monument to the moronic, a gaudy, gleaming, Ozymandian folly that leaves many of the president's prior efforts in its shade. So it's basically madness all the way to the top: bad policy, bad strategy, bad politics, bad legal maneuvering, bad optics, a self-defeating venture carried out via deranged-as-usual tweets and public insults. You can be as loyal as Jeff Sessions and still suffer the consequences of that plain and inescapable truth: This president should not be the president, and the sooner he is not, the better. ❖

Skinny repeal gets traction

INDIANAPOLIS — The Senate rejected a proposal Wednesday that would have repealed major parts of the Affordable Care Act, but Republican leaders were growing more confident about their chances of passing a more modest overhaul of the health-care law later this week (Washington Post). Republicans appeared to be coalescing around a "skinny repeal" that would abolish the individual and employer insurance mandates and perhaps just one tax in an attempt to sustain their seven-year quest to unwind President Barack Obama's health-care law. But even if they succeed — and start negotiations with the House — they will face significant obstacles in accomplishing anything more substantial. Top Republicans such as Sen. John Thune (S.D.) said that although leaders have not yet found "the sweet spot" between conservatives and centrists, they had picked up support for a more modest plan because it did not include deep cuts to Medicaid. Some Republican senators were simply open to any legislation that could keep alive the roller-coaster push for an overhaul. "We're edging closer and closer" to getting 50 votes for a bare-bones plan, Thune said.

Donnelly Medicaid amendment fails

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate on Wednesday afternoon defeated an amendment by Sen. Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., that would have prevented Republican health care legislation from cutting Medicaid funds (Francisco, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). All 52 Republican senators voted against Donnelly's proposal, and all 48 Democrats supported it. Donnelly's amendment would have sent the health care bill to the Senate Finance



Committee for consideration while striking provisions of the legislation that would reduce or eliminate benefits for people eligible for Medicaid, prevent states from expanding Medicaid or shift federal costs to states to pay for that care. Donnelly said in a floor speech that the Republicans' legislation "undermines coverage for millions, and we haven't even had a hearing on their proposal. Committees haven't been able to go through regular order to examine the merits of Medicaid and the Medicaid expansion and how gutting them would harm millions of people."

Pence repeats Trump on Sessions

WASHINGTON — Vice President Mike Pence on Wednesday said he stood behind President Donald Trump's "candid" remarks on Attorney General Jeff Sessions, while stressing that he and the president appreciate his good work at the Justice Department. "One of the great things about this president is you always know where you stand..." Pence told Fox News during an interview airing Wednesday night. "He speaks candidly, he speaks openly, he's expressed his disappointment [in Sessions]. But that doesn't mean that we don't recognize the good work the Justice Department has been doing under the attorney general's leadership." When asked about Sessions' future, Pence echoed remarks by Trump, who said Tuesday that "time will tell" what will happen with the attorney general. "We will see what happens in the future, but at least the American people know and every member of the cabinet can know that you will always know where you stand with President Trump," Pence said.

Carson blasts Trump for ban

WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. Andre Carson is calling the President's

tweets on banning transgender people from the military "unacceptable" (Darling, WIBC). "We have over 15,000 transgendered troops currently serving in our military," Carson said of the tweets. "The President's move, which could possibly lead to their discharge, puts politics ahead of national security." "We've had transgender brothers and sisters serving in our military for decades now," Carson continued. "This is nothing new and I think they should be allowed to serve."

Pentagon feared Trump war tweet

WASHINGTON — Some officials at the Pentagon where reportedly concerned Donald Trump was set to declare war on North Korea when he started tweeting about his plans for the military (Independent). There were nine long minutes between Mr Trump's first tweet - announcing he had been consulting with his generals - and the second, in which he said he had decided transgender people could not serve in the military. During that time, some people were apparently worried Mr Trump had Pyongyang in his sights, rather than the rights of LBQTQ servicemen and women. "At the Pentagon, the first of the three tweets raised fears that the president was getting ready to announce strikes on North Korea or some other military action," BuzzFeed reported. "Many said they were left in suspense for nine minutes, the time between the first and second tweet. Only after the second tweet did military officials receive the news the president was announcing a personnel change on Twitter."

Indy makes funds for Carrier workers

INDIANAPOLIS — Mayor Joe Hogsett said Wednesday the city will allocate over \$1 million to assist hundreds of workers who will lose their jobs as Carrier downsizes its Indianapolis manufacturing plant (IndyStar).