

Banks: GOP should seek working class

Memo to McCarthy tells of 'transformational coalition' that should embrace Trumpism

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Following the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection, a number of big corporations announced they would no longer be giving campaign contributions to the 140 House Members who refused to accept the Electoral College results. In a memo to House

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, House Republican Study Committee Chairman Jim Banks appears to say, "Bring it on."

Banks is advocating an embrace of former president Donald Trump, saying his Jan. 6 "gift didn't come



with a receipt." He believes that the Republican Party "embrace our new coalition" as the party of the working class.

"In the last five years, the GOP has undergone a coalitional transformation and is now the party of the

Continued on page 3

The Gov says V.E.T.O.

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Gov. Eric Holcomb answered the most pertinent question at the Statehouse this week: What would he do with engrossed legislation that would curb his powers and allow the General Assembly to call itself into special session.

"I cannot skirt my duty and do something that I believe is unconstitutional," Holcomb said at his weekly pandemic press conference Wednesday. "So yes, I can answer your question with four letters and it's V-E-T-O."

The Indiana Senate voted Monday giving the General Assembly the authority to convene an "emergency session" in an



"We are all very pleased to have Mike Woodson as the person in charge of leading our program. He will do an excellent job. He will be an outstanding disciplinarian and teacher working with his team. He is just a great man."

- Former IU Coach Bob Knight, on the hiring of Mike Woodson



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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



amended HB1123. Indiana's Constitution specifically states only the governor is authorized to call the Legislature back to the Statehouse after lawmakers have adjourned for the year.

Former Indiana Supreme Court Justice Frank Sullivan Jr. told the Senate Rules Committee under the auspices of Senate President Pro Tem Rod Bray last month that SB407 would violate the Indiana Supreme Court's long-standing precedent that it is unconstitutional for one branch of government to subject another branch to its "coercive influence." Sullivan added, "If the governor's power to handle emergencies needs to be reduced, [you should] do it in a way that the Constitution permits. You have plenty of options in that regard. And if you decide that the Legislature does need power that the Constitution does not now give it, the right way to do that is by a constitutional amendment, not an unconstitutional bill."

"I've made no secret about my understanding of Indiana's Constitution," Holcomb said. "I have viewed this with the belief that this is unconstitutional. We have supplied our legislative friends with background. There is an honest difference of opinion. They honestly believe otherwise. I'm left with no other alternative. I believe I am duty bound by the constitution first and foremost. I can't do an end-around the people."

Holcomb said that he is not "in complete disagreement" with the motives House and Senate Republicans led by House Majority Leader Matt Lehman and State Sen. Sue Glick had for the legislation.

The bill does not rescind any of the governor's emergency powers such as prohibiting church services and locking down non-essential businesses as he did last March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hoosiers saw a 3.2% jobless rate in February balloon to 16.9% in April. It was back to 4% this past February.

"I believe, for example, the funding coming into the state of Indiana, it is beyond understandable; it is to be expected that we work together

and they be updated," Holcomb said of the more than \$5 billion coming to the state via President Joe Biden's American Relief Act passed by Congress in March. "We've been doing that over the past year with letters and phone calls from legislators, sitting down at the table and going over on more than one occasion when we weren't in session."

Holcomb said he asked leadership if they want to be in special session and "The answer was no."

The governor has taken some heat after his statewide address nine days ago that he was shifting the state's mask mandate to an advisory. He left it in the hands of local governments to determine whether they wanted to keep the mandate in place. At least four counties (Marion, Monroe, St Joseph, Huntington) have said they will continue local mask orders.

"Eric Holcomb has too often made politics a part of the equation with the state's pandemic response rather than implementing the science, data-based approach he claims to use every week," said Indiana Democratic Party spokesman Drew Anderson. "With everything Hoosiers have gone through over this past year, why would Holcomb risk derailing all of this progress just to appease folks who don't believe in COVID-19 to begin with? The Governor will create more problems in the near future, not less, if he doesn't responsibly lead Indiana out of the pandemic."

On Wednesday, Holcomb was confronted with an amendment that would prohibit local units of government from keeping mandates in place. "Yes, it concerns me," he said. "A lot of things concern me. I haven't had an opportunity to look at the amendment; didn't see it before the hearing. We'll take a hard look at this. But on this, I'm going to have to look at each and every word. To be determined."

Holcomb added, "It's taken months to arrive at where we are right now and we didn't have months to make decisions."

As for the advisory shift, Holcomb explained, "We have been very clear since the outset in our desire to drive down deaths and hospitalization rates, they have come a long way, they are coming down. It's not the one number I focus on; it's many numbers in terms of our ability to care for those who are hospitalized. We do what we can to limit the spread.

"It's not mission accomplished," he continued. "There is some personal responsibility to be demanded if we want to continue to manage our way through this and manage our way through this is what we're doing."

Banks, from page 1

working class," Banks tweeted Wednesday. "We should embrace that. Not fight it."

"Both parties are undergoing coalitional transformations," Banks, R-Columbia City, said, adding and that Republicans shouldn't fight the trend of corporate donors pulling back from the GOP. "When Eli Lilly and several other corporate PACs blacklisted me" for objecting to the certification of President Biden's victory on Jan. 6, "I reached out to individual donors, explained the situation, and asked for their support. Once my supporters learned that liberal corporations blacklisted me because I refused to cave to their demands on Jan. 6, they were happy to make up the difference. That's how, in the first quarter of this year, I regained every penny of the \$241,000 I lost in corporate money through individual donations."

According to CitizensForEthics.org (CREW) the Business Roundtable, an industry group that represents the CEOs of corporations denounced the "inexcusable violence" and counted by mid-February nearly 190 companies pledged to halt donations from their political action committees. Axios reported that Charles Schwab, Nike, Walt Disney, Facebook, Microsoft, Google, Walmart, Comcast, Verizon, Northrop Grumman, Amazon, BP, JP Morgan Chase, Citi, Dow, Goldman Sachs, Airbnb, Boston Scientific and AT&T are all at least temporarily holding donations.

That Banks represents one of the most uncompetitive congressional districts in the nation (the Cook Partisan Index puts Indiana's 3rd CD +18% Republican), and has won landslide victories every time he's run doesn't appear to alter the congressman's political calculation for how to play in the couple of dozen races expected to determine which party holds the majority after the 2022 elections.

"Every Republican Member in a competitive district should know exactly how much corporate cash their opponent received in 2020, and they should relay those num-

As for criticism from Democratic Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear who said he would ask Holcomb to reconsider rescinding the mask mandate, Holcomb said, "Gov. Beshear has my cellphone number and he clearly has the media number as well. He has not contacted me. I did see his comments and I have always taken the approach ... to respect all other governors and the decisions they have to make according to the numbers on the ground and what is happening in their states. I am paying attention to the numbers here in Indiana and what's best for Hoosiers." ❖

bers to their constituents," Banks continued. "The NRCC should arm Members with that information and commission advertisements that contrast Republican challengers with corporate-backed Democrat incumbents.

"House Republicans can broaden our electorate, increase voter turnout, and take back the House by enthusiastically rebranding and reorienting as the Party of the Working Class," Banks said in the memo. "There is an embittered and loud minority in the GOP that finds our new coalition distasteful, but President Trump's gift didn't come with a receipt.

"Our electoral success in the 2022 midterm election will be determined by our willingness to embrace our new coalition," the memo continues. "House Republicans can broaden our electorate, increase voter turnout, and take back the House by enthusiastically rebranding and reorienting as the Party of the Working Class. Republicans are pro-business and pro-worker, not pro-corporation."

The memo notes that opposing Big Tech "would be popular and politically effective." It said that 45% of Americans have a negative view of Big Tech, up 33% since 2019. It observed that from February 2020 to May 2020, the jobless rate for high-wage workers rose by 3.6% while the unemployment rate for medium and low-wage workers rose by 14.2% and 19.8%.

In what the memo describes as "Main Street vs. Wall Street," it advocates, "Republicans should use regressive coronavirus lockdowns to illustrate how Democrats harm working-class Americans. Republicans opposed draconian lockdowns because we knew that small, independent businesses and working class Americans would be hurt most. Democrats supported them because their donors would profit, and that's exactly what happened."

"Republicans should state clearly, our opposition to China as corollary of our support for working Americans. The reverse is also true: Democrats' coziness with China results from their coziness with Wall Street."

The memo noted Donald Trump's cornerstone issue – "Build the Wall" – and noted that 73% of voters





now recognize the border crisis is an issue, “so Biden’s immigration agenda is likely even more unpopular now that it was in early February. The GOP should continue highlighting Biden’s border crisis by contrasting Democrats’ open-border policies like the wall, remain in Mexico, and opposition of amnesty.”

In “action items” the memo recommends holding “worker class roundtables,” create “working families task forces,” focus on individual and digital donations, and embrace the made-in-America agenda.

The memo concludes: “The Democratic Party is more vulnerable than it’s been in modern history. Democrats’ agenda is now shaped entirely by corporate interests and radical, elite cultural mores, but they still rely on many blue-collar voters. Democrats rely on labor votes but support open-border policies that undercut American workers. They rely on Christian Hispanic voters but want to repeal the Hyde Amendment. After their push to ‘defund the police,’ the murder rate jumped more in a single year than it has in U.S. history, and urban, poor, blue areas were hardest hit.

“Democrats will keep alienating working-class voters because that’s what their donors demand, and Republicans should welcome them with open arms by fully embracing an agenda that’s worthy of their support.”

According to Lakshya Jain, writing for Sabato’s Crystal Ball today, “It appears as if the Republican Party’s strength with evangelicals and religious, working-class whites may be beginning to take hold in areas where the realignment had not hit quite as strongly, and the rates of erosion in Democratic support were thus significantly faster than one might have expected given the other 2020 results across the nation.”

Indiana Democratic Executive Director Lauren Ganapini told HPI, “Congressman Jim Banks’s votes and the Indiana Republican Party’s record do not help working-class Hoosiers. Just last month, Banks and the INGOP voted against increasing the minimum wage for 30% of the state’s workforce, they voted against the American Rescue Plan which will help us get through COVID-19 and get our economy back on track, and they never supported affordable healthcare for Hoosiers. Banks is proving to be a typical Republican politician who talks a big game but is unwilling to do the work.”

Trump on Biden infrastructure plans

Former President Trump said in a press release

on Wednesday: “Joe Biden’s radical plan to implement the largest tax hike in American history is a massive giveaway to China, and many other countries, that will send thousands of factories, millions of jobs, and trillions of dollars to these competitive Nations. The Biden plan will crush American workers and decimate U.S. manufacturing, while giving special tax privileges to outsourcers, foreign and giant multinational corporations. Biden’s policy would break the back of the American worker with among the highest business tax rates in the developed world.”

Schmuhl lauds Biden jobs plan

Indiana Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl said today President Biden’s American Jobs Plan would “give workers again.” In his first policy statement since taking the helm on March 21, Schmuhl said, “The Biden-Harris administration and Indiana Democrats made a promise to help Indiana and its workers build back better into a new era where infrastructure projects will create good-paying jobs, revitalize our infrastructure system, and help our families live, drive, and thrive in every Indiana community. The American Jobs Plan will do just that. Indiana has a strong union tradition, and it’s time the state’s elected leaders start treating its workers and unions with the respect and dignity they deserve. Through the PRO Act, the Hoosier worker will have a voice again while on the job and better opportunities will be available to families who want a pathway toward a brighter future.”

Gubernatorial 2024 updates

Yes, yes, 2024 is still two election cycles off, but we’re watching both major parties for clues on who will be in what lanes.

For Democrats, the list of potential contenders includes former senator Joe Donnelly, former Republican superintendent of public instruction Jennifer McCormick, State Sen. Eddie Melton, businessman Josh Owens, and newly elected Democrat Chairman Mike Schmuhl.

The case for Donnelly is simple: He’s run state-wide twice, winning once. He raised \$18 million in his 2018 loss to Sen. Mike Braun. While he begged off a challenge to U.S. Sen. Todd Young in 2022, he told HPI in March, “I remain open to being involved in public service again, but I will not be a candidate for public office in 2022.” Donnelly maintained a moderately conservative profile during this six years in the Senate, as well as during his House tenure.

McCormick had a listening tour with Sen. Melton in 2019, then campaigned for a handful of congressional and General Assembly Democrats last year. She's kept a Statehouse profile up during this session, opposing the proposed voucher expansion. She was rumored to be interested in forming a ticket with Sen. Melton.

Melton raised his profile a bit by joining the tiny Senate caucuses leadership, but any statewide race would be a huge leap for this Gary Democrat. Indiana has never had a governor from Lake County.

Owens weighed in during the Democratic chair race earlier this year, though he did not advocate for a specific candidate.

Schmuhl managed a \$100 million presidential campaign and served as South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg's chief of staff. His mission is the rebuild the party over the next four years. If no obvious contender emerges, why not him? Gov. Eric Holcomb is a former state party chairman, as was Rex Early prior to his 1996 GOP run.

As for the Republicans, Importantville asked Sen. Braun if he might seek the open governor's office in 2024. He responded, "I'm going to tell you this. As hard as it was to get into the arena, I'm going to stay involved in politics until I view that there's no marginal return left in doing it. Also weighing the chronology, the clock, too, because most ask why I didn't retire. Of course I'll never do that. I've got too many interests, things that I do, even if I weren't in politics. But I'm going to carefully measure where I can have the most impact, and then stay involved until I'm either fatigued of it or find out that it's not worth the time to do it."

That's hardly slamming the door on the prospect. Braun would bring a self-funding component to the race after spending about \$5 million to secure the 2018 Senate nomination. If Braun ran for governor, it would open up a Senate seat for a still relatively young Gov. Eric Holcomb, who began his statewide profile by seeking the Senate in 2016 until Gov. Mike Pence appointed him lieutenant governor.

The most active Republican has been Attorney General Todd Rokita, who has been showing up at GOP events statewide, and has been active on burnishing his cultural cred on issues ranging from abortion, to opposing President Biden's environmental regulatory agenda. Rokita has also received considerable negative publicity for continuing to draw a salary from outside sources after being elected to office.

Newly reelected Chairman Kyle Hupfer has become the GOP's "\$25 million man" after he raised that much money for the state party and Gov. Eric Holcomb's reelection campaign.



Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch has been presiding over the Indiana Senate thus far this year, but expect her to be making statewide rounds as well as adding to her war chest after the General Assembly sine die on April 21.

'Retired' Pence eyes prez run

The Associated Press released a story about how former vice president Mike Pence is "steadily" preparing for a 2024 White House bid. "He's joining conservative organizations, writing op-eds, delivering speeches and launching an advocacy group that will focus on promoting the Trump administration's accomplishments," AP reported. But "for someone who built a reputation as one of Trump's most steadfast supporters, Pence is now viewed with suspicion among many Republicans for observing his constitutional duty in January to facilitate a peaceful transfer of power to the Biden administration, a decision that still has Trump fuming.

"To prevail in a Republican presidential primary, Pence may have to reinforce his loyalty to Trump while defending his decisions during the final days of the administration when the president alleged widespread voter fraud, leading to a deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol. If anyone can achieve this awkward balance, some Republicans say, it's Pence." The AP quoted GOP strategist Alice Stewart, who said, "Anybody who can pull off an endorsement of Ted Cruz and become Donald Trump's vice presidential nominee should not be counted out. He has a way of splitting hairs and threading the needle that has paid off in the past."

Pence has an array of perception and security problems. Just keeping safe following the Jan. 6 insurrection where Trump-inspired loyalists chanted "Hang Mike Pence" will require a campaign security team.

And the memo of a potential Pence presidential bid obviously didn't reach the Indiana Senate this week. NWI Times report Dan Carden wrote on Tuesday: "Mike Pence's political career is over. That at least is the opinion of the Republican-controlled Indiana Senate, which unanimously adopted a resolution Tuesday congratulating the former vice president and Indiana governor on his "retirement." Senate Resolution 33 declares the Senate honors Pence "upon his retirement" and "thanks him for his many years of service to the state of Indiana and the United States of America. Vice President Pence's enduring service, integrity, faith, conservatism, and bold leadership will be greatly missed throughout the state and the nation." It also notes, during his retirement, Pence "will continue to advocate for conservative principles, small government, and pro-American policies, and spend time with his wife, Karen, and their family." ❖



House Minority Leader Charlie Halleck of Indiana (far left) watches President Lyndon B. Johnson sign the Civil Rights Act as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., looks over the president's shoulder.

DC's performance art focused on voter rights

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Late last October during a pandemic, I joined a diverse group of about 5,000 north Indianapolis voters at St. Luke's United Methodist Church on a Saturday morning. It took five and a half hours for us to vote. While there was some grumbling, the prevailing sentiment was how the powers that be need to make it easier to vote.

In this lull between election cycles, the Republican and Democrat battlefront now lies with the divisive issues of immigration and voting rights.

National Republicans effectively became the "Party of Trump" in 2020. The GOP didn't pass a party platform before watching President Trump become the first since Herbert Hoover to preside over the loss of both chambers of Congress and the White House within a single term. The Trump presidential era has been characterized as xenophobic in its use of racial "dog whistles" as the former president concentrated on adding white, male voters instead of expanding its reach to minorities, as advocated by then RNC Chairman Reince Priebus's 2013 "autopsy" report of the 2012 election. It recommended the GOP reach out to a diverse electorate, something the 2020 Trump campaign was able to do, picking up a modest uptick Latino male support in anti-Castro South Florida and in Texas, though that demographic is hardly a monolithic entity.

The Republican National Committee is passing on an election post-mortem after its nominee lost the presidential popular vote for seventh time in the past nine elections. Only President George W. Bush (2004) and Vice

President George H.W. Bush (1988) have won the popular vote during this time frame.

Trump pollster Tony Fabrizio did write a 27-page "autopsy" observing that the president saw the "greatest erosion with white voters, particularly white men," and that he "lost ground with almost every age group" between his 2016 Electoral College victory and his 2020 loss. In the five states that flipped to Biden, Trump's biggest drop-off was among voters aged 18 to 29 and 65 and older.

Politico reported: "Trump saw double-digit erosion with white college-educated voters across the board."

While Indiana Republicans brand themselves as the "Party of Purpose" and the "Party That Works," and Chairman Kyle Hupfer is attempting to expand the party base with a new diversity program, the national GOP appears to be using vote suppression as its calling card heading into the 2022 cycle.

Now during the first state legislative season since the election, multiple sources report that GOP legislatures as of Feb. 19 have carried over, prefiled, or introduced 253 bills with provisions that restrict voting access in 43 states. "With unprecedented numbers of voters casting their ballots by mail in 2020, legislators across the country have shown particular interest in absentee voting reform, with more than a quarter of voting and election bills addressing absentee voting procedures," the Brennan Center reported. "Only six of the 44 states that have introduced election bills have not proposed policies to alter absentee voting procedures in some way."

The Brennan Center lists two bills, SB353 on voter registration and SB398 on absentee voting, as the Indiana version of vote suppression.

The biggest impact of SB353 would prohibit the governor from changing, during a declared disaster emer-

gency, the time, place, or manner of holding an election. This was in reaction to a decision last April when Gov. Eric Holcomb, then-Secretary of State Connie Lawson, Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer and then-Democratic Chairman John Zody signed off on delaying the May primary to June. It passed the Senate on a 34-15 vote with one abstaining.

As for SB398, it passed the Senate on a 46-0 vote. It specifies a list of family members to assist an absentee voter, establishes audit trail standards, sets standards for a county election board to determine whether a signature is valid, establishes procedures and forms for the curing of mismatched signatures involving an absentee ballot and unsigned absentee ballots, and extends the time in which an absentee ballot must be received on Election Day from noon until 6 p.m.

The Republican caucus rejected amendments from State Sen. J.D. Ford attempting to allow for absentee ballot drop boxes and would have expanded no-excuse absentee balloting that was used in the 2020 June primary, but not the general election.

When SB398 was heard in the House, Republicans refused to debate a redistricting reform amendment which would have established an independent, non-partisan reapportionment commission and forbidden the use of "political data" to redraw districts. House Republicans determined the amendment wasn't "germane" to avoid debate.

Nationally, Congressional Democrats have responded with HR1, which was adopted 220 to 210 mostly along party lines earlier this month, that would constitute the most significant enhancement of federal voting protections since the 1960s if it became law. According to the New York Times, it aims to impose new national requirements weakening state voter ID laws, mandate automatic voter registration, expand early and mail-in voting, make it harder to purge voter rolls and restore voting rights to former felons – changes that studies suggest would increase voter participation, especially by racial minorities.

U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski has opposed HR1, saying, "We need bipartisan reforms to assure the American people their votes are counted fully, fairly, and accurately. But HR1 won't restore confidence in our elections; it will only sow further division and doubt by imposing a one-size-fits-all, Washington-mandated election system on all 50 states."

"The idea that you'd federalize the election process with no Republican support in an environment in which tens of millions of people already don't trust the process is insane," Mark Braden, the former chief counsel to the Republican National Committee, told The Hill. "Trump said a lot of things that were untrue and should be held to account for that, but now Democrats are showing up at the fire with gasoline instead of water."

Donald Trump and congressional Republicans helped set the stage for the hundreds of bills in state legislatures after his "Stop the Steal" effort following his 2020

loss in an effort to "overturn" the results that critics say are designed to suppress Democratic vote, particularly in minority communities.

"If you were to poll out activists right now, election integrity is going to be near the top of the list," Noah Wall, executive vice president of FreedomWorks, told the AP. "Twelve months ago, that wasn't the case." Added Jessica Anderson of Heritage Action, "It kind of feels like an all-hands-on-deck moment for the conservative movement. We've had a bit of a battle cry from the grassroots, urging us to pick this fight."

President Biden called the new Georgia laws "an atrocity," adding last week, "Yet instead of celebrating the rights of all Georgians to vote or winning campaigns on the merits of their ideas, Republicans in the state instead



Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

We are up BIG, but they are trying to STEAL the Election. We will never let them do it. Votes cannot be cast after the Poles are closed!

rushed through an un-American law to deny people the right to vote. This law, like so many others being pursued by Republicans in statehouses across the country is a blatant attack on the Constitution and good conscience. This is Jim Crow in the 21st Century. It must end. We have a moral and Constitutional obligation to act."

Rich Lowry writes in his New York Post column that that voter ID laws were recommended by a 2005 bipartisan commission led by Jimmy Carter and James Baker, "neither of who will ever be mistaken for Bull Connor." States, Lowry observes, would have no choice but to accept same-day registrations. People applying for various government programs or for college would be registered automatically. States couldn't turn away the registrations of 16-year-olds, even though they can't legally vote. States couldn't require voter ID. They couldn't remove inactive voters from the rolls. They couldn't work with other states to try to find duplicate registrations six months ahead of an election."

Walorski joined about 140 of her House colleagues in late December in voting not to accept the Electoral College certified results on Jan. 6, which ended in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. It prompted Nebraska Republican Sen. Ben Sasse to observe, "The president and his allies are playing with fire. They have been asking – first the courts, then state legislatures, now the Congress – to overturn the results of a presidential election. They have unsuccessfully called on judges and are now calling on federal officeholders to invalidate millions and millions of votes. If you make big claims, you had better have the evidence. But the president doesn't and neither do the institutional arsonist members of Congress who will object

to the Electoral College vote.”

This is where a history lesson becomes relevant.

In 1964 and 1965, Congress did step in to correct more than a century of Jim Crow laws in former states of the Confederacy designed to suppress African-American voting. The Smithsonian reported: “The Civil Rights Act of 1964, a landmark piece of legislation, was a long time in the making, and the passage of the bill required the political machinations of an assortment of Republicans, Democrats, Northerners and Southerners, congressmen, senators, presidents and activists. Congress had considered, and failed to pass, a civil rights bill every year from 1945 to 1957. In 1957, Congress finally managed to pass a limited Civil Rights Act, which it added to in 1960, but these bills offered Black Americans only modest gains. It wasn’t until 1963, in a televised speech, that President Kennedy called for a robust Civil Rights Act.

“It ought to be possible ... for every American to enjoy the privileges of being American without regard to race or color,” Kennedy said in the spring of 1963. “In short, every American ought to have the right to be treated as he would wish to be treated, as one would wish his children to be treated.”

In a little more than a week, what would become the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was introduced in the House. Two months later, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his “I have a dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial. Three months after that, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. And in an address before a joint session of Congress on Nov. 27, 1963 (five days after Kennedy’s death), President Lyndon Johnson was resolute, declaring, “We have talked long enough in this country about equal rights. We have talked for 100 years or more. It is time now to write the next chapter, and to write it in the books of law.”

President Johnson knew he would need Republican help. He found a key player in House Minority Leader Charlie Halleck of Indiana, who often described himself as “100% Republican” or a “Republican, period.” According to his 1986 Washington Post obituary, Halleck was “one of the leading architects of the conservative coalition of Republicans and southern Democrats that blocked or curtailed much of the legislation in the domestic programs of Presidents Roosevelt, Truman and Kennedy.”

According to his New York Times obit, “In 1963, to the astonishment of Congressional Republicans and the outrage of Southern Democrats, it was Mr. Halleck who gave crucial help in guiding through the House a compromise civil rights bill supported by the Democratic Administration.”

When President Johnson first asked Halleck to help push the Civil Rights Act through the House, Halleck was hesitant, but in the end, he acquiesced, telling Johnson he would “give you the right to sign that thing on July 1,” according to The Smithsonian, though he objected to the “politicalization” of the Fourth of July. In a phone conversation two days after the bill made it through the Senate, President Johnson urged Halleck to push the bill through. Johnson wanted the bill to be signed into law by July 4, leaving enough time for it to be enacted before the Republican

National Convention, which was to begin July 13. On July 2, 1964, the House adopted the Senate’s version of the bill by a vote of 289-126.

Halleck kept his Hoosier GOP delegation in order, with U.S. Reps. Ross Adair, Richard Roudebush, William Bray (grandfather of Senate President Pro Tem Rod Bray), Earl Wilson, Ralph Harvey and Bruce Donald joining the state’s four Democrats in the passage of HR7152. After it was amended by the Senate, only Rep. Wilson voted against the measure.

In the comparison Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Indiana GOP delegation was down to just five after the LBJ landslide victory over Republican Barry Goldwater (who opposed the Civil Rights Act), while Halleck lost a minority leader race to Rep. Gerald Ford. But Halleck joined Adair, Roudebush and Bray in voting yea, while Rep. Harvey did not vote. They joined freshman Democrats Lee Hamilton, Andrew Jacobs and Denton Winfield in voting for the historic civil rights legislation.

In the long run, these two historic acts set in motion more minority voting, but the subsequent political realignment in the Deep South resulted in Richard Nixon’s 1968 “Southern strategy campaign” and is still in place today. In Goldwater’s loss to LBJ, he carried five deep South states. Indeed, when President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law on July 2, 1964, he is said to have told an aide, “We (Democrats) have lost the South for a generation.”

The Trump-era GOP appears to be doubling down on suppression, as opposed to relying on ideas and purpose to attract voters. “Restricting voting is only a short-term rush. It’s not a strategy for future strength,” said Benjamin Ginsberg, one of the Republican Party’s most prominent election lawyers (New York Times). “Look at what it really means. A party that’s increasingly old and white whose base is a diminishing share of the population is conjuring up charges of fraud to erect barriers to voting for people it fears won’t support its candidates.”

In the 1960 Republican National Committee platform was this plank: “This nation was created to give expression, validity and purpose to our spiritual heritage – the supreme worth of the individual. In such a nation – a nation dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal – racial discrimination has no place. It can hardly be reconciled with a Constitution that guarantees equal protection under law to all persons. In a deeper sense, too, it is immoral and unjust. As to those matters within reach of political action and leadership, we pledge ourselves unreservedly to its eradication.”

Times have changed for the Party of Lincoln in an era where Washington has been reduced from policymaking to performance art. ❖

Bill aimed at local health orders advances

Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana lawmakers on Wednesday advanced legislation that would make it easier to overturn local health orders or enforcement actions amid ongoing complaints from conservatives about Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb's statewide response to the coronavirus ([AP](#)). The Senate bill creates a process allowing the public



to appeal local health orders to county or city elected board. The enforcement action would be halted during an appeal, which could allow a business to stay open until the matter is heard by a city or county board, even if it

is not following health orders. Currently, the only option is to file a lawsuit. The appeals process would apply only to health orders enacted during a declared emergency.

Language added to the proposal by House lawmakers requires that any local emergency health order that is more stringent than state orders must first be approved by local elected officials, like city council members or county commissioners. The bill also makes it easier for local elected officials to remove health officers, including for "good cause" alone. The amended measure was approved by the House Rules Committee Wednesday and now heads to the full chamber for consideration.

Bill author Republican Sen. Chris Garten, of Charlestown, said the legislation isn't meant to be a combative response against local health officials, but rather a "check and balance" that protects the rights of business owners and ensures economic health. Rep. Matt Pierce, a Democrat from Bloomington, emphasized that the enforcement appeals are likely to be influenced by partisan politics and "won't be about the science."

Bill on attorney fees concerns HEC

Environmental groups and some lawmakers worry a bill, HB1436, could pressure regulators to approve pollution permits they would otherwise deny. The Hoosier Environmental Council said an amendment has dramatically improved the bill, but it could still have unintended consequences (Thiele, [Indiana Public Media](#)). Under the original bill, several Indiana agencies would have to pay the attorney's fees of a party that wins a lawsuit against the state in a court case overseen by an administrative law judge. HEC senior staff attorney Kim Ferraro said this new language is better, but it could still pose a threat to cash-strapped agencies like the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. "If you don't issue this permit on our terms, we're going to appeal and you could be on the hook for our hundreds of thousands of dollars in attorney's

fees," she said.

Tallian angered at workers comp bill kill

State Senator Karen Tallian (D-Ogden Dunes) responded to inquiries about her workers' compensation bill, Senate Bill (SB) 220. The bill would also allow compensation claims to be filed with the workers' compensation board up to two years after the worker's last compensation claim was filed. "Workers' compensation benefits aren't increased automatically, so in order to keep up with inflation and the increased cost of living, we must pass legislation to increase those benefits," Tallian said. "2013 was the last time that we passed a rate schedule, and those expired in 2016. With SB 220, Indiana would have caught up on missed benefit increases from the last five years. To hear, now, that this legislation is being stopped in its tracks by a few Republicans in the House is sickening. I have been trying for several years to have this addressed, and year after year I am promised that it will be done. And, once again, the House Republicans have killed it."

Rep. Lucas under fire again

District 69 State Rep. Jim Lucas, R-Seymour, is again being accused of racist social media behavior, this time by a Houston surgeon who commented on a Lucas Facebook page post ([Columbus Republic](#)). The most recent post under scrutiny involves an exchange on Lucas' Facebook page with Dr. James Carson, a Black orthopedic surgeon from Houston. In the Facebook post's comment section, a conversation about race and constitutional rights between Carson and Lucas ensued. After Carson posted "You know the Constitution was written with people like me as slaves with no rights. Is that how it should be interpreted?" Lucas responded, "The first slave owner in America was black. Blacks captured and sold blacks as slaves. Slavery is vile and repugnant, but has, and is tragically a way of humanity." Later in the post, Lucas congratulated Carson on becoming a surgeon and asked, "Did you get any scholarships or financial assistance because of your skin color? Any minority scholarships?" Carson responded that he was valedictorian and in the honors college. "I'm not aware of any scholarships available to white people just because they're white. Somehow that was taken as I was implying that was how he got into school, and there was nothing further from the truth," Lucas told The Republic Wednesday. "Those were simple, factual questions with no implications."

Indiana vaccine available to 16-year-olds

A bill requiring Indiana doctors to tell women undergoing drug-induced abortions about a disputed treatment that could stop the abortion process is a step closer to approval in the Republican-dominated Legislature. The state Senate's health committee voted 7-4 Wednesday to advance the proposal, despite objections that it would force doctors to provide dubious information. ❖

On April Fool's Day, Janus-faced bills

By ANNE LAKER

INDIANAPOLIS – I kid you not. On April Fool's Day, a pair of Janus-faced bills are set to be heard in Sen. Eric Koch's Senate Utilities Committee, HB1381 and HB1191. HB1381 creates uniform rules for the siting of solar and wind projects. HB1191 prevents municipalities from



mandating green building materials or electric vehicles, and from banning any certain sort of energy a utility might provide.

While HB1381 forces a path for renewables, and HB1191 defends the turf of traditional utilities and building materials, both bills break Indiana's formerly biblical devotion to home rule.

The bills also represent a bipolar take on Indiana's energy future. Are we going green or

clinging to dirty? Can lawmakers contort themselves to cater to competing industries, from the wind energy lobby to the natural gas lobby? Do counties and towns ever know what's good for them?

Fact is, one-third of Indiana counties currently have some form of legislation on the books against renewable energy projects. And two-thirds of them have passed indignant resolutions against HB1381. Some claim the fact that the bill's subject is renewable energy is incidental; it's all about the principle of local control.

But what do counties do with their local control? Some court coal-to-diesel plants, chemical fertilizer plants, and factory farms with energetic abandon. Some welcome corporations who want to inject chemicals a mile underground. But solar and wind must be slain like dragons?

While Rep. Ed Soliday sees dollar signs with big time renewable energy projects, and county leaders see eyesores, it seems like no one's asking what's best for the health of Hoosiers and the air we breathe. By that criterion, everyone should be running toward wind turbines and solar panels like there's no tomorrow.

While some local leaders have already effectively banned renewable energy production by throwing up roadblocks to siting and zoning, HB1191 takes green-infrastructure hostility to the next level. Authored by Rep. Jim Pressel (R-LaPorte), the bill is chock full of poison pills. No county government will be allowed to ban production of any type of energy, such as natural gas. The Hoosier Environmental Council is urging an amendment that restores local governments' right to ban utility-owned energy projects viewed as public health risks, such as waste-to-energy facilities; it's nice to imagine that any local governments

might think in those terms.

A second poison pill is the banning of green building materials, a prospect that's infuriating the architect community. Think about that for a minute. Scientists the world over have agreed that we need to reduce emissions and increase energy efficiency. And lawmakers in this state are making it illegal. Why not ban life preservers and infant car seats too?

Just reading the bill is like drinking castor oil. HB1191 bans state educational institutions and local units of government from 1) requiring that a building be built or retrofitted with energy-saving or energy-producing materials or designs; 2) prohibiting materials or designs that don't meet an energy-saving standard.

This pathetic panic is being induced by, of all things, the rest of the world's logical march toward self-preservation. "Given the urgency of the climate crisis, and the reality that gas infrastructure built today will continue to emit greenhouse gasses for years to come," explains Amulya Yerrapotu of the Natural Resources Defense Council, "it is imperative that we begin the process of decarbonizing our buildings now."

And with that, the gas industry's hair is officially on fire. As their brains dissolve in the blink of a campaign contribution, Indiana lawmakers crank out embarrassing bills like HB1191. While our Midwest neighbors are passing the Clean Energy Jobs Act (Illinois), committing to reducing utility carbon emissions (Minnesota), and growing utility-scale solar capacity (Ohio), Indiana is telling architects they have to be as inefficient as possible.

I wish this were an April Fool's joke.

SB373 Carbon Market bill update

On Tuesday, Rep. Sean Eberhart orchestrated a messy hearing of SB373 in the House Natural Resources Committee. The bill was amended to the point that it won't create carbon markets in the near term, just a committee to study the issue by July 2022.

The bill was further amended, courtesy of Rep. Alan Morrison, to shield Wabash Valley Resources from liability for its underground carbon injection project in West Terre Haute.

"It's unfortunate that this controversial amendment was added to SB373, which seeks to promote carbon markets and encourage carbon sequestration in trees and soil," said Tim Maloney of the Hoosier Environmental Council, which opposed that amendment. As did the Dept. of Natural Resources.

Was it coincidental that the contents of the amendments were not public until the hearing was underway? And that the committee voted on the Wabash Valley amendment before all opposing testimony was heard?

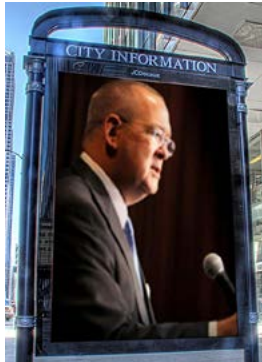
The bill will be ready for House floor action by Monday. ❖

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

What will economic recovery yield for state?

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – In the coming months, the U.S. economy will appear as if it is returning to normal. That won't really be the case, but the conversation about the economy will shift from stabilizing and relief to long-term growth. Midwesterners, particularly Hoosiers ought to be very nervous about the next decade. The last economic recovery left the region and our state in relatively worse condition than the Great Recession. There is every reason to believe the next recovery will again leave much of the Midwest farther behind the nation as a whole.



The poor prognosis for the Midwest rests upon the long-term shifts, or what economists call 'structural' shifts, of our economy. Consumers spend a dwindling share of their earnings on goods, instead buying services such as recreation, travel, education and healthcare. That trend works against our strengths or comparative advantage.

These shifting consumer preferences alter the calculus of producing goods and services. The demand for workers nationwide is overwhelmingly for college graduates. As I've repeated in this column, more than 8 in 10 new jobs created since 2010 went to college grads. Over the next decade, nearly all new jobs and most new wage growth will go to those workers with a four-year degree.

This does not mean that less well-educated workers cannot find work. There will be a steady stream of retirements in other occupations. But, it does mean that all the economic growth will only occur in those places with a high share of college graduates. That is very bad news for Indiana, since we are in the bottom third of educational attainment.

Indiana's declining economic position is not an accident. It is the result of numerous policy choices, for several decades, made by elected leaders of both parties. These were not malevolent choices, just myopic ones that ignored a half-century of data about the nation's changing economy. Today, Indiana's economic, education and workforce policies are far more closely aligned to 1962 than 2062, which is when today's high school students will still be a decade away from retirement.

One way to avoid the continued plague of short-sighted policies is to think about economic growth the way economists do. Economists think of growth as being caused by the self-interested efforts of entrepreneurs to combine people and machinery – or what we call capital – to produce goods and services. This might seem like some

highfalutin model, but it helps focus government policies.

Government can only promote economic growth by doing things that influence the productivity of people and capital. But, most of what government does has little effect on either worker or capital productivity. Indeed, much is harmful, as a disproportionate share of my columns have noted. But, there are a couple of areas where government action can influence productivity.

The first way is to improve the quality of the government's part of productive capital. The private sector owns most machinery and buildings, but the public sector owns or regulates significant capital. Thus, better bridges, roads, air traffic control systems or how effectively government regulates water, sewer, electricity, and telecommunications access also affects productivity.

States, including Indiana, spend a mind boggling amount of public money to attract new investment. States also try to cut taxes in the belief that capital owners are mostly concerned about the cost of owning that capital. But, capital investment goes to the places where it will be most productive, not where it is cheapest. If that were not so, Manhattan, Palo Alto and Boston would all be an economic wasteland, and Indiana would thrive.

Indiana's problem in attracting capital isn't because venture capitalists don't know about us, rather it is because they know us quite well. The most effective way to improve the productivity of capital is to combine it with highly educated workers, which is why capital disproportionately flows to Manhattan, Palo Alto and Boston, not Indiana.

The most effective way government can affect productivity is by focusing on people, or human capital. The most productive businesses locate and expand in the cities and towns that provide them a pool of well educated and skilled workers. Here we are at a deep disadvantage. From 2010-2019 Indiana's businesses created more jobs for high school dropouts than college graduates. This is that 'structural' change that sees advanced manufacturing, high technology and other highly productive sectors fleeing Indiana, and expanding elsewhere.

Fundamentally, Indiana needs to boost educational attainment. As of 2019, Indiana's educational attainment was a full generation behind that of the U.S. as a whole. Indiana has the workforce that is ready for 2004, not 2021. To put that in context, 2004 was the first year with a Bluetooth-enabled Blackberry, the iPod (not iPad) and the concept of 'blogging.'

The remedy to our educational attainment problem will not be quick or cheap. It will require strategic patience and courage from elected leaders. It takes real political pluck to tell voters the truth about our lagging economic prospects, and to explain to them that we need more money for education from pre-K up through college.

More funding alone will not fix Indiana's educational attainment deficit. It is necessary, not sufficient, but it must be a first step. The quest to better fund schools is not a partisan issue. Underfunding of public services that

are critical to the economy has never been a conservative principle. Following a decade of budget cuts and experimentation with schools, we have enough data to draw some pretty clear conclusions. These tax cuts and educational reforms have not yielded us their promise of better educational attainment or economic growth. It is time to

get back on track or prepare to face another lost decade.❖

Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at Ball State University.

Understanding politics requires knowledge of local news media

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – Every politician – at least those who win elections – understands the power and importance of media in all of its forms. People who try to influence politicians tend to understand it somewhat but often tend to think that money, personal relationships and other methods are dominant. Then they often wonder why their ideas do not prevail.



There is an adage that I have believed all my life, in business and politics: Information is power.

So where does one get information? If you are trying to influence people to buy what you are selling, whether it is a

person, a piece of furniture or an idea, you need to understand where they are getting their information.

It is obvious that primary sources of information evolve with technology changes. Political information in America evolved from newsprint to radio to television to today's news niche chaos. America is a nation of information junkies which new technology has advanced, not reduced.

There are two obvious problems that I believe are at the core of the political challenges we face: 1.) the overwhelming distrust of national media by all factions (e.g., fact vs. fake news, every report being "just your opinion") and 2.) the threats to local news and information coverage as they are reshaped and often gutted by conglomerates.

The net results in politics of these trends, combined with a few other demographic (e.g., increasing population diversity) and structural trends (e.g., the decline of political parties), is that name ID and the purchase of name ID have become even more dominant in politics.

Donald Trump, Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders are names people recognize because they have built up ID with symbolic attachments and some

measure of credibility of being advocates for a point of view for decades. This phenomenon is not new – from George Washington to Teddy Roosevelt to Bush 43 – but it is pronounced and headed down the ballot.

The purchase of name ID has actually become more expensive as information splinters. So, the entry level costs to win a statewide race, especially a potentially close contest or a primary battle in the dominant party, are soaring. And it isn't just statewide races. Huge sums are required in congressional races, and now even in competitive state legislative and mayoral races.

The challenge for our electoral system is that there has always been a preference for soft news over hard news and for gossip over facts. This is not new either. It was true before Gutenberg invented the printing press. The assumption has been that, in a free market, people will see the choices, the better choices will ultimately become the preferred one.

However, if in news, you only see one type of news source, and that source is catering to your personal prejudices, you see no comparisons. When television choices were limited, we at least had some common base at least for local news. Because of the importance of media, we need to thoroughly understand what was, what the changes are, and thus be able to adjust what is happening.

A little over three years ago, I proposed to the two most-watched local anchors in Fort Wayne television history, Melissa Long and Heather Herron, that we write a book on about television in our region. They agreed. "Television in Fort Wayne, 1953-2018" was just released by M.T. Publishing of Evansville.

The foundations behind this proposal were simple:

1.) 1953 to 2018 is roughly the arc of the golden era of traditional television. It achieved news dominance in the 1960s (fueled by the Kennedy assassination and the space program, which accelerated universal acceptance of new technology), plateaued, and now has declined in viewership as new technology evolved. Television remains the most powerful and influential local news vehicle, but its dominance is gone.

2.) Local television, and the television marketing zones, define who we are. We know the murders, fires, weather, sports scores, street names, personalities, and encouraging and tragic stories within those zones.

3.) Tip O'Neill is famous for saying that "all politics is local." In other words, what he was saying, in effect, is that all politics is local news.

4.) Little has ever been written about an entire

local television market, anywhere in America. I found one terrific general book on the subject: "News Is People" by Craig Allen. There are other good books on specific categories (e.g., children's television) and many books that focus on one station's partial history, but most are highly personal reminiscences or mostly griping about things that they don't like.

We wanted something that was positive, full of memories, but also showed how a local market developed, what people saw, and how it changed over decades. In his book, Craig Allen includes this quote: "The local news was special because every day you lived the events along with every person in the audience. There was no need to pontificate (like the networks) because you weren't a thousand miles away."

Our book doesn't pontificate nor does it draw conclusions. But for outsiders, they can see how a local market worked. The story is told through personalities, not a politically partisan view. There are 500 images to help tell the story and bring back local memories, but they also show the evolving diversity of the region and how it adjusted over time.

The primary local television personalities stories are a key part of the history because, as Allen noted, they lived among the same community with many typical problems faced by those who watched them in their living rooms. These local personalities that were invited into people's homes for 20 years plus were, and most remain,

the most universally known local celebrities.

Another key point of Allen's was that when people were asked where they got their news, they not only included news broadcasts but the "Johnny Carson Show" and the ABC's "Wide World of Sports." So, what did people see on local television that helped shape their lives, their sense of community? If you don't know what your community is absorbing, you cannot represent it nor hope to influence it.

This is primarily meant to be a positive keepsake in a period of great angst. But understanding media and how it affects people is also important to every single person involved with politics. Craig Allen nailed it in his title: "News Is People." People want elected leaders to serve them as well as lead. If you don't understand how people get their information, don't waste too much time lobbying for an issue or running for office.

I have been involved with media since my high school years in the late 1960s – as an advertiser, being heavily covered in political and controversial issues, and as a commentator. I have always felt that media in all forms was critical to politics; three years of immersion in the subject only convinced me more completely. It is the sustenance of politics, which is actually the battleground of what information people receive. ❖

Souder is a former Republican congressman from Indiana.

2020 was composed of two distinct halves

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Last week, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis gave us a first look at the three closing months of 2020. Indiana did well in the final quarter of 2020. Our Gross Domestic Product, after adjustment for inflation, (Real GDP) advanced at an annual rate of 5.1% compared with a 4.3% increase for the nation.



A bit of chest thumping should be heard about now from state officials, although they probably can take but little credit for our economy. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that, despite our lachrymose Legislature,

Indiana's private sector managed to respond well to the federal stimulus program and sustained the momentum of recovery from the COVID shock of earlier in the year.

The year 2020 was composed of two very different halves. As usual, Indiana rode a more exciting roller-

coaster than did the nation. The first and second quarters felt the full force of the pandemic. During those first six months, Indiana's Real GDP declined at an annual rate of 20.3% with the nation going down by 19.2%.

Not a single one of the 50 states managed to have a positive change in its economy in that first half of 2020. While Indiana ranked 34th during that recession, Vermont, Utah, Washington and Arizona were the least effected. The pandemic hit hardest on Hawaii, Nevada, Tennessee and Michigan.

The second half of 2020 was a different story. From July through December, Indiana ranked fourth in the U.S. with a 22.7% annual rate of Real GDP growth while the nation's had an 18% bounce back. Only Nevada, Tennessee, and Idaho had a better half year of recovery than the Hoosier state. Trailing the pack, but none the less growing, were North Dakota, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Wyoming.

A closer look at the GDP data, without adjustment for inflation, turns up some surprises. For the nation as a whole, the recovery is incomplete, if reaching the level of output enjoyed in the closing quarter of 2019 is our objective. The U.S. was close to 5% off its previous high. Indiana, however, has crossed that magic goal line, if only by .5%.

In the non-farm private sector nationally, seven

of 19 industry groups ended 2020 with higher GDP figures than they had in the final quarter a year earlier. Leading this parade was retail trade, followed by finance and insurance. In Indiana, the same two industries were out in front and eight of 19 business groupings were in the black for the year.

What industries led us in this pandemic parade? Transportation and warehousing, as well as arts and en-

tertainment, were the leading industry groups on both the up- and down-sides of the 2020 COVID recession. Contrary to the state's mythology, and some media reporting, manufacturing was not the drum major for this parade. ❖

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

Massacres prompt 2nd Amendment crosshairs

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI Indiana Bureau

ANDERSON – After a second mass shooting in a week, a friend noted that only one amendment in the Bill of Rights began with the words “Congress shall make no law.”



“It’s not the 2nd Amendment,” he said.

Of course, that doesn’t deter gun rights advocates like Sen. Cynthia Lummis, a Republican from Wyoming. “Every time that there’s an incident like this, the people who don’t want to protect the 2nd Amendment use it as an excuse to further erode 2nd Amendment rights,” she said.

She’s not wrong, I guess. Many Americans see mass shootings like those in Georgia and Colorado, and they cry out for their leaders to do something, anything, to make the carnage stop.

Vice President Kamala Harris accused folks like Lummis of setting up a false choice. “This is not about getting rid of the 2nd Amendment,” Harris said during an appearance on “CBS This Morning.” “It’s simply about saying we need reasonable gun safety laws.”

Both she and President Joe Biden have spoken out in support of such reform. “The point here is Congress needs to act,” Harris said during that CBS interview. “On the House side, they did. There are two bills which the president is prepared to sign, and so we need the Senate to act.”

Biden also urged Congress to reinstate a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines that had been in effect for 10 years in the 1990s and early 2000s. “There is no reason why we have assault weapons on the streets of a civil society,” Harris said. “They are weapons of war.”

Reform advocates have public opinion on their side. A Gallup survey last fall found that 57% of respondents thought gun regulations should be more strict. That number has been as high as 78% in the early 1990s and as low as 44% in 2010. It was 67% in 2018.

A survey taken this year found 56% of respondents were at least somewhat dissatisfied with the nation’s gun regulations. It found 33% to be very dissatisfied. Among those wanting a change in the regulations, those wanting stricter rules outnumbered those wanting to ease regulations by a margin of five to one.

Here’s another statistic driving public opinion. A Gallup survey in 2019 found that nearly half of respondents were at least somewhat worried about falling victim to a mass shooting. Roughly one in five admitted to being very worried. And yet guys like Republican U.S. Sen. John Kennedy of Louisiana suggest that tightening restrictions to fight gun violence would be like banning sober drivers to fight drunk driving.

In spite of comments like that, this issue hasn’t always been one pitting conservatives against liberals. Take the example of Warren Burger, former chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Burger was in all respects a conservative, but he was no fan of the 2nd Amendment.

During a 1991 appearance on PBS, the retired chief justice observed that if he had been writing the Bill of Rights in the 1990s, he wouldn’t have included the right to bear arms. “The gun lobby’s interpretation of the 2nd Amendment is one of the greatest pieces of fraud – I repeat the word fraud – on the American people by special interest groups that I have ever seen in my lifetime,” he said. “The real purpose of the 2nd Amendment was to ensure that state armies – the militia – would be maintained for the defense of the state. The very language of

the 2nd Amendment refutes any argument that it was intended to guarantee every citizen an unfettered right to any kind of weapon he or she desires.”


Sounds like maybe he would have been on the side of the reformers.

❖

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

Where domestic policy is headed

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – There’s not much question where the Biden administration’s domestic priorities lie. Getting the pandemic health crisis under control and moving past its attendant economic crisis were always going to be the first order of business for the new White House. It’s what comes afterward – where the administration wants to head, how the American people respond, and what Capitol Hill does with it all – that will give us a sense of whether the country is ready for the kind of change Biden is signaling he wants to bring.



To be sure, some of that change has just been enacted into law. The stimulus package that made it through Congress a few weeks ago was an abrupt shift in tone from Washington. Beginning with Ronald Reagan and lasting to some extent even through Democratic administrations, the prevailing view valued limited government action on the economy, tax breaks for businesses and wealthy Americans – on the theory that their investments would ultimately help everyone else – and at best a wary view of the public sector. The stimulus bill heads the opposite direction, taking the attitude that forceful government action is needed in this moment and that the way to prosperity lies in helping poor, working-class, and middle-class Americans.

I suspect that a lot of Americans won’t care much about the ideology behind the stimulus bill. They’ll just judge it on whether it works, and in particular on whether the economy recovers and produces jobs, especially jobs that pay decently. Right on the heels of the stimulus bill, though, will come a host of issues that test both the administration and Congress.

One of them has already begun making headlines, as young migrants and migrant families show up in rising numbers at the southern border and federal officials scramble to shelter and process them, and in many cases, expel them under a Trump administration public health order that Biden is under pressure to drop. This all comes after a flurry of early executive actions aimed at developing a more generous immigration stance and talking up a “path to citizenship” for people in the country illegally and is a reminder that shifts in policy can produce

results that overwhelm the best intentions. My sense is that many Americans would welcome a reasoned and humane approach to immigration, but not if it produces chaos.

And just as Republicans on Capitol Hill are seizing on events at the border to raise the heat on immigration reform efforts, so the other big item on the administration’s agenda – infrastructure – may also fall prey to intense partisanship. If ever there was an issue on which Democrats and Republicans ought to be able to carve out agreement, it’s spending money to bring roads, highways, bridges, public water systems, and other basics necessary to modern life up to snuff. So far, the two parties continue to insist they intend to work together, and the Biden administration says that bipartisanship is a priority. But as Democrats push for an expansive view of infrastructure – including cyber-security, public transit, and shifting spending priorities toward cleaner energy – and Republicans insist that they will not back any move to raise taxes to fund infrastructure improvements, the stage is set for a classic Washington face-off.

Beyond that, of course, any number of exceedingly complex issues await action. There’s the pressure to raise the minimum wage, policing reform, climate change, a set of issues around racial equity, and any number of hot-button cultural issues that the wings of both political parties would like to push but the administration so far has shown little interest in addressing.

But what may be the biggest test of all has less to do with policy priorities and the specifics of legislation than with whether Washington can move forward on challenges that matter to the American people. We have had many years now of Washington, collectively, struggling to advance on issues of importance to the day-to-day lives of Americans. Our political leaders have a chance to reset our expectations of what they can accomplish. Here’s hoping they take the opportunity to do so. ❖

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice at the IU O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

James Briggs, IndyStar: Mayor Joe Hogsett is not buying the explanation that ending Indiana's mask mandate has nothing to do with politics. Neither is anyone else, really, but Hogsett has more insight than most people into the decision-making process. He's going through it, too, in the state's largest city. "Gov. Holcomb has a constituency that he has to be mindful of, that is fundamentally different than the constituency that Dr. (Virginia) Caine and I are responsible for serving and protecting," Hogsett said Thursday, referring to the Marion County health director. Hogsett is keeping COVID-19 restrictions in place for Marion County even as Holcomb lets the state-wide rules expire April 6. What's notable about Hogsett's comment is that it is not a criticism — in fact, Hogsett in the next breath emphasized that he is "deeply grateful that the governor has allowed us to exercise local authority on these issues," a point he has made often. Hogsett acknowledged the politics as a matter of fact — everyone can see it. Conservatives across the state and, particularly in the General Assembly, opposed all of Indiana's COVID-19 restrictions and were done showing patience to Holcomb. Nonetheless, Holcomb during his own press conference last week insisted "I'm not pressured" and added that he has "let data drive our decisions." But, when it comes to ending the mask mandate, there is no reason to believe that a spreadsheet generated April 6 as the right date for Indiana's return to business as usual. At least, if there is a reason, the Holcomb administration has not made it clear. ❖



John Krull, Statehouse File: Many Americans have Georgia on their minds these days. The Peach State has become a kind of Rorschach test for this country. People on opposite sides of the United States' great partisan and ideological dividing line look at the same facts and events in Georgia and see entirely different pictures. The latest image to split the nation into warring camps is a voting law that emerged from the Georgia legislature and was signed into law by the state's governor, Republican Brian Kemp. Kemp and his fellow Republicans say it was an election-security measure, one designed to prevent voter fraud. If so, it's a solution in desperate search for a problem. Kemp himself said just weeks ago that the balloting in Georgia in the 2020 election was the safest and fairest in history. The only events that looked anything like election fraud were the calls from former President Donald Trump and his surrogates for Georgia public officials to "find" enough votes for him to win the state. Critics point to the new law's more draconian measures—particularly the one that makes it illegal to bring food or water to a person waiting in a long line to vote. This bit of harshness, those critics contend, is in keeping with the law's overall intent, which is to discourage poor people—particularly poor Black people—from voting. They see it as another sign of Republicans' terror that power is slipping from the GOP. Doubtless, there is some of that. U.S. Senate Minority Leader

Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky, after all, has said bills that would expand ballot access and allow more people to vote represent an existential threat to the GOP. But this is more than a battle of the moment. We Americans tend to think our fierce conflicts, once fought, are fully resolved. They aren't. The truth is from our very founding we have been struggling as a nation over questions of who was entitled to vote. And who wasn't. ❖

Holman W. Jenkins Jr., Wall Street Journal: "Trump didn't believe his election lies," went a headline at the respectable news and commentary site Slate.com. I was arrested by this statement of the obvious. Politics is a strategy game, like war or litigation: The truth gets spoken only if it's useful. I doubt legions of Democratic elders believed the guff about Donald Trump being a Russian plant. Millions of voters see politics as nonstop mendacity. Even to many nonsupporters, the difference between Mr. Trump and his enemies was the difference between night and night. Mr. Trump once touted his own reliance on "truthful hyperbole." In the 2020 election and in Joe Biden's Ukraine entanglement, you could be sure something happened but it wasn't what Mr. Trump said happened. In one ironical way I can sympathize with Trump supporters who question how Mr. Biden could have won an election in which he barely participated. The race was one of Trump against Trump, in which Mr. Trump defeated himself by a nose. ❖

Thomas Friedman, New York Times: After our presidential election I wrote that what had just happened felt to me as if Lady Liberty had been crossing Fifth Avenue when out of nowhere a crazy guy driving a bus ran a red light. Thankfully, "Lady Liberty leapt out of the way barely in time, and she's now sitting on the curb, her heart pounding, just glad to be alive." But she knows just how narrowly she escaped. I hoped that once Joe Biden took charge my anxiety over how close we came to losing our democracy would soon fade. It hasn't. Just listen to Donald Trump or Senator Ron Johnson or Fox News whitewashing the ransacking of the Capitol as a Republican white boys' picnic that just got a little rowdy. Just listen to Trump's former lawyer Sidney Powell trying to escape a lawsuit by arguing that no serious person would have believed her claims that Dominion Voting Systems machines had helped to perpetrate a stolen election. Just watch Georgia's legislature pass a measure supposedly designed to prevent the very fraud that Powell now says never happened by creating obstacles for Black voters — even making it a crime for anyone to serve water to someone waiting hours in a voting line. Yes, that crazy bus driver is still out there and Lady Liberty is still in danger of being run over. Instead of the G.O.P. sitting down after the election and resolving, "Let's complete a bridge to the votes of a diverse 21st-century America — it's decided to burn down any pieces of that bridge and compete only for a white-dominated 20th-century America. ❖

16 year olds can now get vaccine

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Department of Health opened vaccine registration to all Hoosiers ages 16 and older Wednesday morning ([Indiana Public Media](#)). According to a news release from IDOH, the expansion makes 1.3 million additional Indiana residents eligible to schedule and receive one of the three FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccines.

Currently, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is the only one approved for use in people ages 16 and 17. And NPR reported that new trials have shown the Pfizer vaccine to have 100% efficacy, according to the drug company. IDOH recommends that patients ages 16 and 17 or those scheduling on behalf of them should search for a vaccine site that lists "PVAX" or ask for locations supplying the Pfizer vaccine when calling 211. More than 100,000 Hoosiers signed up Wednesday for an appointment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine after Indiana opened vaccine eligibility to any person age 16 and up (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Dr. Kristina Box, the state health commissioner, said that includes some 21,000 individuals who registered in the first 30 minutes of expanded eligibility on the ourshot.in.gov website, or by calling 211. "Today is the day we've all been waiting for," Box said. "Approximately 5.4 million Hoosiers can now sign up for a vaccine; millions of Hoosiers have already done so." State data show more than 2.8 million Hoosiers have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and some 1.1 million Indiana residents are considered fully vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Chicago ballparks could be closed

CHICAGO ([AP](#)) — As thousands of people get ready to flock to Wrigley Field on Thursday for Chicago's largest mass gathering in more

than a year, city officials warned that they may again shut the venerated ballpark to fans if the number of COVID-19 cases keep climbing. The warning from the city's Office of Emergency Management and Communications also applies to the White Sox's ballpark, as well as bars, restaurants and other businesses, and comes amid an increase in the number of cases in Chicago and Illinois, particularly among young adults. Just this week, state public health officials announced that the lifting of some restrictions was being delayed because of increasing numbers of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations since mid-March.



Both the Cubs and the White Sox will be allowed to admit as much as 25% percent capacity. For Wrigley Field, that means a maximum of a little more than 10,000 fans in the stands.

Many more are expected to watch the game from nearby bars and restaurants that are routinely crowded with fans during home games. Those establishments are limited to 50% capacity, and customers must wear masks, just like at Wrigley.

Biden unveils \$2T infrastructure plan

WASHINGTON—The Biden administration's \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief package enacted last month aimed to get the economy back on track fast. Now, officials are set on increasing the speed limit for the long term ([Wall Street Journal](#)). The roughly \$2.3 trillion spending proposal unveiled Wednesday would make investments in infrastructure over the coming decade that officials say would enhance the economy's productivity, such as through public transportation upgrades that make it easier for commuters to get to their jobs, or rural broadband expansion that improves workplace technology. Economists say those types of changes could enable the economy to grow more rapidly over the long term and lift living standards without triggering worrisome inflation. But critics, including business

groups and many Republican lawmakers, say the administration's plan to pay for the measures through tax increases will damp investment, undercutting the boost to growth. Some note the plan will add to federal budget deficits, at least temporarily. And some observers say parts of the package won't do much to raise productivity and change the economy's long-term growth trajectory. "It depends on the investment," Alan Auerbach, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley, said of the potential for raising long-term growth. "Anything that makes workers more productive and private businesses more productive would all seem to be helpful."

Braun reacts to Biden proposal

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senator Mike Braun (R-IN) released the following statement regarding President Biden's \$2 trillion infrastructure proposal. "As the former CEO of a logistics and transportation company, I know firsthand that we need to update our infrastructure, but this package must be targeted towards roads and bridges, and not used as a vehicle for irrelevant liberal policies that raises taxes on America's job creators and their families. President Biden's refusal to work with Republicans, yet again, reaffirms the Democrats' 'my-way-or-the-highway' approach towards running Washington."

2 Indy bars receive COVID violations

INDIANAPOLIS — Two downtown establishments received notices of violation last weekend from the Marion County Department of Public Health ([WRTV](#)). The Patron Saint and Tiki Bob's, both located in the 200 block of South Meridian Street, were cited, according to Aliya Wishner, a spokesperson for the health department. "Both were very cooperative in correcting issues, including making announcements to socially-distance and wear masks," Wishner said.