

Buttigieg seeks his own ‘movement’

He nearly upset Sanders in NH; now he seeks to broaden his base as nomination map expands

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Now the truly hard part for Pete Buttigieg begins. After historically narrow first- and second-place finishes in mostly white Iowa and New Hampshire, the former South Bend mayor is faced with forming his own “movement” to counter U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders and the bottomless wallet of billionaire Michael Bloomberg.



Buttigieg’s nascent campaign is one of epic overachievement. Or as he told supporters in Nashua and a nationwide TV audience just before 11 Tuesday night, “Here in a state that goes by the motto ‘Live free or die,’ you made up your own minds. You asserted that famous independent streak and thanks to you, a campaign that some said shouldn’t be here at all has shown that we are here to stay.”

The former South Bend mayor now heads into a



browner America, with the Nevada caucuses and South Carolina primary coming in the next 18 days, followed

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Bernie scores, Mike looms

By **CHRIS SAUTTER**

WASHINGTON — Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders narrowly won the New Hampshire primary in an election that underscores how totally confusing and contradictory the presidential nominating process has become. After the first primary, Democrats appear headed toward a choice between two candidates who aren’t really Democrats.



The win marks the second straight contest in which Sanders has won the popular vote though he trails runner-up candidate former South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg in the delegate count. Sanders and Buttigieg won an equal number of delegates in New Hampshire. Buttigieg won



“This legislation ensures that Indiana’s students, teachers and schools have the time they need to successfully adjust to the new ILearn. I am grateful the General Assembly unanimously supported my call to take action.”

- Gov. Eric Holcomb, signing SEA2 on Wednesday.



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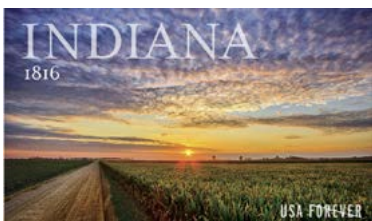
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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



Pete Buttigieg and Sen. Amy Klobuchar ended up on the same flight to Houston last summer. The two are now fighting for the so-called moderate lane in the Democratic presidential nomination fight.

the delegate race in Iowa while losing to Sanders by 6,000 votes.

Sanders has consolidated support among progressive voters, but with just 26% of the vote, he won less than half of his total four years ago when he defeated eventual nominee Hillary Clinton. Total votes for the top two moderate candidates exceeded those cast for the top two progressives. Yet Sanders is now the Democratic front-runner. He has a committed base, an effective organization, and an ability to raise tens of millions of dollars from his followers.

Buttigieg ran strong again with over 24% of the vote but was likely denied a victory over Sanders as some moderate voters became excited about a different candidate. Amy Klobuchar jumped from single digits to almost 20% of the vote in a matter of three days, keeping her campaign alive but also preventing Buttigieg from moving past Sanders. Klobuchar's surprising success also strengthens the hand of former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg who looms large in the background. Bloomberg's ability to take control of the race is contingent upon the Democrats' inability to settle on a moderate candidate.

Former Vice President Joe Biden's campaign is in free fall as the once front-runner fell to fifth place in New Hampshire. Biden's campaign was badly hurt by the unsuccessful effort of House Democrats to remove President Trump from office through

impeachment. The Trump strategy to use the impeachment trial to destroy Biden seems to have worked though Biden clearly contributed to his own apparent demise with a listless, inept campaign.

Meanwhile, another former front-runner, Elizabeth Warren, ran a disappointing fourth having relinquished much of her progressive support to Bernie Sanders after he suffered a heart attack. Warren's mishandling of her position on health care drove away moderate left-of-center voters while giving Sanders the opportunity to win back progressives who had moved to her over the summer. Ironically, her missteps occurred when she was defending Sanders' Medicare for All plan although Sanders has avoided the attacks on his plan that Warren sustained — or at least the intensity of those attacks.

The contest now turns to the Feb. 22 Nevada Caucus where polls show Sanders again leads. Buttigieg needed to win in New Hampshire to give him maximum momentum as the race turns to terrain that is less hospitable for him. Nevada and South Carolina are diverse states unlike Iowa and New Hampshire that are both more than 90% white. Buttigieg's apparent problems with African American voters means he is not likely to do as well there and then heads into Super Tuesday where he is also currently weak.

It is not clear that Klobuchar

can take advantage of her New Hampshire showing either. Klobuchar's fundraising has been anemic for most of the campaign as her poll numbers languished in single digits. As a result she has done little to prepare to compete in Nevada, South Carolina, Super Tuesday and beyond. Unlike Warren who has pledged to soldier on, Klobuchar can actually win somewhere — her home state of Minnesota that votes on Super Tuesday.

But a third-place showing, even a surprise one, may not provide sufficient momentum to carry her that far unless she manages to also surprise in Nevada and South Carolina. That said, if Klobuchar does leapfrog Buttigieg in Nevada or South Carolina, she has a better chance than the former South Bend mayor to emerge as a viable moderate alternative to Bloomberg because she has a better shot at attracting minority voters and especially women. The race that seemed about to relegate the women candidates to the second tier has one to get behind after all, at least for now.

Many moderate Democrats are in a panic over Sanders' possible nomination. Desperate to beat Trump, they are flocking to Bloomberg, who was first elected mayor of New York as a Republican. Bloomberg, who has already spent over \$200 million in post-South Carolina states, is moving up in the polls as a result of his spending spree. Moderate Democrats like him because he projects strength and they believe he is the only Democrat tough enough to stand up to Trump. Elites like him because they feel they can trust him not to bring too much real change.

But Bloomberg has thus far been campaigning in an environment he himself controls and most Democrats gravitating to him know little about him beyond what they see in his TV ads. However, success brings scrutiny as tapes of some of Bloomberg's more controversial statements have surfaced. In one Bloomberg justifies his "stop and frisk" program that was subsequently ruled unconstitutional in coarse language some are characterizing as racist. Bloomberg is working overtime in an attempt to "earn" the support of black elected officials and convince Democrats he can get out the vote. Nonetheless, his record remains a potential liability.

All of this adds up to a confused and divided Democratic nomination contest that could go to the convention. Democrats are still trying to figure out their best choice to defeat Trump. Unity and enthusiasm for the ultimate nominee are the keys to Democrats defeating Trump. But many long time Democrats will be dissatisfied if the nomination comes down to a choice between Bernie Sanders, a self-described Democratic socialist, and Michael Bloomberg, a billionaire and former Republican mayor.

Republicans are no doubt feeling smug about the Democrats' dilemma. Yet their nomination process produced Donald Trump, who as president is on his way to destroying the GOP and American democracy as we have known them. ❖

Sautter is a Democratic media consultant based in Washington.

Buttigieg, from page

by Super Tuesday on March 3 in diverse states like Texas and California. He does so as the first openly gay candidate just two presidential cycles into an era when that isn't seen as a disqualifying electoral liability, and as a mayor of a medium-sized Indiana city, for an office that has never had such an official attempt such a career leap.

On Wednesday morning, Buttigieg began his move toward gaining African-American support seen as vital to what could be a generational movement. He announced the endorsement of South Carolina State Rep. J.A. Moore, an African-American businessman and chef. "Electability is top of mind for every South Carolina voter. If anyone had doubts, Pete Buttigieg has proven he's the only viable candidate to build a cross-racial, rural, urban and suburban coalition to win in November." said Moore.

That endorsement came as Pete for America in



South Carolina State Rep. J.A. Moore endorsed Pete Buttigieg on Wednesday.

South Carolina expanded to 55 staff members across six field offices, as well as 100 in Nevada. The campaign has also been investing in paid media across the state, running digital, television and radio ads, including one featuring Walter Clyburn Reed and Abe Jenkins reflecting on the legacies of their respective grandfathers. Clyburn Reed is the grandson of Rep. James E. Clyburn, and Jenkins is the grandson of civil rights leader Esau Jenkins.

It's an attempt to fix the glaring hole in his resume, the lack of African-American support, which was just 4% in the most recent Charleston Post & Courier poll. Buttigieg is polling in the single digits in the Real Clear Politics polling composites in Nevada (7%), South Carolina (5.5%), California (7.3%), and Texas (5%). But that's been familiar territory for the mayor.

"We have to engage voters in very racially diverse states," Buttigieg said early Wednesday morning on MSNBC's "Morning Joe." "We have to share this message that we have to come together and confront Donald Trump and unify the Democratic Party over values we share. There's going to be a very clear choice here. Sen. Sanders, who I greatly respect, has got an approach that you've either got to be for his revolution or the status quo. Most people don't see where they fit in that message. Our message is real, meaningful, bold, progressive reform in a way that

can actually bring Americans together and not polarize us.”

Asked about the coming pitch to Palmetto State blacks, Buttigieg explained, “The key is that I’m sharing South Bend’s story but also other black and Latino voices from our community are also sharing their experience of South Bend’s story. The Douglass Plan isn’t something that just came out of the blue. It connects to things we’ve learned, sometimes the hard way, at home. Just like America’s story, our city’s story is complex and challenging, but it is a story of working side by side to deliver for black residents. I’ll be telling that story so ideas of the Douglass Plan connect to the world that I’ve done.

“A lot of the folks I’ve talked to over the last year say, ‘The plan seems great ... but, c’mon, are you really going to be a competitive campaign?’ Now that we’ve put that question to rest, I think we’re getting a whole new look from black and Latino voters who have so much riding on whether we defeat Donald Trump.”

With the apparent implosion of former vice president Joe Biden, the key question is where does his support go? Veteran analyst Josh Kraushaar of the National Journal observed, “Who wins the African-American vote going forward? No one, other than Biden, has a claim to their support. Bernie has a faction of the activist base, but deeply skeptical he can broaden support.”

U.S. Rep. James Clyburn said Wednesday morning Biden “is still the leading candidate in South Carolina. I think Nevada will have an impact” but said that Biden lacked a forward leaning perspective. New York Post columnist Ben Domenech wrote Wednesday of Biden, “He is low on money, and the crush of ad spending by Michael Bloomberg and Tom Steyer in critical states means that he can barely afford to compete in key markets. His events seem exhausted and strained, his voice quavering between a harsh staccato and a whisper.”

As for his pitch to Nevada this next week, Buttigieg noted that a wide swath of labor isn’t interested in Sanders’ Medicare for All plan. “Nevada is a great place where union workers gave concessions on wages to get excellent plans,” Buttigieg explained yesterday on ‘Morning Joe’. “I’m talking about culinary workers ... who are prioritizing health care and they are not interested in Sen. Sanders’ plan of eliminating all private plans. They actually got and fought for the good coverage they have now. If the choice is between Sen. Sanders telling them they’re going to have to give that up and me saying we can increase enhanced choice ... I think that is a very good debate for us to have.”

Starting Monday, the Buttigieg campaign will have

Democratic Presidential Nomination					
RCP Poll Averages					
National		Nevada		South Carolina	
Sanders	23.6	Biden	21.0	Biden	31.0
Biden	19.2	Sanders	17.5	Steyer	18.5
Bloomberg	14.2	Warren	11.5	Sanders	17.0
Warren	12.4	Steyer	10.0	Warren	9.5
Buttigieg	10.6	Buttigieg	7.0	Buttigieg	5.5
Klobuchar	4.6	Yang	4.0	Yang	3.0
Sanders +4.4		Biden +3.5		Biden +12.5	
California		Texas		Betting Odds	
Sanders	25.8	Biden	31.0	Sanders	43.6
Biden	21.0	Sanders	22.0	Bloomberg	26.6
Warren	19.8	Warren	15.0	Buttigieg	14.6
Buttigieg	7.3	Bloomberg	12.5	Biden	9.1
Bloomberg	4.3	Buttigieg	5.0	Klobuchar	4.8
Sanders +4.8		Biden +9.0		Sanders +17.0	

boots on the ground in every Super Tuesday state that will help further resource and train thousands of grassroots volunteer networks in all 165 congressional districts, the campaign said. Additionally, Pete for America announced four upcoming trips in the next two weeks that will take Buttigieg to Super Tuesday states including California, North Carolina, Utah, and Virginia. This also comes on the heels of a six-figure digital buy in several Super Tuesday states. He has fundraisers set later this week in Indianapolis and California.

“We are building the campaign that will not only win this nomination but will defeat Donald Trump in November,” said Samantha Steelman, organizing

director for Super Tuesday States. “To compete in all the states on Super Tuesday, you need a massive network of grassroots volunteers. For months, we have had a team building that organization by harnessing the energy and grassroots momentum behind Pete and turning it into real organizing work. This ramp up will provide more staff and resources to train, resource, and guide our 25,000 volunteers in Super Tuesday states that will push our campaign across the finish line on March 3rd.”

Buttigieg burnished his campaign cred this past week in a state that Sanders won in a landslide four years ago. In addition to Sanders’ movement and Bloomberg’s profound wealth, Buttigieg will have to fend off the late surge of Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, who prevented the outright Buttigieg Granite State upset. With Biden imploding, Buttigieg will attempt to consolidate the “moderate” middle lane, which carried more than 55% of the New Hampshire vote. Veteran operative David Axelrod said, “What is striking ... and we saw last week in Iowa as well, Pete Buttigieg runs relatively well across all categories. He does well in different kinds of communities. And he has done a good job of casting a broad message that is hitting a large target.”

Two weeks ago, Real Clear Politics polling composite in New Hampshire had Sanders leading at 25%, Joe Biden at 17%, Elizabeth Warren and Buttigieg tied at 14%, with Klobuchar at 6%. ABC News exit polling revealed Buttigieg won those who made their choice in the campaign’s closing days. .

The other key challenge for Buttigieg is money. Not only is he coming up against Bloomberg’s deep pockets, but Sanders announced he raised an astounding \$25 million in January. CNBC reported that one new Buttigieg supporter is former Goldman Sachs partner David Heller. Another is National Association of Manufacturers president and CEO Jerry Jasinowski. His campaign has spent more in South Carolina than in Nevada so far, but that may be changing. Mr. Buttigieg has \$388,000 in ads placed for this week in Nevada and \$75,000 in South Carolina. ❖

Populist movements like Trump & Sanders rendering parties moot

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Before Sen. Bernie Sanders' narrow New Hampshire primary victory Tuesday night over Pete Buttigieg, Notre Dame Prof. Robert Schmuhl questioned the viability of the two major political parties in his recently published book, "The Glory and the Burden: The American Presidency from FDR to Trump."



Is Sanders on his way to what would be the continuation of a new trend in American politics: The individual takeover of the two major parties by the Vermont senator and the current White House inhabitant, President Donald Trump. These twin forces have induced considerable volatility in the world's oldest republic and super power.

If you need an accompanying soundtrack, Donald Trump's 2016 Republican

National Convention acceptance speech in Cleveland will suffice: "Nobody knows the system better than me, which is why I alone can fix it."

Schmuhl, whose son Mike Schmuhl is Pete Buttigieg's campaign manager, writes of the Vermont socialist's loss to Hillary Clinton in June 2016: "Sanders in defeat took with him a following of supporters afire with the political passion that one didn't detect with Clinton backers. When Trump beat Clinton in November, more than a few analysts wondered aloud whether Sanders would have been more appealing to 'the forgotten men and women' of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin who put Trump over the top in the Electoral College.

"**Trump and Sanders** exemplify the weakening nature of the major parties as political institutions," Schmuhl observes. "Most observers date Trump's association with the GOP only back to his questioning of Obama's birth certificate of 2011, while Sanders's official Senate biography identifies him as 'the longest serving independent member of Congress in American history.'"

He then poses this question: "Have the parties actually become obsolete or extraneous in the nominating process of the so-called party standard bearer?"

The Iowa caucus debacle that robbed Mayor Pete of vital momentum heading into New Hampshire is one more instance of a major political party malfunction, coming eight years after Mitt Romney was declared the winner

of the GOP Iowa caucus, only to have that party's establishment revise that 2012 outcome in favor of the forgettable Rick Santorum.

Never mind.

In 2016, Trump secured the Republican presidential nomination in Indiana with virtually no establishment GOP support. It wasn't until Gov. Mike Pence, following his mealy-mouthed "endorsement" of Ted Cruz that April, ascended to Trump's ticket that the Hoosier party's hierarchy ended up following the masses. Sanders won that year's Indiana primary with the same 53% of the vote Trump won, but without a single establishment Democrat endorsing his candidacy. His current "movement" is void of such support from Hoosier Democratic leadership.

Schmuhl notes that only 9% of the 60 million Americans who showed up at a primary or caucus in the 2016 primaries voted for either Trump or Hillary Clinton. The nominating process of the two major parties is inexplicable to students, and, as Iowa has repeatedly demonstrated, is in need of significant reform.

That Sanders is now on a collision course with President Trump might dovetail into Prof. Schmuhl's drawing on two lines from W. B. Yeats's poem, "The Second Coming," which describes a time when the extremes dominate without an anchoring midpoint: "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."

In 1965, Medicare and Medicaid passed the Democratically controlled Congress with 13 GOP senators and 70 congressmen voting yea. The 1998 and 2019 impeachments of Presidents Clinton and Trump were party line acts, as was the 2010 passage of Obamacare. That



prompted Pew Research to note in 2011, "Congress is now more polarized than at any time since the end of Reconstruction."

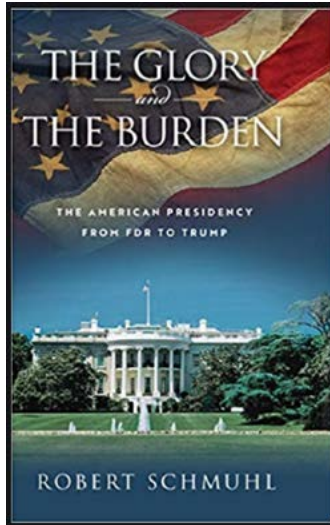
Schmuhl writes, "The greater emphasis on the extremes, conservative or liberal, the less we see any attempt to arrive at a political midpoint, what might be considered an animating center, that brings together the best thinking from the left and the right in a dynamic synthesis of contesting viewpoints. The relative absence of bipartisanship leads to legitimate complaints of political paralyzes and governmental dysfunction."

In the 2018 Lugar Partisan Index that gauges

congressional bipartisanship, the 100th and lowest rated senator was ... Bernie Sanders (Sens. Elizabeth Warren was 69th, and Amy Klobuchar 23rd).

Sanders' emergence comes just a week after President Trump was acquitted in his Senate impeachment trial, a political effort doomed to failure, and on the same night Trump roiled the Department of Justice over the Roger Stone sentencing. In its wake, a few recalcitrant House Democrats talked of a second impeachment of Trump (particularly if he wins a second term next November), while Republican attorney George Conway and Iowa Republican U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst talked of further weaponizing impeachment, with the latter saying, "I think this door of impeachable whatever has been opened. Joe Biden should be very careful what he's asking for because, you know, we can have a situation where if it should ever be President Biden, that immediately people right the day after he would be elected would be saying, 'Well, we're going to impeach him.'"

The modern yield of presidents might have ap-



peared to provide stability, in that the two-term presidencies of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama were the first such trifecta since Founding Fathers Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and James Monroe pulled off the same feat between 1800 and 1824 in an era pre-dating political parties as we know them today.

What is now in motion are presidential movements. Trump and Sanders are movement politicians, gathering up tides of people convinced that the system has been rigged against them ... because of the sclerosis forged by computerized reapportionment maps, wiping out Blue Dog Democrats and moderate Republicans, and making way for the extremes. For Buttigieg to prevail, he will

have to fashion his upstart campaign as a movement as well.

Potentially standing in the way is another billionaire, former Republican New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who appears intent on spending \$1 billion of his estimated \$60 billion on his own candidacy, or that of the eventual Democratic nominee. The delicious



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wrinkle here is the "Democratic Socialist" Bernie Sanders could be the key beneficiary of this billionaire's largess.

"Socialism destroys nations," Trump warned during his State of the Union address last week. "We will never let socialism destroy American health care." But Trump spent \$28 billion to bail out American farmers in 2019, significantly more than the \$22 billion of taxpayer funds to save General Motors and Chrysler in 2009 (which, by the way, was repaid).

The Atlantic's T.A. Frank noted that author and socialist Upton Sinclair wrote to a friend in 1951, "The American people will take socialism, but they won't take the label."

Indiana was home to five-time Socialist presidential nominee Eugene Debs of Terre Haute, but he never mustered more than 5.6% of his home state's vote, coming in 1912 in an election pre-dating the Russian Revolution of 1917 that stained in blood the Socialist brand.

Newsweek columnist Howard Fineman writes of the Iowa caucus fiasco, "combined ... with Trump's repeated humiliation of the GOP" may be the final blow to the reputation of parties.

What has replaced it all? Fineman asks. "Three forces: (1.) Unique, innovative methods of raising and spending huge amounts of cash; (2.) laser-focused arrays of policy proposals that amount to 'revolutionary' or populist manifestos; (3.) mastery of cutting-edge social-media, digital, viral means of organizing and communication.

Here in New Hampshire, Fineman observes, "Sanders isn't relying on local politicians; he's avoiding

them. The distrust is mutual. 'Bernie isn't a Democrat, he is a 'movement,'" former Democratic State Chairman Chris Spirou told me. 'I'd go so far as to say that Bernie Sanders is a cult. He's the leader of a cult!'"

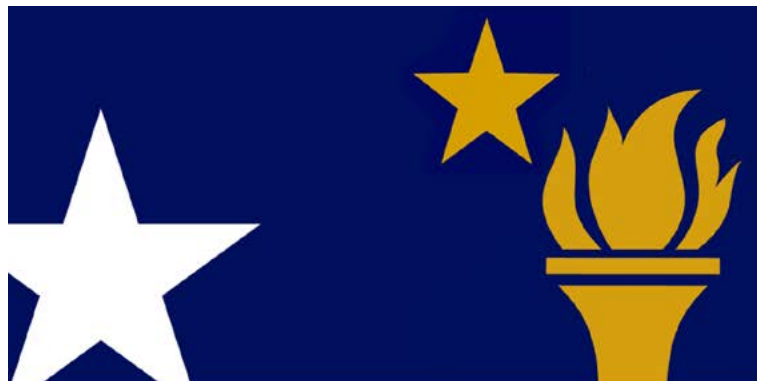
Or as Sanders put it in his Tuesday night victory speech, "This victory here is the beginning of the end for Donald Trump. The reason we're going to win is we're putting together a multi-racial, multi-cultural movement."

Washington Post reporter Robert Costa noted that in the wake of New Hampshire, "Two strands become immediately evident: 1.) There's a bloc of the Democratic Party that is yearning for generational change and to have someone with Mayor Buttigieg's profile come forward from a place South Bend, Ind., echoing the messaging and the rhetoric of President Obama, and say they can take this era of the Democratic Party and move it forward. 2.) There's also a huge appetite on the left wing for a populist Democratic Socialist change to a system that many people believe needs to have remedies from the federal level.

"**Those two elements** are colliding," Costa said. "There's a yearning for populism and a yearning for generational change. The only thing throwing a wrench into this is Sen. Klobuchar's performance, raising the question of Mayor Buttigieg's experience."

So it may be time to brace yourself for the 21st Century brand of politics: Billionaire cults and a hollowing out of the political center, amplified by fake news, alternative facts, socialism and socialism-lite.

We have a republic. The critical question is whether we can keep it. ❖



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Signature drama as Myers lines up to challenge Holcomb

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — The gubernatorial field is set. Democrat Woody Myers will challenge Gov. Eric Holcomb, who starts with more than a \$7 million cash advantage.

If there was any drama left in this race, it was whether Myers and Indianapolis businessman Josh Owens would have enough signatures to qualify for the ballot by last Friday's noon filing deadline. Myers announced last Thursday that he did; Owens did, too, but then dropped out of the race. He seemed to equate who filed their

signatures first was tantamount to winning the primary. "We knew the primary was going to come down to who qualified for the ballot first," Owens told the IBJ. "It was going to be a sprint. We knew the primary might be decided before May."

With that mind-numbing logic in place, Myers told the IBJ that "it's a very different race when you don't have a primary challenger. It just means you have to double down on your efforts in order to make sure you get the resources you need, the votes that you need, on and on. I've got 270 days left in my job interview. I consider a campaign to be a very long job interview. I'm going to continue to work to earn every single vote that I can get. I know we need between 1 million and 1.3 million Hoosiers to see things our way and to give me this opportunity to serve, and I'm going to give them every reason to say yes between now and November."

Besides Owens, the other "stunt candidate" (i.e. an obscure hopeful with no track record inside the party, running to seek publicity) is Republican Brian Roth of Hamilton County. He filed, but in a campaign Facebook posting said he will wait to see if the secretary of state's office will

qualify him. Roth posted on his personal Facebook page, "It might be over in the mind of Kyle Hupfer but options remain. We did fall short of collecting the required signatures."

Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer, who doubles as Holcomb's campaign manager, said Friday, "While Brian Roth came up short of collecting the necessary signatures to be on the May primary ballot, I appreciate the effort he and his supporters put in over the last few months to be active in our party. Although his signature collection effort was not successful and he will not be on the ballot in May, I am encouraged by Brian's willingness to put himself in the public arena."

Campaign spokesman Jake Oakman told HPI on Sunday, "The secretary of state's office lists him as a candidate because he filed, but he wouldn't be able to sustain a challenge to the Election Board." Oakman said Roth is about 2,000 signatures short. "Someone could file with no signatures at all and they'd be on the ballot if no one challenged it." The Holcomb campaign won't file that challenge, but expects one to come from a citizen.

Holcomb endorsed by Indiana Builders

Indiana Builders Association endorsed Holcomb, the first time the association has made a preference. "It is critical that the home building industry support candidates for public office that understand the important role housing plays in Indiana's overall economy," said Indiana Builders Association President Brett Harter. "Gov. Holcomb's success in bringing jobs to our state and making Indiana a desired place to work and live during his tenure has earned the support and respect of our leadership across the state. It is our honor to endorse his reelection as Indiana's governor." According to Harter, Gov. Holcomb's leadership in Indiana's long-term infrastructure plan, Next Level Jobs initiative and community rehabilitation efforts make him an ideal candidate for the association. This is the first endorsement ever made by the IBA.

Congress

1st CD: 19 candidates file

Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. is the frontrunner for this open seat, and faces a spirited challenge from North Township Trustee Frank Mrvan Jr., and State Rep Mara Candalaria Reardon and Jim Harper, along with 11 other Democratic candidates. Six Republicans also filed.



Republican Brian Roth filed for governor, but admitted in a Facebook posting he lacked the necessary qualification signatures.

5th CD: Brizzi enters race

Former Marion County prosecutor Carl Brizzi is joining the crowded field of Republicans seeking the nomination to run for Indiana’s 5th CD (Indiana Lawyer). Brizzi served as Marion County prosecutor for two terms, from 2002 until 2010, before going back into private practice. He was known as a political up-and-comer who had a high conviction rate, especially for narcotics and sex-crimes cases. For years, Brizzi was embattled in controversy stemming from accusations he accepted bribes while in office. He was investigated by the FBI for accepting \$25,000 in campaign contributions from the father of a woman who was seeking a modification to a murder sentence and for arranging a lenient plea bargain for a business partner’s client. He was never charged with a crime. Then in 2017, he was suspended from practicing law in Indiana for 30 days after the Indiana Supreme Court Disciplinary Commission found he violated prohibitions against representing a client in a case in which he had a personal interest. “I’ve been through the trenches,” he said. “I don’t think anyone has been more investigated or vetted than I have been, so I see it as a plus.” The GOP field includes Kent Abernathy, Andrew Bates, Micah Beckwith, Allen R. Davidson, Chuck Dietzen, Beth Henderson, Matthew Hook, Matthew Hullinger, Danny Niederberger, Indiana Treasurer Kelly Mitchell, State Sen. Victoria Spartz, Mark Small, Victor Wakley and Russell Stwalley.

Braun headlines Henderson fundraiser

U.S. Sen. Mike Braun and former state senator Luke Kenley will host a fundraiser for 5th CD Republican candidate Beth Henderson from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 17, at the Booth Tarkington House owned by Doris Anne and Tim Sadler with Nancy and Charlie Hiltunen as co-hosts.

Cardwell endorses Dietzen

Chuck Dietzen received the endorsement of former Indiana Republican chairman Jeff Cardwell. “I am proud to endorse Dr. Chuck Dietzen for United States Congress,” Cardwell said. “Chuck is an unapologetic pro-life conservative leader and the embodiment of Hoosier values. I have known Chuck for over 20 years as we have served together to combat global housing, hunger, and health challenges. His heart for serving others remains unmatched and his passion to walk alongside those in need are both admirable and contagious. A doctor, an entrepreneur, and a lifelong Republican; there is no one more fit to serve Hoosiers in Washington.”

Hale endorsed by Action Fund

The New Democratic Action Fund announced their endorsement of Christina Hale for Congress. “NewDems stand for fresh approaches, bold ideas, and meaningful progress,” said Congressman Ami

Bera, chair of the NewDem Action Fund. “Christina has committed to that same approach and has what it takes to win in this competitive district. We look forward to standing side by side through 2020 and beyond.” Hale had previously been named a “candidate to watch” by the organization and has gone on to earn the support of dozens of state, local and national groups and has set fundraising records. “I am running for Congress to get things done, to work across the aisle and to restore some common sense to Washington,” said Hale. “I’m excited to know that there are others that share my practical approach.”

6th CD: Last 3 Dem nominees file

The last three unsuccessful 6th CD Democratic nominees have filed for the nomination to take on U.S. Rep. Greg Pence. They are George T. Holland, Barry Welsh, and 2018 nominee Jeannine Lee Lake.

8th CD: Drake seeks rematch

The 2016 Democratic nominee Ron Drake has filed, seeking a rematch with U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon. Drake faces labor activist Thomasina Marsili and Mike Webster.

9th CD: 5 Dems seek nomination

Five Democrats seeking the nomination to challenge U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth are former Bloomington councilman Andy Ruff, Rev. Mark Powell, Brandon Hood, Liam Dorris and James O’Gabhann III.


Statewides

Attorney general: Melton endorses Tallian

State Sen. Karen Tallian has been endorsed by State Sen. Eddie Melton for attorney general. Tallian faces former Evansville mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel. “Karen Tallian has been a great partner and leader in the Senate,”

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Melton said. "Her record and expertise on criminal justice reform make her the clear choice for attorney general. I look forward to continuing our work to strengthen our communities when she is attorney general."

General Assembly

HD6: Bauer's daughter running

Maureen Bauer is seeking to extend the family dynasty to three generations; she filed for the seat State Rep. B. Patrick Bauer and her grandfather, Bernie Bauer, held for almost 60 years. Rep. Bauer, 75, a Democrat who



held the seat for 50 years, announced Jan. 27 that he would step down. Running in the May 5 Democratic primary to succeed him are his daughter, Maureen Bauer, 35; Drew Duncan, 30; and Garrett Blad, 25. St. Joseph County Democratic Party Chair Stan Wruble told the South Bend Tribune that when Bauer told him he wouldn't seek reelection, and that his daughter would run for his seat, Bauer commented, "Money

for her campaign won't be a problem." When contacted by The Tribune, Bauer said he hadn't decided whether to give the money to his daughter's campaign. If he does, he won't give it all to her, he said; he'll also give some to other Democrats who polling indicates can win their races. Maureen Bauer said, "I plan to fundraise and knock on doors, make phone calls and do all that is typical of a campaign. In the end, it's about meeting the voters and getting their vote for the most qualified candidate, which I believe I am. I think some of the money will certainly stay in the district to get the House District 6 candidate elected, but there are many other races that are important. My dad has worked very hard across the state to get Democrats elected."

HD36: Pierce to challenge Austin

Republican Kyle Pierce has filed to run for HD36 and as the only Republican to file, will challenge State Rep. Terri Austin. "Citizens of House District 36 deserve a state representative who will work every day to protect manufacturing jobs and to attract high paying industries. My experience as former deputy director of the Indiana Medical Device Manufacturers Council will allow me to focus on job creation for Hoosiers starting on day one," Pierce said in a statement released Monday. "I will fight to direct more education dollars to the classroom where it will work for Hoosier children and their families, while also fighting against funding special interests," Pierce added.

SD36: Dems run digital ads v. Sandlin

The Indiana Senate Democrats Committee, the campaign arm of the Indiana Senate Democratic Caucus, today announced "Big Government Jack Sandlin," a new digital ad buy focused on Senate Bill 436 and its co-author State Sen. Jack Sandlin (SD-36). SB 436 would have allowed the state government to supercede prosecutorial discretion and prosecute Hoosiers who are simply following their local city policies. This bill is a direct contradiction to the Indiana Republican Party's political attacks on "big government" over the last decade.

SD10: Bowman challenges Niezgodski

Local attorney Alex C. Bowman has launched a primary challenge to State Sen. David Niezgodski. "Elections should be about choice," Bowman said about his decision to become the second of two Democratic candidates vying for the position. "I believe it's always better for the voters to choose their candidates than to have the choice made for them." Bowman said he was keeping a years-old promise he made to himself, that upon earning his law degree he would return to his hometown and be a voice for people in the community that means so much to him. "I am committed to promoting the kind of economic growth and job opportunities in South Bend and Mishawaka." ❖



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Audit shows \$68M mispent by schools

Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS — A special investigation by state auditors found that officials from two Indiana virtual charter schools mispent more than \$85 million in state funding by inflating enrollment and funneling millions to a tangled web of related companies (Wang, [Chalkbeat](#)). In what has become one of the nation's largest virtual charter school scandals, Indiana Virtual School and Indiana Virtual Pathways Academy officials showed "substantial disregard" for following the rules and may have "focused on maximizing profits and revenues by exploiting perceived vulnerabilities" in local oversight and state funding processes, the report said. The state auditors' scathing report, released Wednesday, follows a series of Chalkbeat investigations revealing financial conflicts of interest at Indiana Virtual School and Indiana Virtual Pathways Academy and their dismally low academic results. The two virtual charter schools shut down last summer after allegations of enrollment fraud first emerged. The state report seeks repayment for more than \$85 million in public dollars inappropriately spent on companies connected to school officials. In the past three years, the two schools sent 83% of their total funding to related companies, the report found. According to the report, the mispent funds include more than \$68 million that the schools improperly collected from the state — far more than initially reported — by recording inactive students more than 14,000 times over eight years. In some cases, those were people who merely requested information through the schools' website or students who had moved out-of-state — and in one instance, a student who had died. "Taxpayers are literally paying tens, if not hundreds of millions of dollars to a school for students who aren't even there," said Todd Ziebarth, senior vice president for state advocacy and support for the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.



Holcomb signs ILearn harmless bill

Gov. Eric J. Holcomb offered the following statement after signing Next Level Agenda legislation SEA 2, which will prevent ILEARN test scores from having an adverse impact on teacher evaluations and school accountability grades in an effort to ease the transition to ILEARN. "This legislation ensures that Indiana's students, teachers and schools have the time they need to successfully adjust to the new ILEARN. I am grateful that the General Assembly unanimously supported my call to take action allowing educators to remain focused on helping Hoosier students succeed."

Cancer screening bill advances

A House-approved proposal to require health insurance companies to cover colorectal cancer screening beginning at age 45, instead of 50, is advancing in the Senate (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). But a change to House Bill 1080 adopted Wednesday by the Senate Committee on Insurance and Financial Institutions means many at-risk Hoosiers will not immediately be eligible to take advantage of the lower screening age. State Rep. Brad Barrett, R-Richmond, the sponsor, said he recently was informed by the governor's office that his legislation needed to be amended to exclude high-deductible health plans because federal health savings account rules currently limit spending on colorectal cancer screenings to patients age 50 and up. As a result, the approximately 60% of privately-insured Hoosiers covered by a high-deductible health plan won't automatically be eligible for colorectal cancer screening at age 45, if Barrett's revised proposal becomes law. "The way it stands now, we need to exclude that population to not cause violations with the tax-exempt status for health savings accounts," said Barrett, a retired surgeon. Nevertheless, a majority of committee members agreed it still was worth moving ahead with the lower screening age after several doctors testified that colorectal cancer usually is treatable if it's caught early.

House unlikely to restore pregnancy provisions

It looks unlikely the House will restore employment accommodations for pregnant workers that were stripped out in the Senate last week (Smith, [Indiana Public Media](#)). The issue appears headed for a summer study committee even as Gov. Eric Holcomb pushes for more. Pregnant employees have a patchwork of protections across state and federal law. Legislation this session would've ensured that employers reasonably accommodate their pregnant workers — things like seating or more frequent or longer breaks. But Senate Republicans eliminated those provisions. And House Speaker Brian Bosma (R-Indianapolis) appears unwilling to restore them. "It was a new proposal this year," Bosma says. "And it was the governor's proposal — we want to be very respectful of that. But it had a lot of pushback in the business community." Rep. Cindy Kirchhofer (R-Beech Grove), the bill's sponsor, says she'll push for what she can get enough votes to pass. "I've got to consider business as well as pregnant moms," Kirchhofer says. "Obviously, pregnant moms are a valuable resource and we want to take care of them." ❖

Gambling on our political races

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO — Indiana is now a gambling mecca. We can play scratch offs, play the numbers, indulge ourselves playing Willy Wonka for money, bet on the ponies and now we can wager on sports. The next expansion of gaming that I'd like to see is political bookmaking. After all, if we can bet on whether the Colts will score on their next drive (bet against it), get a kick blocked (bet on it) or whether we'll win the Super Bowl next year (called a sucker bet in Vegas), then why can't we bet on politics?



Imagine going to the sports book right now and making a wager on who will emerge as the 5th Congressional District Republican candidate or on how

badly Gov. Holcomb will trounce his Democrat opponent. Maybe drop a fiver on whether or not Attorney General Curtis Hill will survive his ethics complaint and be the Republican candidate for AG in 2020.

Now that might spark my interest in gambling.

Of course, the first bet that I'd make is what the charge will be for President Trump's next impeachment. If you think that all of this impeachment nonsense is going away, then you have been living in la-la land. Remember, the first calls for the impeachment of President Trump began in the spring of 2017, when Ukraine was still just Hunter Biden's personal piggy bank. Back in those quaint days of yore, Trump was being excoriated for his collusion with Vlad the Impaler and the rigging of the 2016 election.

Remember those sweet days when Rachel Maddow, CNN, NBC, CBS, ABC, the New York Times and the Washington Post absolutely knew that Donald J. Trump actively worked with Russia to swing the 2016 election in his favor and destroy poor Hillary Clinton's chance to be president?

Remember the joy in the halls of Congress when Robert Mueller was appointed special prosecutor charged with investigating Trump's alleged collusion, obstruction of justice and failure to use mouthwash? Oh, the euphoria as Hillary's boys and girls in the FBI, CIA and Department of Justice conspired to overturn the 2016 election results. But then, something went wrong. Muel-



ler spent \$36 million and failed to find any criminal act on the part of Donald Trump, not even a single incidence of jaywalking.

This only momentarily fazed the Democrats in the House of Representatives. House Intelligence (an oxymoron if I ever heard one) Chairman Adam Schiff then convened a top secret investigation of his own into possible Trump offenses that might be conjured up for use as an impeachment excuse. Try as he might to stack the deck and rig the game, he was floundering about until the unnamed whistleblower blew his whistle. Forget for the moment that the whistleblower had zero first-hand information. Forget that the whistleblower was a Hillary Clinton partisan. Forget that the whistleblower was coached by members of Schiff's staff in how to write a juicy complaint. Forget all of this and remember that President Trump was guilty of committing a quid pro quo with Ukraine. Never mind that there was never a quo in the quid pro quo. Democrats had an issue that they could use to craft articles of impeachment.

This was what the do-nothing Democrats in the House of Representatives had longed for since January of 2017. Doubt it? Here is what Democrat Maxine Waters told Essence Magazine in September, 2019, "I have been calling for and talking about impeachment of this president since his inauguration."

So many challenges and problems facing our nation and the Democrats have done nothing since they took control in 2018 except stage an attempted coup d'etat. Democrats are now faced with the reality that President Donald Trump has been acquitted by the United States Senate and possibly will be reelected in large part because of the heavy handed bungling of Adam Schiff, Jerry Nadler and Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

After their upcoming impeachment defeat, like groundhogs, the Democrats will go back into their holes and try and look productive as we lead up to the 2020 election. But this will not last long. The calls for a new Trump impeachment will begin again as Democrats scramble to find some new bogus infraction on the part of the president.

This leads me back to my new Indiana revenue source of political betting. Let's get this new expansion of gambling passed before President Trump takes his oath of office in January, 2021. To speed

things up a bit, let's promise the teachers that the state's handle on political wagering will go to increased teacher salaries. That should make this expansion bi-partisan and extremely popular.

What would I like to see as the very first political bet for 2021? I'd like to be able to wager what the grounds for President Trump's next impeachment will be. I

would like to bet a C note that there will eventually be an article of impeachment that accuses the president of infusing bigotry into policy that is harming our society. I am willing to make this bet because one of the new leaders of Democrat Party political thought, Rep. Rashida Talib, has advocated for just such an article. As we all know, it is a short distance from Talib's lips to Nancy's ears. In a political party where the inmates run the asylum, ridiculous thoughts miraculously become policy.

Maybe the United States will be seduced into embracing socialism or communism-light and will elect one of the current crop of tax, spend and give Democrat presidential candidates. Donald Trump will be vanquished and everything will be right with the world and the unicorns will play in candyland once more. I wouldn't bet on that!❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman..

Sen. Braun lines up on climate change

By PETE SEAT

INDIANAPOLIS — For decades now, ever since Al Gore became synonymous with global warming, Republicans have mocked, ridiculed and sneered at prophesiers of "climate change." Whether a heat wave or a cold spell, all were similarly dismissed as hocus pocus and Hogwartsian wizardry. But now, as polling suggests the Republican Party may be experiencing a reverse tractor beam pull with young voters turned off by the lack of climate seriousness, a new tune is being sung on Capitol Hill.



High-profile congressmen such as Kevin McCarthy, Matt Gaetz and Dan Crenshaw, as well as Indiana's very own Sen. Mike Braun, names typically heard in the context of their steadfast support for President Donald Trump, are all expressing an appetite for engaging in a discussion about the climate, and it is slowly taking Washington, and the Republican Party, by storm (no pun intended). In fact, Gaetz recently told the Washington Examiner that "climate denial is bad political strategy" and Braun last year co-founded the Senate Climate Solutions Caucus alongside Delaware Democrat Chris Coons.

Polling suggests their sense of urgency to act is not misguided. According to recently published data from Americans for Carbon Dividends, four in 10 Hoosiers are more concerned about the climate than they were at this time a year ago (only 10% are less concerned) and a full six in 10 say action is necessary. To put a finer point on this: In only five of Indiana's 92 counties did fewer than 50% of respondents agree that "global warming is happening," and no less than 54% in any county believe "global warming will harm future generations." This complementary data set came from a county-by-county survey conducted by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

Think about how incredible those numbers are coming from deeply conservative Indiana (especially considering one survey used the phrase "global warming"), and then it becomes clear why the leaders of 10 Indiana College Republican chapters, as well as the state federation chairman, are urging our state's Republican congressional delegation to acknowledge the political reckoning taking place.

What these young Republicans pinpoint is the reality that the party must at the very least sit at the table and engage in a good faith discussion about what many, including our global partners, believe to be a deadly problem. Whether you agree with the dire predictions of floods, hurricanes and melting glaciers or not, the political reality will not change any time soon and the discussion cannot be entirely dominated by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and others.

And while there are multiple options on the table, including a plan to plant one trillion trees to help suck up carbon dioxide from the air, these young Republicans are gravitating toward a more comprehensive plan that leading economists say is economically sound, the aforementioned carbon dividends.

This idea, championed by two Republican elder statesmen in former secretaries of state Jim Baker and George Shultz, would impose a \$40-per-ton fee on fossil fuel companies emitting carbon into the atmosphere. But then it will do something novel. Rather than fill government coffers with cash, the assessed fees would be immediately returned to the American people on a quarterly basis, similar to a dividend-producing stock.

The plan's supporters argue this is a conservative approach to the issue. And again the numbers bear this out. Fifty-five percent of Hoosiers are in support of this particular solution, including 77% of Democrats, 54% of Independents and a whopping 66% of Republicans 45 years old and younger.

But here's the real Republican hook in the plan: A border adjustment that would assess the same fee on foreign imports. This pillar alone garners support from 64% of Hoosiers because it would, in the words of the Americans for Carbon Dividends poll, "push other countries to adopt similar policies by charging foreign imports in the same way."

How this conversation will play out is yet to be

seen. But for the first time – perhaps ever – Republicans, driven by concrete polling and the voices of the next generation, are willing to throw some ideas on the table and have a debate. That’s progress. ❖

Pete Seat is a former White House spokesman for President George W. Bush and campaign spokes-

man for Dan Coats, former U.S. senator and director of national intelligence. Currently he is a vice president with Bose Public Affairs Group in Indianapolis. He is also an Atlantic Council Millennium Fellow and author of the 2014 book, “The War on Millennials.”

After impeachment, Trump reelect is up

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND — After impeachment and Iowa, reelection of President Trump is more likely. If the election were held next Tuesday, he would win again in the Electoral College. Impeachment has helped Trump politically. He has climbed in approval ratings amid the proceedings. The latest Gallup poll finds Trump’s approval rating at 49%, highest since he took office in 2017.



The debacle in Iowa Democratic caucus tabulating did more than rob former South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg of elec-

tion night momentum that would have come if there had been vote totals then to reveal his spectacular showing. With no totals at all – not that night, not any until partial results dribbled out late in the afternoon on the following day – the famous first-in-the-nation test with voters brought jokes about Democrats not even able to add up vote totals.

Laughter at the bungled process replaced serious analysis of the vote count. There was no count to analyze. The debacle enabled Trump to claim that the Democratic process was “rigged” and that Democrats shouldn’t be trusted with health care if they can’t even count caucus goers.

It was a good week for the president. Rise in the polls. Acquittal in the Senate. A Democratic debacle in Iowa. Poking Democrats in the eye with a sharp stick repeatedly in the State of the Union address.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi wasn’t pleased with the speech. She kind of hinted at that by tearing up her copy when the president finished his remarks. But Trump didn’t care about her reaction. He showed his disdain by declining to shake hands with Pelosi when he arrived at the podium. He cared not at all what Democrats in the House chamber thought. His remarks were aimed at pleasing his base and the expanding Republican support

he needs in key states to win again.

Pelosi had been right to caution last spring against rushing to impeach, with the certainty that it would lead to Senate acquittal and a presidential boast of being exonerated after a partisan attack. But that blatant Ukraine call and other Trump conduct convinced House Democrats to impeach. Pelosi agreed, although she knew what would happen.

It happened. Impeachment did of course lead to the always certain acquittal by Senate Republicans and the presidential boast of being exonerated after a partisan attack. Many Democrats expressed surprise that all of the Senate Republicans except one voted to acquit. Well, impeachment is political, not a judicial process, not when all the “jurors” have vast prior knowledge and have expressed opinions about the impeachment target.

Democrats can be angry. They are. But they shouldn’t be surprised at the always certain result. Republican senators were sure to go along with what a vast majority of the Republican voters back home wanted, demanded.

That Gallup poll found Trump’s approval rating among Republicans hit 94%, up six percentage points from early January and three points higher than his previous best. Trump’s approval rating among Democrats sank to 7%, a fall of three points. This shows an astounding nation-dividing 87% gap between Republican and Democratic approval.

Solid Republican backing and an increase in approval among independents as well means Trump right now would win again, perhaps more easily than in 2016 in the Electoral College. That’s because huge Democratic pluralities against him would come from states like California and New York and other Democratic bastions along the coasts that Trump writes off, while he would have a solid chance again to win the key battleground states in the middle.

The election isn’t coming up Tuesday. It’s Nov. 3. Much will happen before then. Democrats have a chance. Will they get their act together behind a solid contender? And will President Trump’s conduct convince that 94% of Republicans to stay with him or cause defections in key places? ❖

Jack Colwell is a columnist for The Tribune. Write to him in care of The Tribune or by email at jcolwell@comcast.net.

Low cost of living starts with low wages

By MORTON MARCUS

INDIANAPOLIS — Owen Greene lives a quiet life in Southwestern Indiana. He's learned not to challenge the opinions of his neighbors. Yet, this past week he called me with a question: "Are wages lower in Indiana because our cost of living is lower than in the rest of America?"



"No!" I said in my most controlled manner. "Employers like to tell workers that's the reason wages can be lower here than elsewhere, but that's not the truth."

"You mean they're lying?" Owen looked surprised.

"They're not lying, Owen," I said. "They just accept a popular fiction, an easy story to believe."

"But it makes sense," Owen insisted. "Workers won't demand as much in wages, if the cost of living is low."

"Owen," I said. "Think for a moment. Except in very unusual circumstances, the boss tells you what the job pays. It's rarely negotiated. You don't like the offer, you think it's too little, you take it or leave it."

"Yeah," he agreed. "Workers are price takers. Consumers are price takers. We don't bargain with Walmart."

"Exactly," I now agreed with him. "Renters and home buyers are price takers too, although there is often a ritual of negotiation in the latter case."

"How do you decide how much you're willing to pay in rent or for the home you'd like to buy?" I asked and then answered. "You think about how much you can afford out of what you make. Your wages are the limiting factor on your housing costs."

"**Yeah, but**" He tried to speak, but I went on. "Listen, the Bureau of Labor Statistics tells us that housing is about a third of consumer expenditures. And housing prices vary more from place to place than the prices for beer and pizza. It's mainly housing that gives us the differences in cost of living figures."

"But," he objected. "In Chicago, housing is more expensive than in New Castle."

"Right," I said. "The median rental in the Chicago Metro area is 80% higher than in New Castle and the median mortgage cost is higher by 92%. Yet, the median income in Chicago is only 42% higher than in New Castle."

Owen shook his head. "Look," I said. "If you don't have the money, you can't get the goodies, or you get less of the goodies. That means smaller apartments and houses in Chicago than in New Castle for the same expenditure."

"And why are wages lower in Indiana than else-

where?" Owen wanted to know.

"Because what we trade with the rest of the nation and the world is worth less than what Chicago has to trade," I said. "But that's a story for another time." ❖

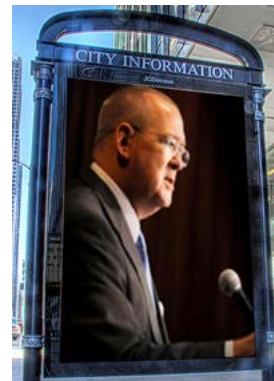
Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com.



Economy is neither as good or as bad as politicians say it is

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE — It is election season, so we face several more months of claims about the U.S. economy. Predictably, the economy is neither as good as the incumbents profess it to be, nor bad as those running to unseat them assert. The real truth is somewhere in between. Of course, each side will be armed with data, but politicians



selectively forget to adjust for inflation or ignore seasonal adjustments that correct distortions in monthly or quarterly data. The economy is a complex affair, and each of us view it through our own lens. This is my assessment as a professional economist who wants better policies from both parties.

We are in the longest expansion in U.S. history, and employment growth continues to do surprisingly well. Every healthy adult who wishes for a job can find one. While wage gains have been modest, over the past year we have seen stronger growth, particularly among the lowest-paid workers. Nationally, the composition of job growth has been good. Only 2.5% of workers are involuntarily working part time. Job growth has been in traditional full-time employment. Even with recent softening of labor markets, particularly in manufacturing, we live in an enviable time to be a worker.

There are many other good aspects to our current economy. Much of what we don't measure well in our economy seems to be booming. Leisure is surely far less costly than in the past, and seemingly more productive. For most demographic groups, lifestyles are healthier and lifespans longer than even a decade ago. There is significant opportunity for human flourishing in what is unambiguously the wealthiest economy in history.

Household wealth is rising for families who've in-

vested in homes, or saved, and thus invested money in an expanding economy. In this way, wealth is churned from Wall Street back to Main Street in a regular pattern. The ubiquity of retirement accounts and stock back pensions means that we are all capitalists now.

This good news does not mean the incumbent talking points are right, for two very important reasons. The first is that the Trump economy is no better than the Obama economy, and in the most meaningful ways modestly worse. The second is that the good economic news is not equally distributed across our Republic.

Comparing the last three years of the Obama Administration with the first three of the Trump Administration offers a good comparison. Annual GDP growth in the Trump years is at 2.52%, while it was 2.25% average for Mr. Obama. But, in terms of job growth, Mr. Obama's last three years saw a full 1.5 million extra jobs created, a roughly 20% better performance. While job growth was solid in both administrations, overall economic growth has been unusually tepid. What makes our current affairs worse than the 2014-2016 period is that the U.S. is now engaged in unprecedented fiscal stimulus, through budget deficits, monetary policy, and farm bailouts.

Mr. Trump's presidency has seen the deficit grow by \$2,575,949,000,000 over three years, a full trillion dollars more than the last three years of Mr. Obama's presidency. Both the bailouts and deficits are bigger than anything we observed in the Obama years. We live in a time of unprecedented fiscal and monetary stimulus, and yet eke out economic growth that is historically sluggish.

The bigger issue is that economic growth is unequally distributed across the nation. Large urban places enjoy fast growth, often twice the national rate of about 2.0%. In contrast, much of the country languishes. At the county level, the U.S. is in a surprising period of economic divergence. The unequal geographic distribution of economic growth makes it difficult to share a perspective

about economic growth. Let me offer two examples.

In 1,000 urban counties, a young couple who saves up to purchase a home will see it build enormous wealth over a decade. In 2,000 counties outside of fast-growing cities, the same couple would see almost no real appreciation in their home values over a decade. Economic divergence doesn't just impact the affluent young couple, but also those at the opposite end of the economy. Imagine a young, single parent living with parents. In a rural community, childcare is absent, and a car is required to get to a job for an employer awash in high school dropouts. In a large city, there is typically transportation, much thicker labor markets and more abundant childcare options. Neither situation is ideal, but one has many more opportunities than the other.

In short, while there are many reasons to be optimistic about the American economy and tout its performance, there are also many deep weaknesses. In times past, candidates wouldn't agree on the economy, but most of their debate would be about policies to make it better. That is because there used to be a time when there were real disagreements about the future of economic policy.

Today, we have one political party that is in the midst of vigorous internal debate about the future of economic policy. The other party has eliminated internal debate and possesses no coherent economic policy. This means we risk several months of candidates arguing more about the past than the future. I view this as a form of intellectual and moral torture. My only solace is that this being a republic, we citizens are only getting what we deserve. ❖

Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University.

Sanders becomes a weak frontrunner

By **KYLE KONDIK**
and **J. MILES COLEMAN**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – In the wake of his victory in the New Hampshire primary, Bernie Sanders seemed to some like an unstoppable frontrunner. To others, he seemed like a spent force. That there is evidence backing up both arguments is a testament to the uncertainty of the Democratic race following the first-in-the-nation primary.

The argument for Sanders is not only that he won

New Hampshire, but also that the person who seemed throughout 2019 like the biggest obstacle to him winning the nomination -- Joe Biden -- sputtered to a pitiful fifth-place finish, failing to crack double digits. Sanders' other seeming top rival, Elizabeth Warren, is arguably in even worse shape than Biden: At least Biden can try to make last stands in more diverse Nevada and particularly South Carolina, where he hopes that the state's majority

African-American electorate can resuscitate his flagging campaign. Warren has no such redoubt: Iowa and New Hampshire could or should have been good states for

her; she did OK in the former, and terribly in the latter.

Meanwhile, Pete Buttigieg probably would have won both Iowa – which he narrowly carried in terms of delegates over Sanders despite Sanders receiving more votes – and New Hampshire had Amy Klobuchar thrown



in the towel after her mediocre fifth-place finish in the Hawkeye State. Instead, Klobuchar used a strong debate performance Friday night as a springboard into a solid third place in New Hampshire, finishing closer to Sanders and Buttigieg in first and second than to Warren and Biden in fourth and fifth.

Here again, Sanders benefits from this alignment of rivals: While Sanders has not demonstrated widespread appeal to African Americans -- a backbone demographic of the Democratic Party that has not really been heard from yet -- Buttigieg and Klobuchar are significantly weaker among black voters than Sanders is, at least right now. Sanders was threatened by a candidate who could dominate the black vote against him. Biden might've been that candidate, and hypothetically still could be, but it seems likelier now that the black vote might splinter, which probably helps Sanders.

As Michigan State University political scientist Matt Grossmann argued Tuesday night, "Bernie won & both his main national competitor (Biden) & his ideological faction competitor (Warren) lost badly. But field remains too muddled for him to see full assault. All good for Bernie."

Note, though, that the pro-Sanders argument we just made above largely focuses on the challenges of his rivals, as opposed to his own performance.

While it's unfair to Sanders to measure him by his 60% vote share in a head-to-head race in New Hampshire against Hillary Clinton, his 26% plurality in a much larger field put him a few points behind his pre-election polling average in New Hampshire, and this was less than half his share from four years ago. He turned in this weak performance even as Warren sank, meaning that Warren's former support probably split among several other candidates as opposed to flowing mainly to her colleague, Sanders, on the leftward edge of the Democratic Senate caucus. So if Warren were to drop out, we can't assume Sanders would disproportionately benefit. Sanders did great among younger voters and liberals, but not necessarily with other kinds of voters.

While turnout was up from 2016, the demographics of the turnout were not really favorable to Sanders, calling into question his claims that he can expand the electorate in his favor in both a primary and general election setting. And, as Grossmann added at the end of the tweet quoted above, "media coverage does not seem likely to help him bounce or expand his coalition."

It makes some sense to compare this race to the 2016 GOP contest, at least in the sense that both featured large fields and a New Hampshire primary winner who party elites didn't really like (Donald Trump and now Sanders).

Trump got 35% in New Hampshire four years ago, finishing about 20 points ahead of second-place finisher John Kasich. Sanders' win was much more of a nail-biter, and he only got 26% of the vote, a historically weak showing for a Granite State primary winner. Trump benefited

from GOP nominating rules in 2016 that made it easier for plurality winners to accumulate delegates earlier in the process. For instance, Trump followed up his New Hampshire win by taking 32% in South Carolina, but he won 100% of the state's delegates while doing so.

The uniform Democratic rules, which require at least 15% support to be included in a proportional allocation, can distribute the delegates much more evenly. Sanders tied with Buttigieg in delegates in New Hampshire, and the upstart former South Bend, Indiana mayor actually leads the veteran senator by two in the overall delegate count (granted, there is a long time to go -- the two lead-off states, combined, awarded only about 1.5% of the total pledged delegates available). There is more below as we update our UVA Center for Politics/Decision Desk HQ delegate tracker.

Biden clearly took a hit in Iowa, and New Hampshire only exacerbated his problems. National polling, where Biden has almost always led, has moved against him, and Sanders has taken the top spot. Michael Bloomberg, powered by his eye-popping television advertising, has seemed to benefit more from Biden's fall.

Friend of the Crystal Ball Chaz Nuttycombe noted Wednesday morning that, over the last month, Bloomberg is up 7.5 points in the FiveThirtyEight national polling average, while Biden is down that same exact total, 7.5 points. The field is so fractured and fluid that it would be wrong to suggest Bloomberg is siphoning all his newfound support from former Biden supporters, but it's also not a total coincidence, particularly as one notes the growth of Bloomberg among black voters in polling crosstabs while Biden slips among that same demographic. Honestly, it may be that the current numbers are catching Biden only in the midst of an ongoing freefall.

Politico's Natasha Korecki, Marc Caputo, and Maya King reported a telling quote from Quentin James, who runs a PAC that backs black candidates: "Black voters are starting to leave him now. ... A big reason lots of black voters were with Biden is they thought he was the best person to beat Trump. And they thought one reason for that is that he had the support of white voters. Now they see he has done so poorly with white voters and he no longer looks like the electability candidate." Or, as Theodore Johnson, an expert on black voting patterns, put it, "For a bloc whose top priority is defeating the president, electoral pragmatism necessarily rules the day."

Black voters may have been attracted to Biden out of pragmatism; could they move in sizable numbers to Bloomberg, Buttigieg, or Klobuchar out of that same kind of pragmatism, rooted in a belief held by at least some Democrats that Sanders is too left-wing to win a national general election? Potentially. The possibility of a single candidate winning a significant share of the black vote against Sanders has always seemed like a major threat to his nomination, and it remains a threat -- just a diminished one thanks to the diminished standing of Biden. ❖

Michael Gerson, Washington Post: At the 68th, and perhaps last, National Prayer Breakfast, the main remarks were made by the former president of the American Enterprise Institute (and Post columnist) Arthur C. Brooks, who spoke on the themes of his wonderful 2019 book "Love Your Enemies." President Trump then prefaced his speech by saying: "Arthur, I don't know if I agree with you. But I don't know if Arthur's going to like what I'm going to say."

It was a strange moment in U.S. religious history. The command to love your enemies, of course, came from Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. "Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to them that hate you." It might be expected for a president to express how difficult obeying such a mandate can be. Trump decided to dispute the command itself. And some in the crowd laughed. The purpose of Trump's sermon at the Hilton was, in fact, to put his enemies on notice. Those who pursued impeachment were "very dishonest and corrupt people." "They know what they are doing is wrong," he continued, "but they put themselves far ahead of our great country." Congressional Republicans, in contrast, had the wisdom and strength "to do what everyone knows was right." Trump proceeded to make a thinly veiled attack against Mitt Romney of Utah, the only Republican senator to vote for the president's removal: "I don't like people who use their faith as justification for doing what they know is wrong." And then a shot at House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.): "Nor do I like people who say, 'I'll pray for you,' when I know that is not so." What did Trump accomplish in his 26 minutes or so at the podium?

First, the president again displayed a remarkable ability to corrupt, distort and discredit every institution he touches. The prayer breakfast was intended to foster personal connections across party differences. Trump turned it into a performative platform to express his rage and pride — the negation of a Christian ethic.

Second, Trump has again shown a talent for exposing the sad moral compromises of his followers, especially his evangelical Christian followers. Jerry Falwell Jr., Franklin Graham, Robert Jeffress and Eric Metaxas don't have it easy after an event such as this one. These evangelical Christian leaders will, of course, find some way to bless Trump's sacrilege. But he makes their job ever harder and their moral surrender ever more obvious.

Third, Trump's unholy outburst (and the White House event that followed) shows we are reaching a very dangerous moment in our national life. The president is seized by rage and resentment — not heard on some scratchy Watergate tape, but in public, for all to see and hear. He now feels unchecked and uncheckable. And he has a position of tremendous power. This is what happens when a sociopath gets away with something. He or she is not sobered but emboldened. It took mere hours for Republican senators who predicted a wiser, chastened president to eat their words. The senators are, in part, responsible for the abuses of power to come. ❖



Walter Shapiro, New Republic: For the moment, Biden is holding onto his African American support in the February 29 South Carolina primary and leading in most national polls. But those numbers may look different next week if Biden limps home in fourth or even fifth in New Hampshire. In politics, universally known and liked former vice presidents don't win by losing badly in both Iowa and New Hampshire. If not Biden, then who? That is the urgent question facing Democrats frightened by the prospect of their party following a Pied Piper named Bernie Sanders. Especially since Sanders in the debate still lacked good answers to questions about his mixed record on gun control and his flirtation with the NRA in the 1990s. Mike Bloomberg may prove to be the establishment's savior if he can pull off a dramatic appearance as soon as the curtain rises for the second act of the Democratic drama on Super Tuesday. But the former Republican mayor of New York is even less of a real Democrat than Sanders, who runs as an independent for the Senate. And at a moment when "billionaire" is the leading epithet in the Democratic lexicon, does the party really want to nominate one of the richest men in the world? All this brings us back to the other three serious candidates on the ABC News debate stage — Buttigieg, Elizabeth Warren, and Amy Klobuchar. Buttigieg did what he had to do Friday night, which was survive. Partly because of his limited political résumé and partly because of his lack of discernible African American support, Buttigieg again faced tough questioning over his record as South Bend mayor, especially about racial disparities in sentences for drug crimes. Even though Buttigieg is running as the charisma candidate of 2020, he doesn't inspire the same visible passions that Bill Clinton and Barack Obama did at this point in their own races for the White House. At virtually every Obama rally in 2008, someone would shout from the bleachers in a crowded high-school gymnasium, "We love you, Obama." Mayor Pete seldom receives such enthusiastic greetings. ❖

Roger Kimball, spectator USA: The truth is, Pete Buttigieg is about as moderate as Bernie Sanders. He comes off as more reasonable than Bernie because he has a more soothing demeanor. (And he comes off as more reasonable than Elizabeth Warren because he does not sound like a screeching harridan whose hectoring voice is like a witch's nails drawn across a blackboard.) He quotes — and misquotes — scripture. He sounds reasonable, so long as you ponder the timber of his voice and don't ponder the substance of what he says. But at the end of the day, this Ivy- and Oxbridge-educated 'progressive veteran' is a Gramscian radical. He is there with with Ralph 'make-'em-comfortable' Northam on abortion, though he has gotten pretty deft at avoiding the issue. Abortion, in fact, seems to be the one issue on which he wants the government to stay out of our lives. About everything else, it's all government all the time. ❖

Hill presides over fetal remains burial

SOUTH BEND — Indiana's attorney general joined more than 100 people Wednesday afternoon for a ceremony at Southlawn Cemetery to bury more than 2,400 fetal remains found in the home of an abortion doctor (Parrott, [South Bend Tribune](#)). Dr. Ulrich Klopfer, who died Sept. 3 at 79, performed the abortions from 2000 to 2002 at clinics in South Bend, Gary and Fort Wayne. He performed tens of thousands of abortions over 40 years, mainly as the only abortion provider in the three Indiana cities. Most of the remains were found in the garage of his Illinois home, with others found in one of his vehicles. "The shocking discovery" of the remains "was horrifying to anyone with normal sensibilities," Hill said at the ceremony. "Regrettably, there is no shortage of depravity in our world today, including due regard for the most vulnerable among us." Hill, a Republican who is seeking re-election, made opening remarks at the ceremony before taking questions from reporters away from the burial site. He has said his office is investigating the case, but it remains unclear what could be under investigation. A 2016 Indiana law, upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in May, requires abortion providers to bury or cremate fetal remains, but it wasn't in effect from 2000 to 2002. Asked what Klopfer was required to do with the remains at the time of the abortions, Hill replied, "The law was not clear."



DOJ roiled over Stone sentencing

WASHINGTON — Top Justice Department officials came under fire Wednesday for jettisoning a recommendation by career prosecutors that Roger Stone, a longtime confidant of President Trump, receive a stiff prison sentence ([Los Angeles Times](#)). Democrats called for investigations

into the reversal, which led four career prosecutors Tuesday to dramatically withdraw from the case. Former federal prosecutors said the department appeared to have either botched its oversight of the prosecution or abandoned decades of independence to help a friend of Trump's.

Either way, they said, the Justice Department suffered a serious blow to its reputation in withdrawing recommendations that Stone, a longtime Republican operative and self-proclaimed dirty trickster, be sentenced to seven to nine years in prison for obstructing a House investigation, witness tampering and lying to Congress. "It's a disaster," said Mary McCord, who spent two decades as a federal prosecutor and was acting assistant attorney general for national security in 2016 and 2017. "The department has no credibility left." Stone is scheduled to be sentenced Feb. 20. Democrats will get their chance to question Atty. Gen. William Barr next month. The House Judiciary Committee said Wednesday that Barr, after a months-long standoff with the panel, had agreed to testify March 31.

Mueller endorses Mayor Pete

SOUTH BEND — At midday Wednesday, Mayor James Mueller offered a surprising answer when asked about endorsing Pete Buttigieg, his childhood friend and former boss, for president. The answer: he didn't know (Parrott, [South Bend Tribune](#)). Mueller told The Tribune there were a "number of great candidates and I'm just waiting to see how things shake out a little bit." Mueller, who succeeded Buttigieg as mayor in January, said he had "looked favorably" on the candidacies of U.S. Sens. Kamala Harris and Cory Booker, both of whom have dropped out of the race, and was surprised they didn't "get more traction. This will become a more pressing issue as we approach our state's own primary in May, so we may take a closer look as we approach Indiana's primary." Buttigieg had hand-picked

Mueller as his successor and supported his mayoral campaign. But about three hours after The Tribune published a story online on his withholding an endorsement, Mueller walked back the comments. By Wednesday night, he said he "enthusiastically" supported Buttigieg for president. "It was really my intent to stay 100 percent focused on South Bend as I was starting my new administration and stay out of presidential politics," he said. "So with that, I just wanted to clarify where my support lies...His service to our city and understanding cities like ours is an important trait for our next president and would serve our community well."

Sen. Young backs War Powers Act

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Wednesday narrowly voted to begin debate on a resolution that would block President Donald Trump from carrying out attacks on Iran ([Roll Call](#)). All Democrats present plus eight Republicans (including Todd Young) voted, 51-45, in favor of beginning debate on the resolution from Virginia Democrat Tim Kaine, which would require the immediate cessation of "hostilities against the Islamic Republic of Iran or any part of its government or military, unless explicitly authorized" by Congress. Kaine's resolution is privileged under the 1973 War Powers Act, which means he is able to force a debate and vote on it with only a majority of votes, rather than the more common 60-vote threshold for legislative measures. "This resolution is about Congress reclaiming its rightful role in decisions about war," Kaine said Wednesday in floor remarks.

Iowa Dem chair resigns after fiasco

DES MOINES, Iowa — Iowa Democratic Chairman Troy Price announced his resignation Wednesday after a disastrous caucus process beset by technical glitches led to a dayslong delay in reporting the results, inconsistencies in the numbers.