

Myers talks teachers, guns & drugs

Democrat governor candidate assails President Trump

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – When Howey Politics Indiana sat down with Dr. Woody Myers mid-day Tuesday at his office in the Conrad Hotel, he was putting the finishing touches on an op-ed article reacting to two weeks of massacres across America.

“Do Something,” Myers wrote. “That was the plea Monday in Dayton. And the day before in El Paso. And before that in Gilroy, and before that in many other communities across the



country. Our country is in pain. Our nation is in shock.”

The former Indiana and New York City health commissioner then talked about his Democratic gubernatorial challenge to Gov. Eric Holcomb, who dodged questions about President Trump’s incendiary rhetoric in the weeks before this spate of atrocities.

“He’s desperately trying to hold to the minority of people who think his style and approach is the right way to go,” Myers said of Trump. “It is not. What disappoints me even more than that is within the Republican Party, I know there are good people. I know

Continued on page 4

American carnage spark

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – In this very space a week ago, the analysis was that after a meticulously calculated national ascension based on tightly controlled talking points, Vice President Mike Pence was essentially consigning his future to the fate of President Trump. And the president had decided his best path to reelection would be a series of racially motivated tropes, tweets and MAGA rallies.



It would be a “reckless” course, with my penultimate paragraph reading: “This is flint and spark in extreme drought conditions. President Trump is not uniting Americans, he is exploiting the urban/rural divide along racial lines that are pulled



“There is a great appetite, and I mean a very strong appetite, for background checks. And I think we can bring up background checks like we’ve never had before.”

- President Trump, predicting some kind of background check legislation will pass.



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taut these days. Just ask the folks in South Bend. Whether you perceive it as 'racist' is a personal call. An errant spark goaded by the right quote at the wrong time could have devastating consequences."

This was published two days before the mass shooting atrocities in El Paso and Dayton.

Those are the latest in a series of 22 massacres this year, claiming just under 100 lives. The El Paso shooter – who I will not lend the sought-after infamy by mentioning his name – published a manifesto on 8chan just moments before opening fire, killing at least 22 people. It was teeming with white nationalist diatribes against "race-mixing" along with the "Hispanic invasion of Texas." The Dayton shooter appears to have sought association with Antifa, the leftist bookend to white supremacy. Isolate the fringe 1% of the American bell curve and you'll find the two latest cowardly shooters.

The problem for Trump and, by association, Pence was the former's own rhetoric warning of "invasions," and amplified on Facebook by the Trump campaign and the Prosper Group based in Indianapolis.

The searing Exhibit A here was a May MAGA rally in Panama City when Trump described a Latino "invasion," asking the crowd, "How do you stop these people? You can't." Someone in the crowd yelled: "Shoot them." The audience cheered and Trump smiled before quipping, "Only in the Panhandle can you get away with that statement."

I watched the folks behind Trump when he made these troubling quips. Many thought it was a real knee-slapper, but there was a woman on the left reacting with a bit of smiling shock, the kind of expression one might have reacting to a ribald joke at a formal event. There appeared to be

an African-American mother and her two children above and to the right of the president, who reacted with stone faces. Shooting dark-skinned folks shouldn't be funny.

So it took just a couple of days for this flint and spark to set fire. Before the dead could be laid to rest in Ohio and Texas, there was an incident at Times Square in New York City Tuesday night. A motorcycle backfired, setting off a chaotic stampede. A similar scenario occurred at a Utah shopping mall after a sign fell. It's in the American psyche now. This is a jittery nation caught in a cycle of atrocity. If you go to a movie theater, a mall, a ballgame or the Indiana



State Fair, in the back of your mind there could be a shooter, a shadowy figure stepping into the street with a 150-round magazine. The Dayton shooter killed nine and injured 26 in a mere 30 seconds before gallant police killed him.

Thirty seconds.

We can speculate that to the credit of Pence (we don't know for sure because Pence World is beyond contact), perhaps after the "Send her back" chants of Greenville, N.C., the week before, the veep may have used his Monday lunches with the president to urge him to back off. That would be consistent with Pence's careful calculations. At the MAGA rally in Cincinnati last Thursday, the crowd did not chant, nor did Trump thumb

his nose at the four "Squad" congresswomen he had urged to "go back" to their native countries, which for three of them is America.

But the Panama City MAGA rally became the link. Presidential candidate and El Paso native Beto O'Rourke was asked by CNN's Eric Brader whether Trump's rhetoric incited the shooter with an anti-immigrant manifesto. "What do you think? You know the s--- he's been saying. He's been calling Mexican immigrants rapists and criminals. I don't know, like, members of the press, what the f---?"

South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg added, "White nationalism is evil – and it is inspiring people to commit murder, and it is being condoned at the highest levels of the American government – and that has to end."

Acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney said on NBC's "Meet The Press" that President Trump now realizes white nationalism is a problem. "I don't think it's at all fair to sit here and say that he doesn't think that white nationalism is bad for the nation," Mulvaney said. "You cannot be a white supremacist and be normal in the head. These are sick people. You know it, I know it, the president knows it. And this type of thing has to stop. And we have to figure out a way to fix the problem, not figure out a way to lay blame."

I have not used my journalism career to define and out racists. I haven't needed to. Whether President Trump has crossed the line is a perception found in the hearts and minds of anyone who reads these words. In a political context, as I observed last week, the incendiary rhetoric leaves Trump open to the charges of reckless exploitation. And, by association, Mike Pence.

I have pointed out to my readers that within the Indiana context, in my 40 years of political reporting and 25 years publishing HPI, I cannot recall a gubernatorial, congressional, legislative, statewide or mayoral candidate campaigning with anything even approaching racially divisive rhetoric. The closest example might have come in 1992 when Republican Timothy Bookwalter took a cardboard cutout of Attorney General Pamela Carter with him to campaign events (Carter is African-American).

Bookwalter lost.

Whether Pence can keep Trump toned down over the next 15 months will be the challenge of his political career. His political fate may rest with how successful he is. Nick, Marty, Bill and the boys in the Pence backshop might keep in mind that in 2024, the veep's most likely opponent will be former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley. She exited the Trump administration before the most racially overt chapters of the Trump reelect were set



South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley outside the Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston in 2015.



in motion.

As governor of South Carolina, she was in office during the Mother Emanuel massacre in Charleston in 2015. "I know what that rhetoric can do. I saw it happen," Haley said. She also assailed candidate Trump for not forcefully disavowing

support from white supremacists.

"I will not stop until we fight a man that chooses not to disavow the KKK," Haley said. "That is not a part of our party, that is not who we want as president. We will allow not allow that in our country."

In December 2018, Gov. Haley signed a bill removing the Confederate flag from the Statehouse grounds in Columbia. "I think the more important part is it should have never been there," she said. "These grounds are a place that everybody should feel a part of. What I realized now more than ever is people were driving by and felt hurt and pain. No one should feel pain."

So this is the future contrast that will face Vice President Pence. His association with President Trump will forever define who he is. The coming 15 months will determine how these chapters will be viewed, written and perceived. ❖

Dr. Myers, from page 1

they know that what President Trump is doing is wrong. I know they, in their hearts, want to speak out, but they are afraid. They are cowards. Until they get over this fear and cowardice, they are going to be extremely poor examples for the young Republicans coming up in the state today."

In his op-ed, Myers called for a multi-government level approach. "A governor has no higher duty than to help protect the citizens of the state," Myers said. "And that protection is required before, during and after gun violence. Stronger federal gun laws (like mandatory background checks) are important, but not the only answer. Better systems to identify and to report those at high risk for committing mass murder (like law enforcement monitoring of online threats and 'cooling off' periods and screening of those accused of domestic violence) before they can purchase firearms, is important, but, again, not the only answer.

"This epidemic will require far more than thoughts and prayers," he wrote. "What we need, more than ever, now, is the immediate and active collaboration between law enforcement and public health leaders, gun safety experts, psychologists and psychiatrists to 'do something' – something more – to solve the problems. We need our state legislators and our mayors and our congressional representatives to cooperate effectively and urgently to determine what new steps we take at the local, state and federal levels to make it less likely that you and I and our friends and loved ones suffer like Dayton. Like El Paso. Like Chicago. Like Noblesville West Middle School. And like Indianapolis Martindale-Brightwood, where I grew up."

This is Myers' second run for public office. He lost in a 7th CD caucus to replace the late U.S. Rep. Julia Carson in 2008, when he kicked off his campaign in July outside the Wishard Hospital emergency room where he once worked and taught.

Today he is running for governor in an extreme political climate. Here is our interview:

HPI: The political climate unfolding before us this past month has been unlike any I've seen in 40 years of reporting and 25 years publishing HPI. You might have to go back to the George Wallace campaign in 1968 to find an equivalent. We have a president who is using incendiary rhetoric that is divisive and designed to exploit urban/rural divides, racial divides. What are your thoughts of what we've witnessed over the past month or so? And how

do you believe it will impact Indiana?

Myers: The climate is odd, the climate is problematic, the climate is different than it used to be early in my political career. When I was state health commissioner back in the 1980s, Democrats and Republicans were far more collegial with each other. We didn't pass legislation on how kids with illness were treated in schools, who made the decisions on medical grounds or other grounds, until the Senate Health Committee led by Republican Pat Miller and the House Health Committee led by Democrat Charlie Brown got together and decided, "We have to fix this," and put legislation together that passed both houses and was signed by Gov. Orr. That's how we used to solve problems. We used to collaborate and figure out ways to create win-win situations. I don't think we're doing that anywhere near as much as we used to. Indiana has been a state where after the election, the hatchet got buried. Legislators frequently got together and had a beer or two and figured out ways to solve problems. Then you could navigate in committee hearings or on the floor. That type of full-on collaboration and cooperation needs to come back. If I can help to induce that I will absolutely take whatever time is required to do so. I want to see that return.

HPI: We've seen rhetoric from President Trump like no other president. I observed this past week that I have never seen a political candidate in Indiana running for governor, Congress, the General Assembly, statewide or mayor use the kind of racially charged rhetoric as Trump has. Any observations?

Myers: President Trump is appealing to his perceived base. He's doing so in a variety of different ways, throwing spaghetti against the wall to see if it sticks. If something doesn't work, he tries something else. He's desperately trying to hold to the minority of people who think his style and approach is the right way to go. It is not. What disappoints me even more than that is within the Republican Party, I know there are good people. I know they know that what President Trump is doing is wrong. I know they, in their hearts, want to speak out, but they are afraid. They are cowards. Until they get over this fear and cowardice, they are going to be extremely poor examples for the young Republicans coming up in the state today. Susan Brooks, I commend for finding her courage, albeit late in her career. And now she is voting in a way her heart has told her to vote for quite some time. Better late than never. I worry that our current senators, our congressmen in the Republican Party, and Republican leaders in our state are defending a guy who they know shouldn't be defended. And they know they are not doing our state a favor by inciting the kinds of violence that he's inciting. There is zero, zero, zero doubt in my mind that some of the acts of violence taking place have been, in the minds of cowards that pull those triggers, inspired by



the rhetoric that President Trump has offered. I decry that. It is just wrong.

HPI: We've now had three massacres in the past week, and some 22 this year killing at least 98 Americans. You've worked emergency rooms on Saturday nights. You've seen this type of mayhem from both a clinical/medical position but also now from a policy position. Tell me what you are seeing right now.

Myers: We are seeing something unlike anything we've ever seen in our history. The point of the matter is we are a country that permits weapons of mass destruction and we do not control those weapons as we should. I am very concerned that unless we collaborate at the local and federal levels in more aggressive ways, these episodes will keep happening. There is nothing at a national level to slow them down. I'm releasing the thoughts on our campaign today. In it I will say that it's a multiple factorial problem and will require law enforcement, public health authorities, gun safety advocates, psychologists and psychiatrists and a whole group of people whose disciplines all have part of a solution to collaborate in ways they haven't collaborated in the past. It's going to require local, state and federal governments to figure out how to work synergistically instead of separately. Who's going to do what at each level to get our arms around this? I think there's a feel in Indiana that we are immune and we are not. Dayton is 40 miles from our border. Chicago is on the Indiana border and what didn't get talked about were the 40 people who died there last weekend.

HPI: There were so many gunshot victims that Mount Sinai Hospital had to stop taking victims.

Myers: So this epidemic is real, it's here and there's not one solution. The destruction that a weapon like an AK-47 can have, a weapon of war, is phenomenal. It's not the kind of weapon that gets taken into the back yard with dad or mom to shoot at a stationary target for fun. The Dayton Police Department did its job. They were there in 30 seconds – 30 seconds! – and yet this guy was able to kill nine people (and wound at least 26). He wasn't even an expert shot. He had a magazine with 100 rounds in it. Because of the customizations he made, he was able to get those rounds off. He killed nine people. Others are at risk. That is just unacceptable in a country as smart as ours. We have to get beyond this concern that we're trampling on someone's 2nd Amendment rights. We're not. We can make sensible changes in our laws that do not take (away) rights to own firearms. We can improve laws



on the privilege of owning firearms more successful and less problematic. A lot of these guys buy these guns legally. They are not buying them illegally. The size of the clip is not the only issue. Mental health of the person is not the only issue. Laws that differ from state to state are not the only issue. There are many issues that need a solution, but it's complicated.

HPI: Give us an overview of your campaign to this point.

Myers: We're off and running. We're about a month in from our announcement. We've put together a team and know what we want to accomplish at this early stage. I'm being as receptive as possible of the invitations that come in from around the state. I'm putting my GMC Yukon in the shop Wednesday night because I think it's gonna get a lot of

miles; I don't want to get stuck on some back freeway. Our website is up and going. We're going to be adding policy positions to that website in the next several weeks. We are putting together fundraisers not just for Indiana, but outside the state as well. The fundraising philosophy is you tend not to do them in August, you wait until after Labor Day. After Labor Day and before Thanksgiving is the sweet spot and we're trying to take advantage of that. I want to be careful of the mayors races that are dominating this cycle. You don't want to get too far out in front of our mayoral colleagues. Those are dances we're doing every day.

HPI: My analysis this year has been that Gov. Holcomb enters this sequence in as strong a position as any incumbent in the two-term era. He's had the super majorities. He's sitting on \$7 million and his approval in the 50-60th percentiles in recent polls.

Myers: But he's having all the problems with education in the state, with 93% of kids in public education and this increase in funds not getting to that 93%. Teacher pay is not going up anywhere near what it should be. We still have teachers in the state starting in the low \$30,000s, teachers with master's degrees starting off at the same level as those with bachelor's degrees. There are all sorts of mismatches. A lot of that is because of our complicated and antiquated funding formula. Decisions are made at the superintendent level as opposed to giving attention to what the teachers need to be successful. The Red in Ed proposal you're seeing in other states like Arizona has had its moment here in Indiana, but we are at risk of teachers having to spend their free time doing that again. The funds required to put our state where it needs to be are not there. In spite of all the things you say about the state and my opponent is pointing out, we have real problems that are not being addressed.

HPI: When I talk about the governor starting out from a historic strength, I am talking about his political

standing, sitting on \$7 million. I go through 30 or 40 websites a day and I see the policy challenges facing the state. The Terre Haute Tribune-Star this past week was writing about how Vigo County is the epicenter of child abuse and CHINs, and the state ranks high in that regard. There are some social metrics that are askew, so don't take my political analysis as being indicative that there isn't a disconnect when it comes to Hoosiers who are struggling.

Myers: You're right. If I didn't think there were issues to point out to Hoosiers, then I wouldn't be in this race. DCS is one of those issues; how we treat the children of our state is a test of society. We're just not doing anywhere close to what we need to do to let our children emerge from the tough circumstances a large percentage of them find themselves in, the disintegrating family situations, the substance abuse issues and mental health issues. DCS is clearly by any measures not doing what we need it to do. There has been a turnover of leadership that is worrisome.

HPI: You are referring to DCS Associate Director Todd Meyer, who resigned abruptly in July with no stated reason. (HPI contacted Gov. Holcomb's office about the resignation and was referred to the Department of Personnel, which ignored an explanation for the resignation.)

Myers: The deputy brought in, Todd Meyer, was

brought in to clean up the legal components of DCS, to hire lawyers, to use his prosecutorial background to fix those entities, to fix the component of what wasn't working. He seems to have been asked to leave suddenly with no explanation from the state as to what that was all about. The position was created for him to do that job, so we know there was something going on, and we have an obligation to find out. I'm afraid we may be sitting on an abscess, on a set of problems on the surface that go far deeper. I worry those problems are affecting our children in Vigo and other counties. Certainly that will be one of the areas we'll be talking about over the next 450 days as this campaign evolves.

HPI: When I interviewed Gov. Holcomb in July, I asked him if he was satisfied with the progress made at DCS as well as on the five-year marker to get a handle on the opioid crisis. He responded that he was, though he said there is still a lot of work to do. Do you take issue with those assessments?

Myers: Oh yeah. We've bought plenty of Band-aids. We're putting them on a lot of the problems of the state. We need to look deeper into why some of these problems exist and figuring out the root causes; working with colleagues and experts on those problems is a

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much better way to go. With respect to the opioids, first of all, you've got to remember there are different kinds of drugs being abused. Opioids are one class of drugs. They are special because they are available legally with a valid prescription. The whole process of how they are managed by the state and the feds is one set of challenges and opportunities. As the screws tighten, so to speak, and the number of prescriptions, the distribution pathways, the pharmacies the pharmaceutical manufacturing companies can take advantage, all of those things are being adjusted, probably in a good way, but what that has done is press the bubble toward the non-legal prescriptions that produce euphoria, such as the fentanyl epidemic we see that is replacing opioids. Fentanyl is produced primarily in China, it's imported in the United States. We're doing an inadequate job at the border. We seem to be able to stop children very easily at the border and I would hope we would put the same energy into stopping fentanyl, which is killing children. Watching what is happening with that drug and others that are being abused and sitting by with a less than aggressive action plan is a mistake. What's needed is a full-on collaboration between state, federal governments and all the interdiction agencies. Indiana is the crossroads of America, crossroads for good things and bad, in this case for a lot of bad things that come through our state to get to somewhere else. We could play a very special role if we had the right tools to stop much more of this poison, both legal and illegal, from getting into our state. There are a lot of levers a governor can pull to get his or her arms around this. We are challenged today, not having pulled them hard enough, far enough, long enough, and that's what I want to get in there and do.

HPI: There were reports that opioid scripts have fallen 35%. Is that an indicator to you that the strategies are working to some degree?

Myers: Opioid scripts are down, both appropriately and inappropriately. The side effects of the reduction of prescriptions are that the No. 1 complaint phoned into the insurance companies today is that people legitimately on opioids for real conditions for which they have chronic pain and opioids are the best prescription, are finding prescribers frightened by the new regulations. They don't understand them and they are worried that the number of outlets to get their prescriptions filled are going to be reduced and the paperwork one has to go through to get it done is going to be a problem. I think there was good intent on the part of our legislature and others to reduce the volume of drugs, to reduce the levels. The intent was good but you can't apply, medically, a blanket approach. There need to be ways for physicians and pharmacists to recognize when an exception is appropriate and should be easily done. The more electronic we make this system, the more we are able to let the pharmacies know that Dr. Smith is

an expert in this arena and knows his patients extremely well and doesn't need to be put through the same hoops that Dr. Jones, who is new to the state and has not prescribed these drugs safely for a longer period of time. We have to use those types of discretionary options into how we manage this crisis with regard to the legal substances. As far as the illegal substances, we have to double down on interdiction at the borders or however the state police and the drug enforcement agencies believe they need to do that. They have great algorithms these days where they can look at a vehicle, at the license plate, the size of



the vehicle, and determine the likelihood that the vehicle is a problem, and make a decision based upon those factors whether or not an inspection is warranted. We need to make sure our state police are as well-funded as they need to be to do that.

But let me not stop there. The issue surrounding treatment: We want to make sure our kids have access to treatment that will predict and prevent them from taking these bad substances and after they start, to get them off as quickly as possible using modern methods. With respect to opioids, we are very fortunate today to have a therapy approach on MAT, Medically Assisted Therapy. It is successful in getting a high percentage of opioid abusers off their opiates and making sure they get back to work and school. We've got to make sure that those who need that treatment get it. It's really tough to put all those resources in place.

HPI: How do you pay for it?

Myers: Well, that's why we have a surplus. Isn't that why, Brian, we have it, for emergencies? I would much rather see the multiple millions of dollars going to be invested in a (state fair) swine barn used to improve treatment access slots and for things that are truly a crisis in our state. I don't like the fact that we lean as heavily as we do on needle exchange. The data on needle exchange is not as positive as you'd like it to be in terms of keeping people away from opioids. It's a Band-aid approach that in effect allows you to address a problem without solving the underlying problem that syringe exchange addresses in the transmission of dangerous viruses like hepatitis C and HIV. We don't want them to spread. From that perspec-

tive, it has promise but what you really want is for the individual not to inject the drugs in the first place, and the effort ought to be made to have slots available for treatment so that the state does not have to use the resources to facilitate what is still a crime. It puts the state and local police in a difficult spot. I understand the public health advocates; I have had this debate with them over the years, that it's better to do something rather than nothing. It's better to do something that promises to decrease the spread of the viruses that create additional huge problems, but it is much better, too, if it came with treatment options that successfully reduce the need for that person to inject in the first place.

HPI: How are you going to approach the marijuana legalization in surrounding states? When I asked the governor about that, he said he would like Indiana and Purdue to study the medical applications. He doesn't believe the standards from state to state are in place and uniform. He isn't interested in decriminalization. Where do you stand?

Myers: He's wrong on two fronts. One, the research increasingly shows that under the right circumstances, medicinal marijuana used for appropriate patients, with appropriate settings and appropriate monitoring can be an effective treatment. There is zero doubt that patients are getting benefits from THC. But there are few good systems in place that get it to the right patient at the right time for positive effects. For other patients it can induce a psychotic state that is very difficult to treat. The situation with THC today in states like Colorado where legalization took place years ago, is that the pediatricians are very worried that with the edibles looking like gummy bears or candies, the kids will find them. A parent on THC who is hiding these edibles is obviously impaired and the kids find them and end up in the emergency room with some very dangerous levels. The problems associated with them need to be thought through. The state does need to explore legalization for medical purposes and decriminalization, making it far less an onerous crime than it is today. Now, full stop, recreational marijuana, anybody uses as much as they want at any time, I don't think so. I think we are dealing in a very different era than that of inexpensive pot that the kids got in college back in the '70s, primarily from backyards or Mexico. The THC concentrations were low. You're dealing with high grade, genetically modified THC strong products that are very different than the ones my generation was exposed to 20 or 30 years ago. That makes it a far more dangerous product. I just do not want Indiana's 16-year-olds exposed. "Well, we'll make the law for 18 or 21." Well everyone knows there are very few 16-year-olds who if they really want a beer, can't get one. Why do we think it's going to be any different with legalized marijuana? I worry a lot about legalization for recreational purposes. I don't



think there has been anywhere near enough research to understand the long-term effects. But I do think we're ready to cross the threshold with medicinal.

HPI: When I asked the governor about decriminalization, he kept going back to the need for more research and the impacts on families. Yet the original decisions back in the 1930s that scheduled marijuana with heroin and morphine were not made with appropriate medical research. Mayor LaGuardia pretty much debunked the original scheduling decisions.

Myers: I agree. It's a win-win. When people break the law, people need to pay a price. But should the price be so onerous for the sale of X-amount of marijuana as for a lethal dose of heroin? Marijuana does not have the toxic overlay as many drugs sold. In many ways, marijuana has a much more beneficial health profile for some patients than do some of the other drugs. I do think there is room for change to the criminal justice system approach as to who are selling and consuming marijuana. Coupled with medical marijuana legislation, I would be comfortable modifying both sets of those statutes, but I am not of the belief to go on to full-on legalization.

HPI: On teacher pay, the governor has laid out a multi-budget session strategy. What's your take on that?

Myers: If you ask the teachers who are making \$30,000 a year if they've seen a significant bump in their paycheck, they'll all say no. We're spending way too much of our energy on the 7% who are not in traditional public schools as opposed to the 93% who are. Our formula on how we fund school districts is antiquated, overly complicated and needs to be overhauled. One of the goals of such an overhaul is to make it far easier for any increase from the state budget to get directly to the teachers, who are the highest component of expenditures to begin with. I believe we have to take this on as a bipartisan effort. There is no one solution I have seen that the Republicans or my colleagues in the Democratic Party have to go. It's going to require collaboration. Indiana has so many nuances. We have to put incentives to get school districts to collaborate on a whole variety of things such as bus routes to save money. A lot of different things can be done to reduce the expenditures that are not directed at teacher pay. Increasing teacher pay should be our No. 1 priority in education.

HPI: The governor said he freed up \$150 million to pay off liabilities for local school districts, yet when we were in Clark County the teachers were saying they weren't seeing any increases.

Myers: That's why the whole funding formula needs to be overhauled, so when the legislature finds the ways to increase the budgets, those increases go to the teachers. It's that simple. It should be that simple. ❖

Weekend atrocities may be shifting the gun reform debate

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Were the two weekend massacres that killed at least 30 Americans the elusive tipping point when it comes to gun reforms? It’s far too early to tell, but what’s occurred since Sunday seems different in a political sense from previous shootings in Virginia Beach, Pittsburgh, Parkland, Sutherland Springs, Las Vegas, Orlando, San Bernardino, Washington Navy Yard, Sandy Hook and dozens of other single-digit death-toll shootings in recent years.

Republican U.S. Rep. Mike Turner, whose district includes Dayton, came out for banning assault weapons and for red flag laws. Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine was preparing to propose state gun reforms.

In Indiana, U.S. Sen. Mike Braun said, “Any bipartisan legislation needs to include stronger background checks, red flag laws known as extreme risk protection orders that address mental illness, commonsense solutions that complement the Trump administration’s ban on bump stocks.”

U.S. Sen. Todd Young observed, “Clearly we have multiple problems in this country – problems of hate, social alienation, and the devaluing of human life – and we’re going to have to work together as a nation to address these challenges. I think Indiana has done a good job with respect to our red flag law and that’s something that needs to be part of the conversation moving forward across the country.”

Young noted that in the last Congress, he co-sponsored and voted to enact the Fix NICS Act to improve criminal background checks, and the STOP School Violence Act to help improve school safety infrastructure, resources, and procedures. “President Trump signed these bills into law in March 2018,” Young said. Young also cosponsored the School Safety & Mental Health Services Improvement Act to improve mental health services for youth, and the Protecting Communities and Preserving the Second Amendment Act, which imposes more severe penalties on individuals who attempt to illegally procure firearms and commissions a study on the causes of mass shootings.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Republicans “are prepared to do our part” and added, “Only serious,

bipartisan, bicameral efforts will enable us to continue this important work and produce further legislation that can pass the Senate, pass the House, and earn the president’s signature.”

Before departing for Dayton on Wednesday, President Trump accused his opponents of “looking for political gain” by tying his comments to the shooting in Texas and insisted he would like to “stay out of the political fray,” though he appeared to connect the Dayton massacre to a shooter with ties to Antifa. He later appeared to say he was for expanded background checks that has already passed the House. But the Washington Post reported today: NRA chief executive Wayne LaPierre spoke with Trump on Tuesday after the president expressed support for a background check bill and told him it would not be popular among Trump’s supporters, according to officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to freely discuss internal talks. LaPierre also argued against the bill’s merits, the officials said.

A new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll found nearly 70% of all voters would back an assault weapon ban. Support for an assault-weapons ban was higher, at 86%, among Democrats, who have been pushing for new restrictions on the firearms. The poll found that 55% of GOP voters were comfortable with banning assault weapons, 54% said they would support stricter gun laws more generally, and 90% said they would back universal background checks for gun sales.

U.S. Rep. Jim Banks observed, “The violence this weekend was perpetrated by extremists from both sides of the political spectrum. It’s clear that those using these tragedies to attack @potus and others are shortsighted. It’s time to put politics aside, come together and address this evil with determination.” In a second tweet, Banks said, “I deployed to Afghanistan as a response to radical Islamic terrorism. We now face a different enemy that has also emerged from the shadows but demands the same focus and determination to root out and destroy. #WhiteSupremacistTerrorism should be named, targeted and defeated.”

U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks said, “Shootings in malls, bars, festivals, places of worship, schools or any other place are horrifically tragic, happening far too often, and must stop. We must and can do more to prevent these senseless acts of violence. Red flag laws, like Indiana’s Jake Laird Law, save lives while ensuring due process rights. It’s past time for Congress to act!”

WTHR-TV polled the congressional delegation and reported that U.S. Reps. Jackie Walorski, Larry Bucshon and Greg Pence did not respond to specific questions about potential reforms, including expanded background checks. U.S. Reps. Jim Banks, Trey Hollingsworth and Democrat Pete Visclosky did not respond to the inquiries.

Bucshon and Brooks will be worth watching. Bucshon has scheduled town hall sessions in Evansville



on Aug. 19, Aug. 20 in Linton, Aug. 21 in Terre Haute, and Aug. 22 in Washington, Ind. Brooks represents the one Indiana district that has been the scene of a recent school shooting, at West Middle School in Noblesville in 2018. She is also a lame duck and might vote beyond party line stances.



The emerging 5th CD race left in her void found only Democrat Christina Hale weighing in. "The tragedies this weekend in Texas and Ohio are becoming all too commonplace in our country, and we can't let that happen. We can't let hateful forces divide and destroy our United States and kill innocent people," Hale (pictured) said. "I stand with the majority of Americans who agree that it's time for common sense reforms to make our communities safe."

Her Democratic primary opponent, Dee Thornton, did not release a statement. Neither has Micah Beckwith, the only Republican who has filed an exploratory committee with the FEC.

South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg's Democratic

presidential campaign proposed a plan that would provide \$1 billion to augment law enforcement and intelligence efforts to address white nationalism, universal background checks, closing loopholes in background checks, building a national gun licensing system, banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, national red flag laws, and funding federal research on gun violence.

But in the General Assembly, there is yet to be a discernible movement toward gun reforms, though Indiana already has a red flag law on the books.

State Rep. Jim Lucas, R-Seymour, reacted to Buttigieg's proposals, saying, "What a dangerous, pandering oath-breaking fool of a tyrant he's showing himself to be! Because 'laws' work so well in keeping people from murdering people now, doing drugs, stopping kids under 21 from drinking and keeping bad people from doing bad things. I'm not saying to not have laws, but LAWS DO NOT STOP BEHAVIOR! They only criminalize an action and assign a level of punishment. The only thing this dangerous level of thinking will do is criminalize good innocent people and make them defenseless against people that won't follow these laws. This is what tyrants are made of."

As for the gubernatorial race, Democrat Woody Myers said in the HPI Interview (page 1) that it will take

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an array of coordinated local, state and federal efforts to properly address the problem. He also blamed President Trump for the incendiary rhetoric.

Indiana Public Media reported that Gov. Eric Holcomb "dodged" questions on whether President Trump's rhetoric played a role in the massacres. IPM's Brandon Smith reported: The El Paso shooting suspect's racist screed, posted online before the shooting, used language similar to that regularly espoused by President Trump. But Holcomb sidestepped questions about whether Trump is part of the problem. "Anyone that claims to have a simple solution to a very complex behavioral problem is simply misleading you," Holcomb said.

Indiana Democrats noted that Holcomb "stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Rep. Lucas on the NRA Convention stage. In a Monday press released, Democrats said, "Today, Rep. Lucas took a strong stance against universal background checks on social media. Meanwhile, Holcomb hasn't said much, he hasn't even tweeted offering condolences for a pair of mass shootings this weekend. The near-complete silence is in line with the governor's approach to gun reform. Holcomb danced around a question about taking steps to prevent mass shootings in an interview in December. He instead pivoted to a focus on mental health to prevent further violence. He later buckled to ultra-conservative lobbyists' efforts to remove any mention of mental health from a school safety bill."

Senate Democratic Leader Tim Lanane (D-Anderson) said, "The Indiana Senate Democratic Caucus has fought for years to close firearm sale loopholes, ban bump stocks and raise the purchasing age to no avail amidst the supermajority. Lives are quite literally on the line. Simple access to firearms capable of mass carnage must come to an end. The time for all lawmakers to acknowledge this and protect all our citizens is far overdue. Action should not wait until it is our own brother's or sister's or cousin's or grandkid's name in the headlines. The time to act is now."

Congress

5th CD: Ballard won't run

Former Indianapolis mayor Greg Ballard won't be seeking the 5th CD Republican nomination. "During the past few weeks I have been heartened by the kind words of encouragement to run for Indiana's 5th District in the U.S. House of Representatives," Ballard said last Thursday. "While Winnie and I have decided to downsize, and move to Hamilton County as part of that process, I will not be running for Congress. I'm grateful for the expressions of support and I look forward to continue to serve my community, state, and nation in



Rev. Micah Beckwith is the only Republican to file 5th CD FEC papers.

other ways." Thus far only Rev. Micah Beckwith of Noblesville has filed FEC paperwork to run for the Republican nomination. Republicans that appear to be exploring a bid include former state senator Mike Delph, former legislator Steve Braun, State Treasurer Kelly Mitchell, Fishers Deputy Mayor Leah McGrath, and State Sens. John Ruckelshaus and Victoria Spartz.



Delph acting like a candidate

Former senator Delph is looking like a candidate for Congress. Asked if he was running by HPI on Wednesday, Delph tweeted: "Enjoyed visiting w my friends with the Grant County Republican Party. Thank you US Senator Todd Young for your team approach, State Rep. Vermillion, and friends. Important municipal races this November 2019...." Once Delph enters, it sets up a showdown with Beckwith for the social conservative wing of the GOP.

Beckwith kickoff Aug. 15

The Beckwith For Congress kick-off party will take place at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 15 at White Willow Farms. There will be special guest Comedian Stacy Corwin and a keynote from former congressman Marlin Stutzman.

Presidential

Buttigieg adds more Obama staffers

Hari Sevugan, a well-known Democratic operative, has joined Pete Buttigieg's campaign as deputy campaign manager for brand and media, Axios has learned. Sevugan will oversee how the mayor's message is integrated throughout the campaign. He was a senior spokesperson for Barack Obama's 2008 campaign, and later the DNC's national press secretary. The Buttigieg staff has grown to 250, from about 40 when he announced four months ago, in mid-April. And he plans to keep hiring. Sevugan will be based in the campaign's Chicago office. The mayor's headquarters is in South Bend, Ind., where he has outgrown his space twice, and is now in his third location, and he has staff in the early states of Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada. Other big recent Buttigieg hires: Jess O'Connell as senior strategist, Michael Halle as senior adviser, Larry Grisolano and John Del Cecato of AKPD Media and Katie Connolly of Benenson Strategy Group. They join campaign manager Mike Schmuhl, communications adviser Lis Smith and national press secretary Chris Meagher. ❖

What to do about the shooter subculture?

By **JOSHUA CLAYBOURN**

EVANSVILLE — Another mass shooting or two and we have another wave of everyone arguing about the 2nd Amendment. Unfortunately, most arguing the point either don't understand the matter at hand or they are situational opportunists serving a preexisting agenda.



But another interesting debate seems to be bubbling to the forefront: What to do about the subculture breeding mass shootings. It is obvious by now there is a self-perpetuating shooter subculture with an ideological infrastructure. How do you take it down? Many have already begun a movement to

strike at this subculture's sources of alienation and radicalization.

One proposal has been to take down 8chan. Not just 8chan, of course. There are plenty of other fora for the dissemination and activation of mass-shooter ideology. And there is an even wider ecosystem of fora plausibly adjacent to them. You can end up scooping up Gab, parts of Reddit, some of Twitter, some of YouTube, and so on.

Once you do that, you've achieved the critical, and perhaps even decisive, step of disconnecting alienated and potentially violent young single males from their single most important source of motivation and validation, one another.

The problem of course is that all this quite plausibly violates the 1st Amendment, the foundation of our freedoms. Our government is well practiced in executing this sort of Internet/communications takedown when the target is Al Qaeda or ISIS. No one disputes the legality of that. Nearly everyone would dispute the legality of this.

You'd see outright opposition even from the left if the effort hit coordination and activation mechanisms for its own apparatus of civic violence in Antifa, et al.

So how do you do it? You sidestep the 1st Amendment issue entirely by having the corporations controlling the infrastructure do it. Acting on behalf of elite consensus

and strong encouragement from the state, the controlling firms themselves will do what the government will not.

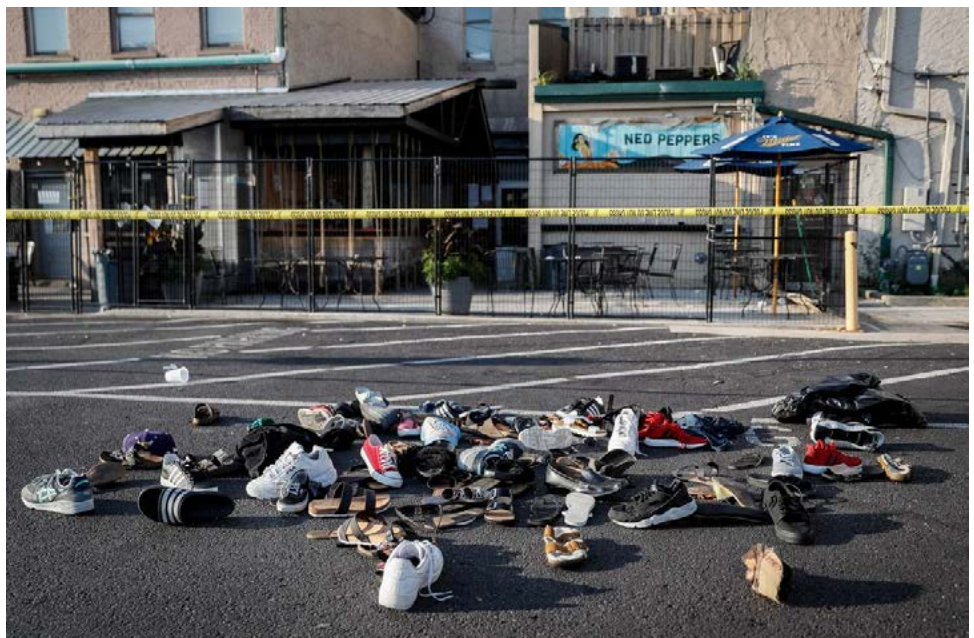
I want to be clear that I am not prescribing any of this, nor rendering judgment on any one thing here. This is strictly descriptive and predictive. Anyone disclaiming or dismissing complexity in this matter is less than honest.

Two points to make on all this.

First, having the corporations execute the hit on the communicative apparatus will be a tremendous furtherance of one of the defining phenomena of modern American life. As traditional institutions collapse in public trust and esteem, the profitmaking institutions step into the breach and attempt to dictate morality in the public square on their own. Swapping out Billy Graham for Tim Cook will have follow-on effects. Also, after the corporations comes the military.

Second, the big bet in the establishment of American democracy nearly 250 years ago was that individual citizens could be trusted to communicate and organize freely with one another. No mediating or moderating aristocracy or hierarchy was required; our liberties could be absolute. This mostly worked so long as the citizenry retained among themselves, at the individual level, a common ethic of restraint and prohibition. Now that this common ethic is gone, the viability of the American proposition becomes a live issue once more.

To those who labored tirelessly for the destruction of institutions, the sundering of community, and the re-



placement of tradition with a cult of accelerating newness and materialist progress: You won.

Your world is here. ❖

Claybourn practices law in Evansville and is the author of the book "Our American Story: The Search for a Shared National Narrative" (Potomac Books, 2019).

Childcare is a heavy burden for families

By ERIN MACEY

INDIANAPOLIS — Parenting is full of memorable experiences: Your child’s first step, your child’s first words, the first time your child says, “I love you.” These are the moments that make all the hardships worth it, the things you dream about when you decide to become a parent.



But another glorious parenting experience, one that you won’t see in any Hallmark-type show but one that many parents know too well, is the day you make your last childcare payment.

For many families in Indiana, childcare rivals housing for the top budget drainer. According to the Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee dashboard, the parents of a preschooler in Indiana can expect to pay over \$8,000 per year for high-quality

childcare. Parents of infants pay even more, close to \$12,000!

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services considers affordable childcare to be care that consumes no more than 7% of a household’s income. By that definition, the parents of an infant in Indiana would need to bring in \$171,429 to “afford” high-quality care. Few households in Indiana meet that bar (around 8%, if we want to be more precise), especially early in their working lives, when, of course, they are more likely to have young children.

It is noteworthy that these costs put childcare on a par with in-state college tuition, which many parents aspire to help their children afford. A good number will tuck away savings in 529s or child savings accounts over the course of a decade or two to be able to do so. But even if they can’t, there are a variety of options – grants, subsidized loans, work study programs, tax incentives, and the like – to support college access. This array of supports doesn’t exist for childcare.

Even families who receive assistance through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) tend to have out-of-pocket costs that still eat up a substantial share of their income. According to the June 2019 CCDF Fact Sheet published by the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, nearly half of families receiving a voucher had overages – meaning the cost of care was more than the assistance they received – that equaled an average of 3.5% of their income. In addition, 29% of families had copayments that consumed, on average, nine percent of their income. So even with support, what

these families pay falls outside the HHS definition of affordable.

Meanwhile, over 1,600 families and 2,656 children that qualify for aid aren’t receiving any assistance at all, but are on the CCDF waiting list.

At the same time, the devoted staff who patiently guide our children through their most formative years of development are financially strained as well.

In Indiana, the median hourly wage for Indiana’s preschool teachers is \$12.13/hour, while childcare workers typically see about \$9.75/hour in their paychecks. So at a time when a strong, stable relationship is perhaps one of the most important features of a quality educational program, staff can be expected to endure financial distress or to strike out for more family-sustaining careers on a regular basis. Some estimates put staff turnover at 30% per year in childcare centers.

It must be recognized, of course, that a child’s entrance into schooling doesn’t wholly obviate the need for care; in many cases, it just reduces the size and frequency of the payments. Before- and after-school care, holidays and summers, second or third shift coverage, sick and snow days – all of these are worthy of our attention and investment, especially if we are live up to our reputation as “A State that Works.” Lack of affordable, reliable childcare can be blamed for absenteeism and turnover that cost Indiana an estimated \$1.1 billion per year in economic activity, according to IU Public Policy Institute.

The push and pull of parents struggling to pay for quality care and centers struggling to maintain the staff necessary to provide it suggests that the only way to balance this equation is to look for funding streams elsewhere.

Until we do, three predictable things will happen: There will be individuals who want to work but will remain on the sidelines because it costs too much; the quality of childcare and of the wages and benefits to childcare workers will remain low, to the detriment of both young children and of workers in this industry; and a broad swath of Hoosier families will continue to be crippled by costly childcare bills. Perhaps we as a society should focus more attention on removing “last childcare payment day” from the list of memorable parenting moments. ❖

Erin Macey, PhD, is a senior policy analyst for Indiana Institute for Working Families and Indiana Community Action Association.

In wake of the Edmund Fitzgerald, a true story of Great Lakes drama

Publishers note: My paternal family came from the Great Lakes — Ontario, Michigan and The Region in Indiana: Michigan City, Gary and Hobart. I found this column by my father, who passed away last week at age 93, written on Nov. 15, 1977, following the sinking of the legendary SS Edmund Fitzgerald. He had graduated from Hobart HS, class of 1943, when he took his turn as a Merchant Marine and helped fuel the arsenal of democracy before he entered the Army Air Corps in 1945. I run this as a grateful son's tribute to him. - **Brian A. Howey**

By JACK E. HOWEY
Peru Daily Tribune

When the ore freighter Edmund Fitzgerald went down with all hands this week in Lake Superior's Whitefish Bay in a raging storm, it brought back memories stored away for many years.

During World War II, many of the sailors who normally manned Great Lakes shipping went on to salt water ships where the pay — and the danger — was greater for delivering war material to Europe and the Pacific. Thus, the long, low freighters, which had the task of delivering cargoes of iron ore, coal and limestone to the steel mills that line the Great Lakes often were short of experienced crews.

This prompted a friend and me, both of us out of high school and not yet drafted, to decide to ship out on the freighters. The pay, as I recall, was something like \$90 a month plus room and board for an ordinary seaman with no experience.

So the last week of March, my friend and I went to the Great Lakes Shipping Association shipping hall in south Chicago to see if we could get berths on a freighter. We decided before we went that we would ship together, or not at all.

The procedure was for freighters approaching the port in the Chicago area to radio crew needs to the shipping office dispatcher, who kept a list of the names of those waiting for berths. When your name reached the top of the list, and if your qualifications matched those sought by the ship captain, you were offered the job.

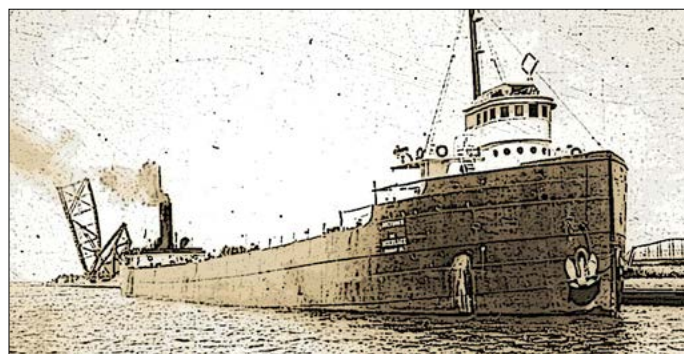
Not many freighters had empty berths for two ordinary seamen, so my

friend and I waited four days — sleeping on benches at the shipping hall at night, eating at a nearby White Castle hamburger shop during the day — before we finally had a chance at jobs.

The only problem was, while there were two berths open, one was for a deckhand and one was for a coal passer, whose job it was to haul coal down out of the ship's bunkers and shovel it into the boilers. But it was that or a longer wait, so we flipped to see who would get the deck job and headed for the Republic Steel plant where we would board the Arcturus.

It was almost midnight on my birthday, March 29, when we stumbled across the gangplank onto the Arcturus, an ancient freighter built in 1904, and were shown our bunks — mine below decks in the engine room section, my friend's in the forecabin with the deck crew — and we were put to work immediately.

My recollection of coal passing was that it was not great fun, but it wasn't the hardest work I'd ever done, either. What I didn't like was working below decks way down in the bowels of the ship, so when a member of the deck crew left the ship a few weeks later, I asked for and got his berth.



Jack Howey's Coast Guard credentials and the SS Arcturus, the scene of a 1943 Great Lakes drama and the fueling of the arsenal of democracy.

At sea, the deck crews mostly did maintenance work washing the decks and other surfaces that were stained with ore or coal dust, chipping paint, painting, the usual exciting shipboard work. We worked a normal eight-hour day with Sunday off.

In port, the crew worked four-on, eight-off shifts and when you were not on watch you could go into town, if there was a town. At places like Port Inland, Mich., which was little more than a limestone quarry, and Detour, Mich., which was an Indian village near a coaling station, there was no place to go.

The unloading was done mechanically with huge cranes. The ships were loaded through big spouts that directed the cargo from storage elevators into the hold. Our ship had four holds and 32 hatches and the ship had to be moved periodically during loading to keep the load even in the holds.

For the most part, deck crews moved docking lines from one stanchion on shore to another so the ship could be moved, and handled a deck winch to open and close hatches. The only time there was hard physical work was when a freighter had unloaded ore, coal or stone was to go to Canada for a load of grain. Then the holds had to be washed out and the residue from the previous cargo shoveled into crane buckets so it could be removed.

The foundering of the Edmund Fitzgerald this week reminded me of one trip through Lake Superior that summer. On our way through the locks at the Soo headed toward Superior, Wis., the ship caught a sudden, heavy gust of wind from the stern and hit a pier with a glancing blow, but one with enough force to put a dent in the bow. The dent was above the waterline, because the ship was empty at the time and rode maybe 10 feet higher in the water than when it was loaded.

It didn't seem to be a problem, though, and we picked up our cargo of ore at Superior as the weather turned drastically for the worse. We left Superior on June 1 in the midst of a howling blizzard, with heavy winds from the east and very poor visibility. A line had been rigged from the superstructure at the stern of the ship to the mast above the pilothouse. These were lifelines attached to it that crewmen tied around themselves when it was necessary to go from one end of the ship to the other. With the freighter fully loaded, the deck was only about six feet above the water level and huge waves broke as high as the lifeline as they tore across the deck.

All that was scary enough to a teenager, but something even scarier happened. I had been promoted to deck watch by that time, and one of my tasks during the watch was to sound the ballast tanks to make sure they were dry when they were supposed to be and that there was the proper amount of water in them when they were

being used.

Up in the very bow of the ship was what was called the dark hold, which was one of the ballast tanks and which was supposed to be dry when the ship was loaded. I went on watch a couple hours after we left Superior and starting making my rounds sounding the tanks. The first one I sounded was the dark hold, and, to my horror, it had 36 inches of water in it!

I made it up to the bridge in record time, getting knocked down once by a wave as I reached the top of the ladder to the Texas deck. A few moments later I found myself with the captain and the chief engineer wading around in waist deep water in the dark hold helping them replace a rusty pipe to a pump.

It took more than an hour to get the job done and the water level had risen about six inches before the pump was made effective. The leak was around one of the plates



that had been dented when we came through the Soo, and the experience was even more frightening because the ship's anchor, which had no device to secure it, banged against the bow plates with every wave that crashed into the ship. And, in case you don't know, Lake Superior's water never gets very warm and on June 1 it was still very cold.

It took us three days to complete what was normally an 18-hour trip from Superior to the Soo and the storm raged during most of that period.

There is a theory that the Fitzgerald broke in two when its bow and stern were raised simultaneously by waves and the midsection of the ship was out of the water. It's possible, and an ore freighter would go down like a rock if its loaded holds were opened to water.

Many persons don't realize that storms on the Great Lakes are often more vicious than those on the ocean because the lakes are shallower than the ocean and the waves tend to come much more rapidly than those in deep water.

But believe me, a Lake Superior storm can be a frightening thing, even in a big ship. ❖

Indianapolis is in a state of decline

By **CRAIG DUNN**

INDIANAPOLIS — You can see it with your own eyes. You can feel it in the depths of your stomach. You can hear it with your own ears. It is happening right now and it is getting worse. You don't need a newspaper or television reporter to tell you. Indianapolis is in a state of decline.



My experience with Indianapolis, as an outside observer, began when I was a little boy. My father was an auto body repairman and he had to make a weekly trip to Indianapolis to buy parts. Frequently, I tagged along with the promise of White Castles or the peanut vending machine at a parts supplier enticing me.

While dad and I certainly got to drive down Meridian Street, we also traveled to many of the business areas of Indianapolis purchasing fenders, moldings, headlamps and the like. We got a pretty good look at the big city. The Indianapolis of the early 1960s was a sleepy big city that was clearly experiencing urban decay. The affluent were abandoning the city for the suburbs and the people, buildings and city that were left behind had all seen better times.

Then along came Mayor Richard Lugar and the miracle of Unigov. Tax revenues reversed their flight to the suburbs and returned to the downtown. You could see the rebirth of the city. New buildings and new infrastructure reversed the decline and made Indianapolis a model of urban success.

The trend continued under Mayor William Hudnut and was capped when Indianapolis leadership bagged the relocation of the Indianapolis Colts. Making good on the "if you build it, they will come" philosophy, the Hoosier Dome secured a place for Indianapolis as the urban leader in the United States when Robert Irsay moved his moribund NFL franchise to "India-No-Place". Growth exploded along with justifiable civic pride that could be seen in nearly every aspect of Indianapolis city life. I lived in Indianapolis during this renaissance and it was an exciting place to live and raise a family.

When I say that you could "see" success, I literally mean it. Everywhere you looked you saw new buildings, new parks, smooth streets, tidy neighborhoods and people going about their business, working and enjoying life. Of course, there is always another side to the coin and there was poverty, but Indianapolis seemed to deal with it better than any of its peer group of big American cities.

Fast forward to 2019. Things have changed in In-

dianapolis. There is now the distinct smell of failure in the air. Indianapolis appears to have lost its way and stepped onto a path of urban decay shared by so many other big cities. Murders and violent crimes have skyrocketed. Poverty and homelessness is evident all over the downtown. Once proud neighborhoods are in dramatic decline. Roads have become pothole-strewn obstacle courses. City budgets are busted. No one seems to be safe or happy. Pork-barrel politics and cronyism appear to be alive and well as the common man becomes engulfed by a sea of urban detritus.

Addressing the many problems facing Indianapolis will require bold and innovative new leadership. Mayor Joe Hogsett has been given a fair chance to put Indianapolis back on the path of success, but has resorted to photo ops and a smoke-and-mirrors approach to municipal governance. He might herald a new soccer stadium at a press conference and ignore the possibility that anyone attending the press conference had to step over comatose street people and dodge potholes and bullets to get there. The few positives are given outsized publicity, but the reality of the nightly news overshadows the mayoral puff and fluff. It is clear to me that Mayor Hogsett's opportunity for success has been squandered. It is now time for new blood in the Indianapolis City Hall.

State Sen. Jim Merritt is a rare public servant. I have watched closely his career unfold and have come to appreciate his spirit of service and governance with a heart that he has brought to his Indiana State Senate job. Merritt has demonstrated his love and concern for the welfare of the children of Indiana, a passion for the health and well-being of all Hoosiers and has struck a perfect balance between the economic development and financial security of Indiana and the competing demands for governmental expenditures. His holistic approach to the financial and fiscal health of all Hoosiers has elevated him to a premiere level of leadership.

When I first learned that Jim Merritt was going to be a candidate for mayor of Indianapolis, I honestly wondered what in the world happened to his good sense. He would be leaving an extremely instrumental career as one of the critical architects of Indiana's great success story and risking his excellent reputation on helping to restore Indianapolis to a preeminent position as an urban guiding light. The challenge of finding solutions to the massive problems in Indianapolis seems like a thankless and mountainous task. Erasing four years of Hogsett "caretaker" government will not be easy, but Jim Merritt has not been a man to shy away from a challenge. His dynamic leadership in facing down the opioid crisis and making significant progress in this fight has demonstrated that he sees no challenge as too great to undertake.

In the years that I have written for Howey Politics, I have never written about nor advocated for a particular mayoral candidate. This column is a first. My reason is simple: The success of Indiana begins and ends with Indianapolis. It is the first impression that any visit-

ing business leader receives upon arriving in the Hoosier State. The ability of Indianapolis to rise above the many problems confronting other American cities will make Indiana stand out like a great beacon of light. We are not a perfect state by any means, yet our collective ability to help Indianapolis succeed benefits each of us in the long run.

As you enter this municipal election season, before you write a check to an Indianapolis mayoral candidate or cast your vote, I ask you to consider the following: As you take a look around you, drive your car to work, think of your family's safety, listen to the evening news or

contemplate the future, does Indianapolis look and feel like it is heading in the right direction?

Who will be the better candidate to support for mayor, the current occupant of the mayor's office who has allowed Indianapolis to slip into a crime-infested, decaying, pothole-strewn cronyism capitol or the man who has vision and a plan for the return of Indianapolis to its former greatness? In my book, Sen. Merritt is the future of Indianapolis. ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman.

When will they learn?

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — Indianapolis is preparing to celebrate its 200th birthday or anniversary. But Indianapolis isn't that village invented by the General Assembly on the banks of the White River. Fifty years ago, Indianapolis took an important step forward by establishing Unigov. It was an imperfect consolidation of governmental units which has remained virtually unchanged for half a century.

Today's real Indianapolis is a composite of nine counties with a host of cities and towns, most of them remnants of pastoral villages, each battling to be "something."

Today, the mayor of Indianapolis speaks of regionalism. His is a genteel appeal to overturn inequities, either created or endorsed by the Indiana General Assembly, that home of irrational and irresponsible 18th-century sentimentality.



Eight counties serve as satellites of Marion County – Boone, Hamilton, Madison, Hancock, Shelby, Johnson, Morgan and Hendricks. (Note: I do not call them parasites as would some central-city chauvinists.) Unlike celestial satellites, these counties have extensive and diverse interactions with their host planet other than gravity alone. Commuting to work in Marion County is only the most prominent of these interactions which include shopping, health care, entertainment and other services.

Even as these satellite counties grow and develop, Marion County is overwhelmingly important with nearly half of the metro's population in 2017, contributing almost a third of its population growth from 2007 to 2017.

Marion County accounted for 58% of all 2017 jobs in the metro area and 24% of the job growth from 2007 to 2017. Of greater significance, Marion County had 67% of

the earnings provided by those jobs in 2017 and 63% of the growth in earnings over the decade.

What does that tell us? Simply, Marion County's jobs pay better than jobs in the satellite counties. With 58% of the jobs, Marion County contributed 67% of metro earnings. Plus, despite just a quarter of the growth in jobs, Marion County provided nearly two-thirds of the growth in earnings by metro workers and proprietors.

Perhaps more readily understood, the average job in Marion County paid \$74,500 while the next highest average job was in Hamilton County at \$59,800. The increase in average earnings from 2007 to 2017 in Marion County was 39 percent or \$20,700; none of the other eight counties saw an increase greater than Hancock's 28 percent or Hamilton's \$12,800.

The essence of regionalism is recognizing and respecting interdependency. This is not happening in the Indianapolis metro area. Satellite counties persist in their opposition to a regionwide transit system which could establish new connections among communities as well facilitating commutes and an efficient integration of other services. They will not work together for their common

County	Jobs					Share	
	2007	2017	Change	Percent Change	Percent of Change	2007	2017
Metro Area	1,153,169	1,294,409	141,240	12.2%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Boone	28,158	41,128	12,970	46.1%	9.2%	2.4%	3.2%
Hamilton	154,994	203,246	48,252	31.1%	34.2%	13.4%	15.7%
Hancock	29,858	33,695	3,837	12.9%	2.7%	2.6%	2.6%
Hendricks	63,475	91,466	27,991	44.1%	19.8%	5.5%	7.1%
Johnson	61,414	73,713	12,299	20.0%	8.7%	5.3%	5.7%
Madison	54,455	53,479	(976)	-1.8%	-0.7%	4.7%	4.1%
Marion	714,552	748,535	33,983	4.8%	24.1%	62.0%	57.8%
Morgan	23,605	24,893	1,288	5.5%	0.9%	2.0%	1.9%
Shelby	22,658	24,254	1,596	7.0%	1.1%	2.0%	1.9%

betterment.

Shortsighted, foolhardy? Will citizens throughout Indiana vote for the future in the forthcoming municipal elections or continue to support narcissistic and environmentally destructive sprawl? When will they ever learn? ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonj-marcus@yahoo.com.

Who won the second Democratic debate?

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – The next round of Democratic debating will be different. The number of presidential candidates participating will be trimmed from the 20 competing in the first two rounds. South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg already makes the cut and will be on stage again in the Sept. 12-13 debating in Houston.

Questions?

Q. Who won in the Wednesday night debate in Detroit?

A. Donald Trump.

Q. How did Mayor Pete do in the Tuesday night debate?

A. Quite well. He wasn't the winner. Elizabeth Warren came off the best. But Buttigieg stayed above the level of personal attacks against other Democratic candidates that made the Wednesday brawlers look petty. And he actually directed his criticism at Trump policies, not at Democratic



policies of the past.

Q. What other than the number of candidates will be different in Houston?

A. Democrats better hope that the surviving candidates get more realistic in appealing to voters and stop tearing each other apart in a way that makes the president the real winner politically. But that's no sure thing.

Q. How many of the 20 candidates will qualify for Houston?

A. Uncertain. The threshold set in advance by the Democratic Party for the next round is higher than for the first debates in Miami and Detroit. More individual donors in at least 20 states will be required to qualify for the grassroots funding qualification. The requirement for standing in the polls now will be at least 2% in four national polls or polls in early-voting states. The needed level before was only 1%.

Q. Will they still have two nights of debating?

A. Yes, if there still are a dozen or so candidates qualifying. If there were a dozen, that would mean six debate participants each night, a more reasonable number for meaning-

ful discussion.

Q. How many rounds of debating have the Democrats planned?

A. A dozen, six this year and six in 2020.

Q. Why so many?

A. The theory was that all the debates will help to motivate voters to support the eventual Democratic nominee.

Q. Isn't there also danger that the debating will turn off voters, give ammunition for the Trump campaign and leave the eventual nominee seriously wounded?

A. Yes.

Q. What would be the best outcome for the Democrats?

A. That the nomination winner emerges from the debates and primaries with a strong showing that would bring party unity and attract independents and Republicans seeking an alternative to President Trump.

Q. The worst outcome?

A. That the nomination winner emerges from a bitter contest without unified party support, as Hillary Clinton did in 2016, and that the nominee becomes as scary as Donald Trump in the view of those independents and Republicans.

Q. In the first two rounds, how did Joe Biden do?

A. Poorly in the first debate, much better in the second. He still is the frontrunner, helped actually by the strange situation of other contenders attacking policies of President Barack Obama in efforts to diminish his vice president.

Q. How about the two on the progressive wing?

A. Bernie Sanders was poor in the first debate, much better in the second. Elizabeth Warren outdid him in both rounds, providing reasons and details for policies.

Q. Did Kamala Harris, regarded as a big winner in Miami, keep her momentum in the second round?

A. No. The tables were turned, and she did not stay steady when a target of criticism rather than an unscathed attacker.

Q. How about Mayor Pete, who has been a top-tier contender? Did he zoom up or fall down in the first debates?

A. Neither. He had solid performances in both rounds, but no big breakthrough. He has the funding and support to stay around through most if not all of the debates ahead. ❖

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

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

Kelly Hawes, CNHI: South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg made an important point during the latest round of Democratic presidential debates. "It's time to stop worrying about what the Republicans will say," he said. "It's true if we embrace a far-left agenda, they're gonna say we're a bunch of crazy socialists." They'll say the same thing, he said, if the Democrats embrace a conservative agenda. Almost immediately, Republican U.S. Sen. John Kennedy went on Fox News to prove the mayor's point. "I'm not buying the story line of progressive versus moderate," he said. "I would remind you that the lesser of two socialists is still a socialist. Even from the less liberal candidates, I heard a job-killing, soul-crushing socialist agenda." Asked later whether he'd describe the stubbornly moderate John Delaney as a socialist, Kennedy said he would. The strategy, of course, has been clear for months as the conservative echo chamber works to convince voters that those in the progressive wing are about to lead the Democratic Party over a cliff. "The Democrat Party is now being led by four left-wing extremists who reject everything that we hold dear," the president told supporters during a campaign rally in Cincinnati. He'll be hammering away at that narrative right up through the November election. ❖



Mark Bennett, Terre Haute Tribune-Star: When a school district deems its region's main thoroughfare unsafe for school buses, that highway's problems need fixed. Lots of Wabash Valley residents fear driving on the local stretch of Interstate 70. And with good reason. Fatal accidents — several involving semi tractor-trailers crashing into stopped or slowed traffic — have become frequent on I-70 between the Illinois-Indiana border and Indianapolis. Accidents along that 68-mile path outnumbered those on the 66-mile portion east of Indy to the Ohio border in 2016 and 2017, according to the Indiana University Public Policy Institute's statistics. Distracted driving has been cited as a factor in several cases. Three more fatalities occurred on I-70 west of Indianapolis last month. On Monday, the Vigo County School Corp. announced its buses won't travel on I-70 "because of the significant number of serious accidents." The VCSC doesn't even want drivers to use I-70 to shuttle buses between schools when students aren't aboard. Buses must use alternate routes, such as U.S. 40. It'll take longer, but as VCSC communications director Bill Riley put it, "Keeping our children safe is one of our basic priorities, and recent news tells us that our children will be safer staying off Interstate 70." It wasn't a snap decision. Superintendent Rob Haworth and fellow administrators reviewed the interstate's safety problems. "We've discussed this for a few weeks," Riley told the Tribune-Star's Sue Loughlin. "We can no longer ignore the safety issues on I-70. It's something weighing on all of our minds." Such a smart step has been taken before. In 2011, former superintendent Danny Tanoos restricted bus travel on I-70 because of a spate of accidents involving congested traffic

around construction zones. This shouldn't be the new normal. Something must change. Not a quick fix. ❖

James Hohmann, Washington Post: The lone black Republican in the House announced Thursday night that he will not run for reelection next year, as President Trump escalated his attacks on Baltimore and other urban centers during a rally in Ohio. This split screen was a coincidence, but the events are not unrelated. Trump's election has accelerated a realignment between the two parties. Many white voters who historically supported Democrats gravitate toward the GOP across the industrial Midwest, as many millennials and minorities across the Sunbelt increasingly identify with the Democratic Party because of their distaste for the president. Texas Rep. Will Hurd, who is retiring from Congress at the ripe age of 41, was one of four House Republicans to vote last month for the resolution to condemn Trump's racist statements about the four liberal women he serves alongside. There is a realistic chance that none of the four GOP dissidents will remain in Congress come 2021. Another member of the quartet, Susan Brooks of Indiana, previously announced her retirement. There's speculation that Fred Upton may follow in Michigan. And Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania is one of the most vulnerable incumbents in the country. Ironically, Brooks also serves as the recruitment chair for the National Republican Congressional Committee. She's one of only 13 female Republicans in the House. Another, Martha Roby of Alabama, announced her retirement last Friday. GOP officials have struggled to recruit women to run, and when they have succeeded, many female candidates have lost in primaries to more conservative men. ❖

Tucker Carlson, Fox News: "Gun control saves lives." That's what they're telling you day and night on CNN. In fact, they're having a town hall meeting on Wednesday to tell you some more. Anyone who opposes gun control, they'll tell you by implication of - not directly - is a bad person, a callous, cruel, probably violent, person. Somebody who doesn't care about the safety of others. Well, on Monday night, a group of progressive activists took that very message to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's home. "Stab him in the heart. Break his neck." That was one of the messages for Mitch McConnell. They're totally opposed to violence, and that's why they want to kill Mitch McConnell. If you're confused, you haven't been paying much attention lately. Almost everything the left says these days is projection. In almost every single case, they accuse you of exactly what they're doing, and this week was no different. In the wake of two horrifying mass shootings, they've been telling us President Trump is a hater. "He is using race to divide us!" they scream. "It's wrong." Well, they are right about the second part. It's definitely wrong. They are using race to divide us. That's a core tenet of the left. ❖

Trump seeks background checks

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Wednesday reasserted his support for changes to background checks even as Republicans in Congress eye other gun legislation, casting doubt on whether Washington can unite around any policy response to a pair of mass shootings over the weekend (Politico). The president also dismissed calls to restrict the sales of assault rifles, even as Democrats called for bans on the military-style weapons in the wake of the attacks in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio that left at least 31 people dead and dozens more injured. "I can tell you that there is no political appetite for that at this moment," Trump told reporters outside the White House of assault weapons restrictions, adding that he "will certainly bring that up" in talks with lawmakers on gun reform measures in the coming days. "There is a great appetite, and I mean a very strong appetite, for background checks. And I think we can bring up background checks like we've never had before," Trump said. "I think both Republican[s] and Democrat[s] are getting close to a bill on, to doing something with background checks."



Trump complains about 'politics'

DAYTON, Ohio — President Donald Trump left Dayton saying Mayor Nan Whaley and Sen. Sherrod Brown "misrepresented" what happened when Trump visited with shooting survivors and first responders Wednesday at Miami Valley Hospital ([Dayton Daily News](#)). Trump tweeted at about 3:50 p.m.: "Just left Dayton, Ohio, where I met with the Victims & families, Law Enforcement, Medical Staff & First Responders. It was a warm & wonderful visit. Tremendous

enthusiasm & even Love. Then I saw failed Presidential Candidate (0%) Sherrod Brown & Mayor Whaley totally ... misrepresenting what took place inside of the hospital. Their news conference after I left for El Paso was a fraud. It bore no resemblance to what took place with those incredible people that I was so lucky to meet and spend time with. They were all amazing," Trump concluded. Brown, a Democrat, said he met with Trump Wednesday and urged him to call on Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to have the Senate take up the gun purchase background checks bill that passed the House. "I asked the president to promise to me and to the American people that he will sign that bill, after he had spoken out in support of it," Brown said at a press conference at Dayton City Hall after Trump's visit to Miami Valley. He said Trump "only said that we will get things done."

Trump praises first responders

EL PASO, Texas — President Donald Trump on Wednesday praised what he said were the many heroes during the mass shooting at a Walmart in El Paso that left 22 people dead ([El Paso Times](#)). Trump added that the suspected shooter "went out like a coward" when he surrendered to an El Paso police motorcycle officer about a block away. "We are with you 100 percent," Trump told a room filled with law enforcement officers at the El Paso emergency operations center, the command hub for the response to the shooting. There were many heroes, Trump said, adding that the shooter "went out like a coward."

Student with gun arrested in Muncie

MUNCIE — A student in Muncie has been arrested after threatening to come to school with a gun. The Muncie Police Department says a male student left Muncie Central High School earlier in the day and threat-

ened to return later with a gun. Officers took him into custody Wednesday afternoon not far from Muncie Central. Police say he had a handgun in his possession at the time.

White supremacist fliers found at USI

EVANSVILLE — Officials at the University of Southern Indiana say white supremacy flyers were left on cars in the parking lots (WFIE-TV). They say USI Public Safety is investigating. These flyers say their "church" is called "The Creativity Alliance." Last November, a group called "White People Awake" left similar flyers at USI. Their websites look the same, and they appear to be the same group.

South Bend sued over immigrant ID

SOUTH BEND — A conservative Washington-based group has sued the Mayor Pete Buttigieg administration and South Bend Common Council, alleging the city has violated Indiana's public records law by refusing to disclose staff emails related to a program that provides identification cards to undocumented immigrants ([South Bend Tribune](#)). The suit, filed this week in St. Joseph Circuit Court by Judicial Watch, details four denied records requests that the organization filed with the city. The requests sought emails exchanged between various city officials and La Casa de Amistad, the nonprofit Latino advocacy group that issues the cards.

Tariffs costs U.S. consumers \$6B

INDIANAPOLIS — Tariffs are now costing the U.S. up to \$6 billion a month, according to Tariffs Hurt the Heartland ([Hoosier Ag Today](#)). The trade group says American businesses and consumers paid \$6 billion in tariffs in June 2019, one of the highest tariffed months in U.S. history. The June figure is up 2.5 billion, or 74%, from the same month last year.