

Merritt seeks to climb ‘Mt. Hogsett’

Indy mayoral race focuses on crime and infrastructure

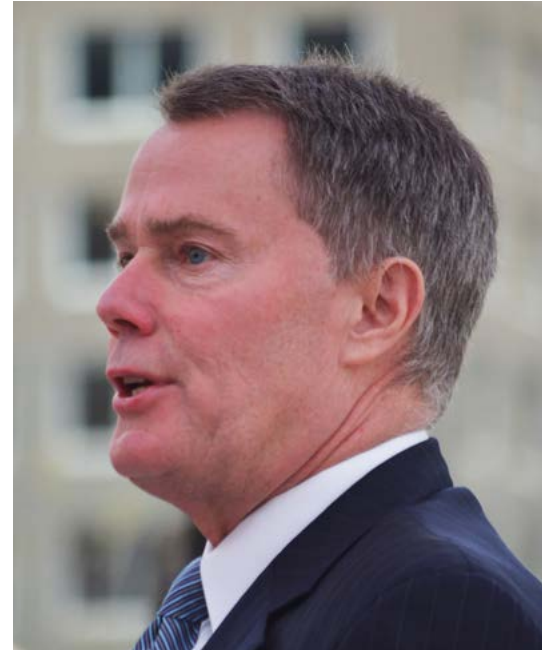
By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Three times in the last two decades, the winning Indianapolis mayoral nominee advanced to the City-County Building’s 25th Floor with around 92,000 votes.

That was the case when incumbent Mayor Joe Hogsett dispatched little-known Republican

Chuck Brewer in 2015, when Mayor Greg Ballard defeated Melina Kennedy in his 2007

reelection, and in Mayor Bart Peterson’s 2003 reelection over Republican Greg Jordan. The big upset came in 2007 when Ballard took advantage of a catalytic anti-tax fervor and upset Peterson 50.4% to 47.2% with 83,239 votes.



For State Sen. Jim Merritt, the Republican nominee challenging Mayor Hogsett, getting to 92,000 votes is his summit. Or as Merritt put it when he talked with HPI Tuesday afternoon, “It’s my mountain. It’s slippery and steep,

Continued on page 3

The lessons of Sept. 11

By **JOSHUA CLAYBOURN**

EVANSVILLE – Everyone has their 9/11 remembrances and that is fine. Understand just how rapidly it is receding into the unremembered past: The number of Americans with no real memory of it approaches one-third, and the number of Americans with no adult memory of it creeps toward half.



With the forgetting comes the loss of emotive content. It is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the falling away of emotion means we lose the felt sense of the only silver lining of the whole blood-soaked affair, the flowering of patriotism in the immediate thereafter. Those



“I would encourage him ... to get on board this time. I’m a member of the NRA and if we do nothing, we’re going to lose our 2nd Amendment rights to the extent we have them right now. We can’t turn a deaf ear, day after day, to the misuse of guns.”

- Sen. Mike Braun on MSNBC.



**Howey Politics Indiana
 WWWHowey Media, LLC
 405 Massachusetts Ave.,
 Suite 300 Indianapolis, IN
 46204
 www.howeypolitics.com**

Brian A. Howey, Publisher
Mark Schoeff Jr., Washington
Mary Lou Howey, Editor
Susan E. Joiner, copy editor

Subscriptions

HPI, HPI Daily Wire \$599
 HPI Weekly, \$350
 Ray Volpe, Account Manager
317.602.3620
 email: HoweyInfo@gmail.com

Contact HPI

bhowey2@gmail.com
 Howey's cell: 317.506.0883
 Washington: 202.256.5822
 Business Office: 317.602.3620

© 2019, **Howey Politics Indiana**. All rights reserved. Photocopying, Internet forwarding, faxing or reproducing in any form, whole or part, is a violation of federal law without permission from the publisher.

Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



of us who lived through the bright autumn of 2001 witnessed the last mass expression of a common American patriotism of the 21st Century.

No moment like it has come since, and it is unlikely to reappear. If in this vein we are the people we were two decades ago, the evidence has yet to present itself.

That said, we should not over-valorize the people we were two decades past, either. The best of us rushed into burning towers in September or descended upon Afghanistan in October. The rest of us watched in stupefaction or satisfaction, or perhaps both. That goes even for direct witnesses of the great massacre, including me. We spectated. It was not two years later that the phrase emerged, not from Afghanistan but Iraq, that in the post-9/11 era only the American military was at war; the American people were at the mall.

This is the other side of the emotive forgetting: We may begin, after two decades, to assess ourselves honestly. We may begin to acknowledge that the surpassing quality of American strategic leadership has been an admixture of arrogance and incompetence, fully in view by the close of 2001 to anyone who cared to look. We may acknowledge that one of the major strategic goals of al-Qaeda, the enmeshing of the United States in draining "crusades" in the Islamic world, was fully achieved, and in this particular sense they won the Battle of 9/11.

We may acknowledge that we never, once, took on our real enemy in south-central Asia, the Pakistani apparatus. We may acknowledge that the purported strategic benefits of the Iraq invasion proved entirely illusory, and that the original rationale for it was, to be exceptionally charitable,

pretextual. We may acknowledge that the entire United States armed forces are in quiet crisis after two decades of post-9/11 war, having missed a generation of weaponry and systems, and mired in a recruiting crisis with no foreseeable end.

We may acknowledge that the breadth and depth of our errors is survivable only by a nation of extraordinary wealth, and that we've spent a lot more of it than we admit.

We may acknowledge that the real coda to 9/11 is imminent. Everyone knows now that we have been negotiating with the Taliban for some



time. It is nearly certain that we will exit Afghanistan in the near future, with the Vietnam model fully in mind. A decent interval will ensue. And then, soon, the Taliban will win. The Islamic Emirate will enter Kabul, raise its black flag, and resume the project we interrupted in October 2001.

Forgetting can be a choice. We've made it. But understand, we made it a long time ago. ❖

Claybourn is an Evansville attorney and author of the book "Our American Story: The Search for a Shared National Narrative."

Indianapolis, from page 1

but I'm climbing it."

Merritt knows what it takes to pull off an upset. He was chairman of Greg Ballard's stunner over Peterson in 2007. Today he faces a race against Hogsett in which he faces, perhaps, a five-to-one money disadvantage. Hogsett began the year with \$3.2 million and had \$3.8 million cash on hand last April, while Merritt posted \$267,000.

Hogsett told HPI on Monday, "I'm going to be very competitive. I've got to tell you, I'm most proud of the grassroots support in the pre-primary filing. We did have a lot more individual donations and, surprisingly, lower average donation than my opponent did." So Hogsett, who has been running campaigns since 1988 when he managed Evan Bayh's historic gubernatorial breakthrough, believes his support is widespread.

1967 was last time first term mayor lost

You have to go back to 1967 to find a first-term Indianapolis mayor who wasn't reelected. That's when IPS School Trustee Richard Lugar defeated Democratic Mayor John Barton, setting off the Unigov era that brought a generation of Republican leadership to the city. Since then, Lugar and Mayors Bill Hudnut, Stephen Goldsmith, Peterson and Ballard have all served at least two terms.

Merritt is trying to make history by becoming the first sitting member of the Indiana General Assembly to move eastward down Market Street and up about 22 floors to claim the mayor's office. He's trying to do it in a city that is 58/42% Democrat over Republican. It is a steep mountain, though Republican Mayor Lloyd Winnecke is thriving in Democratic Evansville, as are Democrat Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry and Republican Terre Haute Mayor Duke Bennett, all ruling in cities dominated by the other party.

Hogsett believes that "local government has more effect and direct impact than any other level of government. I'm told the voter turnout in 2015 was down 19%. Now that's the bad news. It's bad news for so few people determining the important office as mayor. But I do have reason to believe, beyond the field organizing efforts made and expanding, we're well poised to see an uptick in turnout because unlike 2015, with the establishment of early voting sites."

Hogsett believes the five early voting sites and the fact that Marion County has opted for the electronic poll books that will allow any voter to vote in any precinct

will gin up turnout. "We as a campaign are trying to take advantage of that," Hogsett said.



Merritt is candid about the "mountain" he faces. "We won't have \$4 million. I set the bar to raise \$1 million and that's still my goal," he explained. "I don't know what's going to happen on Oct. 15, but we will be at our goal."

"I do believe the mayor, I don't think it's arguable, the mayor has a lead," Merritt said of polling. "The challenge is Nov. 5. I feel very good about going door to door, in congregations and churches, at festivals, that we have a very good plan. I do believe he's surmountable

and I do believe I am going to win."

A survey of 400 likely Indianapolis voters conducted for Indy Politics by Mason Strategies had Hogsett leading Merritt 55% to 27%, in August, with Libertarian Doug McNaughton at 4% and another 15% undecided.

Merritt, like Republican Fort Wayne nominee Tim Smith, is using Indianapolis-based Prosper Group to conduct his campaign social media and digital advertising. "We have been very busy with our digital outreach in July and August," Merritt said. He said his campaign polled in February and June. "We have been putting most of our funds toward communications."

Hogsett, too, is extending his message across a wide variety of platforms. "We're taking advantage of the technological change. We ID targeting voters, and whether they need to be registered or persuaded. We are obviously communicating on every available platform. Our campaign has opened up predictive dialing. We can make three or four more phone calls. You're talking to people you have reason to believe are ready."

Thus, the Hogsett/Merritt race appears to be hinging on two key areas, crime and infrastructure.

Hogsett and infrastructure

Both crime and infrastructure posed challenges for Hogsett heading into 2019. The former federal district attorney campaigned in 2015 as a classic law-and-order candidate. Since his election, Indianapolis has been setting homicide records. And a series of severe winters and a lack of long-term planning on street and bridge maintenance extending back to the Ballard and Peterson administrations left the city in 2018 with a virtual crisis atmosphere as the number of potholes exploded.

Hogsett responded by pushing through a \$400

million capital infrastructure plan. "The difficult winters and the deferred maintenance was a problem," Hogsett said, noting that he responded in two ways. There was the short-term investment "driven by council, a \$400 million infrastructure program that targets road resurfacing, rebuilding bridges and sidewalks and streets. It passed unanimously."

In the current 2019 operating budget, the council unanimously approved in the fall of 2018 the reestablishment of an Indianapolis Street Maintenance Department. "Not being critical of Mayor Goldsmith, but there was a lot of privatizing," Hogsett explained. "It helped him fund his budgets. But when you're having to out-source all of your day-to-day maintenance, particularly with winters, you're at the mercy of private contractors. You're just one of many clients." Hogsett said the brutal winter of 2017-18 exposed the shortfalls of deferred maintenance.

He has established a 36-person maintenance department with half a dozen six-man crews that will respond quickly to new problems. "I do know that many people have shared anecdotally with me that when roads deteriorated, they thought we responded to it better, quickly and more efficiently," Hogsett said.

In addition to roads, he is modernizing street lights with LED technology, with the savings allowing an additional 27,000 lights to be installed. That, Hogsett believes, will help deter crime.

He has also proposed a regional cooperation component that would send parts of income taxes of those commuting into Indianapolis to pay for roads. "We're not increasing anybody's taxes," Hogsett said. "Every county would receive every penny, but we're increasing a capture, then distributing to each community based on vehicle miles traveled."

He said that Westfield Mayor Andy Cook, Zionsville Mayor Tim Hawk, Lebanon Mayor Matt Gentry, and Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness have been "discussing these issues for the better part of a year. "We haven't reached any final answers," Hogsett said. "My argument to my fellow mayors is that with this proposal, you're all winning. Even if Marion County receives 50% of that fund, your residents who depend on jobs in Indianapolis, when they hit potholes, blow tires and bend rims, this will make their lives easier."

On crime, Hogsett said that under his leadership, the City-County Council has appropriated nearly \$4 million for crime reduction programs. "Overall, violent crime has



gone down in 2018 and 2019," Hogsett said. "We still have too many homicides. But it's something where our investments are starting to pay off. We have hired over 300 new police officers over the last three and a half years, a net of 150 new officers. The added officers have allowed us to move to a community-based beat system and allowed IMPD to become more flexible."

Merritt's pitch

Merritt addresses the public safety issue and infrastructure by saying, "We are constantly talking about safety, feeling safe, being safe and keeping people safe as mayor. We need a comprehensive approach to infrastructure. The mayor is more patch, patch, patch."

Merritt vows to be a "24/7 mayor" who will hire a "24/7 deputy mayor for public safety right by my side." He said that Hogsett brings a "district attorney mindset" to the crime fight, when the city needs "a law enforcement" experience.

He said that IMPD "needs a new training facility and a helicopter." The Republican said that IMPD brass "from the chief on down needs to be out in the field to keep current." He vowed to look at crime "in a completely different way. Once this city becomes unsafe and known around the world for that, conventions will dry up and people will move out. We're not there yet."

On infrastructure, Merritt vowed to hire a "leader at DPW who knows infrastructure, either with a background in civil engineering, or a civil engineer. You need someone who understands pavement and snow removal. Missing two snows this past winter was inexcusable."

Merritt promises a "complete analysis" of "all neighborhoods and city streets. Then we can have an asset management plan on how we take care of our streets for the next 25 years. It won't be this patch, patch, patch."

The senator believes he has the relationships in the legislature to get the job done. "We will be working with the General Assembly to get a more fair allocation from the gas tax," Merritt explained. "What does this mean? It means that six lanes of Keystone repaved a mile won't be funded like two lanes in Wheatfield a mile long. We will ask for a fairer plan."

He defended his infrastructure plan that would include a toll lane for arterials such as Binford Boulevard. He advocates creating a toll lane for those willing to pay for express travel in and out of the city. "People didn't realize it was optional," Merritt said. "You've watched Mitch (Daniels) throw out ideas. I'm trying to get creative and innovative, and that would create a lane for people from Fishers traveling Binford."

Merritt says of his the relationships at the Statehouse, "No one is more prepared to be mayor of India-

napolis than I am," he said. "No one has gone from the legislature to be mayor of Indianapolis. I am ideally suited to understand Washington, the capital markets and the legislature. I can say to the legislature and governor that a financially healthy Indianapolis means a solid and healthy Indiana."

He said that his Senate district overlaps those of House Speaker Brian Bosma and Deputy Ways & Means Chairman Todd Huston. "I've known Brian since we were in Young Republicans together," Merritt said. "I have a good relationship with (Ways & Means) Chairman Brown. I work with Chairman Mishler and Holdman in the Senate. I believe I can communicate the message more than anyone in Indianapolis."

Merritt said of his campaign this year, "I'm thrilled with the education I've gotten. I grew up here, I've been in all four corners. I'm glad I've learned a lot about my home city."

Asked what he has learned, Merritt mentioned the many "food deserts" and vowed to bring resources to various underserved neighborhoods. "If we can load a lot of trucks for hurricane victims, we can find a system to sell food in underserved neighborhoods," he said. "What we need is creativity."

HPI Analysis

With a little less than two months to go, Hogsett appears to have a commanding lead and far more financial resources than Merritt. What Merritt needs to break through is one of those "catalytic" events like the tax increase Mayor Peterson sought in 2007 that ignited a visceral political reaction in the streets and then the polls. In mayoral politics, sometimes that can be a high profile crime or something within the administration (i.e.



the 1996 Meridian Street police brawl that doomed Mayor Goldsmith's gubernatorial campaign against Lt. Gov. Frank O'Bannon).

Unlike Chuck Brewer in 2015, Merritt is an establishment Republican with deep ties to Gov. Eric Holcomb, the State GOP and the General Assembly. So there may be some additional resources at his disposal than are currently recognized. But if he is to scale his "mountain," he will need the kind of event that shakes up the electorate. If that doesn't occur, Hogsett will likely coast to a second term. **HPI Horse Race Status:** Likely Hogsett.

Hogsett launches new TV ad

Mayor Hogsett's reelection campaign launched a new TV ad today, touting "Back to back balanced budgets" along with "\$400 million in investment, 150 new police officers" and a "criminal justice campus which could be his greatest achievement." ❖

GOP convention to return to Indy in 2020

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana Republicans announced that they will hold their 2020 biennial convention in Indianapolis. The convention will bring 1,800 Hoosiers from across the state together in the state's capital city.

"Under the leadership of Gov. Holcomb and Republicans across the state, we are Putting People First," said Kyle Hupfer, chairman of the Indiana Republican Party. "Republicans are delivering new jobs, record infrastructure investment and exciting new opportunities for all Hoosiers, which will be on full display next year from our state convention in Indianapolis to communities throughout Indiana."

Official activities at the Indiana Republican State

Convention will be held on Saturday, June 20, 2020, at the Indiana Convention Center in downtown Indianapolis. This follows the history-making 2018 Indiana Republican State Convention, which was held in Evansville and outside the state's capital for only the second time in state history.

Convention delegates, who will be elected from each county during the May 2020 primary, will vote to nominate next year's Republican candidates for lieutenant governor and attorney general. Activities for delegates will also be planned for Friday, June 19.

Governor

Unknown to challenge Holcomb

Indiana Republicans might have a primary on their hands as a central Indiana businessman filed campaign finance paperwork Monday to challenge Gov. Eric Holcomb next year (Kelly, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette).

Brian Roth, who runs a leadership consulting firm in Carmel, didn't return a message seeking comment. To qualify for the primary ballot, he would have to collect 500 certified signatures from each of the nine congressional districts. He founded Employment 2 Deployment in 2017, which lists his wife and son as employees as well. The company offers leadership seminars, executive coaching, and organizational and team assessments. "We see ourselves as an organization that can help anyone, regardless of what they do, improve their leadership if they will do one thing ... change the way they think (sic) about leadership," the website says. Roth's plan to challenge is a publicity stunt: Gin up business by running a hopeless race for the GOP nomination.



Terre Haute Mayor Duke Bennett (left), Pat Goodwin and Councilman Karrum Nasser. (Terre Haute Tribune-Star photos)

Mayors

Terre Haute: Candidates debate

A trio of candidates in this fall's race for Terre Haute mayor addressed both the school and casino referendums, their plans for public safety in the city and a host of other topics Tuesday at a forum hosted by Citizens of Action (Modesitt, [Terre Haute Tribune-Star](#)). But it was a question about the city's public safety spending that provoked

the most heated discussion of the evening. When asked about a supposed plan to cut public safety, independent Pat Goodwin went on the offensive, saying people, likely his opponents and their supporters, have been spreading lies. Goodwin said he has no intention of cutting public safety, but added officials need to get away from the idea that spending more and more on police and fire equals support. "It's not true, I never said it," Goodwin told the dozens in attendance at the Booker T.

Financial Strategy
Leading Progress, Intelligently

Strategic Management
How, Why, Who

Policy Preparation
Comprehensive, Intuitive

Areas of Concentration

5-Year Scope Capital Planning
Five Years, Forward

Proficiency Mastery
Proven Knowledge, Proven

Communications
Clear Communications for Every Audience

Oscar Gutierrez, Principal

Trish Whitcomb, Partner



BONDRY
MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS
LLC

MUNICIPAL + FINANCIAL ADVISORS

**Bond Mastery for
Common Good**

www.BondryConsulting.com

Inquiries@BondryConsulting.com

317-537-9555

Washington Community Center. "But here's the thing; the public safety departments are around two-thirds of our general fund budget.

In response, Democrat Councilman Karrum Nasser said he's glad many of Goodwin's campaign forums have been recorded so that those interested can go back and see for themselves what Goodwin said. "I was at one of the meetings where he did say that ..." Nasser said. "When we have contracts that have minimum staffing requirements, you can't say one thing, be caught in your tale and then go back and say you never said that." "I would ask that everybody make sure to look at the video," Goodwin interjected. "I'll post it on my Facebook site," Nasser shot back.

Bennett didn't address either of his opponents, instead opting to say the public's safety and those that ensure it should be any mayor's number one priority. "The most important thing you do as mayor is public safety," Bennett said. "I can guarantee you everybody that calls me and thanks us for what we do, in answering the calls with good equipment and trained officers and firefighters, we're going to continue to invest in that."

"The most important thing you do as mayor is public safety," Bennett said. "I can guarantee you everybody that calls me and thanks us for what we do, in answering the calls with good equipment and trained officers and firefighters, we're going to continue to invest in that. "We've averaged about a 1% percent raise since I've been in office, if we think that's too much, that's ridiculous."

HPI Horse Race Status: Likely Bennett.

Fort Wayne: Smith knocks on 25,000 doors

On Monday the Tim Smith for Mayor Campaign reached an unprecedented accomplishment in Fort Wayne municipal politics: 25,000 doors knocked. Only 57 days



remain until Election Day and his challenge to three-term Democratic Mayor Tom Henry, during which Smith's campaign said they will be knocking every day, listening to voters and discussing his plans to make Fort Wayne the

safest, smartest, and most prosperous city in the Midwest. After reaching this important milestone Smith said, "I am humbled and thankful for the tremendous grassroots support of my campaign. Whether door knocking, talking with neighborhood associations, or meeting with small groups in people's homes, I am impressed by the number of people backing my candidacy from all walks of life. I'm also impressed by the clear majority of voters who have told me they expect more from city leadership than they're receiving today. I will continue to run an issues-based campaign focused on listening to Fort Wayne residents."

Horse Race Status: Leans Henry. ❖

Buttigieg faces a telling debate moment tonight

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – If South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg is to have a realistic shot at winning the Democratic presidential nomination, he's going to have to make some serious inroads beginning at 8 tonight (E.T.) during the third Democratic debate in Houston. It will run three hours on ABC.

Buttigieg now says he's in his "phase three" of his longshot presidential campaign. "We knew coming into this campaign that its early stages would unfold in roughly three phases," Buttigieg explained. "The first was to convince Americans that a small-town mayor with a funny-sounding Maltese name was a viable candidate for president. On the strength of our vision, the urgency of our convictions, and some help from phonetic pronunciation, we've done that. We've climbed in the polls and been on two debate stages, and now, we continue to earn opportunities to share our plans"

Phase two, he said, "was to show that we've got grassroots energy on our side. We posted the strongest fundraising total of the whole quarter, and we did it competing with well-established candidates. We are building a new kind of campaign, and Americans are showing their support by personally investing in this vision. "Now it's time for phase three. This is the phase where we harness our vision for taking on urgent, generational fights – and turn it into the kind of person-to-person organizing that wins support and leads to people caucusing and voting for my campaign." ❖

Democratic Presidential Nomination					
RCP Poll Averages					
National		Iowa		New Hampshire	
Biden	26.8 ↗	Biden	28.5	Biden	21.4 ↘
Sanders	17.3 ↘	Warren	18.0	Sanders	21.0 ↗
Warren	16.8 ↘	Sanders	17.5	Warren	18.2 ↘
Harris	6.5 ↘	Harris	8.5	Buttigieg	7.6 ↘
Buttigieg	4.8 ↗	Buttigieg	7.5	Harris	7.2 ↘
Yang	3.0 ↗	Klobuchar	2.5	Gabbard	3.6 ↘
O'Rourke	2.8 ↗	Steyer	2.5	Yang	2.8 ↗
Biden +9.5		Biden +10.5		Biden +0.4	
Nevada		South Carolina		Betting Odds	
Biden	27.0	Biden	39.3	Warren	35.1
Sanders	20.7	Sanders	14.7	Biden	26.7
Warren	15.0	Warren	13.3	Sanders	15.1
Harris	8.7	Harris	10.3	Harris	11.7
Biden +6.3		Biden +24.6		Warren +8.3	

Trump's reelection poised for the dustbin

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The old saying is that generals fight the last war, and that can be said for some political operatives and journalists. Still haunting the American political apparatus is that nearly everyone, including Donald Trump himself, didn't expect that epic, stunning upset in 2016. It's so haunting that many political analysts and



journalists always issue the caveat for 2020 foresight: President Trump can win reelection.

But a year out from the 2020 homestretch, saying that with a straight face is an act of discipline, as the numbers marching forth suggest an LBJ- or Reagan-style landslide is building, particularly if Joe Biden wins the Democratic nomination and stays healthy as well as somewhat gaffe free.

First, some historical context: Every television age president who has won reelection had a composite job approval north of 45%, and most were above the magic 50% threshold. First term approval measured by Gallup had President Harry Truman at 45.6% (and his upset of Thomas Dewey was a true shocker), Dwight Eisenhower at 69.6%, Lyndon Johnson at 74.2%, Richard Nixon at 55.8%, Ronald Reagan at 50.3%, Bill Clinton at 49.6%, George W. Bush at 62.2% and Barack Obama at 49.1%.

What about the losers? Presidents Jerry Ford stood at 47.2%, Jimmy Carter at 45.5% and George H.W. Bush at 60.9%.

President Trump is in a class all by himself. His Real Clear Politics composite job approval is 42.9% to 53.9% disapproving, mostly among registered voters.

A year out from the 2020 homestretch, Trump is sagging in historic fashion among the more pertinent "likely voters." A CNN Poll out Tuesday put Trump's approval at 39%, with 55% disapproving. ABC/Washington Post had his job approval at 39% with 56% disapproving among likely voters.

CNN reveals 60% who say Trump doesn't deserve a second term. Measured against the last two presidents who did win reelection, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, those are dustbin numbers. In October 2003, some 52% felt Bush43 deserved reelection. Remember, it was just becoming clear that his invasion of Iraq was slipping into a quagmire. Obama was still struggling with the 2008-09 Great Recession and economic indicators had not fully recovered, but even he was in the low 50s in October 2011.

What is driving Trump's unpopularity? As

I've said to many of my Republican friends, he lies all the time. Trump lies about big stuff and things he doesn't even need to lie about, and things that video clearly shows otherwise. It's the classic Boy Who Cries Wolf syndrome. While his most ardent supporters still believe that Mexico will pay for the border wall, those who work in a somewhat logical and rational world know differently. The CNN Poll reveals that 71% say that they trust only some or nothing of what the president says. Just 9% say they trust almost all of what they hear from the White House, and another 19% say they trust most of it.

That's a big problem. And it could be an even bigger problem if Trump finds himself in a true national emergency, which he has, amazingly, avoided to this point. There may come a day in a crisis when Americans must rely on what he says, and that's when all the lying may become a crisis in and of itself.



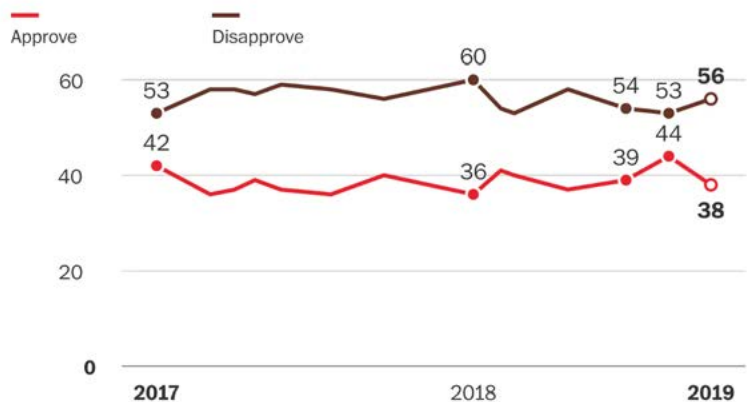
Americans and many Hoosiers voted for President Trump because he promised to be disruptive. But what has fully emerged is blistering chaos. The Trump administration is full of "acting" secretaries and agency heads who are more prone to react to his every whim. With the exits of National Intelligence Director Dan Coats and National Security Adviser John Bolton, the national security apparatus is without confirmed leadership at DNI, Homeland Security, FEMA, National Security, Secret Service, and dozens of top Pentagon posts.

USA Today contributor Chris Lu explains why "acting" officials are a danger: "Few organizations could operate effectively with a large number of temporary leaders. The effects of this personnel void are especially pronounced when it occurs in government. Officials who

USA Today contributor Chris Lu explains why "acting" officials are a danger: "Few organizations could operate effectively with a large number of temporary leaders. The effects of this personnel void are especially pronounced when it occurs in government. Officials who

Trump approval slips from high-point to average territory

Q: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president? (Results among U.S. adults)



Source: Sept. 2-5, 2019, Washington Post-ABC News poll among 1,003 U.S. adults with an error margin of +/- 3.5 percentage points.

SCOTT CLEMENT / THE WASHINGTON POST

serve in an acting capacity are unable to drive organizational change, resist political pressures from the White House, and defend their agencies from internal and external attacks. There is also a corrosive effect on morale, as employees sense that their work isn't valued."

On that second point, look no further than the silly Hurricane Dorian/Alabama Sharpie controversy, that emerged as a curiosity, then a joke, then a farce, before we learn that NOAA attempted to discipline the Birmingham National Weather Service official who tried to allay fears that a hurricane was bearing down on the state when it was tracking far, far away.

The trade war with China is another vulnerability. We've written multiple times that with the U.S. economy in its current state, President Trump should be wildly popular. But ABC/Washington Post polling finds concern over Trump's erratic approach, with just 35% approving of his conduct on the issue and 56% disapproving.

Then there's gun reforms, where 90% favor expanded background checks, 80% back red flag laws and 66% in Fox News Poll backed an assault weapon ban. Despite the bloody August of atrocity in Texas and Ohio, Trump has vacillated and equivocated on any kind of coherent position (though he did stand up against flavored

vaping based on a handful of deaths), effectively freezing Republicans who realize a federal response is expected.

When it comes to the 2020 election, Trump is completely upside down. NBC/Wall Street Journal and ABC/WP reveal that Trump doesn't poll above 41% against any of the top or middle-tier Democratic presidential contenders. Biden is pasting Trump 55-40%, Bernie Sanders 52-43%, Elizabeth Warren 51-44%, Kamala Harris 50-43% and even Pete Buttigieg 47-43%.

Then there's Texas, where a Univision/University of Houston Poll show Sanders leading Trump 48-42%, while Biden is up 47-43% and Warren leads 44-42%.

No wonder we're watching the "Texit" of many Texas Republican congressmen, a long wave of retirements (including our own suburban Rep. Susan Brooks) that is now numbering more than a dozen nationally with more to come.

To our Republican readers, these are the canaries in the proverbial coal mine. Except, they're not just tweeting. They are barking and howling, particularly when you realize that Trump's skinny victory came because millions of Americans just couldn't vote for Hillary Clinton and decided to take a chance on Trump. The last we heard, Hillary is mostly staying home in Chappaqua. ❖

"Content by Carter provided us with an exceptional group of professionals with the ability to assess our situation, prepare a strategy with our team, and execute a game plan in a timely and efficient manner. We were very pleased with their approach and results. We would not hesitate to use them again."

Bryan Kaegi

Senior Vice President of Government Relations
Acadia Healthcare



CONTENT BY CARTER
strategic content creation and deployment

Biden faces Iowa, NH challenges

By KYLE KONDIK

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — As Democrats prepare to debate tonight, the Democratic race remains largely as it has been. Joe Biden is leading, but the other candidates are preparing -- and hoping -- for him to eventually fall off. It is anyone's guess as to whether this will actually happen. Democrats hoping for Biden to collapse may find themselves in the position of Donald Trump's opponents from four years ago by acting out their own version of Waiting for Godot -- anticipating the arrival of something that never actually arrives.

If Biden retains his lead into next year, though, it may be that the thing that ultimately trips him up is the Democratic nomination calendar.

While Biden's lead is built on support from African Americans, hardly any black voters will participate in the first two contests: the Iowa caucus on Feb. 3 (the day after the Super Bowl) and the New Hampshire primary on Feb. 11. According to the 2016 exit polls, the Democratic electorates in both states were over 90% white.

The opportunity that these two overwhelmingly white electorates present to the other candidates is obvious, based on the current demographic bases of support for Biden and his two current leading rivals, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.

According to the most recent Economist/YouGov poll, Biden leads with about 40% among African-Americans nationally, while Sanders, Warren, and Kamala Harris are well behind at around 10% apiece. Meanwhile, Warren leads with white voters with 26%, with Biden (18%) and Sanders (16%) behind her. An ABC News/Washington Post poll released over the weekend tells a similar story: Biden was at 38% with the broader universe of nonwhite voters, with Sanders at 19% and Warren at 12%. The three top candidates were all at around 20% with white voters.

Biden's team is already lowering expectations for Iowa and New Hampshire, and perhaps rightfully so. One would suspect Iowa and New Hampshire to be among the most challenging states in the country for a candidate like Biden given the racial disparities in his levels of support. The danger for Biden is that he might lose both states, which could prompt a ripple effect that would hurt him elsewhere. Nevada votes next, on Feb. 22, followed by South Carolina on Feb. 29. The Silver State will provide the first real test of the preferences of nonwhite voters (in 2016, its caucus electorate was split about 60% white to 40% nonwhite) and the Palmetto State will show how southern African Americans, a vital voting bloc, are leaning: That electorate should be about 60% black.

Super Tuesday follows on March 3, and by March 17 about two-thirds of the delegates will have been awarded.

The past two contested Democratic presidential nomination battles showed how Iowa and New Hampshire may -- or may not -- change the race. Hillary Clinton's failure to sweep Iowa and New Hampshire helped open the door to Barack Obama in 2008, while Clinton's narrow Iowa win and blowout New Hampshire loss to Sanders in 2016 did not really threaten her hold on the nomination.

A key difference between Hillary Clinton's main challengers in 2008 and 2016 was that Obama, as a dynamic African-American politician, had a lot of growth potential among black voters. Following his victory in Iowa, which showed his national viability, he turned this potential into reality, riding big margins with black voters to a narrow national victory over Clinton for the nomination. Eight years later, Clinton's main opponent, Sanders, was unlike Obama in that he did not possess obvious appeal to African Americans. Clinton's black support held in South Carolina and in later contests, and she won the nomination comfortably.

One factor that might bolster Biden if he struggles in Iowa and New Hampshire is that if Warren and/or Sanders edge him out in those states, neither of those candidates may be able to capitalize on those victories by boosting their support with African-American voters, as Sanders failed to do in 2016. In other words, Biden may be able to survive losses in both states, although his potential ability to do so would be historically strange: Since 1976, nearly every nominee for either party won at least one of Iowa or New Hampshire. The sole exception was Bill Clinton in the 1992 Democratic contest, although that race deserves something of an asterisk because the other Democratic candidates (including Clinton) essentially forfeited Iowa in deference to home-state candidate Sen. Tom Harkin.

The possibility exists that Biden could be the second. But this also points to intriguing other alternatives, such as the possibility that if Biden falters, his black support could become splintered -- which might open up the path to the nomination for whichever one of Warren or Sanders comes out of Iowa and New Hampshire better positioned than the other -- or perhaps migrate to someone other than Warren or Sanders. This possibility surely sustains the candidacies of African-American candidates Kamala Harris and Cory Booker, whose respective paths to the nomination are very much like Obama's on paper: Win or exceed expectations in Iowa and/or New Hampshire, and boost their African-American support as a result. The problem for both is that, in addition to having to contend with the other, Harris and Booker are way behind Obama's progress from 2007, where by this time in the race he had established himself as the clearest challenger to Clinton. Harris and Booker have done nothing of the sort, and they are languishing behind not just Biden, but others as well.



Rep. Banks says it's time for Trump, Congress to step up to gun reforms

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – In last week's Howey Politics Indiana edition, my column "Of cephalopods and CEOs" called out the lack of spine Congress and the White House have shown in reaction to an epidemic of mass shootings that have created a jittery nation.



That afternoon, I sat down with Republican U.S. Jim Banks at Sahn's Place. The questions I had were along the lines of is this the "new norm" in American life, where people fear

assaults at schools, universities, malls and bars? I had also called the growing cohesion among mass shooters in fringe websites as a virtual "guerrilla war."

Banks is considered a Republican rising star, moving from Whitley County Republican chairman, to the Indiana Senate, and now Congress. Still young at age 40, with a military tour in Afghanistan under his belt, many consider him to be on a future gubernatorial track and beyond. He didn't dismiss interest in a future Statehouse run, but he could also have a future in House leadership.

Banks agreed that it is time for Congress and President Trump to "rise up" and confront the myriad of security challenges facing the population, as Congress and President George W. Bush did in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terror attacks. Those efforts essentially halted foreign terror strikes on American soil. Today, the threats are overwhelmingly homegrown in a nation awash in an array of lethal weaponry.

Appearing with House Whip Steve Scalise last month in Columbia City, both said that the U.S. needed to focus on existing laws. Scalise was severely wounded in an armed attack on the Republican congressional baseball team two years ago, so I wanted to know what he meant by that.

Banks did not dispute the assertion of a "guerrilla war" unfolding in the population's midst. Did he see that as hyperbole? "No, I don't think so," Banks said. "Look, I'm a father and each one of these shootings is deeply emotional for me and for anyone else who watches them. I want to do anything I can to from my position to address them and keep them from happening again."

Both of us doubt that Congress or the White

House can come up with a silver bullet security solution. Banks believes it will take a consortium of federal, state and local officials, along with other interests ranging from school corporations and local police, to bring this crisis to an end. In the aftermath of the Dayton and El Paso atrocities, some three dozen potential mass shootings had been prevented by the monitoring of social media and tips from the public.

But Banks also believes congressional leaders and President Trump need to step into the challenge this month after Congress returned on Monday.

Here is our interview with Rep. Banks:

HPI: Is this the new norm, that Americans are going to have to endure mass shootings two, three, four times a month? There have been dozens of such incidents this year.

Banks: No. It's not the new norm. It shouldn't be the new norm. Our political leaders have to rise up and do something about it. I agree with your column today that's what is not happening. Many of these incidents happened over the August recess, so we'll go back into session next week and fully expect to see the Senate take something up. I don't expect them to take up what passed out of the House, which was a very broad background check measure, but I suspect the Senate to debate and move something that will come back to the

House. I don't know what that will be or what it will look like. The president has spoken out and will continue to speak out, but it's unclear what he wants.

HPI: It seems the president is having trouble staying on a policy course. If you're in the Senate or House and you're a Republican, that's a problem if you don't know where he's coming down, right?

Banks: Right. The president has to use the bully pulpit and talk about what we can do. That's where I fall on this issue. As an ardent supporter of the 2nd Amendment, how do we pro-

tect 2nd Amendment rights and due process? Each one of these mass shootings has exposed areas where current law has been enforced. That is even the case in the most recent shooting in Odessa. Last year, Republicans passed the Fix NICS (National Instant Criminal Background Check System) bill which went a long way; obviously it didn't fix all of these situations but it went a long way to fix the background check system so that different layers of law enforcement are talking to each other through the NICS system. That was one piece of the puzzle. Now we have to do more to fix existing laws. That's clearly where it gets complicated.

HPI: I'm not convinced that Congress can fix



this. Red flag laws will have more impact on suicides than mass shootings. That's still important. To me, the problem is we're a nation absolutely awash in guns. Other counties have mentally ill people, but we have more mentally ill people getting ahold of AR-15s, shooting up bars and malls.

Banks: Indiana passed the red flag law in 2005. We're one of 19 states that have it. We're the most red state to have the red flag law. You're right, it hasn't solved it. Indianapolis is ranked one of the most violence cities in the country. It doesn't solve violence. It will address some of the mental health issues, but it won't solve mass shootings or violence on the streets. So the debate in Washington will be ... there's one legislative bipartisan proposal that would be a national red flag law. Sen. Lindsey Graham has a bill that would give states money to incentivize red flag laws. There's the Pelosi bill that moved through the House and is in the Senate that is a broader expansion of background checks and it does a lot of other things too. This is societal, this is cultural. I don't know in my heart how Congress solves it. I do believe there needs to be an emphasis on enforcing the laws that we have, addressing the mental health challenges in this country. That's got to be a collaborative effort from local, state and federal governments to figure that out. I know a lot of us are committed to that. When we get back from the August recess that needs to be a conversation that we have.

HPI: I invite friends down to my cabin for target shooting. A friend showed up with an AR-15 and after he fired off about the 17th round, I found it unnerving. I can make the case that civilians shouldn't have that kind of firepower. You were in the military and handled that kind of firepower. Would you consider an assault weapon ban?

Banks: My philosophy as a conservative, as an ardent supporter of the 2nd Amendment, also a veteran who carried essential weapons in Afghanistan, it's very difficult for me to see if you banned them, how that would prevent any of these individuals who in many of these cases found loopholes to purchase them, make them or acquire them, and breaking the law in the process, would solve the mass shootings.

HPI: Should we be focusing on the availability of ammunition?

Banks: I don't see that either. That's where this is complicated. Take guns away from law-abiding gun owners, or people not intent on breaking laws to begin with ... I don't see in my heart how that works. At the same time, whether it is for protection or recreation why these people acquire these weapons who are following the law, who are law-abiding citizens, punishing them in the process while allowing criminals to acquire them doesn't solve the under-

lying societal issues that we face. That's the conversation we face.

HPI: What about buy-backs for assault weapons. There's been some success in Australia and New Zealand on that course.

Banks: I don't know how that works.

HPI: All I know is this nation has more guns in the civilian population than the rest of the world combined.

Banks: It's probably always been that way.

HPI: When you appeared with Rep. Scalise, you said that we should concentrate on enforcing the laws we already have. It seems that various police departments, and even schools and universities are looking at various social media to see who might be making threats. CNN reported shortly after El Paso and Dayton that there had been more than two dozen potential mass shootings prevented in this manner. In high school, every class had that handful of students we called "crazy." It's just that in those days they were smoking weed in the restrooms or blowing up toilets with M80s and not gunning down fellow students and teachers. Then that gets you into the whole profiling dilemma.

Banks: That's where there's a lot of room to explore monitoring social media. Did 8Chan pop back up? Or was it taken off line? There's room for more efforts to be more vigilant online to identify these people and expose these situations before they happen. That's why I was pleased that after the El Paso shootings – was he the guy on 8Chan? – these online networks where these violent people congregate and collaborate, that those outlets are shut down. I think there is room for that. Civil liberties should be protected, but many of these

mass shooters have given warning signs online. He had given every indication he was going to do something and nobody followed up on it. The FBI was alerted and they didn't follow up on it. The lack of enforcement and the lack of followup by agencies like the FBI show negligence in the process.

HPI: I've described this as a virtual guerrilla war, that there will be more cohesion among the crazy people. Do you see that assertion as hyperbole? Am I being too emotional when I describe it as such?

Banks: No, I don't think you are. Look, I'm a father and these shootings are deeply emotional for me and for anyone else who watches them. I want to do anything I can to from my position to address them and keep them from happening again.

HPI: I had two sons in middle school when Columbine happened and as a parent, that was alarming. Now it's become the norm. As Mayor Buttigieg says, we're in the second generation of kids growing up with the specter of mass shootings in schools. Now it's the university systems, and malls, and concerts. This isn't the America I thought



Rep. Banks with the late Sen. Richard Lugar.

it would become. After Sept. 11, Congress and President Bush took some very wise decisions, creating DNI, the Patriot Act. Have we had any successfully perpetrated foreign terror attacks since 2001? That's why now people are saying, after Sept. 11, Washington acted with some real effect and now we have a situation and there doesn't seem to be any effort or viable answers. So that's why I'm asking, is this the new norm?

Banks: I agree. There is room here for political leaders to rise up and address these catastrophes and do something about it. Now is the window of opportunity. We go back into session next week. Leaders on both sides are prepared to make this subject a key discussion. The president is showing a willingness as well. Hopefully in September you're going to see more action than words.

HPI: Let's turn to the Pentagon. President Trump is shifting \$3.6 billion in Defense funds to build the border wall. Yet the Republican Congress refused to fund the wall when it held both chambers. Is the president right to now divert from Crane and Hulman Field?

Banks: Yes. The Supreme Court ruled that he is. Yes, Republicans failed to appropriate dollars for the border. Now the Democrat-led majority has resisted all efforts to negotiate any deal to appropriate any dollars for the border wall. That's what led the president to declare the national emergency.

Fortunately, Secretary Esper is responsible in his approach in identifying dollars that have less of a short term consequence. Both the Indiana projects are important, the shooting range in Terre Haute and the railcar hub at Crane. It's a rail spur (Chris Crabtree interjects that Crane is the most rail intensive facility in the U.S. military). It can wait.

HPI: Do you worry that President Trump is side-stepping the appropriations authority of Congress?

Banks: I don't like that. I've said that before when the president declared the national emergency. In this situation, I don't think he has a choice. If the Congress refuses to act, which we've seen, especially in this Congress to be the case, especially addressing the humanitarian crisis on the border. In my district, in my polling, the border and immigration was the No. 1 issue in my district among all voters, general election voters.

HPI: And you said that 70% support the wall?

Banks: The president has a 70% approval rating in my district, and immigration, building the wall, addressing border security was the No. 1 issue, more than two to one over health care. I'm from northeastern Indiana, so we're a long way from the border. The president has a lot of support for building the wall, especially here in Indi-

ana. While both of the two military construction projects are important and I support both of them, they can both wait for the next fiscal year to be funded and I don't think you're going to find a lot of opposition to that.

HPI: Trump passed on a deal where he could have gotten \$22 billion to build the wall in exchange for a deal on the Dreamers. Was that a mistake?

Banks: I don't recall that. I recall the opposite. In this last go-around the president was offering to negotiate a compromise with Speaker Pelosi that would do just that. I believe the president showed a willingness for a deal that would provide a long term permanent status for Dreamers in exchange for dollars for the border and Pelosi said "no" over and over again. That's my perspective.

HPI: Not only do we have a border problem, the president seems intent on limiting legal immigration. As you tour the 3rd District, aren't employers telling you we need more workers? There are 70,000 unfilled jobs in Indiana. Shouldn't we be increasing legal immigration in order to fill those jobs with highly qualified, degreed people?

Banks: I'm not opposed to that. The Republican legislation I supported last year would have ended the visa lottery that doesn't make a whole lot of sense and replace it with a more merit-based approach, for which I find broad support among Republicans and Democrats through an Ameri-based approach that would take into account workforce needs of our local economy. That would do that. The version the president introduced might be a decrease to begin with

and that number would fluctuate moving forward. We did just base a bill out of the House that would end the per country cap on high-skilled visas. I think every country was capped at 7,000 and countries like India have the type of skills and labor that meet some of our workforce needs.

HPI: Why cap them?

Banks: That's where they are right now. We would eliminate the caps. That's the kind of common sense immigration reform that has bipartisan support. I think the biggest mistake I see in Congress on immigration questions is when we throw all these proposals into the same basket, you can never get to 218 votes. You'd see bills last year that would have 190 or 200 votes but could never reach majority because on one end or the other you would lose votes on minor issues. If you took a lot of these pieces out, we could pass bills that would have bipartisan support, like the Ameri-base bill. I think you would see that pass and the president sign it.

HPI: This past month you've been out in farm country. What is your message to farmers and manufacturers about the trade war with China?

Banks: I can understand their anxiety. What I hear from most farmers I talk to is they support the president, they understand this president is tackling what I refer to as



Rep. Banks meets with Niger officials at Camp Atterbury in 2018. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howe)

the greatest existential threat America faces today in the bad practices of China. They understand that China has started this trade war and not America. They understand that 30 years ago China began a trade war with the United States that no president had confronted. We all want the trade war to end, but the farmers, who I have to say are the best economists I know, understand that short term pain can be long term gain in our economy.

HPI: Do you have confidence that President Trump is taking the disciplined approach needed to get a successful conclusion? This past month he's gone from calling President Xi an "enemy" to slapping on more tariffs, suggesting even higher tariffs. It seems like he's winging it.

Banks: I don't think so. Although that's the Trump approach ...

HPI: Which is only he knows what victory looks like in the end ...

Banks: Two and a half years into this, we're kind of used to Trump using this approach, whether it's with Kim Jong Un or this emerging deal with Afghanistan. In many ways that's his strategy. It appears he's erratic on the surface. The Chinese are clearly keeping their eyes on November 2020. They're just trying to wait him out. When Joe Biden says that China isn't a threat, when Pete Buttigieg says the president is on a fool's errand, these are concessions to the Chinese that in my view are suggesting that if they take over the White House, they'll be more than happy to let the Chinese run over us. It takes a concentrated focus on addressing the China threat from restricting university research that we've seen time and time again infiltrated by Chinese espionage to federal government pensions that have gone into adversarial Chinese companies. There are a lot of bills in the scope of that subject. I appreciate the president's focus in spite of what Joe Biden and Pete Buttigieg have said. This is not a fool's errand. We have to attack the China threat every way we can or my daughter is going to pay the price for it.

HPI: So you're confident the tariffs are the right way to accomplish this?

Banks: It's part of it. It's one key way to put pressure on the Chinese. This is why the military buildup is important, too. What China is doing with unmanned and underwater systems that leap frog the U.S. in hypersonic research, where Indiana is playing a big role in trying to confront that as well. Economically and militarily this is all part of what's unfolding in Washington at this point to address this threat. We've never had this conversation before.

HPI: When Mike Pence was in Congress, he predicted that by mid-century, we'd probably be in a military conflict with China. Now, we're starting to get hints of that. Is that likely to happen? Or are our economies so intertwined that a military conflict would simply be absurd?

Banks: It could. I hope that it won't. That's why

the projection of American strength both militarily and economically is the key way to head it off. That is what Trump is trying to do with tariffs, to address Chinese trade practices or IT theft. What China has done to wreak havoc on the American economy is unquestionable. Stealing our military secrets over and over again, from the F-35 to the Chinese stealing another platform, what they do is they raid ... they dial into our supply chain. They are able to steal our secrets.

HPI: Are we doing that to them? We invented much of the high tech components and it seems the Russians and Chinese are using them to attack us. Are we



returning the favor?

Banks: It doesn't appear so at this point.

HPI: Why aren't we?

Banks: The Chinese have developed hypersonic technologies we don't have. They are finding other ways to leapfrog us militarily. Their long term, savvier approach puts us at a moment of truth to do something about it, or whether we turn a blind eye to it like other previous administrations have. I hope we ratchet up pressure. I hope there will be a resolution and get back to a zero/zero sum trade and free trade in China, which is not what we have today, and certainly not before the tariffs. I give the president high marks for his approach, whether it appears to be erratic on the surface. The Chinese economy has taken a far more drastic hit than the American economy has. Negotiations are to resume in early October and hopefully we can see a strong resolution for farmers and manufacturers.

HPI: Last time I was with you, we talked about the Indiana defense sector, which had been in decline in recent years. Give me an overview on what's happening there.

Banks: I don't have a statistic on how much it's improved, but we work on a daily basis with key defense leaders in the state like AM General, Raytheon, Rolls-Royce, Allison Transmission and Cummins in the central part of the state. They have all benefited from the military buildup and larger defense budgets. Indiana has been able to capitalize on that because of our base with the defense industry. But it's still not where we were 10 or 15 years ago and it's going to be a long process. The gover-

nor has been very focused on the defense industry in the state, too. We appreciate the partnership we have with Gov. Holcomb.

HPI: When I talked with Rep. Walorski a few years ago she noted the decline in military investment and contracts. So that trend is being reversed?

Banks: Trump has reversed it over the last two fiscal years. But keep in mind we saw a decline in the previous 10 years. Now we're seeing a rebuilding.

HPI: Anything you want to add?

Banks: We're going to lose a lot of clout with Susan (Brooks) leaving. But we have a great team of Indiana members on both sides of the aisle, with Pete Visclosky in his position as chairman of Defense Appropriations, he's really good when we get into these discussions. He works

very closely with Indiana defense-related businesses. My office has always enjoyed partnering with him on those issues. Now you have (Jim) Baird on Agriculture, (Greg) Pence on Transportation, (Larry) Bucshon on Energy and Commerce, a very powerful committee, Jackie (Walorski) on Ways & Means, another very powerful committee, Trey (Hollingsworth) on Financial Services, and I'm on Defense and Armed Services. So we have this incredible delegation working closely together to better the state.

HPI: Does the delegation still meet regularly?

Banks: It's not a regularly scheduled meeting, but maybe once a month or every other month formally, but we are constantly working with each other. We have a very strong delegation, and Susan leaving takes a piece of that away, but we will continue to rebuild. ❖

Zoning determines tomorrow's towns

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — This November Hoosier voters will make important decisions about the future economy of our state. They will choose the mayors and council members who will determine the members of local zoning boards and planning commissions. The choices of those boards and commissions will set the course of the state for 50 or more years.



We have many examples of good and bad land use in Indiana's past; let's look at some recent developments.

Boone County and Lebanon have guided development along their portions of I-65.

Warehouses, heavy machinery sales and services, retail trade, and highway traveler services will be found adjacent to the interstate.

Crown Point, in Lake County, has allowed housing right along I-65, north and south of the 109th Avenue (Exit 249). This breaks the line of commercial, industrial, and institutional uses adopted by Merrillville further north.

Kokomo and Howard County have resisted cluttering the "new" U.S. 31 bypass with the usual array of gas stations, fast food, and sundry commercial sprawl often found at expressway interchanges. At the same time, many businesses along the infamous "old" Kokomo bypass work to attract travelers. How that works out depends on informational signage approaching Kokomo.

Fort Wayne/Allen County built I-469 around the south and eastern sides of the city. Significant develop-

ment along that loop has not materialized. Perhaps, they learned from the past when I-69 opened around the west and northern sides of the city. As commerce moved north, downtown was put on life support.

In Indianapolis, a land use change is being contested where the Glendale Shopping Center once set the bar for retail trade. Virtually unused parking spaces are being eyed for a 267-unit multi-family apartment complex in seven low-rise buildings.

Homeowners in the adjoining 50+ year old single-family neighborhood are challenging the permission granted for the development by the city's zoning board.

The development makes sense, if one is concerned about rebuilding Indianapolis. The density of population and employment in Marion County need to be increased. More people with money could help revive commerce in the area. In addition, the land in the city, with the heavy concentration of untaxed institutions, needs to produce more revenue for urban services.

The remonstrators may not object to rental units but entertain negative expectations of the imagined renters. Who will be the new neighbors?

Think of those new units as condominiums occupied by retirees with pensions. They might be folks like those now living in that adjoining neighborhood. Just folks wishing to surrender lawn and garden care to younger green thumbs.

Could the developers bar persons under age 25 or 55 from renting, buying, or living in the apartments? Many are the ways to "discriminate," excuse me, to attract "suitable" tenants or owners. Then what happens to the neighbors' objections?

It's worth finding out how your candidates think about land use in your community before you vote on Nov. 5. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonj-marcus@yahoo.com. Follow his views and those of John Guy on "Who gets what?" wherever podcasts are available or at mortonjohn.libsyn.com.

The economy and those perceptions

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – “It’s the economy, stupid.”

That’s the famous admonition to Bill Clinton’s campaign staffers attributed to James Carville, the colorful Clinton strategist in the 1992 upset of President George H.W. Bush. Bush, a very good president, especially in foreign affairs, handling so well the collapse of the old Soviet Union, had “unbeatable” approval ratings a year before.

Well, it was the economy, or rather the perception of the economy and what Bush was doing about it, that enabled Clinton to win. Two points of clarification:

1. The headquarters message posted by Carville actually had no “It’s.” It was simply, “The economy, stupid.”
2. The brief recession during Bush’s presidency actually was over, recovery underway before the 1992 campaign started.

But Carville was right.

Clinton won. The perception of

how the economy is doing and what the president is doing about it is a potent political factor in presidential politics.

How about now? There will be a recession. I’m no economist. But I guarantee it. There will be a recession. President Trump has brushed off the possibility because, “We’re doing tremendously well. Our consumers are rich. I gave a tremendous tax cut and they’re loaded up with money.”

Whether or not you consumers out there feel rich and loaded up with money, President Trump hasn’t repealed the economic cycle. Recessions come. They always do. Long periods of economic expansion – and we’re in the longest such expansion now in the nation’s history – always end.

There will be a recession. The question is when, not if. Will it come before, during or after the 2020 presidential campaign? And will it be severe or mild, long or short?

If it’s the economy, stupid, will the perception of how the economy is doing help or hurt President Trump’s reelection prospects? Will his trade wars and deficit spending trigger economic woes, bringing the start of recession or at least the fear of imminent downturn? Some economists say there already is a farm recession and that a manufacturing slump gives dire warning.

Will he be credited with continuation of the

longest economic expansion in U.S. history, going back to June of 2009, when recovery from the Great Recession began? Some economists say the inevitable next recession won’t come until the end of 2021, well after the 2020 campaign.

What economists say, either way, won’t be as significant as what most voters perceive. President Harry Truman once said he wanted to find a one-armed economist. He was tired of economic advisors saying, on the one hand, this; on the other hand, that.

Presidents often get blamed for or credited with economic conditions that are viewed wrongly or over which they have little control. As with President George H.W. Bush in 1992, the perception, even if not supported by the economic facts, is what counts.

There is dispute now over how much credit Trump deserves for continuing expansion after he inherited an economy rebounding from the Great Recession. A Forbes analysis of job statistics as the upturn reached record length found that 810,000 more jobs were added during the final 29 months of Barack Obama’s presidency than during the first 29 months of Trump’s presidency.

So, should the upturn be credited to Obama, with Trump viewed as lucky to have inherited it and to blame for slowing down the pace? Or should Trump be credited with the continuation of what he inherited, with his tax cut and other policies staving off that inevitable recession?

What if a Democrat is elected president in 2020? Possible, though far from certain. Would a recession so many economists see coming in 2021 be blamed on Trump or on the Democrat who replaced him?


It’s the economy, stupid, and how the state of the economy is perceived can be stupid. ❖

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



ANTELOPE CLUB

615 N. DELAWARE ST. - DOWNTOWN INDY
antelopeclub@hotmail.com



>> Lunch & dinner 6 days a week

>> Cigar lounge

>> Beautiful view of Downtown from our 2nd floor patio

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

Hmmm ... embracing the zen master

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – Lately the Zen Master has encouraged me to open up my sensory powers and observe more of the world around me. I've embraced my Zen Master's suggestion, and I have to say that much of what I've seen is disturbing. So, for lack of a better title for this column, I'll call it things that make you go "Hmmm."

By now I'm sure that you've noticed that you can't turn on the television, peruse the internet, read the newspaper or go anywhere without being bombarded with



the not-so-subtle message that a climate crisis is upon us, sea levels are rising, baby polar bears are dying by the thousands and you better buy your electric auto soon to save the planet. No less than our all-knowing former President Barack Obama warned us way back in 2009 that global warming and a rise in sea levels threaten our existence. Surely, President Obama, a major supporter of the Paris Climate Accord, would lead

by example and show the average Bible-toting, gun-loving dim-bulb American how to live.

Well, guess again! Just last month former President Obama purchased his second home, a 7,000-square-foot beauty on Martha's Vineyard for a whopping \$14.85 million. Added to his 8,200-square-foot home in Washington, D.C., one can see that the Obamas are going to leave a monstrous carbon footprint. Confounding climate alarmists even more is the fact that the Obamas' new waterfront home on Martha's Vineyard is only 3.3 feet above sea level. That means that our beloved former president is only one collapsed ice shelf away from being washed out to sea.

Frankly, it is alarming how many of my favorite Hollywood stars and climate pundits live on an ocean shore. Our entire entertainment industry is threatened by our rapidly rising oceans. Or not.

Markets tend to reveal more than the hollow words of climate alarmists. Homes and condos on the beach everywhere in the world, with the exception of Fukushima, are at record prices and rising. Home buyers know. Home sellers know. Real estate agents know. Would you pay out the wazoo for an oceanfront property that you believed might soon be under water or inaccessible? I didn't think you would. When everyone in government and the captains and kings of industry start buying homes on the side of mountains, then I'll worry.

Please notice that I did not go "Hmmm" and question the income inequality aspects of the Obamas purchasing a \$14.85 million second home. Hooray for them.

Warriors against white privilege!

On the same topic of climate crisis, did you go "Hmmm" when Prince Hairbrain and Meghan Marvelous flew on a private jet four times in one month to vacation and attend climate crisis confabs on luxurious islands? Couldn't they just Face Time the meetings? And on an unrelated hmmm, what exactly have they done to need a two-week vacation?

It has been hard to avoid listening to the constant harping about the inequities of the Electoral College coming from media pundits and Democratic activists. It has been relentless, but what do you talk about when the Russian scandal falls apart? I can't help noticing and, yes, going "Hmmm," when I hear Democrats whine about the non-democratic aspects of the Electoral College while ignoring the existence of super delegates in the Democrat Party nominating process.

And that brings us to actress and liberal warrior Debra Messing. Dear Ms. Messing has come up with the brilliant idea that all Hollywood types who attend a fundraiser for President Trump should be outed so that actors, producers and directors may refuse to work with the wayward twits.

Hollywood, the only place that could produce movies, documentaries and television programs about the excesses of the McCarthy era in the 1950s and its resulting Communist blacklists and then propose a similar type of blacklist against Trump supporters. Hmmm.

We've all been entertained by the memes, jokes and coverage about President Trump's many gaffs, fibs and screw-ups. We've been denied the relentless coverage of the faux pas uttered by the Democrat presidential field, most notably Joe Biden. When President Trump stretches the truth it is an earth-shattering crisis. Joe Biden makes up a story about pinning a medal on a hero in Afghanistan and the soldier refusing the decoration and the mainstream media and pundits allow him to dismiss his big fat whopper with, "The details of my story were inconsequential." Hmmm.

Right home here in Indiana the other day I was somewhat shocked by a billboard that I saw while driving in the great Hoosier State. The billboard said, "In xxx county, 70% of our teenagers are drug free!" I leave the name of the county out because I may need to drive through that county in the future. Does this billboard mean that 30% of our teenagers use drugs? Who came up with this statistic? Presumably, there would be far fewer 13-year-old drug users than 18-year-old drug users. Does this mean that appreciably more than 30% of your older teenagers use drugs? Did you cut drug use down from 60% to 30% and you're happy about it? This definitely made me go "Hmmm."

I go to my favorite grocery store the other day and see a big display selling Joey Chestnut mustards and sauces for your hotdogs and wings. I don't know about you, but the only thing I've ever seen Joey Chestnut doing with a hotdog during his July 4th eating competition

is dunking his dogs in water before jamming them in his face. While it is understandable that Mr. Chestnut wouldn't try and sell used hotdog water, it is confusing to me that he would market mustards and sauces that he doesn't use.

At this same grocery store I noticed that they only had green bananas for sale. This made me ponder the question, "Do pessimists buy green bananas?" Hmmm.

Finally, as if you need one more reason to hate the New England Patriots, 15 minutes after the Oakland Raiders released wide receiver Antonio Brown from the team

for calling his general manager a "Cracker" and threatening to assault GM Mike Mayock, the New England Patriots signed Brown to a one-year contract worth \$15 million with \$10 million guaranteed. That seemed pretty quick for a \$15 million decision. But hey, if this was all planned out, that would be tampering and that would destroy my faith in the honesty of the New England Patriots. Makes you want to go "Hmmm"! ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman.

The cost of disasters

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE — Natural disasters, such as hurricanes and tornadoes, have economic costs. They also reveal much about market economies, government planning and response. As I pen this column, Hurricane Dorian is winding its way through the Atlantic. I cannot yet speak to its impact, but I can outline the costs that it, along with other natural disasters, may impose.

North America faces blizzards, large snowstorms, hurricanes, cyclones, earthquakes, flooding and tornadoes. All impose some of the same costs on society, businesses, households and government. There are three distinct types of impacts.



Weather-related natural disasters cause trade interruptions. The effects are often modest, delaying shipments and travel by a few hours or days. Additional damages occur when businesses and conventions close, perishable foods are damaged and families miss reunions and weddings. These impacts tend to be modest, transient and easily insured.

The most costly damages tend to be damages to property and infrastructure. Hurricane Katrina cost more than \$150 billion in private and public damages. Natural disasters destroyed homes, business and the contents within, such as furniture or inventory. Public infrastructure such as roadways, bridges and water treatment plants also were destroyed or damaged. Estimates of damages from insurance companies typically ignore most public infrastructure damage estimates, thus understating actual costs to residents.

Natural disasters also kill and injure people in their path. The deadliest Atlantic hurricane appears to be one that came ashore in Galveston, Texas in 1900, which drowned more than 8,000 residents. Estimates of storm-related deaths are fraught with controversy because they potentially address the effectiveness of governmental preparation and response. It is clear that the economic

and social impacts due to loss of life are very large.

Finally, natural disasters have the potential to disrupt communities, altering civic life and the effectiveness of institutions. This is especially true when the natural disaster results in large inter-regional migration, such as Hurricane Katrina. I chose my words carefully here, because it is not clear that these disruptions are, on net, negative. More than ten years after Katrina have yet to make clear the full range of economic and social effects, some of which will be positive, others negative. On net, I'd guess it is negative, but that is a not an analytical conclusion.

On net, natural disasters are always unwelcomed. They disrupt trade, destroy property and end lives. These effects are unambiguously negative. Natural disasters also reveal the effectiveness of institutions and government.

Governments mitigate the effect of natural disasters through preparation and response. The most salient form of preparation is in the development of building codes, evacuation plans and survivability of public infrastructure. Response comes in the form of adhering to evacuation plans, effecting rescues and delivering relief. It also includes accommodating broad and effective private sector relief.

In my soldiering days, I was involved in two hurricane responses. One was very effective (Hugo); the other, terrible (Andrew). These responses involved different levels of execution by local military leaders, which revealed the level of national preparation for national disasters. As an economics professor, I reviewed the government's response to Hurricane Katrina and helped with international flood relief. I can report the nation has steadily improved its response, handing over more of the coordination of assets to experienced professionals.

At the local level, there remain critical differences. It is no coincidence that less effective local governments have poorer preparation and response. Places with good governance are better prepared, typically enjoy more resources with which to mitigate damages and are better at communicating to residents. ❖

Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at Ball State University.

Peter Wehner, *The Atlantic*: During the 2016 campaign, I received a phone call from an influential political journalist and author, who was soliciting my thoughts on Donald Trump. Trump's rise in the Republican Party was still something of a shock, and he wanted to know the things I felt he should keep in mind as he went about the task of covering Trump. At the top of my list: Talk to psychologists and psychiatrists about the state of Trump's mental health, since I considered that to be the most important thing when it came to understanding him. It was Trump's Rosetta stone. I wasn't shy about making the same case publicly. During a July 14, 2016, appearance on C-SPAN's Washington Journal, for example, I responded to a pro-Trump caller who was upset that I opposed Trump despite my having been a Republican for my entire adult life and having served in the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations and the George W. Bush White House.

"I don't oppose Mr. Trump because I think he's going to lose to Hillary Clinton," I told Ben from Purcellville, Virginia. "I think he will, but as I said, he may well win. My opposition to him is based on something completely different, which is, first, I think he is temperamentally unfit to be president. I think he's erratic, I think he's unprincipled, I think he's unstable, and I think that he has a personality disorder; I think he's obsessive. And at the end of the day, having served in the White House for seven years in three administrations and worked for three presidents, one closely, and read a lot of history, I think the main requirement for president of the United States ... is temperament, and disposition ... whether you have wisdom and judgment and prudence."

That statement has been validated. Donald Trump's disordered personality — his unhealthy patterns of thinking, functioning, and behaving — has become the defining characteristic of his presidency. It manifests itself in multiple ways: His extreme narcissism; his addiction to lying about things large and small, including his finances and bullying and silencing those who could expose them; his detachment from reality, including denying things he said even when there is video evidence to the contrary; his affinity for conspiracy theories; his demand for total loyalty from others while showing none to others; and his self-aggrandizement and petty cheating. It manifests itself in Trump's impulsiveness and vindictiveness; his craving for adulation; his misogyny, predatory sexual behavior, and sexualization of his daughters; his open admiration for brutal dictators; his remorselessness; and his lack of empathy and sympathy. The most recent example is the president's bizarre fixation on falsely insisting that he was correct to warn that Alabama faced a major risk from Hurricane Dorian, to the point that he doctored a hurricane map with a black Sharpie to include the state as being in the path of the storm. "He's deteriorating in plain sight," one Republican strategist who is in frequent contact with the White House told Business Insider on Friday. ❖



Bill Scher, *Politico*: With great fanfare last month, Pete Buttigieg has announced "Phase Three" of his presidential campaign. Campaign adviser Lis Smith described the first two phases as teaching people how to pronounce his name and then raising gobs of money. For this new phase, the Buttigieg team plans to "blow them out of the water with our organization." To that end, 20 new field offices in Iowa are opening this month, plus another 12 in New Hampshire. Here's a more accurate description. In Phase One, Buttigieg milked \$32 million from 390,000 donors, most of whom knew next to nothing about his record, but were bowled over by a guy under 40 who can speak in complete paragraphs, sometimes in Norwegian. Phase Two was learning that Buttigieg has no strong and unique governing vision. We also learned his South Bend record on race relations as mayor, however well intentioned, is checkered. Phase Three, which so far has been a series of boasts about the campaign's field operation, does nothing to solve the problems of Phase Two. But his campaign will keep going for months thanks to those swooning donors, who don't reflect actual voters. You may have seen Democratic presidential candidates categorized as "wine track" and "beer track." Political analyst Ron Brownstein popularized those labels, observing that the "brainy liberals with cool, detached personas and messages of political reform" on the wine track tend to lose in Democratic presidential primaries to candidates with support "rooted in the blue-collar and minority communities" on the beer track. But six months after Buttigieg wowed the Democratic donor class in a CNN town hall, and four months after he peaked at 8% in the RealClearPolitics poll average, Buttigieg can't even crack the wine track. Instead, he seems to be pioneering a new campaign lane: the "craft beer" track. With his national polling average down to a paltry 4.5%, Buttigieg's support is narrow and idiosyncratic. He's the IPA of Campaign 2020, a hipster nerd flavor. ❖

Janet McCabe, *NWI Times*: Hoosiers love our beautiful Indiana lakes. But as the dog days of summer continue to bring steamy weather, we should think twice before diving in — both people and dogs. Earlier this month, IDEM issued an advisory for lakes and waterways across the state due to potentially harmful algae blooms. The Great Lakes region has battled algae outbreaks all summer, exacerbated by unusually high water levels. Hoosiers should recognize these warnings are one sign that Indiana's climate is changing; it's getting warmer. This will increasingly affect air and water quality. A Washington Post's analysis found that at least 20 Indiana counties have warmed by at least 1 degree Celsius over the past century. And all of them are either in northern or northwestern Indiana. In Elkhart County, for example, temperatures have risen by 1.4 degrees Celsius, meaning it's just one tenth of a degree Celsius below what many scientists believe is a critical tipping point for reining in climate change. ❖

Braun urges Trump on gun reforms

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Mike Braun is again urging Congress and President Trump to look to Indiana as an example of “common sense” gun legislation “Red flag laws. We’ve had them in Indiana. They work,” Braun said on MSNBC. “They actually lower the rate of suicide. I’m also for background checks where there is any looseness to where there is a commercial sale, there can’t be exemptions.” As for a wavering President Trump who has yet to signal what he would support and sign, Braun said, “I would encourage him ... to get on board this time. I’m a member of the NRA and if we do nothing, we’re going to lose our 2nd Amendment rights to the extent we have them right now. We can’t turn a deaf ear, day after day, to the misuse of guns.”



Gun threat mars Hammond 9/11

HAMMOND — Nearly 200 students gathered Wednesday in the Hammond Area Career Center auditorium in remembrance of the attack 18 years ago on the World Trade Center (Lanich, [NWI Times](#)). Just after 9 a.m., the stair climbers began their 1,980-step trek, mirroring the distance of the 110 stories climbed by first responders to the World Trade Center attack. The students and staff wound through the three-story career center, up and down six different flights of stairs — two extra flights added from the year before to accommodate increased participation. But, just about two laps in to the students’ nine-lap course, the Patriot Day Stair Climb event was cut short. “Code White!” administrators belted from the front hallway of the school. “Go to your ACC 2 classroom.” Over the intercom, Principal JoEllen Raby addressed the school. “The Area Career Center is currently on a Code White,” Raby said.

“Immediately close and lock classroom door or work area door. Continue with your regular classroom teaching or other duties within the school.” Just a half-mile down the road, Hammond police were called to Hammond High School to investigate a threat reported by students through social media. A series of photos sent to a handful of students, some attending Hammond High, included a photo of a rifle along with threats to “SHOOT HAMMOND HIGH UP @12.”

145 companies urge Senate to act

WASHINGTON — In a direct and urgent call to address gun violence in America, the chief executives of some of the nation’s best-known companies sent a letter to Senate leaders on Thursday, urging an expansion of background checks to all firearms sales and stronger “red flag” laws ([New York Times](#)). “Doing nothing about America’s gun violence crisis is simply unacceptable and it is time to stand with the American public on gun safety,” the heads of 145 companies, including Levi Strauss, Twitter and Uber, say in the letter, which was shared with The New York Times.

Trump puts brakes on flavored vape

WASHINGTON — President Trump said the U.S. plans to pull most vaping products from the market, citing growing concerns about health hazards and rising use by teenagers of the trendy alternative to traditional cigarettes ([Wall Street Journal](#)). The Food and Drug Administration intends to ban popular fruity flavors, as well as menthol and mint e-cigarettes from stores and online sellers, leaving just tobacco-flavored products. The move poses a major threat to a fast-growing market estimated to reach \$9 billion in sales this year and dominated by startup Juul Labs Inc., which counts on mango, mint and other fruity flavors for most of its sales. “We have a problem in our country. It’s a new

problem,” Mr. Trump, a Republican, said in the Oval Office on Wednesday as he met with top health officials. “It’s called vaping, especially vaping as it pertains to innocent children.”

Pence’s Doonbeg stay cost \$600k

WASHINGTON — Ground transportation for Vice President Mike Pence’s stay at President Donald Trump’s Doonbeg, Ireland, resort cost taxpayers nearly \$600,000, according to State Department receipts. The documents, made available through a General Services Administration database, were first spotted by the left-leaning watchdog Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington and later reviewed by NBC News. The receipts totaled more than \$599,000 in conjunction with the vice president’s stay, which required him to travel back-and-forth between Doonbeg and Dublin, where his official meetings were set to take place. During then-President Barack Obama’s three-day visit to Ireland in 2013, the State Department spent just \$114,000 on ground transit, paying the same limousine company. The government paid the same company nearly \$1 million for Trump’s ground transportation during a June visit to the property. The vice president’s office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Purdue Pharma deal secured

WASHINGTON — Purdue Pharma LP has secured support from 23 states and thousands of local governments for a multibillion-dollar deal that could enable the drugmaker to resolve much of the opioid litigation it faces through a planned bankruptcy restructuring, according to people familiar with the matter ([Wall Street Journal](#)). The OxyContin maker and its owners, the Sackler family, have been fighting some 2,500 lawsuits brought by virtually every state as well as cities.