

Holcomb's last political campaign

Governor attempts to manage pandemic crisis amidst mixed messaging

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Nine months ago, Gov. Eric Holcomb was sitting on an \$8 million campaign war chest, a 3.2% jobless rate and a \$60 billion road funding plan. His main Democratic challenger had just posted \$14,000 on his year-end campaign finance report.

And then came the pandemic which forced the governor to impose an unprecedented economic shutdown. The pandemic has since killed 3,700 Hoosiers, forced schools to close, put half a million small businesses on the brink of bankruptcy, and the jobless rate estimated to hit 17% by May.

Last Saturday on what became a rare 2020 campaign swing through southwestern Indiana, this writer



passed a COVID-19 test, donned a face mask and joined Holcomb, Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer and GOP communications director Jake Oakman, a day that

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Masking inconsistencies

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – About two hours before Gov. Eric Holcomb's weekly pandemic press conference Wednesday, Indiana University Prof. Aaron Carroll took part in a "Keeping IU Healthy" webinar.



He was asked about the 1,700 COVID-19 cases the state reported earlier in the day: "Will the state hover around that or get worse?" Dr. Carroll, of the Indiana University School of Medicine, responded, "I think it will get worse over the next few weeks and then after the election I hope we start

ratcheting things back. We can, as we have in the past, limit the spread of disease and make it safer. That will require governments to act and they often act slowly.



"Every day at noon I cringe when I see how many Hoosiers have died because the governor isn't sending serious public health signals - like a true mask mandate with consequences, like capacity reductions at bars and restaurants."

- Democrat nominee Woody Myers



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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



"Even in the bad second wave, Arizona, Florida, Texas they got hold of it. They had to take action. They had to do some unpopular things, but they were able to ratchet it back to achieve a better level of success," Dr. Carroll continued. "It will take Indiana taking action. I believe they will, it just may be a couple weeks off because the election, frankly, makes it harder to do a lot of stuff. Without laying blame or casting aspersions, ask me again in two weeks."

Gov. Holcomb was asked by the press about a possible reinstatement of lower stages. The governor became animated, saying, "Stage 5 has zero, nothing to do with any campaign. This has got to do with safely getting back to school, getting this economy reopened safely."

Another reporter asked him about taking what his Democratic challenger Woody Myers called a "mask suggestion" as opposed to a mask mandate, with sanctions for those not getting with the program.

Holcomb responded, "We're not living in a police state. Our liberties do need to be protected and I also mentioned they should not infringe or harm anyone else. We can go through why masks are safe. We know that they are. They help you and help your neighbor, someone you may not know or ever see again. The last thing we need to do is go back. The last thing I want to do is go back to a stay at home. When we did, we didn't shut the state down. We said we've got to get our footing. When the first wave came, we've got to get our PPE inventory up, we've got to have our hospital networks working as one. We have to have the capacity to care. We have that now. We're proving it works."

Fort Wayne Journal Gazette

reporter Nikki Kelly suggested that the "blanket approach" taken with Holcomb's "hunkering down" order last March had successfully brought the COVID cases down, only to see the dramatic spikes seen shortly after Holcomb announced Stage 5 in late September.

Holcomb pushed back. "We started with a very targeted approach," he said. "Marion County was treated very differently, Cass County was treated very differently and throughout the different stages we got our footing and there was no blanket approach. We dealt with this very surgically. Once we had the capacity statewide, then we were able to move statewide to stage 5."

The elephant in the room



has been President Trump, and, to a lesser extent, Vice President Pence. While Holcomb has been ardently consistent once the CDC determined that face masks did, indeed, dramatically help reduce the COVID spread, Trump and Pence have been flagrantly muddled.

Part of Gov. Holcomb's dilemma is the mixed messaging coming from President Trump, who commands an intensely loyal following in red state Indiana. The president was pressed at his NBC town hall last week on why he is opposed to masks by Savannah Guthrie: "I don't get it, because you have so much power and influence as president. You could go to your rallies and say, 'Everyone put on a mask right now.'"

At a rally the night before in Florida, the Trump campaign packed

a largely maskless crowd into an airport MAGA rally. Trump responded, "No, because I was OK with the masks. I was good with it, but I've heard very different stories on masks. A lot of places say different things." Trump then added (falsely) that the CDC reported "85% of people who wore masks" caught COVID-19. Last month, he said restaurant waitresses don't like wearing masks as a factor in dismissing their use.

It begs the question: Who are Trump's Hoosier supporters going to follow, the president, or the governor?

When the histories of this pandemic are recorded in the not-so-distant future, the tightly packed and largely maskless MAGA rallies will go down in infamy as reckless, super spreader events.

When I asked him about whether Trump's inconsistency was creating problems on the homefront, Holcomb said, "Sure." But he avoided direct criticism of Trump.

This afternoon, Holcomb said he would "likely" join Vice President Pence at a campaign rally at Fort Wayne International Airport.

Even though Pence heads the White House

coronavirus task force, he has been wildly inconsistent on masking, just like his boss. When he was with Holcomb at Marion University in July, Pence wore a mask. When he's with Trump, like the now infamous Rose Garden super spreader event for Judge Amy Coney Barrett or any given MAGA rally, Pence shows a naked face.

When I was with Holcomb on Saturday, we all wore masks the entire time. An aide to the governor had a carton of masks to hand out. At the Sullivan County Lincoln luncheon, about a third of the folks wore masks, but this was at a banquet and many were eating.

Even so, Dr. Carroll called an indoor banquet of 20 people a "dangerous" event.

Holcomb said he will join Pence this afternoon "If it's safely orchestrated. I likely will. I'm not trying to avoid your question. Obviously if we do, we'll follow all the Secret Service protocol. I'll be tested before I go. I'll be masked up. If I can't be distanced, I'll be masked up, just like I was the last time I was with the vice president at Marian University."

Folks will be watching. ❖

Holcomb, from page 1

yielded more than two hours of interview time. Holcomb told Howey Politics Indiana that the state's top priority during this third COVID-19 wave rattling the state is "to maintain our posture in our ability and capacity to care for those who are in need."

It came a day before epidemiologist Michael Osterholm told NBC's Meet The Press that the nation was entering its darkest three months, with COVID cases surging to 55,000 a day nationally. On Saturday, Indiana set an all-time high of 2,521 COVID cases, followed by 1,629 cases on Sunday, capping a streak of nine out of 10 days when infections topped 1,000 cases. Indiana Health Commissioner Kristina Box announced three days earlier she and two family members had COVID.

Democrat nominee Woody Myers accused Holcomb of "freezing" while Libertarian nominee Donald Rainwater maintained that Holcomb had gone too far, encroaching on civil liberties. The press was questioning whether he had abandoned his "data driven" approach that marked the state's first two waves and resulted in his declaring "Stage 5" in late September.

Holcomb said that with the shutdown he ordered last March, "We had to get our footing because of the scale and pace this virus was moving, we had to make

sure we had that capacity to care for those in need and to get those resources out for our front lines to deal with all the incoming." On Saturday, there were still 36.3% of ICU beds and 79.6% of ventilators available.

Holcomb said that should the surge of infections continue, the state will have the ability to add ICU capac-



Gov. Holcomb conducts an interview in Shelburn with Terre Haute Tribune-Star reporter Alex Modesitt. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

ity. "We have a long way to go," Holcomb said. "We're detecting more. We did 30,000 tests yesterday. Our radar is becoming clearer and shows more. Our tracing is getting more sophisticated. Ultimately knowing that we're going to continue to detect cases, it's how you manage the spread.

At the beginning of the shutdown, we said this is going up so fast that we had to be aware of bed access, ventilator access, negative flow room access. We still are. That's how we manage our way through this. We got that under control. Now, if we have to add beds, we can because they're available. You have to watch a county or district and say, 'How close are we getting to capacity?' And how can we grow that capacity if the numbers grow as well."

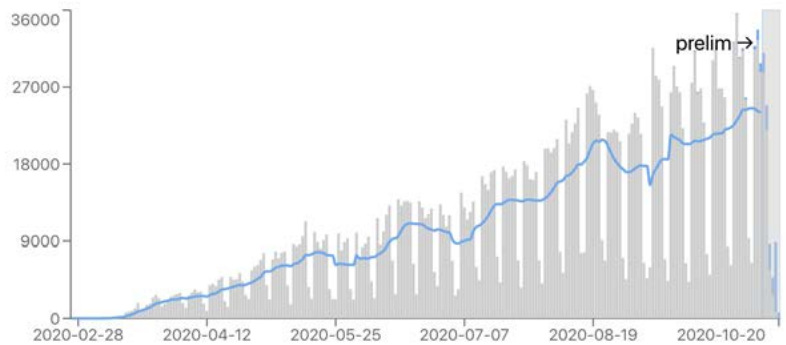
Stopping at WTWO-TV on the way to the Sullivan County Republican Lincoln Luncheon, reporter Taylor Johnson asked whether he would roll the state back from Stage 5. "This is the No. 1 issue on every Hoosier's mind and if you're a citizen of the world, you should be very concerned about this," the masked governor began. "Our further announcements will be on a daily and weekly basis based on the data. We're still in Stage 5, which is still a stage. We're not back to the good ol' days where we just let 'er rip. We're still awaiting a vaccine and therapeutics. Until that fine day, this is in large terms, up to us in how we slow the spread."

Holcomb's mission of "individual responsibility" has been complicated by President Trump, who has gone from making fun of those who wear masks to propagating misinformation about mask effectiveness, and continues to hold MAGA rallies where most attendees don't wear masks and are not socially distanced.

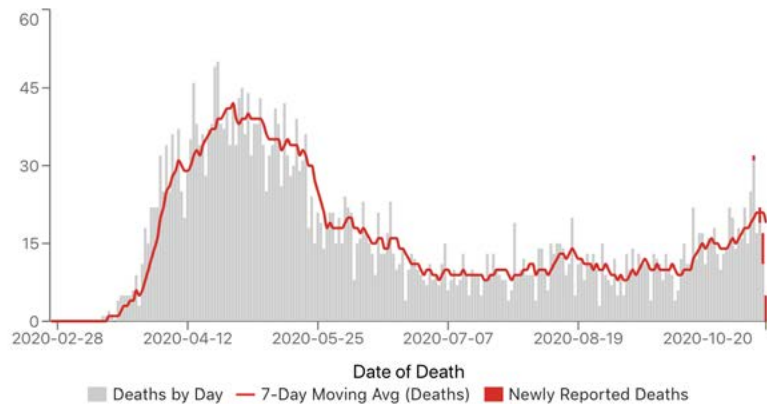
Asked by HPI if Trump has contributed to mixed messaging that has resulted in a lack of compliance, Holcomb responded, "Sure. That's the education component of it. What governors on both sides of the aisle talk about is how do we follow up as state and local communities, county by county, messaging that the mask mandate is a statement the state is making: This works."

He told WTWO-TV, "When folks act responsibly, we can get back closer to the way it was. Not the same, because we have to mask up. We have to practice good hygiene. We can't cram as many people in a stadium. Our schools are proving, if fourth graders can do it, so can adults. Folks shouldn't be so fixated on a maximum number. It's like a fire code in a restaurant. Well, there's

Statewide Tests by Day



Statewide Deaths by Day



a COVID code as well, and it has to do with spacing and distancing properly and safely."

He pointed to former New Jersey governor Chris Christie, who ended up in ICU after prepping President Trump for his debate with Democrat Joe Biden. "Chris Christie says he was doing it right for four months and he let his guard down for four days and he ended up in an ICU bed," Holcomb said. "So it can strike with a quickness and it can lay you out and it can be lethal."

Johnson had one last question for Holcomb: Will you run for president? "No," Holcomb responded, before adding, "Maybe for Hair Club for Men."

Arriving at the Sullivan Lincoln Day in Shelburn, where about a third of the attendees were wearing masks

Today's Statewide ICU Bed Usage

46.3%
ICU Beds in Use - Non-COVID

18.8%
ICU Beds in Use - COVID

34.8%
ICU Beds Available

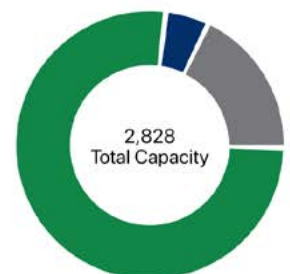


Today's Statewide Ventilator Usage

17.8%
Ventilators in Use - Non-COVID

4.8%
Ventilators in Use - COVID

77.4%
Ventilators Available



(others didn't, but they were eating), Holcomb donned a Hawaiian shirt in honor of longtime Sullivan Republican Chairman Bill Springer. The tropical shirt was Springer's usual fashion, but on this day, Springer looked like an undertaker, wearing a black suit.

Before entering the luncheon, Holcomb met with local reporters. "Everyone has COVID-19 fatigue," he acknowledged. "We just have to accept that fact until there are vaccines and therapeutics proven to be effective."

Asked about mowing through most of the state's \$3.2 billion rainy day fund, he noted that the state has received \$9 billion in business loans and \$3 billion in CARES Act funding passed by Congress and signed by President Trump. "We didn't wait for the session. We were quick to act," Holcomb said. "We did say to K-12 we will protect 100% of your funding. To state agencies, I need you to find 15%. This is a two-front battle. We've got to make sure we're managing this and we need to grow our way out of this."

Asked about more teacher pay and a coming December commission report, Holcomb, "We've come a long way on this front. We've increased education fund \$1.6 billion. It's a historic, record increase. State paid off liabilities and 299 out of 304 school districts passed on teacher pay raises." As for the biennial budget session, Holcomb added, "We're dealing with reality, COVID reality." The commission, he said, will report, "Here are a number of options on how we can increase education funding and teacher pay."

He and Hupfer spent about 20 minutes in a Q&A with Sullivan Republicans. "We're on a roll. We've proven we're not just resilient but innovative," Holcomb said. "We are in the top five states of people returning back to work. We're punching above our weight." That includes 26,000 job commitments in 2020 with average pay at \$27 an hour.

On the opioid epidemic, Holcomb said that treatment bed capacity is up 138%. On the abortion issue, Holcomb said, "Sanctity of life to me means start to finish." He noted his State of the State address last January when he vowed to reduce infant mortality. "We've been able to bring down Indiana's infant mortality rate for three straight years, to a historic low since 1900," he said, also noting that the U.S. Health and Human Services recognized the state for leading the nation in foster care child adoptions."

Hupfer observed that over the past two decades, "nobody has been more involved in Hoosier politics" than Holcomb, who went from being a staffer to U.S. Rep. John

Hostettler, an unsuccessful General Assembly candidate, to Gov. Mitch Daniels' deputy chief of staff, Daniels' reelection campaign manager, Indiana Republican chairman, and a key aide to U.S. Sen. Dan Coats. In 2015, he launched a U.S. Senate campaign before Gov. Mike Pence chose him to replace Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann. By July 2016, he replaced Pence on the gubernatorial ticket, commencing his historic "107-day campaign" in which he rode the Donald Trump wave to defeat Democrat John Gregg.

His reelection campaign this year was supposed to be a return to "normal politics." It prompted Holcomb to say, "Talking to you two weeks out has been the only thing normal about this campaign."

Here is HPI's Interview with Gov. Holcomb as we headed west on I-70 toward Terre Haute, then south to Shelburn:

HPI: I've listened to most of your Wednesday press conferences, but I want to step back and take a broader look at this pandemic. Was there a pandemic playbook at hand that you were able to work from when this began to take shape in January?

Holcomb: There was an influenza playbook, which was a framework or approach, but there was no pandemic playbook on the scale of this Coronavirus. As important as having the play written up, your team becomes critically important. I didn't just mean my cabinet, I mean my team around the state of Indiana in all 92 counties. We're fortunate to have practicing physicians in their state employment and outside that have the stellar reputations and credentials, and they all, whether it was health, or Department of Homeland Security, or Fred Payne (DWD), understood the public service we needed and had to provide

at a time like this. As important as having our play, and putting it together very quickly, what guided us through was being able to draw on the expertise of not only our cabinet, but Eli Lilly, Roche, our hospital networks, Fairbanks ...

HPI: Indiana has a lot of great health infrastructure...

Holcomb: We were able to do a lot of things just as important as our economic infrastructure and architecture was going into this, so was our health infrastructure. Having a company like Roche here and their expertise, or Eli Lilly, people around the world are reliant on those two companies. And they're headquartered here. We are fortunate to have a mature, life sciences ecosystem that has a long history of collaboration. We didn't skip a beat in that sense. From the outset, I called all of the central Indiana hospital CEOs into my office – we sat around in a big circle; we moved all the furniture – and said we had to operate as one.

HPI: So when was that first "uh-oh" moment when you realized the gravity of the situation with regard to the pandemic and the economy? Late January?



Gov. Holcomb at WTWO-TV with reporter Taylor Johnson. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

Holcomb: Late January. You could feel it coming in late January. We were reading reports. It's like that wave that flows, ebb and flows, it crests, dies down and then crests again. That's all in my mind, until we get to multiple therapeutics and vaccines, we'll have to continue to deal with this virus and that makes it even more important to control our own actions, of what we can control. That's the way you can spread it and that's the way we can maintain our ability, our capacity to care. That is our posture: Maintaining that capacity to care for those who are in need. At the very outset, that's why we had to hunker down for about a month, all of April. It was the tailend of March and into the beginning of April. We had to get our footing because of the scale and pace this virus was moving, we had to make sure we had that capacity to care for those in need and to get resources out for our front lines to deal with all the incoming. That meant standing up a PPE marketplace, it meant converting our (manufacturing) lines, it meant working with Roche, Eli Lilly, IU Health, coordinating with our 10 health districts around the state of Indiana and it meant working with local government officials. This was the one issue that brought us all to the same place, every minute of the day. And locally, 92 counties flare up differently at different times. It grows out from there. That collaboration between locals, state and our federal partners is just critically important.

HPI: Was last Wednesday one of the worst days of the pandemic for you? Dr. Box announced she had COVID along with two family members, and we had begun to see infections spike from that 400- to 800-range a day to 1,000, 1,500 and now 2,000-plus? To tell you the truth, the caseload we're seeing now is putting a shudder through the population. Those are shocking numbers.

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Holcomb: (After a long pause) Dr. Box is resilient, she's strong, she's aware, she's experienced. I talk to her multiple times a day. She has a joyful heart and she's a true servant leader. As an example, yesterday in addition to all the important things we were talking about, she was talking about Jimmy Johnson racing in Indy Cars. I'm not worried about her.

HPI: Is Dr. Box asymptomatic?

Holcomb: Yes. (On Wednesday, he said she ended up with mild symptoms). The hardest day is every day because of the deaths. (Long pause) They are not numbers. We talk about this in a different sense from when the drug epidemic was taking lives. No one on the task force looks at them as numbers. It's easy to be thrown into that. This is what the Fairbanks study has told us: We have a long way to go, a long way to go with these kind of numbers.



HPI: Right.

Holcomb: We know the virus isn't becoming less infectious. We've done the opposite. We're detecting more of them. We did 30,000 tests yesterday, about 34,000.

HPI: So that's what's going on; the testing is ramping up the numbers that had been there all along?

Holcomb: Absolutely. Our radar is becoming clearer and shows more. Our tracing is getting more sophisticated and thorough from the outset. Health departments have done this since the Middle Ages.

HPI: But not at this scale.

Holcomb: Right. We're a lot more mobile, in and out of different counties. So those testing and tracing; that's important, but ultimately knowing that we're going to continue to detect cases, it's how you manage to slow the spread so you can always manage the care. At the beginning of the shutdown, we said, "This is going up so fast," that we had to be mindful of bed access, ventilator access, negative flow room access, a list of factors we had to be aware of and we still are. That's how we manage our way through this. So we said, "Electives are going to have to wait because this is going too far, too fast. We got that under control." Now, if we have to add beds, we can because they're available. But we are constantly watching each

area because we have to ask, how close are we getting to capacity? And how can we grow that capacity if the numbers grow as well?"

HPI: What message do you want to convey through me to regular Hoosiers? Because there is some alarm in the population because of the numbers we're seeing. And you were right on Wednesday, this spike is happening in Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, Illinois, Wisconsin; they're all setting records and hospitals in Wisconsin are at capacity.

Holcomb: And Europe.

HPI: But the difference between Europe and America is those nations got it under control last summer, before the predicted autumnal spike we're witnessing now.

Holcomb: I don't think any of us can afford to have a false sense of security, meaning our health is good so we're OK, we're fine. Because this virus uses people to spread, and it kills. And everything in between. And there's so much we don't know about this, whether you're a 23-month-old or a 23-year-old or an 83-year-old. It's going to affect you in the short term and potentially long term, and potentially fatal ways. We have a personal responsibility to do all we can do to slow the spread. That's not a slogan. If we do slow the spread of COVID-19, that will allow us to continue to take care of the people in need. If we don't; if we whistle past the graveyard, if we throw caution to the wind then that will affect our capacity to care. As we said on Wednesday, you can go to a Colts game, not in the same way you did before, or not every-

body, because you'd be compromising what works which is physical distancing, masking up. For the average Hoosier, we're going to have to endure this new normal as long as it takes. If we act responsibly, the safer we all will be until we get to that day of advanced therapeutics and a vaccine and enough people buy into that.

HPI: You've been remarkably consistent in messaging on this, as compared to President Trump, who has been inconsistent, if not reckless. Even though at the NBC town hall earlier this week he said he was for face masks, and then erroneously cited a study that said 85% of those who wear masks caught COVID. He's holding MAGA rallies with few masks and no social distancing. The messaging has been mixed. And I'll give you another example. Last summer my wife and I went to Lowe's on North Keystone, didn't find what we were looking for, then went to Lowe's in Fishers, and then Carmel. At Keystone, there were probably 85-90% wearing masks, but then up north, it went down to 60% and then to less than half. The messaging has been mixed to the population. Has that been a dilemma for you?

Holcomb: Sure. That's the education component of it. What governors on both sides of the aisle talk about is how do we follow up as state and local communities, county by county, messaging that the mask mandate is a statement the state is making: This works. We need you to do this. When I'm on the phone, businesses throughout the state and local officials tell us, "Please make sure the state maintains a state-wide mandate." Because it allows companies, businesses, Main Street, our largest employers and our smallest to refer to the State of Indiana policy. It's up to them to enforce and educate, but if we need to call a small business or

a big box, "We need your help; we need you to be open and have customers; we want you to grow," we will, we can and we do. That's part of the education. That's that partnership. Part of my responsibility is to lead by example and make sure that folks know the integrity of information we're putting out is true, is based in fact. I'm sick of the masks, too. My glasses fog up. I do trust in Hoosiers, but as you cited, some won't trust that fact that masks work to slow the spread. It takes me, and mayors and commissioners who are closest to the problem to continue to get the message out.

HPI: Are you still on the phone with Govs. DeWine, Whitmer, Prizker and Beshear every week? Are any of our neighbors thinking about shutting down or rolling back

stages due to the recent spike?

Holcomb: Yes. There is a realization that our schools aren't the source of origin – in class – of the spread. We do tracing ... and you find it's off campus, at parties, outside the classroom. Or go to some of our biggest auto manufacturers and their supply chains. The safest place is at work. They have the ability to remain open. Our biggest employers hit pause; they had supply chain issues, too. But to their credit they said, "We've got to buy plexiglass, we have to provide masks; we have to reconfigure the floor." They did some amazing things to become safe. They made employees safe, they had education seminars for weeks before they ever came back. That brought employees back in stages. Our auto manufacturers' concern was, "Please keep the mask mandate, please encourage people to physically distance. What we've seen is, our economy has bounced back. Its (jobless rate) is down to 6.4%, 6.2%. You go from 3.2% unemployment to 17%, to 6.2%, lower than the national average, lower than every state we touch. That's 566,000 people who were once unemployed. Now, we still have a couple hundred thousand still out of work. So how do we get more people get back to work that ends up helping us get through this and helps fund all of those programs, not just

help the business grow, to help people in need? You could have everybody stay home and hope you get to zero. We're not going to get to zero. This is going to keep rolling until we get vaccines and therapeutics.

HPI: Have there been any student or teacher deaths traced to a school infection origin?

Holcomb: No. I think this is a credit to the individuals who may have had some underlying health conditions and they loved their job. They didn't want to risk it. If you

can't get yourself to that place, my job is to make sure ... it should not be lost on anyone that right now, people who are making business investments are going around the country and the world looking for a safe place to grow their business and investment. As of yesterday, we have ushered in this year, during a global pandemic, more than 25,000 new job commitments through the IEDC. In 2016 we did 20,320, as of yesterday we were just under 26,000. We've done \$4.8 billion in capital investment this year. We're at \$27.77 average hourly wage in those job commitments. We still have two months to do. Our fourth quarter pipeline is full. People are not hunkering down. They are playing through. They are saying, "Who's managing their way through this? Who's building the workforce develop-



Gov. Holcomb with Chairman Kyle Hupfer, U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon and State Rep. Bruce Borders at the Sullivan Lincoln Luncheon. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)



ment programs for our business to locate here?" We're experiencing the opposite of what some states are. Our phone is ringing off the hook. It's coming from all over the country, because folks are saying, "I've got to grow or my business will die." That economic ecosystem, being able to manage our way through this with no drama, is important to people who are making \$800 million investments to meet global or local demand. One of my predecessors you covered, who promised a "freight train of change" ... I think we've become a freight train of growth and opportunity, even during a global pandemic.

HPI: For the students who had to learn from home this year, are you concerned about the Class of '32 or '33 who have missed structured instruction and are dealing with expanded summer melt?

Holcomb: Yep. I'm concerned about the impact of the disruptions. Fortunately our schools, parents and faculty opted for a hybrid approach, of calling audibles on a daily basis, waking up every day, dealing with the uncertainty, and making tough decisions about the health and well-being of their mission, and ultimately, their students. What that means is the inconsistency this virus brings has to be dealt with head-on. There are some silver linings that have come out of this, but it has also forced us to continue to understand the importance of investment, infrastructure, not just roads, but broadband internet connectivity, device proficiency on both the teacher and student side of the device. I'm actually quite excited about the future of education because we continue to learn just how you can, and can't, do remotely. It's not ideal for K-12, but it doesn't mean we shut down and that loss is forever. And, by the way, remotely means you can do that on-going, in addition to being in the classroom. That's occurring as well. That could occur for months, for students to continue to learn. You're starting to see the private sector embrace, out of opportunity, corporate commitment to the community. The programs that are starting to come

on line, funded by businesses ... all over the state that say, "We'll help train you" and "Here's the software. Here's how we can bridge to a future career." The future of education is starting to be developed and exposed right before us, and that is not a hybrid approach in terms of one or the other, but both, and ongoing. That could be a real asset for us. Our commitments to getting more connectivity, to computer science in every school, to STEM, to career counselors, to workforce development programs, our \$61 million for schools, those things all add up and position us well for not just being a tech hub, but growing a vibrant, attractive place for the future of work. That starts with that educational foundation.

HPI: When the General Assembly reconvenes, there is talk among candidates and legislators about reining in executive authority that you have used during the pandemic, the shutdown and the mask order. What is your basic message to legislators? It seems that you did have the flexibility to make the tough early calls. Are you concerned that may be eroded?

Holcomb: No. 1, I'll look forward to the conversation. No. 2, I really do understand how different this is on them, when they are out and about in their communities talking to a lot of different people. I do as well. So I hear the diversity of how I would do it as governor, or as commissioner of the Department of Health, or pick the position, mayor. I look forward to that conversation and I want it to be constructive. They typically are. They are working on how and when they'll meet, right now. We have a lot of very important work to do with a lean budget. Again, it's not just a challenging time, it's a time of real opportunity for us to separate ourselves. I've been in constant contact with leadership and members. I was this morning. We'll continue to be, and legislative members who want to revisit the law that was passed contemplating a time like this, I'm happy to revisit it.

HPI: Are you willing to revisit vote by mail?

Holcomb: Sure. That's been discussed for years in the General Assembly, going back to when I was state party chair. It is safe to vote. We're proving it, just like we proved it during the primary. I think this record turnout, regardless of who you're voting for, is being proved.

HPI: Are you confident this is going to be a free and fair election?

Holcomb: Yes. Explain what you mean by that?

HPI: President Trump has repeatedly said this will be a "rigged" and fraudulent election. He has cited absentee balloting as compromising the outcome.

Holcomb: I've got faith in Hoosiers to conduct ours free and fairly, easy to vote, hard to cheat, once again. Secretary Lawson, who I met with yesterday, is once again on top of this and working with all of our local clerks. They have the necessary PPE. Traffic is busy, whether you're in Indianapolis, Noblesville or anywhere else in Indiana. But, from what I gather, from what she shared, it's been efficient so far. So if anything, the primary sent out a warning signal, "Be prepared."

HPI: We talked earlier about how this is another campaign that has not been, in any sense, normal. We talked about your 100-day race in 2016 that you likened to building the airplane in flight.

Holcomb: Talking to you two weeks out has been the only thing normal about this campaign. I've always been the kind of person to take things day by day. I never got too ahead of myself. Always focused on what's my job right now, trusting that the future will take care of itself if you do the right thing. Be kind to people, be positive, look forward not back, refer to some accomplishments during the campaign to remind people of how far we've come. And, by the way, it was one of my predecessors who I worked for before I had gray hair who said, "Every 16 years garden needs weeded." I don't agree with him right now. But it turns out he is right, because if you wait 16 years ... but if you weed the garden, if you cultivate on a daily basis, go with what's working. And it's working. Because we continue to do big things, aspirational things. You don't go off course because of the issue of the day.

HPI: So this will be the third consecutive Republican gubernatorial campaign (after Govs. Mitch Daniels and Mike Pence) which hasn't gone negative.

Holcomb: With the people I've talked to when I go out and about, that's what they appreciate: The civility, proving it can be done as the world becomes more polarized. We've been polarized before; look at Adams and Jefferson. Look at the Civil War, both pre and post. Let's talk about how they described Abraham Lincoln and what they said about him. I think at the time we're living

in right now, for me at least, that is an important part of my agenda as any other legislative item. In fact, I think it is the foundation my pillars rest on. It's what needs to be proven, not just as viable, but the way to get things done. I mentioned to a mutual friend of ours, going back to 2005 to date, we continue to do big things, and things that have been talked about forever. Everyone has some opinion about some shiny object, but we've been able to make in just the last four record investments in K-12, we've never had a cash infusion into broadband before, never had a record infusion of cash in trails across Indiana; we've broken and shattered, crushed the new jobs commitment record, the wage level record; the cap ex record, the project record. We talked about for years aligning the superintendent of public instruction with the governor, therefore aligning those job duties. We talked about, for years, Sunday sales. You just go down the line, cleaning up the lead contamination in East Chicago, double-tracking the South Shore Line; massive, mega-transformational projects that will have a huge impact; completing I-69, which is something that's been talked about since the Korean Conflict, in 2024. Building a new Ohio River bridge in Evansville; the first trans-Atlantic flight to Europe.

HPI: Is that going to resume?

Holcomb: Yes. We're not just building new road projects, we're maintaining what we've got because we've got a 20-year, \$60 billion paid for, not debt-financed, road program that was rated A+, No. 1 in the nation. It's only because we're putting our money where our mouth is. Oh, and by the way, our interstates are cleaner than they've ever been as well.

HPI: I've noticed a lack of litter.

Holcomb: It's occurring because we've committed to cleaning our state assets. Our culture of doing big things isn't just accepted, it's expected. Getting through a global pandemic ... will distinguish us, from a lot of the competition. It's happening every day.

HPI: Assuming you win in November, how old will you be when you leave office?

Holcomb: 56.

HPI: What comes after that?

Holcomb: I've just never played that game. I'm not dodging your question. My plate is full right now, and will be if I'm rehired. There's nothing more exhilarating than seeing our infant mortality rate go down, or leading the nation in adoptions. I remember when I was talking about becoming best in the Midwest on infant mortality, someone said, "I don't know if I would have said that publicly." Hold me to it. ❖



Debate doesn't alter gubernatorial landscape

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – If anything, Tuesday's unremarkable gubernatorial debate provided a vivid contrast to that jarring presidential debate in Cleveland. It was civil.



But after an hour, the dynamics of this race which is headed for a GOP landslide didn't change. Gov. Eric Holcomb took in-coming from both Democrat Woody Myers and Libertarian Donald Rainwater over his pandemic

response. "This is an extraordinary time and we've had to take extraordinary measures," Holcomb said. "So we do have a state-mandated mask requirement throughout the state; it's a strong statement that says this works."

Myers responded that Holcomb's mandate was just a "mask suggestion." Rainwater insisted, "Nowhere in constitution does it say that individual rights can be suspended." And, the Libertarian added, science hasn't proved people are at risk. Rainwater added later that "It's not government's job to create jobs, but to protect individual rights."

On the governor's executive powers he used during the pandemic, Holcomb said that they were "granted to the governor by the General Assembly." He added, "I have been in constant contact with legislators." Myers said he would have called a special session.

On teacher pay, Holcomb said that 299 out of 304 school districts increased teacher pay after the state paid off local liabilities. Holcomb said that he has increased funding for public education by \$1.6 billion and that he has put together a commission to suggest ways to further increase teacher pay. He said the average teacher should make \$60,000 and a beginning teacher \$40,000. "Indiana rightly prioritizes our public school education," Holcomb said. "We allocate over 50% of our total revenue of our state budget to education. That doesn't mean we're there yet."

Myers said that charter schools received a 25% increase, compared to 2.7% for public schools. "It's like giving a sandwich to a starving person," Myers said. "After 15 years it tastes good, but it certainly doesn't do the job. It doesn't get us close to where we want to be."

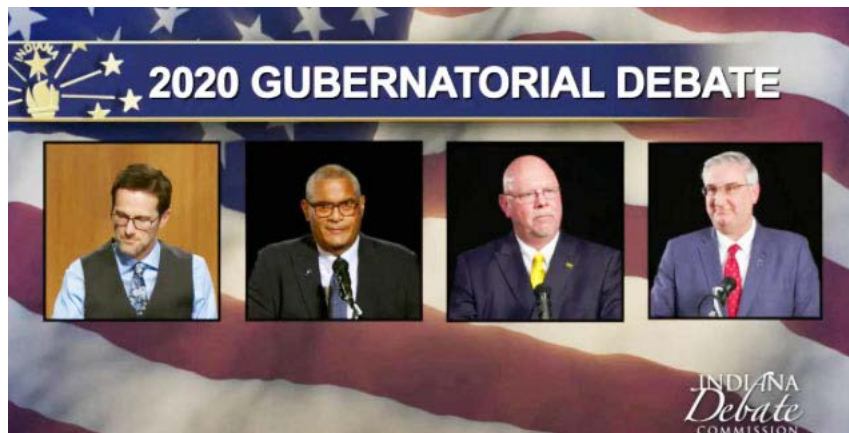
The shiny object for Hoosier Democrats has been "Republican" Supt. of Public Instruction Jennifer McCormick. Since she opted not to seek a second term back in 2018, she's endorsed Democrat congressional and legislative candidates, and Myers vowed to appoint her to her current post in the one "breaking news" debate moment. The problem is that Myers trails Holcomb by at least a couple of dozen percentage points in the polls, and doesn't have the finances to mount the mandatory media campaign needed to win. What McCormick lacks is a constituency she can deliver. She needs to update her resume.

Rainwater begins TV, radio ads

Libertarian Rainwater began running his TV ad campaign this morning. It comes before Democrat nominee Woody Myers has begun his TV ads, which is a first in Indiana politics. "Together we can make our state better. Indiana deserves better government, not bigger government. Together we can take our state back," Rainwater says in the ad. Rainwater TV ads are on the air in Hoosier markets including Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Terre Haute, Evansville, SE Indiana/Louisville, Elkhart/South Bend and Lafayette. Additionally, Rainwater for Governor radio ads are airing in every region of the state.

75% support mask mandate

Outpacing every candidate in the SurveyUSA poll was approval for Gov. Holcomb's directive that Hoosiers wear masks or face coverings in public places (NWI Times). A whopping 52% strongly approve of the governor's mask requirement and 23% somewhat approve, the poll found. Just 22% said they oppose wearing a



face mask. Similarly, the poll found just 16% of Hoosiers believe marijuana should remain entirely illegal, a policy position repeatedly affirmed by Indiana's Republican-controlled General Assembly.

Indiana moves up on tax climate index

The Tax Foundation, an independent tax policy research organization, updated its State Business Tax Climate Index for 2021. The new rankings have Indiana maintaining its status as the best tax climate in the Midwest. The Hoosier State also moved up in overall ranking to ninth best business tax climate in the nation. "Gov. Holcomb and our Republican General Assembly have cut taxes and kept Hoosiers' overall tax burden low. That is

why, even during this pandemic, Indiana continues to be a magnet for job creators and investment. Under Governor Holcomb's steady leadership, Indiana is balancing lives and livelihoods, making our state an even more attractive state for business," said Kyle Hupfer, chairman of the Indiana Republican Party. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Holcomb.

Congress

3Q FEC totals

Here are congressional 3rd quarter FEC fundraising totals:

1st CD: Frank J. Mrvan (D) \$416,412 raised, \$333,575 spent, \$82,837 cash on hand. Mark Leyva (R) \$14,372 raised, \$10,176 spent, \$4,197 cash on hand.

2nd CD: U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski (R) \$2,153,146 raised, \$1,090,078 spent, \$1,181,099 cash on hand. Pat Hackett (D) \$710,784 raised, \$455,942 spent, \$256,040 cash on hand.

3rd CD: U.S. Rep. Jim Banks (R) \$1,005,848 raised, \$627,310 spent, \$390,047 cash on hand. Chip Coldiron (D) \$60,943 raised, \$32,978 spent, \$28,047 cash on hand.

4th CD: U.S. Rep. Jim Baird (R) \$291,657 raised, \$165,195 spent, \$236,264 cash on hand. Joe Mackey (D) \$37,679 raised, \$32,894 spent, \$5,002 cash on hand.

5th CD: Victoria Spartz (R) \$2,374,370 raised, \$1,731,032 spent, \$643,338 cash on hand; Christina Hale (D) \$3,181,208 raised, \$2,575,989 spent, \$605,220 cash on hand.

6th CD: U.S. Rep. Greg Pence (R) \$2,757,982 raised, \$2,294,562 spent, \$663,946 cash on hand. Jeannine Lee Lake (D) \$104,628 raised, \$99,666 spent, \$4,962 cash on hand.



HOWEY
POLITICS INDIANA



President (U.S. & Indiana)



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

HPI Horse Race:

National: Likely D; Last week: Leans D
Indiana: Likely 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 Walorski (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

7th CD: U.S. Rep. Andre Carson (D) \$857,415 raised, \$733,633 spent, \$974,279 cash on hand. Susan Marie Smith (R) \$54,472 raised, \$28,129 spent, \$26,343 cash on hand.

8th CD: U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon (R) \$911,262 raised, \$891,338 spent, \$254,155 cash on hand. Thomasina Marsili (D) \$59,970 raised, \$52,206 spent, \$7,763 cash on hand.

9th CD: U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth (R) \$1,035,356 raised, \$334,048 spent, \$708,635 cash on hand. Andy Ruff (D) \$117,716 raised, \$71,550 spent, \$46,166 cash on hand. Tonya Millis (L) \$9,739 raised, \$9,613 spent, \$1 cash on hand.

1st CD: Leyva controversial post

GOP 1st Congressional District nominee Mark Leyva refused to discuss his rationale for posting an image on Facebook of a white woman wearing sunglasses and what appears to be a bathing suit with the phrase: "Know the warning signs of white supremacy" (Carden, NWI Times). The post then lists the "warning signs" — "1. Full time employment; 2. Literacy; 3. Professional or technical degree; 4. Regular church/temple attendance; 5. Auto insurance; 6. Good credit rating; 7. No criminal record." "All right, you know what, I'm not even going to comment, OK. This is social media, all right," Leyva said. "If you guys want to talk about real issues, like health care and this pandemic or anything like that, feel free. If you guys want to ridicule me about what I post on my social media, go right ahead, all right. But it's no comment." "This is not what the Republican Party is about," Lake County Republican Chairman Dan Dernulc said. "In fact, we strive for not just fairness, but anti-anything such as this." Jake Oakman, spokesman for the Indiana Republican Party, said the state GOP "condemns such disgusting and divisive materials."

2nd CD: Walorski, Hackett to debate

Incumbent Jackie Walorski and challenger Pat Hackett will participate in the 2nd District Congressional debate at 7 p.m. next Wednesday (WSBT-TV).

Statewides

Attorney general: Funding parity

The fundraising totals are much closer in the race for Indiana attorney general, the only other statewide contest on this year's general election ballot after Statehouse Republicans last year made state superintendent of public instruction a governor-appointed post beginning in 2021 (Carden, NWI Times). Data show Republican Todd Rokita had \$1.1 million available to spend on Sept. 30, while Democrat Jonathan Weinzapfel had \$1 million. Rokita, a former Indiana secretary of state and four-term congressman, raised \$1.5 million during the third quarter, primarily



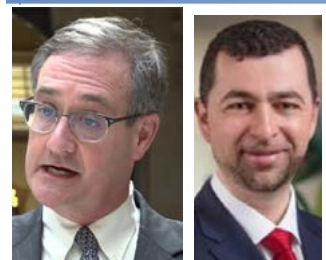
Indiana General Assembly SD8



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

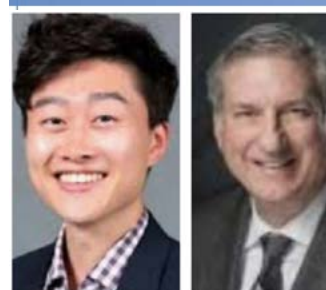
Indiana General Assembly HD7



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

from the Republican Attorneys General Association, after beginning the reporting period with just \$18,000. Weinzapfel added \$798,000 between July 1 and Sept. 30 to his \$722,000 in the bank, thanks mostly to donations from a variety of labor union members. "Unlike our opponent, who is being funded by Washington, D.C., special interests, Jonathan's campaign is powered by Hoosiers from all across the state," said Ann Bochnowski, of Munster, chairwoman of Weinzapfel's campaign. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Rokita.

General Assembly

Parties targeting Torr, Wright, Kirchhofer

Howey Politics Indiana continues to examine the late money reports into General Assembly races, with State Reps. Melanie Wright (D), Martin Carbaugh (R), Cindy Kirchhofer and Jerry Torr (R) the new focal points.

HRCC edumped \$150,000 two days ago into the race to unseat Rep. Wright. The state Chamber added another \$9,434. The next day, Wright reported a \$20,000 contributions from I-PACE. Both the GOP and the teachers must be seeing something in their polls.

Democrat Ashley Klein's challenge to Torr is also seeing an infusion of late money (\$162,000 between them) as Democrat Kyle Miller's rematch to Rep. Carbaugh.

Most surprising, however, is Mitch Gore's challenge to Marion County Republican Chairwoman Kirchoffer race in HD89. HRCC, Gov. Holcomb, and several GOP-leaning PACs gave Kirchoffer \$138,500 since Monday. Gore reported \$25,500 in late money but he must be polling pretty well for the GOP to piney up that much that fast.

Late Money to Indiana House Candidates

District	Candidates	DEM	GOP	TOTAL
5	Donald Westerhausen	\$44,000		\$66,000
	Dale DeVon		\$22,000	
7	Ross Deal	\$0		\$37,500
	Jake Teshka		\$37,500	
12	Mike Andrade	\$15,744		\$16,744
	Tom Wichlinski		\$1,000	
15	Chris Chyung	\$13,000		\$15,000
	Hal Slager		\$2,000	
19	Lisa Beck	\$17,000		\$37,000
	Julie Olthoff		\$20,000	
35	Melanie Wright	\$46,500		\$224,434
	Elizabeth Rowray		\$177,934	
37	Aimee Rivera Cole	\$55,171		\$251,968
	Todd Huston		\$196,797	
39	Ashley Klein	\$75,500		\$162,000
	Jerry Torr		\$86,500	
81	Kyle Miller	\$25,045		\$106,045
	Martin Carbaugh		\$81,000	
88	Pam Dechert	\$4,518		\$46,084
	Chris Jeter		\$41,566	
89	Mitch Gore	\$25,500		\$163,615
	Cindy Kirchoffer		\$138,115	
		\$321,978	\$804,412	\$1,126,390



Indiana General Assembly HD19



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

HPI Horse Race
This week: Leans Beck
Last week: Leans Beck

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



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 Kirchoffer (R)
Mitch Gore (D)

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

Totals in Senate races don't really tell much of a story, the totals are comparably small. All the big dollars came in later in the last reporting period that ended Oct. 9. Fady Qaddoura, for example, took in \$30,377 directly from ActBlue and another \$32,051 indirectly from ActBlue through a committee called Supporting Friends of Fady in his challenge to State Sen. John Ruckelshaus, who reported far more individual contributions than Fady but the race is, financially speaking, very competitive.

HRCC pumps \$500k v. Wright, Austin

The Indiana Republican Party has pumped more than \$500,000 in the effort to win two seats from Madison County in the Indiana House (de la Bastide, [Anderson Herald Bulletin](#)). Incumbent Democrat Melanie Wright is seeking reelection from District 35 for a fourth term but has never won with more than 53% of the vote. She is being challenged by Republican Elizabeth Rowray. The Indiana House Republican Campaign Committee has contributed \$343,818 to Rowray's campaign with the Indiana State Republican Party providing an additional \$29,934. In reports filed Friday with the Indiana Secretary of State's office, Rowray's campaign has reported receiving \$407,263 in donations and has spent \$209,377. The campaign reported \$3,370 in contributions from individuals. Wright's campaign reported a cash balance of \$34,345 and has received an additional \$118,744 through Monday. The campaign has spent \$96,021. Her campaign has received \$75,000 from the Indiana Political Action Committee for Education and \$9,528 from individuals. In 2012, Wright lost a close race to incumbent Republican Jack Lutz, receiving 49% of the vote. Two years later she defeated Lutz with 51% of the vote.

In HD36, incumbent Democrat Terri Austin is being outspent by Republican Kyle Pierce by a 2-to-1 margin. Austin was first elected in 2002. In the past three election cycles she has received more than 55% of the vote against Republican candidates who didn't have financial support from the party. Pierce, a first-time candidate, has reported receiving a total of \$184,593 with \$137,852 from the Indiana House Republicans and \$26,813 from the state party. His campaign received a \$75,000 contribution on Monday. Pierce's campaign was showing a debt of \$10,326. The campaign reported spending \$107,776. Austin's campaign started the pre-election reporting period with a cash balance of \$35,659 and has received an additional \$67,153. The campaign has spent \$41,056 leaving \$61,776.

President

Fox has Trump up in Ohio, Biden in PA, MI

President Donald Trump has a slight lead over Joe Biden in Ohio, according to a series of Fox News polls released on Wednesday — but the Democratic former vice

Late Money To Indiana Senate Candidates

District	Candidates	DEM	GOP	TOTAL
8	Gary Davis	\$9,000		\$42,042
	Mike Bohacek		\$33,042	
30	Fady Qaddoura	\$40,178		\$68,812
	John Ruckelshaus		\$28,634	
32	Belinda Drake	\$4,249		\$23,130
	Aaron Freeman		\$18,881	
35	Pete Cowden	\$3,583		\$15,083
	Mike Young		\$11,500	
36	Ashley Eason	\$20,209		\$53,317
	Jack Sandlin		\$33,108	
		\$77,219	\$125,165	\$202,384

Top 20 Late Money Contributors

House Republican Campaign Committee	\$527,500
Indiana House Democratic Caucus	\$155,000
Indiana Republican State Committee	\$105,665
I-PACE	\$90,000
Eric Holcomb for Indiana	\$45,000
Indiana Senate Democrats	\$35,161
Indiana Business for Responsive Government	\$33,312
Indiana Merit Construction PAC of ABC	\$30,000
Thomas W Kelley	\$20,000
Northern Indiana Joint Operators Management-Labor PAC	\$20,000
Indiana Democratic State Central Committee	\$15,687
GiaQuinta for State Representative	\$13,500
ActBlue Indiana	\$13,222
Insurance Political Action Committee	\$12,500
TWG BRL, LLC, dba Big Red Liquors	\$10,000
Indiana State Ironworkers Political Action Committee	\$10,000
IBEW PAC Voluntary Fund	\$8,500
Iron Workers Local 395 IPAL	\$7,000
Zink Properties LLC	\$7,000
Indiana Association of Beverage Retailers	\$6,500

president is pulling far ahead of the Republican president in three key battleground states. Among Ohio likely voters, 48% of respondents said they preferred Trump, while 45% opted for Biden. That's a reversal from a Fox News poll last month that had 50% of respondents picking Biden compared with 45% picking Trump. In the critical states of Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, however, the preference seemed much more clear for Biden. In Michigan, 52% of likely voters said they preferred Biden, to only 40% for Trump. Trump and Biden are tied 47 - 47% among likely voters in a Texas Quinnipiac Poll. "Biden and Trump find themselves in a Texas stand-off, setting the stage for a bare knuckle battle for 38 electoral votes," said Quinnipiac University Polling Analyst Tim Malloy. ❖

The power of the minority

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – As the Senate held hearings and debated the nomination of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, attention understandably focused on



the policy implications of a sixth conservative vote. What got less notice was an important political fact: If she's confirmed as expected, it will mean a majority of the Court will have been put there by senators representing a minority of the American people.

Four justices on the Court already – Thomas, Alito, Gorsuch, and Kavanaugh – were confirmed by a Senate "majority" put in office by fewer voters than

the senators who opposed them. Barrett will be the fifth.

In fact, the ideal of "majority rule" in the U.S. is mostly window-dressing these days. The people in power as we head toward the November general election increasingly do not represent the will of the American people.

This starts at the top. Of the last three presidents, neither President Trump nor, in his first term, George W. Bush won more votes than their opponents. In a country where ultimate political control is supposed to lie with the majority of citizens, this is an odd result. People in other countries have a hard time grasping how the Electoral College could produce such an outcome.

In the Senate, the Republican senators now in control represent not just a minority of the country's population, but a minority of its economic activity (as measured by GDP) and of its tax revenues. The Senate has never been democratic, since small states from the very beginning have had the same number of senators as large states. Yet now we're at the point where the makeup of the Supreme Court for the foreseeable future will be determined by a group of politicians who, as Vox pointed out recently, received 13 million fewer votes than their colleagues across the aisle.

The one federal body that does reflect a majority of the country at the moment is the House of Representatives. Oddly, though, there's an exception to this: If neither Donald Trump nor Joe Biden is able to win an outright majority of the Electoral College, the decision gets thrown to the House. This hasn't happened since 1876. And if it does, the decision will be made by each state's delegation, with each state getting a single vote. Since Republicans control 26 state delegations and Democrats 22 (Pennsylvania is tied; Michigan has seven Democrats, six Republicans, and one independent), it opens the real possibility of a president installed by a House minority.

So the U.S. finds itself in an uncomfortable situation: Our basic institutions no longer reflect majority rule. In the past, when bipartisanship was considered a congressional value and the Senate majority paid greater attention to trying to accommodate the views of the minority, this might not have mattered as much. But politics is fought with bare knuckles these days, and political power is seen as bestowing the ability, and hence, the right, to ram through legislation and court nominees.


The most likely solution to all this is at the ballot box. That's certainly what Americans expect. But there's also increasing talk of alternatives. Some politicians and activists are pushing to eliminate the Electoral College; in fact, a bipartisan majority of the House tried just that in 1969, only to have it killed by a filibuster of senators from small states. More radically, the late John Dingell of Michigan, the longest-serving House member ever, came to believe that the Senate itself should be abolished; as he would point out, the largest state in the country gets just two seats, while the smallest 20 states, whose combined population is still smaller, get 40 seats.

Daunting procedural obstacles stand in the way of reforming the governing structure of this country so that it better represents the majority of voters. And ensuring attention to the rights and political interests of the political minority is baked into both our Constitution and Americans' enduring sense of political fairness and decency. But if this minority-rule pattern continues and U.S. political and judicial leadership no longer represents a majority, one has to wonder, with Lincoln, how long such a country can endure. ❖

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.

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

Trump over that 'socialist' Biden

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – As I write this, we are 17 days from, arguably, the most important election in my lifetime. In my opinion, we have never seen an election with such well-defined lines between economic philosophies as this one. On the basis of economic philosophy, how to vote should be a



relatively easy decision. On the surface, the decision appears to boil down to whether you trust and support a capitalistic economic system which rewards effort, education, skills, hard work, ingenuity and risk or whether you support a philosophy of government managed economics, income redistribution and government created do overs for actors with bad behaviors.

As a life-long Republican, I believe that our philosophy has always been that we are for equal opportunity for all, not equal outcomes. Right or wrong, I stand by that belief.

Although the decision of who to vote for should be an easy one, it has been made much more difficult because of President Donald J. Trump. He is not a conventional president nor candidate, so he does not lend himself to a traditionally economics-based decision. The fact is that many traditionally economics-based voters will not vote their core beliefs because of their abject hate of the Orange Man. Their attitude is, "Orange Man bad, don't confuse me with facts."

I have friends who are excellent conservative business people, friends who are vociferously pro-life, rabidly pro-law enforcement and dedicated 2nd Amendment advocates who are willing to set aside, just to vote against the Orange Man.

My own journey with Donald Trump began on such a note. As I surveyed the huge Republican field of contenders for the White House in 2015, Trump was just about my least favorite candidate. I felt then, as I do now, that he was a man who was overindulged as a child. He had few filters and said and did what he pleased. His simplistic answers to debate questions, easy fixes for complex problems and boorish conduct and name calling gave me nothing comfortable to feel good about supporting.

As the Republican primary field dwindled to Trump, Ted Cruz and John Kasich, I found myself perilously close to joining the "never Trump" universe. I flirted with looking for ways to help swing the Indiana primary results to Ted Cruz. I considered possible strategies for denying Trump the nomination at the Republican Convention. I freely admit this because I was quoted repeatedly on

several national media outlets, both print and electronic, stating that the only way that I would consider voting for Trump would be if he was running against Satan himself.

And then a funny thing happened, the Democrats nominated Satan herself, Hillary Clinton. In a magical and miraculous wave of the political wand of moral relativism, I became a reluctant supporter of Donald Trump. My belief was four years of Donald Trump just had to be better than four more years of the gangster regime of Clintons and their nefarious cronies. Yes, I was late to the Trump bandwagon, but I finally made it.

During the 2016 fall campaign, I quietly supported Trump and his efforts in Indiana. We registered hundreds of first-time voters whose sole objective was to vote for Donald Trump. We had a run on our Republican headquarters for caps, t-shirts, yard signs and bumper stickers. I quickly came to understand that these wild-eyed Trump voters could be counted on to vote for our governor candidate Eric Holcomb and for Senate candidate Todd Young. If fully embracing Donald Trump was necessary to elect Holcomb and Young, then I was willing to shovel coal on the Trump Train.

Then, the miraculous happened and Donald Trump was elected president of the United States. From the very beginning you could sense that Trump was not going to get a fair shake from the main stream media. I saw this, first hand, at the inauguration.

I witnessed with my own eyes a full national mall and even took a photo of the immense crowd stretching from the Capitol all the way back near the Washington Monument. Of course, the photo distributed by the media was taken before the crowds had fully assembled and was portrayed as being small when compared to Obama the Great.

President Trump's inauguration speech was presidential, aspirational and respectful. I believed that he was off to a great start. Then came the taxi ride to the airport. I read on my cellphone how the media blasted Trump's speech as jingoistic and not presidential. My taxi crawled through masses of pink-clad women dressed up as vaginas, screaming for Trump to be impeached.

A few days after returning from Washington, I began seeing Democrat congressmen and senators parading to podiums in the Capitol building and actually beginning to talk about impeachment. Celebrities and the universe of talking heads began the nightly talk show circuit with their own calls for impeachment. The media devoted copious amount of coverage to the malcontents.

Out of the blue miraculously appeared the early rumblings of the bogus Russia investigation and, as if on cue, the Clintonistas, celebrities, Democrat functionaries and national media lined up and began the relentless drumbeat that eventually ended with Donald Trump's impeachment and predictable acquittal.

Never mind that the Russian "scandal" was dreamed up by Hillary Clinton and put in motion by Clinton refuseniks in the Justice Department, this thinly veiled

coup d'état drove the media into a feeding frenzy and the Trump haters to nirvana.

Three years of Trump victories and achievements made many people take notice of a distinctly different, yet successful presidency. Record low unemployment in every measurable demographic group, record high work force levels, significant increases in personal income became the hallmark of the Trump Administration. President Trump cut the strangling morass of bureaucratic red tape that was strangling innovation and business success. He brought manufacturing jobs back to the United States. He renegotiated unfair trade treaties around the world and gave American workers a fighting chance. He upgraded our military, de-escalated our entanglements in Iraq and Afghanistan and reached out to North Korea in an attempt to neutralize a perennial bad actor. He gave hope to the underprivileged by extending a hand and not just a hand out.

Most notably, Trump filled two Supreme Court vacancies with immensely qualified justices and filled several hundred lower court vacancies with qualified and capable justices. In short, Donald J. Trump became an extremely successful president, like it or not.

All of this being said, Trump could have been acknowledged as being a great president and not merely successful, if he had only ignored the frequent bait thrown in his direction and kept his mouth and Twitter account closed. Spectators and fans know who scores the touchdowns. They don't need to see the player spiking the football in the end zone or taunting the defeated. The man who carries the world's biggest stick was frequently reduced to name calling and childish gestures like some hooligan on the school playground.

Many presidents have fired cabinet officers over the years. It hasn't been an enjoyable task, but sometimes it needs to be done. President Trump seemed to take infinite delight in sacking subordinates and then publicly humiliating them by calling them losers, fakes and incompetents.

One presumes these were talented and accomplished people or they would never have had their jobs in the first place. The cycle of appointment, firing and lambasting repeated itself time and time again. The overwhelming success of the economy tended to mute any attempt by the Trump detritus to effectively defend themselves.

And then the pandemic hit. While I personally don't think that President Trump had anything to do with the spread of the virus or its ultimate economic effect, in politics, if you live by the sword, you will die by the sword.

The weakening of president by the pandemic gave his many enemies accumulated over the years ample opportunity to take a whack at the presidential piñata. All of the numerous casualties of business, personal and political warfare that Trump had vanquished along his bumpy and storied career now had the perfect timing to emerge from the shadows and fire their torpedoes. It has now been eight straight months of the steady drip, drip of personal

attacks launched on President Trump by his enemies or their surrogates. In the best of times, he was untouchable. Now, he is a weakened president with an uncontrollable pandemic weighing him down.

It is in this maelstrom that I will make my decision whom I will vote for on Nov. 3. Do I choose the devil I know or the devil that I don't? I have made up my mind and it was an easy decision. I will vote capitalism over socialism every time.

The long-term economic costs of the reckless legislative proposals of Joe Biden and his surrogate wannabe, Kamala Harris, stand to shake our economic system to the ground. As a country, we can't stand four months of socially engineered income redistribution, moral decay, civil disobedience and fraudulent green new deal socialism, let alone four years. When Pandora is out of the box, she is gone for good.

I intend to vote for Donald J. Trump for president. He is not a perfect man nor a perfect president, but the lives of all Americans will be better served by his reelection. Orange Man may be bad, but socialist is unthinkable!

❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican Party.

Team Holcomb works

By PETE SEAT

INDIANAPOLIS – They never see it coming. “Michael Jordan or Magic Johnson,” I ask, certain the prospective intern or staffer won't get it right. When they choose correctly, the job is theirs. When they don't, well, hopefully they can better explain their greatest weakness.



When it comes to Gov. Eric Holcomb, though, it's not an either/or. His governing style is part Jordan and part Johnson. He can both hit the clutch shot when it counts the most and pass the ball and let his teammates – in this case members of his administration and local government officials – score the basket and get the credit.

We saw this at the opening tip-off of the first Indiana gubernatorial debate as a deferential Holcomb immediately dished out credit to his fellow Hoosiers for Indiana's “positive forward momentum.” Later in the debate he sent assists to the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and the Department of Workforce Development, and he gave a singular “shoutout” to members of his administration's cabinet.

This is what makes Eric Holcomb the consummate team player. He's the kind of team captain who doesn't trash talk the opposition in the heat of the fourth quarter and the type of leader who always remains focused on the fundamentals. Or, as he likes to say, "providing great government service at a great taxpayer value."

But he and his teammates at the federal, state and local level – Indiana's Dream Team – are not only providing great government service at the top of the key in Central Indiana, they are proactively engaged in a full court statewide press to bring great taxpayer value to every nook and cranny of Indiana. Like their captain Holcomb, this team is leaving it all on the court.

Through Holcomb's Next Level Connections program, attention is being lavished on parts of the state that are often overlooked by Indianapolis. Where those of us in the capital city can take things like reliable infrastructure and broadband access for granted, not everyone in Indiana could say the same, until now.

During his first campaign for governor, a campaign I served on as communications director, then-Lt. Gov. Holcomb made double-tracking the South Shore commuter rail line in the Region a top priority. He talked about it everywhere, connecting for Hoosiers as far away as Evansville to the importance of Indiana's connection to Chicago. But he didn't stop there.

He's partnered with teammates in southeastern Indiana, where Jennings, Franklin and Fayette counties all recently received \$1 million in Community Crossings grants, cash that will help improve local roads and bridges. Add this to the \$730 million already distributed to Hoosier communities via this program and the on-the-ground, or

rather on-the-court, impact is real.

Infrastructure isn't always about roads and bridges, or stadiums and arenas, Holcomb regularly reminds us. It's also about blazing fast broadband internet access. With the help of \$100 million in dedicated matching grant funds, \$79 million of which has already been allocated, nearly 22,000 Hoosier homes and businesses spanning 41 counties from Montgomery County to Grant County, and from Steuben County to Posey County, are well on their way to experiencing enhanced connectivity. This means there's no excuse for not watching film before the next big game.

And just as the first day of practice sets the tone for a season, Holcomb's first day as governor set the tone for his first term. In his first official act, he created a cabinet-level drug czar to oversee an alarming epidemic touching towns and cities large and small. Today, Holcomb's Next Level Recovery program has 18 opioid treatment centers across the state, including two in northeast Indiana, putting every single Hoosier a fast break away from being within an hour's drive of help.

Just as Jordan and Johnson were but two members of America's Dream Team, Holcomb made clear in the opening minutes of the debate that he is but one of Indiana's. He couldn't take us to the Next Level without his teammates across the state, and they couldn't do it without him, either.

Pete Seat is a vice president with Bose Public Affairs Group in Indianapolis. He is also an Atlantic Council Millennium Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations Term Member.

The Hoosier job situation

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — How bad the job loss was in the United States depends on your starting and ending points. If we take March 2020 as the last "normal" or pre-covid month, with August as our latest data point, then national job losses just exceeded 10 million.



Yet, just three states (California, New York, and Texas) account for one third of that 10 million. Indiana is among the 38 states in the bottom third of that distribution. Indiana accounted for 91,100 (2.9%) of that 10 million job loss.

While 10 million jobs nationally represented a 6.6% drop

in wage and salary jobs from March, Indiana's 91,100 loss was only 2.9% of our March jobs. That's the basis for the Hoosier Happy Hour at the Statehouse; Indiana ranked 47th behind Hawaii in percent of jobs lost due to the virus. Only Utah, Mississippi and Idaho were more fortunate than we.

Manufacturing led all sectors in that 91,100 Hoosier jobs decline with 26,800, 5.1% of the March level. That was about the experience in Kentucky (5.9%), Ohio (5.4%), and Wisconsin (5.0%). In contrast, Michigan lost 9.1% of its manufacturing jobs with Illinois down only 2.7%.

The sector that led the downward slide in Illinois, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin was leisure and hospitality, which was nearly a third of all job losses in each of those states. In Kentucky, jobs providing professional and business services were the biggest loser with a 27,000 loss, a 12.3% decline, more than a quarter of all job losses.

These data confirm a serious economic dislocation as a result of the COVID pandemic. They complement the official unemployment numbers which show 214,000 unemployed Hoosiers in August.

The number of unemployed rose from 100,000 persons in March. Thus, the unemployment associated with the virus was 114,000. This is a reasonable number to go with the 91,100 jobs lost. More people look for jobs when another member of the household becomes unemployed or must accept reduced income. [Note: No one was concerned about 100,000 unemployed Hoosiers in March when the unemployment rate for Indiana was 3.0%. It was high-fives all around. That's an issue for another column.]

The true crisis is not limited to the unemployed without a steady income flow. It involves all those working

for greatly reduced incomes. These are not only employees let go, but those who remain, along with small business proprietors in firms where discretionary spending is vital – restaurants, home improvements, travel services, elective medical procedures, movies, and a host of other spending options.

When the money is not flowing through these severely impacted sectors, it reduces the flow to other more vital sectors. With reduced income, utility bills, rents, charitable contributions, and tax revenues are all negatively affected.

This virus is teaching us how necessary the unnecessary is to our economy. ❖

Echoes persist from 2016 Trump upset

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND — Four years ago, at this point before the presidential election, a columnist wrote of a widely popular sentiment, an oft-heard response to a campaign that drove down approval ratings of both Donald Trump



and Hillary Clinton. The widespread sentiment was this: "I'll be so happy when this election is over."

But the columnist warned, "Don't bet on that." That columnist was me. So, despite what's suggested in kind, thoughtful emails from militia types and conspiracy advocates, I sometimes can get something right.

When the 2016 election was over, joy wasn't ubiquitous among all who said they would then be "so happy." A majority of voters was not happy at all. The majority, by a margin of nearly 3 million votes, selected Clinton, but the unhappy reality for them was that Trump carried key states and won in the Electoral College, where it counts.

Some who didn't vote for either Clinton or Trump also were not "so happy." Some had voted for the Green Party nominee, who had no chance except as a spoiler, and then realized they could have been decisive in some of those key states if they had instead voted for Clinton, an environmentalist who wouldn't have dropped out of the Paris climate accord and repealed environmental regulations.

Some decided to stay home because they were mad that Clinton defeated Bernie Sanders in the primaries. They wanted to show disdain for Clinton. They did, helping to bring about a presidency that didn't exactly make them "so happy."

There was happiness. Trump supporters were

happy to have a disrupter in Washington. Now, will most of them want more disruption? We will see in this election if those contributing to Trump's narrow victories in key states last time will bring him a second term.

Back when the '16 campaign was closing, I was writing about some of the same things cited now, including projections by Nate Silver in his widely quoted "fivethirtyeight." With a couple of weeks to go, he projected Clinton with an 84.7% chance to win. Now, he has projected Joe Biden with an 87% chance.

I'm glad I warned back in '16 that "It ain't over 'til the Fat Lady sings," not until the votes are cast. In fairness to Silver, he was only calculating then, as now, how the race looked at a specific time prior to the election, not predicting the outcome. And he did capture the tightening of the race at the end after the FBI director devastatingly resurrected Clinton's emails at campaign close.

Could something devastating happen to hinder Biden's chances and enable President Trump to win again? Of course. There was much speculation at this point in '16, with Clinton leading in polls, that Trump's continued tweets and tirades could bring a "blue wave" that would sweep in Democratic candidates for Congress and state offices, maybe even in Indiana. There was a wave in Indiana, a red tsunami, with Trump carrying the state by nearly 20 percentage points. Hoosier Democratic candidates were washed away.

An important element back then was that Trump, with tweets and tirades wearing thin, held back on that in the closing weeks, sticking to message and gaining support as Clinton was sinking. Will Trump modify the tone again at close this time? Can he? Democrats say the situation is different this time, that Trump now is known for what he is and Biden is not as unlikeable as Clinton proved to be. Trump supporters say the president is, indeed, known for what he is, and that will ensure he wins again.

Once again, we hear, "I'll be so happy when this election is over." When it's over, alas, there won't be widespread joy across the land. Some Americans will be "so happy." Others will not be happy at all. ❖

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

James Briggs, IndyStar: Indiana has a new coronavirus strategy. Call it the Holcomb Doctrine. Gov. Eric Holcomb on Wednesday rejected his own past policies and charted a course that veers to the political right of where he has stood up until now. The Holcomb Doctrine contends that it is not up to the government, or at least not state government, to end the COVID-19 pandemic, but rather each individual. That sentiment is not entirely new. When Holcomb revealed his five-phase reopening plan on May 1, he acknowledged he was accepting rising case numbers in exchange for “allowing folks to responsibly and safely return to some normal aspects of their life.” Few would disagree with that position now. But, since then, Holcomb also embraced government restrictions on public gatherings as one tool for preventing the pandemic from spiraling out of control. Now, he’s not so sure. This is the part that’s new. Holcomb on Wednesday described coronavirus restrictions as ineffective and suggested he has no plan to return to them. Here is the Holcomb doctrine, in the governor’s own words. “The pain that will come from assuming that if we just restrict down or shut down, and it’ll have no adverse impacts — it’s our behavior, it is our actions that need to be addressed,” Holcomb said in response to a question from IndyStar’s Shari Rudavsky. “And they have to be addressed together. The shutting down approach is missing the point. I would point you to some other states who have capacity limits of 10 who are dealing with this as well.” Holcomb’s shift in philosophy — the assertion that even strict capacity limits can’t stop coronavirus transmission — is the clearest explanation yet for why Holcomb decided Sept. 23 was the right time to announce he would lift Indiana’s coronavirus restrictions and let high-risk businesses, such as bars and restaurants, start packing people indoors at full capacity. It has never made much sense. Holcomb at the time celebrated Indiana’s seven-day COVID-19 positivity rate, which had dipped below 4%, and said the state had earned the move to Stage 5. But Indiana hadn’t met any objective benchmark, or at least not one that had been communicated to the public. Something has changed. For the worse.



Thomas Friedman, New York Times: The good Lord works in mysterious ways. He (She?) threw a pandemic at us at the exact same time as a tectonic shift in the way we will learn, work and employ. Fasten your seatbelt. When we emerge from this corona crisis, we’re going to be greeted with one of the most profound eras of Schumpeterian creative destruction ever — which this pandemic is both accelerating and disguising. No job, no K-12 school, no university, no factory, no office will be spared. And it will touch both white-collar and blue-collar workers, which is why this election matters so much. How we provide more Americans with portable health care, portable pensions and opportunities for lifelong learning to get the most out of this moment and cushion the worst is what politics needs to be about after Nov. 3 — or we’re

really headed for instability. The reason the post-pandemic era will be so destructive and creative is that never have more people had access to so many cheap tools of innovation, never have more people had access to high-powered, inexpensive computing, never have more people had access to such cheap credit — virtually free money — to invent new products and services, all as so many big health, social, environmental and economic problems need solving. Put all of that together and KABOOM! You’re going to see some amazing stuff emerge, some long-established institutions, like universities, disappear — and the nature of work, workplaces and the workforce be transformed. I’ve been discussing this moment with Ravi Kumar, the president of the Indian tech services company Infosys, whose headquarters is in Bangalore. Infosys’ main business was doing work that American companies would outsource to India. Today, Kumar operates from New York City, where he’s creating thousands of jobs in America. How could that be? It starts with the fact, explained Kumar, that the Industrial Revolution produced a world in which there were sharp distinctions between employers and employees, between educators and employers and between governments and employers and educators, “but now you’re going to see a blurring of all these lines.” Because the pace of technological change, digitization and globalization just keeps accelerating, two things are happening at once: The world is being knit together more tightly than ever. Today, companies like Infosys, IBM or AT&T are all creating cutting-edge in-house universities — Infosys is building a 100-acre campus in Indianapolis designed to provide their employees and customers not “just-in-case learning” — material you might or might not need to master the job at hand — but “just-in-time learning,” offering the precise skills needed for the latest task, explained Kumar.

Chris Christie, Wall Street Journal: For seven months I was very careful about mask wearing, social distancing and hand washing. As someone with asthma, I knew I faced heightened risk. Then, at the Rose Garden nomination event for Judge Amy Coney Barrett, and during debate preparations with President Trump, I let my guard down and left my mask off. I mistook the bubble of security around the president for a viral safe zone. I was wrong. There is no safe zone from this virus. Three days after the presidential debate, I still felt fine. Then — all within 24 hours — came the fever, chills and body aches, severe pain and utter exhaustion, and hospitalization in the intensive-care unit. A week in the ICU offers time to reflect. I was conscious of the virus’s unpredictability. My doctors came in twice a day, told me I was doing better, and warned me that I could take a turn for the worse at any minute. Everyone in the hospital with COVID hangs on a thin thread. When you get this disease, it hits you how easy it is to prevent. We are asked to wear cloth over our mouth and nose, wash our hands and avoid crowds. ❖

Gov sending Guard into nursing homes

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric Holcomb is deploying members of the Indiana National Guard to nursing homes and other long-term care facilities across the state next month to help combat the coronavirus where its health impacts are most profound (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). According to the State Department of Health, a total of 2,205 Indiana nursing home residents have died from COVID-19 as of Wednesday, accounting for 58% of all the coronavirus deaths in the Hoosier State. Nursing home residents also account for a significant share of the state's surging COVID-19 hospitalizations, which hit 1,484 individuals Tuesday, up from 766 COVID-19 hospitalizations one month ago and nearing the April 13 record of 1,799. Dr. Lindsay Weaver, chief medical officer for the State Department of Health, said the agency recently completed a survey and inspection of the state's 535 nursing homes and long-term care facilities and found staffers are exhausted and infection control practices need to be improved. "They have been running a marathon at a sprint pace for eight months, and the human body simply isn't designed to sustain such a pace," Weaver said. In response, the governor said he decided to send the National Guard to take over the tasks of screening nursing home employees and residents for COVID-19, data entry and infection control — enabling facility staff members to focus on direct care of the residents. He said the guardsmen initially will go to nursing homes with at least one active COVID-19 case. But soon they'll be on the ground at all 535 long-term care facilities in the state through at least the end of the year. "The pandemic has taken a toll on all of us. But it's taken a real toll on the residents and staff, and both of their families," Holcomb said. "The bottom line is to provide



some relief for the staff members and the residents, slow the spread among them, and educate and improve all of those known-to-be-working infection control measures."

Fort Wayne officials alarmed by spike

FORT WAYNE — Local government and health officials are emphasizing continued masking, social distancing, hand-washing and vigilance, especially as the area's new COVID-19 cases continue to rise (Gong, [Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). "People in our city and our county are dying. This is not over," Mayor Tom Henry said during a Wednesday news conference.

Allen County Commissioners Therese Brown, Nelson Peters and Rich Beck joined Henry for the news conference. Health Commissioner Matthew Sutter and representatives from Parkview and Lutheran health networks and Indiana University Health also attended. "Something is terribly wrong," Henry said, because positive case numbers in Fort Wayne, Allen County and the state of Indiana are rising faster than other states and communities of similar size. Fort Wayne "is better than that." On Wednesday, the Allen County Department of Health reported 99 more Allen County residents have tested positive for the virus, bringing the total case count to 8,017 and 224 deaths. "We need to be very vigilant and very aware that this isn't going anywhere, ... unfortunately anytime soon," Brown said.

Trump to nominate Kirsch to ACB seat

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump intends to nominate an Indiana federal prosecutor to replace Amy Coney Barrett on the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals if Barrett is confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court (Ortiz, [NWI Times](#)). The White House on Wednesday announced Trump's pick to replace Barrett is Northern District of Indiana U.S. Attorney Thomas Kirsch II, who was appointed to the

post in 2017. From 2001 to 2008, Kirsch was an assistant U.S. attorney in the Northern District of Indiana, where he focused on high-profile, white-collar crimes, which included the prosecution of multiple elected public officials, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Barr in Indy today for roundtable

INDIANAPOLIS — U.S. Attorney General William Barr will be in Indianapolis on Thursday to talk about progress with Operation Legend at a law enforcement roundtable ([WRTV](#)). During his appearance on Thursday, Barr will be joined by Josh Minkler, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana, and Chief Randal Taylor of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department.

'Miracle' harvest underway in state

KOKOMO — Just a few months ago, area farmers were expecting one of the worst harvests in years. Corn and soybean prices had plummeted, and a prolonged drought in August threatened to seriously stifle yields (Gerber, [Kokomo Tribune](#)). Brad Winger, who farms corn and soybeans with his family in eastern Howard County and parts of Miami County, said it all made for a dreary financial forecast, and many farmers were expecting to make little to no profit this year. "Coming through the summer, with prices being so slow, it was pretty bleak," he said. "And with COVID, it probably made it even worse in our minds." But now, Winger is calling this year's harvest a kind of miracle. Despite the dry summer, corn and soybean yields are much higher than expected, and are some of the best they've had in last five years, he said. On top of that, crop prices made a huge comeback in the last month, with corn jumping from \$3.65 to \$4.09 nationally. Soybean prices also climbed by about 60 cents in the last month.