



Lt. Gov. Crouch on politics, policy

She will focus on pandemic response while preparing for what will likely be a 2024 gubernatorial run

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – In December 1976 and again that same month in 1992, there was little doubt that Lt. Gov. Robert Orr and Lt. Gov. Frank O'Bannon were destined to be their party's gubernatorial nominees four years hence.



Today, Lt. Gov. Gov. Suzanne Crouch is preparing for her second term that will include a vivid response to the

once-in-a-century pandemic, as well as what occurs when we reach the so-called "light at the end of the tunnel" (i.e. the COVID-19 vaccine).

But any inevitability of Crouch's



ascension as the 2024 Republican gubernatorial nominee is going to have to be not only earned, but demonstrated in terms of raw power and clout if she wants to make history and become Indiana's first female governor in what would be the state's almost 208 years of existence.

While Crouch would head up the earliest Howey Politics Indiana Horse Race status as a leading contender, just about every Republican we've talked with expects an extensive field. At this nascent point, Crouch clearing the field as

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Importance of parties

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – One of the oldest cliches in business is that there is no "I" in "team." In business, you buy a brand, in which a real salesperson is increasingly less important. In politics, it is the "I" on the ballot and a declining percentage of voters who generally vote straight ticket.



When I was congressman, my wife Diane never particularly liked it when I told her on fall election days that probably 30,000 people voting today will be going to out to specifically vote against me. (For the record, my lowest margin was +8% and my average margin was over 20%; closeness was not the point.) To tell someone running



“We strongly believe the vaccine distribution process could begin as soon as the week of Dec. 14. With this morning’s news that Moderna has joined Pfizer in submitting an EUA, we continue to be on pace.”

- Vice President Pence, in a conference call to governors on Monday



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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



for office that there is no "I" in team has far less relevance than in most fields of work. If your self esteem is low, try another career.

In politics, however, one of most important strengths of the American system has been the durability (since 1864) of the dominance of two major political parties. Having two teams, or "tribes" as some like to call them, provides stability to the system. But those parties have never been monolithic. They are coalitions, like in a parliamentary system. Often the party issue positions even reverse over time.

Generally, in a presidential election year, the presidential candidate defines the party's team. In the state, it is usually the governor or a senator. In a congressional district, the congressman. In a city, the mayor. At the county level, it is most often the combined grassroots connections of the local candidates plus the top of the ticket that year. Campaigns with heavy advertising – mayor, governor, and federal offices, but also increasingly the close legislative races – define the team's base vote but are augmented by a strong local team.

Donald Trump, on the surface, challenged the entire premise of the team concept. He spelled team "imei." He did come to realize that if the Senate and the House were controlled by Democrats, impeachment and conviction were a constant threat. But in lambasting and opposing in primaries non-loyalists, the president's concept of team was still rooted in "imei." His personal obsession in Georgia that could cost the Republican Party control of the Senate is but the latest example. What should have been solid run-off victories now need rescuing from his attacks on the integrity of the system.

What is most relevant right now is Trump's driving desire to establish that he's not a "loser." He deserved his day in court, as I've written, but he had to prove, not allege, fraud. This obviously was a likely doomed effort because Biden's Elec-

toral College vote total is projected to be slightly higher than Trump's in the previous election. Trump's losing popular vote total is projected to be slightly lower than Romney's in 2012.

To win reelection, President Trump not only needed to prove significant fraud in one state, but in at least three larger states by margins that would require significant cheating. There is no precedent in U.S. history for such levels of invisible fraud. (Tammany Hall and historic urban incumbent party specific fraud was not undetected on election days by media, the opposing party, or the general public.)

A key part of the checks and balances in preserving the integrity of our system is the responsibility of political parties. Election day workers and also observers are the respon-



sibility of each party. They deserve everyone's thanks because without them, a free system does not work.

The president was concerned about alleged fraud months ago. Why was there not an emphasis put on recruiting people – in time to get training, not last-minute panic – to fill these positions in areas about which they were concerned? If you have not focused on building your party, and don't develop your own, why do you think you will win in court when you were short of trained observers?

The legal cases, for which millions of dollars were spent, had minimal, if any, evidence. They presented assertions about what could theoretically happen, not facts about what did happen. The lawsuits turned the losing candidate into the biggest loser we've had in modern times. Donald Trump lost the popular vote and the Electoral College vote by significant margins. Then, asking for his days (and weeks) in court, he received them in four states (Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia and Wisconsin, as well as dismissals in Nevada and Arizona).

For nearly two weeks, a man obsessed with not being a loser has been pummeled with accurate stories about losses in courts at every level in every state where he contested something. His narrative of the election being stolen, essentially alleging that the process was rigged, has been rebuked over and over again, including by judges he appointed. There is no legal argument being presented that would overturn an election. People voted in the ways they were allowed to vote.

It has become increasingly embarrassing as Trump now attacks the legal system, suggests that the Republican-controlled Department of Justice is part of the effort to defeat him, continues to attempt to emasculate the FBI,

fires the Homeland Security administrator who claimed the election was honest, smears statewide and local elected Republican officials who have participated in trying to provide fair elections, and in general undermines confidence in our system of government. Trump also did the same thing after the Iowa caucuses in 2016, in which he claimed Ted Cruz stole it and the Iowa Republican Party was complicit.

Moveon.org and leaders of BLM have repeatedly attacked our legal system as untrustworthy. They attack the fundamental structures of capitalism and the institutions that support it. The far left views government as an untrustworthy swamp. Many Republicans are now peddling the same swamp attacks.

As a nation, we have fought off extremist attacks from both ends. Some valid critiques are absorbed by the impacted party. But it seems to me that this constant battering of the structural fairness of the best system, and most flexible, that the world has ever known is more wobbly than in the past. Both parties can hopefully help stabilize it so we don't descend into chaos. ❖

Souder is a former Republican congressman from Indiana.

Crouch, from page 1

Mitch Daniels did in 2003 with quick exits by David McIntosh and Murray Clark (leaving just Eric Miller) isn't likely to happen.

The potential 2024 field will likely find feelers from Attorney General-elect Todd Rokita, Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer, U.S. Reps. Trey Hollingsworth and Jim Banks, Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness, former state senator Jim Merritt, Health & Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, Senate President Pro Tem Rod Bray, and, perhaps, even disgraced Attorney General Curtis Hill. If either U.S. Sen. Todd Young or Mike Braun decides to seek the office, the former could clear the field, the latter could self-fund as he did in the 2018 U.S. Senate primary. Hollingsworth is one of the richest members in Congress and could also self-fund.

Crouch begs off a clear signal she would enter the race, telling HPI in a Zoom interview on Nov. 23 that timing is everything in politics. But a few minutes later, she observed that both Govs. Orr and O'Bannon were from Ohio River towns.

Crouch is from Evansville and has worked her way

up the GOP ladder, holding office in Vanderburgh County, then the Indiana House, becoming Indiana auditor before Eric Holcomb tabbed her to fill out the ticket in late July 2016 after Gov. Mike Pence left to run for vice president.

Crouch has been a significant partner to Gov. Holcomb from a policy standpoint (the lieutenant governor's portfolio sprawls across the administration), as well as politically, donating \$2.5 million to Holcomb's campaign coffers.

Gov. Holcomb's reelect began as the "Holcomb-Crouch" brand at the campaign's 2019 kickoff at Knightstown, then went MIA during this past fall's TV ad campaign, before it returned at the Election Night celebration. A Holcomb endorsement at some point heading into a 2024 primary would be a significant factor, though at this point is not expected.

For close to 45 minutes, HPI conducted this interview with Lt. Gov. Crouch:

HPI: What are your next chapters here? Indiana will have an open governor's seat in 2024. Should I be putting your name on the list of poten-



tial candidates?

Crouch: So much in politics is about timing. The next four years I'll be focused on being the very best lieutenant governor I can for the state of Indiana and a great partner to Gov. Eric Holcomb. From a preparation standpoint, having served in local government, in the legislative branch and now in the executive branch of state government, the preparation will be there. Timing is always the issue. I will certainly be prepared for political opportunities as they arise, but for right now, I'm focused to what I am supposed to be doing, which is lieutenant governor. The rest will take care of itself.

HPI: Do you have a timeline in which you'll decide your political future?

Crouch: I am already zeroed in on my political future.

HPI: A generation ago, it was almost a foregone conclusion that Lt. Gov. Orr and Lt. Gov. O'Bannon were going to be their party's gubernatorial nominees at the end of Doc Bowen's and Evan Bayh's two terms. That seemed to change with Lt. Gov. Joe Kernan's early exit and then return to the 2004 campaign. Since the era of the female LG that began in 2003, that expected ascension has ended. You have maintained an energetic presence statewide. Has that dynamic changed?

Crouch: The last two elected lieutenant governors who went on to become elected governors were lieutenant governors from southern Indiana towns that bordered the Ohio River. History seems to repeat itself.

HPI: That's pertinent perspective. So what's the next year hold for you?

Crouch: We're totally focused and our No. 1 priority is coming out of this pandemic in a good position. Quite honestly, because of the past 16 years of fiscally conservative leadership at the state level, our foundation is really strong and it has remained strong during COVID. We have the best business environment in the Midwest, we have the No. 1 infrastructure in the nation, and in spite of COVID, despite the business challenges of COVID, we have already created over 27,000 jobs here in the state of Indiana in 2020, have exceeded the total number of jobs in 2019 already, and we're holding the average wage at \$28 an hour. In my conversations with our mayors around the state, whether in Montpelier, Batesville, Terre Haute or Evansville, they all express that kind of economic vitality in their local communities; the same economic vitality

that we're experiencing at the state levels. That's because of the foundation we've laid. So we're going to continue to focus on economic opportunity and also quality of life. What keeps me up at night and I know it keeps the governor up at night because we talk about this, is the human cost of this pandemic. Those people who are suffering from mental illness or addiction or from abuse, suicides, those people who need structure, who need resources, who need that stability in their lives. That group of people are the ones who are going to feel the effects of this COVID-19 and that is an impact we are starting to feel and will continue feel. Not just as a state, but as local communities and families.

We will be focused on how do we make sure they get the resources? How do we make sure that they have the support they need to come out of this pandemic whole and productive.

HPI: When the daily COVID statistics come out, one thing I focus on is hospitalizations and the ICU bed and ventilator capacities, because Gov. Holcomb has been saying since last spring that the state must manage its way through this pandemic. It seems we're

heading into the worst of it, while in three or four months we're seeing the light at the end of the tunnel with now three vaccines ready for emergency approval. What will be your focus on the pandemic and how it's managed?

Crouch: What we've been focused on within my agencies – and I oversee agriculture, housing, OCRA (Office of Community & Rural Affairs), broadband and the new Indiana Destination Development Corporation – is how do we pivot and refocus our resources to be able to support the economy that will provide relief to those communities challenged by COVID-19. We've done that through a number of programs, whether it's housing in rental and mortgage assistance programs, whether it's through OCRA which has provided tens of millions of CARES Act dollars, to federal block grant money to be able to provide grants and loans to communities. We will look to continually pivot, refocus our resources to provide that aid and assistance to local communities and Hoosiers. From my standpoint, and I've talked to the governor about this, as I have spearheaded a number of initiatives in the past, whether it was the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, the Census Commission, Civic Education



Task Force, I want to be able to focus some of my energies over the next year on mental health issues. How do we help Hoosiers who are struggling get the resources needed to provide them the tools that they need to be able to survive in this environment?

HPI: I've covered the General Assembly going on four decades, and mental health keeps coming up, but the solutions and the funding never seem to be enough. What strides have been made the first part of the Holcomb administration?

Crouch: We have been named the No. 1 state in the country for the adoption of foster children. That was a focus and will continue to remain a focus. Our infant mortality rates are declining and Gov. Holcomb said that by the end of 2024, we want Indiana to be the best in the Midwest in terms of infant mortality rates. So we'll continue to stay focused in that area. We also understand and realize when it comes to mental health resources, what we are lacking are providers and personnel to provide care for those who are challenged or suffering. We'll be working with FSSA to explore how to attract more practitioners in those industries, whether they be psychiatrists, therapists, or workers in the mental health community. How can we attract more individuals to that particular health care? How do we make sure we have the resources, because we are lacking them at this particular point in time?

HPI: The governor has also proposed \$100 million for broadband expansion. With schools going virtual during this pandemic, that has exposed this gaping shortfall, as Speaker Huston noted in his opening speech last month. What's been your role on that front? And how much more money will be needed to get broadband into those last miles?

Crouch: Back in 2018 we created the director of broadband opportunities with the lieutenant governor's office. We've been elevating that to an agency level position. Scott Rudd has been heading up that effort for us, so we have that single point of contact for not just providers, but communities to make those connections. At the end of 2018, Gov. Holcomb announced the Next Level Broadband Connections Initiative that put \$100 million into broadband projects throughout Indiana. OCRA is the agency that administers that grant program. We have deployed

already \$79 million in grants to providers to expand broadband throughout rural Indiana, connecting about 27,000 households and businesses. It is an extremely expensive endeavor. The reason these people are not connected is that it's very costly to provide that connection. Through COVID, we have seen the importance of having broadband. It used to be considered a luxury. Now it's essential

because broadband affects every life, workforce, health care, education, economic development and quality of life. With e-learning, with Google Working, with telehealth, we are seeing that Hoosiers need to be connected to get that quality of life and that economic viability that their urban counterparts already have. It is going to continue to be a priority, not just in this administration, but in the General Assembly. Now having said that, we have invested \$100 million, spent \$79 million so far and have connected 27,000 households. When Purdue did their study in 2018, they indicated 500,000 Hoosiers needed to be connected.

HPI: So how much more will be needed?

Crouch: There have been estimates of between \$2 billion and \$3 billion to connect throughout Indiana. It's an extremely expensive proposition. We will continue to invest but we will need our federal partners because much like rural electrification in the 1930s, when the federal government said every

American deserves electricity, I believe, personally, the same level of priority is going to have to be made at the federal level to get Hoosiers that last mile.

HPI: On the agriculture front we've seen everything from President Trump's tariff war with China, to bad weather and wild swings in commodity prices. What will be your priority there?

Crouch: One of the things we discovered through COVID-19 is it's extremely important to have our food chain supply operating so there are no disruptions. With COVID, we saw some disruptions within the food supply chain with our meat processing plants, two of them in particular in Delphi and Logansport. What came about as the result of that is we have a lot of independent processors here in the state who want to grow their capacity. Early on, we allocated \$1 million in CARES Act money to provide assistance to those independent meat processing plants and companies that experienced challenges and costs due to COVID-19 to keep them viable. Over the next couple of years we'll be considering how to grow that sector so that we don't get in a situation like other states that had



to euthanize hogs because of disruption in the food supply chain. We don't want to ever be in that position here. We will look to grow those independent processors so that we can continue to have a food supply chain that survives any kind of epidemic, pandemic or disruption in the future.

HPI: Congress came up with the CARES Act money and stimulus relief money early. Does Congress or either the Trump or Biden administration need to follow up quickly?

Crouch: The real concern that I experience through my agencies is the struggling of small, rural communities and their main streets which they worked so hard to revitalize over the last 10 years. Help for our small businesses would be well received; 75% of all jobs created in Indiana come through small businesses. We want to be sure those companies that are providing a few jobs here and a few jobs here, 50 jobs here, continue to be able to survive and prosper.

HPI: The other major part of your portfolio is tourism, where there's been a restructuring. The pandemic has hit tourism hard. The Brown County Music Center that was just getting started when the pandemic hit is an example, as well as The Barns in Nappanee. What will be your focus there?

Crouch: Ten million dollars in CARES Act money was dedicated to awarding grants to festivals, events that really add to quality of life and economic opportunity across the state. We see it in apple festivals in Linton and Bloomfield. We want to make sure the Blueberry Festival ...

HPI: In Plymouth, right?

Crouch: Yes. We have 650 festivals throughout Indiana that add so much to who we are and our quality of life. Those grants will help those venues to survive. That was the most immediate thing we did. The new Indiana Destination Development Corporation was created to transition tourism into the bigger picture of economic development. Economic development is not just about creating jobs; it's about the quality of life that community and those jobs have to offer. These generations want to know about the quality of life and so the purpose of the IDDC is to tell that story of Indiana so that we can attract not just visitors, but also talent and business, and retain college students so they can continue to grow our state. Before COVID-19 we were on a fast track to rebranding Indiana to reach all of those groups. That is still in the works, but it has been slowed down because we want to ensure we come out of this pandemic at the right time with the right message. Currently we are working with the Hoosier Hospitality Promise to instill confidence not just in establishments, but also to educate the consumer on which establishments are following the CDC and state guidelines to provide a safe environment for those visitors. We want to encourage Hoosiers to go out, spend money and do it safely. There's that balance on when is it safe to go out and when is it important to go out. IDDC

under Elaine Bedel is working on that timing.

HPI: Talk about the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel. This has been a scary and excruciatingly intense year that has disrupted many lives, families, businesses, securities and traditions. Do you see things getting worse before that vaccine is widely available in three to four months?

Crouch: Gov. Holcomb has provided incredible leadership during this pandemic. You can't make everyone happy no matter what you do. But his No. 1 priority is to keep Hoosiers safe and to protect their health and welfare. Gov. Holcomb has done a tremendous job on that. There is now light at the end of that tunnel. When exactly does that happen? We don't know. As I am around the state,



I see people living with it for so long now it just becomes common. People are starting to let their guard down and it's so critically important we don't do that. What we go through at the end of the tunnel depends on how safe people are during this holiday season. If they do what is recommended, keeping gatherings small and to their immediate families, we should be all right. Is it going to get worse before it gets better? I hope not. Is there that possibility? Yes, there is, realistically. Gov. Holcomb watches those touch points, in terms of ICU beds, ventilators, positivity rates. What we don't want is to become overwhelmed. I have seen hospitals in my hometown of Evansville diverting patients. That's frightening. We've come so far; we don't have that much further to go and so we've just got to keep at it over the next few months. Will we get back to normal? Well, what's the new normal? I do believe a crisis is an opportunity to change and an opportunity for improvement. I do believe many of the things we're currently doing we should carry on with to end up with a healthier population. I don't think we'll have as many meetings because we've found we can do it more efficiently and effectively by Zoom. We'll look at how our cities are going to be different, how our rural areas are going to be different. ❖

2024 prospects for Trump & Pence

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Whether it was North Side Gym in Elkhart or the Southport Fieldhouse, or packing Evansville’s Ford Center with 11,000 supporters in September 2018, President Trump was at the spearhead of a populist movement. His MAGA rallies filled Indiana’s basketball palaces, with thousands who couldn’t get in standing outside.



In contrast, at a solo Oct. 22 campaign rally at Fort Wayne International Airport, Vice President Mike Pence drew a very, very modest 400 supporters.

Both Trump and Pence lost the Nov. 3 election, with Democrat Joe Biden polling more than 80 million votes in a 51%-47% victory. Yet 74 million

voted for Trump despite the pandemic and the ensuing economic meltdown. Within hours of his loss, Trump was telling friends he is considering a comeback in 2024, just as he kicked off his reelection bid just days after his 2016 upset victory over Hillary Clinton.

Conventional wisdom had it that if Trump lost, somehow, some way it would be Pence who would become the frontrunner. Yet other recent veep losers (Walter Mondale in 1980 and Dan Quayle in 1992) weren’t able to make this comeback.

Pence is now chained to however the Trump legacy bears out. A Politico/Morning Consult Poll released this past week had Trump leading Pence 53%-12% in a hypothetical 2024 primary matchup, with Donald Trump Jr. at 8%. Other GOP rising stars such as Nikki Haley and Tom Cotton barely registered.

“The wild card in all of this will be the plans and whims of Donald J. Trump,” Craig Dunn observed in his HPI column after the election. “He might decide to make another run in a bid for redemption or weigh in on behalf of one of his children or one of his loyalists. Make no mistake about it, President Trump will happily throw Mike Pence under a bus and label him a loser if it suits his purpose. He has done the same to a litany of qualified and good men and women and Mike Pence should not expect any different treatment.

“President Trump, like him or not, is a death star and tends to destroy anything that enters his orbit,” Dunn added.

Club For Growth President David McIntosh, a close friend of Pence, told Politico before the election, “If President Trump is not reelected and decides to mount that

campaign ... (Pence) would put any personal ambitions aside to help the president. He holds these things lightly because he knows it’s either a calling for him or it’s not. He’ll spend a lot of time being out there with members when they need to raise money and helping conservative pro-Trump candidates be successful in their races.”

Pence is expected to move back to Indiana, write a book and give paid speeches for the next couple of years. Trump faces an array of post-White House challenges, including tax fraud investigations from New York state (which can’t be vanquished if Trump tries to pardon himself), to hundreds of millions of personal loans coming due in the next four years, to health concerns (he’ll be 78 in 2024). Trump will remain in the headlines, but how his political legacy fares is anyone’s guess.

Trump finally said on Thanksgiving Day he will leave office on Jan. 20 after months of injecting doubt. “Certainly I will. Certainly I will. And you know that,” he said after he was asked if he will leave office on Jan. 20 when President-elect Biden is scheduled to be inaugurated. “But I think that there will be a lot of things happening between now and the 20th of January. A lot of things. Massive fraud has been found. We’re like a third world country.”

Trump is now what he has long despised, a loser. Not only just a loser, but a poor loser, which in the past has not impressed most Hoosiers. He pouted for three weeks before signing off on the transition to President-



elect Joe Biden. The conservative National Review editorial board called Trump’s behavior “disgraceful,” adding, “Almost nothing that the Trump team has alleged has withstood the slightest scrutiny. In particular, it’s hard to find much that is remotely true in the president’s Twitter feed these days. It is full of already-debunked claims and crackpot conspiracy theories about Dominion voting systems.”

That, in Hoosier parlance, is BS. There are no reliable reports or metrics that indicate this was a “rigged”

election. Ask Connie Lawson. Yet Trump has injected an element of an illegitimate Biden presidency, particularly within the Republican Party.

Asked if he would attend the Biden inauguration, Trump said, "I don't want to say that yet, I mean I know the answer, I know the answer. I'll be honest, I know the answer, I just don't want to say it yet."

The other significant issue with Trump's farewell (for now) bookend is the damage he has done to the election process, which had been the cornerstone of American democracy. A post-election YouGov Poll revealed that 70% of Republicans do not believe the presidential election was "free and fair."

The danger for the Republican Party is that while Trump drew that royal flush in 2016 to win, the fact is that he lost the popular vote twice, with Joe Biden doubling the margin in this past election. Combined with Al Gore's 2000 loss to George W. Bush despite winning the popular vote, you'd have to go back to 2004 to find a Republican (George W. Bush) who won both the popular vote in the Electoral College. Republicans have only won the popular vote in two of the last nine elections.

There have been three other former presidents

who sought comebacks after failing at reelection, with two of them involving Hoosiers. President Martin Van Buren lost to William Henry Harrison in 1840, and made an unsuccessful attempt as the Free Soil Party nominee in 1848. President Grover Cleveland lost to Benjamin Harrison in 1888, then recaptured the White House in 1892 (Harrison never won the popular vote, either).

In 1912, former President Theodore Roosevelt attempted a revival against his hand-picked successor (President William Howard Taft) and lost as the Bull Moose Party nominee to Democrat Woodrow Wilson in the only race featuring three presidents.

A reelection of the Trump/Pence team would have given Pence a significant leg up on the 2024 campaign.

Now Pence faces his "Plan B" or "Plan C" in either a crowded GOP presidential field where he'll have to defend his presiding over the Trump administration's disastrous pandemic response, or play second fiddle to Trump himself. ❖

The columnist is publisher of Howey Politics Indiana at www.howeypolitics.com.

Indiana Democrats need a brand makeover

By **DAVE KITCHELL**

LOGANSPORT – As Indiana Democrats begin their search for a new state chair, Exhibit A for a new direction comes in the form of Vigo County.

For the first time in more than 60 years, the county that had picked every president – and all but three since 1888 – went the wrong way. The county may have a Democratic coroner, but voters chose the Republican nominee for president instead.



That county's political prescience has endured generations of voters long before Tommy John or Larry Bird made names for themselves within the Vigo borders, or before Steve Martin made reference to the city in the black-and-white retro comedy "Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid."

Had Democrats focused on Indiana voters the way other states have, the Vigo streak might still be alive.

But Hoosiers have become too predictable in their voting patterns, particularly in presidential elections. When Barack Obama won the state in 2008, along with every other state with a Big Ten university, Indiana was already trending purple thanks to the 50-state cam-

paigned mantra of Howard Dean and the diligent direction of Obama campaign manager David Axelrod. Indiana performed politically like a state that had just produced a former national chair in Joe Andrew and one that had a Democratic senator in Evan Bayh. It performed like a state where a major city, South Bend, had produced names such as Brademas, Roemer and Donnelly.

As Democrats search for that singular influence to live, eat and breathe the party's fortunes for the next four years, it's poignant to think of a Hoosier composer who penned a great song that applies to this discussion. Hoagy Carmichael may have written "Stardust" in a music store in Bloomington, but he also wrote "Georgia on My Mind."

It was the signature song for Jimmy Carter when he ran and won the presidency, and given the red-to-blue status Georgia had in the recent election and the pending dual Senate run-off races, it's worth noting that Indiana could be much like Georgia in the next eight years. With Democrats winning the popular vote for the seventh time in eight presidential elections, the trend nationwide is blue. While Republicans have become more popular with non-college educated Americans, more Americans are earning degrees. Urban women are trending in the blue direction, witness the Democratic mayoralship in Zionsville last year.

It's a given that the Democratic brand in Indiana needs a makeover. The question becomes who will style it and whether they can find the person in Indiana as committed as Stacy Abrams has been in Georgia.

What once was the Solid South for the Democratic Party nationwide could also be said of southern Indiana. For more than 30 years, it was the dominion of Lee Hamil-

ton, and it produced the last two-term Democratic governor, the late Frank O'Bannon. That's part of the discussion Democrats have to have soon, and as much as Dean had a 50-state strategy for winning elections, Indiana Democrats need a 92-county strategy for winning their first statewide race since Joe Donnelly's Senate race in 2012.

There are names out there for potential candidacies. Certainly Evan Bayh's name will be mentioned, as will Tom McDermott's. But there are plenty more in cities that aren't traditional Democratic strongholds like Goshen

and Richmond.

For now, the harsh reality of legislative maps that won't favor the party are in the offing in the coming year. And the people who ask how Democrats can regain a competitive seat at the table in state politics will be met with a Hoosier phrase that applies to the moment: "You can't get there from here." ❖

Kitchell is the former Democratic mayor of Logansport. He teaches at John Glenn HS.

GOP prospects for 2022 look promising

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Looking ahead after what just happened – with President Donald Trump and the Democratic brand the big losers – election prospects are bright for Republicans in 2022.



A diminished Democratic House majority, solidified Republican control of redistricting and the history of midterm elections point to Republicans gaining control of the House of Representatives in 2022.

President-elect Joe Biden was of course the big winner this time. His personal appeal contrasted effectively with the unappealing but politically formidable Trump. Biden might have been

the only Democratic presidential aspirant who could have defeated Trump, just as Hillary Clinton might have been the only Democratic aspirant who could have lost to Trump in 2016.

Now, Biden inherits a troubled nation, with a worsening pandemic, an economy suffering COVID-caused disruptions and a divisive split. His calls for unity are rejected by Trump and a multitude of Trump voters decrying and disputing the election results.

The Democratic brand was a big loser. And that is another serious problem for Biden, even though his personal brand prevailed. Democrats envisioned a big blue wave, sweeping away Trump and lots of his Republican supporters along with him. They were confident of defeating politically vulnerable incumbent Republicans to gain control of the Senate. Instead, they lost most of those races.

Democrats were positive they would increase their House majority. Instead, Republicans made significant gains, leaving Democrats with a slim margin of around a dozen seats. Tired of Republican-controlled gerrymandering in so many states, they concentrated on winning

control of more state legislative chambers for the redistricting now after the 2020 Census. Instead, they failed everywhere in the quest for more state legislative control. They cling now to hope of winning two tough run-off races in Georgia to bring a tie that Kamala Harris could break as vice president.

The Democratic brand wasn't selling. Why? That's the subject of a Democratic finger-pointing debate. Was it because campaign rhetoric of some party progressives left Democratic candidates in competitive areas vulnerable to Republican claims that they would "defund the police" and bring socialism? Or was it because party moderates didn't stress big programs and change and didn't punch back hard enough at Trump and the Republican brand?

Whatever the cause, the effect is clear. While Biden won in the key battleground states and added Arizona and Georgia to his decisive Electoral College total, Democrats down the ballot suffered a disaster that will in some ways last a decade.

Here's why Republicans have a good chance to win back the House in 2022. With a slimmed-down Democratic majority, around a dozen seats as a few contests remain in doubt, the usual losses by the president's party in midterm elections could bring Republicans control. The narrow margin is more precarious because Republicans solidified control of state legislatures. So, Republicans will draw districts to be used for a decade, until after the 2030 Census. They will be able immediately to pick off some Democrats with the new maps.

In midterm elections since World War II, the party of a sitting president lost an average of 26 House seats. In 2018, Republicans lost 39 seats two years after Trump's election. In 2010, Democrats lost 63 seats while President Barack Obama was in the White House.

One reason for midterm losses is that voters grow dissatisfied with what a president's party has accomplished, usually not what supporters hoped for. If Republicans keep control of the Senate now, Biden's chances for accomplishments dwindle. And chances of continuing House control could dwindle as well. The situation would be far different if the Democratic brand had sold.

There was a Biden wave. He won with a record 80 million votes and the second highest vote percentage margin out of the six presidential elections in the 21st Century. Down-ballot, the color of the wave certainly wasn't blue. ❖

Americans must be cautious as pandemic comes to an end

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI Indiana

ANDERSON – I heard a guy talking on the phone the other day about the ongoing pandemic. "I think we've grown so afraid of dying," he said, "that we've forgotten how to live."



He's wrong about that. The problem with our nation's reaction to the coronavirus is not that we've taken the threat too seriously, that we've done too much to protect ourselves and our loved ones. It's that we haven't taken it seriously enough. Way too many of us have ignored the health warnings and gone about our lives as if there was no threat.

People survive the flu every year, these folks say. We shouldn't turn our lives upside down for a virus that kills only a small fraction of its victims. But the toll keeps rising.

Every day, it seems, the United States sets a new record for the number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19. Deaths are adding up at a rate of more than 2,000 a day, and public health experts fear that number could reach 3,000 by the end of the year.

Think about that.

By the end of the year, the coronavirus could be claiming the same number of American lives every day as were claimed by the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The virus has already killed more than 260,000 Americans, and experts say the toll could reach 300,000 by the end of the year. The number of new cases recorded is approaching 175,000 a day.

And like that guy on the phone, people are ready to be done with it. They're tired of the masks and the social distancing. They're tired of the Zoom meetings and the working from home. They want to go back to the way things used to be. They want to stand in a crowded arena and cheer for their favorite basketball team. They want to watch a band perform at their favorite bar or actually walk into a crowded restaurant for a nice meal.

But the public health experts say

no. They say we have to keep on wearing those masks. We have to keep our interactions to a minimum, and we need to avoid those large crowds for at least a few more months.

No one is happy about this. The pandemic has disrupted nearly every aspect of our lives. It has upended the way we celebrate. And the way we mourn. Nine months into this pandemic, almost everyone knows at least one person who has been infected by the virus. As I write this column, one friend awaits the results of a test while fighting symptoms that seem an awful lot like the coronavirus. Another lies hooked up to a ventilator, fighting for his life.

Many of us have gotten through this crisis with relatively minor interruptions. We still have our livelihoods and our health, and we'll emerge from the experience little worse for the wear. Others have been left without a job. Some find themselves without food on the table or a place to live. Suffice it to say this pandemic will leave lasting scars. Some have seen their lives forever changed.


The good news, though, is that relief is on the horizon. Public health officials say we could begin seeing vaccinations by the middle of December. Not for everyone, of course. They'll go first to the medical professionals, the front-line workers and vulnerable populations. But availability of the vaccines will gradually spread to the broader public, and by spring, if enough people are vaccinated, things might actually be approaching normal.

In spite of our differing outlooks on the pandemic, we can all look forward to that. ❖

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

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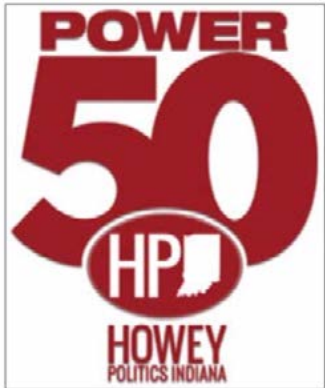
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YOUR FRIENDS ALL HANG OUT HERE... DO YOU?

2021 HPI Power 50 List will face drastic change

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – When the 2020 HPI Power 50 List was published on Jan. 7, the COVID-19 pandemic was just beginning to create a stir in China. Vice President Pence was at the apex of his power. Health Commissioner



Kristina Box was cited for her coming contributions to the "story of our lifetime" (the opioid crisis). South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg was an out-sized presidential dreamer.

Come January, Indiana will have two new members of Congress (1st CD Democrat Frank Mrvan and 5th CD Republican Victoria Spartz).

This will be a biennial budget and reapportionment year in the General Assembly, so Dr. Tim Brown and Chairman Timothy Wesco will rise on the 2020 list.

There will be new gubernatorial contenders, at least one new state party chair. Will there be a Libertarian to crack the list for the first time since we began this publishing exercise in 1999, now that gubernatorial nominee Donald Rainwater made it into double digits in the Nov. 3, election.

The HPI Power 50 list is designed to illustrate who stands to make the greatest impacts in the coming year. We invite our readers to make nominations or complete your own full list.

This year's list will be published in the Jan. 7, 2021, edition of Howey Politics Indiana

Here is our 2020 HPI Power 50 list:

1. Vice President Mike Pence
2. Gov. Eric Holcomb
3. Pete Buttigieg
4. U.S. Sen. Todd Young
5. U.S. Sen. Mike Braun
6. Senate President Pro Tem Rod Bray
7. Secretary of State Connie Lawson
8. Speakers Brian Bosma and Todd Huston
9. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch

10. Dr. Woody Myers
11. Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer
12. ISTA President Keith Gambill
13. Mike Schmuhl
14. Marc Short
15. HHS Sec. Alex Azar and CMS Director Seema Verma
16. Attorney General Curtis Hill
17. Commerce Sec. Jim Schellinger
18. U.S. Rep. Jim Banks
19. Indiana Treasurer Kelly Mitchell
20. Christina Hale
21. Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr.
22. FSSA Sec. Jennifer Sullivan and IDOH Commissioner Kris Box
23. INDOT Commissioner Joe McGuinness
24. Chief Justice Loretta Rush
25. Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett
26. Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry
27. Evansville Mayor Lloyd Winnecke
28. Democratic Chairman John Zody
29. Terre Haute Mayor Duke Bennett
30. U.S. Rep. Andre Carson
31. U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski
32. Drug Czar Douglas Huntsinger
33. Purdue President Mitch Daniels
34. IU President IU President Michael McRobbie
35. USDA Under Sec. Ted McKinney
36. Surgeon General Jerome Adams
37. Ways & Means Chairman Tim Brown

38. Bill and Ann Moreau
39. RNC Committeeman John Hammond
40. Chamber President Kevin Brinegar
41. IMA President Brian Burton
42. Marty Obst
43. U.S. Rep. Greg Pence
44. U.S. Rep. Larry Bushon
45. State Sen. Jeff Raatz and State Rep. Robert Behning
46. Kurt and Kristin Luidhardt
47. U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky
48. U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks
49. Earl Goode
50. Joe Donnelly



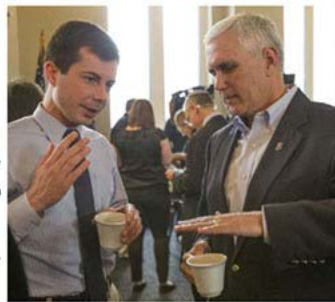
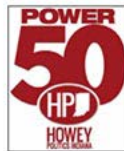
Pence, Pete & Gov head Power 50

Veep, mayor and governor in position to transform Indiana and American political scene

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY** in Indianapolis and **MARK SCHOEFF JR.**, in Washington

INDIANAPOLIS – As we unveil the 2020 version of the Howey Politics Indiana Power 50 List, Hoosiers appear to be relatively satisfied with their state government, unsure about the federalists and specifically President Trump, and are most concerned about health care and the economy.

These are the latest survey numbers from the We Ask America Poll conducted in early December for the Indiana Manufacturers Association. They accentuate the formulation of our annual Power 50 list headed by Vice President Mike Pence, Gov. Eric Holcomb, former South Bend mayor and Democratic presidential contender Pete Buttigieg, and the state's



two Republican senators who will likely sit in judgment (and acquittal) of President Trump in an impeachment trial

Continued on page 3

Unforgiving Middle East

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – By most Western accounts, Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani was, as President Trump might put it, "scum."

He had the blood of hundreds if not thousands of Americans on his hands. As I surveyed the list of the hundred or so Hoosier soldiers killed by IEDs and other havoc during the ill-fated Iraq War, I'm sure Suleimani played a role in at least some of them.

That President Trump made the decision to assassinate Suleimani by drone, at first consideration, was good. My initial thoughts were that this terrorist general probably died



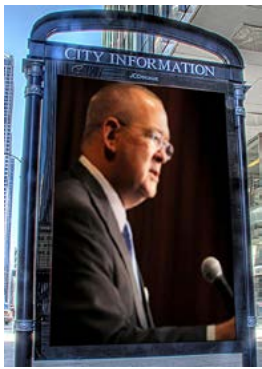
"All is well. Assessment of casualties & damage taking place now. So far, so good!"

- President Trump, tweeting Tuesday evening after Iran missile attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq. Trump is expected to address the nation this A.M.

Regional divergence and local taxes

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE – In the century after the Civil War, the USA went through a long period of regional convergence. This simply means that as our standard of living grew, poorer places generally grew faster than richer places. This caused states and cities to “converge” towards one another at a time when our overall standard of living grew more than five-fold. By the 1970s the trend of convergence slowed appreciably, and by the 1990s reversed. Over the past three or so decades, rich places have grown more quickly, while poor places grew more slowly.



Population flows exacerbate these trends. Rich places tend to attract more people, while poorer places shed them. This results in some stark geographic anomalies. For example, Columbus, Ohio, has captured 130% of Ohio’s population growth in the 21st Century, while Indianapolis captured 120% of all Indiana’s job growth. In recent decades, nearly all large urban places thrived, while smaller cities and rural places mostly stagnated.

Unsurprisingly, decades of these patterns cause unease and even resentment among many residents. There are several good studies tying this divergence to growing political discontent.

Just last week, mayors of seven Midwestern cities called for a domestic Marshall Plan to invest in their cities. They invoked the memory of America’s large commitment to rebuilding Europe after World War II.

Their argument focused mostly on federal investment in clean energy technologies and urban infrastructure as a means for revitalizing cities. Unfortunately, the gist of this argument is that such investments would boost primarily factory and construction employment. While I think it is time to have a frank discussion about place-based economic policies, this particular argument has two fatal weaknesses.

First, the federal government heavily subsidizes poor places and people already. Federal tax dollars are disproportionately collected in affluent cities and distributed disproportionately to poor places. While most of those tax dollars flow to individuals, not local governments, the notion that poor cities and rural areas are not getting their share of government spending is simply false.

It is the other way around. Rich places receive far fewer tax dollars per person from federal taxes than do poor places. Moreover, within states, rich counties subsidize poor counties through state tax systems.

Again, it would be wise to review the spending priorities to poor places. But, taxpayers in rich cities also tax themselves more heavily than do smaller cities and rural places. To ask them to fork over even more money to places unwilling to raise their own revenues seems to me like a political dead end.

The second, bigger problem confronting the idea of a domestic Marshall Plan is that what ails cities and rural places has almost nothing to do with private sector capital investment. The problem is more fundamental. Declining cities and struggling rural places almost always have two overwhelming problems: Their educational attainment is too low to attract the types of jobs that will grow in the 21st Century, and the quality of their public services is too low to attract new households.

This is a tough thing for most people to hear about their community, yet it is inevitably true. As an exercise, I have my undergraduate students build a predictive algorithm of a county’s population growth using only educational attainment. They can do so with about 90% accuracy, and that gets at the heart of why the nation is experiencing regional divergence. Educational attainment is the strongest causal factor in regional economic growth.

A century ago, workers enjoyed a wage premium by moving to a city with good transportation networks and a cheap energy source. Those factors dictated the strength of cities. Today, educated workers enjoy a wage premium by working closely with other educated workers. In the 21st Century economy, education and skills have replaced electricity, railroads and canals as the prime contributors of city growth.

There is a small chance that federal place-based economic policies can help smaller cities and rural places do better, but it is no more than a small chance. Federal spending might improve roads or sewage systems, extend broadband or help subsidize more reliable electricity. All of these are helpful, but they aren’t the keys to revitalizing a Rust Belt city or aging factory town.

The real policy challenges remain at the state and local level. The federal government isn’t going to address the fundamental weaknesses that keep some places poor while others thrive. Moreover, most people wouldn’t want them to. The building blocks to better educational attainment happen in school board meetings and in statehouse votes, not in Congress. Places that do well recognize this, and places that do not will continue to lose population and relevance. That leads me to my final point.

Recall that more affluent cities typically tax themselves more heavily than other places. There’s a reason for this, and it reinforces the divergence between rich and poor places. Over time, household preferences change, and in recent decades school quality and neighborhood amenities have become more attractive. These attributes seem especially attractive to mobile households with educated workers and children, in short, the type of families that communities wish to attract. They also cost money.

The implication is that places that tax themselves more heavily to provide better schools and neighborhoods will capture most of the population growth. These are state and municipal governments who seek to compete for people on the basis of value. In contrast, many state and municipal governments focus more heavily on lower tax rates. These communities compete on price, not value.

There may have been a time when being a low-price community was a successful strategy, but that

time has long since passed. The economic forces that led to that change show no signs of abating, and successful cities have already figured that out. ❖

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

Stay calm by considering townships

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Readers have petitioned for columns that ignore our dysfunctional politics, disrupted economy, and medical calamity. I am compelled to comply. What could be more neutral, more emotionally void, and more sleep-inducing than a focus on Indiana’s townships?



In truth, I must alert you to the fact we have lost three townships since the 2010 Census. Their departure was not widely broadcast beyond the borders of their two counties, Boone and Delaware. No sympathy cards are expected.

In Boone County, as you might have heard, has seen considerable growth. Whitestown and Zionsville engaged in very suburban competition for present and future tax base. This is what passes for foresight in suburbs. In the process Eagle and Union Townships were absorbed.

In Delaware County, Yorktown sought greater recognition as an alternative to Muncie and to secure part of I-69 with whatever future benefits might be expected there. This was achieved by allowing Muncie to retain its small portion of Mount Pleasant Township, with the rest renamed for the site of Washington’s victory over Cornwallis (Yorktown).

Hence, whereas previously compulsive Hoosiers might have memorized the names of Indiana’s 1,008 townships, they now have a mere 1,005 to commit to memory. But it does present a minor issue for

the Geography Division of the Census Bureau. Townships no longer encompass the 35,800-plus square miles of our 92 counties. In the future, a comprehensive report of geographic detail in Boone and Delaware counties will have to include the names Muncie, Whitestown, Yorktown, and Zionsville where once actual township names were used.

Do you care? If not, some of your neighbors will label you as ANTI-TOWNSHIP, one who would destroy the intent of the Continental Congress which bequeathed townships unto us in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

You will have allies. The existence of townships, these revolutionaries claim, has been brought into question by 20th Century technology including autos, trucks, radio, TV, internet and other manifestations of modernity.

Have these disruptive persons ever examined the list of township names and contemplated their significance. Precisely 46, one half of our 92 counties, have a Washington Township. These nay-sayers to history probably don’t care about the mystery of Aubbeenaubee Township in northwest Fulton County.

Nor have the ANTIs pondered the size and density of population in our townships. Yes, they had superstars Joe Kernan and Randy Shepard issuing a report in 2007 that might have eliminated townships. But you can consider the issue anew in future restful columns right here.

❖

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



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Michael Gerson, Washington Post: Is there always so much sobbing at Democratic victory parties? For the first time in my adult life, I publicly endorsed a Democratic presidential candidate. He won in a convincing fashion. But now, my new comrades, after an initial burst of celebration, are in a deep funk. The reason? While the country shifted away from Trump, it did not turn against the GOP. And the GOP has not turned against Trumpism. To the contrary, the Republican loser has convinced some 70 percent of Republicans that he was cheated out of a victory. Expected Democratic gains in Congress did not materialize. And large increases in Democratic turnout were nearly matched by Trump reinforcements — 10 million more voters than he had in 2016 — that seemed to emerge from thin air. “Figuring out how Trump won an additional 10 million votes,” argues my Post colleague E.J. Dionne Jr., “is one of the most important questions in politics.” His theory? “Given Trump’s intemperate and often wild ranting in the campaign’s final weeks and the growing public role in GOP politics of QAnon conspiracists, the Proud Boys and other previously marginal extremist groups, these voters may well be more radical than the party as a whole.” The facts do not refute Republican blame, but they do complicate it. **Complication No. 1:** According to the 2020 exit polls, 35 percent of voters said that the economy was their most important issue. Of this group, the overwhelming majority — 83 percent — voted for Trump. **Complication No. 2:** Trump did modify his 2020 message in a significant way. Except for absurdly claiming that his border wall was near completion, he did not focus on immigration as he had previously. During the 2016 presidential election and the 2018 midterms, Trump’s final appeal was to stop an imaginary flood of Hispanic drug dealers, gang members and rapists from entering the country. In 2020, Trump’s main appeal was fighting socialism and maintaining law and order. **Complication No. 3:** Some of the most respected voices in Democratic politics have located significant image and policy problems on the Democratic side. House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn (S.C.) has warned that Democrats lose electoral momentum when they are associated with issues such as socialized medicine and defunding police departments. Calls to defund the police, he argues, have the possibility of “doing to the Black Lives Matter movement and current movements across the country what ‘Burn, baby, burn’ did to us back in 1960s. We lost that movement over that slogan.” ❖



should overrule a Southern Indiana U.S. District Court decision that would allow both parents in a same-sex marriage to be listed on their child’s birth certificate. The case began when a Tippecanoe County couple — two women — found that Indiana’s software system wouldn’t allow both their names to be listed when their child was born. Judges in Indiana’s federal Southern District Court found that denying both parents in a same-sex marriage the right to be listed on birth certificates was discriminatory. The U.S. 7th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed that lower-court decision. Those courts and judges were following precedent. In 2017, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the constitutional rights of an Arkansas same-sex couple were violated because they both couldn’t be listed on their child’s birth certificate. This clear precedent didn’t deter Indiana Attorney General Grinch — er, Hill — from springing into action. That’s because a couple of strange notions animate his peculiar brand of conservatism. ❖

Brad Rateike, IBJ: When you recover from a case of political exhaustion, you might consider watching “The Candidate,” the 1972 film starring Robert Redford as the son of a fictional California governor who runs for the U.S. Senate. The movie is decent, but it is not as iconic (or life changing) as “The Sting” or “Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,” so, please forgive me while I spoil the ending. In the final scene of “The Candidate,” Redford’s character, after winning an upset election against the incumbent, asks his campaign manager, “What do we do now?” Before the question is even acknowledged, a crowd of reporters and supporters burst into the room and whisks Redford away to begin his new endeavor. Seconds later, credits roll. Over the past few weeks, there have surely been more than a handful of “what do we do now?” conversations with new and recently reelected candidates. The easy answer to Redford’s question should be, simply this: Brand yourself. On election night 2020, there were plenty of Indiana campaigns prepared with spin for why they did not win. Some Indiana Republicans were prepared to say that President Trump was going to underperform and potentially “tank” the down ballot races (5th Congressional District, Senate and House races). The strong Indiana GOP results made this argument largely moot. Indiana Democrats had a difficult night and have (privately, and in some cases publicly) placed blame on the poor performance of their gubernatorial candidate and his lack of electoral coattails as reason for their own statewide anemic performance. This may be legit. Bbut I also think that few of these campaigns felt an obligation or a sense of urgency to establish their own identities as part of their campaigns. Pro tip: Define what you stand for. Just like in business, if you do not define yourself, your competitors will define you. And that is why you need to know the difference between “press” and “communications” strategies. A press strategy announces the story; the communications strategy shapes and amplifies the story.. ❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: Maybe disgraced Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill has a new career plan. Perhaps he’s heard somewhere that there are casting calls for a new version of “How the Grinch Stole Christmas!” That might account for Hill’s mean-spirited attempt, on his way out the door, to bust up families, deny parents their children and children their parents. A few days ago, Hill submitted a brief arguing that the U.S. Supreme Court

Coalition forms for redistrict reforms

INDIANAPOLIS — A coalition of activist groups announced a new push Monday against what it called partisan gerrymandering by Indiana's Republican-dominated Legislature (AP). Coalition leaders said they would form a citizens commission that will hold virtual town hall meetings in January and February and propose new voting districts to the General Assembly before lawmakers approve new congressional and legislative district maps next year using 2020 census information. Those advocating for a revamp of Indiana's redistricting procedures have failed over several years to find support among Republicans whose full-supermajority command of the Indiana Legislature came about after they gained total control over redrawing those maps 10 years ago. The coalition of some 25 groups, including Common Cause Indiana, the NAACP and the League of Women Voters, said they hoped public pressure would force Republicans not to draw new voting districts behind closed doors. "The General Assembly won't do it—we understand the motivations why they won't do it," said Julia Vaughn, Common Cause Indiana's policy director. "So we're creating this parallel, this shadow, process that will demonstrate to Hoosiers and the Legislature alike that there is a way to do this in the public interest, out in the open so that everybody can see."

Hospitalizations up 350% since Sept.

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana's hospitals had more COVID-19 patients than ever before over the Thanksgiving weekend and the number under intensive care unit treatment also continued its recent steep increase (AP). The Indiana State Department of Health's daily update on Monday also reported 38 more coronavirus deaths

occurring over the past several days. Indiana hospitals were treating 3,401 COVID-19 patients as of Sunday — about a 350% increase since late September when Gov. Eric Holcomb lifted nearly all business and crowd size restrictions before reinstating some limits in mid-November.

Vanderburgh sets new COVID record

EVANSVILLE — Vanderburgh County set a new one-day record for COVID-19 cases Monday with 266, with one death reported. It shatters the previous record of 210 cases, set just one week ago ([Evansville Courier & Press](#)). The new data, found on the Indiana State Department of Health's statewide dashboard of cases, brings Vanderburgh County to 10,546 cases of COVID-19, the illness caused by the novel coronavirus. The total has been building since the first case emerged on March 19.

Trump blasts Georgia GOP

WASHINGTON — President Trump's sustained assault on his own party in Georgia, and his repeated claims of election fraud in the state, have intensified worries among Republicans that he could be hurting their ability to win two crucial Senate runoff races next month ([New York Times](#)). The president has continued to claim without evidence that his loss in the new battleground state was fraudulent, directing his ire in particular at Gov. Brian Kemp and Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, both conservative Republicans, whom he has accused of not doing enough to help him overturn the result. Over the weekend, he escalated his attacks on Mr. Kemp, saying he was "ashamed" to have endorsed him in 2018, and on Monday he called Mr. Kemp "hapless" as he urged him to "overrule his obstinate Republican Secretary of state."

Violence plagues Miami prison

BUNKER HILL— The Miami Correctional Facility is getting more dangerous (Harper, [Indiana Public Media](#)). As Side Effects previously reported, former employees said the Indiana men's prison is out of control. Housing units are so short-staffed that officers can't quickly respond to emergencies like stabbings, let alone prevent such violence from occurring. Data from the Miami County Central Dispatch reinforce that image. Ambulance and helicopter runs to the facility have more than tripled since 2015. Though 2020 is not over, the number of incidents at the facility has already surpassed previous years: Emergency medical services visited 73 times from January through October. At least 29 of those visits resulted from trauma or violence, such as stabbings. Another 28 incidents were given vague labels such as "medical."

Evans, Embrey lead Rokita transition

INDIANAPOLIS — Attorney General-elect Todd Rokita has named veteran attorney Brent C. Embrey as chairman of the transition team and former IU Health President and CEO Daniel F. Evans, Jr. as chairman of the team's executive committee. Others on the team include Greg Zoeller, Greg Garrison, Sen. Erin Houchin, Peter Drumm, Larry Hopkins, Tom John, Tom Wheeler, Michael Schopmeyer, Jamie Weber and David Miller.

Long-time East Chicago clerk dies

EAST CHICAGO — Mary Morris Leonard, a leader in East Chicago government and politics for more than a quarter century, has died ([NWI Times](#)). Leonard served six terms as East Chicago city clerk beginning in 1992. Her tenure ended following an unsuccessful bid for the Democratic mayoral nomination in 2015.

