

Trump-Biden race in decisive stage

Nominees spar over safety; president on race; challenger on COVID

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – To win this fall's election, President Trump will want you to feel unsafe from urban strife. Think of downtown Indianapolis last spring at the apex of the George Floyd protests that killed one person and shattered dozens of massive glass panes.

For Democrat Joe Biden to win the presidency, he must convince enough voters in key states that COVID-19 and the corresponding economic collapse present a far greater danger.

While many observers believed the die was cast in



May and June as the United States struggled with the pandemic and economic fallout, this campaign's vital contours

Continued on page 3

A new 'red' menace

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – First there was the "Red Scare" of the 1920s and 1950s thanks to Lenin, Stalin and those crazy Bolsheviks. Next came Mitch Daniels' fiscal "Red Menace" of 2010. And then there was Walder Frey's "Red Wedding" massacre at Riverrun in the HBO series "Game of Thrones" just a few years ago.

Now we are expecting to have the "Red Mirage" on Election Night, Nov. 3.

That's the warning of Hawkfish CEO Josh Mendelsohn, a Democrat consultant. "We are sounding an alarm and saying that this is a very real possibility, that the data is going to show on election night an incredible victory for Donald Trump," he said.



"Everyone wants to see football return, but that's a Big Ten decision and I will stay in my lane."

- Gov. Eric Holcomb, asked about President Trump's call to Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren about resuming the football season this fall.



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
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



"When every legitimate vote is tallied and we get to that final day, which will be some day after Election Day, it will in fact show that what happened on election night was exactly that, a mirage."

With President Trump consistently warning of a "rigged election" fueled by a "cheating" electorate using "corrupt" vote by mail (with zero proof), what will be the ramifications of a delayed final tally on Nov. 4 and the days and weeks beyond?

Mendelsohn told "Axios on HBO" that "way more Democrats" will vote by mail than Republicans, due to fears of the coronavirus, and it will take days if not weeks to tally these. This means Trump, thanks to Republicans doing almost all of their voting in person, could hold big Electoral College and popular vote leads on election night.



Axios asks: Imagine America, with its polarization and misinformation, if the vote tally swings wildly toward Joe Biden and Trump loses days later as the mail ballots are counted?

One can easily fathom how President Trump will react. And Hillary Clinton has advised Biden not to "concede" on Election Night.

There's been a great deal of speculation about a "constitutional crisis" ranging from the Mueller Russia probe to Trump's own talk that he deserves a third term, to his former fixer Michael Cohen's warning that he will never leave office on his own due to the potential criminal liabilities he might face from the Southern District of New York. Congressional Democrats pressed Pentagon brass this past week if they would intervene should Trump refuse to leave the Oval Office.

"The Constitution and laws of the U.S. and the states establish procedures for carrying out elections, and for resolving disputes over the outcome of elections ... I do not see the

U.S. military as part of this process," Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark Milley said in a letter released on Friday responding to questions from two members of the House Armed Services Committee. "In the event of a dispute over some aspect of the elections, by law U.S. courts and the U.S. Congress are required to resolve any disputes, not the U.S. military. I believe deeply in the principle of an apolitical U.S. military."

There's a forecast that is predicting that up to 1.8 million Hoosiers will vote by mail via absentee ballot for the coming general election.

This comes during a pandemic that has stricken more than 90,000 of us in cases documented by the Indiana State Board of Health and killed more than 3,000 Hoosiers.

While Gov. Eric Holcomb and Secretary of State Connie Lawson

signed off on expanded, no-excuse absentee voting for the pandemic-delayed June 2 primary election, the state is sticking to its rules for the general. "I want to make it clear that we are going forward with a normal election process here in Indiana," said Lawson, who is not granting press interviews due to litigation. "We will not be making changes like we did in the primary since the stay-at-home order has been lifted."

Secretary Lawson served on Trump's Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, which was formed in the spring of 2017 and disbanded less than a year later, finding zero evidence of election fraud of any kind. On Wednesday in North Carolina, President Trump actually suggested supporters vote twice to test the system (which would be a felony crime).

I view Indiana absentee voting rules similar to the old "out of state" fireworks laws. Remember those? When you bought a bag of

bottle rockets or firecrackers, you had to sign a piece of paper saying you would take them to another state before firing them off (wink-wink).

Current absentee ballot rules give voters wide variance, whether it's being age 65, you have a disability, lack transportation to the polls, you are following a "religious discipline," you have to work or travel on Election Day, you're a "serious sex offender" or in the witness protection program. As long as you don't say you can't vote because you're washing your hair on Nov. 3, the state is prepared to give you an absentee ballot.

And many folks are doing so, whether you're from a Republican county like Hamilton or Bartholomew, or a Democratic county like Marion. All are reporting a significant increase in absentee requests. Bartholomew County Clerk Jay Phelps told the Columbus Republic that his office is already being "overwhelmed" with absentee requests.

Lawson said 99,146 absentee ballots have been sought for the general election as of last Wednesday, compared to 53,818 for the entire 2016 election. "We still expect an influx of absentee vote-by-mail ballots. We have a forecast that predicts that between 1.3 million and 1.8 million will vote absentee by mail this general election," she said. "We are working with the Post Office to ensure that ballots are prioritized by the Postal Service and are received in a timely manner. The Post Office is helping coun-

ties design envelopes so mail sorters or carriers can easily identify election mail and prioritize its delivery to voters and to the counties when a voter returns a ballot."

While there has been talk of the new postmaster general "sabotaging" the election by removing dozens of mail sorters, the United State Postal Service handles more volume leading up to Mother's Day than it does during an election. "There are cases where trucks may run half empty or half full, and then instead of running an extra truck like we would have traditionally have done, the mail sits until the next day," Doug Brown, Indiana State president of the American Postal Workers Union, told WRTV's Kara Kenney.

Lawson urged Hoosiers to request absentee ballots by Oct. 19 and return them by Oct. 27. But, she added, "My sage advice would be don't wait. If you know you're going to vote by mail, apply today."

So there you go. In an election that President Trump and Democratic nominee Joe Biden are saying is for the "soul of America" and, perhaps, the most important one in history, there are options – even here in Indiana – to vote by mail.

There are also potential hysterics just over the horizon if results are delayed. As Gen. Milley suggested, it's going to be vitally important for public stewards such as Sec. Lawson and her counterparts in the 49 other states and D.C. to help keep a proper perspective on this. ❖

President, from page 1

are being shaped as we speak as Trump and Biden seek to steer these differing narratives. How this race evolves (or de-evolves) over the next two weeks will have profound implications for the next decade. And just after this sequence, early voting begins, much of it by mail.

The protests that have transpired in Minneapolis, Portland and now Kenosha – which has become Ground Zero for the Trump-Biden showdown – are creating the blaring headlines this past week, with Biden going there today. But the real reckoning may still harken back to the 1992 campaign that saw the last incumbent president lose. Bill Clinton campaign's unofficial slogan ("It's the economy, stupid") should not be filed away and forgotten.

On the urban strife front, Vice President Mike Pence made it "perfectly clear" at his Republican National Convention acceptance speech last week that the chief American threat was anarchy and disorder. "Joe Biden said America is systemically racist," Pence said. "You won't be safe in Joe Biden's America. Under President Trump ... we're not going to defund the police, not now, not ever. We will have law and order on the streets of this country."

Speaker after speaker at the RNC attempted to portray America in the dystopian flare of Trump's own "American carnage" inaugural address from January 2017. U.S. Rep, Steve Scalise errantly claimed that Biden "em-



braced the insane mission to defund the police" while Rep. Matt Gaetz warned Republicans that Biden and the Democrats would "disarm you, empty the prisons, lock you in your home, and invite MS-13 to live next door."

Trump mentioned Biden 41 times (Biden never named Trump the prior week), saying the former vice president is a "destroyer of American greatness"; that he advocates "the most extreme set of proposals ever put forward by a major-party nominee"; is "a Trojan horse for socialism," who will "demolish the suburbs" while he will

"confiscate your guns."

Departing White House senior advisor Kellyanne Conway told Fox & Friends, "The more chaos and anarchy and vandalism and violence reigns, the better it is for the very clear choice on who's best on public safety and law and order."

Trump made similar declarations a week ago at his White House acceptance speech celebration, continuing through his Tuesday morning departure for Kenosha from Joint Base Andrews: "I think a lot of people are looking at what's happening in these Democrat-run cities and they're disgusted. They see what's going on and they can't believe this is taking place in our country. I can't believe it either. One of the reasons I'm making a trip today and going to Wisconsin is we've had such a big success in shutting down what would be ... a city that would have been burned to the ground by now."

Biden's response was delayed but forceful and he and his wife Jill will head to Kenosha today. Speaking Monday from Pittsburgh, the Democratic nominee noted that during the Obama administration, violent crime decreased 15%. He said, "This president long ago forfeited any moral leadership in this country. He can't stop the violence, because for years he has fomented it. He may believe mouthing the words law and order makes him strong, but his failure to call on his own supporters to stop acting as an armed militia in this country shows you how weak he is. The violence we're seeing is in Donald Trump's America. These are not images of some imagined Joe Biden America in the future, these are images of Donald Trump's America today."

"Does anyone believe there will be less violence in America if Donald Trump is reelected?" Biden asked. "We



need justice in America. And we need safety in America. We are facing multiple crises – crises that, under Donald Trump, keep multiplying. Covid. Economic devastation. Unwarranted police violence. Emboldened white nationalists. A reckoning on race. Declining faith in a bright American future. The common thread? An incumbent president who makes things worse, not better. An incumbent president who sows chaos rather than providing order."

Which brings us to the economy. On Monday, National Federation of Independent Businesses's Barbara Quandt sounded new alarms, saying that 21% of Indiana's small businesses will shut down in the next six months, and another 19%

within a year.

"The unprecedented and devastating crisis isn't going away. Many small businesses here in Indiana are still suffering," said Quandt, the NFIB's Indiana director. "While some small businesses have been able to get back to work, there are other industries still stuck at a standstill and likely will be for months to come. For every small family business that is coming back to life, there's one that is circling the drain. We need to help those small business owners and we need to do it now. Many can't hold on much longer. They need money to keep their doors open and support their employees and their families."

Quandt reported that 84% of Hoosier businesses which received PPP loans have exhausted that resource, up from 71% in July. If eligible, 44% of small business owners would apply or re-apply for a second PPP loan. Another 31% would consider applying for one. Sales levels remain at 50% or less than they were pre-COVID sales levels for about one in five employers.



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But Congress and the dealmaker-in-chief are at log-gerheads on a further rescue.

There are other ominous signs coming before Friday's monthly jobs report, the first of two that will surface before the Nov. 3 election. Just over 1 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week, a sign that the coronavirus outbreak continues to threaten jobs even as the housing market, auto sales and other segments of the economy rebound from a springtime collapse. "Layoffs are ongoing reflecting interruptions to activity from virus containment that are likely resulting in permanent closures and job losses," Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, wrote in a research report.

On Monday, Bloomberg News reported that a tidal wave of apartment evictions and mortgage foreclosures is at hand and will play out in hundreds of thousands of neighborhoods and apartment complexes over the next two months. About 30 million Americans are "at risk" of being evicted in coming months because they can't pay rent, according to a review of the Census survey data by the Aspen Institute Financial Security Program and the Covid-19 Eviction Defense Project. On Aug. 8, President Trump signed an executive order pledging to "take all lawful measures to prevent residential evictions and foreclosures resulting from financial hardships caused by Covid-19." But that measure didn't authorize any specific action and is drawing fire from house advocates (see Page 19).

In Indiana, the eviction and utility shutoff moratoriums expired at the end of July. The City of Indianapolis offered rental assistance last month to more than 3,000 units, with more than 10,000 seeking help before it suspended the effort.

While Trump and the RNC painted a picture of racial strife, it glossed over the administration's tortured pandemic response. Economic advisor Larry Kudlow talked about it in past tense, while about 1,000 Americans were dying each day. The death toll stood at 185,000 at this writing, and will crest 200,000 by the October campaign homestretch.

A new Trump health advisor, Scott Atlas, had reportedly advocated a "herd immunity" strategy which medical experts say could kill up to 2 million Americans. White House communications director Alyssa Farah said there is no change in the White House's approach toward combating the pandemic. "President Trump is fully fo-

RealClearPolitics Election 2020			
President	Senate		House
Election 2020	Biden	Trump	Spread
RCP National Average	49.6	42.4	Biden +7.2 ⬆
Top Battlegrounds	48.4	45.1	Biden +3.3 ⬆
Latest Betting Odds	50.0	49.7	
Electoral College	Biden	Trump	Toss Ups
RCP Electoral Map	212	115	211
No Toss Up States	352	186	
Battlegrounds ● ○	Biden	Trump	Spread
Michigan	47.3	44.7	Biden +2.6
Pennsylvania	49.0	44.8	Biden +4.2 ⬇
North Carolina	47.8	47.5	Biden +0.3 ⬆
Florida	49.0	45.3	Biden +3.7
Wisconsin	48.5	44.5	Biden +4.0
Arizona	49.0	44.0	Biden +5.0 ⬆
2020 vs. 2016	2020	2016	Spread
Top Battlegrounds	D +3.3	D +3.2	Biden +0.1
RCP National Average	D +7.2	D +3.2	Biden +4.0
Favorability Ratings	D +15.4	D +9.8	Biden +5.6

cused on defeating the virus through therapeutics and ultimately a vaccine. There is no discussion about changing our strategy," she said in a statement. "We have initiated an unprecedented effort under Operation Warp Speed to safely bring a vaccine to market in record time. Ending this virus through medicine is our top focus."

The Atlas story came three days after Indiana reported 1,140 COVID infections on Saturday, though the death toll increased by eight that day to a total of 3,066. The University of Washington's health metrics website is forecasting 6,414 Indiana deaths by Dec. 1 with the number of daily deaths matching the April 30 apex (48) by Nov. 1 if Gov. Eric Holcomb's mask mandate is eased. Holcomb has extended it through September.

An ABC-Ipsos poll published Sunday revealed why the Trump/Pence campaign is seeking to shift the campaign focus to law and order: 63% disapprove of their handling of the pandemic. Trump's approval rating stood at 31%. A Reuters/Ipsos poll released during the RNC found that 58% of Americans view the economy as on the wrong track, and for the first time this year, the poll showed Trump with net negative approval numbers on the economy, down from an approval margin of 14 points in late March.

Every day the Trump campaign shifts the narrative from COVID to crime, the better position he is in for another November upset.

Blue wall revisited

The Trump/Pence campaign appears to be revisiting the Blue Wall (Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania) with Minnesota thrown in for good measure. The national NBC News/Wall Street Journal polls have interviewed 215 voters who said they backed either Johnson or Stein in 2016, and Biden holds a 2-to-1 advantage among them: 47% say they're voting for Biden, 20% are supporting Trump, and 33% are unsure or say they're backing another candidate. NBC's "Meet The Press Daily" reported: In 2016, Trump won Michigan by 10,704 votes, while the combined Johnson/Stein vote was 223,599. (So Biden getting 47% of that third-party vote to Trump's 20% easily overturns that '16 margin.) In 2016, Trump won Pennsylvania by 44,292 votes, while there were 196,656 Johnson/Stein voters. And in 2016, Trump won Wisconsin by 22,748 votes, and the combined Johnson/Stein total was 137,746.

"Set aside the national popular vote, which Democrats are likely to win because Trump has mobilized Democrats in cobalt-blue states as never before," said former Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel, now an ABC News analyst.

"The outcome of this election hinges on a handful of swing states. In Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, white working-class citizens constituted 67%, 62%, and 62% of nonvoters in the 2016 election, by one estimate some 4.8 million voters. That is the core threat Democrats now face. It means that the pool of potential new Trump voters is very deep."

In Morning Consult post-convention sequence swing state polling released Tuesday, Biden led Trump in Wisconsin 52-43%, in Michigan (ditto 52-43%), and Pennsylvania 49-45%, which is the same margin of a Monmouth Poll on Tuesday. The best news for Trump comes from Ohio, where he led 50-45%. But Trump is having to defend red states like Texas (where he leads 48-47%), Georgia (Biden up 49-46%) and Arizona (Biden leads there 51-42%).

A USC/Dornsife Poll shows Trump losing 9% of people who voted for him in 2016. The poll that really caught our eye was from the Military Times: Biden leads Trump among active duty U.S. service members 43.1% to 37.4%. Some 49.9% of respondents had an unfavorable view of their commander-in-chief. "You can't lose 9% or 10% of the people who voted for you last time" and still win, said Bob Shrum, the director of USC Center for the Political Future, which co-sponsors the poll, and a veteran Democratic strategist. "If that holds, it would be catastrophic for him."

Bellwether Research pollster Christine Matthews observed via tweet on Monday, "No consensus – yet – in polls about impact of violent clashes and protests or whether Trump is making inroads in suburbs (doubtful) or if race is, actually, tightening or if Biden's favs are up or down. Also, no new evidence for shy Trump vote."

Susan B. Glasser, writing in the New Yorker, observed: "Perhaps the most quoted line from Trump's 2016 speech was a memorable expression of his aspirational authoritarianism: 'I alone can fix it.' That, it turned out, was not a throwaway line or an odd exaggeration by a narcissistic political novice; it was a precursor and a prelude to the radical reimagining of the presidency as a one-man show."

The next two weeks will likely determine whether the Trump show goes on, or whether it will be cancelled by voters sending the message: "You're fired." **Horse Race Status:** Leans Biden.

From Vigo County, presidential bellwether

Vigo County has a stellar track record in voting for the next president of the United States. Since 1892, Vigo County has backed the winner in all but two races, and since 1952 has gone 16-0. On Wednesday, the Terre Haute Tribune-Star's online poll asked: Did Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden effectively present an alternative to President Donald Trump during the party's national convention? Out of a total of 542 votes (as of 3:30 p.m. Wednesday) 51% said yes and 49% said no.

Quinnipiac has Biden up 10%

On the heels of back-to-back political party conventions and a climate of growing unrest in the country, likely voters support Biden over President Trump 52-42% in a Quinnipiac University national poll released Wednesday. This is the first survey of likely voters in the 2020 presidential election race by the Quinnipiac University Poll, and cannot be compared to results of earlier surveys of registered voters. Democrats go to Biden 93-6%, Republicans go to Trump 90-8%, and independents back Biden 50-40%. Likely voters say 58-38% that the country is worse off than it was in 2016. Republicans say 84-15% the country is better off, Democrats say 95-4% it is worse off, and independents say 60-36% it is worse off. "With six in ten likely voters feeling the country has lost ground, the president stares down a big gap to make up in a short time," said Quinnipiac University Polling Analyst Tim Malloy.

Biden leads key states in Fox News polling

Democrat Biden is ahead in three key states that President Donald Trump won in 2016, according to new Fox News statewide surveys of Arizona, North Carolina, and Wisconsin, which was taken after the Kenosha story.

Biden tops Trump by 8% among [Wisconsin](#) likely voters, 50-42%. That's just outside the survey's margin of sampling error. Two percent back Jorgensen and 5% are undecided. Women make all the difference in the Badger State. They favor Biden by 17%, while men are about evenly divided (Trump +1). Plus, more Democrats (95%) support Biden than Republicans (86%) back Trump.

Biden is preferred over Trump by 49-40% among likely voters in [Arizona](#). That 9% lead is outside the margin of error. The Libertarian ticket headed by Jo Jorgensen receives 3 percent and 6 percent are undecided.

[In North Carolina](#), Biden holds a narrow 4% margin among likely voters (within error margin). He receives 50% to Trump's 46%, while 1% go for Jorgensen and 2% are undecided. Here's why the race is tight: Whites back Trump by 23%, while Blacks support Biden by 83%. Men go for Trump by a 2-point margin, while women prefer Biden by 10%.

Biden posts \$365M in August

Biden and the Democratic National Committee reported raising a record \$365 million in August, surprising even seasoned party fundraisers and putting to rest fears that President Trump would drown him in campaign spending (Politico). The staggering cash coincides with Biden naming Sen. Kamala Harris as his running mate before the convention. It more than doubles Trump's \$165 million record, set in July, and eclipses the \$193 million raised by Barack Obama in September 2008. Trump has not yet announced his August numbers. "In August, together, we raised \$364.5 million. That figure blows me away," Biden said in a written statement. "And we raised it the right way, from people across the country stepping up to own a piece of this campaign." ❖

Pandemic continues to impact INGov race

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – On Monday night, Democratic gubernatorial nominee Woody Myers hosted a virtual fundraiser featuring former South Bend mayor Pete Buttigieg and Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett.



Campaign spokeswoman Lindsay Shipps Haake told Howey Politics Indiana that it was “very successful,” as was the biographical video the campaign posted

digitally in late August, which was also designed to gin up support and fundraising.

Myers campaign manager Zakiya Thomas put the fundraising push in perspective for the campaign that trailed Gov. Eric Holcomb by about \$8 million on June 30. “On Tuesday, September 1st, I have a meeting with Dr. Myers and our campaign team about our budget from now until Election Day. That budget will depend on how much money we have in the bank before midnight of August 31st. You might be tempted to wait a bit before donating to see what happens in the campaign, but in reality, giving now is what makes the difference between winning in November, and falling short. If you give today, we can fully fund the campaign programs we need to win – like TV and digital ads to make sure every voter knows Dr. Myers and how he will move Indiana forward.”

On Wednesday, Haake said there are “no plans” currently to expand the campaign’s digital media outreach to broadcast and cable TV. “We’ve been reaching voters consistently,” she said, via digital marketing.

The pandemic has crimped Myers’ challenge financially from its beginning in March. But it began the year with just a \$14,648 balance, even though Myers declared his candidacy the previous July. It posted \$678,296 on its June 30 mid-year report and had just \$72,310 cash on hand, which is by far the worst performing gubernatorial campaign for the two “major” parties in a generation.

The Myers campaign suffered a big blow in July when the Indiana State Teachers Association’s I-PACE PAC declined to endorse or provide funding for Myers. In 2016, I-PACE spent more than \$300,000 on Democrat nominee John Gregg. “We’re a small PAC with limited resources,

and so we have to be careful with that,” Keith Gambill, ISTA president and a member of the political action committee, told Chalkbeat. “The legislature has been at times a roadblock for positive change for our public schools, and we’ve got to elect more pro-public education candidates into the General Assembly.”

The lack of Myers’ financial traction prompted Gregg, the 2012 and 2016 nominee (who still has \$360,882 cash on hand in his campaign account) to lament to the IBJ that Indiana Democrats are “sitting this election out. It’s a missed opportunity.”

On his Twitter account, Myers acknowledged, “My life has led to this reckoning of a pandemic, an economic collapse, and a racial awakening. This election, we are fighting to put people over politics and fix this broken system.”

But unless the perfect storm develops – a worsening of the COVID-19 pandemic so severe that it would force another economic shutdown, the collapse of the Trump/Pence presidential prospects, and a wellspring of independent support for the Black Lives Matter movement – the idea that Myers will be in a position to seriously challenge Holcomb seems far, far fetched at this Labor Day milepost.

Gov. Holcomb is not out of the woods yet. While the state’s jobless rate slipped to 7.8% last month after ballooning to 16.9% in April, and the state has mowed



through \$2 billion of its reserve funds in the three months between the start of the pandemic and the end of the fiscal year, there are an array of challenges just over the horizon.

School reopenings, while disparate and fitful, have yet to result in widespread COVID outbreaks. But the state ended rent and utility payment moratoriums at the end of July, and experts are predicting an unprecedented wave of evictions that could become a political problem by November. Gov. Holcomb announced a new eviction moratorium via the CDC, beginning on Sept. 4. The state has received 36,000 applications.

Holcomb took steps to inoculate himself on the racial divide, holding a statewide address on Aug. 18 when he declared Indiana at an “inflection point” on race while vowing to become a “barrier buster.”

Myers quickly pronounced the effort as “Much too

little, much too late" and countered with a biographical video, "A Broken System," where he talked of the "shocking story of institutional racism he repeatedly encountered over the course of his 42-year medical career" that had led him to become a medical physician, Indiana health commissioner, and a corporate and investment heavyweight.

If ever a candidate's resume matched up with the widespread events shaping the contours of this gubernatorial race, it would appear to be Myers'. The campaign notes: Dr. Myers' career intersects with many of the highest-profile medical stories of the last few decades, including teaching emergency medicine in San Francisco at the time of the emerging AIDS crisis when "we started seeing young gay men come in with mysterious pneumonias and skin lesions." Myers also served as Indiana commissioner of health and championed the cause of Ryan White, a young boy infected with HIV who wished to attend public school.

The Indiana Black Legislative Caucus isn't convinced that Holcomb is fully committed to meeting the racial divide head-on. State Rep. Robin Shackleford told the Statehouse File, "I would say it's been kind of a perfect storm with COVID-19 and people being at home. They got to see racism on full display. When you have everyone at home and millions watching, that starts to ignite in them action for a movement."

The Statehouse File reported: "When IBLC members met with Holcomb earlier in the summer, Shackleford said the governor indicated he would be announcing a plan to respond to the unrest. But when a member requested to see a draft of the plan to offer feedback from the caucus, he declined. And the plan he did unveil did not include the Black caucus' priority justice reform items, including bans on racial profiling, chokeholds and no-knock warrants."

Indiana Republican Chair-



HOWEY
POLITICS INDIANA



President (U.S. & Indiana)



President Donald Trump (R), Joseph Biden (D), Jo Jorgensen (L)

HPI Horse Race:

National: Leans D; Last week: Leans D
Indiana: Safe R; Last week: Safe R

Indiana Governor



Gov. Eric Holcomb (R), Woody Myers (D), Donald Rainwater (L)

HPI Horse Race:

This week: Safe R
Last week: Safe R

Indiana Attorney General



Todd Rokita (R) Jonathan Weinzapfel (D)

HPI Horse Race

This week: Leans R
Last week: Leans R

Congressional 2nd



U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorki (R) Pat Hackett (D)

HPI Horse Race

This week: Likely R
Last week: Likely R

Congressional 5th



Victoria Spartz (R), Christina Hale (D), Kenneth Tucker (L)

HPI Horse Race

This Week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

Congressional 9th



U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth (R) Andy Ruff (D)

HPI Horse Race

This week: Likely R
Last week: Likely R

man Kyle Hupfer, who doubles as Holcomb's campaign manager, said that reaction to the governor's address from Black and Latino voters has been "extremely positive." Hupfer, who is in the process of recruiting the party's first diversity class, said, "It's not just a speech, it's going to be actions that follow up the speech."

Haake acknowledged the pandemic has made it tough to raise money, because the traditional in-person fundraising has been substantially altered. "Most of our supporters are asking for virtual events," she said, noting a rise in June and July of Indiana's COVID infection and positivity rates.

Holcomb, too, is experiencing his second gubernatorial campaign that has been nothing close to normal. In 2016, he received the Republican nomination about 100 days prior to the election after Gov. Mike Pence resigned the ticket to join the Donald Trump presidential effort. This year it's the pandemic that has altered the race.

The gaping difference between Holcomb and Myers beyond the former's incumbency is that the governor began 2020 with a \$7.25 million cash balance that has only expanded despite the fact that the governor spent much of the spring concentrating solely on the pandemic.

So far the Holcomb reelection has aired two TV ads in August and September. Campaign spokesman Jake Oakman told HPI the campaign has spent "seven figures" on the ads that have been running on broadcast TV. Hupfer told HPI that the Holcomb campaign has already "locked up our base buy" through the Nov. 3 election. He added that the GOP's coordinated campaign has already completed more than 1.5 million voter contacts. He said polling this summer showed Holcomb's favorables in the 60th percentile and unfavorables in the 20th percentile.

As he has for the past year, Hupfer believes Holcomb is well-positioned for reelection. "We've seen a substantial drop in our unemployment. It's down to 7.8% in July, while the U.S. is at 10.2%."

"We're not going to take our foot off the gas," Hupfer said. "All the numbers we've seen has the governor in a substantial lead. Indiana is responding better than any state on the backside of COVID. We're bouncing back." **Horse Race Status:** Safe Holcomb.

Congress

5th CD: Hale begins new ad on health

Democrat Christina Hale began airing a new TV ad this morning focused on health and the United States Postal Service. She notes in the ad that many voters receive prescription drugs from the postal service, which has seen operational cuts by the Trump administration. She also vows to protect citizens with pre-existing conditions. "There's nothing more important than your health," Hale says in the ad. The Trump administration is backing a federal lawsuit that would end pre-existing condition protections. Hale faces Republican State Sen. Victoria Spartz. **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.



Indiana General Assembly SD8



Sen. Mike Bohacek (R)
Gary Davis (D)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

Indiana General Assembly SD30



Sen. John Ruckelshaus (R)
Fady Qaddoura (D)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

Indiana General Assembly HD5



Rep. Dale Devon (D)
John Westerhausen (R)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

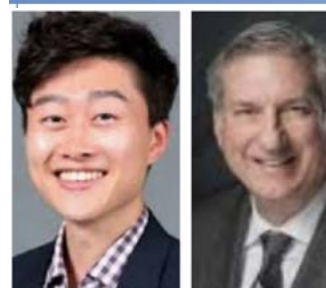
Indiana General Assembly HD7



Rep. Ross Deal (D)
Jake Teshka (R)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

Indiana General Assembly HD15



Rep. Chris Chyung (D)
Hal Slager (R)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

General Assembly

SD30: Ruckelshaus begins TV ad

The reelection campaign of State Sen. John Ruckelshaus began TV cable advertising on Tuesday. It is one of the earliest TV ad campaigns by the Senate Majority Caucus. The \$30,000 buy is for cable television. Ruckelshaus is facing Democrat Fady Qaddoura.



The script: "In today's divisive politics one leader stands out as a voice of reason. John Ruckelshaus is a bipartisan

problem-solver, who helped write new laws that guaranteed coverage for pre-existing conditions and ensured victims of sexual assault get the medical and legal support they deserve with courtesy and respect. John Ruckelshaus works with both parties to find common ground to do what's right for us. John Ruckelshaus: A trusted voice of reason." **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

SD36: Sandlin up on TV

State Sen. Jack Sandlin's reelection campaign has also begun TV ads on cable. The script: "Jack Sandlin is the trusted voice our communities need. He knows the



challenges we face and is working with Gov. Holcomb to fully fund our schools, help the economy recover and grow and keep our neighborhoods safe." Sources

tell HPI that the Sandlin cable buy is smaller than that of Ruckelshaus. Sandlin faces Democrat Ashley Eason. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Sandlin.

HD37: Huston to begin TV ads

The IndyStar reported that Speaker Todd Huston has spent more than \$30,000 on TV ads in his rematch race with Democrat Aimee Cole Rivera. It's part of a trend in suburban Hamilton County, where the 5th CD race between Republican Victoria Spartz and Democrat Christina Hale is drawing attention and money from national sources. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Huston.

HD39: Torr going door to door

Carmel Republican Jerry Torr has never had to worry too much about reelection. For the past 24 years, he has represented what has been one of the most reliable



Indiana General Assembly HD19



Rep. Lisa Beck (D)
Julie Olthoff (R)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

Indiana General Assembly HD35



Rep. Melanie Wright (D)
Elizabeth Rowray (R)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

Indiana General Assembly HD37



Rep. Todd Huston (R)
Aimee Cole Rivera (D)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Likely R
Last week: Likely R

Indiana General Assembly HD88



Rep. Chris Jeter (R)
Pam Dechert (D)
Open: Brian Bosma

HPI Horse Race
This week: Likely R
Last week: Likely R

Indiana General Assembly HD89



Rep. Cindy Kirchhofer (R)
Mitch Gore (D)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Likely R
Last week: Likely R

Republican Statehouse districts. But this year is different (Sikich, IndyStar). "It's certainly going to require some work," he told IndyStar. "I've never gone door to door in July and August before, but we're putting on masks and talking to voters and finding out what's on their minds." Torr has dropped from 73% of the vote in 2014 to 65% in 2016 to 57% in 2018. Campaign finance reports aren't due until October, but there are indications that money is pouring into these districts. Candidates from both parties have been going door to door dropping off literature, and some prominent Republicans are up on TV, which isn't common in Statehouse races. House Speaker Todd Huston, who represents Fishers, is spending more than \$30,000 on TV ads through his campaign, while Zionsville Rep. Donna Schaibley's campaign is spending more than \$9,000.

Horse Race Status: Likely Torr.

Statewides

Attorney General: Weinzapfel slams state on absentee case

Democratic nominee Jonathan Weinzapfel said it "is absolutely unfathomable" that Attorney General Curtis Hill continues to fight efforts to expand absentee voting. The Indiana Lawyer reported Tuesday that Indiana is urging the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals to apply the brakes to the challenge to the state's restrictions on absentee balloting, arguing in part that the plaintiffs are seeking to overturn decades-old election laws without allowing time for proper consideration of the merits. "The Indiana Election Division is playing politics with our right to vote," Weinzapfel said. "They could call a meeting this week and allow people to vote by mail, just like they did during the primary election. Instead, they are hiding behind legal arguments that even the courts aren't buying. In the coming days, Indiana will likely top 100,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Who knows what the number of cases will be come Election Day. We shouldn't have to choose between our health and our right to vote. But, that's what Indiana Republicans want us to do. It's shameful. Our campaign has been advocating for Hoosiers to have more opportunities to vote by mail for months. I promise you this: if elected, I won't play politics with Hoosiers' right to vote. I'll do everything I can to protect your rights and make sure your vote counts in an election that is fair and secure."

Weinzapfel outlines plans

As workers face unprecedented health and economic challenges, Weinzapfel outlined his plans to better protect working Hoosiers as Indiana's next attorney general on Tuesday. "From demanding safe working conditions and appropriate PPE for all employees, to making sure workers are paid what they've earned and supporting Hoosiers' right to organize, it's time the Indiana attorney general stands up for everyday working people – and

that's what I intend to do," said Weinzapfel. "COVID-19 has shed new light on the people who make our economy work. We need to protect them, just like they continue to protect us," added Weinzapfel. "This is our opportunity to reset and demand better. As attorney general I would use this office to lift working people up, to make their lives better and to respect and honor the dignity of work...all work."

He will emphasize the following as the state's Attorney General:

- **Better Enforcement of Workplace Safety Standards:** As attorney general, Weinzapfel will work with the Indiana Department of Labor to hold organizations that put workers in danger accountable, including filing civil lawsuits, issuing subpoenas to compel the release of information, offering advisory opinions to aid local prosecutors, releasing reports on workplace safety violations and other measures designed to publicly admonish bad actors.

- **Protecting Hoosier's Wages.** As attorney general, Weinzapfel will hold businesses accountable that don't pay employees in a timely matter, that seek to restrict future employment with unlawful non-compete clauses, and those that treat full-time employees as independent contractors, thereby denying them benefits, taxes and other agreed upon wages.

- **Using the Office to Support Workers Rights.** From fighting to ensure equal pay for equal work, to advocating for raising the minimum wage for essential workers, to supporting the rights of workers to bargain collectively, Weinzapfel will use the office's bully pulpit to shed light on issues all working Hoosiers are facing.

- **Protecting Health Care.** As attorney general, Weinzapfel will immediately withdraw Indiana from a lawsuit that seeks to overturn the Affordable Care Act. If successful, the lawsuit would strip away health care from both employed and unemployed Hoosiers who rely on the ACA for coverage, gut protections for those with pre-existing conditions and destroy the states' Healthy Indiana plan which covers low-income families.

Hupfer says Rokita has 10% lead

Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer told HPI on Tuesday that internal polling since Todd Rokita locked up the attorney general nomination shows him with a 10% lead over Weinzapfel. "I believe that Todd Rokita has completely shifted this race," Hupfer said. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Rokita.

Local

Vanderburgh sheriff switches to GOP

Vanderburgh County Sheriff Dave Wedding, elected twice to office as a Democrat, confirmed he is switching to the Republican Party ([Evansville Courier & Press](#)). Wedding said he will explain his reasons during a news conference on today. He declined to answer further questions until then. ❖

GOP platform: What Trump supports

By **JOSHUA CLAYBOURN**

EVANSVILLE – Nearly four years into Donald Trump’s presidency, it is easy to take for granted the peculiarity of his policy priorities in 2016, especially for a Republican: A massive border wall, isolationist foreign policy, trade protectionism, and a denouncement of the so-called elites. As the Republican National Convention plays out this week, many naturally wonder what a possible second term has in store.



The GOP opted to reuse its platform from four years ago written before Donald Trump became president. An official Republican National Committee resolution blames the pandemic

for making platform work too difficult, but numerous reports suggest Jared Kushner’s desire to shorten the platform and remove controversial conservative stances led to significant disagreements.

Regardless of the party’s platform, though, Trump would inevitably chart the administration’s second term and that effectively becomes the GOP’s new platform: Whatever Trump supports.

The campaign recently released some broad second-term goals – eradicating Covid-19, ending America’s reliance on China, cutting drug prices, expanding school choice, and defending the police – but none of these constitute new points of emphasis. Instead, they are all part of the administration’s existing policy focus.

Modern second-term presidents often sought to secure their legacy by highlighting one or two big ideas or goals. Reagan pursued tax cuts and better relations with the Soviet Union. Bill Clinton zeroed in on foreign policy challenges in Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Middle East. George W. Bush tried major reforms of Social Security and immigration laws. Obama, faced with Republican control of Congress, pursued social issue change through executive orders and foreign policy agreements.

Some major push on the international stage seems common for every second-term president. For Trump, that would undoubtedly involve additional pressure on China with more protectionism and tariffs. With Iran, the United States already helped implement crippling sanctions on the country and Trump’s team hopes a second term would force the “desperate” country back to the negotiating table.

No matter what policy goals Trump pursues, we can be assured his administration will pursue them with more executive powers in mind. Like every administration

before it, both Republican and Democrat, Trump’s team acts like a centrifuge, sucking power from the legislature and making de facto law through regulation and executive order. American democracy increasingly works this way: The executive directs, the bureaucracy enacts, the judiciary imposes, and the legislature may or may not do anything at all.

America suffers from an identity crisis. What does it even mean to be American? Do we as a society and culture have any shared or collective values or vision for who we are and want to be?

Although Trump has never seemed capable of answering this question in convincing fashion, he at least sees that a void on this important issue exists. As he has tried to do thus far, albeit unsuccessfully, Trump would seek to shape the American story in a second term through stark contrasts with progressive alternatives.

Ultimately Trump would likely approach a second term with an eye toward shaping and cementing a legacy of some sort. The ongoing search for that legacy will not be guided by well-grounded ideology, but instead by the rollercoaster ride of maximizing cable news soundbites.

Miles Taylor, former Department of Homeland Security official, said Trump wanted officials to tune into Fox Business host Lou Dobbs’s show “every night.” With Dobbs as the “shadow chief of staff,” Taylor quoted Trump as saying, “What Lou says is what I want to do.” ❖

Claybourn is an Evansville attorney.

Here’s a platform for the Republican Party

By **PETE SEAT**

INDIANAPOLIS – Republicans on the national level this year did not produce a party platform. And it’s a real shame because, at the urging of White House senior advisor Jared Kushner, it was supposed to replace the traditionally wordy quadrennial manifesto with an anti-loquacious one-page document.



Having written more than one (verbose) party platform in my day, I decided to take up Jared’s challenge and set aside time this past weekend to draft in my best platform voice what could have been the Republican

Party’s 2020 Platform. And while the Democrat platform could be summarized in four words – “He’s Not Donald Trump” – this one can be boiled down into two: Security and safety.

Preamble: From former governor and ambassador Nikki Haley, the daughter of Indian immigrants; to Tim Scott, the first Black senator elected to represent a southern state since Reconstruction; and Elise Stefanik, who made history in 2014 as the youngest woman ever elected to the United States Congress; the Republican Party represents the past, present and future of America.

We are a diverse party, with a diversity not always seen or appreciated in the mass media. Most importantly, that diversity of gender, race, geography and thought does not divide us, rather it unites us in a common purpose to be the one and only party that stands for security and safety.

Provided without context, those two words may sound shallow and empty – like hope and change. But they are much more than that. Security is not a single word, but a resolve to protect and preserve economic, job and national security. And safety is not a talking point, but a commitment to fight every day for the public and personal safety of every American.

Economic and job security: Our nation was dealt an unfair hand by the emergence of the coronavirus, a contagious pathogen unleashed on the world by the reckless Chinese government.

What was a vibrant and robust economy built by Republican leadership went into freefall. But thanks to that same Republican leadership, the economy is rebounding and there is no better indicator of that economic success story than the stock market, a market that matters not only to institutional investors, but to the everyday Americans our policies are aimed toward. In fact, the retirement accounts of 40% of American workers are invested in the market. Therefore, these Americans, found in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Maine's 2nd Congressional District, count on a rising tide to lift all boats.

And when it comes to job security, across the country, Republican-led states were similarly thriving prior to this virus coming ashore. Unfortunately, for many Americans the peace of mind that job security brought has now vanished. But we believe for them and for us there is an American comeback at hand because we know the formula that got America's economy to where it was before the virus. We know the formula because we drafted the blueprint, laid the foundation and built the economic envy of the world on the fertile soil of the American Dream.

National security: From the days of America's first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, who through steady leadership saved our

Union, to Ronald Reagan, who defiantly stood tall against the Soviet Union and compelled an end to the Cold War, Republicans have been at the forefront of national and global security. We believe in protecting our citizens at home and our friends abroad and will continue to invest in the assets of prevention – our military – and engage in the strategic relationships necessary to maintain America's preeminent role in global affairs.

Public and personal safety: To the communities wrestling with violence and watching unrest take hold in cities large and small, know that the safety of our citizens is a solemn duty that requires courage and sacrifice. Therefore, we renew our commitment to support law enforcement and ensure they have the training, tools and political support required to protect their communities and keep the peace.


And when it comes to personal safety, we stand strongly in support of the 2nd Amendment and the right of law-abiding Americans to keep and bear arms. Every family has the right to protect themselves from harm and the 2nd Amendment is critical to providing that protection.

There you go, Jared. That wasn't so hard. No need to thank me publicly. Just pay the invoice within 30 days of receipt. I'll be sure to include the friends and family discount. ❖

Pete Seat is a former White House spokesman for President George W. Bush and campaign spokesman for former director of national intelligence and U.S. Sen. Dan Coats. Currently he is a vice president with Bose Public Affairs Group in Indianapolis.

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

We are a nation adrift

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – We are a nation adrift. Even before the pandemic and George Floyd’s death, the U.S. was piling on problems with little sense that we had either the leadership or the political will to address them. The coronavirus and Black Lives Matter protests have amplified those challenges, throwing older ones into stark relief and adding new ones.



I am as convinced as ever that this country has the strength and ingenuity to find its way out. I don’t know about you, but I see rising out of the multiple crises besetting us a bedrock recognition that there is much work to do, which requires a new willingness to overcome the inertia of recent years.

Not that this will be easy. The scale of our problems is too immense to resolve them outright. The stark inequities in economic opportunity, policing, and criminal justice that have sparked ongoing protests are too deep-seated for quick fixes – though, hearteningly, there seems to be a widespread conviction among ordinary Americans that change is due. The economy in recent years has done just fine for a relatively small group of people at the top but has left too many Americans fearing that they won’t be able to fend for themselves or their families. These differences are even more glaring now; the pandemic is eviscerating small businesses and upending the lives of millions as larger companies and well-connected entrepreneurs position themselves to thrive. Digging out will be the work of years.

We face other immense issues that have been allowed to drift. People who are chronically sick today have their lives upended and often wind up in debt, yet much as we talk about health care being a human right, we don’t act that way.

Many Americans worry that immigrants are taking jobs and reshaping the lives they know, yet our political system has been unable to move beyond either “fence them out” or “welcome them” to reckon with how we adjust creatively and humanely to demographic change. Our tax code is riddled with loopholes created for and exploited by people of higher income, yet those with the power to change it have refused to do so. We face an ever-rising national debt with no political will to address it. We’re involved in countless conflicts overseas with no strategic clarity or concerted effort to ask why and for what purpose.

So, what do we do? Obviously, there are specific policies we could pursue. On economic opportunity, for instance, some form of universal basic income or at least

a rise in the federal minimum wage, which hasn’t budged from \$7.25 an hour since 2009, would at least help workers save a little and reduce anxiety in times of uncertainty. But overall, how we set about fixing ourselves matters as much as the specifics of what we do.

For one thing, most of these problems can’t really be solved, only managed. Because of their scope and complexity, there’s no single remedy. There are multiple things that need to be done, and the vital thing is to get started doing them and not be hamstrung by partisan differences.

Secondly, we are long past the point where one sector can afford to sit things out. We need government, the private sector, and not-for-profits to work together. The old saws that solutions lie chiefly with government or that government is useless long ago lost their relevance. When you’re dealing with problems of this magnitude, the answers lie with both the public and private sectors, and they need to focus together on the common good. Our federal system allows experimentation. Different approaches can be tried at local, regional, state, federal and non-government sector levels.

Finally, we all have to recognize our stake as Americans in the problems that beset the country, not just the ones that concern us directly. Our society is ailing. We have the strength to rebuild, but not if we continue to withdraw to our little warring camps and lob insults at one another. Only if we make “we’re all in this together” more than just five empty words can we overcome the enmity, division, and harmful drift of the last few years. ❖

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.



Trump, Pence set bad examples

By **KELLY HAWES**



ANDERSON — As he watched the crowd gathering for the president’s speech on the south lawn of the White House, Ashish K. Jha offered an observation. “This is deeply irresponsible,” he said. “It goes against all that we know about keeping people safe. We should expect better from our national leaders.”

Jha should know. He is the director of the Global Health Institute

at Harvard University.

Of course, ignoring public health experts was something of a theme at the Republican National Convention. In his own speech the day before, Vice President Mike Pence had expressed frustration with his predecessor's assessment of the pandemic that has gripped our nation for nearly six months. "Last week Joe Biden said that no miracle is coming," Pence said. "What Joe doesn't seem to understand is that America is a nation of miracles, and we're on track to have the world's first safe, effective coronavirus vaccine by the end of the year."

Perhaps not surprisingly, the vice president's recollection lacked some context. What Biden actually said was that the president had been overly optimistic in his coronavirus projections. "The president keeps telling us the virus is going to disappear," Biden said. "He keeps waiting for a miracle. Well, I have news for him. No miracle is coming."

Biden placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of the man in the White House. "He has failed to protect us," Biden said. "And, my fellow Americans, that is unforgivable."

Public health experts say thousands of American lives could have been saved if the administration had moved more quickly to address the threat. And now, even if Pence is right that researchers are on track to develop a vaccine by the end of the year, that milestone will be only one step toward ridding this nation of COVID-19.

Some health experts suggest it could be a year before a vaccine is readily available, and to be honest, we really shouldn't rush. The shorter the time allotted for testing, the less certain we'll be that a vaccine is effective. And the fewer people who are involved in any trials, the less likely the testing will uncover any potential side effects. Shorter testing periods also make it less clear how long the vaccine's protection will last.

A recent study led by Dr. Bruce Y. Lee of the City University of New York found that if public health officials manage to vaccinate three out of four Americans, the vaccine will have to be effective 80% of the time to bring this pandemic to an end. Such numbers are not at all likely.

For the sake of perspective, the Food and Drug Administration has said it will approve a vaccine that is 50% effective. As for how many of us might be vaccinated, a July survey by YouGov and Yahoo News put that number at 42%.

Our president and his running mate, meanwhile, speak to crowds of supporters standing shoulder to shoulder, many of them without a mask. The two men seem not to recognize their own failures in response to this pandemic. "Thanks to the courage and compassion of the American people, we are slowing the spread," the vice president said in his acceptance speech. "We are protecting the vulnerable. We are saving lives, and we are opening up America again."

It's almost as if they live in a different universe.

Here's the bottom line: We need to stop hoping for a miracle and accept the fact that this virus is likely to

be with us for months to come. Wash your hands. Wear a mask. Stay six feet apart. In spite of what our leaders might be telling us, this fight is far from over. ❖

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.

Inflation in Indiana

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Hank Hoosier explains his low income by saying, "We have a low cost of living in Indiana, so our incomes doesn't have to be as high as elsewhere." He pays no attention to me telling him, "Your low income is why your cost of living is low."



Today, I just lay it out flat for him. "Inflation is all we really know about. We don't know beans about the cost of living. The Consumer Price Index (CPI), which so many people incorrectly call the cost of living, is just what it says it is, an index of consumer prices.

"The cost of living is hard to define. We all have a different idea of what standards should go into that concept. It can get rather personal, tied up with our expectations. We can know actual rental and grocery prices plus the quantities bought and then compare them over time. But a "cost of living" is a different beast for which we don't have any official measure."

"So, what's the CPI for Indiana?" Hank challenges me.

"There's no CPI for Indiana," I tell him. "The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) doesn't give state-by-state measures of prices. They do have figures for the nation, some regions and 23 metro areas. They offer nothing for Indiana except a Chicago number which would contain some Indiana counties."

"Then how can you talk about Indiana's inflation?" Hank says.

"Ah," I say. "The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) compares prices in each state with those nationally. They tell us back in 2007, before the Great Recession, Indiana's prices were 91.2% of the U.S. average. That put us in 34th place behind Hawaii, if we were in a race to have the highest prices."

"That's good," Hank says.

"Don't be too sure," I caution. "In 2018, the latest data we have so far, Indiana stood at 89.3% of the national average and in 39th place behind Hawaii."

"Better and better," Hank exults.

"Yes," I play along. "BEA also tells us the national

inflation rate was 14.9% from 2008 to '18 and for Indiana it was 12.3% (40th behind the State of Washington).

"Super," Hank is overjoyed.

"It's close to meaningless," I tell him. "Don't you compare the prices you pay to your income? If prices are high and your income is low, life can be tough. Indiana's median household income in 2018 was \$54,325. That's 90.1% of the national median. Now, when you divide our 90.1% income index by our price index (89.3% of the nation), we come out just about in the middle at 100.9 and 27th in the country."

I could tell Hank understood precisely. His bubble was burst. Indiana isn't really an inexpensive place to live, when you consider our income level. We're just ordinary, like Ohio and Missouri.

"How 'bout those Cubs?" Now Hank's back on a high. ❖

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

Hi, Q, it's me, Jack

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND — Hi Q,

I'm Jack. You don't know me. And I guess you probably wouldn't like me. I'm a journalist. But I know you. Well, not really, because your identity is mysterious.



I know, however, that you, whoever you are, promote the widely spreading QAnon conspiracy theories. That's some wild stuff, Q.

The world is run by a cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophiles operating a child-trafficking ring? Hillary Clinton is involved in abuse of kids in the basement of a Washington pizza restaurant? Piz-zagate? So, Q, how did you come up with this stuff? Did you get

mushrooms instead of the pepperoni you ordered for your pizza at that place? Is it all pepperoni revenge?

Why do you claim that cabal leaders not only molest kids but even kill and cannibalize their victims? Is this because those leaders, the ones you cite, like Oprah Winfrey, Pope Francis, Barack Obama and the Dalai Lama, also got some lousy pizza?

Back when you started this, Q, did you ever dream that all the major newspapers and television networks would have big stories about your QAnon? Or that the president of the United States would praise your followers as "people who love our country" and must be OK because they like him?

Did you start this to help President Trump politically by portraying him as in a secret struggle to the death to expose and destroy the evil cabal? Honestly, Q, would Trump keep the struggle secret, no tweets?

So, who are you, Q? Are those perceptive followers right in theorizing that you are John F. Kennedy Jr.? If so, how did you fake death in that plane crash? Or are you Elvis? Did somebody at that pizzeria step on your blue suede shoes?

Tell me, Q, what happened to the QAnon specula-

tion that President Trump would replace Mike Pence on the Republican ticket with the resurrected John F. Kennedy Jr.? Did Kennedy, whether or not that's you, decline? Or was Pence deemed too valuable to your cause?

Why are your internet posts so strange, so coded? Can't you speak English? If Russian is your native language, how do you order a pepperoni pizza in Russian? When the FBI warned that QAnon followers are a potential domestic terrorism threat, did that boost support?

Speaking of conspiracy theories leading to terrorism, what do you think of the guy from North Carolina who drove to that pizzeria in Washington to free the kids in the basement? Was he right to storm in, firing a military-style assault rifle, as he searched the place while patrons fled? Why didn't he find any kids or any place for imprisoning them? Did the cabal warn Hillary to get the kids out of there? Are you sad that the poor guy went to prison? Should he be pardoned?

What's your favorite pizza? Deep dish? Or is that out because of word association with the Deep State? Do you like thin crust? Or is that unappealing for a person with a lot of crust? And are you ending up with a lot of dough?

When you sit around with other QAnon promoters to dream up new conspiracy messages, do you drink a lot? Do drugs? Do you laugh and joke about what you'll tell your followers next?

Do you laugh uproariously at how QAnon helped to promote and then usurped and inserted its message in "Save the Children" marches? Is there pride in marchers carrying signs featuring pizza slices? Is it rewarding that false claims of all those cabal crimes against kids tie up child trafficking hotlines designed for tips about real abuse?

Did you really believe so many Americans are so stupid? Or did it come as a surprise when you found so many really are? Well, Q, I warned that you probably wouldn't like me.

Jack ❖

Colwell covers Indiana politics for the South Bend Tribune.

Presidential perceptions may not hit down ballot

By KYLE KONDIK

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — With the conventions now in the rearview mirror, and incidents of violence in Kenosha, WI and Portland, OR dominating the news, political watchers are debating whether the presidential race is getting tighter. Compared to Joe Biden's high points in late June and early July, the race does seem to be closer; compared to before the conventions to now, the story is still unclear, although a flood of new polling Wednesday was generally favorable for Biden.



Whatever prognosticators say -- our own Electoral College ratings show Biden leading but just shy of 270 electoral votes, which is a little less bearish on Donald Trump than other forecasters — the public itself does not seem to see a clear favorite in the race.

This may have down-ballot consequences.

Two mid-August polls showed Biden leading Trump nationally by a comfortable margin, but respondents in those same polls were torn on who they actually thought would win. The Pew Research Center had Biden leading 53%-45%, but respondents, by a slim 50%-48% margin, thought Trump would win. Likewise, a CBS News/YouGov poll had Biden up 52%-42%, but when asked who they thought would win, respondents were torn, 41%-40% nominally in favor of Trump.

The USC Dornsife tracking poll, which attracted attention in 2016 for being more favorable to Trump than many other national polls over the course of the campaign, has started off this cycle by being a little more favorable to Biden than the national averages. Its most recent reading showed Biden up by 10 points. However, when respondents are asked about who they think others in their state will support, Biden and Trump are tied.

Betting markets also indicate more uncertainty than national polls. RealClearPolitics aggregates betting markets, and finds that oddsmakers have the race roughly even right now — this after Biden became a favorite in June and July while Trump was narrowly favored in April and May. This stands in contrast to 2016; Ohio State University's Thomas Wood recently noted that Hillary Clinton was a much bigger favorite in betting markets in late August 2016 than Biden was in late August of this campaign.

The Pew and YouGov polls showed that slightly more Republicans are confident in Trump winning than Democrats are confident in Biden winning. Surely, some of this is a 2016 hangover after the Democrats' Election Night nightmare. But some of it, also, must reflect legitimate uncertainty about the outcome overall and at least some lack of trust in Biden's polling lead, as well as the reliability

of the polls that undergird Biden's lead (we feel it too, at least to some degree).

Time will tell if the public and the bettors do better or worse than the polls. But the reason we bring all this up in the context of a report on the U.S. House is because these expectations may have down-ballot repercussions.

We've previously noted in this space a study by respected political scientist Robert Erikson, who suggested that some high-information voters may be likelier to split tickets against the party of a presidential candidate they believe is strongly favored to win the election as a way to put a check on the person they believe is the likely winner. This sort of dynamic may have helped down-ballot Republicans in 2016, who may have benefited from (erroneous) projections of a Clinton victory, contributing to the ticket-splitting we saw in highly-

educated, suburban districts where Republican House incumbents performed well even as Trump was significantly underperforming usual Republican presidential performance.

This time, Democrats may be better off if Biden is simultaneously leading, but the public and betting markets don't see him as being favored. Republicans are defending some highly-educated suburban districts this time where Trump seems likely to do even worse than he did four years ago. How confident voters are in the presidential outcome could contribute to the House outcomes in these districts, particularly in these kinds of districts with high-information voters.

Back before the pandemic, and when it appeared that Bernie Sanders might be the Democratic nominee, I wrote about this dynamic from the perspective of concerned Democratic House incumbents. You could now apply to same argument to Trump and Republican House incumbents — and even to Republican Senate incumbents like Cory Gardner in Colorado or Susan Collins in Maine, who will need crossover votes to win. Arguing that they could be a check on the Democrats' worst impulses could end up being a closing pitch for both embattled senators as well as some swing district Republicans, but the argument may have less juice if voters aren't confident about the presidential outcome.

Meanwhile, Democratic incumbents in Trump-won districts may have an easier time separating themselves from the national party and generating crossover support if voters in their districts are not strongly assuming Biden will win the presidency. That leads us to this week's rating changes.

Overall, we now have 232 districts at least leaning to Democrats, 192 districts at least leaning to Republicans, and 11 Toss-ups. If we split the Toss-ups roughly down the middle (6-5 Republican), we'd be looking at a 237-198 Democratic-controlled House, or a two-seat gain from the 235-200 Democratic House elected in 2018. ❖

Marc Chase, NWI Times: It may seem like cruel poetic justice that in a Northwest Indiana city called Whiting, the myth of the white-hat-wearing hero has again been knocked from its pedestal with the recent federal indictment and pending felony guilty plea of Mayor Joe Stahura. The admitted felonious criminal acts of Stahura are the most recent reminder that white hats often are too good to be genuine — and that perhaps white hats are just as much a warning of false promise as they are a beacon for hope. Over the years, I invested in the dime novel that was the story of supposed local government hero Stahura. Myself, and other past editorial writers at *The Times*, celebrated Stahura's leadership for transforming the industrial oil refinery town on the Lake Michigan shoreline into a family-friendly community with a strong sense of place. It was a story line that was easy to embrace. Stahura was widely thought of as one of the good guys in a Northwest Indiana political landscape littered with corruption and graft. Over the years, the progression of Region government leaders leading into the Hammond federal courthouse, and ultimately federal prison, has been longer than a Black Friday line at Costco. We've repeatedly cited the 80-plus Region elected leaders and their politically connected supporters who have been convicted of felony crimes against taxpayers since the mid 1980s. Most of us didn't see Stahura filing into that line. He ushered in millions of dollars in lakefront development — moves that directly helped Whiting but also began transforming the overall sense of place for Northwest Indiana. Stahura championed the creation of the national Mascot Hall of Fame in the city. Though it has struggled to meet attendance and financial forecasts, it was widely seen as a wholesome creation, celebrating the plush icons of Americana that are the costumed mascots of our sports teams. These accomplishments can't be taken away from Stahura. But they also weren't enough to provide cover for his admitted ill dealings. Last week, federal prosecutors indicted the mayor on felony wire fraud and tax evasion charges alleging he spent \$255,000 in campaign funds to fuel his and his wife's gambling habits, to pay down person debts and to provide financial support for his adult daughter. In the end, Whiting Mayor Joe Stahura won't be best remembered for his hero's white hat of government accomplishments. Instead, he'll be branded in disgrace with the bandanna mask of a bandit. ❖



Gary Truitt, Hoosier Ag Today: Well, here we are in the heart of election season. The conventions are over, the campaign commercials have begun in earnest, and the name calling has declined to the level of a junior high playground. Over the next few months, we in the ag media will be reporting on where different candidates stand on various farm issues. The truth is, however, that their positions, proposals, and promises don't add up to a bag of beans and should be ignored. What is important is vision — how they see the future. This realization occurred to me as I was sitting in the recent Lt. Governor's Debate on Agricul-

ture held in Boone County, Indiana. For 50 minutes, the three candidates for the Lt. Governor position in Indiana dutifully answered questions from three other ag journalists and me about a variety of farm issues from broadband to trade to hemp. On the national scene, in what journalist H.I. Mencken called "A Carnival of Buncombe," the same approach can be used. Mencken astutely observed that what candidates for the White House really want is "the job." Thus, they will say anything and promise anything to anybody at any time if it will help them get the job. This may seem cynical, and it is; but it is also reality, and to think otherwise is delusional. Thus, don't be distracted by what Donald Trump or Joe Biden say or promise on any specific ag issue. Try, as best you can, to discern their vision for the future of agriculture and for our country. Then, decide if that approach is going to help your family and farm grow and prosper in the years ahead. ❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: It's hard to determine whether President Donald Trump's reelection pitch is impressively perverse or perversely impressive. The only thing we know for sure is that it is odd. Odd, indeed. His 70-minute-long, rambling and — to use a favorite Trump term — low-energy speech accepting the Republican presidential nomination demonstrates that. Much of the attention focused on the president's acceptance address has been on the setting. Critics have noted that he violated long-held political norms — and, quite possibly, the law — by giving a political speech on the White House lawn. They also have taken aim at the fact that he packed more than 1,000 people, most of them not wearing masks, together to hear him speak, in violation of medical advice and public health cautions. Those are valid points, but they overlook the fact that Trump delivered an insurgent's, rather than an incumbent's, speech. He spent a great deal of time attacking his Democratic opponent, former Vice President Joe Biden, in complicated and often bizarre ways. But he didn't devote much energy to defending his own four years in office. How could he? The days leading up to Trump's acceptance of re-nomination were tumultuous ones. News came down that not one, but two criminal investigations into his and his family's business affairs are ongoing in New York state. At least one of his sons fretted to friendly reporters that members of the Trump family might be prosecuted the minute they leave office. Recordings of the president's sister — a former federal judge — surfaced in which she depicted Trump as an amoral moron. And the nation itself was on fire. In his speech, the president warned Americans of the dire consequences of electing Joe Biden president. If Biden moves into the Oval Office, Trump said, our city streets would erupt in violence and chaos. Jobs would disappear. Pestilence would roam the land. Americans would have to live in fear. The obvious problem with the president's argument is that all these things are happening now. In Donald Trump's America. ❖

Young expects rescue deal

NAPPANEE — Indiana U.S. Sen. Todd Young says he still expects a deal on a new round of federal pandemic assistance, but says it may take a few weeks ([WIBC](#)). Congress is in recess but could return on 24 hours' notice if there's a deal. Young says there are still discussions going on, but acknowledges there are still significant "friction points" preventing an agreement. Young accuses Democrats of being unwilling to compromise, while some Senate Republicans have refused to support even their party's version because of spending concerns. Young says he wants a narrowly-focused bill that makes the top priorities a safe return to school, virus testing and other health care concerns, and jobs. Young says the bill needs to include liability protections for employers. And Young is adamant that a now-expired \$600 add-on to weekly unemployment benefits is too high and shouldn't be revived at that level.



CDC contacts states on vaccine

WASHINGTON — Dr. Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sent a letter last week to the nation's governors with an urgent request. The Trump administration wanted them to do everything in their power to eliminate hurdles for vaccine distribution sites to be fully operational by Nov. 1. The Aug. 27 letter, obtained by McClatchy, asked governors to fast-track permits and licenses for new distribution sites. "The normal time required to obtain these permits presents a significant barrier to the success of this urgent public health program," Redfield wrote. "CDC urgently requests your assistance in expediting applications for these distribution facilities," he continued, "and, if necessary, asks

that you consider waiving requirements that would prevent these facilities from becoming fully operational by November 1, 2020." ❖

CDC eviction moratorium doubts

BOSTON — Housing advocates say the Trump administration's surprise national moratorium on evictions only delays a wave of crushing debt and homelessness, and an attorney representing landlords questions whether the measure is aimed at voters ahead of the November election ([AP](#)). The White House announced Tuesday that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would act under its broad powers to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The measure would forbid landlords from evicting anyone for failure to pay rent, providing the renter meets four criteria. Critics call it everything from an empty stall tactic to an outright political ploy. "My first reaction was, 'Thank God,'" said Matthew Hill, an attorney with the Public Justice Center in Baltimore. But he noted that tenants will be expected to repay their rent when the moratorium expires on Jan. 1, and without some kind of rental assistance, "we are just going to be kicking the can down the road." Richard Vetstein, the lead attorney representing landlords who are challenging an eviction moratorium in Massachusetts, called the CDC order "convoluted" and poorly drafted. "It's a pretty blatant political play by Trump in an election year," Vetstein said.

NCAA furloughs entire staff

INDIANAPOLIS — The NCAA will furlough its entire Indianapolis-based staff of about 600 employees for three to eight weeks in a cost-saving move, according to memo obtained Wednesday by [AP](#). The memo from NCAA President Mark Emmert went out to the association's more than 1,200 member schools Wednesday.

day. The furloughs will not affect senior executives.

Indiana unveils new COVID map

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana's top health official announced Wednesday an overhaul of a new county-by-county rating system for coronavirus risks just before it was becoming public as a guide for school leaders on whether to keep students in their classrooms ([IBJ](#)). The state health department will now assign scores to all 92 counties based on the number of new cases per 100,000 residents and the percentage of tests confirming COVID-19 infections. Those scores then coordinate with a color-coded rating system for the county's level of community spread and risk. Dr. Kristina Box said the ratings were changed based on feedback received from school leaders in the past week. The new metrics, she said, will be "less volatile" to rapid COVID-19 changes at the community level and more representative of "true community spread" within a county.

State officials warn about Labor Day

INDIANAPOLIS — The state's top health official warned Hoosiers ahead of the Labor Day weekend to limit social gatherings and time spent indoors without masks, noting past COVID-19 case surges experienced after Fourth of July and Memorial Day. "We don't want to see that again," Dr. Kristina Box, state health commissioner, said Wednesday during Gov. Eric Holcomb's press briefing.

30 IU Greek houses under quarantine

BLOOMINGTON — More than a thousand students at Indiana University-Bloomington Greek houses are under quarantine ([WTHR-TV](#)). The university reports 30 chapters are under quarantine.