



McDermott on pandemic, 1st CD

Hammond mayor critical of President Trump, lauds Gov. Holcomb, and opens up a big primary money lead

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Five-term Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., is the man of this peculiar season. He’s an executive dealing with the most deadly pandemic in more than a century. He’s also running for the 1st CD seat being vacated by retiring U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky.

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown a wrench into both his

campaign and governing style. On Palm Sunday, he and the Hammond Police Department had to confront a church determined to hold a service in violation of Gov. Eric Holcomb’s shelter-in-place order.

McDermott opted to use social media to thwart a second service planned for later that Sunday.



COVID-19 also wreaked havoc on his campaign. While he doesn’t fault Holcomb for issuing the order – in fact Mayor McDermott says he would have done the same thing – it forced him to cancel his largest fundraiser of the

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The reopening formula

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — The economic carnage of this pandemic is without historic parallel. Just this past week ArcelorMittal idled another blast furnace in East Chicago, Hoosier Park Racino at Anderson and the Tropicana Casino in Evansville furloughed a combined thousand employees, as did the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. Cummins, Honda and Toyota all extended plant shutdowns through May 1.

The half million small businesses across the state find themselves on the brink of oblivion, risking hundreds of thousands of Hoosier livelihoods.

Last week Indiana endured 134,000 unemployment claims. Department of Workforce Development Commissioner Fred



“We’re excited to hold the 2020 state convention virtually and we’re confident we’ve found the safest way to bring Hoosier Democrats together. There’s just too much at stake in 2020 not to adapt.”

- Democrat Chairman John Zody



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Kokomo, IN, 46904
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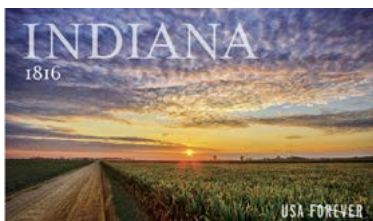
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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



Payne told the Northwest Indiana Times, "Prior to March of this year, the highest number of claims that were filed in a one-week period was the week ending Jan. 10, 2009, about 28,000." That was during the Great Recession of 2008-09.

Payne continued, "The number of claims were received in a one-month period during the highest amount during our downturn is now what we may be seeing on a weekly basis. We're also seeing an equally unprecedented number of calls. Already this week we've had more than 210,000 phone interactions. Last week we had 158,000."

Folks, these are Great Depression type statistics.

Which begs these questions: How does America restart the \$22 trillion economy? And while the coronavirus pandemic is stressing medical systems across the nation, the number of total positive cases in Indiana were 8,236 and deaths were 350 on Monday, this coming in a state with 6.85 million people. Nationally, Johns Hopkins University put the total cases at 1.9 million and deaths at 120,450 in a nation of 331 million people.

Our collective humanity and a safeguarding of life has brought a consensus to shut the economy down. But the number of afflicted and departed are less than 1% of the population.

Little wonder that President Trump, being the businessman he was, instinctively wants to reopen the economy. "We're looking at two concepts," Trump said on Fox News last week. "We're looking at the concept where you open up sections and we're also looking at the concept where you open up everything." Economic advisor Larry Kudlow put the timeframe in the next "four to eight weeks."

Two Food and Drug Administration commissioners – including Scott Gottlieb who served under President Trump – listed four goals for states to return to a normal economic footing: 1) Hospitals in a state must be able to safely treat all patients requiring hospitalization, without resort-

ing to crisis standards of care. 2) A state needs to be able to test at least everyone who has symptoms. 3) The state is able to conduct monitoring of confirmed cases and contacts. 4) There must be a sustained reduction in cases for at least 14 days.

The problem is that the Trump administration hasn't invested in a systemic testing program health and economic experts say is required to reopen the economy. States like Indiana are scrambling to fill the void that should have been in the federal portfolio. "We are all kinds of Band-Aid, patching it together to get as many tests done as we can," said State Health Commissioner Kristina Box earlier this week. "We're really trying to remove any restrictions for people as far as testing anybody who's symptomatic."

On Monday, the ISDH had conducted 44,539 tests. That leaves undiagnosed the tens of thousands of asymptomatic carriers of the virus. At the Anderson nursing home where 22 residents and staffers perished, the state was unable to test all residents and employees.

At Monday's press conference, Box said the surge peak will hit central Indiana at the end of April and rest of state in the first week of May. "We have not seen the peak of the surge yet, but I believe it will be a lot lower," Box said.

Dr. Michael Osterholm, the director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, said Monday that ramping up systemic testing will be an arduous task, because many of the necessary agents needed (in addition to the shortage of swabs) will be an impediment.

"I just have to say right at the outset: It will hit every small town, every county, whether rural or urban or not," Osterholm told the Bemeditji Pioneer. "It will not be a blue or a red virus. This is going to get worse. This is going to get much, much worse. I think most people don't understand that. As such, what we're doing now is just the beginning of what will likely be a 16- to maybe

20-month period of time when we're all going to be dealing with this issue. It will be a real challenge."

Osterholm continued, "The economy is critical, we have to have a functioning society. That means we can't have these unemployment rates. They themselves cause serious health problems in terms of lack of access to care, in terms of mental health issues and suicides. We have a lot more we have to do. I think we're going to ultimately find the right balance, and it shouldn't be one where it's a blue or a red issue."

The danger in restarting the economy too quickly is that a second economic shutdown – with compliance of the population – was articulated by Federal Reserve Chairman Jay Powell, who said it was crucial to "avoid a false start where we will partially reopen and that results in a spike in coronavirus cases, and then we have to go back again to square one."

Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis President Neel Kashkari told CBS's Face The Nation, "We're looking around the world. As they relax the economic controls, the virus flares back up again. We could have these waves of flareups, controls, flareups and controls until we actually get a therapy or a vaccine. I think we should all be focusing on an 18-month strategy."

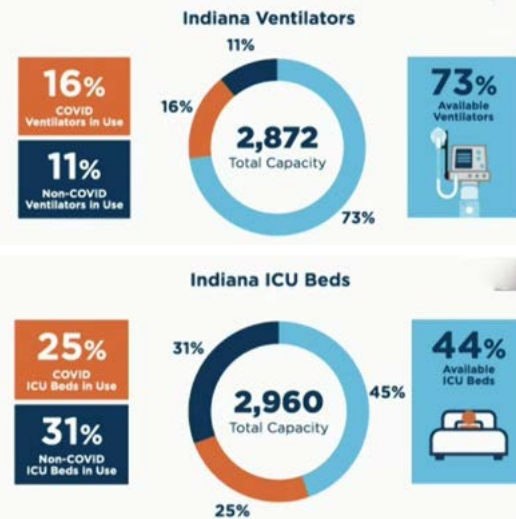
The Wall Street Journal reported that an economic restart "includes building testing and surveillance systems ... to give businesses and individuals confidence that they can return to work without risking infection."

The subsequent lack of systemic testing will continue to stress the economic reopening of our economy. As President Trump prepared to set up yet another task force to reopen the economy, the Washington Post reported: "Public health experts say that among the keys to returning to normalcy are nationwide virus testing. But the administration has not fully grappled with the sheer manpower and resources required for an effort like contact tracing — and right now, there are not even enough coronavirus tests for those who need them, let alone the entire country."

On Saturday, President Trump said he would use "facts and instincts" to make a decision on whether to recommend opening up areas of the country for working life. "I think it's going to be the toughest decision I ever made and hopefully the most difficult I will ever have to make. I hope I'm going to make the right decision."

Asked Monday about President Trump's desire to reopen the economy, Gov. Eric Holcomb said, "Of course we want to remain in line not just with our state authority, but also understanding the balance between federalism

Ventilator Availability



and states rights. I think the president has Hoosiers' best interests in mind. I don't think he wants, nor do I, to act prematurely. He's looking at the same data we're looking at. I spoke to Vice President Pence on Saturday about the very data that they see and it's the same data we see. We are all in this together. We'll continue to work with the president and his team and look for CDC guidance as this virus changes, mutates and evolves."

Pence said on Monday, "Reopening the country, as the president is anxious to do at the earliest responsible moment, will be through a combination of facts. First would be that we are at the end of the coronavirus for most major communities. Another

piece of that is we have therapeutics for Americans to take medicines if the contract the disease."

Pence said in conversations with governors, "We told them what the president has directed to be produced are additional guidelines, certified by the CDC, about the best way forward."

Holcomb said Monday that he will announce "tweaks" to his stay-at-home order this coming Friday. "Tweaks means tweaks. I'm not sold on any of them yet. It will be driven by the data. Not just our hope."

Three hours later, Trump claimed during a marathon 2 hour and 24 minute coronavirus task force briefing, "When somebody is president of the United States, the authority is total. The governors know that. The president of the United States calls the shots."

Vice President Mike Pence backed up Trump's assertion, saying that at times of emergency, the powers of president are "unquestionably plenary" (New York Post). Earlier on Monday, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo teamed up with the leaders of New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Rhode Island to form a regional task force aimed at a gradual reopening of the economy beyond the coronavirus. Shortly after, California Gov. Gavin Newsom announced he was working with state leaders in Washington and Oregon on a similar framework for reopening as a region.

According to the Constitution's Bill of Rights: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

President Trump has strong influence over several Republican governors, but it will be governors of both parties who will determine when to reopen their states.

Consumers, too, will have a huge say. If Americans don't feel safe in going to a restaurant, a shopping mall or MLB game, the economy will be impacted. ❖

McDermott, from page 1

year on St. Patrick's Day, as well as every campaign event for the next 50 days heading into what he planned for the May 5 primary.

Delayed to June 2, McDermott said his frontrunner status and the new date has given his 13 opponents another month to catch up.

According to Federal Election Commission filings, the extra month may not amount to much for his opponents. McDermott posted \$270,000 on top of his field leading fourth quarter 2019 report of \$170,000, for a cycle total of \$440,000. In contrast, State Rep. Mara Candalaria Reardon posted \$105,000 on top of the \$95,000 she raised in the fourth quarter. His second main challenger, North Township Trustee Frank Mrvan posted \$115,000 on top of the \$55,000 he reported at the end of 2019.

When we conducted this Howey Politics Indiana interview Monday afternoon, McDermott was dealing with the pandemic. "We make fun of our Illinois neighbors a lot, but they test at 8,000 people a day. That's three times the rate of testing in Indiana," he said, adding that the state is still flying blind with its inability to test asymptomatic people and then trace contacts, which are keys to reopening the economy. "Everybody makes fun of Illinois because they have too much government. But you need government in times of emergency. They are kicking our butt with testing."

Here is the HPI Interview with Mayor McDermott:

HPI: What are you hearing from the state on coronavirus testing?

McDermott: I was talking to the governor early on. We were texting back and forth. I know he is frustrated as well. I'm not one to criticize Gov. Holcomb for a lack of testing. I don't think it's his fault; it comes from the top. When we have emergencies, that's what the national government is for. We're not going to have a hurricane blow through Northwest Indiana, but this is the equivalent of a hurricane. Usually the federal government is there to help. It's just frustrating because I don't think we were ready in any way, shape or form. That's obvious.

HPI: The dynamic with the governor and Vice President Pence, do you suppose that's why Gov. Holcomb hasn't been more forceful in demanding a better national response on testing and other supplies?

McDermott: I would be if I was the governor and my state was testing at one third of what the state of Il-

linois is. I would be screaming from the mountain top. It's possible that his loyalty to the vice president he doesn't want to make the administration look bad. When you hear South Korea was testing 10,000 people a day, the state of Illinois is testing 8,000 people a day, and in Indiana, we're testing 2,600 people a day, how do we know if we're on top of this thing or not? Or are we sticking our head in the sand? We're hoping that it's over, but we have no idea because we are not testing.

HPI: About a week ago I suggested the governor and Indiana congressional delegation call for a national emergency operations manager, similar to what Lt. Gen. Russel Honore did after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. There was no response, and many of the glaring bottleneck and lack of testing issues persist. As a congressional candidate, do you believe this is necessary?



McDermott: I read that. I'd rather see the governor take that role. But maybe he's personally uncomfortable taking that negative approach with the federal government. My residents feel that we're on top of this thing and I get on Facebook live and try to tell Hammond residents how few people are being tested. How do we know we're on top of this when we're not testing them?

HPI: Every health expert I've heard says testing is the key to reopening society. Why is that so important?

McDermott: Let's say I had it already. I was exposed and I had the anti-bodies. I'd feel a lot more comfortable going back to work if I knew I had had it. I had a police officer who believe he had been exposed. He went in for a test on Friday and we're waiting for the test results today. If we're going to go back to work we certainly have to do better on the testing for the people we're sending back into the workforce, knowing they are not spreading the disease.

HPI: I read that you and the Hammond PD had confronted a violation of Gov. Holcomb's stay-at-home order Palm Sunday weekend. What happened?

McDermott: It was unfortunate it got to the point it did. The Gary Diocese shut down all church services early. We have a huge church, the First Baptist Church of Hammond, with 7,500 people at each service, and they were not pushing the issue. And 99% of the churches in our city are abiding by the governor's stay in place order. And then there's one, the Church of Christ. It's a small church, real close to my house and last weekend there were complaints from residents. Some 99% of the time we're finding out about illegal gatherings from our own residents, who are policing for us. We get the complaint, the officers show up, they observe over 30 people in the church, most of them are unmasked at the time. They are streaming live right in the middle of the service. My officers arrive, they disrupt the service. They tell them, "This is an illegal gathering; you can't be here." The church elder basically told them,

"We're essential. If you guys have to ticket us, then ticket us. We're doing it." My officers were extremely nervous because of 1st Amendment issues, so they came back and spoke with the chief, who spoke to me. We decided they should be cited for what they did. They had a second service planned that day so we made sure the officers told them that can't happen. And it didn't. I felt like peer pressure would be appropriate. I posted it on social media and it went viral. The local media picked up on it, it was front page in both papers. During the Spanish flu in 1918, I researched this: There were church services shut down across the country for the same reason, without violating the 1st Amendment.

HPI: It must be surreal for you and Gov. Holcomb to have to shut down church services. What's it like being an executive during this kind of environment?

McDermott: I feel like everyone's mad at me. I feel like I'm the essential non-essential officer. Golf courses is another big deal up here. In fact, one of my opponents running for Congress, has a golf course. He's a trustee and one of the main parts of his job is running a golf course ... in the teeth of a pandemic. I shamed him. I feel that's part of our job, the kids aren't supposed to be at the skateboard park or on the playgrounds. I appeal to the parents to control their kids. That's what we're doing; going around and being the bad guy. Look at (Mayor)



Lori Lightfoot in Chicago. When they had a problem on the lakefront, she went down the next morning by herself and shut it down. There's a picture of her shutting it down. That's our job right now. Unfortunately, people are pushing the limits. It's a tough situation.

HPI: The overwhelming response has been compliance. But that's the first month. If we get into a second or third month, do you believe that will hold?

McDermott: It's hard enough getting people to comply. If this goes on much longer, I don't know. The stock market was up last week and people are feeling we are turning the corner on this. People are watching the national news and think this is about over. I figure we're going to get out there too early and, you know, they end up reinfecting people. I'm giving Gov. Holcomb a lot of credit and I think our state sheltered in place very appropriately. I think we were early, which turns out to be better. San Francisco went early and they had 18 coronavirus deaths. Give Gov. Holcomb credit; we sheltered early.

What frustrated me early was the essential businesses like golf courses vs. the non-essential, but the governor tightened up on that.

HPI: Since you're running for Congress, critique President Trump on his handling of this pandemic.

McDermott: I want to make it clear I am trying not to beat up on the president during a national crisis. I believe all of us as a country need to pull together. But I expect better from the United States of America. I think we're the greatest country in the world and we should be leading the world when it comes to testing and how to battle this virus. The words I'm hearing from the president are disturbing. Basically, the buck doesn't stop with the president; that it's not the president's fault; it's just poor leadership. And, quite frankly, we have the best military in the world, but the CDC is obviously underfunded. I expect better from the United States of America. One thing we should all learn from this going forward is when we talk about the Centers for Disease Control, we should be talking about it in the same vein we talk about the United States Navy. It's just as important as the Navy, the Army, the Air Force. We need to fund it. It's a military branch and we need to fund it in this war against a germ. And it's kicking our butt right now. We weren't ready for it. I'm not saying President Trump should anticipate every scenario, but he has people that should be ready for every scenario and we

weren't ready for this. The other thing that is disturbing is we needed to send out to other countries like China and Vietnam for PPE because we don't make things in America any more. It's a problem. We need to make things like masks and gloves. If we're in a crisis like this, China isn't going to send us PPE.

HPI: The other disturbing thing is the China makes most of our prescription drugs.

McDermott: I don't want to have to call China when I need to make a battleship. We need to make steel in America. This has shown us that we have to make the basic supplies in America. When you have a crisis, they're not going to ship us PPE during this pandemic, because they need it for their own citizens. I think America is going to change because of this and I hope we've learned our lesson. I hope the next time there's a pandemic, we react way better. I think history is going to measure our reaction to this pandemic in a very poor light. We lack testing and we're dying at a higher rate than other countries. I expect better from the United States of America

HPI: How do you expect society to change on the back end of this?

McDermott: Voting will change. There is tremendous energy behind the Democratic Party's quest for mail-in voting. Virtual meetings are going to become more common. All of us are learning how to use Zoom. I have a studio in my house now. I never had that before. We'll have more telemeetings, teletherapy, telemedicine ... if I have COVID-19, I don't need to go see my doctor face-to-face. I think America will forever be changed because of this, hopefully for the better.

HPI: Where do you think your 1st CD campaign stands at this point?

McDermott: The 4th quarter I raised \$170,000. This quarter I raised \$270,000. We have \$169,000 cash-on-hand. By the way, I lost my biggest fundraiser of the year to COVID-19. My St. Patrick's Day fundraiser was shut down. That was the day shelter-in-place went into effect. We're doing very well with fundraising; I'm very proud of my team. The more I raise, the more I can go on TV. We want to stay up on TV. That's the goal right now.

HPI: What other impact has the pandemic had on your campaign beyond fundraising?

McDermott: I had every day, for the last 45 to 50 days of the campaign was packed with schedule. I lost every one of them. All the events, all the candidate nights got wiped out. And now the whole extending the election by one month ... I understand why Gov. Holcomb made that decision. If I had been governor, I would have made the exact same decision. But I don't think that helps a candidate like me much at all. I think I am winning and extending out an election by a month to the person who is winning isn't a very pleasant experience. That's one more month for everyone to catch up with me. I understand why the governor did it, but I'm frustrated as the leading candidate. That's the reality of it. I'm not complaining.

HPI: Have you done any polling?

McDermott: Yes, we have. I learned I'm in the lead. I polled before COVID and only 3% of residents were worried about COVID. I was up by double digits in a 14-person race. With one third still undecided, I was up double digits.

HPI: How will the expanded no-excuse absentee balloting impact this race?

McDermott: I've always believed the more the merrier when it comes to voting. I think we are ancient in Indiana when it comes to voting. We need to revamp the whole system. If this causes us to revamp the voting system in Indiana, I'm very happy. I support people's unfettered right to vote by mail. I hope that moving forward it's something that becomes permanent in Indiana.

HPI: Should this no-excuse vote by mail be extended to the November election?

McDermott: Absolutely. If you're nervous, you shouldn't have to endanger yourself. ❖



Indiana Dems to hold convention online

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The Indiana Democratic Party announced today it would hold its 2020 State Convention on June 13 with events held virtually and votes cast by mail. The plan to go virtual had been unanimously approved by the Party's State Central Committee. Indiana Democratic Party Chairman John Zody believed conducting votes by mail and maintaining the Party's original June 13 timeline struck the right balance.



"We're excited to hold the 2020 State Convention virtually and we're confident we've found the safest way to bring Hoosier Democrats from around the state together," said Zody. "There's just

too much at stake in 2020 to not adapt to maintain a critical element of the electoral process. Hoosiers find a way, and that's exactly what our Party intends to do."

Delegates to the state convention will vote to nominate the Party's candidate for attorney general, lieutenant governor and delegates to the National Convention. All state delegates will be mailed a ballot to cast their vote for contested races for statewide office, and online voting options are being examined for national delegate elections, with consultation from other states and the Democratic National Committee. On June 13, delegates will be invited to a virtual convention to conduct necessary business under Party rules. Votes will be counted and the Party's nominee for contested races like Attorney General will be announced following June 13. Zody noted how integral

voting by mail was in making the decision to go virtual. "Voting by mail is safe, secure and convenient," said Zody. "With the level of uncertainty around the status of the virus and when Hoosiers can gather again, voting by mail was the obvious choice to ensure an effective and efficient nomination process."

Holcomb vows 'safe, secure' elections

Gov. Eric Holcomb said on Monday that he is keeping a dialogue open with Hoosier Republicans and Democrats on how the November general election will be conducted. There have been calls by the Indiana League of Women Voters, Common Cause and Indiana Citizen to expand the no-excuse absentee voting adopted for the delayed June 2 primary for the November election.

"We're in constant discussion with both major parties here, and with the secretary of state," Holcomb said during Monday's COVID-19 press conference. "My standard is our elections need to be safe and secure."

Holcomb downplayed opposition to vote by mail from President Trump, who claims that it leads to vote fraud. "Mail ballots are a very dangerous thing for this country because they are cheaters," Trump said last week.

Holcomb said, "The federal government has

already forwarded a lot of funding toward conducting our elections in both a safe and secure manner. Those details are being negotiated on that June election which has obviously been delayed and also the November election. We want to make sure the steps we take set the right precedent."

Holcomb added that he will have Secretary of State Connie Lawson attend a future press conference to address the November election. The Indiana Election Commission is expected to address how the November election will be conducted at its 10 a.m. April 22 meeting.

Indy Council passes absentee ballot funds

The Indianapolis City-County Council on Monday voted to allocate \$1.1 million toward costs associated with mailing every registered voter an absentee ballot application for this year's elections (Quinn, IBJ). On March 18, Mayor Joe Hogsett and City-County Council President Vop Osili announced that Marion County would take steps to encourage voters to cast ballots by mail for the primary election, which has been moved from May 5 to June 2 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The duo said that city-county government would mail every registered voter an absentee ballot application with instructions. ❖

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A solitary Easter

Publisher's Note: This column was published on Easter Sunday by the South Bend Tribune.

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Is today really Easter? Well, it is. Really. It seems different. It is different. What now isn't different?



Christians who pack churches on Easter, even if they don't attend that much the rest of the year, won't be in church today. No church. Churches are closed.

Kids coloring Easter eggs? Sure. But not as many eggs, maybe not any in some homes. With eggs among scarce items now, if they're found in the grocery store, they probably won't be turned

over by the dozens to the kids for coloring.

Easter egg hunts? Can't have a bunch of little boys and girls running around in search for eggs, real or chocolate. Imagine telling them to stay six feet apart.

Can't invite family and friends over for a big Easter dinner? So, just go out to one of the nice restaurants famed for lavish Easter buffets. Oh, wait ...

Will the Easter Bunny come? Some of the very little kids will find this morning that, somehow, he did, even though he surely was following advice to wear a protective mask.

Lent is over. Celebrate? Lent already brought more sacrifices than intended by many who were observing it. With more sacrifices ahead, as the pandemic peak hits here, is it time to celebrate?

That coronavirus, horrible as it is, can't change everything. Can't change the date of Easter. Can't change Scripture. Can't prevent hearing online, though not in church, the story of the stone removed and discovery of what has for centuries been the central belief of Christianity, the Resurrection.

Nor did this coronavirus change the date of Pass-

over last week. Nor will it put off the time of Ramadan.

If today is Easter, is tomorrow Dyngus Day? Of course. Dyngus Day always comes on the Monday after Easter. Or as some jokes go: You can always tell when Easter comes in any year. It's always the Sunday before Dyngus Day.

You can't go Dyngusing tomorrow. No Dyngusing sites. But those of Polish descent still can in their homes offer a toast: "Sto lat!" Countless others of many ethnic backgrounds will have some kielbasa, even if they call it Polish sausage.

While family and friends can't come together today for traditional Easter visits – often with folks coming from across town, across the state or beyond – all still can get together for greetings on Zoom, hearing and seeing on computer those who couldn't be here. No Zoom? Phones still work. They actually can be used to talk.

Easter is supposed to be a joyous time. Must it now be sad? If you look around when you go for a walk or while driving to the grocery or the bank, you will see that the flowers of spring are blooming just as they should, the birds provide their usual springtime serenade, trees are bursting on schedule from their long-dormant winter state, the sunshine is warmer, so nice. Sure, thunderstorms, too.

You can see displays at homes, like the one with an inflated pink bunny, who needs no ventilator to adjust the air. Or the ones proclaiming "Happy Easter!"

You can see a boy probably 11 or 12 practicing jump shots at the driveway hoop, thinking no doubt of March Madness. Not of pandemic madness of March, 2020, but of starring in a March Madness game in his future.

There's a Realtor's sign: "To Our Heroes: Thank You."

At Hedwig Memorial Center there is no mention of an Easter or Dyngus event, just this: "Let us pray through this



together."

A sign at a church closed today tells the faithful to "Behold." There is much to behold, whether in reference to Scripture or not.

So, is today really Easter? Yes. Really. ❖

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

Taking America's greatness to the bank

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO — If I've acquired anything in my 38 years as a financial consultant, it has been the experience of witnessing significant world events and their effect on the American economy and its financial markets. My experience has taught me a few things over the years.

First and foremost, I've learned that things are rarely as bad or as good as they appear. Just as financial markets are a titanic struggle between the forces of greed and fear, the media, government and public opinion are all prone to shelving dispassionate analysis for hype and hysteria. I've seen this propensity to overstate both the good and the bad too many times to count. The shrill cacophony of media-driven public opinion has made many rational and clear-thinking people fold like a cheap tent and pushes



them to do the exact opposite of what was in their best self-interest.

Perhaps the best example of this I witnessed was in my first year as a newly minted financial consultant. My market was not the ultra-high income dice rollers who play the stock market like a fiddle. My clientele were the backbone of our economy, the people who get out of bed early and head out to back-breaking jobs in the factories or in their hog barns. Some people might call them common men and women, but these folks are and have always been the real strength of our nation, not the paper shufflers on Wall Street or the talking heads on CNN.

In the summer of 1982, the United States was experiencing a severe recession that was characterized by high unemployment, high interest rates and high levels of inflation. There was doom and gloom everywhere. It appeared to me at the time that it would be an excellent time for investors to consider moving some of their interest-bearing money into the 15-plus percent, 30-year, United States Government Guaranteed Treasury Bonds that were available at that time.

My job was made almost impossible by the daily drumbeat of bad economic news. The most frequent response that I usually received from my recommendation to move a part of their assets into long-term bonds was, "Craig, why would I want to tie my money up for 30 years at 15.5% when I can earn 16% on a six-month certificate of deposit?"

We all know the answer now, but back then things seemed less reasonable. Of course, today, with our latest form of gloom and doom and the accompanying negative

hysteria, investors have been perfectly willing to accept a recent rate of 1.35% on 30-year treasuries. Now, I find myself talking with investors who ask, "Craig why wouldn't I want to get 1.35% before rates go to zero?" Go figure.

The media has done an enormous disservice to the American people by substituting news reporting with what they call analysis and opinion. I remember the illustrious economics expert and CBS anchorman Dan Rather reporting on October 19, 1987, that the stock market drop of 22.6% would trigger another Great Depression. Less than two years later the market set another record high and everyone forgot Rather's stupid musings. At the time, Rather scared many people out of their wits and moved them to make terrible investing mistakes out of fear.

Fast forward a few years and we witnessed Iraqi forces invading Kuwait. The stock market tumbled, oil prices skyrocketed and unemployment ticked up. This time, Dan Rather reported on the buildup of American forces in Saudi Arabia in the lead-up to Operation Desert Storm. Rather opined at the time that President Bush was leading us into another Vietnam and that the United States could see the loss of over 50,000 troops to the fourth most powerful army in the world. Once again, I witnessed the public panic over the impact of the coming war on our economy and markets. I saw people fearful of another Vietnam War. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was in August 1990 and by February, 1991, the vaunted Iraqi military was a burned-out pile of rubble.

This cycle of major news event, media overhype, investor panic and return to reality has been repeated numerous times over the past 38 years. The hysteria and panic seem to get worse with every new "crisis." When my career first started, most people had three television channels and a daily newspaper or two. The nightly news brought you about 22 minutes of news when you factor in the commercials. That's just not enough time to truly rattle the public.

Then along came cable news and the 24 hours of uninterrupted pageantry of man-bites-dog stories and the obligatory panel of talking head experts. Also contributing greatly to the public's apprehension and comprehension of any newsworthy event are the numerous podcasters, Facebook experts and Twitter nitwits. We have information overload and massive cognitive dissonance.

Please allow me to distill down for you the accumulative wisdom that I have acquired over the past 38 years and my opinion about what our future will look like. In addition to my conclusion that nothing is as bad or as good as it appears, I begin by stating that no one, and I mean no one, knows what is going to happen tomorrow, let alone next year or five years from now.

To illustrate, in February 1984, my company sent me to an oil industry conference featuring the Secretary of Energy Donald Hodel and Occidental Petroleum CEO Armand Hammer. The price of a barrel of oil at the time was near \$30. During the question-and-answer period, the question was asked about where the two speakers felt the price of oil would be in a year. Hodel stated emphatically

that oil would go to \$60 a barrel and Armand Hammer chided him for being an optimist as he forecast \$85-a-barrel prices. Who was right? Neither. One year later, oil went to \$16. This was when I learned that there are no experts, only people who sound like experts.

I am one of those hopeless romantics who truly believe in the American Dream. I have lived the dream and seen countless examples of people who have been blessed by our amazing economic and political system. I believe that our recovery from this pandemic nightmare and the willful shutting down of our economy will be relatively quick and it won't be long before we put this trying time out of our minds and move to a place where Joe Exotic and quarantines are but a faint memory. This will be possible because of three things; as long as these three things are in place, our bright future is assured.

First, Americans innately like to work. As long as the average Joe or Jolene gets up in the morning, goes to work, gets paid a fair wage based on their production, pays their bills, pays their taxes and has enough money left to have a little fun, then the first element of the cycle of success is present.

Next, business must price their products to cover their costs, pay their fair share of taxes and have money to reinvest in their company and reward investors with either dividends or escalating stock prices. If this happens, the second element is secured.

Finally, if government will allow business to innovate, invest in itself, pay their workers fairly, reward their shareholders, tax no more than is necessary and maintain our constitutional rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, then the chain of success will be unbroken. With these three ingredients our return to economic security will only be a question of when and not whether.

Make no mistake about it. This pandemic has delivered a terrible body blow to virtually every American. Some businesses will fail and individual American workers will be displaced through no fault of their own. But as the superb Green Bay Packer coach, Vince Lombardi, once said, "The greatest accomplishment is not in never falling, but in rising again after you fall."

America will rise to economic greatness again. Take that to the bank. ❖

Reflecting on the virus

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — Nothing focuses our attention on the future like becoming a grandparent. From the day the first grandchild is born, we see the world differently. Suddenly, our hopes and fears extend well beyond the present to decades far away.

The COVID-19 virus is changing our calendars. Thus, my granddaughter in Maryland has postponed the wedding to her firefighter husband-to-be from May to August. He was a Marine who chose a profession in which he could serve others. As a first-responder to medical emergencies, his life and their lives are on today's front lines. Their future is our future.

With this killer virus afflicting the planet, we want to return to life as it was just a few weeks ago. However, our burden today -- constrained interactions, limited economic activity, and legitimate fear of what is yet to be for ourselves, our families, our communities -- will pass.

The big question is: What will we learn from this world-wide catastrophe? Can we use these days of enforced idleness as a foundation for improving our lives, not just returning to what was, but developing what should be? We should have learned from our viral "vacation" there are no national boundaries for sunshine or storms. There is but one world of the environment and human activity.

Walls may be built, edicts proclaimed, but nature and human desires deny all borders.

As with Joseph in Egypt, we must put aside from the bounty of today for the lean days of an uncertain future. For the past decade, we have seen increasing prosperity only deepen the national and international chasms between the rich and poor.

This virus has demonstrated our neglect to prepare in the times of plenty for the times of distress. We are tragically unprepared for repeated incursions of nations and nature upon our serenity.

Our economies are built on current consumption. We glory in proclaiming how much we consume only to discover how poorly we are prepared for events that become disasters. Hurricanes destroy cities not built to withstand their force. Viruses ravish our economies, as they do our bodies, because we fail to include them in our planning. This virus will pass, but Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis and muscular dystrophy will still be with us. Children will be born into the whirlpool of poverty. Technology will displace established jobs and millions will be still be illiterate.

We can renew sluggish political systems that willfully ignore decades of damage to our environment and fail to protect us from further environmental degradation. Similarly, we can restructure communities with health care and decent housing for everyone.

Now is the time to re-examine past choices. These weeks of self-isolation or limited interaction provide a chance to plan for devoting more resources to the preservation and protection of our environment and the economic security of all our grandchildren. ❖



Economic uncertainty surrounds COVID-19

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE — Precautionary steps to stop the spread of coronavirus have obviously affected the world's economy. I use the term "affected" instead of "hurt" because this is a policy choice between two bad options. I think it is



clear we chose the least damaging option.

Over the past few weeks, the center in which I work, as well as others around the nation, have attempted to model the economic, fiscal and labor market effects of this less painful option. As with any economic analysis, there is uncertainty about the depth and persistence of the path we have chosen. The source of some of this uncertainty is obvious, but

much is not. As we look forward to more normal economic times, it is helpful to think about what we cannot yet know, and what this means for our projections about the economy.

The first and most obvious source of uncertainty is just how long this first onslaught of the coronavirus might be. Right now, the economic shutdown most states have ordered is designed to preserve lives. However, even if we manage to keep the death toll down to an astonishing 100,000 this spring, it is pretty clear the economy will not magically rebound back to the pre-COVID-19 levels.

As long as this disease can run largely unchecked through our populations, we will experience a much different level and type of economic activity. Until we develop a vaccine, a robust treatment or broad immunity, a significant level of reduced economic activity must be expected.

Many economists, myself included, believe a short duration shutdown would not leave lasting scars on the economy. With a well-designed relief bill, most businesses would restart, displaced workers would find new employment and government services would continue unabated. However, the notion that this will be a brief shutdown seems increasingly improbable. A longer shutdown, even one with a known end date, introduces more uncertainty to our economic conditions.

The type of economic disruption we now experience falls unevenly upon American families. I don't mean to suggest that this is easy for anyone. A family can face minimal financial disruption and still bear great burdens of sorrow, fear and stress. But, economically, COVID-19 largely strikes at small business owners and employees working in restaurants, retail, hotels and motels and in other leisure sectors. Workers in these sectors are generally less well-paid and well-educated than the typical American.

Uncertainty about jobs persisting after COVID-19 will also weigh heavily on the strength of the recovery. If the disease suppresses these sectors for a year or more, we should anticipate much expanded automation of service sector jobs, and loss of many smaller businesses. Prospects for work and business owners largely depend on their ability to improve educational attainment in preparation for better jobs. The lengthier the COVID-19 shutdowns, the more likely will be the permanent loss of lower wage service sector jobs.

There is little certainty over the size of the effect of school closings on the long-term prospects of the economy. The direction is pretty clear. School closings pull more than 7% of adult workers out of the labor force. That alone would push the unemployment rate to Great Recession peak. Worse still is the share of students not accessing education. As many as one third of American students will have missed five months of school in 2020. We know that learning losses over a short summer are large; five months of missed school can affect a lifetime for many children. Most troubling here is the likelihood that the most affected kids are those already facing challenges in schooling.

It is a smaller share of the economy, but this fall will likely force the closure of many American colleges. Most at-risk are those small, private institutions that are already relatively expensive and have little capacity for online learning. The spread of the disease will also limit international travel, which will have outsized impacts on higher education.

The productivity impacts of the current anti-COVID-19 measures are uncertain. We will surely find that some tasks, and maybe some entire occupations, are easily performed at home. Others require an in-person presence. A year or more of mostly work-at-home will change the way we use urban space and where families can live.

Finally, the conduct of business is a complex and varied affair. Institutional knowledge, the skills developed from interacting with other workers and the relationships with customers and suppliers are not easily built from scratch. This makes a long closure damaging to businesses ranging from a food truck to a technology firm.

These few uncertain effects imply a high variance in economic forecasts for the coming months and years. While a quick rebound in economic activity is certainly possible, so too are several protracted and damaging years of slow, or even negative, growth. Readers should brace themselves for many different predictions, based on only modestly different assumptions about the duration of the downturn, and its effect on families, businesses and institutions. ❖

Michael Hicks is the George and Frances Ball Distinguished Professor of Economics and the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at Ball State University.

Some good news on our interconnectivity

By ERIN MACEY

INDIANAPOLIS — It is perhaps unsurprising that John Krasinski’s brand new show, “Some Good News,” has risen in popularity with the same turbocharged upward trajectory as COVID-19 cases and unemployment filings.



After all, at a time when day-to-day life seems filled with news generally ranging from devastating to disappointing, tuning in to watch police cars line the streets in a show of support for hospital workers, the original cast of “Hamilton” sing together on Zoom to soften the blow of someone’s long-awaited trip to the theater being canceled, or a neighborhood lineup to cheer a teenager’s recovery from cancer reminds us that humans can and do rise to

meet moments of devastation and disappointment with incredible compassion.

There are many extraordinary examples of communities coming together to recognize and assuage the impact of the sacrifices and uncertainty that challenge us during this difficult time. Perhaps even more inspiring are what in ordinary times are routine acts of going to work in hospitals, grocery stores, childcare facilities, distribution centers, and other institutions that have always been critical but now are actively proclaimed essential. And, while not necessarily part of systems all of us encounter frequently, those who staff food banks, social service agencies, and unemployment offices have new visibility as they work to connect families to life preservers.

With more and more Hoosiers understanding what it means to rely on others to meet basic needs and stay healthy, our gratitude for support and essential services increases.

As we toggle between crushing news on the one hand and signs of hope on the other, we should not forget that impressive displays and individual acts are not the only ways to express care for one another. We can do so through policy. Always at heart a product of our values, policy sets expectations for how we treat one another and dictates where our community resources should be invested. Individual acts of service and sacrifice are no substitute for laws and budgets and that encourage – demand, even – that we support and uplift

one another.

If we recognize that staying home when you are sick is not only an act of self-care, but also a way to protect public health, we should have paid-leave laws. If we view childcare as an essential business, we should invest in a quality system that can sustain workers with adequate pay and benefits.

If making a loan at 200% interest would seem like taking unfair advantage of another person’s distress during this pandemic, we should reinstate usury laws and make alternative forms of support available to those in crisis. If a sudden shock can turn everything upside down, we can and should ensure that we have systems in place to keep people housed, fed, and healthy when life deals them a devastating blow.

The scale of this crisis is unique, but the reality is that, even before COVID-19, people experienced sickness and needed time off. Some workers provided essential services like caring for young children or stocking shelves without receiving enough to meet their own needs.


Some bad actors took unfair advantage of others. Even ordinary life events can throw a wrench into everything, let alone a global crisis, and our systems let people fall through the cracks.

I hope our collective vulnerability helps us see more clearly how interconnected we are, and recognize that to make the acts of care and service continue, we need policy to hold these expectations in place. As we emerge from this crisis, we should make sure Some Good News lasts. ❖

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

What makes a successful politician?

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON — One of the intriguing features of the coronavirus pandemic is how sharply it has illuminated the importance of effective political leadership.



Wherever we stand on the political spectrum, we're looking to elected officials to help steer us through this crisis.

While I don't want to talk about specific politicians, a lifetime in politics has given me a sense of what makes a good one — as a policy maker, that is, rather than a candidate. One of the ironies of our system is that the skills and attributes that put someone in office are usually not

the skills needed for success once they're there. Yet as a nation we depend on politicians' abilities in office to move us forward.

For starters, I think the most successful politicians have integrity. When you're interacting with many others to deal with complex and difficult public policy issues, it's hugely important that you can trust someone's word. Most of the politicians I've met stay true to what they tell you. They recognize the need to work with others and know that trust matters.

For the same reason, they tend to be skillful at working with all sorts of people. Sizing others up accurately — not just whether they're trustworthy, but the skills and strengths they might bring to a given policy or organizing effort — is vital. So is not rushing to make quick judgments, but instead letting others show through their actions what they can accomplish. Many good politicians are quite tolerant; they know people make mistakes or errors of judgment, and that nobody has a monopoly on the truth or performs flawlessly.

The best politicians I've met — Bill Clinton comes to mind — also have a way of charming people who don't agree with them. I was in a room once with Clinton and a group of people who he knew disliked him. He was affable, engaging, listened carefully to what they had to say; you would never have guessed he had any idea what they thought of him. Walking out with them afterward, I asked what they thought. They all responded, "I still have

disagreements with him, but what a nice fellow!"

I've been impressed over the years by the energy and drive to get things done that good politicians bring to their work. When I talk with people who want to get into politics, I usually open the conversation with two questions: What's your energy level? And what's your spouse or partner think about it? Both are critically important, because as all-consuming as a campaign might be, serving in office is even more so, especially if you're a politician who wants to accomplish change. An unsupportive spouse or partner spells problems down the road.

At the same time, accomplished politicians know how to rein in their enthusiasm and zeal. They practice patience and perseverance and prepare for the long haul, because they understand that controversial things don't get easily done in our system. They believe that facts matter, because they're the starting point for any productive negotiation. And they're very good at managing their time efficiently.

Good politicians are able to put aside partisan differences when necessary and work for the common good. They do not see someone they disagree with as the enemy.

One of the intriguing things about good politicians is that they don't just want to serve their country and communities, they also know how to check their egos at the door and act with apparent humility — even when, as is often the case, their egos are quite healthy. I remember when Tip O'Neill was speaker of the House, he'd make sure to let other House members bask in the glow of accomplishment as often as possible. When legislation

passed, he'd congratulate everybody involved — he knew what each of us had done to move the ball forward — and you'd walk out of there thinking he'd had nothing to do with it at all, even if he'd orchestrated the whole thing.

I'll be candid: No politician combines all these traits. But it can't

hurt to keep the ideal in front of us and know what the politicians we elect should strive to be. ❖



Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice at the IU O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

In a pandemic, listen to the experts

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News Bureau

ANDERSON — A Facebook friend the other day shared a comment attributed to Rush Limbaugh. “Sixty million Americans were infected with the swine flu resulting in 274,304 hospitalizations and 12,469 deaths. No media panic, no trashing of President Barack Obama and no travel ban. You don’t even remember it.”



The post appears to be a distillation of a commentary Limbaugh delivered on March 12. “Do you remember any talk about running out of hospital beds?” he asked his audience. “Were we gonna run out of IV saline solution? Were we gonna run out of masks?”

He insisted the swine flu epidemic was far more severe than the current crisis. “We’re nowhere near 300,000 hospitalized with coronavirus,” he said. “I mean, we’re not even close to it. In fact, worldwide we don’t even have 300,000 cases...”

The difference, he said, was politics. “Because Barack Obama was president, and he was God, and we couldn’t be critical,” Limbaugh said. “We had to build him up and promote him like nothing else we’ve ever seen before.”

He blamed the media. “The media was praising the efforts of the government to deal with swine flu,” Limbaugh said. “The one difference is the freaking media.”

There was one other difference. The numbers Limbaugh was quoting for the swine flu covered a 12-month period from April 2009 to April 2010. For that period, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated there were 60.8 million cases, 274,304 hospitalizations and 12,469 deaths. At the time Limbaugh delivered his commentary, COVID-19 was just getting started. There had been 1,663 cases and 40 deaths across the country.

How was he supposed to know the virus would kill more people in a month than the swine flu had killed in a year? How was he supposed to know the death rate for COVID-19 in the United States would be so much higher than that of the swine flu?

Well, I guess he could have listened to the medical professionals, but then, Limbaugh doesn’t seem to have much regard for their opinions. In a more recent commentary, he accused medical experts like Dr. Anthony Fauci of

being “Hillary Clinton sympathizers” conspiring to “get rid of Donald Trump.”

“We don’t really know for sure how many people are dying of coronavirus versus people that had underlying conditions that the coronavirus may have hastened,” he said. “Cardiac arrest, diabetes, any number of things.”

In another segment, Limbaugh claimed models suggesting hundreds of thousands of Americans could die from the virus were “just as bad and just as unreliable as climate change models.” He accused the mainstream media of “hyping huge death tolls.”

I feel the need to point out that the folks putting out those scary numbers are public health experts, and just to be clear, they want to be wrong. They hope their projections of the number of deaths prove to be way too high.

James Hamblin, a public health policy expert who writes for The Atlantic, explained it in a tweet on the same day Limbaugh offered his swine flu commentary. “The thing is, if shutdowns and social distancing work perfectly and are extremely effective, it will seem in retrospect like they were totally unnecessary overreactions,” he tweeted.

Mike Leavitt put it another way at a forum on pandemic influenza when he was secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services under George W. Bush. “Everything we do before a pandemic will seem alarmist,” he said. “Everything we do after a pandemic will seem



inadequate.”

We need to listen to guys like him. This isn’t about politics. It’s about saving lives. ❖

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Mark Bennett, Terre Haute Tribune-Star: It's impossible to label any aspect of the pandemic as a "bright spot." Lost lives, fears and heartaches bear down on so many right now. Still, signs have emerged of the "better angels of our nature," a phrase coined by Abe Lincoln. America's 16th president called on those forces of good to guide his fellow humans, even on the brink of the nation's darkest days -- the Civil War. So, what evidence of our better angels is detectable right now? Many people feel a deeper appreciation for the jobs others do. That might seem small, but it's not. Just over a dozen years ago, the opposite threatened to pull the country apart. Today, reminders surround us of the occupations filled by others. That's because the products and services they provide are in short supply during statewide shutdowns, or because their work is saving lives and easing our disrupted everyday routines. Doctors, nurses, nurses aides, orderlies and hospital staffers are hearing applause on the streets as they arrive for duty at hospitals and clinics. Some are being serenaded by grateful neighbors, singing on apartment balconies, from Europe to the Midwest. Those health-care workers are in the trenches of this fight against a COVID-19 virus that has everybody's attention, but no cure. The cheers and songs matter for those folks as they walk into emergency rooms, risking their own health to help others. Firefighters, police, EMTs, ambulance crews and other first-responders face those same dangers, along with other risks. Like health-care workers, first-responders and their families have felt the impact of the relentless virus.



Employees of grocery stores and supermarkets have likely toiled for months or even years without hearing many "thank-yous" from customers or acquaintances. Governors of Indiana and Illinois have declared those cashiers, sackers, stockers and managers officially "essential." Most of us never realized the vital role those folks shoulder, until this unusual moment. The same is true of sanitation workers. They're still handling the various forms of our waste, left by us to be out-of-sight-and-out-of-mind. Their work through a pandemic is the definition of both "essential" and "risky." Pharmacy crews fill prescriptions for customers struggling with illnesses and ailments. Gas station employees keep essential workers supplied for transporation. Mail and package carriers are delivering many necessities residents once picked up in person, helping us to stay home and flatten the curve -- the motto the world lives by in springtime 2020.

Daycare workers tend to many essential workers' kids or aging parents. Nursing home attendants help the elderly carry on with their lives in sheltered communities particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Funeral home staffs handle the passing of loved ones, a situation that's stressful in normal times and even more so now. Bank tellers cash our checks. And, the work of people in numerous other occupations idled or downsized by the pandemic has taken on renewed significance. Elementary, middle and high schools are closed till fall, along with colleges.

Face-to-face interations with teachers, principals, cafeteria cooks and custodians are missed by kids. A professor's explanation of a vexing question must come via a computer, for now. A relaxing cup of coffee in a diner booth, refilled every few minutes by a waitress, has been temporarily replaced by carryout-only orders. Those waitresses, cooks, bussers, baristas and managers of restaurants, pubs, coffeehouses and nightspots gave us an oasis after our workdays were completed. We're all missing those amenities. ❖

Scott Martelle, Los Angeles Times: It's too early to have anything close to a clear vision of the effect the COVID-19 pandemic will have on the 2020 presidential election, but rest assured, it will make a difference. But to whose advantage? The pandemic has effectively muscled former Vice President Joe Biden out of the spotlight. Wisely holed up in his Delaware home, Biden has done a series of on-air television interviews and issued some public statements via webcast, but that's not the kind of campaigning he, nor America, is accustomed to. And it's going to get worse if the Democratic Party can't hold its national convention as usual, the traditional coronation of a nominee. The crisis has also knocked President Donald Trump off the tour circuit, shutting down rallies of the faithful in parts of the country where his popularity holds strong. The president still has the presidential bully pulpit at his disposal and has anchored daily public briefings on the government's response to the pandemic. But it's not the same performance he delivers to the MAGA crowd. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), a Trump loyalist and golfing buddy, told the New York Times that he, too, was among the concerned Republicans, and that he had advised the president to limit his appearance at the coronavirus update news briefings to once a week. "I told him your opponent is no longer Joe Biden - it's this virus," Graham said. No, it's not. Trump's opponent is himself. ❖

Daniel Henninger, Wall Street Journal: Despite ample experience the past 20 years with viral pathogens, the one that finally spread across the U.S. — SARS-Cov-2 — has produced panic, confusion, improvisation, damage and death. On Sunday, Surgeon General Jerome Adams described the coming weeks' experience with coronavirus as "our Pearl Harbor moment." Dr. Adams meant mortalities, but more relevant to this stark reality is that Pearl Harbor sits in America's historical awareness as the epitome of unpreparedness for a known external threat. The most famous book written on the causes of this massive intelligence failure is Roberta Wohlstetter's "Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision." Substitute "Coronavirus Pandemic" for "Pearl Harbor" and Wohlstetter's book could have been written yesterday. "If our intelligence systems and all our other channels of information failed to produce an accurate image of Japanese intentions and capabilities," she wrote, "it was not for want of the relevant materials." ❖

Trump claims ‘total’ authority

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump claimed the “total” authority to decide how and when to reopen the economy after weeks of tough social distancing guidelines aimed at fighting the new coronavirus (AP). But governors from both parties were quick to push back, noting they have primary responsibility for ensuring public safety in their states and would decide when it’s safe to begin a return to normal operations. Trump would not offer specifics about the source of his asserted power, which he claimed, despite constitutional limitations, was absolute. “When somebody is president of the United States, the authority is total,” Trump said Monday at the White House. “The governors know that.”



Rapid virus test vexes states

CHICAGO — A rapid test for the new coronavirus that was touted by the White House as a game-changing development has proved vexing for state officials, who say the federal government has failed to provide enough necessary equipment ([Wall Street Journal](#)). “It’s incredibly frustrating,” said New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, whose state got 15 of Abbott Laboratories’ testing machines for Covid-19, the illness caused by the new coronavirus—and cartridges to conduct only about 100 tests. Mr. Sununu, speaking at a news conference, said most of the machines would sit idle until he could figure out how to get more of the cartridges, one of which is needed to complete each test. “There was a lot of hype on this nationally,” the Republican said. “To have 13 of these devices and no way to use them—I’m banging my head against the wall.” After conducting a bulk purchase with Abbott, the

federal government this month gave every state except Alaska 15 devices and 120 cartridges, regardless of its population or severity of its coronavirus outbreak. In Illinois, where Abbott Laboratories is based, Gov. J.B. Pritzker said he spoke to the company more than a week ago and thought he had an agreement to conduct 88,000 tests a month, or about 3,000 tests a day. He subsequently learned that the federal government was taking over purchasing and distribution of the tests. Instead, Illinois received 15 Abbott machines and 120 cartridges. “That’s eight tests per machine for all of Illinois,” Mr. Pritzker, a Democrat, said.

Clinton newspaper closes due to virus

CLINTON, Ind. — A small western Indiana newspaper has folded, in part due to the coronavirus pandemic. Friday’s editions of The Daily Clintonian were its last, publisher George “Sonny” Carey said. COVID-19 and the resulting lack of advertising revenue was the final straw, Carey told the Tribune-Star. “It’s economics,” Carey said. “I wanted to keep it open, but it’s not viable. We put a lot of our own money back into the business and ...” Carey operated the newspaper with his sister, Diane Waugh. Their parents bought the newspaper in 1936. Carey said he’s tried to sell the paper and its parent printing company, Clinton Color Crafters, for the past 14 months. “Our newspaper kept our communities informed,” Waugh said. “And maybe more important, it kept politicians honest.”

Casino mayors eye downturn

EAST CHICAGO — The state-mandated closure of Northwest Indiana’s casinos to minimize the potential spread of COVID-19 is prompting the mayors of Lake County casino cities to more closely scrutinize their spending as the shutdown drags into a fourth

week (NWI Times). State records show the city of Hammond last year collected \$33.5 million in gaming taxes and related revenue, the city of East Chicago \$17.3 million and the city of Gary approximately \$6 million. While Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland and Gary Mayor Jerome Prince all agreed the loss of a single month of gaming revenue won’t break their budgets, it’s the combination of the unknown duration of the casino shutdown and the soaring unemployment caused by the coronavirus that has them concerned about the future. “I pray on bended knee that the industry will come back,” Copeland said. “But I’m far from foolish. I know that if they cranked up tomorrow, it still would take months and months before people that have been affected across the nation who go to these properties will have disposable income.

15 state companies making PPE

INDIANAPOLIS — The state is working with 15 Indiana companies to purchase personal protective gear for health care professionals responding to the coronavirus pandemic, officials announced Monday (IBJ). Luke Bosso, chief of staff for the Indiana Economic Development Corp., said during Monday’s media briefing that the state has purchased 1.9 million pieces of PPE so far for \$5.5 million. The acquisitions include 1 million face masks, 763,000 face shields, 141,000 gloves, 68,000 gowns, 10,000 pairs of goggles and 6,700 bottles of hand sanitizer. The items are coming from 15 companies across the state that are producing the equipment and supplies. “These Indiana businesses have stepped up in a big way to make PPE,” Bosso said. Several businesses have also agreed to donate 440,000 pieces of PPE. Some of those businesses include the Indianapolis Colts, Toyota, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, Westfield Outdoors, Subaru of Indiana Automotive and Acclaims Graphics.