

Holcomb faces crisis of the century

He joins ranks of Govs. Morton, Goodrich, Leslie, Orr & Daniels in face of calamity

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Oliver P. Morton faced the Civil War and a Copperhead General Assembly that he sidelined to keep Indiana in the Union.

Gov. James P. Goodrich survived two near-fatal life chapters while serving on the Second Floor, as well as World War I and the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918.

Gov. Harry G. Leslie returned from the dead as a Purdue student and after serving as speaker of the Klan-dominated House, was at the helm at the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929.

Gov. Robert Orr had to call a special session after the steel crash of 1982, opting to forge a record December tax increase.



Gov. Eric Holcomb at his daily COVID-19 press conference on Tuesday. He is facing arduous decisions on the twin health and economic calamities facing the state.

And Gov. Mitch Daniels watched the domestic auto industry crater after the Wall Street collapse, endangering the state's vast auto supplier network at the onset of the

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A global stress test

By **PETE SEAT**

INDIANAPOLIS — Speaking to a virtual convening hosted by the Atlantic Council last week, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu compared the COVID-19 global pandemic to an exercise stress test that monitors heart rates, blood pressure and breathing. This moment in time, he said, is "the ultimate stress test for the entire world. It has revealed our vulnerabilities, it has also shown our strengths."



The conjured images of a bionic-looking man hooked up to gadgets and gizmos briskly walking on a treadmill aside, his point is well taken. With each spike in infections and deaths



"I am proud of what we have accomplished and I can turn the page to the next chapter in my life with no regrets, knowing that I gave it my best every day."

- Notre Dame woman's basketball coach Muffet McGraw, who announced her retirement. She won two NCAA titles.



Howey Politics Indiana
WWWHowey Media, LLC
c/o Business Office
PO Box 6553
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Brian A. Howey, Publisher
Mark Schoeff Jr., Washington
Mary Lou Howey, Editor
Susan E. Joiner, Editor

Subscriptions

HPI, HPI Daily Wire \$599
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Lisa Houchell, Account Manager
 (765) 452-3936 telephone
 (765) 452-3973 fax
 HPI.Business.Office@howeypolitics.com

Contact HPI

bhowey2@gmail.com
 Howey's cell: 317.506.0883
 Washington: 202.256.5822
 Business Office: 765.452.3936

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Jack E. Howey
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 1926-2019



our blood pressure rises. With every day the market ticks up we breathe a sigh of relief and every day it dips down we gasp in horror. But beyond the immediate impacts to public health (a stress we were ill-prepared to address) there lies a broader question: Can our global heart handle the unintended stresses of broken alliances, electoral mayhem and geopolitical uncertainty that are being exacerbated in our coronavirus world?

The European Union's

vulnerabilities could be the first to answer that question. In late January, the United Kingdom officially began its transition away from the continental pact, creating additional financial stresses for the 27-member economic alliance. Then in late February, days prior to the global lockdown, Turkey opened their border to allow migrants unhindered passage across the Aegean to Greece, putting great strain on an already tenuous situation. As a result of these inherent fiscal and migratory vulnerabilities, pleas for help from Italy were met with deaf ears, calling into question the long-term stability of the alliance.

But where is Europe's strength? The North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, long struggling to redefine its mission in a world without a Cold War, may have stumbled upon an opportunity to provide lasting value to its members (which now number 30 following the late March ascension of North Macedonia) in the EU-created vacuum. The military alliance has mobilized to make medical deliveries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Poland, among other nations, while continuing to monitor NATO operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Eastern Europe. Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance needed to "project strength" in the face of the virus and he wasn't kidding.

Then there are the two sides of electoral stresses.

Chile, Bolivia, France and Britain are among 47 countries, according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, that have postponed voting or canceled elections altogether. As a result,

the Chilean president was handed a free pass to postpone a referendum on a new constitution demanded by his citizens, the tenure of the interim president of Bolivia was extended and all elections in Hungary have been suspended as a result of President Viktor Orban's coronavirus-inspired move to declare an indefinite state of emergency that gives him unlimited power until he decides otherwise.

South Korea, on the other hand, released a stress valve by flawlessly executing a socially distanced election full of strict protocols dutifully adhered to by the 66.2% of the voting public that cast a vote – the highest percentage of participation since 1992 – proving authoritarian subterfuge is not the only option.

And, of course, there is the stressful struggle for global supremacy. China's long game plans to overtake the United States as the world's superpower, or at least find itself on equal footing, is taking a beating. At least in Africa. According to a report in POLITICO, multiple African ambassadors cried foul over China's forcible removal of African laborers from their temporary Chinese homes in the name of compulsory COVID-19 testing. After years of showering countries in Africa with infrastructure investment, China's relationship with the recipients of its largess is clearly brittle enough to lead to a "diplomatic showdown" that could cause "lasting damage."

But in other places, like Serbia, the Chinese regime is flexing its muscle and being welcomed with open arms in their years-long effort to win friends and influence countries through unvarnished bribery and extortion. To them, a virus knows no bounds, and a crisis, even one of China's own making, is a chance to show strength while they mitigate vulnerability one continent south.

All of these moments, some hopeful and some not, offer a hazy glimpse into an uncertain future. The greatest strength of the post-World War II era was our collective ability to work toward shared goals of peace

and prosperity. Europe, for instance, is inching ever closer to being whole and free and millions have been lifted from poverty into the middle class the world over. This unified strength of allies helping allies is what we need to weather the storm.

Conversely, our vulnerabilities exposed hard truths about the fragility of our global order and how simple it could be for an authoritarian leader to take advantage of a crisis. Nationalism for the sake of patriotic pride in one's nation is standing in the way of global progress to destroy the virus and rebuild our economies and our lives. As the Turkish foreign minister said, we either "confine

ourselves within our borders and negate what we have achieved in the last century, or we will prevail together with more cooperation and solidarity."

The vulnerabilities revealed by this global stress test warn us of what to avoid, and the strengths provide a blueprint for what to do.

Is anyone listening? ❖

Pete Seat 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."

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Great Recession of 2008-09.

What Gov. Eric Holcomb is facing here in April 2020 is on par with all these financial and war disasters. He has seen his state enter March with a 3.2% jobless rate and record employment involving more than three million workers, and will exit April with perhaps more than 1,000 Hoosiers dead due to the increasingly mysterious coronavirus pandemic, the economy tanking at historic rates unseen since 1929, with perhaps as many as a half million unemployed, while 500,000 small businesses teeter on the brink.

And the hard part is just over the horizon, when Gov. Holcomb will have to rely on increasingly sketchy data while under intense pressure ranging from business executives, a revived Tea Party movement, and even the populist President Trump whose calls to "LIBERATE" neighboring blue states have spilled into Republican Indiana and Ohio.

If he moves to reopen too soon, with a second and third wave of this pandemic forecast, universal testing months away and a vaccine perhaps more than a year in the offing, he could set in motion circumstances that bring even more death and economic turmoil.

If Holcomb moves too late, it could set off waves of business bankruptcies and stress-induced suicides, heart attacks and strokes, as well as mowing through the state's \$2.27 billion rainy day fund, which faces an economic Category 5 hurricane.

On March 16, Holcomb issued his historic "stay at home" order to promote social distancing designed to flatten what had been projected as a pandemic that could claim up to 2,400 lives by August. By April 21, it had infected (that we know of) more than 12,000, killing 630 Hoosiers (including 61 that day, that we know of), while epidemiologists are now suggesting that all of those statistics are substantially under-counted because of the microbe's evil stealth.

Pressure mounts to reopen

Gov. Holcomb is now under intense pressure to reopen the economy, all while President Trump stirs his base into protest, with 100 showing up last Saturday outside the Governor's Residence. On Monday, Holcomb acknowledged their right to protest, but decried their lack of masks and social distancing, creating what he described as "almost a perfect petri dish for how this can spread."

"When we add to that, almost in a flaunting way, it is not helping," Holcomb said at Monday's daily briefing. "There's nothing government can do to encourage people to care about their neighbors, folks that they may not know."

While his press conferences during his first three years in office were rare, he has approached COVID-19 with transparency, taking questions via Zoom from the diminishing statewide press corps during what has been called a "media extinction event." He is usually accompanied by Indiana Health Commissioner Kristina Box and other cabinet members. He is a man of many gestures, and extends wide praise to those 99% of Hoosiers who have complied with his order. "You are practicing, in large part, good physical distancing practices and you're slowing the spread," Holcomb said on Monday. "You're flattening the curve. We see this around most of the state of Indiana."

Holcomb has said reopening the state's economy will be gradual. "We're at a phase where we're planning the safe reopening of sections of our economy," Holcomb said last Friday. Earlier last week he said, "We're letting the data drive our decision. We're looking at the cases and the deaths. We're also contemplating how we're going to be able to track former positives and how they recovered and what stage they are in. In terms of how we will reopen or reengage on an economic front, it will be a rolling reopen. It won't be all at once. It won't be flipping a light switch."

Holcomb joined a Midwestern compact with all neighboring states. "I've been in touch with the governor of Kentucky, Andy Beshear, Ohio Gov. Mike Dewine, I've



also reached out to the governor of Illinois and the governor of Michigan," he said last Wednesday. "I want to make sure we all know, because we're neighborly and share a border, we're not going to act alone in this. We're all in this together. While we were one of the first into this, my goal is to be the first out of it." On Tuesday, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker said he would keep his stay-at-home order in place until June.

Dr. Tony Fauci of the National Institute of Health warned, "So what you do if you jump the gun and go into a situation where you have a big spike, you're going to set yourself back. So as painful as it is to go by the careful guidelines of gradually phasing into a reopening, it's going to backfire. That's the problem." And CDC Director Robert Redfield said on Tuesday, "There's a possibility that the assault of the virus on our nation next winter will actually be even more difficult than the one we just went through. We're going to have the flu epidemic and the coronavirus epidemic at the same time." A glowering Trump tried to get Redfield to say he was misquoted on Wednesday, something the director said wasn't true.

While there is intense pressure for him to reopen, the NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll released last weekend revealed 58% said they were concerned that the country would move too fast to loosen restrictions, compared with about three in 10 who said the greater worry was the economic impact of waiting too long. A Seton Hall University poll showed 72% won't go to a ballgame or concert until there is a vaccine available for the masses.

The Holcomb and Trump 'shows'

Gov. Holcomb's daily briefings (or "shows" as President Trump might call them), have featured a bipartisan line up of mayors from Fort Wayne, Valparaiso, Terre Haute, Gary and Jeffersonville. They typically last around an hour and feature Q&A with reporters on Zoom. Holcomb has assumed the role as cheerleader for the dozens of Indiana and multi-national firms who have stepped up to make ventilators in Kokomo, face masks in Madison, and test kits in Carmel. He has shown empathy when needed, stayed strictly with the facts, and has been more than willing to get more information from inquiring reporters.

The contrast with President Trump has been striking. Holcomb tends to be focused and oriented toward problem solving. His supporting cast has been consistent, with Dr. Kris Box almost always there.

Trump has usurped the daily coronavirus briefing from Pence and he issues campaign style stream of consciousness, lasting up to two and a half hours. The tone is ideological and political; he lashes out at reporters. The cast of characters changes, turning into a "Who's in; who's on the skids." HHS Sec. Alex Azar and Surgeon General Je-

rome Adams have been sidelined by Trump. After putting out federal guidelines for states, then urging governors to "liberate" their populations as Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp did, Trump then said he "strongly disagreed" with that decision.

Dov Seidman, founder and chairman of both the ethics and compliance company LRN and the How Institute for Society, told New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, "The strongest local leaders will be the ones who collaborate with others and, at the same time, are exceptionally clear about their plans, brutally honest about the risks, utterly specific about the behaviors they're asking of us, constantly searching the world for best practices and totally transparent about the technologies and data they want to collect to track our movements and contacts. They'll also be the leaders who go to extremes to protect those among us who are vulnerable and support those among us who are risking their lives so everyone else can get back to theirs."

While his reelection seems safe this November, with his job approval north of 60% and a \$7 million money lead over presumptive Democratic nominee Woody Myers, the decisions Holcomb makes in the coming weeks will go a long way toward defining his ultimate legacy. An Indy Politics/Change Research Poll revealed Holcomb leading Myers 45%-25%, with 8% supporting the Libertarian and 22% undecided.

Gov. Holcomb entered March declaring his state "remarkably prepared." While there have been some shortages of personal protective equipment, by this past week at what models have said will be the apex of this COVID-19's first wave, the administration's planning appears to have staved off the kind of ventilator and Intensive Care Unit shortages that have brought waves of death to places like New York City and north-

ern Italy. Holcomb has declared a state emergency, activated the state's emergency command center, and deployed the National Guard. He has open lines of communication to his predecessor, Vice President Mike Pence, as well as President Trump. If he's come up short, it's been his apparent

inability to convince Pence and Trump to invest what is necessary to create universal testing. In a state of 6.8 million people, the state has tested just over 60,000 people.

Holcomb faces an unrelenting, silent and deadly virus, that appears to be spread by asymptomatic human carriers. Some end up with mild cold or flu-like symptoms; some show no signs of the illness. Others, like North Central HS Athletic Director Paul Loggan, end up dead. Bloomington Mayor John Hamilton tests negative, but his wife, Indiana University Prof. Dawn Johnsen, is hospitalized for more than 10 days and his mother-in-law succumbs. The



highly contagious coronavirus that observes no borders seemingly picks its victims with vicious randomness.

The COVID-19 virus has infected less than 1% of Hoosiers, and killed just a fraction of those. But it has shut down a state with an annual GDP of more than \$360 billion, and a labor force of more than three million, taking aim at an array of small and large corporations, mom-and-pop businesses, tens of thousands of bars and restaurants that saw April revenues decline by almost \$1 billion. It could cost local governments between \$200 million and \$360 million in revenue, according to Ball State University's Center for Business and Economic Research. "I think we're closer to \$360 million which is tough for local governments because there's no fat for most local governments in Indiana, but it's not catastrophic," said BSU Prof. Michael Hicks. According to Prof. Erick Elder of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, "Based on its business cycle characteristics, Indiana would need \$0.82 billion to make it through a recession of average severity if the state decided to rely on its combined rainy day fund and general fund balances rather than cutting spending or raising tax rates. To weather a severe recession (at the 90th percentile of all possible economic contractions), Indiana would need funds that make up 15% of its revenue, or \$2.20 billion." The state had \$2.27 billion in reserves in 2019.

It has emptied college campuses, fieldhouses and NBA stadiums, swamped hospital ERs, and has carved a deadly path through more than 150 nursing homes and retirement centers. It has delayed the Indianapolis 500 and Kentucky Derby, sidelined the NCAA's March Madness, the IHSAA's Hoosier Hysteria, and sent more than one million students home for the rest of the spring semester, idling more than 60,000 teachers. Indiana's churches, synagogues, temples and mosques have been left empty and silent. CBS4 reports that there's been a 70% increase in domestic disturbance calls to central Indiana police departments

No modern governor has faced the type of loss of life and economic paralysis and destruction that COVID-19 has dropped at Holcomb's boots.

How governors fare in crisis

Thus far, Holcomb has earned good marks for his handling of these twin crises. He and Secretary of State Connie Lawson, working with Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer and Democratic Chairman John Zody, delayed the May 5 primary to June 2, and extended absentee balloting. He appears to be prepared.

Gov. Morton is widely regarded as the state's most powerful governor, suspending the General Assembly after Copperhead Democrats took control in 1862. He arranged loans from Madison's Henry Lanier, and sent more Hoosiers into battle (per capita) than any other state.

Gov. Goodrich survived typhoid fever he contract-

ed in an Indiana prison, and then was critically injured in a 1917 car accident, and there isn't much information on how he handled the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic. Press accounts indicate he deferred to local health officials. According to the Indiana History Blog, "On Sunday night, October 6, 1918, 10 soldiers died in (Fort Benjamin Harrison's) hospital bringing the total for the week to 41 deceased soldiers. Four civilians died from influenza and six more from the ensuing pneumonia. At the fort, officials reported 172 new cases of influenza (bringing the total to 1,653 sick soldiers)."

The front page of the Indianapolis News read, "PUBLIC MEETINGS ARE FORBIDDEN," and noted that all churches, schools, and theaters were closed until further notice. In October of 1918, Indianapolis must have looked like a ghost town. The Indianapolis Star reported the local death toll to be 3,266. According to the University of Michigan Center for the History of Medicine, "In the end, Indianapolis had an epidemic death rate of 290 per 100,000 people, one of the lowest in the nation," attributing the city's relative success to "how well Indianapolis as well as state officials worked together to implement community mitigation measures against influenza."

Gov. Leslie, who survived an Indianapolis train accident as a Purdue athlete headed for a game against IU in 1903 (he was actually found to have a pulse as he was about to be embalmed), was able to institute some relief for the twin crises he faced with the 1929 stock market crash and a severe drought.

Gov. Orr was able to win reelection in 1984 after his late 1982 tax hike. Gov. Daniels, with Holcomb serving as deputy chief of staff, found the sunny economy of his first term matched with the dark Great Recession.

While there have been rumblings of discontent from some Senate Republicans, with State Sen. Victoria Spartz, a 5th CD candidate, calling for a special session if he extends his stay-at-home order beyond May 1, and Indiana Democrats beginning to press him on the lack of universal testing, thus far the political reaction has been largely supportive.

"Does Eric Holcomb agree with Mike Pence that Indiana can double its testing overnight?" asked Indiana Democratic Party Executive Director Lauren Ganapini. "If he does, then the Holcomb administration has failed Hoosiers. If he doesn't, then why isn't Holcomb demanding the federal government do more? It's time for Eric Holcomb to answer for Indiana's failure to ramp up testing capacity. Every day spent under-testing is a day longer to reopening the economy."

Gov. Holcomb has repeatedly said data will be important for reopening the economy, but he has left lanes open to delay that sequence. His four data points include: 1) Sustained control of the rate of new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations; 2) enhanced ability to test and trace; 3) sufficient health care capacity to handle a second or



third wave; 4) best practices for social distancing in the workplace. Today, the state is coming up short on the first two points.

Mike Allen of Axios observed: "We're fighting the greatest public health crisis in a century, and we barely understand our enemy. We cannot afford to stay in lockdown until a cure or vaccine arrives – but anybody trying to reopen our cities needs information that is frustratingly difficult to find. We don't know the scope of the pandemic itself, or its economic fallout, or how its trajectory will change as we embark upon an ad hoc effort to reopen the economy. We don't know how many people the corona-

virus has killed, or how many people have had it. The official tally of over (42,000) deaths is too low, because it's based on people who died after testing positive for the coronavirus, but we don't know how low. We don't know how many Americans have lost their jobs because of the coronavirus shutdown. We don't know when it'll be safe to fly, go to a game, or pack into a school or a church. It's shocking and a bit scary how much we do not know."

Thus, Gov. Holcomb faces the most mysterious foe and set of economic and public health circumstances in Indiana's 2004 years of statehood. He faces arduous decisions. ❖

A sophomore in the White House

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS — In a horrifying second week this April, where Indiana's COVID-19 death toll crested 500 with 10,000 Hoosiers afflicted, and 33,000 Americans have died, with the economy shut down and hundreds of thousands of small businesses teetering on the brink, and unemployment claims spiraling up to levels not seen since the Great Depression, we learned that there's a sophomore in the White House.



As the Centers for Disease Control reported the U.S. mortality rate at 5%, Americans were looking for true leadership, when CEOs, governors, mayors and health experts were still pointing at the gaping lack of testing and a coherent plan to reopening a collapsing economy, President Trump responded at sophomore levels.

On Sunday, President Trump retweeted "#FireFauci" from a West Coast Republican congressional candidate, at a time when Dr. Anthony Fauci had become the nation's guiding expert on this pandemic. A day later, Trump said, "Today I walk in, I hear I'm going to fire him. I'm not firing him, I think he's a wonderful guy."

On Monday, President Trump claimed "total authority" when it came to reopening the economy, saying at a two-hour-plus 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."

On Tuesday, President Trump severed funding to the World Health Organization as this pandemic was still barreling toward its U.S. apex, saying it opposed his China travel ban while "severely mismanaging and covering up the spread of the coronavirus."

On Wednesday, President Trump threatened to adjourn Congress. "The current practice of leaving town while conducting phony pro forma sessions is a dereliction of duty that the American people cannot afford during this crisis," Trump said at a White House briefing. "It is a scam what they do."

On Thursday, President Trump backtracked on his "I alone can fix it" and "total authority" claims after a conference call with the 50 governors. "The governors are responsible," Trump said. "They have to take charge." He also named business leaders and members of Congress (including Indiana Sens. Todd Young and Mike Braun) to the economic reopening task force. Young had described Trump's "tremendous leadership" earlier in the week. That was news to a number of CEOs as this task force got off to an uneven start. The Wall Street Journal reported that a number of those CEOs said universal testing was the key to reopening the economy. But Politico reported that testing had hit a "plateau" and was still not widely available, and Indiana Health Commissioner Kristina Box described it as a "Band-Aid" approach earlier in the week.

On Friday, President Trump took aim at the shutdown orders of states with Democratic governors. Those orders had begun to flatten the pandemic curve. "LIBERATE MICHIGAN!" he tweeted, and "LIBERATE MINNESOTA!" He added, like a sophomore, in all caps, "LIBERATE VIRGINIA, and save your great 2nd Amendment. It is under siege!" Trump essentially fanned opposition to stay-at-home orders in red states like Ohio and Indiana.

President Trump has yet to reveal a comprehensive testing plan, insisting the 4 million tests conducted are "more than any other country." While the COVID Tracking Project reported 3.6 million total tests across the country or 146,000 a day, for the U.S. economy to reopen, Harvard University said there should be between 500,000 to 700,000 daily.

By the end of last week — the same day U.S. deaths spiked to 4,591 and news reports revealed mass graves in the Bronx and a shutdown of the Smithfield pork plant in South Dakota that threatened the U.S. meat supply — President Trump said at his daily show (the coronavirus task force), "We're starting our life again. We're starting rejuvenation of our economy again." ❖

The most consequential decision in state history

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE — We now enter a fifth week with shelter-in-place orders. As the governor contemplates easing some restrictions, it would be useful to know whether or not these rules saved lives, and how much they altered our economy. Unfortunately, we must wait months, if not

years, for a clear answer. Those pondering such weighty matters don't have the luxury of time. Like all of us, they must make decisions based on the best information available at the time. That is how we should judge those decisions.



This column will assess Gov. Holcomb's shelter-in-place decisions based on what he and his staff could reasonably have understood about the coronavirus

one month or so ago. I won't argue the unknowable facts about the disease or the economy. I will ask whether this decision was warranted when made, and how wise it appears after a month of new information.

Early stage transmission of diseases relies on pretty basic math, and research can be guided by many good studies of earlier pandemics. A month ago, this math offered frightening mortality rates for Indiana if the disease were to go unchecked. Using early data on Indiana's known deaths, an exponential model would've estimated deaths rising to perhaps 3,000 within weeks. This estimate is right about in the middle range predicted by most epidemiologists. Worst case scenarios offered predictions of deaths that were tenfold higher. To place this in context, Indiana lost just over 1,500 men in the Vietnam war.

That stunning number is what every American governor heard six weeks ago. They also heard from epidemiologists that non-pharmacological interventions, like social distancing and shelter-in-place, could reduce deaths. That is why Gov. Holcomb, along with most U.S. governors, ordered significant restrictions, including shelter-in-place orders.

One way to judge these decisions is to update the death projections from actual death data. After full 30 days of restrictions deaths rose in to the low 100s, far short of the predicted 3,000 deaths. It is now abundantly clear that the curve flattened to the lower level of deaths. However, even with the lower death rate, a model of exponential increase in deaths suggests that without a "flattening" of the exponential curve, we'd have seen thousands more die.

To be certain, it is possible the restrictions were too tough or too loose. With 50 states trying 50 different strategies, we'll learn plenty in the coming months and years. But, the real policy question is whether the benefit

of these decisions outweighed the costs. We start by noting that after a full 30 days since our first Covid-19 death, the difference between the "exponential" death curve, and the flattened "polynomial" curve is more than 5,000 souls. That is, the shelter-in-place rules likely reduced short-run deaths by more than 5,000 people.

To weigh the lives against the economic loss, we have to place a dollar value on human life. The Environmental Protection Agency uses a value of \$9.22 million per life as an average. That figure might be too high considering that many who die are older, with fewer expected years of life before them. If we use the best available data, which is the reported age distribution of New Yorkers who have succumbed to the disease, we get a lower value of life, at roughly \$4.5 million on average.

These range of estimates suggest that flattening the curve in Indiana saved between \$22.5 billion and \$46 billion. These policies also imposed a cost on the economy, with lost jobs and commerce. However, much of the cost of this disease happened without any state government intervention. In two recent studies, my colleagues and I projected deep economic losses from the Covid-19 disease. Some of these losses are due to supply chain disruptions in China, some from the negative stock market shock, and some from a reduction in labor supply due to school closings. Our estimate of social distancing and shelter-in-place was a deep, short-term shock that reduced GDP in Indiana by roughly 12.8% in the 2nd Quarter, or about 3.2% for the year. This is among the higher annualized estimates we have seen.

Our estimate of total economic damage from the shelter-in-place rules is roughly \$12 billion. This is far, far below the lower estimate of lives saved of roughly \$22.5 billion. Thus, a conservative estimate is that the costs of Indiana's shelter-in-place restrictions exceed the benefits by \$10 billion to more than \$30 billion.

Doubtless many readers will find plenty to quibble with in my estimates. Perhaps my value of life estimates are too high, or my economic damage estimates too low. Some readers might be worried about the long-term erosion of civil rights, or are concerned that the pain is distributed unequally upon citizens. These are all reasonable matters to submit to the marketplace of ideas. Such a debate will be especially helpful to policymakers who are deciding how to wisely resume a more normal functioning economy.

Still, we should judge Gov. Holcomb's decisions on what he and his staff could reasonably have known in March and April as they made and extended the shelter-in-place orders. By that criterion, the shelter-in-place decisions will be judged by history as among the most appropriate and consequential in state history. It may well rank first. ❖

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.

Still no clear favorite in GOP 5th CD race

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Much as the crowded Republican 4th CD race produced a surprise nominee in 2018, now U.S. Rep. Jim Baird, the neighboring 5th CD seems ripe for a surprising result in the delayed June 2 primary that began without a clear frontrunner. Republican State Sen. Victoria Spartz loaned her campaign \$750,000 and has a \$546,663 to \$122,589 cash advantage over Beth Henderson.



Then there is former Marion County prosecutor Carl Brizzi, who probably leads the field in name ID after serving two terms in the state's largest media market.

Today, Sabato's Crystal Ball moved the 5th CD from "Safe" Republican to "Leans Republican."

In conversations with multiple 5th CD Republicans, Spartz (pictured), Henderson and Brizzi are the names surfacing the most; Spartz and Henderson because of their ability to self-fund, while Brizzi has high name ID. Others mention Indiana

Treasurer Kelly Mitchell, who has some conspicuous establishment support, though her fundraising with only \$55,425 in cash at the end of March drew pause among some Republicans we've talked with.

All of these "frontrunners" have flaws, beyond Mitchell's anemic cash balance and the fact that modern Statehouse constitutional office holders – beyond secretaries of state Evan Bayh and Todd Rokita – don't have much of a track record of advancing to federal office.

Henderson has been the only candidate with TV advertising exposure to this point, which is expected to raise her name ID, but she received a "cease and desist" letter from Rep. Susan Brooks for saying the incumbent had personally recruited her into the race. Henderson also voted as a Democrat in the 2008 primary and donated money to former Sen. Bayh.



Even though Spartz won the caucus to replace retiring Sen. Luke Kenley, she suspended her reelection bid in January after IMPD officer Scott Baldwin entered the race with the endorsements of Noblesville Mayor Chris Jensen, Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness, Hamilton County Commissioner Steve Dillinger and 17 Hamilton County elected officials. Spartz, who self-funded her campaign with a \$750,000 loan, has been endorsed by Club For Growth and is one of the candidates approved by Indiana Right to Life. The Ukraine native has vowed to take on "socialism" if she is elected to Congress.

Brizzi probably has high negatives after he was sanctioned by the Indiana Supreme Court's Disciplinary Commission in 2017 for violating prohibitions against representing a client in a case in which he had a personal interest. Brizzi has loaned his campaign \$60,000. Brizzi has also attempted to raise money off the coronavirus pandemic with an email subject line reading "China is to blame." His campaign issued emails about "Brizzi's Experience Investigating China." Brizzi explains, "My work as senior investigative counsel to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (has held) the Chinese government accountable for funneling millions of dollars of illegal campaign contributions to the Clinton White House in exchange for the transfer of America's most sensitive technology."

On the social conservative front, Noblesville Rep, Micah Beckwith had to deal with old tweets that were unearthed, suggesting a woman's place is in the "kitchen," asking whether "Kentucky Downs" was a birth defect, and that President Obama was born in Kenya.

The pecking order in the crowded GOP field beyond Sen. Spartz's \$750,000 and her \$546,663 to \$122,589 cash advantage over the second place Henderson (in FEC first quarter filings) includes:

- Henderson who posted \$324,824 for the cycle, and spent \$202,234. On Tuesday, she picked up the endorsement of Forest Lucas, CEO of Lucas Oil and a Carmel resident.

- Indiana Treasurer Kelly Mitchell, who raised \$281,708, spent \$226,283 with \$55,425 cash on hand.

- Dr. Chuck Dietzen, who posted \$269,739, spent \$161,924 and had \$107,815 cash on hand.

- Rev. Beckwith, who took in \$133,056, spent \$97,619 with \$35,437 cash on hand.

- Brizzi, who posted \$115,725, spent \$15,066 and had \$100,659 cash on hand. Of those funds, Brizzi loaned his campaign \$60,000.

- The other Republicans who filed FEC reports all raised less than \$20,000, while three other Republicans have not filed reports.

Democrat Christina Hale held a huge cash advantage lead over 2018 nominee Dee Thornton – \$591,046 to \$41,281 – after filing first quarter FEC reports. Hale has raised \$926,835 for the cycle, and spent \$335,789. Thorn-

ton raised \$60,973 and spent \$57,054. Two other Democrats, Andy Jacobs Jr., and Jennifer Christi, raised less than \$20,000.

Hale was endorsed this past week by the Planned Parenthood PAC. **HPI Republican Primary Horse Race Status:** Tossup. **Democratic Primary Horse Race Status:** Safe Hale.

Here are postings from Indiana's other eight CDs:

■ **1st CD:** Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. (D) has posted \$436,555 for the cycle, spent \$275,884, and had \$160,671 cash on hand; Gary attorney Sabina Haake has posted \$267,530, spent \$30,798 and had \$236,731 cash on hand; State Rep. Mara Candalaria Reardon has raised \$213,166, spent \$66,716 and had \$146,450 cash on hand; Jim Harper has posted \$187,873, spent \$106,459 and has \$81,324 cash on hand; and North Township Trustee Frank J. Mrvan has raised \$170,374, spent \$127,074 and had \$43,300. Retiring U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, who endorsed Mrvan, is sitting on \$218,951 cash on hand. Republican Mont Handley has posted \$30,038, spent \$7,604 and had \$22,465 cash on hand. No other Republican has posted more than \$20,000.

"We are in a good spot for the home stretch,"

McDermott told the NWI Times. "The extra month of campaigning will stretch the budget, but we are in a much better position than my opponents, and I will continue to run a very strong campaign through Election Day on June 2." Mrvan, likewise, said he's put off campaign fundraising in recent weeks to focus the duties of his current position due to the pandemic. "I understand the importance of fundraising, and I am proud of the incredible momentum in my campaign due to the thousands of individuals who have donated their financial resources, time, and tremendous enthusiasm," Mrvan said. **Democratic Primary Horse Race Status:** Likely McDermott.

Rep. Reardon was endorsed by U.S. Rep. Chuy Garcia of Chicago.

■ **2nd CD:** U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski (R) has raised \$1,445,529 for the cycle, spent \$593,723 and has \$969,838 cash on hand; Democrat Pat Hackett has posted \$281,093, spent \$153,787 and had \$128,504 cash on hand.

■ **3rd CD,** U.S. Rep. Jim Banks (R) holds a \$260,746-to-\$28,290 cash on hand advantage over primary challenger Chris Magiera. Banks has raised \$702,717 for the cycle and spent \$453,480. Magiera raised \$240,495 and has spent \$212,205. Republican Primary Horse Race



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Status: Safe Banks.

■ **4th CD:** U.S. Rep. Jim Baird has posted \$209,212, spent \$129,059 and has \$189,955. No Democrat has filed FEC reports,

■ **6th CD:** U.S. Rep. Greg Pence has posted \$1,575,802, spent \$1,565,492 and had \$210,836. No Democrat had made a FEC first quarter filing.

■ **7th CD:** U.S Rep, Andre Carson (D) has raised \$603,397, spent \$516,351 and had \$964,543 cash on hand. No Republican has raised more than \$10,000.

■ **8th CD:** U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon (R) has posted \$586,903, spent \$636,220 and has \$184,914 cash on hand. Democrat Thomasina Marsili posted \$20,028, spent \$16,494 and had \$3,535 cash on hand.

■ **9th CD:** U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth has posted \$792,039, spent \$268,772 and had \$530,592 cash on hand. Democrat Andy Ruff was the only Democrat to post more than \$10,000. The former Bloomington councilman posted \$14,900.

Governor

Holcomb has \$7M money lead

Presumptive Democratic gubernatorial nominee Woody Myers reported raising just \$527,742 on his first quarter report, making little headway against Gov. Eric Holcomb, who reported an ending first quarter balance of \$7,126,831. Myers ended the first quarter with \$158,930 cash on hand.

The Eric Holcomb for Indiana Committee reported raising \$391,473 during the first quarter and had expenditures of \$517,165. State law prohibits the governor from fundraising while the General Assembly is in session, which ended in the second week of March. Gov. Holcomb imposed a stay at home order on March 17 that prohibited large gatherings, and that has impacted campaign fundraising across gubernatorial, constitutional offices, congressional and legislative campaigns.

Dr. Myers, the former Indiana health commissioner, blamed the pandemic for the lack of funds. "The world changed significantly during this fundraising cycle because of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Myers. "As a physician and former state health commissioner, I understood early on what this virus would mean for Indiana – both from a health and an economic standpoint. I directed my team to begin looking for solutions to control the crisis and find a map out of the financial fallout before state leaders fully grasped what was coming."

Myers said he cancelled fundraisers and pivoted from raising money to focusing solely on providing information. "I've had numerous virtual education events and town halls to keep Hoosiers informed about what a Myers Administration would do during this difficult time and to answer public questions about the coronavirus," Myer said. "Real leaders put aside their personal agendas to focus on the public good. In this case, that meant turning away from fundraising toward providing medically-accurate,

solution-based information. In spite of the most challenging public health crisis of our time, many donors to our campaign have remained both steadfast and generous - and, for that, I am enormously grateful."

Myers has loaned his campaign \$153,959. His campaign reported expenditures of \$367,226. The pandemic forced the Indiana Democratic Party to move its June 13 state convention to a virtual online event.

Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer, who doubles as Holcomb's campaign manager, told HPI, "From our standpoint, our focus has not been on fundraising or even campaigning over the past 40 days. My main reaction is thankfulness that our supporters allowed us to be in this position that unexpected events haven't derailed our campaign. We haven't had to let go any of our staff. I feel the governor is in a very strong position.

Big donors for the Holcomb campaign include Grant Verstandig (\$50,000), Mark Miles (\$10,000), Michael Browning (\$25,000), Douglas Rose (\$12,500), Stephen Simon (\$10,000), Matthew Miller (\$10,000) and Republican National Committeeman John Hammond III (\$5,000).

The Friends of Suzanne Crouch reported \$58,850 in contributions during the first quarter and had an ending balance of \$356,036.

Myers issues Earth Day plan

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Dr. Woody Myers released a plan in observance of Earth Day that sounds the alarm on climate change, even while we are in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.


"Hoosiers are suffering from a climate pandemic they can't yet fully see, but whose effects we already feel," said Myers. "We must take the lessons learned by our failed response to coronavirus and immediately apply them to tackle climate change in order to save our environment and improve Hoosier health before it's too late. The time for genuine leadership on this issue is now."

Myers pledged to take a number of steps to improve the environment as governor, including:

- Establish a goal to increase the number of

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forest acres from five million to 7.5 million over 10 years to offset carbon emissions from fossil fuels.

- Restore the Division of Forestry budget back to 2010 funding levels that will allow better direct reforestation efforts and appropriate staffing.
- Strengthen the Conservation and Reserve Program to encourage farmers to convert erodible and less farmable land to more responsible vegetation cover.
- Speed retirement of coal plants, while helping Hoosiers working in the industry find real alternatives.
- Update Indiana's renewable energy standards

Shake up in GOP attorney general race

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – There were rumblings that Republican attorney general candidate Adam Krupp had made past donations to Democrats. On Tuesday morning, Krupp abruptly exited the race and endorsed Decatur County Prosecutor Nate Harter (pictured). That could set up a fascinating convention battle with Attorney General Curtis Hill, who in the past had been a close friend of Harter.

And the convention floor fight – if it indeed it physically happens on June 20 despite the coronavirus pandemic – could include former secretary of state and congressman Todd Rokita, who won a spirited four-ballot contest for secretary of state in 2002.

Krupp, the former Indiana Department of Revenue commissioner, kicked off this sequence by saying, "I entered this race to ensure that we bring strong and new leadership to the office of attorney general. I believe the person to do that is Decatur County Prosecutor Nate Harter. Nate is a talented lawyer and a strong conservative with a track record of integrity. He has a passion for creating a positive organizational culture. He is a servant leader in his community."

Krupp added of the rumor that he had contributed by Barack Obama's 2008 Democratic presidential campaign, "The claim is simple, true, but without context. Over 12 years ago, as a young lawyer I gave the campaign of Barack Obama \$500. At the time I didn't consider myself to be political. At the request of a senior colleague, I attended an event with a \$250 check in hand. I was told my contribution was not large enough, so I wrote a second check for \$250. Years later, when a close and longtime friend was running for office and asked for a contribution,



and set a new clean energy goal, renewing our commitment to a cleaner future.

- Establish more renewable energy rebates, grants, and credits to boost investment in the clean energy industry and create high-paying jobs.
- Provide incentives to retrofit our brownfields and our abandoned mined land for solar farms and install solar panels on the rooftops of state government buildings to advance our solar industry and increase employment opportunities. ❖

I obliged."

After Krupp's exit, Harter quickly entered the race, saying, "I am running for attorney general because Hoosiers deserve a tested and proven prosecutor who will be tough on crime, support law enforcement, protect victims, and defend our conservative core values in words and deeds," Harter said. As a committed grassroots conservative, I know that in these perilous times, the attorney general has a crucial role as the tip of the spear – or the last line of defense against big government and the radical left."

Seeking the Democratic nomination at the party's virtual convention on June 13 are State Sen. Karen Tallian and former two-term Evansville mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel.

Attorney General Hill still faces an Indiana Supreme Court Disciplinary Commission sanction. In February, hearing officer and former justice Myra Selby recommended a 60-day license suspension for Hill. The Indiana Constitution requires the attorney general to be a licensed lawyer. Selby said Hill's conduct was "offense, invasive, damaging and embarrassing" to the four alleged victims, Rep. Mara Candelaria Reardon, and legislative staffers Gabrielle Brock, Niki DaSilva and Samantha Lozano at a 2018 sine die party. Selby also said Hill offered no assurance he won't repeat his behavior and that he "appears more concerned with his political and professional reputation than with addressing the charges."

The Supreme Court could accept Selby's recommendation, or take other action. Gov. Eric Holcomb, Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, the four legislative caucus leaders and U.S. Sen. Mike Braun all called on Hill to resign in July 2018.

But legislation that would "clarify" whether a license suspension for Hill would disqualify him from office died in the final hours of the General Assembly in March, and Indiana Code as well as the constitution gives little guidance on whether a suspension would disqualify Hill from office. If Hill is removed by the Supreme Court, it would almost certainly result in further legal action.

The timing of the Supreme Court's decision could come in the weeks before the June 20 Republican Convention, still slated to physically occur in Indianapolis despite

the coronavirus pandemic.

Gov. Holcomb has not weighed in on the attorney general's race and is not expected to, as one ally put it, "He's spending 150% of his time on the pandemic response."

The perception is that while Hill has faced damnation in and around the Indiana Statehouse, he still remains popular across much of Indiana. Hill, the only elected African-American Republican official at the Statehouse, has remained active as an official in anti-abortion

causes, presiding this past winter over the funeral of more than 2,000 fetal remains found at the Illinois home of the late Dr. Ulrich Klopfer.

At the 2018 Indiana Republican Convention in Evansville, some on the social conservative flank had urged Hill to challenge Gov. Holcomb this cycle after he and Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer backed a platform plank that would have widened the definition of marriage, which was easily defeated on the convention floor. **HPI Convention Horse Race Status:** Leans Hill.

Confused by COVID-19? You should be

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Confused by all the coronavirus models as the daily count of cases and deaths is analyzed? You should be. It's confusing, especially when changing projections often are misunderstood or analyzed politically rather than scientifically.



Q. Will we ever know how many people died from the coronavirus in Indiana or the nation or the world?

A. No.

Q. Don't all those daily counts accurately show how many people have been infected and how many died?

A. They do not. It's not "fake news" or terrible counting. The totals are the best that can

be compiled under the circumstances. But they aren't precise. There's agreement that actual cases and deaths are far higher than on those daily counts.

Q. Why?

A. One example cited nationally was concern of a coroner in Indiana, Joani Shields from Monroe County, that a man who died of "pneumonia" in early March was a victim of the virus. She requested a test, but state health officials denied it because testing was limited. Lack of testing resulted in similar situations all around the country. Deaths in nursing homes from the virus are regarded as way under-reported.

Q. Is the number of people infected as much under-reported as deaths?

A. Even more so. Many people with less severe cases have never been tested or listed. Some even with more severe cases aren't counted because they fought off the disease at home, finding that safer than standing in long lines for tests or hospitalization in places like New York. Some estimates are that the real number could be as much as 10 times higher. Testing to find out still lags.

Q. Were those models of what would happen, like

that widely cited Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) model, really way off?

A. They may not have been, but they certainly have changed. What's not understood is that these models are not designed to predict the future months ahead but to tell what the future could look like if certain things do or don't happen. Things change. New data is obtained. And the models change to reflect the new situation.

Q. Don't some conspiracy theorists claim those earlier IHME models that led to shutting down much of the nation were designed to tank the economy and hurt President Trump?

A. Sure. They, like the president, insist he had an early and perfect response. In terms of politicizing the models, critics of the president could claim now that a new IHME model showing no more coronavirus deaths after June 21 is a plot to help the president.

Q. But how could the same model now forecast 60,000 deaths after citing 100,000 or more not that long ago?

A. The model is like an opinion poll on an election. Each provides a snapshot on the situation at the time taken. Both are based on data and assumptions. Data is never perfect. Lack of testing skews coronavirus data. Poll data has a mathematical margin of error. Initial assumptions about virus spread changed with tough preventative action, just as polling assumptions about voter reaction change as new issues emerge. As Dr. Deborah Birx repeatedly stresses, the lower death projections are because of the remarkable way Americans have followed social distancing and stay-at-home guidelines.

Q. Will the newest model be accurate?

A. Maybe. Let's hope so. But by June, there will be more data and perhaps new assumptions. The model projecting a possible halt in deaths in June is based on assumptions that social distancing will be followed until the end of May and aggressive measures for testing and contact tracing will be in place.

Q. Will they?

A. We will see. And the model will reflect what happens. ❖

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

Draconian sanctions for litterers needed

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — Spring is here. Flowers are popping up, leaves are popping out, but neighbors are not popping in. The COVID19 virus has seen to that.



Spring is a time for clean-up. Recently the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) reminded motorists that crews would be on the highways picking up litter again.

Yes, again. Every year our state and local highway departments are cleaning up after citizens who use our roadways as trash cans. You and I know it's against the law in every state to litter the roads. But those laws are not strong enough and the public danger not great enough to enforce them vigorously.

Let's be clear, we're talking about litter, not debris. Most litter is the small stuff – the candy wrapper, the beer can, the plastic bag, the cash register receipt, the cigarette stub. Some litter is the garbage bag, the embarrassing piece of clothing you dare not take home, or other evidence of misconduct.

Debris is different, as I understand it. Debris is what's left on the road after a storm or an accident. It's a tree or its limbs, it's the blown tire, the torn fender, the shattered glass, the ladder that fell off a pickup, the household goods off the top of a car moving a family from here to there.

Litter is an unsightly nuisance capable of clogging drains and causing dangerous flooded areas. Debris is an impediment to safety leading to serious accidents. Litter reminds us of how inconsiderate and uncivilized our neighbors can be. Debris confirms the persistent element of uncertainty in our lives.

INDOT reports spending about \$8 million a year to clear litter and debris from our interstates, our federal highways, and our state roads. Counties, cities, and towns take care of the roads they maintain, as best they can. Upfront, \$8 million is not a lot of money in the context of INDOT's \$2.6 billion budget. Yet \$8 million is not chump change. What else could that money buy to improve transportation services in this state?

To be clear, the 8.6 tons (910,000 bags) of litter collected in 2019 were not the result of misbehavior by Hoosier drivers alone. We are a state with heavy interstate travel and there is no reason to believe that Hoosiers are any more or less law-abiding when it comes to throwing things out of car or truck windows.

In my more draconian mood, I would recommend

the penalties for littering, running red lights, and other vehicular misbehavior be punishment, not by fines or imprisonment, but by impoundment of the vehicle as well as suspension of the license of the offender.

Littering is just another example of our national malady: Disrespect for the law stemming from an absence of a responsible sense of community. ❖

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



Health experts fight a tug-o-war

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News Bureau

ANDERSON — Indiana Congressman Trey Hollingsworth created quite a stir with his comments on the current pandemic.

Speaking to talk show host Tony Katz on Indianapolis radio station WIBC, Hollingsworth said the nation's leaders needed to "put on our big boy and big girl pants" and make some tough choices.

"It is always the American government's position

to say, in the choice between the loss of our way of life as Americans and the loss of life, of American lives, we have to always choose the latter," he said.

Hollingsworth, a Republican seeking his third term, soon found himself the target of ridicule on social media.

"Guess what?" one Twitter user replied. "If we are dead, we can't return to work."



In an interview with The Indianapolis Star, Hollingsworth said his remarks had been misconstrued. "What I got back was Trey wants people to die," he said. "I never said that, and it's not true."

What is true, he said, is that there will never be a perfect time to lift the current restrictions. "The reality of past pandemics is no one is going to blow a whistle and say it's over," he told The Star. "There will continue to not be a zero risk."

Hollingsworth is not alone in his sentiments.

Stephen Moore of Freedom Works and the Heritage Foundation is a member of President Donald J. Trump's economic recovery task force. He appeared on

the National Public Radio program "1A" to talk about the importance of reopening the economy as soon as possible.

"We've got to get this economy opened up last week," he said. "We should have done this a week or two ago because the economic carnage is so, so damaging and will last so long."

He predicts a terrible summer. "It's gonna be like the Great Depression," he said. Moore called shutting down the economy "one of the worst decisions this country has ever made."

"I think the economic costs ... the ruination of people's lives is orders of magnitude larger than the risk of the virus," he said. "I mean we're going to see hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people die, frankly. ... We're going to see millions of businesses fail."

On the other side of the argument are people like Howard Markel of the University of Michigan Center for the History of Medicine. He's a trained physician and historian who helped to coin the term "flattening the curve."

There is no doubt that social distancing and other measures have saved lives, Markel told a writer for the university's Michigan Health Lab. The restrictions have also bought time, he said, for researchers to seek treatments

and develop vaccines, and for public health agencies and hospitals to build up the testing and treatment capacity that must be in place for any "return to normal."

Markel is worried about what will happen, though, if the arguments put forward by guys like Hollingsworth and Moore carry the day. "In every pandemic, there's a tug of war," he said. "On one end, there are the economic and business interests, and on the other end is the public's health."

It's predictable, he said, that citizens will grow restless and protest to their leaders to begin lifting the sanctions prematurely, and if those leaders give in, "another rise in cases invariably occurs." That second peak, he said, can be even worse than the first.

"This creates a situation where you have endured shelter-in-place sanctions and crippled the economy for nothing," he said. Markel knows what he's talking about. He has studied this issue. Maybe we ought to listen to him.

❖

Kelly Hawes is a columnist for CNHI News Indiana. He can be reached at kelly.hawes@indianamedia-group.com. Find him on Twitter @Kelly_Hawes.

Democratic House generic lead stable

By **KYLE KONDIK**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – President Trump's approval rating is not the only big-picture national indicator that has not changed much over the course of his presidency.

The national House generic ballot has also been very consistent for the three-plus years he's been in the White House.

Democrats have led almost every single one of the nearly 400

House generic ballot national polls released since Trump took office, as compiled in the 2018 and 2020 RealClearPolitics averages.

The lion's share of these polls, about 310, were released during the 2018 cycle, while close to 90 have come out in this cycle. Because the House is less of a focus in this year's presidential election cycle, it's natural that the generic ballot question is being asked less.

Indiana's 5th CD is listed as "Leans" Republican.

The wording from different pollsters varies, but the generic ballot question usually asks whether a respondent plans to vote for a Democrat or a Republican in their local House of Representatives election.

Out of 309 polls included in the 2018 database, 305 showed Democratic leads; three were tied and another

showed a Republican lead of one point. Out of 88 polls this cycle, 87 have shown a Democratic lead, and one has shown a tie. The current RealClearPolitics average shows a Democratic lead of 7.4 points, almost exactly the same as its final average in 2018.

According to FiveThirtyEight's averages in both 2018 and 2020, the Democratic lead has been in the mid-to-high single digits for almost all of the last three years (the site's 2018 average dates back to April 2017). You can see the immense stability at the links. FiveThirtyEight models the results somewhat, which can smooth

out changes; RealClearPolitics just uses a straight average and is thus more sensitive to change. The RealClearPolitics average generally showed Democratic leads similar to FiveThirtyEight in

the 2018 cycle, albeit with more volatility; it hasn't computed a running average over time this cycle.

One bit of caution about the numbers is that the vast majority of the generic ballot polls taken this cycle have been by just two pollsters: Economist/YouGov and Politico/Morning Consult, both of which conduct their polls online as opposed to making live calls to telephones (old-school polling professionals sometimes prefer the latter method, although we don't see much reason to quibble with these two pollsters' findings).

Of the 26 generic ballot surveys with field dates in 2020 included in the RealClearPolitics database, 22 of them were conducted by one of these two pollsters.

That said, pollsters other than those two so far



this year found basically the same results as Politico/Morning Consult and Economist/YouGov have found recently.

The most recent surveys from those two pollsters showed Democratic leads of five and eight points, respectively; the four surveys released by the others so far this year have shown Democratic leads of six, eight, nine, and nine points.

FiveThirtyEight includes some additional polls that RealClearPolitics does not, but those surveys tell much the same story as the others.

What does this mean?

It's reasonable to continue to believe that Democrats have a lead on the House generic ballot at this time, and that this lead is more than just a few points. This suggests a political environment that leans at least a bit toward the Democrats. That Joe Biden also leads Donald Trump nationally by about half a dozen points on average – in a greater number of polls conducted by a more diverse collection of pollsters – is also an indicator of this kind of political environment.

In an era where presidential and down-ballot voting is more aligned than it was a few decades ago, one might expect the generic ballot and the presidential polling to look relatively similar.

It is worth noting that many of the districts that will decide the House majority vote to the right of the nation as a whole. The median House district based on 2016 presidential performance is FL-25, held by Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R). Donald Trump won FL-25 by about two points while losing the national popular vote by two points, so the median district is about four points to the right of the nation.

In other words, the House map is similar to the Electoral College in the sense that it favors Republicans to some degree: Wisconsin, which effectively provided Trump

Year	Final RCP generic ballot average	Actual House popular vote differential	Net change in seats	House elected
2002	R +1.7	R +4.6	R +7	229-206 R
2004	Tie	R +2.6	R +3	232-203 R
2006	D +11.5	D +6.4	D +30	233-202 D
2008	D +9.0	D +10.6	D +24	257-178 D
2010	R +9.4	R +6.6	R +64	242-193 R
2012	R +0.2	D +1.4	D +8	234-201 R
2014	R +2.4	R +5.1	R +13	247-188 R
2016	D +0.6	R +0.9	D +6	241-194 R
2018	D +7.3	D +8.6	D +41	235-200 D

with his decisive electoral votes in 2016, voted about three points to the right of the nation.

So just as most analysts will not see a Biden lead of just a few points in national polling as sufficiently large enough to translate into an actual victory this fall, so too might a Democratic House generic ballot advantage of just a few points not be big enough to translate into a retained majority.

But this is not really an exact science: There are plenty of candidates in both parties who will run both ahead of and behind what one might expect in a district based on just the district characteristics and the generic ballot.

It may be better to view the generic ballot as more of just a generalized signal of voter intent: Does the public, writ large, want to see a change in party control of the House or not?

When the House has changed hands the last three times (2006, 2010, and 2018), the generic ballot polling showed a pronounced edge for the party that would go on to flip the House. This was a signal: The incumbent majority party was in trouble. ❖



Jacki Deason, Real Clear Politics: When President Trump expressed concerns about the shutdown, his critics presented a false choice between mitigating deaths and the economy. In reality, a great number of the most vulnerable American lives will be lost from economic shutdown. A prolonged shutdown could bring tens of thousands of deaths through spikes in rates of suicide, heart attack, missed cancer diagnoses, domestic violence deaths, substance abuse, and more. We have evidence that these deaths are coming, and the shutdown is only a month old. A suicide spike is almost certain. One study in Taiwan indicated a 10% increase in the unemployment rate yielded approximately 30,000 suicides annually. Another global study linked the 2008 recession to a 20% to 30% increase in the relative risk of suicides. We already had a suicide epidemic in this country before the virus, with nearly 50,000 Americans taking their own lives, and an additional estimated 1.4 million attempting to do so, in 2018 alone. The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis estimates over 52 million will be laid off just by the second quarter of 2020, for a 32.1% unemployment rate, far higher than Great Depression estimates of 20% to 25% unemployment. Should these predictions materialize, and if history can be our guide, we are going to lose tens of thousands of American lives to suicide ... or more, if these impacts of a three-month shutdown were extended to 12-18 months of shutdown.



After only a few weeks of lockdown, calls to crisis hotlines increased from 1,000 to 25,000 a day in Indiana and 8,900% (Los Angeles), with the latter reporting that one in five calls express "suicidal desire." Expect an increase in heart attacks, too. Disruption-related stress attacks the heart. The National Institutes of Health reported that just the one-hour, fully anticipated Daylight Savings Time change correlates with a 24% increase in daily acute myocardial infarction ("AMI" or "heart attack"). What will be the increase in heart attacks when the disruption to our lives is not just one hour, but instead 12 to 18 months? As "elective" routine cancer screenings are delayed, we should expect missed cancer diagnoses and an increase in cancer deaths. Cancers with routine screening include breast (200,000-300,000 new cases annually), colorectal (140,000 new cases), prostate (200-300,000 new cases), melanoma (96,000 new cases) and cervical (12,000 new cases).

Domestic violence spikes in times of home confinement. After only one week of "shelter-in-place," women's shelters in the Dallas-Fort Worth region were fielding an increase in "extremely violent calls that are COVID-19 related," according to Paige Flink, CEO of The Family Place. Running out of space, they diverted victims from shelters to hotels. Also, as early as March 22, north Texas saw a spike in "severe" child abuse cases – including death. "We knew an increase in abuse was going to occur, but this happened faster than we imagined," said Christi Thornhill, director of the Trauma Program at Cook

Children's Hospital. ". . . this happened in a week." For each of the above causes of death, the death toll would surely mount, depending on severity and duration of the economic lockdown. Over 12-18 months, could deaths reach hundreds of thousands? Conversely, would COVID-19 deaths reach original projections if we end the lockdown? No. Those estimates assumed we did nothing. Americans are now too educated and concerned to not take precautions. For example, a new Seton Hall poll shows that 72% of Americans have said they will not attend a sporting event until a coronavirus vaccine is developed. Trust Americans to make caring and smart decisions. ❖

David Leonhardt, New York Times:

1. Every day for the past two weeks, another 25,000 or so Americans have been diagnosed with the coronavirus. It's great news that number is no longer growing, but it's barely started to fall. **2.** Countries that have succeeded in containing the virus made much more progress in reducing the number of new cases before reopening. "China did not allow Wuhan, Nanjing or other cities to reopen until intensive surveillance found zero new cases for 14 straight days, the virus's incubation period," as The Times's Donald McNeil writes. **3.** The vast majority of the American population — perhaps about 90% — has not yet been exposed to the virus. So there is tremendous potential for outbreaks worse than any we have experienced so far. **4.** The testing program in the United States remains terribly flawed. About a month ago, the Trump administration promised 27 million tests would be available by the end of March. Late April is now approaching, and yet only about 4 million tests have been conducted. The current pace of testing needs to triple before the country can safely reopen, Harvard researchers estimate. **5.** We also haven't fixed our shortages of protective equipment for health care workers. As a recent paper from the conservative-leaning Mercatus Center puts it: "Demand has rapidly outstripped supply as the urgent need for personal protective equipment (PPE) such as surgical masks, respirators, gloves, and gowns, as well as for ventilators, continues to grow apace with the COVID-19 global pandemic." **6.** Most places in the United States don't yet have a plan for aggressive contact tracing — the process of tracking people who may have been exposed to the virus. "Only a few states are recruiting and training the army of public health workers who will be needed to track, trace and isolate anyone exposed to the coronavirus," Politico's Joanne Kenen wrote. This kind of tracing has been vital to reducing the virus's spread in South Korea and elsewhere. **7.** The same goes for quarantining: We don't yet have anything approaching a full plan. A recent Times Op-Ed, by the public health experts Harvey Fineberg, Jim Yong Kim and Jordan Shlain, explains. **The bottom line:** If the country reopened now, we would probably end up in lockdown again soon, while also needlessly increasing the death toll from the virus. ❖

Swab shortage slows state testing

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana continues to struggle with increasing testing for COVID-19, largely because it can't find the swabs needed to take a specimen from a person (Kelly, [Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). "Yes, we have tried to buy swabs, but do I know how many swabs we have bought directly? I cannot tell you," State Health Commissioner Dr. Kris Box said Wednesday. "Because again the federal government has taken over the supply of a lot of this. It's not a question of money. I have plenty of money. If I can find them, I buy them and will buy them." Testing dominated Wednesday's briefing as the state is nowhere near hitting a goal capacity of 6,300 tests a day. Many days it is half that or sometimes less. Box said tests consist of both swabs and viral transport media. The latter has been provided by Eli Lilly and a subsidiary of Cook Group. But nasopharyngeal swabs are hard to find.



Pence coming to Kokomo next week

WASHINGTON — Vice President Mike Pence is coming to Indiana next week to tour a General Motors plant in Kokomo (IBJ). GM began producing ventilators at the plant April 14 to help hospitals across the country respond to the surge in COVID-19 patients. Pence, the former governor of Indiana, is scheduled to visit the facility on April 30. GM recently signed a nearly \$490 million contract with the federal government to produce 30,000 breathing machines.

Bankers Assn. advise on PPP loans

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Bankers Association on Wednesday urged small businesses that would like

to apply for funds from the second round of the Paycheck Protection Program to contact their banks now (IBJ). New legislation that passed the U.S. Senate on Tuesday and is expected to pass the House on Thursday is slated to inject \$331 billion into the small-business payroll loan program that ran out of money last week. The IBA said upcoming funds are anticipated to run out more quickly than initial funding, which was depleted within two weeks.

AP Poll shows most back restrictions

WASHINGTON — Americans remain overwhelmingly in favor of stay-at-home orders and other efforts to slow the spread of the coronavirus, a new survey finds, even as small pockets of attention-grabbing protests demanding the lifting of such restrictions emerge nationwide. The survey from the [Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#) also finds that a majority of Americans say it won't be safe to lift social distancing guidelines anytime soon, running counter to the choice of a handful of governors who have announced plans to ease within days the public health efforts that have upended daily life and roiled the global economy. Only 12% of Americans say the measures where they live go too far. About twice as many people, 26%, believe the limits don't go far enough. The majority of Americans — 61% — feel the steps taken by government officials to prevent infections of COVID-19 in their area are about right.

Biden leads in 'blue wall' states

INDIANAPOLIS — Republican President Donald Trump trails Democrat Joe Biden among registered voters in three Midwestern battleground states that he narrowly carried in 2016 and are seen as crucial to winning November's election, according to an Ipsos public opinion poll conducted exclusively for Reuters.

The poll, which ran from April 15-20 in Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, showed 45% of registered voters said they would support Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee, while 39% said they would support Trump. It also found that Biden, vice president under Trump's predecessor Barack Obama, has an advantage of 3 percentage points among registered voters in Wisconsin, 6 points in Pennsylvania and 8 points in Michigan.

U.S. jobless grows to 4.4 million

WASHINGTON — More than 4.4 million Americans filed their first claims for unemployment insurance last week as the U.S. economy bleeds jobs under a lockdown imposed to slow the coronavirus pandemic, the Labor Department reported Thursday ([The Hill](#)). Between April 12 and 18, 4,427,000 million Americans applied for jobless benefits for the first time, falling by roughly 8,000 from a revised total of 5,237,000 jobless claims in the prior week. Claims for jobless benefits have shattered historic highs in the five weeks since the U.S. began to feel the economic devastation social distancing measures adopted to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Crouch announces 13 rural grants

INDIANAPOLIS ([WLF1](#)) — Some local governments are getting a share of COVID-19 grant funds from the state. Indiana Lieutenant Governor Suzanne Crouch says the Office of Community and Rural Affairs launched the program to ease the burden on smaller communities. Thirteen rural Hoosier communities will receive more than \$1.96 million in federal grant funding. "After setting up weekly calls with our local elected officials and Main Street organizations, I was able to hear how quickly we needed to provide funding to assist with rising medical needs and to save jobs and small businesses," said Crouch.