



Holcomb fulfilled, 'haunted' in 1st year

Opioid crisis gives new governor daily look at the good and bad in Indiana

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – By sheer force of his personality, Gov. Eric Holcomb has personified in his first year in office the upbeat optimism of a happy warrior. That was the expected impression last Thursday afternoon in front of the fireplace in his State-house office for his year-end interview with Howey Politics Indiana.

But within minutes, Holcomb revealed the complexities of leadership after he experienced a year of extreme emotion, mostly



Emotion grips Gov. Eric Holcomb as he announces new opioid services in Greenwood last summer after hearing from a former heroin addict. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

due to the crushing and far-flung opioid pandemic that is hitting good Hoosier families across the socio-economic spectrum. He used the word "haunting," in tandem with the adjective "fulfilling," but still in the context of his personality, an unexpected pull of the human spirit.

Holcomb entered office last January after a riotous year in 2016 that found him shifting from an uphill U.S. Senate primary race, to becoming Gov. Mike Pence's lieutenant governor, to mid-July when Pence resigned his nomination to join Donald Trump's presidential ticket. He

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Precursor to GOP disaster

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Republicans are staring at a mid-term electoral disaster in 2018, both here in Indiana and across America's amber waves of grain. After a hostile takeover by Donald Trump in 2016, this president has spent the year assaulting an array of institutions ranging from the Republican Party to Republican members of Congress and leadership, to U.S. intelligence agencies, American allies abroad, to the judiciary and the news media.

On Tuesday, the voters of crimson-red Alabama rebuked him and top political adviser Steve Bannon by sending Democrat Doug Jones to



"I think those claims are true. As you look at the president, I hope he will take a look at his conduct and act accordingly."

- U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, to WNDU-TV on sexual harassment allegations made against President Trump





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the U.S. Senate. It came in the most Republican state in the nation where Trump won with a 28% plurality in 2016, even more than the 19% plurality he rolled up in Indiana. Trump had backed the current appointed incumbent, Sen. Luther Strange, who lost a primary race to Roy Moore. As the Senate nominee, Moore faced an array of accusations ranging from pedophilia to sexual assault and harassment, yet earned the full endorsement of President Trump and the financial support of the Republican National Committee.

NBC News exit polling revealed Trump's approval/disapproval rating in Alabama stood at 48/48%. That compares to Trump's Indiana approval of 47/51% in a recent Public Opinion Strategies Poll for the Indiana Realtors in November.

The Indiana GOP establishment has not only acquiesced to Trumpism, perhaps out of loyalty to Vice President Mike Pence, it has refused to criticize his often boorish, untruthful and offensive rhetoric.

There will be a price to pay. It is a similar to a fateful scenario in 2012 when Hoosier Republicans jettisoned its leading vote-getter in history, U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar, for the firebrand Treasurer Richard Mourdock in the primary, only to watch that Senate seat end up in the hands of Democrat Joe Donnelly.

Trump's Gallup approval/disapproval stands at a disaster-making 35/60% on Dec. 8-10. How does that compare to other presidents at the first mid-terms? In 1994 when a Republican tidal wave forged congressional and General Assembly majorities, President Bill Clinton stood at 52/42% on Nov. 3-6, 1994. On Nov. 4-7, 2010, when Republicans took three Indiana congressional seats and regained control of the Indiana House, President Barack Obama's approve/disapprovals stood at 44/44%.

Essentially, there is no comparison. Running with Trump fum-

ing above them, Republicans up and down the ballot are faced with wearing a millstone. It could have been a Gibraltar had Roy Moore won, creating the Grand Old Pedophilia. While U.S. Sen. Todd Young and U.S. Rep. Luke Messer called on Moore to resign the nomination following the sexual allegations, U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita told Fox59 last weekend that he was "comfortable" with the prospect of serving with Moore in the Senate. That could come back to haunt him.

Indiana Democratic Chairman John Zody told HPI on Tuesday of Roy



Moore, "The president of the United States has campaigned for him, people have come in from Washington and campaigned for him. The RNC has invested in him. It's not just about Alabama any more. The Republican Party reversed its position and decided to support him again. This is about a moral direction of one of the major political parties in the United States and it is not going in the right direction."

With Moore's loss, "It means the Democrats pick up a seat in the Senate, which is good," said Zody, who will be featured in next week's HPI Interview. "It shows the importance of voting for a stand-up guy over one who is morally questionable at best. I've been telling people it's a moral imperative Doug Jones gets elected in Alabama. It will give us a boost if a Democrat won in a pretty red state."

"It is really clear what happened in Alabama and it should cause great worry to Republicans,"

said HPI columnist Mark Souder, a former congressman, in the wake of Tuesday night. "Mobile, Tuscaloosa and Huntsville are Republican areas that showed some swing potential in the past. They went Democrat. The rural areas – core Trump country – stayed with Moore overwhelmingly. This is another warning sign of internal wars ahead. A Republican must win both the higher-educated suburbs and the rural areas to win in most areas that have potential of swinging. The fight ahead looks much tougher for Republicans, but, honestly, had Judge Moore prevailed, he might have been a millstone that took everyone down with him. Democrats were just deprived of a huge potential asset."

Perhaps, but NBC News compiled a list of special congressional and gubernatorial elections since Trump took office, and Democrats are over-performing across the board, even if they aren't winning all the races:

- **Kansas-4** in 2016: Mike Pompeo 61%, Daniel Giroux 30% (R+31); KS-4 in 2016 (presidential results): Trump 60%, Clinton 33% (R+27); KS-4 in 2017: Ron Estes 53%, James Thompson 46% (R+7).

- **Georgia-6** in 2016: Tom Price 62%, Rodney Stooksbury 38% (R+24); GA-6 in 2016 (presidential results): Trump 48%, Clinton 47% (R+1); GA-6 in 2017 (initial round): Jon Ossoff 48%, Karen Handel 20%, Bob Gray 11%, Dan Moody 9%, Judson Hill 9%.; GA-6 in 2017 (runoff): Handel 52%, Ossoff 48% (R+4).

- **Montana-AL** in 2016: Ryan Zinke 56%, Denise Juneau 40% (R+16); MT in 2016 (presidential results): Trump 57%, Clinton 36% (R+21); MT-AL in 2017: Greg Gianforte 50%, Rob Quist 44% (R+6).

- **South Carolina-5** in 2016: Mick Mulvaney 59%, Fran Person 39% (R+20); SC-5 in 2016 (presidential results): Trump 57%, Clinton 39% (R+18); SC-5 in 2017: Ralph Norman 51%, Archie Parnell 48% (R+3).

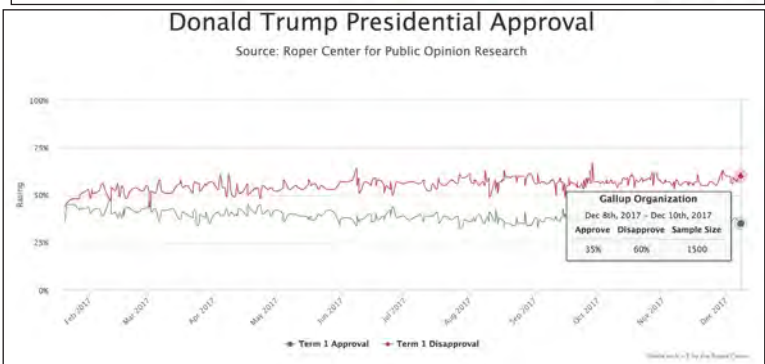
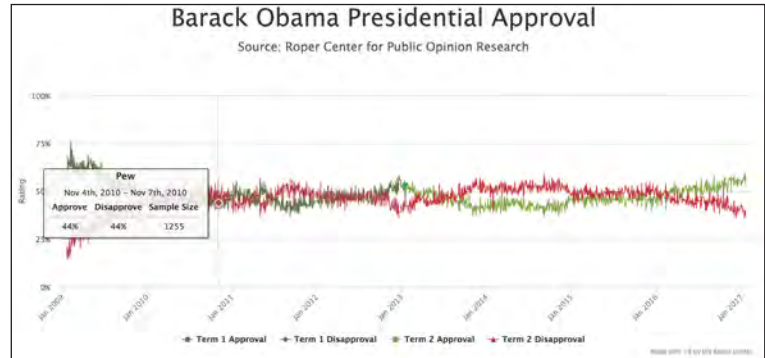
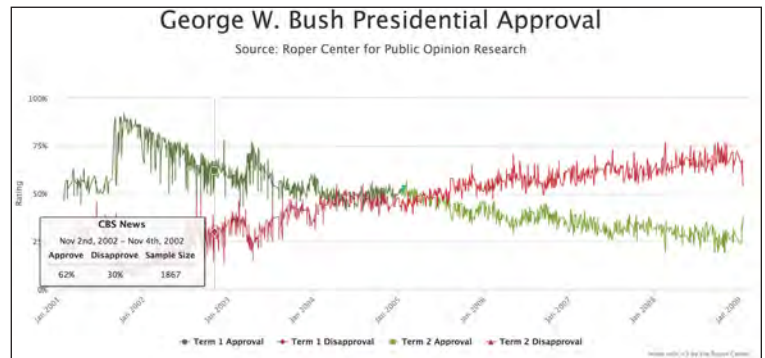
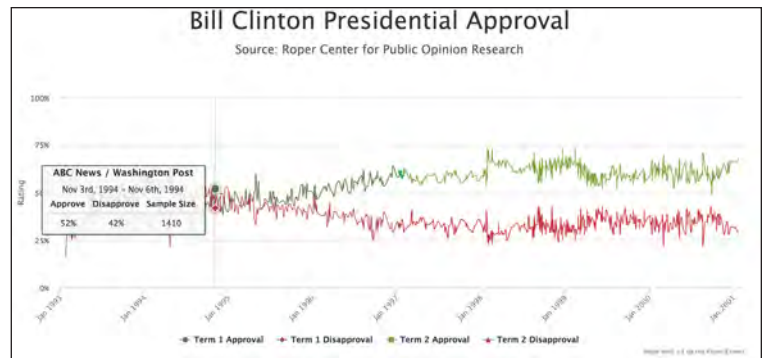
- **New Jersey GOV** in 2013: Chris Christie 60%, Barbara Buono 38% (R+22); NJ in 2016 (presidential results): Clinton 55%, Trump 41% (D+14); NJ GOV in 2017: Phil Murphy 56%, Kim Guadagno 42% (D+14).

- **Virginia GOV** in 2013: Terry McAuliffe 48%, Ken Cuccinelli 45% (D+3); VA in 2016 (presidential results): Clinton 50%, Trump 44% (D+6); VA GOV in 2017: Ralph Northam 54%, Ed Gillespie 45% (D+9).

- **Alabama SEN** in 2016: Shelby 64%, Crumpton 36% (R+28); AL in 2016 (presidential results): Trump 62%, Clinton 34% (R+28); AL SEN in 2017: Doug Jones 50%, Roy Moore 48% (D+2).

First mid-terms in Indiana

For a Hoosier context, we explored mid-term elections since 1990. In the case of both Bush presidencies, those two presidents were popular, but that did not translate into down-ballot strength for Republicans. The two Democrats, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, while not nearly as radioactive as President Trump is today, presided over wrenching cycles for their parties.



- **1990:** In President George H.W. Bush's first mid-term with a 58/32% approve/disapprove on Nov. 1-4, incumbent Democrat Secretary of State Joe Hogsett defeated Indianapolis Mayor Bill Hudnut, who was hoping to use the Statehouse constitutional office as a staging for a 1992 Republican gubernatorial run. U.S. Sen. Dan Coats defeated Baron Hill in the Senate special election, while Democrats retook the 50/50 Indiana House.

- **1994:** In President Bill Clinton's first mid-term with a 52/42% approve/disapprove on Nov. 3-6, reaction to his aborted HillaryCare health plan and gun reforms,

a Republican tidal wave helped Indiana Republicans pick up three congressional seats (Mark Souder defeating Rep. Jill Long, David McIntosh defeating Joe Hogsett in the open seat of retiring Rep. Phil Sharp, and John Hostettler upsetting Rep. Frank McCloskey). Indiana Republicans also picked up the Indiana House.

■ **2002:** President George W. Bush's popularity increased from 63 to 70% as he began the ramp-up to the Iraq War. In polling Oct. 31-Nov. 2, his approval stood at 62/30%. He was so popular that summer that OMB Director Mitch Daniels told HPI in July he was concerned that Bush43's popularity had crested too soon. Bush43 visited 30 states, raised \$140 million and helped Republican Chris Chocola defeat Jill Long in the 2nd CD seat open by 4% due to the retirement of U.S. Rep. Tim Roemer. Indiana Democrats retook the 50/50 split Indiana House with a 51-49 seat margin after Democrat Reps. David Orentlicher and Winfield Moses Jr., won recounted races. In Bush's second mid-term 2006 with the Iraq War descending into a lethal insurgency, Indiana Democrats picked up three congressional seats: Joe Donnelly over Chris Chocola in the 2nd, and Brad Ellsworth defeating U.S. Rep. John Hostet-

ler in the 8th CD, and Baron Hill retook the 9th after one Mike Sodrel term in the 9th. Democrats also reclaimed the Indiana House as voters reacted to Gov. Mitch Daniels' push for Daylight Saving Time and the Major Moves leasing of the Indiana Toll Road.

■ **2010:** In President Barack Obama's first mid-term with his Nov. 4-7 approval/disapproval standing at 44/44% coming after passage of the Affordable Care Act, Democrats lost Sen. Evan Bayh's seat after he abruptly announced his retirement in February, with Dan Coats defeating Brad Ellsworth in the "Bayh dominoes" election. The 9th CD shifted Republican as Todd Young defeated U.S. Rep. Baron Hill. Indiana House Democrats suffered a stunning rebuke as Republicans seized control of the lower chamber – and the 2011 redistricting process – by taking a 52-48 Democratic House majority to a 60-seat Republican majority.

The Trump brand is toxic, even here in Mike Pence's Indiana. The stage is set for a wave election, though in the age of Trump we've seen waves go in reverse. But after Tuesday in Alabama, the crimson tide appears to be deeply receding. ❖

Gov. Holcomb, from page 1

nominated Pence at the Republican National Convention, then waged the unprecedented 22-vote nomination fight in, of all places, Cleveland, won the nomination on a second ballot, and then forged the 106-day campaign where he surfed the Trump/Pence wave to become Indiana's 50th governor. He and campaign manager Mike O'Brien compared the odyssey to building an airplane in mid-flight.

By the time Holcomb began his transition, the reality was that the story of our time, the drug pandemic, would define perhaps not only the first year in office, but perhaps his entire term and maybe a second if he is reelected in 2020. A recent Public Opinion Strategies Poll on behalf of Indiana Realtors puts his approval at 61% with 20% disapproving, with the Indiana right/wrong track numbers at 59-34%, inverse from the national track of 36-57%. He used extraordinary political capital to forge a historic road and infrastructure plan that will invest almost as twice as many dollars as the 2006 Major Moves plan, one of the most compelling accomplishments of his former boss, Gov. Mitch Daniels.



While he has grappled with identifying data sets to forge a cogent response to the drug crisis, Holcomb has presided over a state with a historically low jobless rate, a record year for investment and employment growth, all while Indiana had 90,000 unfilled jobs. Holcomb spent a good part of his year attempting to match private sector employment needs to education curriculum, while realizing that the state will need to fill 1 million jobs in the coming generation, with an artificial intelligence bloom growing over the horizon. At year's end, he believes Indiana is in the running for the \$5 billion, 50,000-job Amazon HQ2.

Here is our year-end HPI Interview with Gov. Holcomb:

HPI: How are you doing?

Holcomb: If I was doing any better it would be a sin.

HPI: An amazing first year ...

Holcomb: Flown by. Which you always know is the case, but it's been such a fulfilling experience and I underestimated the profoundly personal interactions. It's been very gratifying and haunting at times.

HPI: How so? How is it haunting?

Holcomb: Because you see the darker side of lives. You wonder about humanity and what some do. At

the very same time, you see people rush to help. You see extreme good and bad, all in a day. Both are fueling this team chemistry, with our people all moving in the same direction on five fronts, our pillars. It's also not my first time in the building. When you get the tempo, when people are all rowing in the same direction and it's synchronized, you can make adjustments along the way. People feed off of one another's strengths. This drug epidemic reveals the darker side, but to have people like Dr. Walthall of FSSA, Health Commissioner Dr. (Kristina) Box, (drug czar) Jim McClelland and (IPS Supt.) Doug Carter working together in response to it is making a big difference. Yet we have a long way to go. A long way.

HPI: I personally know of four or five families who have had sons and daughters grapple with heroin addiction, just in my circles. When we talked in July, there was the guy up in Delphi who related his experience with heroin. Did you ever find out who he was and whether he's survived?

Holcomb: No, I haven't. And I ask all the time.

HPI: I would love to know if he survived.

Holcomb: If I find out I will let you know. I am hopeful.

HPI: We saw reports this past week that the state will not seek additional funding to combat the opioid crisis during next year's General Assembly short session. It was something I pressed you on when we were in Richmond. Two thoughts came to mind: A crisis doesn't work on a schedule and you get what you pay for. Talk to me about funding because when I was in Connorsville and Richmond, the people from Fayette County were saying they need funding. Rep. Cindy Ziemke was saying they need more money.

Holcomb: That narrative is a little misleading in the sense that funding comes from different places. We're still expecting another \$10 million from the CURES Act. We're still seeking in the HIP waiver, the 1115, another \$60-\$65 million that we'll know about by the end of January. We're seeking that right now. We're spending, I'm going to guesstimate, another \$100 million statewide on this epidemic through various agencies. We have Indiana University stepping up and saying, "Here's another \$50 million." So \$65 million, \$10 million, \$50 million, you add it into this effort. It's not a budget year, so we're not saying we're going to appropriate another \$50 million, but this is real money that is going to be added into this effort. This money will be going directly to treatment, where we need the help right now. That's why my whole team and I are working every single day. When you say, "No new state funding," that's correct, but money is going to be spent and we're seeking tens of millions more in 2018.

HPI: We've seen several counties, Lawrence, Johnson, Madison and now Tippecanoe this past week

grappling and debating needle exchanges. I think we all appreciate the dilemma facing county commissioners and council members, who can be torn. I know Mike (Pence) faced that when he was governor. Any messages for these counties?

Holcomb: I still believe as I did in January that the locals ought to be nimble enough to make that call and have the authority to do so, and not to struggle with having that internal debate and then seeking approval from the state. I want that to be centered right there on the ground, in the trenches, where it matters. If something goes askew or awry, the state can come in after the fact and say, "You've got to get this sorted out." All the money in the world is not going to solve this. Delusional. This is behavioral. All the partnerships in this get tied down at the most local level. I talk to other governors and we're all struggling. Larry Hogan in Maryland says, "We've increased spending 10-fold and it didn't move the



needle a bit." So it's what you are spending your time, money and resources on. I've looked to Maryland and Massachusetts to see if we need a seven-day (opioid) buy period. Kentucky went to three days. The problem is it's right now. Last year there were 230 million prescriptions, enough for every adult in America for 30 days! And we've been told, "No pain, no gain"; there should be zero pain. We've had all these painkillers over-prescribed. Now what we're seeing around the country is people not just going to doctors and dentists, we're seeing animal cruelty spike in some areas because they're going to veterinarians. Some of those painkillers are 10,000 times more potent. So what we have to do in America – and Indiana can be a leader on this front – is recognize this funnel that's putting a lot more than you really need into the system and dial that back. Check INSpect, limit the supply, seven days right now; get better data so we know what the true causes are of overdose deaths, so we can direct those precious resources we have to protect those precious lives. It evolves, it moves, it's heroin, fentanyl, meth, every day it's moving. And then we also have to invest through partnerships in educating a lot earlier in life. There should be an elementary school program, a middle school program and before students leave high

school. Unfortunately, kids are learning about drugs at home, not at parties. They may be at a party, they may experiment, but they're learning about it at home with their mom and their grandparents shooting up.

HPI: That's crazy.

Holcomb: And they're not hearing anything anywhere else; we've got to start much earlier in educating. I'm really proud of sheriffs around the state, again localized, going into schools with programming, saying, "We've got to get the message out because we can't wait till they get here to reform them." We've got to educate prevention. We're in the beginning of this, only seeing the tip of the iceberg, but there is recognition that we have a problem.

HPI: In a legislative context, we had Sen. Head and Rep. Smaltz forge SEA308 to deal with the meth production supply. Now I understand that some of the decline is because addicts are moving to heroin. That's an example of the General Assembly coming up with a solution. What's your message to legislators heading into this session about that kind of innovative approach?

Holcomb: The general message is, no matter how daunting the task may be, we have to hit this with



not an equal force, but with a greater force than it's hitting us. That doesn't mean just dollars. It means the networking has to occur with our hospitals, our jails, our schools unfortunately, and our local government and our state government. I just talked about our HIP waiver ... with our federal government enforcement. When you trace where these drugs are coming from – and we just made two big busts with Colorado license plates, one in Putnam County and the other in Dearborn County – it's also coming from overseas. We're real proud ... of being the crossroads of America ...

HPI: But it's a double-edged sword.

Holcomb: It's a double-edged sword. Well put. So we've got to crack down on that, too. It's not rhetorical. We're coming at you with everything we've got. Enforcement, that's when it's too late. When the F-18 is right above you, if you're hearing it, it's too late.

HPI: The Children's Health Insurance Program has not been reauthorized and some states are running out of money. The Washington Post says Indiana will run out of funds next March, right?

Holcomb: Yes.

HPI: What's your message to Congress?

Holcomb: Get it done.

HPI: What's at stake?

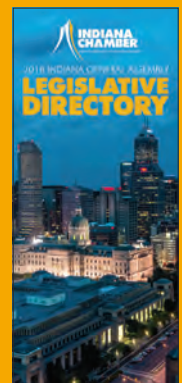


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Holcomb: Not just Hoosier lives now, but their futures. This is not something to mess around with. This is get it done and take the drama out of it.

HPI: And not doing it? That's not an option, right?

Holcomb: Yes.

HPI: The Alcohol Revision Commission made some recommendations.

Holcomb: I'm aware.

HPI: Where are you on cold beer and Sunday sales?

Holcomb: I've been very disciplined, very focused on my five pillars. While it's not part of my agenda, I have indicated I want to be part of that conversation. I want to continue to look forward; as pleased as I am about the forward progress we've made in 2017, we've got work in 2018, anything we can do to modernize our alcohol laws in Indiana. I'm anxious to see what they send me and want to be part of the discussion, understanding that these are controlled substances. This administration has a role to make sure we do that; that's why we're going to be part of the conversation. I have said I have a pen, anxious to use it to modernize our alcohol laws. I'll see what they bring me. The other thing is, I'm thankful for the data-driven process, like our state roads and bridges program that contemplated and funded record investment into local roads. We can disagree on where the ultimate destination may be, but the goal is to continue to make forward progress. That's why I believe Hoosiers believe Indiana is moving in the right direction. We're actually delivering. That's why I say, "Get it done." We've been getting it done. Baby steps to some people may be giant steps. I talk to people around the world and they say, "You're going to put \$7.5 billion in roads and bridges in five years? How?" When in the very same breath they're talking about cutting education funding because they're too tethered to oil and gas. In terms of our alcohol laws, I would like to see forward progress. I think we will.



HPI: One of the things I've been pointing out is that we're trying to land Amazon HQ2. These guys have revolutionized the way we sell and buy stuff. And yet last Saturday I pulled into a convenience store near Muncie to get a six-pack of Bud, it was warm and I had to buy a bag of ice. I had a lot of yard work to perform. That's the common sense thing I hear from a lot of Hoosiers. They think that's just stupid.

Holcomb: To me that's refreshing.

HPI: Hoosiers think that's stupid, unless you're Scott Schneider (and own an ice company).

Holcomb: I was thinking the same thing. It's refreshing that the voices of Hoosiers are being heard.

HPI: Are we in the running for Amazon?

Holcomb: We better be. It's a no-brainer for me. We are short-term and long-term a very attractive place, when you think about the world class colleges and universities, the pipeline we offer for the next 20, 30 or 40 years. This is a long-term investment. This is not a one-term deal. This is evolution and growth. Amazon has revolutionized and they're just getting started. Think about what they're going to be doing in 15 years.

HPI: On Yellowwood State Forest, are you looking into that logging project?

Holcomb: I have.

HPI: Any news to break on that front?

Holcomb: No. I would encourage folks to go there. When we're talking about three to five to seven trees per acre, you're not going to notice a lot of difference, this is not a clear cut. This is a shallow thin cut, targeting very specific diseased trees and making sure the canopy is not suffocating habitat. We're seeing both national and international recognition for the health of our forests. That's the No. 1 thing I'm concerned about the health of our forests and habitat. They are beautiful for a reason, because we've been managing them correctly. I tend to look to not just general scientists, but forestry scientists, from Purdue. I want to make sure we absolutely save Yellowwood. I share that goal. I want to make

sure it is a healthy forest and habitat. That's what we will do. We will not sacrifice that moving forward.

HPI: How many counties have you completed a basketball shot in?

Holcomb: I need to tally that up.

HPI: Have you hit one at TigArena in Peru?

Holcomb: I have not. I need to do the Berry Bowl, but that's 2018. That's a New Year's resolution, Tig-Arena. Peru.

HPI: Anything you want to add that I haven't asked? I know you're passionate about education and workforce.

Holcomb: That's people, people, people. The sky's the limit. We're about to prove that Indiana is going to be pioneering well into the future, not just the past. This is the most exciting and empowering time to be alive and empowering a state. It really is. What I've starting to see right now is ... on the drug epidemic, I'm seeing YMCAs, the pharmacy school at Purdue, Indiana University where I just called all the deans in public health and that resulted in \$50 million. I'm seeing people saying, "What can we do to be helpful on that front?" It's not Republican or Democrat, it's not a Chamber or IMA, good people all are coming to these five pillars, saying, 'We want to be a part of this.' It's a pretty encouraging time to be leading this state. ❖

Tax reform vote was easy for Sen. Donnelly

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – That wasn't a tough vote. It was easy for Sen. Joe Donnelly to vote against the tax package hastily offered in decorative Christmas wrappings by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.



Polls show that a substantial majority of Americans regard the package, despite the decorative wrappings, to be more in the spirit of Scrooge than of Christmas. A Quinnipiac University poll finds that only 29% of Americans approve of the plan. By 61% to 34% they believe it favors the rich over the middle class.

Bipartisan analysts, looking at economic facts rather than political claims, find the package would add from \$1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion to the national debt, leaving an even

higher bill for future generations and likely to force painful cuts everywhere, including in Social Security and Medicare. Some tax deductions popular with the middle class would vanish. So would their tax cuts, set to expire instead of being made permanent like the corporate cuts.

Why would Donnelly vote for that? He wouldn't. He couldn't. He didn't.

Nor did any of the other Senate Democrats. Not one of the Democrats facing tough reelection contests in states carried by President Trump voted in favor of the tax plan taped together by McConnell and hailed by Trump.

Donnelly and the others in that category of endangered Democratic senators had been courted

by Trump with a White House dinner and flights on Air Force One. They also were warned by Trump of political demise if they didn't go along. In an Indiana appearance, Trump threatened that if Donnelly didn't vote for the Republican tax plan, "We will come here, we will campaign against him like you wouldn't believe."

Donnelly, a moderate Democrat who will reach across the aisle for a compromise, had told the president during the White House dinner about the type of compromise he would consider, a bipartisan reform with focus on creating jobs and helping the middle class, not big cuts

for the wealthiest individuals and corporations. He urged inclusion of penalties to discourage outsourcing of jobs to foreign countries.

Donnelly said he told the president: "If it's skewed toward the very wealthy, I don't think you are going to get any Democrats."

While Trump seemed receptive then to a bipartisan approach, McConnell was not. McConnell was determined to win Senate passage with just Republican votes. He did so, with only a lone Republican voting "no" because of the deficit. Other wavering Republicans were brought along with last-minute deals, some scribbled in the margins. President Trump, wanting most of all a bill to sign, a victory to claim before Christmas, praised McConnell, a rare occurrence.

The president said people will be "very, very happy" with the bill and that Democrats all opposed it "because they think it's too good." Wrong on both counts. Happy? Polls show unhappiness. Too good? Some Democrats, likely including Donnelly, would have voted for a bill they found good. They found it bad, in no way bipartisan and so flawed and unpopular that a vote for it would be politically harmful, not helpful.

Didn't have to be that way. Shouldn't have been that way. Back in 1986, the last time of a major tax restructuring, the final version signed into law by President Ronald Reagan passed with overwhelming support of both Republicans and Democrats in both House and Senate. It was popular. So was the president.

That law was crafted after many hearings and extensive debate over a year and a half. Reagan didn't demand a quick victory. There was time for compromises and

Wednesday, December 13

Race/Topic (Click to Sort)	Poll	Results	Spread
President Trump Job Approval	Monmouth	Approve 33, Disapprove 59	Disapprove +26
President Trump Job Approval	Gallup	Approve 36, Disapprove 59	Disapprove +23
President Trump Job Approval	Rasmussen Reports	Approve 41, Disapprove 57	Disapprove +16
President Trump Job Approval	Economist/YouGov	Approve 41, Disapprove 54	Disapprove +13
Congressional Job Approval	Economist/YouGov	Approve 12, Disapprove 69	Disapprove +57
Congressional Job Approval	Monmouth	Approve 15, Disapprove 69	Disapprove +54
2018 Generic Congressional Vote	Monmouth	Democrats 51, Republicans 36	Democrats +15
2018 Generic Congressional Vote	Quinnipiac	Democrats 49, Republicans 37	Democrats +12
2018 Generic Congressional Vote	Economist/YouGov	Democrats 44, Republicans 36	Democrats +8
Direction of Country	Economist/YouGov	Right Direction 35, Wrong Track 55	Wrong Track +20
Direction of Country	Monmouth	Right Direction 25, Wrong Track 66	Wrong Track +41
Direction of Country	USA Today/Suffolk	Right Direction 31, Wrong Track 58	Wrong Track +27

fixing potential flaws, time for both parties and the country to know what was in the bill and, ultimately, to embrace it.

The package this time was a last-minute deal, like purchasing a hideous Christmas tie as the store closed. Pretty wrappings didn't convince Donnelly or any of the other endangered Democrats to strangle themselves with a McConnell tie wrapped around their necks. ❖

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

Moore ‘comfort’ could impact Rokita

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - Last weekend, U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita raised eyebrows when he told Fox59’s INFocus, “I’d be comfortable with whoever the voters of Alabama send to the Senate, that’s whose decision this is, and I’d be comfortable with Roy Moore.”

When the reports of Moore’s alleged sexual harassment and pedophilia surfaced in October, Republican congressional leaders, Vice President Mike Pence and the Republican National Committee brandished 10-foot poles. But when

President Trump decided he’d accept an alleged pedophile in the Senate in exchange for that 52nd vote, many Republicans

migrated back, with Pence and Speaker Paul Ryan notable exceptions.

The rationale? A number of Republicans, evangelicals and Rokita cited abortion. “This is a man who’s 100 percent pro-life like myself, what we shouldn’t be doing is what Jeff Flake did, this stunt he pulled where he gave a check to the other guy, a pro-abortionist. So really it’s up to the voters in Alabama, that’s where the decision lies, and that’s where it should be.”

U.S. Sen. Todd Young and U.S. Rep. Luke Messer (running in the Senate primary against Rokita) are on record urging Moore to leave the race, while GOP Chairman Kyle Hupfer says it was up to the voters of Alabama.

The logic Rokita was using is that because Moore is pro-life, voters should overlook the allegations of pedophilia and sexual assault. That could have been an affront to the pro-life movement, but there wasn’t little reaction in those quarters. The contrast came from Alabama U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby, who said on the Sunday talk shows he felt Moore’s accusers “believable” while stating he voted against Moore once, adding, “I think Alabama deserves better.”

That Moore was defeated on Tuesday was seen as a rebuke to the Trump/Bannon wing of the party. Rokita and Mike Braun were seen as seeking the Bannon imprimatur prior to Tuesday. Wednesday brought a new reality, that Bannon had discredited himself, just adding another Todd Akin and Richard Mourdock to the dustbin of radical Senate nominees who couldn’t win a general election in a red state.

HPI columnist Mark Souder, a former congressman, observed, “I am not sure if this will have any rub-off impact on the Indiana Senate race. If it is a three-way

race, Rokita doesn’t need 50%. Messer will get most of the hardcore Lugar vote. It depends a lot on Braun, as well as new issues that arise and the effectiveness of commercials.”

So Rokita’s “Defeat the Elite” campaign will continue to concentrate on that 30 to 35% of the Trump base. But it will take six months to determine whether that’s a winning primary strategy.

U.S. Senate

Rokita defends Christmas

Rokita today moved his “Defeat the Elite” battle to the front lines of Christmas. In a new online ad, Rokita – who is among six Republicans vying to take on Democratic U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly in 2018 – calls out “liberal elites whose political correctness attacks everything we hold dear” against scenes of his wife, Kathy, and two sons, Teddy and Ryan, decorating a Christmas tree. The digital ad, released Tuesday afternoon, follows on President Donald Trump’s frequent pledge – and swipe at President Barack Obama – to return the phrase “Merry Christmas,” instead of a more generic “Happy Holidays,” to the White House. (That comes despite numerous ex-

amples of Obama saying, “Merry Christmas,” including in a video address from Christmas Eve 2016.)

Braun explains primary votes

U.S. Senate candidate Mike Braun, who calls himself a conservative Republican, voted as a Democrat for more than a decade in the primary elections, and says he had local reasons for doing so (Ingle, Dubois County Herald). “Locally, I thought it was important to weigh in where there are choices,” said Braun, 63, of Jasper. “In Dubois County legacy politics through 2008, the Republicans had no contested races.” Both of Braun’s chief rivals in the upcoming GOP Senate primary in May, Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita, have long been involved in Republican Party politics, with each taking public office in the early 2000s. Public documents The Herald obtained from the Dubois County Clerk’s Office indicate Braun voted Democratic ballots in primaries as far back as 1980. His only Republican primary ballot before 2012 was in 1982.

Horning enters the GOP race

The Libertarian Party candidate who finished third in Indiana’s 2012 U.S. Senate race is running again, this time as a Republican (Carden, NWI Times). Andrew Horning, of Freedom, Ind., announced Thursday that he’s entering the Republican Senate contest because he’s unable to find any substantive differences between the five other



contenders, and believes Hoosier GOP voters deserve a unique choice.

4th CD

Baird stumps in Lebanon

State Rep. Jim Baird stopped in Lebanon to attend an agriculture breakfast Tuesday Doerlein, Zionsville Times Sentinel). "We learned a little during my run for commissioner and we learned even more when I ran for the House," Baird said. "If you get out and really talk to the people, and you talk to different groups, you start to see the issues they care about."

A Democratic wave takes shape

President Trump is slowly but surely giving Democrats an increasing shot at winning the House and Senate in 2018. If this happened, the House would surely move to impeach him (Allen, Axios). The numbers — not just in Alabama, but for the totality of elections in 2017 — have top Republicans rattled: Dems outperforming in every off-year race: "There have been more than 70 special elections for state and federal legislative seats in 2017," according to FiveThirtyEight's Harry Enten. "The Democratic margin has been 12 percentage points better, on average, than the partisan lean in each race." Republicans have "lost five

Senate races since 2010 because of nominees who were far outside the political mainstream, including two before Mr. Moore who were defeated after making damaging comments about rape." (NYT)

Julian Zelizer, a history and public affairs professor at Princeton University: "This is the first real evidence that a political backlash might be brewing to Trump-ian Republican politics." (USA Today) Democrats, flat as could be after 2016, suddenly see the makings of a 2018 comeback:

"An energized African-American voter base could help Democrats in some Senate battlegrounds with large, urban black populations, such as Missouri, Indiana and Ohio." (WSJ)

Republican pollster Whit Ayres said results in Alabama and Virginia show "college-educated, suburban women" turning against Trump. (WSJ)

As the landscape looks bleaker, more GOP lawmakers will retire. Geoff Garin, a Democratic pollster who helped Democrat Ralph Northam win the Virginia governorship: "Democrats have a chance to occupy the center of the electorate in no small part because Republicans have vacated the center in such a dramatic way." (WP)

But Dems still face a tough path to either majority, as this AP math shows: "Democrats need to flip 24 seats for a House majority. National Democrats have a target list of about 90 seats, including the 23 Republican-held

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districts that Trump lost to Hillary Clinton. In the Senate, Democrats must defend 10 seats in states where Trump won. With Jones' upset of Moore, they need to net a two-seat gain, and see opportunities in Nevada, where Trump lost, and Arizona, which could be a toss-up."

General Assembly

House Dems unveil 57 candidates

Indiana House Democrats say they have candidates ready to compete in 57 of the 100 districts, with more on the way. Included on the list was Hammond Councilman Carolyn Jackson who will seek HD1, a seat that State Rep. Linda Lawson will retire from. Democratic Chairman John Zody told HPI on Tuesday that potential candidates are still contacting the party about 2018 runs and he expects to have more challengers.

In HD89, former legislator John Barnes will seek a rematch with State Rep. Cindy Kirchhofer. Veteran State Reps. B. Patrick Bauer and Sheila Klinker are also running again.

Here are the list of Democrats preparing to file by noon Feb. 9 deadline:

HD1: Carolyn Jackson; **HD2:** State Rep. Earl Harris, Jr; **HD3:** Jessica Renslow, Ragen Hatcher; **HD5:** Don Westerhausen; **HD6:** State Rep. B. Patrick Bauer; **HD7:** State Rep. Joe Taylor; **HD8:** State Rep. Ryan Dvorak; **HD10:** State Rep. Charles Moseley; **HD12:** State Rep. Mara Candelaria-Reardon; **HD14:** State Rep. Vernon Smith; **HD15:** Chris Chyung; **HD18:** Dee Moore; **HD19:** Lisa Beck, Mark Back; **HD24:** Naomi Bechtold; **HD27:** State Rep. Sheila Klinker; **HD28:** Harlan Vondersaar; **HD29:** Tracy Roberts; **HD34:** State Rep. Sue E. Errington; **HD35:** State Rep. Melanie Wright; **HD36:** State Rep. Terri Austin; **HD38:** Tom Hedde; **HD39:** Mark Hinton; **HD40:** MeChelle Callen; **HD43:** State Rep. Clyde Kersey; **HD45:** Jim Exline; **HD46:** Larry Barker, Thomasina Marsili; **HD50:** Jorge Fernandez; **HD53:** Nancy Webb-Tibbett; **HD58:** Cindy Reinert; **HD59:** Dale Nowland; **HD60:** Penny Githens; **HD61:** State Rep. Matt Pierce; **HD66:** Minority Leader Terry Goodin; **HD67:** Corey Wilson; **HD68:** Matt Gaustad; **HD72:** Sam Charbonneau, Chris Fitzgerald; **HD74:** Larry Kleeman; **HD75:** John Hurley; **HD76:** Steve Folz; **HD77:** State Rep. Ryan Hatfield; **HD80:** State Rep. Phil GiaQuinta; **HD81:** Kyle Miller; **HD82:** Devon Miller; **HD83:** Jamie Cline; **HD86:** State Rep. Ed DeLaney; **HD87:** State Rep. Carey Hamilton; **HD88:** Poonam Gill; **HD89:** John Barnes; **HD91:** Kevin Leineweber; **HD92:** State Rep. Karlee D. Macer; **HD94:** State Rep. Cherrish Pryor; **HD95:** State Rep. John Bartlett; **HD96:** State Rep. Gregory W. Porter; **HD97:** State Rep. Justin Moed; **HD98:** State Rep. Robin Shackelford; **HD99:** State Rep. Vanessa Summers; **HD100:** State Rep. Dan Forestal.

Thomas announces for SD41

A Jennings County native who has lived in Colum-



bus for the past 15 years plans to challenge an incumbent in the Indiana General Assembly (Columbus Republic). Ross Thomas, 48, has announced his intention to run as a Democrat for the Indiana State Senate in District 41 in the 2018 election. That seat is held by Sen. Greg Walker, R-Columbus. It will be Thomas' first attempt at seeking public office. District 41 includes portions of Johnson and Bartholomew counties. "Those we

have elected to serve us seem more concerned with pleasing lobbyists and helping their friends and donors than solving problems for the rest of us," Thomas said. "Fancy dinners, tickets to sporting events and other gifts are just a normal part of business as usual at the State Capitol," Thomas said. "They shouldn't be doing that, and we need to change our laws to end this activity."

HD61: A 'Goodin' year in Scott County?

Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer said the GOP will target new House Minority Leader Terry Goodin in 2018, but local sources tell Howey Politics Indiana it could be a difficult task. There is local speculation that two-term Scott County Sheriff Dan McClain might be considering a challenge to Goodin. But Rep. Goodin's twin brother Jerry, a 27-year Indiana State Police trooper, is running for Scott County sheriff in 2018. "Two Goodins on the ballot could be a problem any place else but Scott County," said Curt Kovener, publisher of the Crothersville Times. "There, it could bring out more Dem votes." Kovener noted that Goodin easily dispatched Joseph Van Wye, described as a Tea Party Republican, 15,939 to 10,484 during the Trump landslide in 2016. As for State Rep. Steve Stemler, who is retiring from HD71 is on Hupfer's target list, he faced only a Libertarian in 2016, winning by more than 13,000 votes.



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Time to weigh in on HPI Power 50 List

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – It’s time for our readers to ponder and weigh in on the 2018 Howey Politics Indiana Power 50 list which will be published on Jan. 4.

We’ve been compiling this list annually since 1999, gauging who will likely influence the events of the upcoming year.

The 2017 list focus was on the two incoming federal and state administrations of President Trump and Gov. Eric Holcomb, as well as the biennial budget and the historic highway funding program that is now law.

In 2018, we’ve seen a number of Hoosiers take key roles in the Trump administration and the list will reflect that. We also have crucial mid-term elections, with Indiana’s U.S. Senate race potentially determining who controls the upper chamber.

Some of our readers will nominate individuals. Others create and send along their own entire lists. Either way, HPI subscriber input is a critical part of creating this list.

Please send your thoughts and lists to me at bhowey2@gmail.com.

2017 HPI Power 50 List

1. Gov. Eric Holcomb
2. Vice President Mike Pence
3. U.S. Senator Todd Young
4. House Speaker Brian Bosma
5. Senate President David Long
6. Earle Goode, Holcomb chief of staff
7. U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly
8. and 9. U.S. Reps. Luke Messer and Susan Brooks
10. Sen. Luke Kenley
11. Ways & Means Chairman Tim Brown
12. State Rep. Ed Soliday
13. U.S. Rep Todd Rokita
14. Marc Short
15. Josh Pitcock
16. South Bend Mayor Peter Buttigieg
17. Christina Hale
18. Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett
19. Sen. Brandt Hershman
20. Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer
21. State Rep. Ben Smaltz
22. Purdue President Mitch Daniels
23. CMS Commissioner Seema Verma
24. FSSA Commissioner Jennifer Walthall
25. U.S. Rep Jackie Walorski
26. U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon
27. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch
28. Evansville Mayor Lloyd Winnecke
29. Mike O’Brien

30. U.S. Rep Jim Banks
31. U.S. Rep Trey Hollingsworth
32. Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard
33. Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight
34. State Rep. Robert Behning and State Sen. Dennis Kruse
35. Brian Burdick, Bob Grand and Rod Ratcliff
36. Brian Burton, President and CEO, Indiana Manufacturers Association
38. Kevin Brinegar, President and CEO, Indiana Chamber of Commerce
39. Dennis Faulkenberg and Gary Langston of the Indiana Motor Truck Association
40. Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness
41. U.S. Rep. André Carson
42. U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky
43. Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr.

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Power 50: Tandem administrations unfold

Trump/Pence and Holcomb teams, biennial budget forge the annual power list

By BRIAN A. HOWEY
INDIANAPOLIS – After a year of what had been unfathomable events and improbable ascendancies, after a year where political alignments fell off the rails between the people and their political leaders, after a year where long-held beliefs were ditched for current expediency, this is where we are: 2017 promises to be, perhaps, a bipolar year. If 2016 was sensational and unprecedented, 2017 could bring a new dawn or a reckless interlude.

There are voices tweeting things beyond our immediate comprehension. There are photo ops no one ever expected. The political world is shaking at an 8.2 Richter



President-elect Donald Trump with Vice President-elect Mike Pence and Governor-elect Eric Holcomb at the Carrier plant in Indianapolis.

scale level, and the populist uprising that installed two administrations leans in to see what can be delivered, what can't and at what price. There are deals to be made.

Continued on page 3

Participation, not party

By CHRISTINA HALE
INDIANAPOLIS – I just have to thank Donald Trump from the bottom of my heart.

When winning presidential candidates talk about "bleeding from the whatever," and grabbing p*****s, women sit up and take notice. They listen, too, when that same candidate's empowered daughter talks about increasing access for parents to quality daycare options.

Understandably pundits and the public continue to gape, agog and astounded by this past election, glued to the continuous news cycle that is our incoming president. For me, I am grateful for one




“The first order of business is repeal and replace Obamacare.”
- Vice President-elect Mike Pence after addressing Capitol Hill Republicans on Wednesday. He offered little detail on what will replace the ACA.

44. Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry
45. Rep. Scott Pelath
46. Sen. Tim Lanane
47. Democratic Chairman John Zody
48. Matt Greller, Accelerating Indiana Municipalities
49. Danny Lopez and Jane Jankowski, Holcomb deputy chiefs of staff
50. Chuck Jones ❖

Dealing with the negative stuff

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO – I’m an optimistic person by nature and by profession. As an investment advisor, it is pretty much a job requirement that you have an optimistic outlook on the



future of the economy and the country. That’s why this column is particularly difficult for me to write. It’s full of negative thoughts about some of the significant challenges that we find ourselves confronting in this normally cheerful holiday season.

I’ll cover the negative stuff this week and then in my next column, I’ll tell you why I believe that we can deal with the problems. So here’s the

best of my 2017 gloom and doom!

First and foremost, our national debt is terrible and it’s going to get a lot worse. It is just about time that the voters of each party cut through all of the mumbo jumbo gobbledy gook spewed by our representatives and senators and realize that the people who manage the finances for our country are running things into the ground.

A \$20 trillion dollar debt that continues to grow should be something that catches your attention. Unfortunately, the citizens who should be most concerned, the Millennials, are more engrossed in the comings and goings of Kim Kardashian and Meghan Markle to give two hoots about a budgetary death spiral.

Think of the national debt as a baby polar bear at the zoo. When born it looks so cute and cuddly but it does have a big appetite. What starts out as an easy task to buy food for the polar bear progressively gets more difficult as the size of the bear grows along with its appetite. Before long, you can’t feed as much fish to the sea lions as you used to because that big old white bear wants beef. Day after day, month after month and year after year, more of the zoo’s budget goes to feeding the polar bear.

Eventually, you start thinking about feeding your sea lions to the bear. By then, when you have that moment of clarity, it is too late. The current Congress has done nothing to address the debt problem. It doesn’t look like Congress ever will, until it’s time to feed the sea lion to the polar bear.

Part of the reason that Congress does nothing about the debt is because government on the federal level is completely dysfunctional. I don’t mean partially, largely or mostly dysfunctional. It is completely dysfunctional.

Our government can’t get much done other than making sure that they get paid and that lobbyists’ needs are catered to. Once again, not only is the dysfunctionality of government bad, it promises to get worse. This is bad because someday we might actually need government to help select which sea lions are fed to the polar bear.

A most troubling aspect of our current dysfunctionality of government is the ham-handed attempt by the coalition of Clintonistas, snowflakes, dark state operatives, socialist true believers, sour grape Republicans and legion of pitchfork wielding media elites to stage an internal coup against President Trump.

It makes you wonder, with all of the sexual harassment going on, how this group has the time to do two things at once. Let’s face it, the loyal opposition died long ago. Now, as soon as the presidential election is over, the long knives come out and the quest for blood begins. My fear is that we will push the envelope on this internal insurrection right up to the brink of outright lawlessness.

I don’t know about you but I grew up with the naïve expectation that government would look for problems and try and fix them. Silly me. In the bizzaro world of Nancy Pelosi and Barack Obama, you took something that worked fairly well for the vast majority of Americans, healthcare, and then did your best to design a system that would pretty much destroy healthcare for everyone. Perhaps that is the vision of equality pursued by the Democrats, but it sure isn’t my vision.



It is almost impossible to go anywhere today and not hear people of all walks of life complaining about healthcare. For those of you who are hearing impaired or too engrossed in what Meghan Markle’s wedding dress will look like, let me give you a summary of the complaints. We can’t afford our healthcare premiums. We can’t afford our deductibles.

We can’t choose our doctor. We can’t choose our hospital.

We used to be healthy until our own government made us sick. Just about the only folks not screaming bloody murder are those on Medicare. Tick, tick, tick. Your time is coming!

The student loan crisis continues to eat away at the futures of our young adults. Easy credit piled up to pay for tuition, room and board, textbooks, spring break vacations and the latest Bruno Mars album create a mound of debt that the average ancient Samaritan linguistics graduate just can’t pay off with their part time job at Applebee’s. Student debt now exceeds one trillion dollars

and shows no sign of dropping off. Universities, beauty colleges and truck driving schools continue to relentlessly help arrange loans for their students that have little chance of being paid off unless junior moves into mom and dad's basement. This debt is pernicious and eats away at the psyche and futures of our young. Debt has become a lead weight tied to the ankles of those trying to compete against the rest of the world.

You would think that with all of the borrowed-money-educated people running around that one of them would look at the current Bitcoin situation and recognize a good old fashioned scam. You can get as moogy foogy on Bitcoin as you want, but I smell a very expensive rat. This latest iteration of a fraud scheme would be no more damaging to us than the guy begging at the intersection or your neighbor's daughter selling you Girl Scout cookies if it wasn't that the pirates at the futures markets are now willing to grant legitimacy to Bitcoin by offering contracts and allowing purchases with borrowed funds. This is going to be Dutch tulips bad but without attractive arrangements. You can't create something out of nothing and expect there to be no bad results. It's like selling packing peanuts as a health food alternative. Something's going to go bump in the night.

Finally, there is the threat of the little rocket boy

in North Korea. No, I'm not in the least worried about him dropping a nuclear missile on Monument Circle. I don't think that he is any way near being ready to do that. There is no way he can Photoshop that convincingly. I'm worried about his thousands of conventional artillery pieces that threaten to put LG televisions on back order for quite some time. South Korea is a pretty small country and you just can't fire an artillery shell across the 38th parallel without hitting a factory that supplies critical consumer and industrial goods to our country. In addition, the South Korean people live in such tight proximity to each other that indiscriminate shelling could easily kill millions.

Sure, we could give a good, old fashioned thumping to rocket boy the way we gave it to Saddam, Uday and Qusay, but there are way too many things that can go wrong if someone gets an itchy trigger finger in Korea.

There they are, my short list of things that keep me awake at night. These are the lumps of coal in my stocking. That being said, this is the season of joy and hope. Next column, I'll share why I still bother to get out of bed in the morning.

Season's greetings! ❖

Dunn is former Howard County Republican chairman.





Photography With Punch

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Will Lake County GOP ever get it?

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – Sometimes one gets the feeling that Lake County Republicans aren't the sharpest knives in the drawer. One gets the feeling that they enjoy playing second fiddle to Democrats who rule the roost.



One gets the feeling that Republicans aren't bothered by the fact that they haven't won a countywide office since the late 1940s, except for one a decade ago that actually saw Democrats elect a Republican. One gets the feeling that Republicans are content to hold a township or town office here and there.

One gets the feeling that Republicans have rejected the openings Democrats have afforded Republicans to advance themselves.

The most recent example involves Lake County Councilman Jamal Washington, who faces felony charges of battery and confining his 23-year-old cousin. Washington remains in the county jail but is expected to be released on bail later this month.

The County Council also stripped Washington of power by removing him from budget and law enforcement committees. Besides the recent charges, it has been learned that Washington pushed Brian Hitchcock, the former head of the county's E-911 department, to hire his friends and relatives. In exchange, Hitchcock said Washington vowed to make sure Hitchcock had a well-funded budget. Hitchcock said pressure from Washington was one of the reasons he left the department for a similar job in Tennessee.

Meanwhile, Lake Republicans haven't said the first word about Washington being another cancer within the Democratic Party that has been plagued with public corruption convictions for decades. It was, in fact, Lake Democrats who have gone public with comments about Washington and the fact he has been charged for the second time in a year with abusing women. He pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor about a year ago.

But, this week, Lake County Democratic Chairman Jim Wieser weighed in on Washington. "I ask for the immediate resignation of Jamal Washington as a Lake County councilman," Wieser said publicly. "I do this with no joy, but rather believing it to be in the best interests of Washington himself, his constituents, the thousands of good members of our Democratic Party and the citizens of Lake County as a whole."

Republicans, meanwhile, have said nothing. ❖

Rich James has been writing about state and local government and politics for more than 30 years. He is retired from the Post-Tribune.

Santa comes back home to Indiana

By MORTON MARCUS

INDIANAPOLIS – Elvin Elfenhousen, one of Santa's long-term helpers, joined me recently for a cup of hot chocolate. "What brings you to Indiana?" I asked. "Normally we meet up at the North Pole."

"Yes," he agreed, "but the Big Guy wants me to check out locations in Indiana for our workshop."

"What? Santa leaving the North Pole?" I was astonished.



"Shhh!" He shhded. "We don't want anyone to know, but the Big Guy is adjusting to the melting polar cap as well as the problems of finding flying reindeer. He's thinking of switching to FedEx, UPS, and USPS. The sleigh is too small for the volume he has to handle and, frankly, he's tired of going down chimneys to find only cookies and milk."

"Incredible," I said. "Indiana does have a town in Spencer County already named for him. And I'm sure North Vernon, North Judson, and even South Bend, East Chicago and West Lafayette would happily change their names to be home to Santa."

"Sure," Elvin said. "We think this could be better for a community than landing Amazon's new headquarters. The tourist dollars alone would top Elvis' Graceland."

"Oh, Indiana would be a great place for Santa's Workshop," I enthused. "We're 45th in the nation in percent of people working at home. Only folks in Kentucky, Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi are less likely to work at home."

"So what?" he asked.

"**They're our competition,**" I answered.

"They're states that don't have workers with the skills or firms with the flexibility to have people working on their own recognizance. And maybe they're just as unconnected from high speed internet as is Indiana."

"But are Hoosiers willing to travel to get to work?" he asked. "Aren't they mainly home-bodies?"

"Yes and no." I was emphatically ambiguous. "It true that the average commute to work for Hoosiers (24 minutes) is below the national average (27 minutes), but

plenty of our workers are well above or well below that figure. In four of Indiana's 92 counties (Lake, Morgan, Hendricks and Porter) average commute times are greater than the national average. We also have seven counties with average commute times less than 20 minutes, including Grant, Elkhart, Bartholomew and Howard counties."

"Then Hoosiers are willing to travel, but many don't have to," Elvin concluded.

"Exactly," I agreed.

"It seems, then," he said, "Indiana could be a good site for Santa's Workshop."

"Precisely," I said. "We've got the transit facilities,

old-fashioned workers, our famous (notorious) low business taxes, as well as sensible (lax) environmental and workplace regulations. Plus, we'll pay through the nose to get Santa to relocate here."

"None of that will be necessary," Elvin said stiffly. "Santa gladly pays taxes, if asked. He has lots of benefits for his workers and doesn't take inducements (bribes). After all, he is a mythical employer." ❖

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

It will take citizens to change Congress

By LEE HAMILTON

BLOOMINGTON – It's past time for comprehensive reform of Congress. The changes I advocate will not come about without citizen action.

The first three words of the U.S. Constitution are, "We the People." The Constitution itself, our institutions of government, the democratic process – all were established to give Americans a voice in their own governance. We are still striving to make that vision real for all, but we are closer than ever.



So let me ask you some questions about Congress today. Do you think the voice of ordinary Americans resounds strongly in its hallways and chambers? Can you recall Congress in the

last few years successfully dealing with an issue that directly affected your life? Does Congress produce legislation that resolves our differences and brings us closer together? Do you believe that the political system produces members of Congress who fairly and effectively represent the diversity and complexity of this country and are addressing our real, long-term challenges?

I thought not.

This is why I believe it's past time for comprehensive reform of Congress. Representative democracy today is being undermined by the rising power of big money, the challenges of governing a country as large and diverse as ours, the problems brought by rising economic inequality, the ineffectiveness of our political institutions, and too many citizens who were never taught the skills needed to make the pragmatic judgments necessary in a representative democracy.

In the present environment, it's doubtful that the various reforms needed to address these challenges can actually get adopted. But their time will come, either because the public demands it or the cost of dysfunction becomes too obvious to ignore. So it's important to know in advance where we need to head.

To be sure, part of what we need is outside the purview of any single institution. We lack a robust, comprehensive system of civic education, designed to produce an engaged, informed electorate able to sort fact from fiction in a complicated world. We want citizens who know how to maintain healthy skepticism and wariness about elected officials, and who have the knowledge and confidence to hold them accountable.

But there are also steps we need our lawmakers to take. Partisan gerrymandering has become a scandal; competitive congressional districts drawn to represent the population fairly are vital to our future. Similarly, we have to expand voter participation and fight efforts to repress votes; lower participation empowers the extremes in politics, and it's hurting our country. And we need to make it easier for third parties to break into the system; people are losing confidence in the two parties and we need to open up the system to new participants.

Greater transparency from those in power or those seeking to influence those in power truly matters. Disclosure of campaign donations, disclosure of foreign money's track through our political system, disclosure of special-interest spending, identifying the people who make contributions to secretive political committees, details about financial conflicts of interest – all of this should be a habit in any self-respecting representative democracy. Extensive disclosure needs to be required by law, and backed up with the resources to enforce the law.

On Capitol Hill, members need to fund and then rely on independent sources of information they can trust, rather than special interests who too often lay down their own interpretation of the facts as a legislative foundation. And they need to return to the traditional processes of gathering expert testimony through congressional hearings.

And perhaps more than anything, Congress needs

to revitalize the institution itself – by energizing the traditional committee structure and practices, giving up its ridiculous habit of enacting budgets through omnibus bills, and no longer allowing major legislation to be put together by a few leadership staff behind closed doors – and restore its power vis-à-vis the president.

This is where you come in. The changes that I’m advocating will not come about without citizen action. Our lawmakers have become fixated on their reelection and too comfortable with the status quo they and their predecessors have built in recent decades. We have to hold politicians to the highest ethical standards, and have them

come up with serious proposals to fix the system. Without that, the loss of faith in our process and our institutions that all of us lament will be almost impossible to reverse. ❖

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Jones victory compares to Scott Brown’s in ‘10

By **KYLE KONDIK, GEOFFREY SKELLEY and ALAN I. ABRAMOWITZ**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – Prior to the Alabama special Senate election on Tuesday night, there was an ongoing discussion in the media about whether the Republicans would lose either way in Alabama. But as bad as it would have been for Republicans to have had Roy Moore (R) in their Senate caucus, losing this seat is, in our view, significantly worse. The victory by Sen.-elect Doug Jones (D) will cut the GOP’s Senate majority to a slim 51-49 margin, and it opens the door to an unlikely Democratic Senate takeover next year.

Perhaps more alarmingly for Republicans, the race reinforced several trends we’ve seen in other places this year. Here was another special election where a Democratic candidate ran very heavily ahead of Hillary Clinton’s 2016 showing. Republican turnout was OK, just like in the Virginia gubernatorial race, but Democratic turnout was a lot better, both in urban and suburban parts of Alabama and also in the Black Belt, a rural, heavily African-American part of the state that gets its name from the color of the soil (turnout was exceptionally high throughout this region).

There are obviously a lot of compounding, negative factors for Republicans that led to this result, many having to do with the GOP nominee. But the positive environmental signs for Democrats are a big part of the story, too. Individual special elections are not always a harbinger of the future, but it’s impossible not to compare Jones’ victory to Scott Brown’s (R) January 2010 Senate election upset in Massachusetts, which suggested a terrible Democratic environment that endured through the party’s disastrous 2010 midterm. At the time, Democrats pinned the loss on their own bad candidate, Martha

Coakley, but huge electoral upsets don’t have just a single cause, and the Republicans ignore 2017’s warning signs at their own peril.

Meanwhile, Jones should remember Brown, too that his time in the Senate was short-lived, ending in 2012. Jones will have three years in the Senate, but it will be very hard for him to add to that tenure when he presumably seeks a full term in 2020.

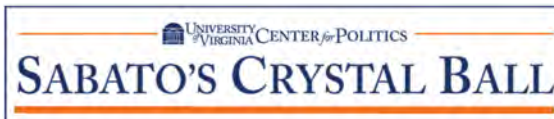
But that’s a long time off. Democrats now have miraculously added a Senate seat that, truth be told, they have no business having, and it’s one they do not have to defend next year.

That’s good for the Democrats because they already are defending a lot of territory next year – 26 of 34 seats, including a special election in Minnesota – but none of their incumbents are retiring. Even the most vulnerable Senate Democrats up for election next year – Sens. Joe Don-

nnelly (D-IN) and Claire McCaskill (D-MO) – are probably no worse than 50-50 to win reelection at this point, given the challenges the presidential party historically faces in beating Senate incumbents from the other party (Republicans would counter by arguing that McCaskill, at the very least, looks like a goner – we’ll see). The list of vulnerable Republican seats is much smaller, but Sen. Dean Heller’s (R-NV) reelection bid is a pure Toss-up, as is the open GOP seat in Arizona. The math problem for Democrats prior to Tuesday night was that even if they pulled off an unlikely sweep of all these seats, maintaining the 26 they already hold plus capturing Arizona and Nevada, that would only get them to 50-50 in the Senate, with Vice President Mike Pence breaking ties for the Republicans.

But now, that sweep would get them to a bare 51-49 majority. We are not predicting that to happen, and Republicans are still favored, perhaps significantly, to hold the Senate. But this flub could have real consequences for the GOP.

Democrats will say that they have additional offensive targets, like the open seat in Tennessee that former Gov. Phil Bredesen (D) is now contesting, and perhaps



Rep. Beto O'Rourke's (D) longshot bid against Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX). We're holding those races at Likely (though not Safe) Republican for now. We don't want to over-apply the lessons of Alabama to other races: Roy Moore may quite possibly have been the worst Senate candidate in quite a long time, and there have been plenty of duds in recent years (mostly, it must be said, on the Republican side, and these poor choices by their primary electorates have cost them several seats over the past few cycles). However, given what we've seen in other special elections this year, and in our home base of Virginia, Moore's awful candidacy could not have been entirely responsible for turning a 28-point Trump win in Alabama last year into a narrow Democratic Senate victory just 13 months later.

While there are many voting patterns to dig into, we will highlight two trends in particular. As we said in our preview of the Alabama race last week, a Jones win map had to include notably better performances in the big urban and suburban counties of Alabama by way of strong black turnout and improved Democratic performance among college-educated whites. Jones achieved that handsomely. Using the 2012 election for Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court as a baseline – a race Moore won by only about four percentage points, 52%-48% – we can see where Jones improved the most over the Democrat in that election five years ago, Bob Vance. Jones ran between six and seven points ahead of Vance in Jefferson County (Birmingham), Madison County (Huntsville, and in Shelby County, the key Birmingham suburban locality that is solidly Republican. He also ran four points ahead of Vance in Mobile County and two points ahead of Vance in the Black Belt as a whole.

Exit polls are imperfect, especially on education

questions, but the Alabama exit showed that Jones won 40% of white college graduates and 22% of whites with no college degree (31% of the white vote overall). The improvement for Jones in the metropolitan areas and Moore's improvement in some of the more rural regions align with those findings. Considering the fact that the 2012 presidential exit poll showed Barack Obama winning just 15% of the white vote, all of this was more than a little remarkable.

Gerrymandered maps may clip Dems

There is a growing sense among political observers that the United States may be heading toward a wave election in 2018. Results of recent special elections, including Doug Jones' (D) victory in the Alabama Senate race on Tuesday, along with Democratic victories in the New Jersey and Virginia gubernatorial elections and surprisingly large Democratic gains in the Virginia House of Delegates all point toward the likelihood of substantial Democratic gains in next year's midterm elections, including a real possibility that Democrats could regain control of the U.S. House of Representatives. In addition, results of recent generic ballot polling generally show large Democratic leads.

Despite these signs of an impending Democratic wave, however, many political experts believe that the way House district lines in many key states were drawn by Republicans prior to the 2012 election will make it difficult for Democrats to gain enough seats to take back control of the House. According to this argument, Republican gerrymandering was so effective that Democrats would need to win the national popular vote by a very large margin, perhaps eight points or more, in order to gain at least the 24 seats needed to take back the House. ❖

Democratic vote share %	Predicted Democratic seats	
	Before 2011	After 2011
46	192	171
47	200	179
48	209	188
49	217	196
50	225	204
51	234	213
52	242	221
53	250	229
54	259	238



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David Brooks, New York Times: The Republican Party is doing harm to every cause it purports to serve. If Republicans accept Roy Moore as a United States senator, they may, for a couple years, have one more vote for a justice or a tax cut, but they will have made their party loathsome for an entire generation. You don't help your cause by wrapping your arms around an alleged sexual predator and a patriarchic bigot. You don't help your cause by putting the pursuit of power above character, by worshiping at the feet of some loutish man or another, by claiming the ends justify any means. "What shall it profit a man," Jesus asked, "if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" The current Republican Party seems to not understand that question. Donald Trump seems to have made gaining the world at the cost of his soul his entire life's motto. Starting with Sarah Palin and the spread of Fox News, the G.O.P. traded an ethos of excellence for an ethos of hucksterism. The Republican Party I grew up with admired excellence. It admired intellectual excellence (Milton Friedman, William F. Buckley), moral excellence (John Paul II, Natan Sharansky) and excellent leaders (James Baker, Jeane Kirkpatrick). Populism abandoned all that — and had to by its very nature. Excellence is hierarchical. Excellence requires work, time, experience and talent. Populism doesn't believe in hierarchy. Populism doesn't demand the effort required to understand the best that has been thought and said. Populism celebrates the quick slogan, the impulsive slash, the easy ignorant assertion. Populism is blind to mastery and embraces mediocrity. The rot afflicting the G.O.P. is comprehensive — moral, intellectual, political and reputational. More and more former Republicans wake up every day and realize: "I'm homeless. I'm politically homeless." ❖



Peter Wehner, New York Times: There are times in life when the institutional ground underneath you begins to crumble — and with it, longstanding attachments. Such is the case for me when it comes to the Republican Party and evangelicalism. I've been a part of both for my entire adult life. These days, though, in many important ways they are having harmful effects on our society. The latest example is in Alabama, where Roy Moore, the Republican Senate candidate, stands accused of varying degrees of sexual misconduct by nine women, including one who was 14 years old at the time. Mr. Moore leads in most polls, and solidly among most evangelicals, heading into Tuesday's election. I don't mean to imply that politics and religion are a perfect fit. Often they're not, and over the years Christians, myself included, have not gotten the balance right. But overall I felt that the Republican Party and the evangelical movement were imperfect forces for good, and I spent a large part of my life defending them. Yet the support being given by many Republicans and white evangelicals to President Trump and now to Mr. Moore have caused me to rethink my identification with

both groups. Not because my attachment to conservatism and Christianity has weakened, but rather the opposite. I consider Mr. Trump's Republican Party to be a threat to conservatism, and I have concluded that the term evangelical — despite its rich history of proclaiming the "good news" of Christ to a broken world — has been so distorted that it is now undermining the Christian witness. ❖

Ken de la Bastide, Anderson Herald-Bulletin:

There was a time in the not too distant past when people running for state and national political office would proudly proclaim their willingness to reach across the political aisle in the spirit of compromise. Unfortunately, during at least the past decade, that spirit in modeling legislation has been lost in a flurry of ideological beliefs, sometime rants, that draws the proverbial line in the sand. That line can't be crossed in the spirit of compromise to pass legislation.

There really is no reason for compromise in the Indiana General Assembly with Republicans maintaining super majorities in both the House and Senate. Legislation can be adopted by Republican majorities without a single Democrat sitting in the chamber. When a Democrat proposes legislation, whether good or bad, the reality is the idea is usually dead on arrival. With the 100 House seats and half of the Senate seats up for election in 2018, the GOP is looking to increase those majorities. Despite proclaiming in the past that GOP leadership was supportive of redistricting reform, nothing is likely to change until sometime in the next decade. At the national level, the divide is getting wider all the time, and the level of rhetoric has climbed since Donald Trump has become president. But the lack of compromise goes back further than a year. Democrats approved health care reform during the administration of Barack Obama with no GOP support. Most recently the GOP-controlled Congress has passed two versions of tax reform without a single Democrat voting in favor. Seems some of the newer elected officials in our nation's capital could use a history lesson on how Republican President Ronald Reagan and Democrat House Speaker Tim O'Neill reached a compromise in the 1980s, the last time there was major tax reform. This week the Lugar Bipartisan Index was released for members of the U.S. Senate who have served from 1993 through 2016. Sen. Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., seeking re-election in 2018, is ranked second overall and top among those senators still serving in terms of being willing to work with the opposite party to pass legislation. On the House side, the index ranks two members seeking to replace Donnelly in the bottom half of the list. Luke Messer is 309th and Todd Rokita came in 278th. Rep. Susan Brooks, a Republican who represents Madison County was 24th among the 435 members of the House. From the founding of the nation, the art of compromise was paramount in shaping our governmental system. Since that time, there has been swings both far right and far left. We are obviously in one of those swings. ❖

Deal struck on tax reforms

WASHINGTON — House and Senate GOP leaders forged an agreement Wednesday on a sweeping overhaul of the nation's tax laws, paving the way for final votes next week to slash taxes for businesses, give many Americans modest cuts and deliver the first major legislative accomplishment to President Donald Trump (Associated Press). Top GOP aides said lawmakers had reached an agreement in principle on the final package. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk publicly about private negotiations. One congressional aide said the deal was contingent on whether late changes to the bill still complied with budget rules adopted by both the House and the Senate. Lawmakers were waiting to hear back from analysts at the non-partisan Joint Committee on Taxation. The final House-Senate compromise is on track to be unveiled this week, the aides said. Absences could be a problem in the Senate with Sen. John McCain in the hospital and Sen. Thad Cochran has missed votes recently.

Rosenstein finds no cause on Mueller

WASHINGTON — Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said Wednesday that he has no cause to remove Robert Mueller from the Russia investigation, even as Republicans stepped up charges of "extreme" political bias on the special counsel's team (Chalfant, The Hill). "Based upon his reputation, his service, his patriotism and his experience with the department and the FBI, I believe he was an ideal choice for this task," Rosenstein told lawmakers on the House Judiciary Committee. Rosenstein was the second official hauled before Congress in the past week forced to defend the integrity of officials at the Justice De-

partment and the FBI. The questioning comes amid revelations that FBI employees exchanged text messages critical of President Trump.

Donnelly presses Trump allegations

WASHINGTON — In the wake of sexual misconduct accusations against lawmakers, Democratic congresswomen this week called for an investigation into President Trump's alleged discretions (WNDU-TV). Indiana Sen. Joe Donnelly, who agreed that colleague Al Franken should step down, says as a senator it is not his job to ask for an investigation. But, he thinks it is time for the president to fess up. "I think those claims are true," he says. "As you look at the president, I hope he will take a look at his conduct and act accordingly."

PBS suspends Tavis Smiley

NEW YORK — Longtime talk show host and Indiana University graduate Tavis Smiley has been indefinitely suspended from PBS amid "troubling" allegations that he has sexually harassed staffers and retaliated against those who rebuffed him. Officials at PBS recently contracted a law firm after they received a series of claims that Smiley had created a hostile work environment and engaged in sexual relationships with several subordinates. "The inquiry uncovered multiple, credible allegations of conduct that is inconsistent with the values and standards of PBS," a representative of PBS said.

Holcomb urges STEM expansion

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric Holcomb is calling on legislators to focus on Hoosiers during the 2018 legislative session if they want to take Indiana to the "next level." (Mullis,

Statehouse File). Holcomb took a moment to reminisce on the previous year's successes and look ahead to the future in his first appearance as governor at the annual Bingham Greenbaum Doll LLP Legislative Conference Wednesday. In his 2018 legislative agenda, which he unveiled on Nov. 8, Holcomb emphasized the need for a stronger STEM education program in order to develop Indiana's workforce. "Everywhere I go, this is what I hear — if I invest in Indiana, am I going to find the workforce I need in order to survive and thrive in business?" Holcomb said. "We're addressing that."

Holcomb orders parental leave

INDIANAPOLIS — State employees will have up to four weeks of paid parental leave time, the governor announced Wednesday (Fox59). Gov. Eric Holcomb signed an executive order that goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2018. The policy gives employees up to four weeks to spend time with a newborn or newly adopted child.

FCC expected to end net neutrality

WASHINGTON — Federal regulators are expected to vote Thursday morning to allow Internet providers to speed up service for some apps and websites — and block or slow down others — in a decision repealing landmark, Obama-era regulations for broadband companies such as AT&T and Verizon (Washington Post). The move to deregulate the telecom and cable industry would be a major setback for tech companies, consumer groups and Democrats who lobbied heavily against the decision. And it would be a sweeping victory for Republicans who vowed to roll back the efforts of the prior administration, despite a recent survey showing that 83 percent of Americans — including 3 out of 4 Republicans — opposed the plan.

