



Republicans tout 'historic' budget

GOP says teachers will get pay hike; gaming deal reached

By **JACOB CURRY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The 2019 General Assembly session ended Wednesday after nearly four full months of negotiation, success, and disappointment, culminating with what Republicans described as a “historic” budget. Coming into the year, there were



some clear, pressing challenges that would top priority lists at the Statehouse: Passing a working \$34.6 billion biennial budget, addressing the growing crises in Indiana education, getting Indiana off the list of states without a meaningful hate crime statute, and pushing through bills on gaming and the CIB.

The General Assembly successfully fulfilled its constitutionally mandated duty for this session, passing

some clear, pressing challenges that would top priority lists at the Statehouse: Passing a working \$34.6 billion biennial budget, addressing the growing crises in Indiana education, getting Indiana off the list of states without a

biennial budget late Wednesday night. The final budget that came out of conference committee had most of the key numbers – K-12 tuition support increases, DCS funding, and several grants – at compromise levels in between their House and Senate figures. That clear compromise reflects what GOP leaders and most of the negotiators said was an unusually smooth process of working out the two chambers’ differences, though as always there were plenty of hard choices involved. The final state budget, which was the last item up for vote in both the House and Senate

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A yield of incompetence

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

NASHVILLE, Ind. – Last winter over a plate of Cajun cookin’ at Yat’s, I compared notes with U.S. Rep. Jim Banks on the Russia collusion investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller. My expressed hope was the report would either absolve President Trump of conspiring with the Kremlin with compelling certainty, or that it would be so damning that his political support within the Republican Party would collapse and we would have President Mike Pence.

That was the scenario in July 1974 with President Nixon. Democrats were heading toward impeachment, but Republicans held until the U.S. Supreme



“Mayor Buttigieg has wasted millions of taxpayer dollars in a seven-year effort to keep these tapes secret and hidden from the public. Mayor Buttigieg should release the tapes immediately.”

- Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer on the South Bend PD tape controversy





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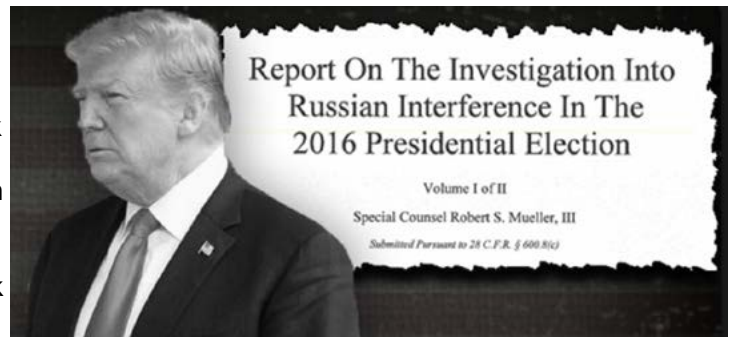
Court ordered the tapes released, which revealed Nixon as a conspiring cover-up liar. It was Republicans Hugh Scott, John Rhodes and Barry Goldwater who delivered the news to Nixon that the gig was up.

The Mueller report landed in the middle of my two best/worst case scenarios. It absolved President Trump and his campaign of conspiring with the Russians. On the obstruction scenario, Mueller punted, sending the matter to Congress, which is ill-equipped to referee this question. By the time it would even get into trial mode, the 2020 election will be at hand and it will be the American people who render the ultimate verdict on President Trump's campaign and first term.

Most Republicans snapped quickly into line, professing the lack of collusion. As Banks observed on Twitter, "No collusion. No obstruction. Let's get back to work, @SpeakerPelosi."

In a more lengthy statement, Banks bought into the "witch hunt" Trump had oft described, but noted something Trump has yet to acknowledge in the post-Mueller world, which is that the Russians successfully assaulted the 2016 U.S. presidential election. "Mueller's report proved what the president has said all along, but every American should be more outraged than ever before by the findings in the Mueller report that show without a shadow of a doubt Russia sought to meddle and disrupt our election process," Banks said. "President Trump has been exonerated from the witch hunt over collusion, but now I hope he will swiftly turn his sights to show leadership in holding Russia accountable for attacking our American institutions. Congress as well should shift away from bogus investigations and instead turn toward passing tough measures to address Russia's activities and taking action to make the lives of every Hoosier and American better."

Not all Hoosier Republicans took the default "witch hunt" stance. U.S. Sen. Todd Young's comms director, Amy Grappone, said in a statement to HPI, "Sen. Young is approaching this matter with utmost seriousness and is still digesting details of the voluminous report. He looks forward to discussing it with colleagues on both sides of the aisle when the Senate is back in session and will make further comments as appropriate." Young told John Krull of the Statehouse File last week, "There's absolutely no question among Republicans or Democrats, certainly with whom I dialogue, that Russia interfered with our election — that they engaged in a disinformation campaign



to further divide the American people. I think we all have to acknowledge that they succeeded."

True outrage

To find true outrage, it came from U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney, the 2012 GOP presidential nominee, who said, "I am sickened at the extent and pervasiveness of dishonesty and misdirection by individuals in the highest office of the land, including the president. I am also appalled that, among other things, fellow citizens working in a campaign for president welcomed help from Russia — including information that had been illegally obtained; that none of them acted to inform American law enforcement; and that the campaign chairman was actively promoting Russian interests in Ukraine. Reading the report is a sobering revelation of how far we have strayed from the aspirations and principles of the founders."

Perhaps the two potentially

most vulnerable Hoosier Republicans in 2020, U.S. Reps. Susan Brooks and Jackie Walorski, were circumspect in their reaction. "I am pleased portions of the report that are legally allowed to be shared are now public and I am reading through Special Counsel Mueller's findings," Brooks tweeted. Walorski has not made a statement since the report was released a week ago.

Different from Nixon, Clinton sagas

Former congressman Mark Souder, observes the differences between Trump and the Nixon and Clinton impeachment sagas. "The allegations against Trump

are scary, but occurred in a campaign by someone not in power. And, so far, no proof exists. No proof," said Souder, who voted for two of four impeachment amendments against President Clinton in 1998. "In Watergate, Nixon was president, used his power and proof existed – it just needed more proof. Bill Clinton was in power, used his power and boxes and boxes of proof existed. Instead the GOP



leaders went after Monica because legal proof in a narrow case. Hillary was a sitting secretary of state, former First Lady and her husband still had people stacked in the federal government. Where was the gnashing of teeth on the Clintons from those who are doing so with Trump? Trump was a candidate, and watching for potential was important but this was not like previous cases and certainly not like Nixon, or Clinton. It does not justify behavior, but it is NOT the same. If he did something because of what was proven to have been done in the campaign, not alleged, then it would have more similarities."

Dysfunction and incompetence

Beyond the "Putin wins" acknowledgement, the more deeply disturbing aspect of the Mueller report is the stunning dysfunction and incompetence of the Trump/Pence White House. It goes back to the hours after the historic upset when Trump fired Chris Christie as head of the transition team, throwing the binders into the Trump Tower dumpster, and giving the helm over to Pence, who orchestrated arguably the worst transition in presidential history. It was during this transition that Michael Flynn's contacts with the Russians were exposed along with his lying to Pence, and it put Trump on a collision course for allegations of conspiracy when he tried to protect Flynn to the point of dismissing FBI Director Jim Comey, who throughout 2016-17 had etched a dubious history himself.

Trump's actions throughout 2017 and 2018 only fueled the fire. His five solo meetings with Russian President Putin, the lack of read-outs to National Intelligence

Director Dan Coats, his verbal assaults on NATO and the European Union, his tariffs aimed at allies and foes alike, and his policy decisions (e.g., Syrian withdrawal) seemed to match up perfectly with Putin's diabolical playbook. My colleague Craig Dunn (see page 7) can take a shotgun "attempted coup d'état" approach to all of us who wondered what the hell was really going on, but it was Trump himself who stoked the conspiracy blazes. (Most of us prefer that coup d'états remain in the banana republic realm.)

As I noted last week, Mueller made two damning statements. The first was the acknowledgment that the Russians succeeded: "Although the investigation

established that the Russian government perceived it would benefit from a Trump presidency and worked to secure that outcome, and that the campaign expected it would benefit electorally from information stolen and released through Russian efforts, the investigation did not establish that members of the Trump Campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government in its election interference activities."

The second surveyed the Trumpian incompetence: "The president's efforts to influence the investigation were mostly unsuccessful, but that is largely because the persons who surrounded the president declined to carry out orders or accede to his requests," Mueller concluded.

11 guardrails

There were at least 11 Trump administration officials who outright disobeyed the president's orders to obstruct, spread over 15 specific incidents, with Mueller describing 10 of them. These include Counsel Don McGahn, who refused Trump's order to fire Mueller, and Coats, who refused to intercede and get the FBI probe halted. The full list is a who's who of the nascent Trump presidency, from Reince Priebus, to Corey Lewandowski, to Attorney General Jeff Sessions, to Rick Dearborn, K.T. McFarland, Rob Porter and Chris Christie.

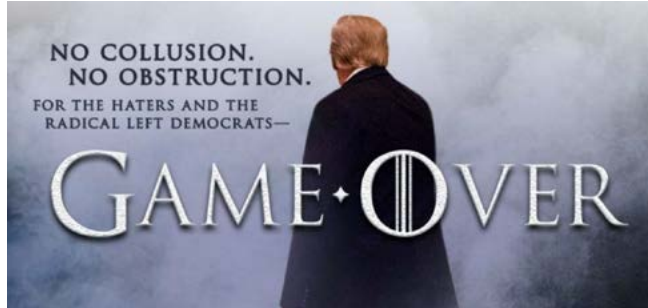
These are the people described as "guardrails" and all but Coats are gone. Some believe Pence may be the ultimate barrier to keep Trump in reality, but that's speculation at this point.

Trump pushed on the institutional guardrails that may have saved his presidency. "Nobody disobeys my orders," Trump said Monday morning at the White House Easter Egg Roll. It's as if Trump is the only one not in on the joke. But we've seen this play out over and over, with Trump denying reality even as past videos and tweets provide the words emanating from him.

If Republicans are jubilant and in high-five mode over such demonstrated incompetence, then that itself is a troubling portrayal of where the American body politic stands today. Or as Fox News judicial analyst Judge Andrew Napolitano observed, "Depending on how you

look at them, there might be enough to prosecute, but the attorney general has decided it's not enough to prosecute. But it did show a venal, amoral, deceptive Donald Trump, instructing his aides to lie and willing to help them do so. That's not good in the president of the United States."

We've come a long, long way – as has Mike Pence – since he observed at the time of the Clinton presidency, writing, "If you and I fall into bad moral habits, we can harm our families, our employers and our friends. The president of the United States can incinerate the planet. Seriously, the very idea that we ought to have at or less than the same moral demands placed on the chief executive that we place on our next door neighbor is ludicrous and dangerous. Throughout our history, we have seen the presidency as the repository of all of our highest hopes and ideals and values. To demand less is to do an injustice to the blood that bought our freedoms."



This Mueller report comment shaped many of the headlines last week: "The evidence we obtained about the president's actions and intent presents difficult issues that would need to be resolved if we were making a traditional prosecutorial judgment. At the same time, if we had confidence after a thorough investigation of the facts that the president clearly did not commit obstruction of justice, we would so state. Based on the facts and the applicable legal standards, we are unable to reach that judgment."

Mueller punts to Congress

Mueller punted this question to Congress, and if Democrats such as Sen. Elizabeth Warren get their wish and launch impeachment proceedings against President Trump, it will likely result in his reelection. Trump comes out of the Mueller end-sequence in precarious political position: His approval was just 39% in a Morning Consult Politico poll with 57% disapproving. But only 34% favor impeaching Trump, with 48% saying Congress shouldn't go there.

Unless further information beyond the outlined, Keystone Cops obstruction attempts surfaces, impeachment would be an epic fool's errand. With Republican support holding, the House passing impeachment resolutions will only result in a Senate acquittal. As Republicans learned in 1998 and 1999, President Bill Clinton actually came out ahead when that story played out.

Still, an array of dangers face President Trump. House Democrats will subpoena Mueller to testify soon, and his written report will be augmented by specific answers to questions on how and why he came to his conclusions. Such testimony on the Part II obstruction segment of the report may not be the catalyst for a move to impeachment, but would certainly add to Trump's emerg-

ing profile of mendacity and incompetence.

Mueller also dished off aspects of his work to 14 other investigations in New York and Virginia. Some of these could involve potential campaign finance violations tied to the payoffs to porn star Stormy Daniels, as well as finances of the Trump Organization, the Inaugural Committee and Jared Kushner's various business interests and security clearance.

For Americans who loathe the cycle of investigation, the Trump presidency will be dogged by them to its conclusion. President Trump's defiance now extends to Congress. He is seeking to prevent McGahn from testifying and Treasury is resisting the release of his tax returns. Court battles and a potential constitutional showdown loom. While Trump declared a "Game Over" worthy of a Winterfell slaughter, this saga will continue on and on.

Foreign interference

The most compelling question for Democrats, Republicans and independents is the notion of foreign adversaries influencing, funding and disrupting American presidential campaigns.

It's happened before. John Fund of "National Review" reminds us of the 1996 Chinese fundraising scandal involving DNC finance vice chairman John Huang and President Clinton's reelection effort. A 1998 Senate Government Affairs Committee report on the scandal found "strong circumstantial evidence" that a great deal of foreign money had illegally entered the country in an attempt to influence the 1996 election. The DNC was forced to give back more than \$2.8 million in illegal or improper donations from foreign nationals.

So this means that twice in the past two decades, Chinese and Russian money and subterfuge impacted American presidential races. It was dangerous in 1996 and 2016. And it will be perilous in 2020, as well.

President Trump's lawyer Rudy Giuliani said Sunday on CNN's State of the Union, "There's nothing wrong with taking information from Russians. It depends on where it came from. You're assuming that the giving of information is a campaign contribution." When host Jake Tapper pressed Giuliani, the former mayor explained, "There's no crime. We're going to get into morality? That isn't what prosecutors look at — morality."

It is that moral dimension of this fiasco which poses the most compelling question facing the American people and Congress. We've been consumed by two years of incompetence and rogue behavior that is now being institutionalized and, perhaps, funded and impacted by foreign adversaries.

As I asked last week, is this our new reality? Is it acceptable? ❖

Sine die, from page 1

Wednesday night, received just one Democratic vote, from Sen. David Niezgodski of South Bend.

Gov. Eric Holcomb lauded the gains, saying, “I want to commend Speaker Bosma and Senator Bray for their extraordinary leadership, and a job well done to their members and staffs. With the investments we’ll make over the next two years, we’ll be able to make our strong state, even more so. We balanced our budget for the eighth straight time and protected our AAA credit rating. We’re making historic investments in K-12 education, expanding our school safety efforts, and implementing all the recommendations to improve our child services. We are strengthening our already transformational road and rail programs, doubling down on our Next Level Jobs programs, and connecting more Hoosiers to affordable broadband service. We passed a bias crimes law and modernized our tax code. We’ll help more babies reach their first birthdays. Indiana is on a roll.”

Republicans cite education gains

Republicans are touting the budget as a historic success for K-12 public education in Indiana, and for teacher pay. From the start of session, the GOP was promising a budget that could deliver an immediate response to teacher pay concerns. With teachers resorting to walkouts in other states and recent data showing Indiana lagging behind its neighbors, the teacher pay issue was one that the General Assembly simply could not ignore.

Specifically, Republicans cite the additional K-12 tuition support in the budget, expansion of Teacher Appreciation Grants, and new savings brought on by the state’s one-time payment toward the post-’96 Teacher Retirement Fund, combined with a bill encouraging schools to increase their ratio of education-to-facilities spending. They say these measures will free up enough money for teachers to see substantive raises in the short term. But GOP leadership, including the governor, have admitted that work on a systemic solution will need to come in sessions to follow.

Bosma said, “This session marks a historic win for rural, urban and suburban public schools as lawmakers worked hard to increase our commitment to K-12 education by \$763 million in new state dollars.”

For their part, Democrats argued all session that Republican efforts on teacher pay contained no guarantee of actual salary increases and thus fell short. They also repeatedly pointed out that while some school districts would indeed see money freed up under the GOP plan, many struggling districts, particularly in smaller communities, would receive minimal increases.

Teacher pay wasn’t the only hot-button education issue though, as last year’s shooting at a Noblesville middle school heightened efforts to strengthen protections

for schools. Republicans had a priority school safety bill that wound up taking a blow in the final days of session. That bill mainly dealt with the establishment of parameters for the School Safety Grant Fund to provide mental health services for students. After passing the House in the first half of session, the mental health language would be removed in the Senate as a response to concerns over parental consent. Although bill author Rep. Wendy McNamara had the original language reinserted, final conference committee report approved by both chambers left it out.

Another Republican effort on school safety that struggled was Rep. Jim Lucas’ bill which would have allowed school corporations to arm and train teachers. The bill stayed alive until the final day but faltered in conference committee. The conferees were ultimately unable to come to an agreement over which employees should be subject to training requirements. The idea will surely be back; it’s becoming increasingly popular among conservatives.

The question of passing a meaningful hate crime statute, or simply what a meaningful statute would even be, dominated discussions for several weeks in the General Assembly. A long-time wedge issue in the Statehouse, it was anti-Semitic graffiti sprayed at a Carmel synagogue last July that gave rise to enough political pressure to see the legisla-

ture pass its first bias crime measure in over a decade.

This issue had a particularly up-and-down journey at the Statehouse. After taking on two very different forms in the Senate, House Republicans opted to disregard the initial measure, Senate Bill 12, altogether. Instead, they inserted Rep. Greg Steuerwald’s “compromise” language into a separate bill. The compromise aspect lies in the fact that its text contains no specific list of protections, but instead references an already existing list from Indiana’s civil rights law, satisfying concerns of most of the rural Republicans.

Republicans heard criticisms on multiple fronts for the final product, with Democrats and some advocacy groups saying they didn’t go far enough on protections, some conservative groups saying they went too far by employing enumerations, and others criticizing their procedural methods. The only version of a bias crime statute to receive public testimony, or even just a committee hearing, was the original form of SB12. Both of the most significant swings of the pendulum on this issue occurred during second hearing floor debate, where there was very little actual debate. That drew ire both inside and outside the Statehouse. Still, Republican leadership stood behind the new sentencing guideline as a win for the state and a long-lasting solution.



Ways & Means Co-Chair Todd Huston delivered a sprawling gaming bill on top of his first budget. (HPI Photo by Jacob Curry)

Gaming compromise

On gaming, despite some late doubts, conferees were able to arrive at a compromise and get another of the session's headline-grabbing bills out in time for sine die. The bill had some predictable drama attached to it, even in the final days of the session, but the version passed by both chambers late Wednesday turned out very similar to the initial conference committee report released Monday morning.

Still, the signal upon the bill's passage wasn't that the continuity meant it was an easy final few days, and it certainly didn't have an easy session. The man who carried the bill in the House, Rep. Todd Huston, ended up voting against his own bill in a 59-36 tally. Most of the controversy on the bill revolved around the casino aspect of the bill, though the sports wagering half also underwent some back-and-forth. In particular, hold-harmless provisions and how to handle the potential move of a casino to Terre Haute were the focal point of debate.

Huston had stripped the bill of its original hold-harmless language for payments from Gary to Hammond, East Chicago, and Michigan City when it came to Ways



State Rep. Regan Hatcher, D-Gary, makes an appeal on the gaming

& Means, expressing his preference that the state should not be involved. The language was later reinserted in conference committee, and also extended to include the city of Evansville. The conference committee also imposed a \$20 million fee for one Gary casino to move inland to Vigo County, payable over five years, but tacked on a \$40 million tax credit for the casino operator. Huston's version of the bill, which passed the House, had the fee at a one-time \$50 million payment and contained no tax credit.

Legislators in both chambers were also keen to pass another big-money bill on Marion County's Capital Improvement Board this session, with hotels, the Indiana Pacers, and a soccer stadium as the big-ticket items. The bill had a fairly smooth ride through the Senate but concerns from Indy's hotel industry led to major changes in the House. The state was pulled out of any discussions of bringing new hotels to Indianapolis, but the end result of the rest of the bill remained largely the same: The Pacers will stay in Indy, the CIB has funding to seek further downtown improvements, and a soccer stadium is likely on the way.

Bosma and Bray both noted the CIB bill's passage as a major economic success in their closing remarks for the session. ❖

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The coup d'état has been averted

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO — The reader may be assured that I enjoy writing on this subject with the same joy and anticipation that one approaches a visit to the dentist. There are days when I would much rather be a sports commentator than one who slices and dices politics. If I were a sports commentator, this week's column would have been about the collapse of the Indiana Pacers in the NBA playoffs.



Alas, instead, I will tackle the attempted coup d'état orchestrated by elements in the former Obama Administration, Democrat operatives, the media and, regrettably, the United States Department of Justice.

Before I begin, I'd like to remind you that I am not a diehard fan of Donald Trump. In fact, I famously (or infamously) declared in the lead-up to the Indiana presidential primary in 2016 that the only way I could vote for Donald Trump would be if his opponent was Satan himself. (Note to self: Be very careful what you say to a national journalist at the end of a long, long interview.)

Needless to say, I found Satan in the form of Hillary Clinton and I cheerfully cast my general election vote for President Donald Trump. That being said, I do not condone, approve, like, admire or support many of the things that the man Donald Trump has said or done both before and after his election as our president. In fact, much of Mr. Trump's behavior has made me want to gag. However, I have learned to separate the conduct of Trump the man from Trump the president.

As president, Donald Trump has done a fairly admirable job. In the areas that are truly important such as the economy, our national defense, judicial appointments and reducing the mindboggling bureaucratic snafus that plague American business, President Trump's tenure has been very good.

This brings me to the sad and troubling realization that the United States has just survived a coup d'état aimed at destroying the president.

Fortunately, this coup has failed. In most countries, the perpetrators would have been taken out back of the Marine barracks in Washington, D. C., and shot. In South America, the principal architects of the coup would

have just been disappeared. But, hey, this is America and in America we will make celebrities of the perpetrators, give them guest slots on CNN and the late-night talk shows. None of this rogues gallery of nefarious characters will be forced to slither into the trash heap of history as they should.

Let's start at the very beginning. The sole focus of the Robert Mueller investigation was to be collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russian government. The basis for launching this investigation and obtaining FISA warrants was the dubious "Steele Dossier," the salacious political hit piece written for Fusion GPS and later sold to the Democrat National Committee and the Clinton campaign.

Please understand this: The two-year-long, \$35 million special investigation of President Trump was launched by a Democrat-purchased and -provided political hit piece joyfully supplied by a Fusion GPS employee, Democrat Nellie Ohr, to her husband, Bruce Ohr, a high-ranking Justice Department official, since demoted for misconduct. Ohr delivered the document to disgraced, fired former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe. McCabe assigned the investigation to rabid anti-Trump FBI Assistant Deputy Director Peter Strzok, since fired for his undisclosed anti-Trump emails between him and his girlfriend, FBI counsel Lisa Page. Mueller dumped Strzok from his investigation because of the conspiratorial nature of the pillow talk emails with Page, including the reference to an "insurance policy" to get rid of Trump should Trump defeat Clinton.

Summary: The Mueller investigation occurred because of a bogus dossier provided by Hillary Clinton's allies to their allies in the Justice Department who abused their power in an attempt to bring down the presidency of Donald Trump. This is criminal and treasonous, regardless of what you think about President Trump.

What was the fruit of the exhaustive investigation recently concluded by the special prosecutor? No collusion with the Russians and no obstruction of justice. Case closed.

Well, the case is not closed. The usual Democrat suspects in Congress, big money men and the media just will not write this sad situation off as another failed political strategy. They intend to use every tool at their disposal

to remove or irreparably injure President Trump before the 2020 presidential election.

Facts and the truth be damned, the destruction of the president is a worthy end to their despicable means. Niccolo Machiavelli would be proud of his Democrat dis-



ciples and their dedication to results over truth.

The case is not closed on the investigation of the men and women who dredged up a Democrat-paid-for dossier and used it to illegally obtain FISA warrants and begin the process of intimidation and legal arm-twisting that led a litany of supporting characters to cop pleas. The Constitution was abused and twisted to suit the political ends of the Democrats. Light needs to be shown into the corners of the Justice Department and we all need to see the roaches run. Failure to fully investigate this abuse of the Justice Department will only lead to more egregious abuses in the future.

The American form of government only works because of an adherence to the rule of law. Once that principle is trashed, other forms of abuse and injustice will also find their home in our government. When injustice becomes prevalent and the rule of law falls to the wicked,

then our country will become no better than some banana republic.

Yes, I understand that many of you wanted Hillary Clinton as president. I understand that you hate Donald Trump for his immigration policies, personal behavior, court appointments, tax cuts, economic success and his Electoral College victory. I get it. You hate him with a purple passion. Message received.

The question to be asked now is, "Do you hate Donald Trump more than you love your country and the Constitution?" The answer to this question will ultimately decide the fate of our nation. God be with us on this one!

❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican Party chairman.

Biden's entry becomes a big test for Buttigieg

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

NASHVILLE, Ind. — Perhaps the most important element in Mayor Pete Buttigieg's presidential fortunes becomes a reality today. Former Vice President Joe Biden kicked off his campaign with a video shot in Scranton, Pa.



How his campaign fares could determine whether Mayor Pete ends up with the Democratic nomination or is consigned as a veep nominee, a future cabinet member or an ex-mayor looking for think-tank work.

Biden's campaign launch ends a tormented pre-candidacy period in which we've watched the deliberations include family angst, age considerations and whether the Obama/Biden vision is still viable in leftward-veering Democratic politics. But it sets up the crux of Buttigieg's generational campaign where his polling surges have been prompted by his JFK "pass the torch" mantra.

It's working thus far. Buttigieg is third in national, Iowa and New Hampshire polling. Gravis Marketing has Buttigieg in third in Iowa with 14%, trailing Bernie Sanders and Biden at 19%. The Granite Poll in New Hampshire has Sanders leading with 30%, followed by Biden at 18% and Buttigieg at 15%. That is remarkable: The mayor of South Bend trails a two-term vice president by just 3%. In a national Monmouth

University poll, Biden led with 27%, Sanders was at 20% and Buttigieg was at 8%, up from 1% in March.

"If Biden does enter the race this week, he starts off with a fairly stable amount of good will from Democrats," said Monmouth pollster Patrick Murray. "We might even expect to see a small bump after his announcement, but the bigger question will be what happens when those voters start taking a closer look at him on the campaign trail. It's a long way to Iowa and a lot can happen. This is the most diverse field of presidential candidates in history, but that doesn't seem to be a major consideration for Democratic voters at this early stage of the campaign. It's probably a large reason why a couple of old white guys are leading the pack right now."

Old white guys haven't fared well in Democratic presidential races in the past. John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama all won nominations in their 40s, and Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Carter were in their early- to mid-50s when they took power.

Former vice presidents don't do well either. Only two of six vice presidents have won the presidency since World War II, Republicans George H.W. Bush and Richard Nixon (in a second attempt). Democrat veeps Hubert Humphrey, Walter Mondale and Al Gore all lost presidential races, and Dan Quayle's 2000 quest ended early, well short of the nomination that went to George W. Bush.

"There's a lot of talk about what lane he's in," a Democratic strategist told The Hill of Biden. "Is he a moderate or a progres-



sive? I think he's trying to be above the fray and above all that."

Therein lies the "lane similarities" between Biden and Buttigieg. Both are likely to campaign as "storytellers" as opposed to trotting out white paper exercises such as the Green New Deal or Medicare for All that would invite specific criticism.

NBC's "Meet The Press" first read explained on Wednesday, "Being a current or former vice president is a real advantage when it comes to name ID, raising money and the potential to clear a field. But the downside is that you don't get to be the new/fresh/different candidate. You own the bad (as well as the good) of the administration you served. And you have a harder time portraying yourself as a change agent. And those potential downsides could end up being Biden's biggest challenges in 2020 – more than age, ideology and a long, long record in public service."

So if Joe Biden falters, it will be Mayor Buttigieg best positioned to pick up support, particularly with the considerable angst that a Sanders nomination would play right into President Trump's wheelhouse of running against a "socialist." Don't underestimate the generational pull that Buttigieg is touting as he works Iowa and New Hampshire.

Buttigieg is also taking aim at Sanders, saying, "I have a hard time seeing the coalition ultimately coming together there," adding that in 2016 "people were refreshed by the novelty of that boldness" of Sanders's ideas, but that they are now less excited.

Buttigieg's week since he kicked off his campaign on April 14 saw him presiding over Dyngus Day celebrations in South Bend on Monday, then to a second CNN Town Hall that night. Appearing at Dyngus Day, Buttigieg said, "In so many ways, South Bend is our message. This is the story of a city that changed its future, changed its trajectory." During his CNN Town Hall Monday night, Buttigieg said President Trump "deserves impeachment" and added, "God doesn't have a political party."

"My role in the process is trying to relegate 'Trumpism' to the dust bin of history," Buttigieg said on CNN. "To me there is no more decisive way to do that, especially to make Republicans abandon this deal with the devil they've made, than by an absolute thumping at the ballot box."

NBC News is reporting that Democratic rivals are now seeking "dirt" on the mayor, filing a flurry of FOIAs in South Bend. Thus far the "dirt" includes the South Bend police tape controversy, his firing of Police Chief Daryl



Boykins during his first year in office, and the 1,000 zombie homes his administration razed in an effort to deal with blight. None of that rises to the so-called silver bullet category. Having said that, running a city can be a complex, even messy endeavor. We've seen mayors running statewide who failed to advance due to pragmatic stances such as tax and fee increases, or how a police or fire controversy has been handled. So, this will be a "stay tuned" aspect of the Buttigieg candidacy.

On the police tape incident, Buttigieg said on CNN that he has not heard the tapes. "These tape recordings were made in a way that may have violated the federal wiretap act," he explained. "I'm not going to violate it even though I want to know what's on those tapes like everybody else does."

Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer called on Buttigieg to immediately release five hidden tapes at the center of a seven-year long court battle over the firing of the city's first-ever African-American police chief, following a new court ruling that the case can now proceed to trial. "Mayor Buttigieg has wasted millions of taxpayer dollars in a seven-year effort to keep these tapes secret and hidden from the public," said Hupfer. "This court battle has gone on long enough and cost far too much. Mayor Buttigieg should release the tapes immediately before it costs the city even a penny more."

Just days after becoming mayor of South Bend, one of his first actions in office was to fire Police Chief Boykins. Boykins vowed to fight his dismissal by Buttigieg, while the South Bend Common Council has also fought to make the tapes public.

The final parallel between Biden and Buttigieg is that both are now in the process of building out national campaigns. Biden has run twice before and has a reputation of lagging in fundraising and stump speech faux pas. A lot of Democratic talent has migrated to some of the other 20 candidates, so Biden will be under pressure to perform, quickly.

The AP reported that Buttigieg is now under the gun to build a viable national campaign apparatus: "There



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are no policy positions on his website. He has virtually no paid presence in the states that matter most. And his campaign manager is a high school friend with no experience in presidential politics. Welcome to the campaign of Pete Buttigieg, the 37-year-old Indiana mayor who has suddenly become one of the hottest names in the Democrats' presidential primary season. Yet there is an increasing urgency, inside and outside of the campaign, that his moment may pass if he doesn't take swift action to build a national organization capable of harnessing the energy he'll need to sustain his surge in the nine months or so before the first votes are cast."

In the AP interview, Buttigieg conceded that his supporters across the country have essentially had to "organize themselves" so far. "We need to make sure we have the organizational strengths to sustain this wave of support that we've been getting for the last almost month and a half now," he said. "It's created some challenges to rise this far this fast, but I would put those in the category of a good problem to have."

Politico reported today that While Biden's campaign manager, Greg Schultz, led Obama's campaign efforts in swing-state Ohio, Beto O'Rourke hired Obama's 2012 deputy campaign manager Jennifer O'Malley Dillon and has enjoyed the support of Paul Tewes, the 2008 Obama campaign's director in first-in-the-nation Iowa. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren signed Joe Rospars, Obama's chief digital strategist in 2008 and 2012, and Emily Parcell, political director for Obama's 2008 Iowa caucus team. Several top former Obama administration officials contributed to Pete Buttigieg.

So Joe and Pete will build, hope followers will come, and will likely compete in the so-called same lane. It may take a June debate moment with the two on the same stage that catalyzes their future trajectories.

National

Biden enters the race this morning

After months of deliberation, former Vice President Joe Biden announced his decision to run for president for a third time this morning with [this video](#), answering one of the biggest outstanding questions about the makeup of the 2020 race. The video begins with Biden talking about Charlottesville, Va., invoking both Thomas Jefferson and neo-Nazi protests in 2017. "That's when we heard the words of the president of the United States ... who said "there are some very fine people on both sides." He said Trump created "a moral equivalency" between haters and those who resist. "If we give Donald Trump eight years in the White House" it will "fundamentally undermine all the core values of the nation." Later today, Biden will attend a fundraiser in Philadelphia, Pa. On Monday, he will hold his first official event in Pittsburgh, Pa. followed by a swing through early voting states like Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina in the coming weeks. ❖

Mayor Pete's final Dyngus dalliance

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Mayor Pete was presented with a "POTUS Pete" shirt, bright red letters on white, as he was introduced Monday at Dyngus Day festivities at the West Side Democratic & Civic Club.

Some in the enthusiastic crowd packing the old club, traditional center for Dyngusing and where Bobby Kennedy campaigned for president, were initially unsure of the meaning of the lettering, referring to Washington alphabet lingo for President of the United States.



But they all knew that South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg is making a big splash nationally in his candidacy for the Democratic nomination

for president. And they couldn't miss all the national news media coverage, TV camera crews and all.

Buttigieg told the crowd that he had urged journalists covering his events in Iowa and New Hampshire and elsewhere to come to South Bend for Dyngus Day to witness the celebrated event in his hometown.

What day? What is it? They didn't know. And the mayor told them: "You've just got to see it and you'll understand."

The Monday-after-Easter event has been celebrated for well over a century in Polish-American neighborhoods on South Bend's west side, with traditions traced back to Poland. Now, it's celebrated all over the area. It's sort of a Polish version of St. Patrick's Day; ethnic food (kielbasa) and music (polka) and abundant liquid refreshment, plus conviviality and crowds that bring campaigning candidates to meet one on one with voters.

Buttigieg called it "politics at its finest." Easy to see why Buttigieg welcomed national coverage. Cheers of "Pete, Pete, Pete" came as he mentioned the presidency. He's at the height of his popularity here in his eighth year as mayor, and it didn't hurt to have the national news media around to see the enthusiastic support in the city he has made so much a part of his campaign.

"South Bend is our message," he told the crowd. Indeed, a central part of his campaign theme is that his city, with a new spirit, has moved on from the decades of gloom and "can't-do" despair after the demise of Studebaker automotive production. He stressed that he never made a Trump-like only-I-can-do-it claim or suggested that he turned around the city single-handedly.

"We grew together," the mayor said, referring to the growth of economic developments, jobs and population in the city and his own growth in political stature to rank among top contenders for the presidential nomination.

"South Bend is back," he declared, setting off more cheers and applause.

"Let the rest of the country learn from the city's story," he said. "Can I count on you to tell the real story . . .?" They shouted affirmatively. And most of the local residents interviewed by the national news media provided positive evaluations of the mayor and his policies. But not all.

Criticism of the mayor in quotes from Regina Williams-Preston, a council member seeking the Democratic nomination for mayor in the May primary, appear in numerous national accounts. She is highly critical of what had generally been hailed as a remarkable achievement, fixing up or tearing down over 1,000 empty and deteriorating homes in 1,000 days. Williams-Preston and some other African-Americans contend that the effort did not result in more affordable housing or better living in lower-income neighborhoods.

He does have the support of other prominent blacks, including City Clerk Kareemah Fowler, the first African-American elected to that post after Buttigieg provided key support for her in winning an election contest with a white police officer once regarded as the favorite.

It was a long Dyngus Day for Buttigieg. He went to a Dyngus site at 5 a.m. for TV interviews. Then, more interviews with national news organizations before going in late morning to unveil a "Solidarity Day" street sign at the site of the city's Solidarity Day observance, an African-American event held on Dyngus Day since 1971. It was started back then by blacks who didn't feel welcome at some Dyngus sites and decided to hold their own event



and welcome all candidates to attend.

He also unveiled a "Dyngus Day" street sign at the West Side Democratic Club and spoke there at the traditional noon introduction of candidates - only Democratic candidates are introduced. Immediately after speaking, Buttigieg flew to New Hampshire for a live CNN town hall meeting from 11 p.m. until midnight.

Some at the Dyngus event wondered why the mayor didn't skip it this year in order to prepare for and arrive fresh for his national TV appearance on CNN. He stressed, however, not only the importance he placed on showing off Dyngus Day for the national news media but also how appearing at the club for his eighth and final time as mayor "is emotional for me." He noted how the Dyngus attendees at the club always "were there for me" in his political activities, to welcome him home from active duty in Afghanistan and to back him in the personal decision to come out as gay and be married.

His husband, Chasten Buttigieg, who has become an effective campaigner and political celebrity in his own right, joined the mayor on the platform and received applause, long and loud. Such a warm reception likely would not have occurred there 20 years ago or even 10.

Buttigieg concluded with a promise: "No matter what happens . . . South Bend will always be home."

Whether he will be home for Dyngus Day in 2021 as POTUS Pete or VP Pete or Secretary of Something Pete or just as former Mayor Pete will be determined over the presidential marathon that has just begun. ❖

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

Another twist in Carmel mayoral race

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — The Republican Carmel mayoral primary has become, well, just weird. Clerk-Treasurer Christine Pauley accused Mayor Jim Brainard of inappropriate email shenanigans.



"I have a peer who am I supposed to work with and looked to as a mentor who I have presenting these types of emails to me," Pauley told WTHR-TV's Scoop Jefferson.

"It's inappropriate. It's inappropriate."

Brainard's team quickly produced a photo of the mayor and Pauley in a warm embrace. "The clerk-treasurer is leaning in close with her hand on his back whispering in his ear. That was on May 2, during a national campaign stop," said city spokeswoman Nancy Heck. "It seems clear at city hall they were interested in developing a relationship more than professionally."

These allegations come on top of a complaint by Hamilton County Democratic Chairman Joe Weingarten that Brainard attempted to "bribe" Fred Glynn from running in the primary. "It's been alleged that Mayor Brainard's campaign offered a bribe to have his opponent Fred Glynn not run against him," charged Democrat Party Chairman Joe Weingarten.

Fox59 reported in late March, "There was a guy who was supposed to be representing me in that meeting.

His name is Dan Hennessey," said Glynn. "He went to discuss polling numbers. He came back and said he saw the polling numbers. It didn't say anything in the polling numbers but he said that they were willing to offer me \$140,000 in campaign cash to not run in the mayor's race."



The Hamilton County Election Board will investigate the claim on May 14, a week after the primary.

At a Carmel meet-up this past week, the two candidates made a joint appearance. Brainard made his pitch, saying that he has added 1,000 acres of parkland, 200 miles of trails since he was first elected in 1995, "and we've built the safest street network in the country." He said "our debt is reasonable" while Carmel is home to 125 corporate headquarters. He also noted that Carmel had 11 armed robberies last year, and "we caught all 11 of them." He said the roundabout network has reduced personal injuries by 80%.

Glynn, a Hamilton County councilman said, "After 24 years, we need new leadership. I think we're putting all our eggs in one basket and we're putting all our debt downtown when other areas need attention. We need more fiscal responsibility in this city." **Primary Horse Race Status:** Likely Brainard.

South Bend: Mueller has big money lead

South Bend voters will see eight names on the Democratic ballot for mayor in the May 7 primary election, but two candidates have stood out from the pack in raising money for their campaigns (Parrott, South Bend Tribune). James Mueller outpaced the field by a hefty margin, raising nearly \$245,000 between Jan. 1 and April 12, according to campaign finance reports that candidates were required to file by Monday. That was followed by Jason Critchlow's \$139,000. Critchlow's campaign spent slightly more than Mueller's, about \$98,000 compared to \$91,000 spent by Mueller, meaning Mueller was left with about \$153,000 cash on hand, compared to Critchlow's \$40,000, entering the campaign's final weeks. Other candidates trailed in terms of fundraising: Lynn Coleman reported raising more than \$19,000, with nearly \$11,000 of that coming as a transfer from his failed congressional campaign in 2016.

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Regina Williams-Preston raised about \$16,600, while Oliver Davis raised about \$15,300. Mueller said his fundraising lead shows that “we’re getting our message out.” “I didn’t have a lot of name ID and hadn’t ever run for public office before this,” Mueller said. “I’m proud to have a lot of support from folks who realize this is a critical moment in our history and we need to keep building on the progress.”

Primary Horse Race Status: Tossup

Buttigieg gave Mueller more than \$100k

“Pete for South Bend,” a holdover from Buttigieg’s mayoral and Democratic National Committee chair campaigns, gave James Mueller’s campaign \$54,500 — \$50,000 cash and \$4,500 worth of polling service (South Bend Tribune). Three people each gave Mueller \$5,000: Michael Browning, chairman of Indianapolis-based Browning Investments; Bob Urbanski, retired South Bend businessman and longtime local Democratic Party funder; and Chris Murphy, 1st Source Bank chairman and CEO.

Muncie: Republicans debate

Republican candidates for mayor of Muncie discussed the relationship between Ball State University and the city, changes to EMS service, the use of TIF districts and more at Tuesday night’s debate (Ohlenkamp, [Muncie Star Press](#)). All three Republican candidates — Tom Bracken, Dan Ridenour and Nate Jones — participated in Tuesday’s debate. Ridenour pushed the need for bipartisan support in tackling city issues. “We understand we are in a minority and we have to work together,” Ridenour said. He added that working in the minority party on city council taught him how to look beyond someone’s party when trying to improve the city. Ridenour is one of only two Republicans currently on Muncie City Council, but frequently finds common ground with Democrat council members. Jones stressed the need to talk to the whole city. According to Jones, he has not made a decision based on political stances and didn’t plan to if he takes office. Bracken said there was already a strong want from certain factions of the Democrats to work together to fix issues they saw in city hall. He believed that both parties had one goal in mind and that is to make a better Muncie. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Leans Ridenour.

Indianapolis: Hogsett has cash lead

Democratic Mayor Joe Hogsett outraised his top Republican challenger, State Sen. Jim Merritt, by a nearly three-to-one margin in the first quarter of the year, according to new campaign finance reports (Colombo, IBJ). Hogsett pulled in \$769,022 from the beginning of January to April 12, while Merritt raised \$266,939 during that period. Hogsett’s take gives the Democrat an even greater fundraising edge for the fall municipal election when the two will likely compete head-to-head, assuming Merritt is successful in the May primary election for Republicans. With the first-quarter results, Hogsett’s cash-on-hand total

is \$3.88 million, which the Hogsett campaign says is a “record cash-on-hand figure for any mayoral pre-primary filling in the history of Indianapolis.” Meanwhile, Merritt’s cash-on-hand figure is \$223,960. That’s substantially less than the Republican challenger raised in roughly the same amount of time in 2015, when then-candidate Chuck Brewer raised \$671,730 from Jan. 1, 2015, to April 1, 2015.

Anderson: Mayor Broderick posts \$222k

The four candidates seeking to replace Democrat Thomas Broderick Jr. as mayor of Anderson have raised a total that’s 10% of the incumbent’s funds. The campaign finance reports were due at the Madison County Clerk’s Office at noon Monday (de la Bastide, Anderson Herald-Bulletin). Broderick started the reporting period that runs from Jan. 1 through April 19 with \$180,827 cash-on-hand. The Broderick campaign reported spending \$11,765 leaving a cash balance of \$222,234. Longtime Republican farmer Herb Likens contributed \$5,000 to Broderick’s campaign. The campaign received a \$1,000 donation from Greg Winkler, executive director of the Anderson Economic Development Department; \$750 from John Paugh, president of Carter Express; \$500 from John Brand; and \$5,000 from the Unified Group. Broderick’s opponent in the Democrat Party primary on May 7 is Terry May. May reported itemized contributions of \$2,552 and nonitemized donations of \$3,350. May’s campaign has spent \$4,344 leaving a cash balance of \$1,558. The campaign received \$2,069 from Dan’s Fish, \$1,280 from Ann Chamberlain and \$995 from C&H Signs. On the Republican primary ballot, there are three mayoral candidates. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Safe Broderick.

Anderson: Smith has narrow money lead

Former Mayor Kevin Smith, Madison County Auditor Rick Gardner and JobSource Director JoAnna Collette are all seeking their party’s nomination (Anderson Herald-Bulletin). Gardner’s campaign reported contributions of \$8,387 and expenditures of \$8,008, leaving cash on hand of \$381. Gardner has spent \$7,437 on the campaign. Smith reported starting the year with \$2,109 for the campaign and received donations of \$3,744. The campaign has \$4,400 currently after spending \$1,453. Collette has provided all \$1,800 for her campaign and has spent \$1,491, leaving a balance of \$309. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

Terre Haute: Bennett has cash advantage

Prospective Democratic challenger Karrum Nasser outraised and outspent Republican Mayor Duke Bennett in the first campaign finance reporting period for the 2019 municipal election ([Terre Haute Tribune-Star](#)). But a starting balance of more than \$139,000 gives the Duke Bennett for Mayor Committee a huge financial advantage, according to campaign reports for the period Jan. 1 through April

12. Bennett has no opponent in the May 7 primary. The three-term incumbent raised \$2,700 and spent \$875.34 during the period, giving him a balance of \$141,056.52. Nasser began the year with \$137.40, raised \$4,350 and spent \$3,715.75, giving him a balance of \$771.65. He listed campaign debts totaling \$4,212.71.

Valparaiso: Murphy has GOP money lead

Valparaiso City Councilman Matt Murphy doesn't have a challenger in next month's municipal primary election, but he's out-raised and out-spent both of his potential opponents in the city's November mayoral race (Russell, NWI Times). Murphy, a Republican, will vie against either Democrat Councilwoman Debora Porter or businessman Bill Durnell in November to replace present Mayor Jon Costas in the city's top role. Costas, a Republican, is not seeking reelection. Murphy began the campaign finance report period with more than \$70,000 cash-on-hand. Since Jan. 1, he's raised \$23,500 and spent more than \$28,000, according to the latest round of campaign finance reports. Porter began the report period with just less than \$4,000 in her campaign fund. She raised \$880 and has spent \$320. Durnell, who is new to politics and began with no funds, has raised just more than \$10,000 and spent about

\$4,800. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Leans Murphy.

Portage: Tight Democrat primary race

In Portage, four Democrats are facing off in the primary, aiming to take on John Cannon, a Republican, who was elected mayor by precinct committee members after the conviction of James Snyder. He previously served as a city councilman (Russell, NWI Times). Economic Development Director Andy Maletta — son of former Portage Mayor Sammie Maletta — has so far just out-raised Councilwoman Sue Lynch. Maletta started with nothing in his coffers, raised just more than \$32,000 and spent about \$15,000. Lynch began with \$10,000 in her campaign account, has raised \$31,000 and spent just less than \$20,000 on the primary campaign. Clerk-Treasurer Chris Stidham began with \$7,500, raised just less than \$9,000 and has spent about \$9,700. Realtor Leo Hatch Jr. began with nothing and has raised \$5,475. Of that, \$5,000 came from himself, according to the report. He has spent \$2,350. Cannon, who is unchallenged in the primary, began the 3½-month accounting period with \$90 in his campaign account. He has raised just less than \$4,000 and has spent about \$2,600. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Tossup. ❖

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What Indiana Makes, Makes Indiana

Braun spends his early days on health care

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Mike Braun entered the U.S. Senate last January with the government shut down. As a CEO, the notion of any organization coming to a halt due to a lack of compromise is a foreign one, but Sen. Braun finds himself in the inert world of Congress where even a good idea can take a decade to pass.

His reaction to the shutdown was to propose a bill that would prevent congressional paychecks when that occurs. It has no chance of passage, but it provides early, symbolic notice that he's uninterested in BS. He is putting drug companies and insurers on notice that if changes don't come to that gigantic sector of the economy, "Medicare for all" could become the alternative.

When we sat down with Braun last Wednesday at Shapiro's Deli at Keystone at the Crossing, it was just hours before the Mueller report became public. We didn't talk about that, but in a follow-up question, I asked Braun if he had read the full report, did he have specific comments on Section I (collusion) and Section II (obstruction of justice), and whether American campaigns should accept help and resources from foreign governments.

Braun declined to comment further, with his office sending me this statement: "Attorney General Barr kept his promise and provided as much transparency on the Mueller report as was consistent with the law, which I strongly supported. Indeed, the report is unprecedented in its level of transparency. President Trump provided unfettered access to his campaign's records and his personnel to clear his name and now the American people deserve to know how this groundless investigation into the Trump campaign was launched in the first place. Now that the report is public, it is clear there was no collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign and that President Trump did not engage in obstruction of justice. It's time for the country to move forward and focus on real issues like delivering solutions to lower the cost of health care and keeping our red hot economy roaring."

What we did discuss at length were those "real issues" such as health care costs, which was a major thrust

in his upset victory over U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly last fall, and immigration and the border situation, which also played a major role in his victory. In other recent interviews, Braun has described the "gummed up" process of this dysfunctional Senate. He is engaging the freshman class of senators – notably Rick Scott of Florida and Mitt Romney of Utah – to forge health care solutions. He chastised his own party for seeking to repeal Obamacare (which he believes is also dysfunctional) without a credible plan to replace it.

In a Senate meeting with President Trump last month, he urged the president to act, and that produced Trump's vow for Republicans to become the "party of health care." That gave Majority Leader Mitch McConnell indigestion, but as you'll read below, it may be Braun who forges the "replace" part of the repeal-and-replace equation.

Here is our HPI Interview with Sen. Braun:

HPI: You get to Washington and the government is shut down. What are some of your initial impressions?

Braun: Yeah, we had to get through all of that. It was good to get that behind us. So often when the government shuts down, Republicans and conservatives get blamed for it. In this case, it was the issue of border security and Trump said, "We opened up the government" and he wanted to get a border security bill through. That was a tricky dynamic because it was also a budget bill.

Five of the seven appropriation bills went through at the same time and it kind of complicated that vote. Anyway, we got through it and I've been doing things focused on reforming the place. That's why I came up with a bill that Governor Rick Scott, now Sen. Rick Scott, co-authored with me: No budget, no pay-check. We're trying to get rid of senatorial pensions.

HPI: Any chance those pass?

Braun: No, but it shows you're there for more than to just nestle in and accept business as usual. Nothing has a chance of getting (done) quickly there

anyway. It took 11 or 12 years to get the criminal justice reform through. It finally got 87 votes in the Senate. Anything you tackle there happens over many, many years.

HPI: Isn't that going to drive you nuts? You're a CEO. You're used to ...

Braun: But you're there for the conversation and the fact that you're going to weigh in on whatever does happen. Yes, that's frustrating. Inherently, like you have to slow your metabolism down and get used to that. But I kind of knew that going into it. You have a big microphone to talk about things. I'm not going to sit back.



I'm not going to go there to not at least talk about what's wrong with the place and try to get others to buy into it. You might get a little victory here and there. Who knows?

HPI: Let's talk about health care. It was a key topic in your Senate race. You did a lot of innovative things at Meyer Industries. As a small businessman, I've had this conversation with Todd Young and just about every Republican colleague of yours in the delegation. I'm getting hammered. My monthly premiums have gone from \$440 a month to \$913 this year. And that's with a \$5,000 deductible.

Braun: That's crazy.

HPI: Help me. What can you do?

Braun: First of all, the fact that there are individual payers and policies with just a few individual employees and you have to interact with this big monster of a health care industry, especially these health insurance (companies), that shouldn't be the case. When it came to covering pre-existing conditions, no cap on coverage, it won't be an issue for us, having kids on the plan until they're 26... mine are out of the nest. That was part of Obamacare. We shouldn't be discussing that any more. Most Americans and Hoosiers believe that should be the case. It was just done through Obamacare and big health care. It was doomed to fail because of costs. That's why your premiums went from \$400 to \$900. The insurance industry has, in the health care industry, benefited from a system that has been broken for many years. They don't want to change it because they all make a lot of money at it. It's reflected in the price you pay for your health insurance.

My mantra is, "Hey, you guys are smart. Do you really want the federal government to be your only business partner? Don't you think things will be a little different when that occurs? Fix yourself." The bills I've come out with are prodding them to become transparent and competitive. Do things like all other businesses, to compete for the health care dollar. It's almost like an entitlement through insurance policies that have gone way out of sight because of costs and doesn't allow you and I, as users of health care, to see any of the costs. We just gripe about how expensive it is. You pay it through your premium. You never pull your wallet out when you pay for health care. It ought to be the opposite where consumers are engaged and have choices. You, as a consumer, ought to be pooling with an association or other small companies. Insurance companies don't want to do it because they couldn't sell a policy where they wouldn't make as much money on (it). If that were the case, you'd probably be paying less than \$400 a month. I found a way to do that, but most people don't take the time and energy to take on the industry.

HPI: Your comments to the Journal Gazette this past week where you said, let's stop talking repeal unless we have a plan to replace... You know, there are stunt con-

gressmen and stunt senators who spew rhetoric and take votes that are meaningless, like the 50 votes to repeal Obamacare that had no chance of passage, with no viable plan to replace. And then there are those who dig down into the details and come up with proposals that make sense. I'm hoping you're not going to be the stunt senator; you're going to be the senator that's going to develop a plan to find some traction and make it into law. Describe that process.

Braun: The plan if we want to avoid (high costs) is the plan where the government is the payor of all health care, which is Medicare for all. That will actually lower the costs. The government will say, "This is what I'm paying currently." Medicare and Medicaid pay less for particular procedures; the private health insurance industry, where most people get their health care coverage through, is paying those (higher) bills. The countries that do that, the costs are lower. I don't know how that's going to work in the U.S. because we've been used to a system that is not producing. But we also don't want to do some of the



things that could occur with government-paid-for health coverage which would be like rationing, not getting the quality. Ironically, with most health care we're not ranked in the top 25. I want to create a system that engages individuals to have some skin in the game. Otherwise, the only way it can work is if the government does it for us, because it's the only cudgel with a heavy hand to take on the health care industry. And then it will be the industry bargaining with the government and they will end up getting less because the government will say, "I'm paying you this much and that's it." That sounds simple, but I think there will be trade-offs with it. I'm trying to prod the industry to be welcoming of transparency and competition, starting with drug prices. So they're forced to throw that information out there and then individuals with some skin in the game have incentives to shop around. With everything else, prices come down because consumers shop for lower prices. Just like a lot of drugs, generics are \$10 here or \$35 somewhere else. It wouldn't happen like that in other transparent markets. My idea is to start the process to get the industry to fix itself before it gets into business with the federal government only, which will happen.

HPI: So, are you having talks with the health care industry?

Braun: I'm putting bills out there. Hey, you've got to start publishing your prices so we can see what they are.

HPI: The reaction has been ...?

Braun: It has to make it through the Senate first. They know that's probably better than being in business with government only through Medicare for all. But I'm not sure they think ... maybe it's not urgent enough for them. They have been straddling, knowing that the day of reckoning is probably coming, but haven't had government,

through bills like this, force them to do something.

HPI: So, are you forming alliances with Rick Scott and Mitt Romney and Sen. Cassidy who have been there and done that? Talk about your relationships both within the industry, and also with this new group of senators you came in with.

Braun: I'm working on the industry first of all. You know this can't keep going. The Brian Howey's are complaining too much, as everyone else is. I can't expect them to do what we did (at Meyer Industries) where we found a method. I just had the nerve to do it and I got my employees to buy into it. All that was is that on any minor health care, there are no co-payments. You use your deductible to shop around for whatever you need. I forced them to have skin in the game and then I gave them tools. There are transparency tools out there: You can make a phone call like I did when I had a generic prescription renewed. That's when I found out it was \$35 one place and \$10 at one of six or seven other places in Jasper. You know why? I at least made the effort to shop. That's what I'm trying to do, convince the industry to start some of these things through introducing my bills. Hopefully, I'll get some Democratic buy-in along with the senators who are already working on it – Barasso, Cassidy, Mitt Romney will pay attention to it. And Rick Scott.

HPI: So you're forming a bond with those guys?

Braun: Yeah. We're talking. Hopefully, we'll get some of that through the legislative finish line and get a Democrat in the House to vote for it. Because they're going to try and lower costs in the meantime knowing they are not going to get "Medicare for All" across the finish line. That's not going to pass in the Senate.

HPI: Have you had chance to talk about these ideas with President Trump since you got to Washington?

Braun: Sure.

HPI: Since the campaign?

Braun: He was over in the Senate two weeks ago right after the Mueller report. I was happy that came out and we'll see what the full report says when it comes out on Thursday. It doesn't look like there's anything, if you're scrounging through the details, that's going to eat up more time up to this point.

HPI: Do you think President Trump is open if you and Sen. Cassidy or Romney come up with something on the health care front?

Braun: At the tail end he said, "By the way, Republicans are going to lead on health care."

HPI: But that caused a lot of heartburn for people like Mitch McConnell ...

Braun: That's because we weren't ready. You've got guys like me and Rick Scott, who know something about it. Cassidy and some of the others have been working at it as part of the system. We're working at it to disrupt the health care system. So, I don't know if they've been as aggressive as they needed to be. But we're all talking together and hopefully we'll get a plan together that gets fleshed out before 2020 that we can talk about, or the Democrats will win the discussion again. Whether it will win the election ... they've got to talk about the Green New Deal, the cost for Medicare for all, free college tuition and getting rid of the electoral process. That's going to occupy a lot of what they're doing. They'd be a lot smarter if they sat on some of those things until after 2020.

HPI: Have you found some Democrats you can work with?

Braun: Sure.

HPI: I've been watching Todd Young churn out all sorts of bills with Democratic co-sponsors.

Braun: Chris Van Hollen on the Budget Committee and Tim Kaine and a few others, we were sitting across the table from one another that day and I was routinely voting against their amendments, and they were routinely voting against our amendments. I turned to Rick Scott and said, "Hey, Chris Van Hollen has got a nice amendment here on prescription drug prices and it looks like it could be ours." I said, "I'm going to vote for it. Why not?" Rick said, "I will, too" and then every other Republican who came after us did, including the committee chair. That was a sign that maybe we shouldn't be saying "no" just because it was the other side's idea.

HPI: I'm sensing the people want to see some action.

Braun: They want to see that. Who wouldn't be for lowering drug prices by making the industry accountable and transparent? Who wouldn't be for that?


HPI: So, that's how you change the dynamic – by building these bonds and also putting the industry on notice?

Braun: You do it by leading, just like I led basically as a lone soldier, taking on the insurance companies. When I tell people that I crafted a plan and, yes, you've got skin in the game, you're going to pay for some stuff, but I pay 100% outside the deductible so there's no co-insurance. Most people don't think about that unless they get



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really sick or have a bad accident. Then they've got to pay up to a stop-loss. I got rid of that. I covered pre-existing conditions, no cap on coverage and your kids get to be on the plan, and it costs only \$75 a month for an individual. You never heard that in the campaign. All they said was we've got a \$5,000 deductible.

HPI: I ignored all of these TV ads.

Braun: If you lead, if you're willing to take on the status quo, you do things differently than most freshmen senators would do... and just sit back and go with the flow, I'm not going to do that.

HPI: Let's talk about the border situation.

Braun: The border situation is a bona fide mess. And a great thing is Democrats are all on record as saying that a year or two ago until it became Trump's mission. Anybody who has been watching the news can't say that's not a crisis. You have people charging the border, getting across in so many ways. Families now dominating who's coming across, using the system to where they can claim asylum, get in the country and we have no ability to process them on a timely basis. Who knows what has happened.

HPI: President Trump says he's going to cut off aid to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, the triangle countries. Rep. Castro has come out and said we need a Marshall Plan for Central America to stop the reasons for people who want to come here in the first place.

Braun: Of course, there needs to be something happening at the source of the problem.

HPI: Shouldn't we put together a Marshall Plan to address that?

Braun: We've got to do something to address the issue, otherwise people are going to keep coming. I think they're coming for two reasons. Lives in those three countries are difficult. Coming all the way through Mexico says those are real issues. President Trump says we're full.

HPI: I don't know if I believe that. Our rural areas are emptying out.

Braun: I don't know if I believe that either, but I think we're fully occupied with dealing with what's at the border. I don't think we can take more of what's already happening. It all starts with securing the border, getting

the resources to do that, and then putting the resources out there to process the people who want to come here. Maybe finding some money to discourage them from coming so they don't do that. Find out who is coming with legitimate asylum issues and who's coming just because they think they can come into the country because we've got a porous border.

HPI: Jeff Cardwell has worked diligently in El Salvador on all sorts of humanitarian issues there. Have you talked with him?

Braun: I have not talked to him, but all of these discussions need to be had. Since we have avoided this for years and years, both sides, everybody was willing to spend \$25- or \$30 billion two or three years ago, now it's Trump's main issue. I do think Democrats have calculated it benefits them politically, demographically, to have rather loose borders. That's why they've changed their tune. We've got to stem the flow of the problem in the first place and then hurry up and start addressing the problem.

HPI: Indiana farmers are really feeling the heat on the tariffs. They are now in their planting season.

Braun: They are feeling the heat because their markets are terrible beyond the tariffs. They are getting hit with everything. I think tariffs are a short term tool. I think everybody agrees with Canada and Mexico, that needs to be resolved. China just exports four times as much here as we do there. I think their economy is starting to struggle. I think we put the Chinese thing to rest in some fashion. Whatever they agree to, I wouldn't trust them. You have to get the USMCA, the old NAFTA, across the finish line, and the steel and aluminum tariffs are still there, and you probably need to do something with it. I think they've agreed to other things to be fixed and we need to find a way to get around that. I think Trump believes they're necessary to some extent with Canada and Mexico. I say they are not with them. I say they are a long-term stick with China if they don't change their behavior quickly.

HPI: Can the USMCA trade deal pass the Senate?

Braun: I think the USMCA will pass if the aluminum and steel tariffs aren't part of it. ❖

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Peter Hamby, Vanity Fair: Now that Pete Buttigieg is firmly established as a credible candidate rather than just a Twitter-friendly novelty act, his financial support is growing more serious by the day. While he netted over \$4 million from donors giving under \$200 in the first quarter, \$2.5 million came from large donations, a sum likely to balloon in the coming months. Many L.G.B.T. donors who gave early to multiple candidates are now either firmly in Buttigieg's corner or lining up to host big money events for his campaign. Broadway mogul Richie Jackson hosted a finance event for Buttigieg in New York in April. This week, Buttigieg traveled to Chicago for an event with Democratic donors Eric Janssen and Marco Zerega. In May, Buttigieg will attend a fundraising event in the Washington area hosted by lobbyist Steve Elmendorf, a top Hillary Clinton bundler who recently told CNBC that he's fully in Buttigieg's corner in the 2020 race. Buttigieg, of course, has attracted financial support from plenty of straight bundlers as well, including from well-connected Obama and Clinton donors like Susie Tompkins-Buell, Barry Karas, and Orin Kramer. But in conversation after conversation, it's becoming clear that the high-dollar L.G.B.T. donor community has never been as excited about a presidential candidate as they are right now. "The gay community should speak freely and clearly, and to have someone on the national and international stage is meaningful to us," said Rufus Gifford, the former Ambassador to Denmark who was Obama's National Finance Director in 2012. "As a public member of the gay community, it's an inspiring voice without a doubt. I have maxed out to Pete because of what you are seeing." Put simply, Buttigieg's identity is helping him tap into a deep reservoir of politically-engaged wealth that has, until recently, been watching the Democratic race somewhat tepidly. If Buttigieg manages to post a monster fundraising number in the second quarter of this year, it won't just be because small-donor millennials were fired up about his CNN Town Hall appearances or his viral piano covers of Spoon songs. It will be thanks to a growing set of major fundraisers, many of them gay and lesbian, who are coalescing behind him early and fast, delivering substantial checks that other Democratic candidates are choosing to leave on the big money table. ❖



Alan Greenblatt, Governing: Gov. Eric Holcomb's success is only surprising when you realize how unlikely it was for him to become governor in the first place. At 6'5", Holcomb makes for an unlikely Cinderella – he habitually wears cowboy boots, cowboy boots, not glass slippers – but his rise to the top included as many twists and turns as a fairy tale. Holcomb has been in and around politics and government for his entire post-Navy career, serving as a state Republican Party chair and working as a top aide to Gov. Mitch Daniels, to a member of Congress and to a senator. But he'd never held elective office himself, failing at his one bid for the state House in

2000. Fate intervened. While he was driving home from a campaign event in February 2016 to catch the Super Bowl, Holcomb got a call from Gov. Pence, informing him that the incumbent lieutenant governor was leaving to run the state's community college system. Holcomb accepted the job, only to find himself thrust from an understudy role to the top of the state ticket after Donald Trump tapped Pence that July as his running mate. Pence had already won the GOP nomination for a second term, so it was up to a party committee to choose a new nominee. To win the nomination, Holcomb had to overcome considerable sentiment in favor of two sitting members of Congress. But Pence pushed hard for him, and he prevailed on the second committee ballot. With the Trump-Pence ticket carrying Indiana by 19 points, Holcomb ended up winning election easily. "We had 105 days to build the airplane in flight, raise \$14 million and spend it and land safely, which we did," Holcomb says. Now that he's midway through his third year, the Indiana political class seems almost to have forgotten how many unlikely dominoes had to fall in order for Holcomb to end up as governor. At the time of his election, plenty of people, including some GOP stalwarts, wondered whether this relatively unknown figure had enough experience to fill the job. No one is saying that now. His trajectory toward the governorship was so unusual that no one wants to say his reelection next year is a slam-dunk certainty, but it's hard to come up with a realistic scenario in which he doesn't win a second term. "He's a great governor," says longtime Republican House Speaker Brian Bosma. "I don't want to suggest my expectations were low, but he's certainly exceeded, greatly, what I expected. I've seen each of the five previous governors really mad. I've never seen Holcomb mad. I've honestly never seen him in a bad mood or worked up about something." ❖

Juan Williams, South Bend Tribune: Is Pete Buttigieg the Jesse Jackson of his time? Or is Buttigieg the Barack Obama of his time? Jackson took the black rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s "from the streets to the suites" when he campaigned to be the Democratic party's presidential nominee in the 1980s. Twenty years later, Obama blasted his way into the stratosphere of American and global political power when he won the presidency and sealed the reality of black people as full participants in American politics. In the last 25 years, public acceptance of gay people has changed so much that Buttigieg is on track to skip the Jackson-like struggle and go straight to Obama's winner's circle. He currently trails only former Vice President Joe Biden and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) among Iowa Democratic primary voters in a Monmouth poll. And Buttigieg claims to have more than 65,000 donors to his campaign. That number qualifies him to be on the stage for the first Democratic primary debate. Keep in mind that Buttigieg is not hiding his homosexuality as he rises in the polls. ❖

Holcomb signs abortion bills

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric Holcomb has signed into law two measures approved by the Republican-controlled General Assembly that further restrict the availability of abortion in Indiana. The Republican chief executive did not issue any statement in connection with his enactment of House Enrolled Act 1211 and Senate Enrolled Act 201 (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). The governor's office announced Wednesday evening that Holcomb had signed the legislation, along with more than two dozen other proposals recently advanced to his desk by the Indiana House and Senate. House Enrolled Act 1211, which takes effect July 1, prohibits dilation and evacuation abortions, which the law calls "dismemberment abortion," except when a woman otherwise would suffer "substantial and irreversible physical impairment of a major bodily function."

The procedure is considered by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists to be the safest method for completing an abortion after 13 weeks of pregnancy. But anti-abortion lawmakers claim the procedure is "barbaric" because it requires a doctor to use forceps, tongs, scissors or similar instruments to remove a fetus from a woman's uterus. State records show just 27 women obtained an abortion in Indiana using the procedure in 2017, out of 7,778 total abortions. The second new law, which also takes effect July 1, expands the state's conscience-protection statute for medical professionals who do not want to perform an abortion or participate in any procedure that results in an abortion, including prescribing, administering or dispensing an abortion-inducing drug. The Indiana Code already authorizes physicians, hospital employees and health clinic staffers to opt out of providing abortion care.



The new statute gives the same right to nurses, pharmacists and physician assistants who are not directly employed by a hospital or health clinic.

IURC rejects Vectren plant

EVANSVILLE — The Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission Wednesday rejected a Vectren proposal to build an 850-megawatt natural gas-fueled power plant to replace its aging coal-burning A.B. Brown Generating Station (Wilson, [Evansville Courier & Press](#)). The IURC order took Vectren to task for not adequately considering various combinations of other less expensive alternatives, especially renewable energy sources, of which it said there was a lack of evidence that Vectren "...made a serious effort to determine the price and availability of renewables." In denying Vectren preapproval for the new power plant — which was projected to cost \$781 million — the commission cited the potential financial risk to customers who would be stuck paying for it over a 30-year period in a time when the energy industry is rapidly evolving. According to the 38-page order posted on the IURC website: "The proposed large scale single resource investment for a utility of Vectren South's size does not present an outcome which reasonably minimizes the potential risk that customers could sometime in the future be saddled with an uneconomic investment or serve to foster utility and customer flexibility in an environment of rapid technological innovation."

NRA facing internal discord

INDIANAPOLIS — The National Rifle Association is used to battling forces that criticize its fiery and unbending efforts to protect gun rights. But as the group gathers in Indianapolis this week for its annual convention, the NRA may be facing its toughest foe in decades: its own

members (AP). NRA insiders and longtime observers describe an organization at war with itself over a central question: Has it strayed too far from its original mission of gun safety and outdoor shooting sports and become too political? It is rare for the NRA to betray any hint of internal turmoil. But it erupted very publicly recently when the NRA sued its longtime public relations firm, Ackerman McQueen, accusing it of refusing to hand over financial records to account for its billings. In 2017 alone, the NRA paid the firm \$40 million. "The battle in the NRA board that must have occurred with this breakup of a decades-long relationship must have been something," said Adam Winkler, a professor at the University of California Los Angeles School of Law and gun rights expert.

Floyd County coroner dies

NEW ALBANY — Floyd County Coroner David Moore, who also served 20 years as the Greenville Town Marshal and as a volunteer for the department, died Monday. He was 72 ([News & Tribune](#)). Moore, a Republican, was elected coroner in 2016. Prior to being elected coroner he was president of the Greenville Town Board.

Bicknell police chief arrested

BICKNELL, Ind. — Authorities say a southwestern Indiana police chief has been arrested for allegedly trying to interfere in a misconduct investigation (AP). Indiana State Police say a Bicknell police officer went to the Knox County prosecutor's office Monday and turned over a laptop that possibly contained evidence in the misconduct investigation involving another officer. State police say Bicknell police Chief Terry Stremming went to the office Tuesday, demanded the return of the laptop and tried to remove it. State police say Stremming allegedly put his hands on an investigator from the prosecutor's office as he tried unsuccessfully to take the laptop.