

Indiana grapples with pandemic year

State's economy weathered the storm, but many challenges remain

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

COLUMBUS, Ind. – It was a tad more than a year ago that Indiana reported its first COVID-10 case on March 6, 2020. In the March 12 edition of Howey Politics Indiana, Gov. Eric Holcomb said, "We're remarkably prepared and you're seeing that play out right now in our coordination." Purdue President Mitch Daniels told HPI, "I think there's a good chance this will prove manageable, that it won't be a cataclysmic global event. We can't be sure of that yet. It may not quite be of the Y2K variety, but it may not be 1918, either."

On March 16, 2020, came news of the first known



Gov. Eric Holcomb is joined by officials of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and General Assembly leaders at the mass vaccination site last Friday.

Hoosier to die. And three days later in the March 19 edition, HPI's lead paragraph: "Hoosiers are facing their greatest physical and economic threat since the Great Depression and on the most crucial aspect of this crisis – the availability of coronavirus testing that would allow health

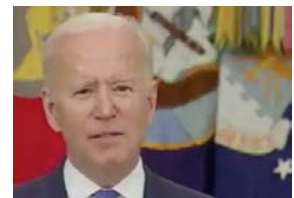
Continued on page 3

Donnelly won't run in '22

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – A week after U.S. Sen. Todd Young surprised no one by announcing for a second term, Democrat Joe Donnelly took a pass. In a statement to Howey Politics Indiana, Donnelly said that while he could run in the future, it won't be against Sen. Young in 2022.

"It was a great honor to serve our state in the U.S. House and Senate," Donnelly said. "I worked to create better health care for Hoosiers, provide more services for our Veterans, assist in job creation, and keep our nation safe. During the last two years, I have had the chance to teach U.S. national security at Notre Dame, to practice law, to



"This is going to be an all-hands-on-deck effort under my administration to end the scourge of sexual assault in the military - and we're going to be focused on that from the very top."

- President Biden on Monday.



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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



work on Hoosier renewable energy issues, and to work with Indiana businesses to create more jobs. I remain open to being involved in public service again, but I will not be a candidate for public office in 2022."

Currently, Gary Human Relations Commission Executive Director Haneefah Khaaliq is the only Democrat seeking the nomination.

Young kicked off his first Senate reelection campaign a week ago, saying on Twitter and in a YouTube video, "When you entrusted me the honor of serving you five years ago, I swore an oath to defend the constitution. I also pledged to you that I would work to on behalf of all Hoosiers to deliver conservative results. I believe I've lived up to that and kept my word but more work remains, so today I'm announcing my reelection campaign and I'm asking for your support."

It comes just months after Young headed the National Republican Senatorial Committee, raising a record \$70 million. Republicans were poised to maintain control of the Senate despite Joe Biden's seven million vote plurality, until President Trump made controversial remarks that helped Democrats win two Georgia Senate seats on Jan. 5.

Since 2012, Indiana U.S. Senate races have cost exponentially more each cycle. In 2012, Sen. Richard Lugar, Donnelly and Republican nominee Richard Mourdock and PACs raised and spent some \$51 million. In his race against Evan Bayh which Young won 52.1% to 42.4%, there was \$75 million raised. In 2018, Braun, Republicans Todd Rokita and Luke Messer, Donnelly and their PAC allies raised and spent more than \$100 million.

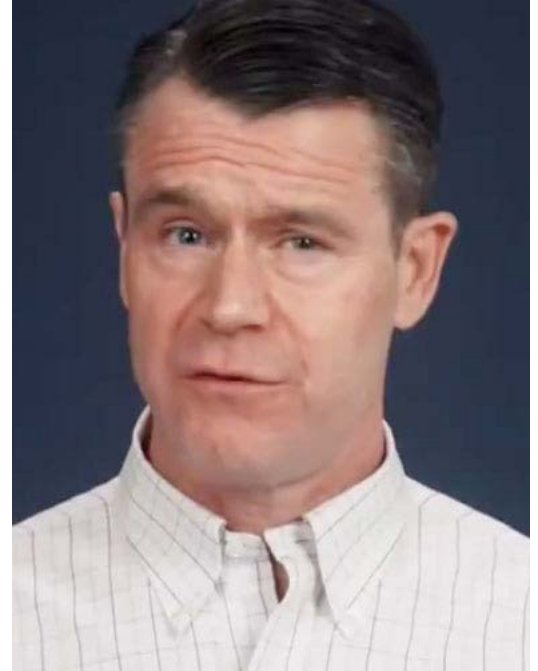
"I'm prepared for an incredibly expensive race," Young told HPI just an hour before Donnelly announced he wouldn't challenge. "I've always entered these races and am entering this one assuming the worst but hoping for the best and I prepare accordingly. Whether this is a \$150

million race or \$200 million, I'll be ready. I've laid the groundwork for reelection campaign from my two years of service as chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee. That position put me in touch with some of the most Republican contributors in the country. I feel strongly positioned to raise whatever we need to raise."

With Donnelly not running, it's unclear whether there is a credible Democratic challenger in the wings. Beyond Donnelly and with Young's historic fundraising prowess, there doesn't appear to be a Democrat who could compete.

The Donald Trump/Mike Pence ticket helped Young swamp Bayh, who entered the race with a \$10 million war chest in July 2016 after primary nominee Baron Hill stepped aside.

Asked about the difference between running in a mid-term election as opposed to a presiden-



tial year, Young said, "I think I'll get more airtime. Former President Trump had an uncanny ability to generate earned media that sucked some of the oxygen from some down ballot candidates. It had an upside here in Indiana that really benefitted down ballot candidates. I really look

forward to leading the ticket, to communicating my vision for the Republican Party and the conservative movement."

Young, who has \$2.4 million in his war chest, has also gathered up endorsements across the GOP establishment, from the congressional delegation to the Indiana Statehouse, and throughout the state. It was designed to preclude any sort of primary challenge. Young has been close to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who has fallen out of favor with the Trump base.

"He is a colleague of mine," Young said of McConnell. "I was elected to a leadership position independent of Mitch McConnell. Mitch McConnell remains a powerful Republican and it benefits Hoosiers that I'm able to work constructively with him, just as it benefited Hoosiers I was able to work constructively with President Trump. I feel like I've made the necessary relationships both on the Republican and Democratic side to deliver conservative results to all Hoosiers."

For Hoosier Democrats, the bench is wafer thin. U.S. Reps. Andre Carson and Frank Mrvan have not expressed any interest in running statewide. Indianapolis



Mayor Joe Hogsett hasn't won any of the statewide races he's run for the U.S. Senate and attorney general. The party's mayoral and General Assembly benches yield no obvious challengers, and the state's most conspicuous Democratic rising star, U.S. Transportation Sec. Pete Buttigieg, is more likely to seek the presidency than to come back and challenge Young.

Young may be facing what Sen. Lugar did in his 2006 reelection, which is a Libertarian opponent. ❖

Pandemic, from page 1

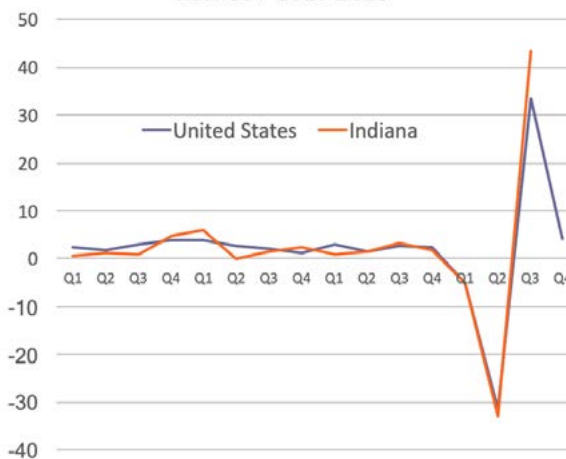
and policy executives to learn of the extent of the spread and contact trace those in a cluster – we are flying blind."

Out of 6.85 million Hoosiers, there had been a mere 193 tests, 39 confirmed cases and two deaths.

A year later, the state's death toll stood at 12,315, more than the estimated 10,000 Hoosiers who died during the 1918-19 Spanish flu epidemic, making the COVID-19 pandemic the most lethal event in Indiana history. The state has established 300 test sites, testing 3 million Hoosiers 8 million times, with 10 labs established and some 2,300 labs reporting results. As of Monday, 1,113,856 first doses of vaccine have been administered in Indiana, and 703,808 individuals are fully vaccinated, according to the Indiana Department of Health.

"We're obviously coming up this Saturday on March 6, which is a year to date of our first reported case, so yes, we have been through a lot together and we're going to get out of this together," Holcomb said last week. "We're pointed in that direction. Obviously when you think about those principles which we shared going back about a year ago, PPE available, having resources on the ground, those hospitalization rates, making sure we have those doctors, nurses and nurses assistants on deck and on site making sure we got to the point where we were adminis-

Quarterly percent change at Annual Rates
Real GDP 2017-2020



tering those vaccinations ... this is huge.

"I count my lucky stars every day that we're having this discussion about hundreds of thousands of Hoosiers getting vaccinated and that we're not waiting seven years," Holcomb added. "This is a good thing."

On Thursday, President Biden has scheduled a primetime national address to mark the pandemic's first anniversary.

Holcomb, 52, became one of 8,200 Hoosiers vaccinated at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway on Friday, one of more than a million Hoosiers to do so. With three vaccines, he has taken part in a modern American endeavor that will rank among Dr. Jonas Salk's polio vaccine, the three-year Manhattan Project that produced the atomic bomb that ended World War II, and the space race to the moon as the greatest scientific breakthroughs in history.

But the costs are mostly unknown. With most of Hoosier students out of in-classroom learning for most of the past year, we won't know the education toll for years. Same with the economic impacts that saw universities restrict on-campus classes, perhaps half of the states' 500,000 small business in financial trouble, 20% of Indi-

Table 3. STATE GOVERNMENT TAX COLLECTIONS BY STATE AND TYPE OF TAX

Data shown in thousands of dollars, percent changes rounded to the nearest hundredth percent

Year 2020 & 2019, Quarter 3 (July, August, September), & Quarter 2 (April, May, June)

Tax Description	Code	U.S. Total (excludes Washington, D.C.)						Indiana					
		Amount			Percent change			Amount			Percent change		
		2020 Q3	2020 Q2	2019 Q3	2020 Q3 from 2020 Q2	2020 Q3 from 2019 Q3	2020 Q3	2020 Q2	2019 Q3	2020 Q3 from 2020 Q2	2020 Q3 from 2019 Q3		
Total Taxes		306,666,877	240,416,632	256,466,904	27.56	19.57	5,845,211	5,310,961	4,886,157	10.06	19.63		
Property taxes	T01	4,785,148	4,203,509	4,555,954	13.84	5.03	3,002	3,551	2,797	-15.46	7.33		
Sales and gross receipts taxes													
General sales and gross receipts	T09	86,369,253	78,516,909	84,594,123	10.00	2.10	2,216,000	1,917,285	2,142,321	15.58	3.44		
Selective sales and gross receipts taxes													
Motor fuels	T13	12,722,412	11,483,855	13,269,911	10.79	-4.13	347,977	295,559	379,679	17.74	-8.35		
Alcoholic beverages	T10	1,768,313	1,506,789	1,771,815	17.36	-0.20	12,552	5,342	11,352	134.97	10.57		
Public utilities	T15	2,437,193	3,080,342	2,474,968	-20.88	-1.53	50,795	46,902	52,121	8.30	-2.54		
Insurance premiums	T12	6,624,406	7,485,265	5,968,360	-11.50	10.99	54,800	89,336	57,640	-38.66	-4.93		
Tobacco products	T16	4,891,436	4,784,581	4,768,182	2.23	2.58	111,376	55,828	107,676	99.50	3.44		
Pari-mutuels	T14	65,218	18,717	62,881	248.44	3.72	27,600	3,407	27,913	710.10	-1.12		
Amusements	T11	1,838,883	1,076,781	2,019,719	70.78	-8.95	85,778	14,717	85,778	482.85	0.00		
Other selective sales and gross receipts	T19	10,269,434	8,758,824	11,300,644	17.25	-9.13	172,550	220,166	185,466	-21.63	-6.96		
License taxes													
Alcoholic beverages	T20	127,799	219,811	139,860	-41.86	-8.62	3,363	2,897	3,518	16.09	-4.41		
Public utilities	T27	320,499	332,941	258,246	-3.74	24.11	X	X	X				
Motor vehicles	T24	7,763,423	6,623,083	7,297,721	17.22	6.38	64,689	125,076	63,046	-48.28	2.61		
Motor vehicle operators	T25	774,043	489,927	718,463	57.99	7.74	66,973	46,848	64,636	42.96	3.62		
Corporations in general	T22	1,620,105	2,058,326	1,185,658	-21.29	36.64	2,355	1,795	1,973	31.20	19.36		
Hunting and fishing	T23	522,850	590,429	456,257	-11.45	14.60	5,532	6,237	5,221	-11.30	5.96		
Amusements	T21	87,784	46,816	101,898	87.51	-13.85	1,220	1,130	1,070	7.96	14.02		
Occupation and businesses	T28	2,851,369	2,518,778	3,108,241	13.20	-8.26	14,244	14,431	13,995	-1.30	1.78		
Other license taxes	T29	443,374	469,430	436,866	-5.55	1.49	22,237	18,883	23,011	17.76	-3.36		
Income taxes													
Individual income	T40	132,079,816	86,866,163	90,833,397	52.05	45.41	2,169,000	2,125,220	1,436,200	2.06	51.02		
Corporation net income	T41	21,622,538	13,018,254	13,144,230	66.09	64.50	392,000	230,968	196,700	69.72	99.29		
Other taxes													
Death and gift	T50	1,324,924	1,083,010	1,299,049	22.34	1.99	29	33	29	-12.12	0.00		
Severance	T53	1,814,675	1,820,621	3,268,698	-0.33	-44.48	239	190	361	25.79	-33.80		
Documentary and stock transfer	T51	2,904,751	2,255,610	2,743,391	28.78	5.88	X	X	X				
Other taxes, NEC	T99	637,231	1,107,861	688,372	-42.48	-7.43	20,900	85,160	23,654	-75.46	-11.64		

ana restaurants closed and another 12% tetering, and the economic losses after the Indianapolis 500 and Brickyard 400 were run without fans. Not to mention the loss of March Madness, Big Ten and Notre Dame football and basketball, ISHAA, NBA and NFL revenue.

Ball State University economist Michael Hicks told HPI, "At its peak, some 600,000 to 700,000 households were jobless, and today 325,000 receive some form of unemployment compensation. Our Third Quarter GDP was about 3.7% beneath where it should have been, or about \$13.8 billion below forecast. That set the Indiana economy back almost two years in terms of total size. The jobs numbers provide a similar story. We are now down some 104,300 workers from our peak in January 2019."

Indiana's unemployment rate hit 16.9% for April with more than five times as many people jobless than before widespread business closures started with the coronavirus outbreak. The state's unemployment rate fell to 12.3% in May, 11.2% in June, 7.8% in July, 6.4% in August, 6.3% in September, 5.5% in October, 5.1% in November and ending the year at 4.6%. It was 3.2% in November 2019.

Hicks added, "The news of COVID masked the fact that 2019 was a very bad year for Indiana, as we eased off our all-time peak employment in January of that year. The blame lies in the Trump trade war. Manufacturing peaked in February 2019, is now down by 42,100 jobs. It is stunning that 40% of job losses in this dual downturn (trade war and COVID) are in factory jobs."

According to MoneyGeek.com, Indiana has recovered 78.3% of jobs lost since the pandemic began.

Economist and columnist Morton J. Marcus believes Indiana has weathered the pandemic better than most states. "Bascially we had one bad month, that was April," Marcus said on Monday. "Everything was the total constipation of the economy, and after that we all ate our prunes and everything got better."

He points to the chart above that shows how Indiana's economy snapped back quicker than most states and the U.S. as a whole. "A couple of decades ago, a 6% unemployment rate was considered low," Marcus said.

And there is the troubling education front. When Gary schools returned to in-class learning earlier this month, more than 40% of students did not show up. "All Hoosier schools were closed for a quarter last year, and most have suffered significant disruptions this year," Hicks told HPI. "Schools are loath to share data, but privately, I've been told some schools simply lost a third of kids after spring break last year. That combined with disruptions this year will leave a lifetime learning deficit among some share of kids. Despite an expected stimulus windfall, no one in Indiana seems to be talking about offering remedial summer school this year."

Economic and educational metrics on the true impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will filter in over the next two years or so, with impacts likely to be quite damaging.

Anecdotally, we're getting snippets of information. For instance, the Indiana University athletic program lost

\$6.6 million in revenue, according to the IndyStar.

According to the Indiana Hospital Association, in the first two months of the pandemic, the average hospital operation margin last April was down 8.3%, critical access operating margin was down 27.7%, emergency care was down 40%, inpatient volume fell 26%, out-patient surgeries fell 52%, there was a doubling of ICU capacity, a dramatic spike in PPE pricing and a surge in staffing costs.

These losses occurred during the first spike when around 1,555 COVID patients were hospitalized. The spike in hospitalizations increased to 3,381 in early December and was at 1,648 at the end of January 2021.

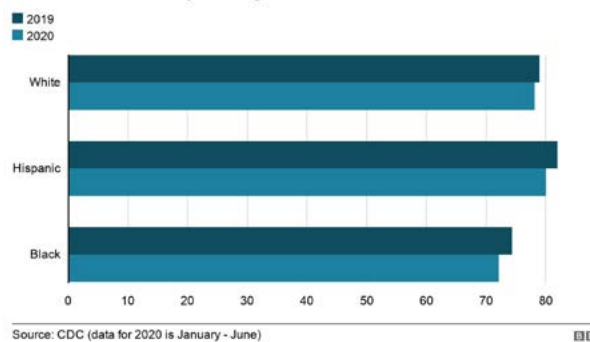
While the fiscal carnage is unknown at this point, what we do know is that the state and medical sector dodged the bullets that hit overwhelmed medical systems in places like New York City, El Paso, Tex., Madison, Wis., and Los Angeles, where ICU patients were placed in tents and corpses were transferred into refrigeration trucks. Indiana's ICU capacity did not slip below 20% and ventilator capacity was never severely threatened.

According to a National Restaurant Association survey conducted in February, spending in Indiana restaurants remained well below pre-pandemic levels in January. Overall, 86% of restaurant operators say their total dollar sales volume in January was lower than it was in January 2020. The survey also found that 12% of Indiana operators say they will "probably" or "definitely" be closed within three months if there are no additional relief packages from the federal government on top of the 20% which already have shuttered, 29% of operators think it will be seven to 12 months before business conditions return to normal for their restaurant, while 37% think it will be more than a year, and 73% of Indiana operators say their current staffing level is lower than what it would normally be in the absence of COVID-19. This is after the already permanent closure of 20% of Indiana's restaurants.

"These results prove what those of us in the industry already knew," CEO/president of the Indiana Restaurant and Lodging Association Patrick Tamm said. "While some conditions are improving for our restaurants, we are far from where we were pre-pandemic. Our restaurants are still in desperate need of action from the federal government and support from our local communities."

Marcus noted that "Restaurants are an important part of the economy. Year after year people eating out increased. To disrupt that pattern was a real psychological and economic blow." Was he surprised to see 20% of restaurants closing? "No," he said. "To me it's surprising we have so many that are still open."

Decline in US life expectancy



Light at the end of the tunnel

Last Wednesday, Gov. Holcomb was asked at his COVID Zoom press conference how we will know when the pandemic is over. "It's an almost impossible question to answer because we don't know," he responded. "What we do know is we have more control now than ever, and it's paying off. In previous surges, we didn't have a vaccination to bring down those hospitalization rates and deaths. Now we do."

Indiana Health Commissioner Kristina Box added, "It's going to take time. It's going to take time to get everybody vaccinated and we're not going to be able to call this pandemic over with all the mutations until we've really protected more of our population, really decreased those cases and kept those cases down. The governor knows I look at the number of cases per 100,000 a county has. My real happiness is that there is only one county over 200 right now. Many, many are below 100."

Holcomb added, "The real important thing is because this is a public health question at large, how we manage day by day is how the virus is going to end. We're on the right path. What is different and what really drives me is having vaccination available to the most at risk. We are on a path, and once we get through that, I'm going to be a happy camper."

Societal impacts

According to the Center for Disease Control, due to the pandemic, life expectancy at birth for the total U.S. population declined from 78.8 years in 2019 to 77.8 years for January through June 2020. For African-Americans, life expectancy fell 2.7 years. Across the globe, 2.4 million people with COVID perished.

During the societal shutdown last spring – known as the "autopause" – ozone levels fell 7% across the Northern Hemisphere, according to the New York Times. The planet's temperature jumped between a fifth and a half a degree.

The pandemic has created a hot housing market. According to the IBJ, MIBOR data shows that from March to July, median single-family home prices in central Indiana increased \$16,000, or 8%. In Marion County, median prices jumped \$11,000, or 6%.

Kroger saw its profits increase 90%. Amazon added 427,300 employees globally and in December employed 1.3 million people.

Community Hospital North in Indianapolis saw a 30% increase in births in February over January, suggesting a pandemic baby boom is underway.

Indiana University-Bloomington's Dr. Hank Green published a study in the journal JAMA Network Open which documented that since the pandemic began, alcohol

consumption went up by 14% overall and by 17% for women. What's more, alcohol use in the 30-to-59 age group increased by 19%. "Their current findings – not to mention those of the work that is still to come – have truly broad public health significance," said IU School of Public Health Dean David B. Allison.

According to a PMC study, in Indianapolis the daily rate of narcotic overdose events before and after the stay-at-home order (pre-period defined as period directly preceding March 25, 2020), "We observed rate increases of 61% (naloxone administration) and 43% (primary or secondary EMS provider impression of overdose) that are both significant. Drug overdose deaths are also higher by 47%. Overall calls for service were up by 4%.

IU Health, Indiana's largest hospital system, saw a nearly 23% increase in the number of people treated for a drug overdose in 2020 compared to 2019. "It's huge. It's very distressing," Dr. Jessica Knopp, an emergency room physician at IU Health West in Hendricks County, told WTHR-TV in January. "The people we see in the ER for overdose are from all walks of life and all ages. There isn't a demographic that is not affected."

According to the New York Times, the Bureau of Labor Statistic says that 176,000 more registered nurses will be needed in the U.S. annually between 2021-29. It reported: "Research indicates that nurses have probably advanced from burnout and are now suffering from 'moral injury,' a term typically applied to combat soldiers that the Department of Veteran Affairs defines as a response to 'acting or witnessing behaviors that go against an individual's values and moral beliefs.' The NYT quoted El Paso RN Ashley Bartholomew, who described the sense of 'hopelessness' she experienced at work, saying, 'It's a moral injury when I leave a hospital bursting at the seams and all the bars and stores are full of people.'"

Epilogue

Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead once observed, "What a strange, strange trip it's been." Ditto that for the COVID-19 pandemic. The changes we made during the pandemic may be enduring. Over the past year, many of us have worked from home offices, done meetings via Zoom, had groceries delivered from Kroger and Meijer, made purchases via Amazon as opposed to going to the mall. Malls in Carmel and Kokomo are facing bankruptcy. Whether these new habits persist will have a huge impact on the commercial office market. A plethora of other unknowns will take years to fully understand.

New CDC guidelines

The CDC issued its first set of recommendations on activities that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 can safely resume. The new guidance includes recommendations for how and when a fully vaccinated individual can visit with other people who are fully vaccinated and with other people who are not vaccinated. This guidance represents a first step toward returning to everyday activities in our communities:

- Visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or staying 6 feet apart.
- Visit with unvaccinated people from one other household indoors without wearing masks or staying 6 feet apart if everyone in the other household is at low risk for severe disease.
- Refrain from quarantine and testing if they do not have symptoms of COVID-19 after contact with someone who has COVID-19.
- A person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving the last required dose of vaccine. CDC estimates that just 9.2% of the U.S. population has been fully vaccinated ❖

Our biggest economic challenge is Ed funding

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE – Last week's column on school funding in Indiana stirred a great deal of conversation around the state. I am glad it did, but cannot take credit for the interest. Most Hoosiers are keenly attentive to their local schools and concerned about the economic performance of their cities and towns. These issues are intimately linked, yet too few Hoosiers appreciate how fully they are connected. For example, more than one person tried to explain that we could not afford more money for



schools because higher taxes would slow the economy. He was wrong.

My column is not politically biased; a desire for a better economy is hardly a partisan position. I'm an economist, and insofar as I have anything useful to write about education, it is about its effect on the economy.

Among the most repeatedly demonstrated facts in the social sciences is the link between educational attainment and economic performance. On average, better-educated people are more productive, which means they produce more per year in goods or services and earn a higher income. Likewise, better-educated counties are more productive and earn more income. This relationship holds for cities, states, nations and continents. This is no accident.

Better educational attainment both causes and is caused by a better economy. Educational attainment is the most important factor in determining regional economic conditions, and the performance of schools is the most im-

portant factor in household location decisions. A well-educated place attracts more well-educated families. Those relationships can hardly be in doubt. But, how important is school spending on educational attainment?

The report from the Teacher Pay Commission mentioned several studies from the nation's top education economists. Among the 379 footnotes were studies from the Hoover Institution, a highly respected conservative think tank. They raised precisely the same concerns I did last week. The report also cited the nation's top K-12 researcher, whom I would describe as a center-left economist. His study notes that when it comes to educational outcomes, "the question of whether money matters is essentially settled." He is right; education dollars do matter, and it is time for Hoosier taxpayers and policymakers to acknowledge this. As I wrote last week, if we spent the same share of our state's GDP on education that we did in 2010, it would be \$1.3 billion more per year for schools.

I am well aware of Indiana's claims and nationwide reputation for having a good business climate, low taxes, a modest regulatory burden and a ready workforce. Unlike some, I have no doubt that Hoosier policymakers who undertook these policies did so with the best of intentions. They want the economy to grow, and they felt this was the right path forward. I used to believe that myself. But when the facts change, I change my mind, as should we all.

From the summer of 2009 when the recession ended, through the end of 2019, Indiana grew at only 41% of the rate of the nation as a whole. For all our claims about having a strong workforce, a good business climate and smart regulatory policies, the facts say otherwise. Businesses and families are overwhelmingly choosing places other than Indiana. It's time to do something differently.

As I described last week, Indiana spent the last decade reducing inflation-adjusted school spending by a full 7% per student. This happened during the longest economic expansion in U.S. history, when we should have been making historic investments in people and places.

This won't be popular, but I think the evidence demonstrates the school choice reforms were largely effective and should remain an integral part of education policy. I think both micro studies of student performance and the state's overall test scores suggest school choice is a net benefit. But, simply imposing competition on local schools was not enough. We took the wrong lessons from the early successes of school choice and neglected the rest of public education.

The best way to think about this is to consider what Hoosier families did when they were offered educational choice. Most chose to stay where they were, in part because family location decisions are so heavily influenced by local school quality. So, 86.4% of kids attend their local public schools.

But, among families who chose other schools for their kids, the number one choice was another public

school. Even with vouchers, private school enrollments crashed by 21% since 2007. Last year another 5.8% chose a different local public school, 4.1% chose a charter school, the plurality of which are run by local public schools. Only 3.3% chose a private school voucher. If you admire the usefulness markets have in signaling value, it is pretty obvious where the value in K-12 education lies.

Today, the biggest risk to continuing Indiana's successful school choice experiment isn't a teacher's union or courts. The biggest risk to school choice is that it will be blamed for the heavy budget reductions for everyone else's education and the lackluster economic outcomes that resulted. If you support continued school choice, you must also support the 86.4% of families who choose local public schools.

The recovery from the COVID recession will favor people and places with strong educational attainment. The next decade will amplify the trends of higher demand for educated workers. Without vigorous intervention, this will prove tough for Indiana's economy. We should do everything we can to prevent another failed recovery like the last one. Dedicating more resources to education is the most urgent remedy we can undertake.

Finally, education alone won't solve the problem, and a teachers' pay increase won't, by itself, solve our educational challenges. We need more Hoosiers to leave high school and then graduate from college. We need to attract more educated people from other states and nations, and we need to make more of our communities inviting to new residents. Doing all of this takes time, and it involves much more than additional tax dollars.

Still, our local schools serve two key functions. They both produce the foundation of educated people and serve as the most important magnet for those families who value education. Indiana's unwillingness to sustain school funding and expand educational attainment sends a strong signal to businesses and families around the nation.

The question isn't really whether or not we can afford to spend more money on education in Indiana.

The real question is how can we afford not to? ❖

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.

Elsener wins Marion Co. GOP race; Wruble prevails in St. Joe

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana Republicans and Democrats organized their county parties on Saturday, with Joe Elsener prevailing for the Marion County GOP while St. Joseph County Democrats reelected Stan Wruble even after the party suffered the loss of two county commissioner seats last fall.



Allen County Republican Chairman Steve Shine was reelected to an eighth term, while the Vanderburgh County GOP opted for Mike Duckworth over Steve Ary following the retirement of long-time chair Wayne Parke. Marion County Democrat Chair Kate Sweeney-Bell and Hamilton County Republican Chair Laura Campbell were each reelected.

Saturday's party election quadrennial reorganizations will be followed up by the election of congressional district chairs on March 13, then by the state chair elections on March 20. Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer is seeking a second term, while Democrats Trish Whitcomb and Mike Schmuhl are seeking to replace the retiring John Zody. The party has not won a statewide election since 2012 and is at a historic low ebb, with Republicans controlling all five statewide constitutional offices, 71 mayoral seats, nine of 11 congressional seats while maintaining super majorities in the General Assembly and close to 90% of all county offices.

"I want to make our party an organization which is attractive to our grassroots donors and good candidates and is prepared to fight for and with good candidates to make that a competitive and winnable race," Elsener told HPI on Sunday of the 2023 mayoral race. "That's the long term goal, but we're going to start today in terms of looking at our operations top to bottom to make this a good functioning organization again. It's going to take our relationships with the state party, it's going to take working with everybody at the county level to get everyone moving in the right direction. It's going to take really good candidates, but

we have all of those things."

Hupfer used his extensive clout to help Elsener defeat John Schmitz and Alex Henby in an attempt to revive what used to be a key bastion of the Indiana GOP. "If he's selected, we're going to collectively in-kind a third of his time and restart the rebuild," Hupfer told HPI in late February. Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett succeeded Republican Mayor Greg Ballard with a 62-38% win over Chuck Brewer in 2015, then shellacked State Sen. Jim Merritt 71.5 to 26.8% in 2019. Ballard upset Mayor Bart Peterson 50-47% in 2007 and won reelection with a 51-47% victory over Melina Kennedy in 2011.

Elsener is a protege of Gov. Eric Holcomb and Hupfer, earning the endorsements of both. Clearly, the Holcomb/Hupfer machine is preparing to do battle in Indianapolis in 2023.

In St. Joseph County, Wruble easily prevailed over Dave Nufer 67-28%, with Oliver Davis coming in at 6%, despite Nufer's endorsement by South Bend Mayor James Mueller. Nufer was also backed by former St. Joseph Chairman Butch Morgan, who was convicted of forging ballot petition signatures in 2011 following an investigation by the South Bend Tribune and HPI.

The Tribune's Jeff Parrott reported: Wruble argued that Nufer's affiliation with former party chair Morgan, who had made calls urging support for Nufer, showed that Morgan would seek to exert control in the party. "It says that a lot of folks in St. Joseph County in the Democratic Party are ready to move forward and put the politics of the past in the past," Wruble said. "I campaigned on transparency and building the party from the bottom up. I specifically didn't ask elected officials and longtime party folks to endorse me publicly because that's the old way of doing things."

Morgan told the South Bend Tribune last week, "All I want to do is continue to help people that ask for my help. From time to time, I can donate smaller sums of money. I can ask other people to help put up yard signs or take a sign in their yard. Just all those things that go into volunteering

and helping to get the word out."

Here is how other county chair elections fared on Saturday:

Vanderburgh County: Republican Mike Duck-



Elected county chairs include (top, from left) Republican Joe Elsener and Democrat Kate Sweeney-Bell in Marion County; Republican Martha Campbell and Democrat Dayna Colbert in Hamilton County; Republican Mike Duckworth in Vanderburgh County; Democrat Drew Wenger in Porter County; Allen County Republican Chairman Steve Shine; and Democrat Stan Wruble in St. Joseph County.

worth, a former aide to U.S. Sens. Richard Lugar and Dan Coats, defeated Steve Ary 47-40. He had the backing of Evansville Mayor Lloyd Winnecke and Vanderburgh Councilman Russell Lloyd Jr., a former mayor. He told the Evansville Courier & Press, "It's funny that when you don't have experience and your opponent does, I think a lot of times you talk about how bad experience is. I really think that all the car washes and door knocking and candidates that I'm supporting, from back to Russell Sr. all the way up to Mayor Winnecke — that is an asset. It helped me determine my ideas and my beliefs." County Democrats elected party treasurer Cheryl Schultz, who succeeded Edie Hardcastle, serving the remaining 20 months of Scott Danks' term. Hardcastle did not pursue a full term.

Hamilton County: Republican Carmel Councilwoman Laura Campbell won a full term, defeating Paul Hevesy 156-93, uniting the GOP. Democrats elected Dayna Colbert over Kevin Patterson 116-41. She succeeds Joe Weingarten, who retired as party chairman after four years and is considering a challenge to U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz.

Bartholomew County: Columbus Clerk-Treasurer Luann Welmer has been chosen to succeed Barb Hackman as chairwoman of the Republican Party (Columbus Republic). Hackman announced in late January that she is stepping down after eight years as chairwoman. "If chosen, my responsibility would be generating some excitement with the group, fundraising, and supporting any candidates we want to put on the ballot," Welmer said when announcing her candidacy.

Porter County: Valparaiso Democrat Chairman Drew Wenger, who cites U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders as an inspiration to enter politics, was elected to succeed Jeff Chidester, who retired after 24 years at the Porter County helm. Citizens have become disconnected and need to become civically engaged again, Wenger told the NWI Times. "The political realm of me doing this is just one aspect of building a vibrant community," Wenger said.

Allen County: Eight-time Republican Chairman Steve Shine was elected unopposed. He has yet to elect a Republican Fort Wayne mayor, though four-term Democrat Mayor Tom Henry is not expected to seek a fifth term. "I'm just as excited today as I was 28 years ago," Shine told WANE-TV. "A lot of energy, a lot of excitement... a lot of good things that the Republican Party has to look forward to." Shine succeeded long-time Republican Chairman Orvas Beers in 1993. Beers and Shine have led the party for more than half a century. Allen County Democrats elected Derek Camp as chair. He ran for a Marion County Senate seat two years ago before relocating.

Vigo County: Democrat Chairman Joe Etling was elected 116-58 over Terre Haute Councilwoman Martha Crossen, extending his rule to a 25th year.

Madison County: Former Judge Thomas Newman Jr. was elected unopposed to succeed Ludy Watkins after eight years. "I love the party and what it did and can do for the country," Newman told the Anderson Herald Bulletin. "The party has always stood for elevating the peo-

ple." As chairman, Newman intends to look at the structure of the central committee by evaluating ward and township chairs. "I want to form a committee to increase our diversity and appeal to as many voters as possible," he said. "I'm a nuts-and-bolts type of guy and believe that politics at the precinct level can make a difference. It's all about networking with the voters." County Republicans reelected Russ Willis to a third term. "We will work on finances this year," Willis told the Herald-Bulletin. "We will work on recruiting and developing candidates for the 2022 election."

Clark County: Former judge Joe Weber was elected to head the Democrats. Republicans reelected Chairman Jamey Noel.

Floyd County: Adam Dickey was reelected Democrat Party chair, telling the News & Tribune, "I believe this slate of officers puts forward an excellent face for our party. Each of us have broad professional, community, and political experience that we're ready to use to help grow our party and improve the community."

Partial list of Democrat county chairs

Allen	Derek Camp
Bartholomew	Steve Schoettmer
Blackford	John Bartlett
Boone	Ericka Pickell
Brown	Rick Bond
Clark	Joe Weber
Crawford	Rick Grider
Decatur	Mimi Pruet
DeKalb	Suzanne Drerup Davis
Elkhart	Chad Crabtree
Floyd	Adam Dickey
Fulton	James Frost
Hamilton	Dayna Colbert
Harrison	Graylin Porter
Huntington	Christine Bohm
Jackson	Jeanette Hackman
Jay	Tina Elliott
Jefferson	John Hutchinson
Johnson	Amanda Stevenson-Holmes
Kosciusko	Victoria (Vicki) Morton
La Porte	Dr. Vidya Kora
LaGrange	Stephen E. Liechty
Lake	Jim Wieser
Madison	Thomas Newman Jr
Marion	Kate Sweeney Bell
Miami	A.J. Rogers
Monroe	Jennifer Crossley
Morgan	Tiffany Grant
Orange	Brandy Terrell
Perry	Ryan Risse
St. Joseph	Stan Wruble
Scott	Dennis Wilson
Sullivan	Logan Pearison
Tippecanoe	Jacque Chosnek
Union	Dennis Spaeth
Vanderburgh	Cheryl Schultz



Vermillion	Joanie Kanizer
Vigo	Joe Etling
Warrick	Stephanie Gerhardt
Washington	James Logan Cockerham
Wells	Dylan McIntosh
Whitley	Vivian Sade

Rokita's activity has 2024 implications

Attorney General Todd Rokita made statewide headlines frequently this past week. He had to quit his second job at Apex after he was exposed by Importantville (perhaps unable to make ends meet at his current \$97,201 salary) Tweeting, "I have concluded my limited involvement in Apex Benefits and am divesting my equity position so as to remove any potential concerns for the company and its clients." Indiana Democrats reacted, saying, "No matter how he tries to spin it, Todd Rokita simply got caught. He was wrong, and that's why the Indiana Democratic Party filed a records request on the matter last month. Whether it's swearing an allegiance to a disgraced former president (and QAnon ideology) or creating clear conflicts of interest with his elected role, Attorney General Rokita has proven to Hoosiers why we should never trust a thing that comes out of his mouth."

Rokita sued the Biden administration over environmental regulations, joining a coalition of 12 states that filed a lawsuit against President Biden's \$9.5 trillion expansion of federal regulations through an executive order which dictates the "social cost" of greenhouse gases. "Since January, we have witnessed an unprecedented level of federal overreach. And now, we have yet another egregious example as President Biden attempts to regulate virtually every aspect of the American economy," Rokita said. He celebrated consumer protection week.

And he is making the rounds on the GOP breakfast circuit, Tweeting:

■ "Congratulations to the DeKalb County GOP's newly elected leadership team! Thank you for your willingness to step up and serve in these crucial roles. It's incumbent on each of us, at the local and state level, to defend our Constitution and preserve American liberty."

■ "Since January, my team in the Indiana Attorney General's Office has hit the ground running to promote and defend Hoosiers' liberty — just as I promised to do during my campaign. This morning, I was grateful to share an update on our work with the Steuben County Republican Party."

■ "This morning, I was glad to join @StJoeCoun-

tyGOP for their Chairman's Breakfast! We had a great discussion regarding our work to combat censorship on social media, reform our elections, and defend Hoosiers' liberty."

Of the potential 2024 gubernatorial field (which includes Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, GOP Chairman Kyle Hupfer, U.S. Rep. Jim Banks, former state senator Jim Merritt and others), Rokita has been as active as anyone.

Senate retirements challenge GOP

Sen. Roy Blunt's retirement highlights the twin challenge facing Senate Republicans: Finding good replacement candidates and avoiding a pathway for potential troublemakers to join their ranks (Axios). While the midterm elections are supposed to be a boon to the party out of power, the recent run of retirements — which may not be over — is upending that assumption for the GOP in 2022. People with sharp rhetoric and outlandish style who see themselves as Trumpian figures — similar to Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene and Lauren Boebert in the House — may be attracted to the Republican Senate races. And there's no question Donald Trump will want a say in each of the resulting primaries. The question: is the GOP more (Josh) Hawley than Blunt? It's hard to replace serious, smart and productive team players like Blunt, of Missouri, as well as Sens. Rob Portman of Ohio, Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, Richard Shelby of Alabama and Richard Burr of North Carolina. All five are fixtures in Republican politics, know how to get things done and aren't afraid to play ball with Democrats to achieve their aims.

RNC ignores Trump's cease & desist

The Republican National Committee is moving part of its spring donor retreat next month to Mar-a-Lago from a nearby hotel for a dinner speech that will be headlined by former president Donald Trump, according to Republicans involved in the planning of the event. The move, which highlights the former president's continued grip over the GOP, comes amid a spat over the use by RNC and other Republican organizations of Trump's likeness and image in fundraising, as well as anxiety about how Trump plans to use his influence in the 2022 midterms. In a letter sent to Trump attorney Alex Cannon, RNC chief counsel Justin Riemer asserted that the committee "has every right to refer to public figures as it engages in core, First Amendment-protected political speech, and it will continue to do so in pursuit of these common goals." ❖

Holcomb names Staton interim commerce sec

INDIANAPOLIS – Gov. Eric J. Holcomb announced Monday he has selected Jim Staton to serve as interim secretary of Commerce. Staton has served Indiana’s business community for more than 30 years. He first joined the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) in 2005 and currently serves as senior vice president and chief business development



officer, overseeing the organization’s domestic and international business expansion and attraction efforts and leading the team through back-to-back record-breaking years for economic development. Prior to being selected to lead global business development activity in 2018, he served in a number of economic development-focused roles at the IEDC, including vice president of business development, director of business development for the central and northwest Indiana regions, and as business recruitment director for North America. Staton earned undergraduate degrees in environmental design and urban planning from Ball State University. Staton will begin as interim secretary of Commerce immediately.



Holcomb unlikely to scrap mask order

The Hoosier State will not immediately be joining Texas and Mississippi in scrapping the governor’s directive for individuals to wear a face mask inside businesses and other public places to minimize the potential spread of COVID-19 (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Gov. Eric Holcomb recently told reporters he’s been keeping abreast of decisions by some of his fellow Republican governors to get rid of their mask mandates, but he’s not yet convinced doing so is the right policy for Indiana. “I’m very Indiana-centric about this, and I’m really happy about the path that we’re on to get to that light at the end of the tunnel,” Holcomb said. Holcomb was among the last Midwestern governors to issue a face mask directive. It initially took effect July 27, 2020, long after most national retail chains operating in Indiana already required masks be worn to enter their businesses. Lake County separately enacted a mask mandate July 20. In comparison, face masks were required in Illinois starting on May 1, 2020. Indeed, all of Indiana’s neighboring states had a mask mandate before Holcomb issued his executive order telling Hoosiers to wear them as well. The current Indiana face covering requirement is due

to expire March 31. However, Holcomb is empowered to renew the mask directive as he has repeatedly since last summer. He said last week any decision on lifting Indiana’s mask requirement largely will hinge on the continued reduction of COVID-19 cases in the state, along with the share of Hoosiers getting vaccinated against the coronavirus. “We’re going to continue to balance the lives and livelihoods sides of the ledger,” Holcomb said. “We have been through a lot together and we’re going to get out of this together, and we’re pointed in that direction.” Holcomb observed that Indiana is ahead of many other states now getting attention for “opening up” their economies, since Indiana businesses have had no statewide capacity caps since November provided they follow the state’s social distancing and face mask directives. “When you actually read the fine print, many states that are ‘opening up’ are opening up not even to the level we’re at right now,” Holcomb said.

Group files SCOTUS case on mail-in ballots

A voting rights group is asking the U.S. Supreme Court to consider its lawsuit that aimed to make mail-in ballots available to all Indiana voters for last fall’s election. Attorneys for the advocacy group Indiana Vote By Mail argue in the petition filed Friday that the state law allowing no-excuse mail balloting by those ages 65 and older infringes on the constitutional rights of those younger. Indiana’s mail-in voting law limits such ballot to those who fall into one of 11 categories, including being 65 or older, having a disability or being absent from their home county or working throughout Election Day voting hours. Bill Groth, an attorney representing voters named in the lawsuit, said even though the 2020 election is over, his clients are still seeing their constitutional rights infringed by Indiana law. “Younger voters thus have less opportunity to vote than older voters,” Groth said.

Rokita sues Biden administration over regs

Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita is joining attorneys general from 11 other states to sue the Biden administration over new environmental regulations that they claim will “impoverish millions” (IndyStar) The lawsuit was filed Monday as a response to President Joe Biden administration’s sweeping environmental protection order called “Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis.” Biden signed the order into action Jan. 20, setting in motion the reversal of a bevy of Trump administration-era policies that promoted economic growth over environmental regulations. Joining Indiana are Missouri, Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Utah. In their complaint the attorneys general said the order would cost \$9.5 trillion to bring to life and launch an “enormous expansion of federal regulatory power that will intrude into every aspect of Americans’ lives.” ❖

Sen. Young a leader with quiet dignity

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO – One of my lifelong obsessions is to study history from a human perspective. I’m not really interested in dates and places or how many Mongols killed how many Visigoths.



I am interested in why humans react the way they do when placed under stressful situations. What makes a common farm boy from Elkhart climb over a trench and charge across a field at Antietam, Belleau Wood or Peleliu into the face of flying lead and shrapnel? Of particular interest to me is how do leaders, from squad level to army command, motivate their ordinary soldiers to do the extraordinary,

and what traits make for a good leader?

The more I study the issue of leadership I find that I have great difficulty in telling you exactly what it is, but I’ve learned to recognize it when I see it. Most of the characteristics of an effective military leader are usually found in our proficient governmental leaders. No, I’m not talking about the fuss and feathers elected officials who prance around the halls of Fox News waiting to spout their opinions on just about any topic that will net them some air time. I’m talking about the workhorse leadership who work diligently without much fanfare and yet are right on the firing line when the bullets start to fly. These are the men and women whom I admire.

The Hoosier State is very fortunate to have a U.S. senator who has proven to be a leader of quiet dignity and humility, who has helped lead the United States Senate through some of its biggest recent battles. Sen. Todd Young has been the Hoosier senator who has found himself sought out to provide counsel and leadership on a variety of issues. He has done his job with honesty, integrity and a desire to do what is best for our country. This is why I am so happy that Sen. Young has decided to run for reelection in 2022.

Sen. Young piled up an impressive list of conservative wins in his first term. Much of the agenda that brought historically high levels of economic growth and historically low levels of unemployment can be

traced to Sen. Young’s leadership. Unlike former senator Joe Donnelly, who spent his last campaign running from his record, Young is able to run on his record.

Sen. Young has checked all of the boxes that conservative voters look for in their elected officials. He is 100% pro-life and has been an unwavering defender of the 2nd Amendment. He helped lead the charge to confirm 234 federal judges and led a talent search that identified and promoted the candidacy of Judge Amy Coney Barrett first to the 7th Circuit Court, and later led the battle for her confirmation as United States Supreme Court justice. Young was even influential enough to convince Democrat Sen. Joe Donnelly to support Barrett for the 7th Circuit Court. That ability to work across the political aisle is rare and refreshing.

Young supported building a wall to reduce illegal immigration and the tidal wave of criminals and potential terrorists flooding over our southern border. He forcefully resisted calls from the anarchist elements to defund our police. Young also provided critical leadership in promoting the 2018 Police Mental Health Bill which was signed into law by President Trump. He led the call to reduce destructively high corporate and personal tax rates that when enacted launched previously unimagined economic growth.

As I’ve previously written about, Sen. Young was early to the table to recognize that China is not a friend of the United States, either economically or militarily. His recognition of the multiple threats represented by China has moved him from a voice of warning in the wilderness to a frontline leader in the United States’ effort to contain a country bent on the destruction of our American way of life.

His Republican peers in the Senate recognized Young’s leadership capabilities and tapped the senator to be chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee. At the time of his appointment, this job looked like a thankless, doomed-to-fail task. Even the rosier of projections foretold Democrats holding 56-58 seats after the 2020 election. Young pulled the NRSC up by its bootstraps and raised \$335 million, over \$175 million more than had previously been raised. In baseball terms, Sen. Young hit three grand slam homers to stem an ugly Democratic tide.

Only the Georgia senatorial sideshow prevented a win of epic proportions. As it is, Sen. Young’s efforts have given Republicans a fighting chance to keep the wilder, socialistic Democrat agenda from sailing through the United States Senate.

By now you are prob-



ably wondering if ole flap jaw Dunn has found any other conservative Republicans who are also supporting Sen. Young's reelection effort. I have and the list is impressive. As of this date, Sen. Young has locked up endorsements from over 310 Hoosier conservative leaders. The list includes two Hoosier vice presidents, nine former Trump Administration officials, all Indiana GOP statewide officials, all Indiana GOP members of Congress, nine Indiana Republican Party chairs, the entire GOP State Committee, 96% of the Indiana General Assembly, 92% of Indiana Republican County chairmen and 50 Indiana Republican mayors. Now that's what we call running the table!

My mother used to say that if you kept your nose clean, showed up to work and listened more than you talked, then people would take notice. Such has been the experience of Sen. Young, in spades.

As I consider the various historical leaders whom I have studied in my lifetime, I realize that most shared a

few vital characteristics: They prepared themselves academically; they were considerate of others and possessed empathy; they loved their countries. They never asked those who followed them to do anything that they themselves were not willing to do. These leaders were also bold and unafraid when acting in the cause of freedom. Most importantly, these leaders always had the backs of their soldiers.

Perhaps this is why United States Naval Academy graduate and U. S. Marine Todd Young so readily answers the call to leadership. His career has become the intersection of preparation and the call to service. Hoosiers can feel confident that when the battles begin on any battlefield, Sen. Todd Young has their six! ❖

Dunn is the former chairman of the Howard County Republican Party.



General Assembly does the right thing

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – The Indiana General Assembly, which gets its share of bruises, is getting close to doing something very beneficial for some very sick children, their parents and their siblings.



Hoosiers are fortunate to have the Riley Hospital for Children located in Indianapolis. It is nationally ranked in 10 children specialties. However, it is in Indianapolis. That's not a bad thing, except if you are poor and live in a corner of the state.

Imagine your family on Medicaid. Not Medicare, which is primarily for the older population, but Medicaid, the stepchild of health care in the United States. The federal and state governments share Medicaid costs with the states anteing up 34% of the fees paid to health care providers.

Your family is very poor; if you weren't, you wouldn't qualify for Medicaid. You have just one old, not very reliable car, and one very sick child. To get a proper diagnosis and treatment plan for that child, Indiana's Family and Health Services Administration (FHSA) would have you go to Riley in Indianapolis.

But how far is Riley from the extreme reaches of the state? From Hammond (Lake County), Fremont (Steuven), Vevay (Switzerland), New Albany (Floyd), and Mt. Vernon (Posey)? In terms of distance, the average is 150 miles or 2:30 hours one way. Double that to come home. Yes, 300 miles in an unreliable car and five hours on the

road when there are closer alternatives in Chicago, Louisville and Cincinnati.

When there is a distinguished hospital in an adjoining state, that might be a better choice for the child, the parent(s) and any siblings. Last year, the Indiana Senate rejected a bill that would have granted parents that choice. Why? The out-of-state hospital might expect Medicaid reimbursement from Indiana FHSA at a higher rate, as approved in their state, than Indiana would approve. We do have a reputation for being cheap.

How much money are we talking about? The Indiana Legislative Services Agency (LSA), recognizing that an exact estimate was not possible, advised "Indiana's state share ... would be between \$300,000 and \$950,000." You'll be proud to hear the bill passed the House by a vote of 93 to 0. Now it rests with the Senate. In fiscal terms, this proposal is hardly to be noticed in a total budget of \$36 billion as passed by the House.

Rep. Hal Slager (Lake County) and Sen. Mike Bohacek (La Porte County) introduced HR1305 to enable Hoosier families to use out-of-state hospitals to treat their children when circumstances require such action. They have been joined by Reps. Soliday, Clere and Olthoff, as well as Sens. Charbonneau, Niemeyer and Tallian. When passed by the Senate, this will be a major benefit to poor Hoosier families caring for extremely sick children. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonj-marcus@yahoo.com.

GOP's civil war comes to Michiana

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Republican civil war, declared and fought with a vengeance by Donald Trump, rages from Alaska to Louisiana, from Maine to North Carolina, with a battlefield in the middle right here in Michiana.

Nikki Haley, who's been on both sides in her quest for the party's next presidential nomination – warning against following Trump and then praising his call for Republicans to follow him – said Democrats want a GOP civil war that's "not gonna happen."

Haley's right that Democrats desire a Republican civil war to tear apart the GOP and enable Democrats to cling to control of Congress in 2022 and win the presidency again in 2024. She's wrong that a Republican conflict is just something Democrats promote – not real, "not gonna happen."



Democrats didn't declare a Republican civil war. They couldn't. Donald Trump did. Disagreement among Republicans was obvious when Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell proclaimed the truth, that Joe Biden indeed won

the election, and sharply criticized Trump for instigating the insurrection at the Capitol.

But McConnell also sought to ward off full-scale civil war. He found a procedural way to vote against conviction. He sought to appease Trump with praise for administration accomplishments, while also seeking to get beyond Trump, beyond Capitol storming by Trump supporters, and move on with unity to contend with Democrats.

Trump would have no unity stuff, this weakness. In his 90-minute tirade at the Conservative Political Action Conference, he declared war on Republicans who dared to disagree with him on whether he somehow won reelection. Top targets on his hit list were the 17 Republicans in Congress who voted for impeachment in the House or for conviction in the Senate. He called out their names, for their defeat, for purging them from the party.

The seven Republican targets for vengeance in the evenly split Senate include Lisa Murkowski up in Alaska, Bill Cassidy down in Louisiana, Susan Collins out in Maine and Richard Burr over in North Carolina. Republicans from all around the country.

Congressman Fred Upton of Michigan's 6th District was among the 10 House members on Trump's hit list. Upton, though a long-time Republican stalwart, already has been censured twice by the

Cass County Republican organization, first for his impeachment vote and then for voting to remove Marjorie Taylor Greene, the creepy conspiracy promoter, from choice committee posts.

The danger for Republicans in Trump's declared civil war is that casualties would include far more than some of the 17 on his hit list. Casualties occur on both sides in a civil war.

Trump made clear that his targets include "establishment hacks" in leadership. He identified McConnell. He denounced "the RINOs (Republicans in Name Only) that we're surrounded with." His definition clearly includes just about any Republicans, including staunch conservatives, who have differed with him on anything, from voting to accept certification of the election results to voting against some of his pet projects. His wrath extended to the Supreme Court, with three justices he appointed, for refusing to intervene to approve his desperate attempts to hang onto the presidency after he lost.

If so many Republicans are purged, how many winners will there be in the future? If a long-time Republican winner like Upton is defeated in a Republican civil-war primary or just decides to retire, what are chances that a Republican will be elected to replace him? A Marjorie Taylor Greene defender might not do so well.


If Trumpsters battle Sen. Todd Young in Indiana's Republican primary because he voted for election certification, could that endanger retaining a "sure" Republican seat?

Attacking "establishment" Republicans might not be the way to bring back Republicans in suburbs and elsewhere who defected from Trump. They kind of like the way "establishment" figures such as Ronald Reagan handled things in a more civil way. Civil way? Or civil war?
❖

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

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

Citizens will need to keep doing heavy lifting

By ANNE LAKER

INDIANAPOLIS — “Everywhere I look, people from both parties are working hard to create a livable future for their kids and grandkids,” mused a friend, who directs a local environmental non-profit. “It would be one thing if the Statehouse just stayed out of the way as municipalities, counties, businesses, churches, neighborhoods did this work.”



Indeed, many citizens are doing the heavy lifting of democracy, in contrast to the contemptuous themes of marquee bills in the 2021 Indiana General Assembly.

Point #1: In 2016, 59% of Marion County voters agreed to a tax to improve the city’s transit system with a new 15-mile line from Lawrence to downtown, and

a 24-mile line from Cumberland to the airport, each bringing with it improvements to sidewalks and drainage – and links to jobs. Although he sang the praises of infrastructure in a 2017 interview in *TheStatehouseFile.com*, Sen. Aaron Freeman (R-Indianapolis) authored SB141, the much-discussed vengeful bill that retracts funding for Indy’s public transit.

Point #2: Another Indianapolis lawmaker, Sen. R. Michael Young (R), has put forth SB198, the anti-free speech bill that criminalizes protests by broadening the definition of rioting. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has been peddling versions of this bill across the country since the Standing Rock pipeline protests; how convenient to repurpose it for Black Lives Matter gatherings, the great majority of them peaceful.

Point #3: Last summer, Black Lives Matter South Bend rallied hundreds in marches for justice. But Rep. Jake Teshka (R-Mishawaka) authored HB1367, a bill that deepens segregation in the region by redrawing lines that make a white school district even whiter.

To top it all off, a bill to fund private school vouchers with public dollars, SB413, authored by Sens. Jeff Raatz (R-Richmond) and Dennis Kruse (R-Auburn), is another link in the chain slowly strangling public education.

You don’t need special glasses to see the pattern. The safety, speech, education and mobility of Black and urban Hoosiers is at best, disregarded, and at worst, sabotaged with legislation like this. And to state the obvious: House Republicans and their leaders should be ashamed of their national-newsmaking behavior against Reps. Greg Porter, Vanessa Summers and Vernon Smith last month.

When it feels like a majority of leaders our fellow

Hoosiers have elected are pulling us backward, stories of citizen-led proactivity abound. Southern Indiana residents should kick up their heels at the news of Duke Energy’s planned early closure of its New Albany coal plant. Lower demand for power during the pandemic and the high cost of burning coal are the reasons for the plant’s closure. Some might argue that that’s exactly how it should have been: The company decides, not the legislative branch. Well, two of its units were shut down in 2012, only because a federal judge ruled that Duke was violating the Clean Air Act. The Sierra Club’s statewide Beyond Coal Campaign has been holding the utilities accountable for years.

When lawmakers don’t act for the public good, citizens must. Two mothers in Franklin, Indiana, started *If It Was Your Child*, a non-profit that sounds the alarm to government officials about the connection between environment and health, especially the cancer clusters in Johnson County. When IDEM didn’t act to investigate, the moms took the lead, in another case that thrust Indiana into the national news.

Similarly, a band of concerned citizens, including medical professionals and academic scientists, have been running a multi-year public campaign and triple legal challenge against a coal-to-diesel project proposed for Dale, Indiana. This hulking plant would pile on the pollution in one of the nation’s five most polluted regions, Southwestern Indiana. Valley Watch, along with Southwestern Indiana Citizens for Quality of Life, are party to three lawsuits to halt the project. Rep. Stephen Bartels (R-Eckerty), predictably, supports the plant.

No issue has higher stakes than redistricting. The League of Women Voters of Indiana, Indiana NAACP, and Common Cause Indiana have formed the Indiana Citizens Redistricting Commission, comprising three Republicans, three Democrats and three independents. Public testimony is now being solicited on the redistricting criteria that should guide the map-drawing process. If there’s any governmental process that needs to stay close to the ground, it’s this one.

They say that in a free society, government reflects the soul of its people. That doesn’t feel true in Indiana right now. We need laws and policies that expand possibilities, not governance by cynicism and distrust.

Kudos to the many citizens and non-profits toiling each day to forge a more livable future. Government needs to follow their lead. ❖

A consultant and grant writer, Laker is principal of Laker Verbal LLC.

When CPAC becomes the GOP's Z-Pack

By **DAVE KITCHELL**

LOGANSPORT – If you were watching reports from the Conservative Political Action Committee's annual gathering, you could draw some conclusions. First, there are people who despite losing the White House and both houses of Congress are blindly loyal to Donald Trump. For them, it has become more about idolatry than polity. It wasn't exactly the physician cure-all for what ails patients: The Zithromax Pack known as Z-Pack.



But for Republicans who have actively left the party or gone to the sidelines along with members of The Lincoln Project to redefine what the party stands for, there is the reality that is staring them in the face: Who do we run for president in 2024? They know they can't run Trump again, either because of his antics on Jan. 6, his failure to swing either Georgia Senate seat after he lost, or just because the weight of last November's loss weighs too heavily on the party and down ballot candidates.

The instant approval ratings for Joe Biden that have gone above any level Trump had in the past four years underscore the need for fresh names and new blood. There's also the prospect of running a losing candidate a second time for president. That may have worked when Grover Cleveland lost to Indiana's Benjamin Harrison in the 19th Century, but that was a different time. If Trump is the nominee again, it will more likely end the way Adlai Stevenson's second campaign against Adlai Stevenson ended, 3 million votes worse than the first.

So let's consider a short list of possible 2024 nominees for the Elephants:

1. **Nikki Haley:** More likely a vice presidential pick, but a resume as a governor and U.N. ambassador is a good domestic/international profile.

2. **Condoleezza Rice:** A reach back to George Walker Bush, but a former Cabinet official who is respected and a known quantity internationally.

3. **Colin Powell:** It may be too late for him, but he has the experience and name recognition

to garner votes. A minority at the top of the ticket could redefine Republicans.

4. **Rob Portman:** Yes, he's leaving the Senate, but not before he forged a decent career with respect from both sides of the aisle. A more moderate Republican would do the party good.

5. **James Ackerman:** The Oklahoma senator, a pastor, was among those on the Hill Jan. 6. He would appeal to evangelicals in a way that would probably eclipse Trump.

6. **Larry Hogan:** The Maryland governor heads the National Governors Association, and has been a voice of reason on several news shows before and after Jan. 6.

7. **John Kasich:** Again with Ohio, the heart of the country, and a candidate who has both congressional experience and gubernatorial experience. After that, he added a presidential run.

8. **Mitt Romney:** His time may also be past, but he's back in the Senate and he doesn't appear to be backing down from being a moderate or from continuing his Washington career. The drawback? See the previous paragraph on running a loser for president again.

9. **Ben Carson:** Of all Trump's Cabinet choices, this is one that actually lasted and worked. Again, a minority at the top can't hurt the party and he's run a presidential campaign before, so he has some name recognition.

10. **Rand Paul:** The darkest of dark horses in the field, and yes, that is a Kentucky reference. But his resume has experience and name recognition that likely will earn some nods in Southern states.

In the post-Rush Limbaugh era of American politics, it's likely more moderate voices will be heard in the next four years when it comes to the red side of the aisle. If the Republicans continue to cater to Trump loyalists, Democrats can cheer – scratching their heads and even shaking them – but cheer. ❖

Kitchell is the former Democratic mayor of Logansport.





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Dr. Seuss still teaching 30 years after death

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI Indiana Bureau

ANDERSON – The whole thing started with a report circulating on conservative media that a Virginia public school district had banned students from reading books by famed children’s author Theodor Seuss Geisel.



Things got so crazy that Loudon County Public Schools felt obligated to post a denial online. “Dr. Seuss books have not been banned and are available to students in our libraries and classrooms,” the announcement read.

The rumor had been that the school board demanded all mention of the author be eliminated from the annual Read Across America Day held on Geisel’s birthday, March 2. What the school board actually did was to suggest that its schools “not connect Read Across America Day with Dr. Seuss’s birthday exclusively.”

The rationale was simple. “Research in recent years has revealed strong racial undertones in many books written/illustrated by Dr. Seuss,” the school district said in its statement.

Then came word that Dr. Seuss Enterprises had decided to stop publishing six of Geisel’s books. “These books portray people in ways that are hurtful and wrong,” the announcement read. “Ceasing sales of these books is only part of our commitment and our broader plan to ensure Dr. Seuss Enterprises’ catalog represents and supports all communities and families.”

The decision, the organization said, came after months of discussion. “Dr. Seuss Enterprises listened and took feedback from our audiences including teachers, academics and specialists in the field as part of our review process,” it said. “We then worked with a panel of experts, including educators, to review our catalog of titles.”

Fox News personalities and others in right-wing media took the news hard. They saw it as a clear case of “cancel culture.” “We’ve now got foundations book burning the authors to whom they are dedicated,” conservative commentator Ben Shapiro tweeted. “Well done, everyone.”

Amid the furor, Geisel’s books were flying off the shelves. The irony, of course, is that Geisel was far from conservative. Were he alive today, he might well be lampooning many of the folks now rallying to his defense. He had been a political cartoonist during World War II, and he carried some of the same messages forward into his children’s books. In an interview included in the book “Pipers at the Gates of Dawn,” Jonathan Cott suggested some of

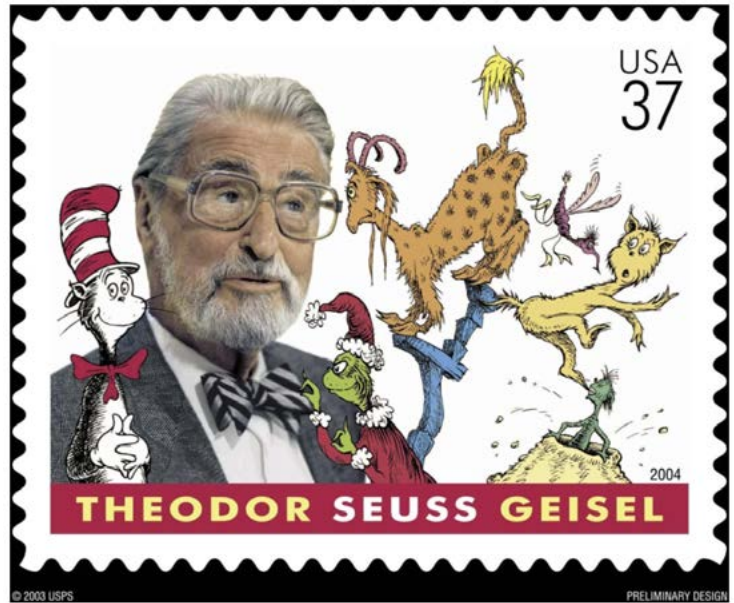
Geisel’s books were subversive.

Geisel didn’t deny it. “I’m subversive as hell!” he said. “I’ve always had a mistrust of adults.” He was influenced, he said, by writers like Jonathan Swift. “‘The Cat in the Hat’ is a revolt against authority,” Geisel told Cott, “but it’s ameliorated by the fact that the cat cleans up everything in the end.”

His book “The Lorax” offers a cautionary tale about the environment. It features a businessman who destroys a forest of Truffula trees despite the protest of the Lorax. The Lorax speaks up, he says, because “the trees have no tongues.”

“**The Butter Battle Book**,” meanwhile, takes on the nuclear arms race. “I don’t think my book is going to change society,” Geisel told USA Today in 1984. “But I’m naïve enough to think that society will be changed by examination of ideas through books and the press, and that information can prove to be greater than the dissemination of stupidity.”

Geisel never tried to hide the lessons his books sought to impart. “Children’s literature as I write it and as I see it is satire to a great extent – satirizing the mores and the habits of the world,” he told Cott. “There’s ‘Yertle the Turtle,’ which was modeled on the rise of Hitler; and then there’s ‘The Sneetches,’ which was inspired by my opposition to anti-Semitism. These books come from the part of my soul that started out to be a teacher.”



Geisel is still teaching, nearly 30 years after his death. ❖

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James Briggs, IndyStar: As COVID-19 vaccines are rapidly enabling Americans to safely re-engage in public activities, Republicans are telling pollsters they're not interested in vaccines. The effect could be that COVID-19 continues to ravage Indiana's vast rural counties. "The more Republican a state is, the more vaccine hesitant it is," said John Bryden, a research scientist and executive director of the Observatory on Social Media at Indiana University. Bryden is working on a project called CoVaxxy, which has found a correlation between Republican politics, misinformation on social media and vaccine refusal.

The overall problem of vaccine hesitancy has proven to be a bit overblown, largely because people are poor predictors of their future choices. For example, Pew Research Center found in September that 49% of American adults would not get a COVID-19 vaccine. That figure is so high that, if everyone had stuck to their September preference, there would be no end in sight to the pandemic. But that's not how it has played out. Since then, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has authorized three COVID-19 vaccines for public use, each of which eliminates virtually all risk of hospitalization and death. Pew on Friday released new polling that shows 69% of respondents say they either plan to get a vaccine or already have done so. The rise in acceptance has been especially sharp among Black Americans. As recently as November, only 42% of Black Americans said they would get vaccinated; now, it's up to 61%. Over that same period, though, Republican disinterest in the vaccines has remained relatively steady. Half of Republicans said they would get vaccinated in November; now, it's 56%, compared with 83% of Democrats, according to Pew. ❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: Long ago, Dan Quayle had come to the end of a brutal presidential campaign. This was in 1992, when Quayle was President George H.W. Bush's vice president. The race that year had been a rough and ready affair. Invective flew freely on all sides. The Democratic ticket — Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton and Tennessee Sen. Al Gore — had been depicted as the pairing of a lecherous Southern huckster and a New Age space cadet. Bush, the incumbent, wasn't spared in the flood of vituperation. He was caricatured as an out-of-touch elitist, a weak man who went "wobbly"—to use Margaret Thatcher's phrase—at telling moments. Few, though, received worse than Quayle. During his four years as vice president, almost no part of his life had been spared criticism or attack. His patriotism and courage were questioned, as was his fidelity to his wife and family. Nothing was as savage, though, as the assaults on his intelligence. All people who spend enough time in front of a live audience or mic will end up saying they wish they hadn't. That's what happened to Quayle. It wasn't fair, of course. He had reason to feel resentful after the votes were counted on election night in 1992 and the Bush-Quayle ticket came up short. Quayle could have vented that evening. Instead, he took

another tack. He congratulated Clinton and Gore on their victory. ❖

William McGurn, Wall Street Journal: That didn't last long. Only a month ago, a Journal editorial noted the "strange new respect for Mike Pence" emanating from America's progressive quarters. It was strange because it comes after four years of presenting Mr. Pence as a religious kook and Donald Trump flunky. At one point even his wife, Karen, came under fire for the high crime of teaching art part-time at a small Christian school that adheres to a traditional view of marriage. All this changed Jan. 6. On that day, Vice President Pence certified Joe Biden's victory in the Electoral College, returning to the Capitol to finish the job even after some Trump supporters had roamed the halls chanting, "Hang Mike Pence." Overnight, he found himself extolled as the "hero" who had saved American democracy from the mob. At Mr. Trump's subsequent impeachment trial, House managers sang Mr. Pence's praises. The Journal editorial suggested this new respect for Mr. Pence wouldn't last. Indeed it hasn't. The same man hailed only a few weeks ago as an American Cincinnatus is today back to being just another Trump toady. The trigger was an op-ed last week for the Daily Signal website in which Mr. Pence called election integrity a "national imperative." New York magazine described this as "Mike Pence's Blueprint for Permanent Authoritarian Rule." CNN chimed in with a "fact check" headlined: "Pence echoes Trump's Big Lie in dishonest op-ed on election rules." The "Big Lie" is Mr. Trump's contention that he is the real winner of the 2020 election. Mr. Biden has himself likened Mr. Trump to Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels and the idea that if you tell a lie big enough and often enough, people will come to believe it. Here's how the lead sentence in the CNN fact check explains it: "In an opinion article published on Wednesday, former Vice President Mike Pence did something he used to do in office: echo a lie from former President Donald Trump in a slightly more sophisticated way." The CNN piece concedes that Mr. Pence wrote nothing about election "fraud." He also didn't argue that anything happened that could have changed the election outcome. Still, the CNN fact check asserts that Mr. Pence's "vague claim about 'voting irregularities'" left it "wide open for readers to interpret as an endorsement of Trump's fraud lie." But here's the thing with Mr. Pence's article: Contrary to the claim of dishonesty in CNN's headline, there is no endorsement at all of Mr. Trump's election claims. Not only has Mr. Pence not contested Mr. Biden's victory, he officially certified the Electoral College votes—even though he was under enormous pressure from Mr. Trump to "stop the steal" by not doing so. So who has the real dishonesty issues here — and why? CNN gives a hint when it describes Mr. Pence's article as "mostly filled with attacks on a Democratic elections reforms bill known as HR 1." They are right that Mr. Pence's op-ed was mostly about H.R.1. ❖



5 Hoosier cities could lose status

INDIANAPOLIS — Move over, Muncie. Take a powder, Terre Haute. Those Hoosier cities are two of 144 that the federal government is proposing to downgrade from the metropolitan statistical area designation, and it could be more than just a matter of semantics ([AP](#)). Officials in some of the affected cities worry that the change could have adverse implications for federal funding and economic development. Under the new proposal, a metro area would have to have at least 100,000 people in its core city to count as an MSA, double the 50,000-person threshold that has been in place for the past 70 years. Cities formerly designated as metros with core populations between 50,000 and 100,000 people, like Muncie (90,580 residents in 2010) and Terre Haute (92,742), would be changed to "micro-metropolitan" statistical areas instead. Five metro areas in Indiana would be affected: Columbus (54,933), Kokomo (62,182) and Michigan City-La Porte (66,025), in addition to Muncie and Terre Haute.



Snyder's federal trial begins

HAMMOND — Former Portage Mayor James E. Snyder faced a new jury Monday on federal bribery charges (Dolan, [NWI Times](#)). Attorneys for Snyder and federal prosecutors spent much of Monday choosing jurors to hear evidence and legal arguments on whether the former mayor solicited and accepted a bribe, as the government alleges. Attorneys for the prosecution and defense are scheduled to give opening statements in the case Tuesday, followed by the opening of testimony in a trial expected to last one or two weeks. Judge Matthew F. Kennelly, who has served in the U.S. District for the Northern District of Illinois in Chicago

since 1999, is presiding over the trial. Federal prosecutors first charged Snyder in November 2016 with bribery and tax evasion. Snyder is pleading not guilty to allegations he solicited money from the former owners of a Portage trucking sale firm after steering a city contract to the dealership for the purchase of trucks for garbage collection.

Meijer teams with ISTA on vaccines

INDIANAPOLIS — Meijer is partnering with the Indiana State Teachers Association for several COVID-19 vaccine clinics at Indiana stores next week ([WIBC](#)). Meijer says it will hold a dozen clinics and give 10,000 doses of the coronavirus vaccine to pre-registered teachers and school staff in grades pre-K to 12 by the end of next week. Teachers and staff will be asked to verify their school affiliation and have proper ID when pre-registering through Meijer's vaccine registration process. Teachers can also register by texting ISTA to 75049. "We are very pleased to continue to support the State of Indiana with this extremely important initiative," said Jason Beauch, Vice President of Pharmacy for Meijer. "With nearly 40 stores in Indiana, our pharmacy teams have been working across the state for weeks to administer vaccine doses to seniors, and we're proud to broaden this outreach to include teachers, who are such an important part of our communities."

IU extends Coach Allen's contract

BLOOMINGTON — Indiana head football coach Tom Allen has agreed to a restructured contract that will pay him an average of \$4.9 million annually and keep him with the Hoosiers through 2027 ([CBS4](#)). The New Castle native is coming off his best season in Bloomington, winning national and Big Ten coach of the year honors last year. He led Indiana to

wins over Penn State, Michigan and Wisconsin, earning the program's first top ten ranking in 51 years. The Hoosiers ended the season ranked 12th after a trip to the Outback Bowl. "I'm excited about what we are building here and how we are building it," Allen said in a school release. "Having said that, we have unfinished business that we will continue to chase after every single day."

ISU fires Coach Lansing

TERRE HAUTE — Indiana State fired men's head basketball coach Greg Lansing on Monday ([Indiana Public Media](#)). In 11 seasons in Terre Haute, Lansing became the school's second all-time winningest coach with a 181-164 record. The Sycamores went 15-10 this season, including an 11-7 record in the Missouri Valley Conference. Indiana State was eliminated from the conference tournament Saturday by top-seeded Loyola. "While I am disappointed, I understand the business side of college athletics," Lansing said in a press release. "I love Indiana State and Terre Haute and always will. It's a part of who I am."

Lightfoot to allow fans for Cubs, Sox

CHICAGO — The Cubs and White Sox will play before real fans, instead of cardboard cut-outs (Chicago Sun-Times). Mayor Lori Lightfoot gave both teams the go-ahead to sell 20% of the seats at Wrigley Field and Guaranteed Rate Field citing the "remarkable" progress Chicago has made toward containing the coronavirus and vaccinating its residents. "As a die-hard sports fan myself, I'm personally excited to have Chicago take its first, cautious steps toward safely reopening our beloved baseball stadiums to fans this season," Lightfoot, a Sox season ticket holder, was quoted as saying in a press release.