

Clown car blocks pandemic tunnel

State vax rate stalls as variants pose threat to return to normal

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Last March 23, Gov. Eric Holcomb used the first anniversary of his COVID-19 shutdown to give a statewide address, his “light at the end of the tunnel” speech, a glimpse at a post-pandemic life returning to normal. “It’s up to each and every one of us to do our part to stay on our course,” he said.

Little did the governor, or most of us, realize that the end of that proverbial tunnel would be blocked by a clown car, with commentators and anti-vaxxers tumbling out, erecting an arcade-style house of mirrors. At this writing, only 43.1% of Hoosiers are fully vaccinated, according to CDC statistics, and only 45.8% have received one dose – far, far below President Biden’s July 4 goal of achieving a



70% vaccination rate on the way to herd immunity.

Instead of reveling in that social achievement coming on the heels of one of this nation’s greatest scientific breakthroughs (getting a safe, effective vaccine to the general public within a year), the U.S. is now rigidly divided along political fault lines.

The top 22 states (including D.C.) with the highest adult vaccination rates all were carried by Joe Biden in the

Continued on page 3

Trump’s GOP death grip

By **CRAIG DUNN**

CARMEL – It is always a perilous thing to predict the demise of a politician or a political party. History is chock full of examples where a premature death notice has been embarrassingly retracted. With this historical fact in mind, I gingerly look to the future and speculate on the systemic risk to the Republican Party of an out-of-control former president Donald Trump and his rising legion of legislative and state-wide candidates who appear to have no allegiance to their party, but only to the messianic message of The Donald.

I’m not too old to remember when the Republican Party had a cogent, cohesive message



“This massive attempt to defraud Hoosier taxpayers through complex schemes truly boggles the mind. This case demonstrates that public servants must remain ever vigilant in our work to safeguard the public treasury from opportunists.”

- Attorney General Todd Rokita





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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



about where we stood as a political party. We were a pro-growth, pro-equal opportunity party that championed fiscal discipline, low taxes, a strong national defense, law and order and personal freedom. I believe that the vast majority of Republicans still believe in these things. However, it appears to me that the Republican Party has been hijacked, manipulated and twisted to advocate for the personal and political interests of Donald Trump, his family and many self-serving candidates willing to ride to their own victories by pretending to ride the Trump train.

I know many office holders and party leaders who are personally disgusted by the continued intrusion of Donald Trump in the machinations of the Republican Party. They wish he would keep his mouth shut and stay away from candidate endorsements and party operations.

That being said, they are terrified to speak their minds publicly on the subject for fear of Trump retaliation and retribution. I am loath to criticize these Republicans because to speak out against anything said by Trump or against any action of the former President is a virtual political death sentence. The sad, but true, fact is that Donald Trump has a death grip on the Republican Party, for better or worse.

Republicans will be forced to deal with Trump's significant impact on both the 2022 mid-term elections and the 2024 presidential election. Trump seems to be content at this time to devote his time and energy to personally selecting candidates who unquestionably back the Trump agenda, whatever that seems to be. This process often involves endorsing a neophyte Trumpster candidate at the expense of an experienced congressman, senator, governor, attorney general or secretary of state. I happen

to be from the Ronald Reagan school where someone who agrees with you 80% of the time is an ally and not a 20% traitor. Unfortunately, with Donald Trump, if you don't want the ire of his eminence, you had better be in line on 100% of his litmus issues.

I believe that if the 2022 mid-term elections become a contest between "I like Trump" and "I hate Trump" philosophies, the Republican Party may just find itself snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. We have plenty of issues that are championed by a majority of the American people.

My sense from speaking with both Republicans and independents is that they are sickened by many of the actions of the Biden Administration that have moved the United



States toward a socialist nanny state and away from a nation of personal responsibility and equal opportunity. They are concerned about the seeming lawlessness of the Democrat Party and the anti-American sentiment that freely oozes from its leaders.

Their natural inclination is to vote against Democrat senators and representatives as a counterbalance against a political party and government run amok. And then, with lowered voices and whispers, they declare, "I don't know if I can support anyone who has sworn their allegiance to Donald Trump."

Even if the Republican Party

survives and thrives at the mid-term elections, we still must endure an uncertain 2024 presidential election that may very well see Donald Trump running for president at the same time that he battles an array of local, state and federal criminal charges involving himself, his family or close associates. I simply would hate to see a rematch of Joe Biden hiding in his basement, talking from cue cards as the major media controls the messaging of the campaign against the boorish, blustering and abusive candidate Trump. I believe that such a rematch would have a similar outcome to 2020. This result might very well signal the end to the significance of the Republican Party.

I would far rather see a 2024 presidential election where Donald Trump sits out the primaries and allows a new generational leader to emerge. There are plenty of

top-quality Republican conservatives who are well-qualified to be president and who have not been branded as a complete Trump toady. These are the men and women who carry the hopes of the Republican Party for the future.

Water inevitably runs down hill and takes the path of least resistance bypassing obstacles that are in its way. Along its race to the bottom of the hill, it gathers dirt and detritus that may never be cleansed. So too is the course of a political party in decline. Let all freedom loving Republicans come together to return our party to the ideals of Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan. We have three short years to secure our future. ❖

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

COVID clown car, from page 1

2020 presidential election. Donald Trump won 17 of the 18 states with the lowest adult vaccination rates.

While there are a number of doughnut counties that Trump carried that have exceeded a 50% vaccine rate, the bottom 11 Indiana counties voted heavily for Trump/Pence in 2020, with their vax rate (and Trump totals in parentheses): La-Grange has the lowest rate at 18% (76% voted for Trump); followed by Franklin (80%), Newton (75%) and Switzerland at 24% (75%); Daviess at 25% (80%); Carroll (74%) and Adams (75%) at 27%; Starke (72%) and Crawford (70%) at 29%; Fayette (76%) and Jay (75%) counties at 30%.

Even more troubling, according to Centers for Medicaid/Medicare, only 48.56% of long term care staff in Indiana nursing homes are vaccinated, 10th worst in the nation.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, one of the main factors driving differences in COVID-19 vaccination rates across the country is partisanship. "Our surveys consistently find that Democrats are much more likely to report having been vaccinated than Republicans, and Republicans are much more likely to say that they definitely do not want to get vaccinated," the foundation reported last week. "Three months ago, as of April 22, the average vaccination rate in counties that voted for Trump was 20.6% compared to 22.8% in Biden counties, yielding a relatively small gap of 2.2 percentage points. By May 11, the gap had increased to 6.5% and by July 6, 11.7%, with the average vaccination rate in Trump counties at 35% compared to 46.7% in Biden counties."



At a video press conference last Friday, Indiana Health Commissioner Kris Box said, "We will see a surge in the Delta variant." But she said, "We are not planning any further restrictions at the state level, but individuals and school districts could." Dr. Box added, "If you mandate masks, 50% of the people are angry; if you don't mandate masks, 50% of the people are angry."

Asked about Indiana lagging the U.S. vaccina-

tion rate, Dr. Box said, "Obviously we are disappointed. Right now one of the barriers is it's still an emergency use approval." Box said these are among "the most studied vaccines in the history of the world," including potential side effects. She said that the FDA's full approval would be helpful.

The state's chief health officer, Dr. Lindsay Weaver, made this ominous prediction of future COVID outbreaks: "We're going to see pockets in unvaccinated areas. We will see more cases and death as the Delta variant spreads."

The threshold realization of the proverbial clown car blocking the end of the COVID tunnel came at a CPAC conference in Dallas last weekend. One panel featured Alex Berenson, the former New York Times reporter (Yale-

educated novelist, avid tweeter reaching more than 200,000 followers). “Clearly, they were hoping – the government was hoping – that they could sort of sucker 90% of the population into getting vaccinated,” Berenson said. “And it isn’t happening,” he said as some in the crowd applauded.

With the U.S. crossing 20,000 COVID cases for the third straight day (and Indiana crossing the 400 threshold during the same period, Dr. Anthony Fauci said on Sunday that he was distressed to hear the crowd at a conservative gathering this weekend cheering anti-vaccination comments. “It’s horrifying. I mean, they are cheering about someone saying that it’s a good thing for people not to try and save their lives,” Fauci told host Jake Tapper on CNN’s “State of the Union.”

“I mean, if you just unpack that for a second, Jake, it’s almost frightening to say, ‘Hey, guess what, we don’t want you to do something to save your life,’” Fauci said. “Yay. Everybody starts screaming and clapping. I just don’t get that. I don’t think that anybody who is thinking clearly can get that.”

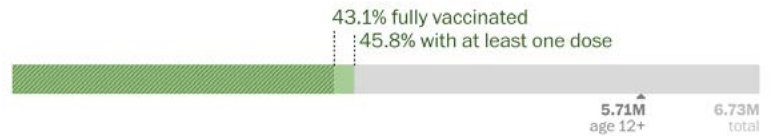
In the past 24 hours, the CDC acknowledged that 100 people (out of 13 million) taking the Johnson & Johnson vaccine have experienced a neurological effect. There has also been a COVID outbreak at a church retreat in Ohio that an unknown number of Hoosiers attended. And the [IndyStar analyzed](#) the vaccine disparities and impacts between neighboring Ohio and Switzerland counties.

Conservative commentator Charlie Sykes, writing for The Bulwark, put it in this perspective: “I admit that I’m struggling to come up with an analogy that would shed some light on the sheer insanity of this moment. Try to imagine, for example, a campaign to mock attempts to improve airline safety in the wake of a crash that killed hundreds. Or ignoring an engineer flagging structural deficiencies in a seaside Florida condo.” Or a Londoner in 1940 refusing to close the nighttime shades during The Blitz.

“None of that, however, even comes close to the genuine depravity of the current burst of performative anti-vax demagoguery we are seeing right now,” Sykes continued. “The irony is that many of those who now deride the vaccines also objected to lockdowns, social distancing, and the wearing of masks. In a rational world, they would see the vaccines as a ticket back to normal life. Instead, at this moment, they have chosen to go full anti-vax. Even with hundreds of thousands of dead, and hospitals again filling up.”

Hoosier Republican officeholders who dominate the state have been largely mum as the state’s vaccine rate lags. U.S. Reps. Dr. Larry Buchson and Jackie Walorski publicly promoted the vaccine last winter, but haven’t made any recent conspicuous public statements or joined local health officials in advocating the vaccine.

Indiana



Reported doses administered by day in Indiana

In the last week, an average of **7.4k** doses per day were administered, a **82%** decrease ↓ over the week before.



County	All ages	Age 18+	Age 65+
State average	43%	54%	81%
Hamilton	58%	73%	94%
Ohio	58%	71%	100%
Boone	57%	72%	94%
Hendricks	56%	71%	100%
Hancock	54%	67%	91%
Monroe	50%	57%	84%
Warrick	50%	62%	91%
Bartholomew	47%	58%	81%
Clark	47%	59%	88%
St. Joseph	47%	59%	81%
Tippecanoe	47%	57%	81%
Fayette	30%	38%	68%
Jay	30%	39%	75%
Crawford	29%	36%	61%
Starke	29%	36%	64%
Adams	27%	39%	71%
Carroll	27%	34%	52%
Daviess	25%	35%	65%
Franklin	24%	30%	56%
Newton	24%	30%	53%
Switzerland	24%	31%	59%
La Grange	18%	27%	59%

Gov. Holcomb, who is in the midst of a court fight over Indiana General Assembly laws he vetoed that supersede gubernatorial and local health officials' ability to press pandemic response mandates, has backed off vaccine push. "It seems to me that the closer we can get to different individuals around our respective states, the more effective it is," Holcomb said in May. "It's a slog, and it's going to be a grind. I can't change reality. If there are some people who are just dead set against it, it's their personal responsibility."

While Holcomb refused to halt Indiana University's vaccine mandate (the school has since made it optional), Holcomb said he's against public institutions requiring the vaccine. "I do support private businesses making that call," Holcomb said. "But not public institutions."

Except ... if the Delta variant of COVID mutates into an infection that makes the vaccine obsolete. That is already happening to the Johnson & Johnson one-shot vaccine that the governor took last spring in the company of Senate President Rod Bray, U.S. Rep. Andre Carson and State Rep. Robin Shackelford.

And in some of the lowest vaccinated states, COVID is roaring back and infecting younger Americans. According to WMC-TV in Memphis, nearly 100% of the Delta cases infecting mid-southerners are among unvaccinated people. In Arkansas, where they are reporting a surge in hospitalizations and possible third wave of COVID cases, doctors said patients are trending sicker and younger. "We've had to reestablish our surge plan and reopen surge beds," said Dr. Cam Patterson, University of Arkansas Medical Sciences chancellor.

A surge in hospitalizations is starting to hit the Mid-South, something other nearby states, like Missouri, are already dealing with. Patterson said it's happening because of a convergence of two things, low vaccination numbers and the spread of the highly contagious Delta strain of COVID-19.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the Missouri state health department tests wastewater to track the spread of COVID-19, including which variant is dominant. Data from June 14, the most recent available, showed the Delta variant was present statewide. At the beginning of May, the variant wasn't present in the wastewater sampled, the data showed. "The uptick is powered by the Delta variant," said Clay Dunagan, chief medical officer at BJC HealthCare, a system serving St. Louis, southern Illinois and mid-Missouri. The variant, which is about 40% to 60% more contagious than the previous dominant variant, is sending more people to hospitals in the northern and southwestern parts of the state, health officials say.

During his virtual State of the State address last January, Holcomb said, "The pandemic has pulled forward many trends that were already well underway, and this plays to Indiana's strengths. Our decisions, our discipline now enable us to do things that many other states won't be able to do for years to come. We're lucky to have been chosen to lead at this moment, and I will say it once again. For Indiana, the future is now, and the world continues to hear Indiana's engines roar."

But at this juncture, the state appears to be frozen in making the leap from 43% full vaccinated to that now elusive 70% herd immunity threshold. While Republican officeholders appear weary of pressing the Trump base to go see their primary physicians (who have a vaccination rate of 96%), and the Biden administration hasn't fully credited the Trump administration with helping to get the vaccine to the general population, the political risks are how independent voters will react if ICUs fill up again, or school districts go back to a virtual format due to Delta variant outbreaks.

President Trump lost his reelection bid because he lost control of the pandemic, which has cost at least 650,000 American lives. Instead of embracing face masks as a political marketing tool (in addition to

being a proven lifesaver), the administration was indifferent. Instead of publicly taking the vaccine (as Vice President Mike Pence and Surgeon General Jerome Adams did), Trump received his in private, reportedly angered that Pfizer, Moderna and J&J didn't begin the emergency approval process before last November's election, as he repeatedly promised they would.

Baked in to American politics is a red/blue state divide over the vaccine, with unknown potential consequences. Just like Trump's indifference to masking and the vaccine, if 2022 brings a resurgent pandemic with outbreaks in regional unvaccinated pockets, or a general outbreak that swamps emergency rooms, the health and political consequences are hard to fathom at this writing. But just as social and supply chain dynamics have produced a seemingly unlimited number of surprises during this pandemic, the unfolding clown car dynamic at what was supposed to be the end of the tunnel is poised to produce even more.

Holcomb ended his speech last March, saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, as we continue to do these few things, the light at the end of the tunnel becomes brighter and brighter. Buying tickets for March Madness games, planning for all our local fairs and festivals, or the greatest spectacle in racing itself tells me that all those life delights I once took for granted are coming back online. It's up to each and every one of us to do our part to stay on our course." ❖

7:48 PM

 Thursday, March 25, 2021

Holcomb steers through virus gauntlet

'Light at the end of the tunnel' speech comes as he begins to loosen restrictions toward normal

By BRIAN A. HOWEY
 INDIANAPOLIS — Last October, Gov. Eric Holcomb and Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Huffer pulled into a parking lot in Shelburne, Ind., where the governor did a media avail with the local press. The power pair then disappeared momentarily into the governor's back Toyota before emerging adorned in Hawaiian shirts.

It was meant to be a how-to for the fashionable Sullivan County Republican Chairman Bill Springer before they addressed his Lincoln Day luncheon. But Springer turned the tables on them out of apparent respect, wearing a three-piece black suit. The conservative, Trump-loving Sullivan County Republicans were partially masked for the meet.



and during about a roughly 20-minute Q&A that Holcomb and Huffer conducted, rarely a complaint was heard on how the governor was handling the pandemic.

The pundit class isn't needed to analyze Holcomb's job performance during the unprecedented pandemic of 2020-21. A more thorough measure came on Nov. 3 when 1.7 million Hoosiers, or 56.5% of voters, decided to send him back for a second term in a race waged against a former state health commissioner.



The Novell COVID-19 pandemic didn't create that one moment snapshot of gubernatorial authority like it did in 1989 when Gov. Evan Bayh led a hundred

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Political censorship

By MARK SQUIDER
 "Censorship of political speech is not new. In fact, in world history freedom of speech is more than censorship. In the United States, respected freedom of speech and freedom of the press (the corollary of free political speech) are among the hallmarks of what makes our nation different. The focus of this is not whether Donald Trump should get his Twitter finger back, though it is certainly a current, viable example of our nation once again re-defining censorship."

Traditional media, in every decision, must pick and choose what to cover. Newspapers, magazines, radio and television have space and time constraints.

"I'm excited to begin a second term as party chairman and honored to have the trust of Gov. Holcomb and the Republican State Committee to continue serving in this role."

— Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Huffer, who was reelected on Wednesday.

Rokita had a mixed week in the way-too-early 2024 INGov race

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Attorney General Todd Rokita has made it abundantly clear he will seek the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 2024.

That’s a little less than three and a half years from now, an eternity in politics.

In the era of Hoosier politics when governors could serve two terms, the 1972 and 1980 GOP races had heirs apparent (Doc Bowen and Robert Orr) in the first two, as was Lt. Gov. John Mutz in 1988. Attorney General Linley Pearson was a nominal favorite when he won the nomination in 1992.

In 1996, Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith was the frontrunner from the start, but couldn’t clear the field.

In 1999, Republican legislators traveled to Muncie to woo U.S. Rep. David McIntosh into the 2000 race. Mutz, Pearson, Goldsmith and McIntosh would all lose in the general election.

The breakthrough came in 2004, when White House Budget Director Mitch Daniels ran. The buzz around his candidacy began in 2002, he announced in the summer of 2003, and McIntosh and State Sen. Murray Clark exited the race in late summer of 2003, leaving only Eric Miller to face Daniels in the primary.

And in 2012, U.S. Rep. Mike Pence emerged as the heir apparent, with Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman folding her campaign in late 2010.

The point in all of this is . . . it’s way, waaaaay early to be spending too much time on which Republican emerges for the open seat in 2024.

So far there is one candidate, Eric Doden, who has formed an exploratory committee, and Rokita, who is acting like an candidate as he is making overt appeals to the Trump wing of the party.

In HPI’s 2021 Power 50 list, we rated the potential field like this:

2. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch
 5. Senate President Pro Tem Rod Bray
 8. Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer
 19. Attorney General Rokita
 27. Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness
 29. U.S. Sen. Mike Braun
 30. U.S. Rep. Jim Banks
 32. U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth
- Of course, this list was not compiled with 2024 as



the key filter. For instance, Bray rates high because of the biennial budget session.

When it is a more appropriate time to weigh the gathering GOP field, Sen. Braun and Rep. Hollingsworth would likely rise, because of their ability to self-fund.

In the meantime, we will keep an eye on these potential strivers.

Rokita’s week

Which brings us to Attorney General Rokita.

He had a mixed week. It began when Marion County Judge Patrick Dietrick ruled against Rokita in his efforts to thwart Gov. Eric Holcomb’s efforts to hire outside counsel in his case against a General Assembly bill that he vetoed and was subsequently overridden.

But Judge Dietrick didn’t just reject Rokita’s claims; he eviscerated them, at one point, calling the AG’s goal an “absurd result.”

“In light of Gov. Holcomb’s duty to protect the Indiana Constitution, and the inherent powers vested in him to do so, (...) Gov. Holcomb is both authorized, and required, to take actions necessary to protect the Indiana Constitution,” Dietrick wrote in the order. Because his veto was overridden, this lawsuit is the only means available for the governor to do so, “This is an absurd result that could not have been intended by either the drafters of Indiana’s Constitution or the General Assembly.”

Dietrick said Rokita’s efforts to insert himself in this case may have violated the Indiana Rules of Professional Conduct for attorneys, which bar lawyers from representing opposing parties in the same lawsuit, noting the AG “has an irreconcilable conflict of interest,” Dietrick said. “The court takes no position on whether Attorney General Rokita’s conflict requires him to completely recuse himself and his office from continuing to represent the defendants in this case.”

Rokita responded: “If left unchallenged, the court’s order in this case threatens to tip the balance of powers and undermine the individual liberties of the citizens of this state.”

Rokita also was denied on Monday a motion in a Marion County Court to dismiss a lawsuit filed by John Whitaker over HEA1123.

Rokita was able to flex his political muscles at a Kosciusko County Board of Commissioners hearing on his critical race theory-inspired “Parental Bill of Rights.”

Rokita mustered partisans from Brownsburg, Madison County and Northeastern Indiana for the meeting that was moved to an assembly hall in Winona Lake.

Warsaw Times-Union reporter David Slone: “Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita was ecstatic about the turnout Thursday evening to the two-hour panel discussion on his Parents’ Bill of Rights and critical race theory (CRT).

"I'm excited and pleased by the turnout because this follows what we really did the Parents' Bill of Rights for," he said afterward. "We saw that parents were finally getting engaged, more than I've ever seen in my lifetime. And we encourage that because this is about raising a family at the end of the day. A nuclear family is the absolute foundational building block of society, and parents wanting to know more about the education of their children should be applauded. We saw that here tonight."



Slone reported that "hundreds of attendees not only included Kosciusko County residents, but also at least Elkhart, Allen and Madison counties." He said he wasn't planning to go on tour with his Parents' Bill of Rights but was asked to come by the Kosciusko County Commissioners. "I think these commissioners are within their duty to say, 'Hey, you know, we have an executive responsibility to the taxpayers. This is a taxpayer issue. I don't comment on their other business, but as to this, again, growing our best asset, that's everyone's responsibility so I thought it was a good idea to come on their invitation.'"

Commissioner Brad Jackson told the Times-Union, "I don't see at this point, since we had a forum, that we would move forward with a resolution because it really is just a statement. It's not an ordinance. And we were able to make statements tonight and, I think, for the most part, have good dialogue and I think, from what I saw, evenly divided."

Reporter Dan Spaulding of Ink Free News led with: "Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita on Thursday night urged hundreds of people in Winona Lake to heavily scrutinize local schools on policies they think run afoul – namely the teaching of concepts connected to Critical Race Theory. The state's top legal figure also took aim at social-emotional learning, an educational construct used to support students' well-being that is deeply integrated into Warsaw Community Schools. Rokita's visit, at the invitation of Kosciusko County Commissioners, was used to tout his recently released Parents Bill of Rights, which serves as a guide for parents on how public school curriculum is developed, who controls it and how to become involved in shaping local school policy."

Spaulding also reported: Commissioners Bob Conley and Brad Jackson both said they don't plan on seeking a ban on CRT in local schools, acknowledging it falls outside their jurisdiction. Conley said the commissioners "in no way shape or form contrived or conspired to tell school systems what to do. That's never ever part of our conversation. It's not our intent. Our intent was to provide a forum."

"The reason we did this is we took an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America," Conley said, drawing strong applause from the crowd. The

size of the crowd, he said, "speaks volumes" about the community's interest in the issue.

Spaulding also reported: Circumstances became testy toward the end as people began inter-

rupting speakers. One woman who has been an advocate of Black Lives Matter in the past year sought to speak for more than an hour and then eventually began complaining loudly. One of the commissioners told her she'd didn't have the floor and she was then escorted out of the building. The person trying to escort her appeared to touch her arm, which led the woman to loudly and repeatedly warn him not to touch her.

Redistricting schedule taking shape

Indiana House Speaker Todd Huston and Senate President Pro Tem Rodric Bray are tentatively planning on completing new congressional, state House and state Senate districts by Oct. 1, using so-called "legacy" data from the U.S. Census Bureau that will become available in mid-August, according to the [Indiana Citizen](#). The Republican legislative leaders laid out their ideas to their Democratic counterparts, House Minority Leader Phil GiaQuinta and Senate Minority Leader Greg Taylor, in a meeting held late Wednesday afternoon in the Senate Republican Caucus meeting room in the Indiana Statehouse. Two people who attended the meeting provided the following information on background because they were not authorized to speak for Huston or Bray.

The U.S. Census Bureau data from the 2020 census, delayed by the coronavirus pandemic, will come in a format similar to that used in the redistricting processes in 2001 and 2011. The Legislative Services Agency will reformat the legacy data so that map-drawing can begin by Sept. 1. The House and Senate election committees will hold public hearings in early August – weeks before proposed new maps are released. The dates, number and locations of the hearings have not been determined. House and Senate members were asked to provide the exact locations of their homes to LSA, consistent with past practice. The process to draft the legislation determining the district boundaries will originate in the House. The legislation would move through the House the week of Sept. 20 and through the Senate the following week. It is unclear how far in advance of Sept. 20 – if at all – the proposed maps will be available for public review and comment.

Sec. Sullivan preparing for 2022

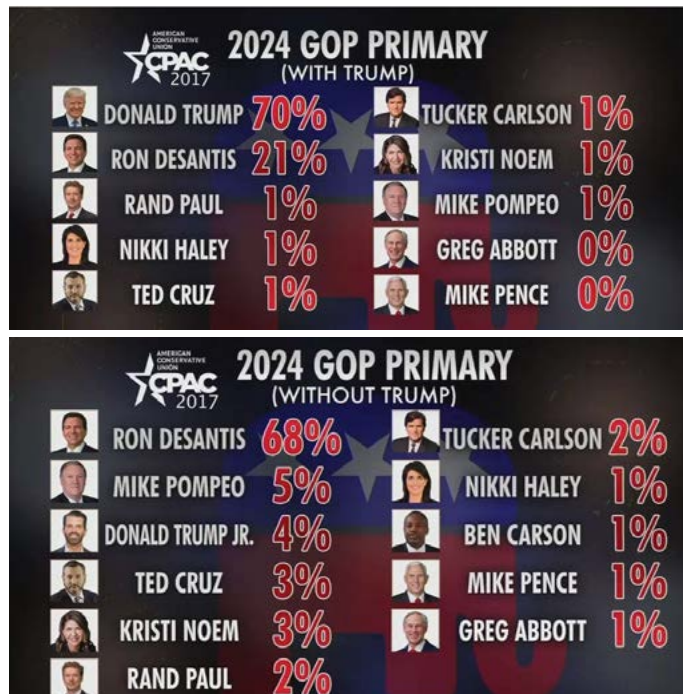
Though Indiana doesn't have a statewide election this fall, the new Secretary of State – appointed in March – is preparing for 2022's midterm contest by meeting with all the state's county clerks. And as IPR's Stephanie Wiech-

mann reports, she wants to continue to make it simple for Indiana to vote on Indiana’s own terms (Weichmann, [Indiana Public Media](#)). “I no longer call it ‘voting day.’ We now have ‘voting season’ in Indiana, where we have at least 28 days for voters to have the opportunity to vote in their counties.” It’s that in-person voting access that Secretary of State Holli Sullivan is trying to expand before next year. She wants to increase the number of counties using vote centers. But during last year’s election in a pandemic, many more Hoosiers flocked to absentee ballots as a way to safely cast their vote. Indiana’s 2020 voter turnout was the highest in nearly three decades – and 61% of those votes were absentee. That’s about twice as high as recent previous presidential elections. Though Sullivan has said the 2020 election had no fraud, and Indiana requires voters to choose one of about a dozen reasons for why they need an absentee ballot, she says she’s heard concerns about this way to vote. “After this listening tour, we probably will have some initiatives around, more security around absentee ballots to increase our voter confidence.”

Presidential

Pence gets 0%, 1% in CPAC straw polls

Former president Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) led the pack in the Conservative Political Action Conference’s (CPAC) straw poll for the 2024 GOP presidential nominee. Trump held a commanding lead, with 70% of those who responded to the survey saying they would vote for him in the Republican primary if it were held today (The Hill). DeSantis came in second with 21%. But when polling the 2024 Republican primary ballot without Trump, DeSantis led the pack with 68% of the vote. Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Fox News host Tucker Carlson, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem (R) and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (R) all received 1% in the poll that included Trump. In the survey that left off Trump, Pompeo came in second at 5%, and Donald Trump Jr., the former president’s son, came in third with 4%. Former Vice President Mike Pence clocked in at 0%.



Trump lauds Jan. 6 insurrection attendees

Trump on Sunday widely praised those who attended the Jan. 6 rally that preceded the insurrection at the Capitol, repeatedly using the word “love” to describe

the tone of the event. Echoing his rhetoric about the 2017 white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Va., Trump said, “These were peaceful people, these were great people” (Politico). Speaking on “Sunday Morning Futures with Maria Bartiromo” on the Fox News Channel, he also said the rally participants were patriots, that some of them were unjustly arrested and jailed, and that a woman who was shot and killed by law enforcement during the insurrection was a great hero. The remarks reflected recent efforts by Trump and his supporters to cast themselves as the aggrieved parties from the Jan. 6 riot, which left five people dead and others injured — and, for a brief time, halted the wheels of democracy as President-elect Joe Biden’s victory over Trump in the Electoral College was being confirmed by Congress. In his interview with Bartiromo, Trump said those at the events of Jan. 6 were loving people who wanted to save the nation. “The crowd was unbelievable and I mentioned the word ‘love,’ the love in the air, I’ve never seen anything like it,” he said of his rally on the Ellipse. “That’s why they went to Washington.” He added: “Too much spirit and faith and love, there was such love at that rally, you had over a million people,” inflating the size of his rally crowd.

Top RNC lawyer warned of allegations

The Republican Party’s top lawyer warned in November against continuing to push false claims that the presidential election was stolen, calling efforts by some of the former president’s lawyers a “joke” that could mislead millions of people, according to an email obtained by The Washington Post (MSN). Justin Riemer, the Republican National Committee’s chief counsel, sought to discourage a Republican Party staffer from posting claims about ballot fraud on RNC accounts, the email shows, as attempts by Donald Trump and his associates to challenge results in a number of states, such as Arizona and Pennsylvania, intensified. “What Rudy and Jenna are doing is a joke and they are getting laughed out of court,” Riemer, a Republican lawyer, wrote to Liz Harrington, a former party spokeswoman, on Nov. 28, referring to Trump attorneys Rudolph W. Giuliani and Jenna Ellis. “They are misleading millions of people who have wishful thinking that the president is going to somehow win this thing.” ❖

When we refuse to accept election results

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – One of the most vivid moments of my fatherhood was sitting in the woods one hot early July day at the Gettysburg battleground between Devil’s Den and Little Round Top, watching my two sons climb up what became the most important strategic heights of the American Civil War and a turning point for civilization.



The Union prevailed in holding Little Round Top with a bayonet charge led by a former college professor named Joshua Chamberlain from Maine, repulsing Confederate rebels from Alabama and Texas on July 3, 1863.

By commanding Little Round Top, Union artillery helped beat back the Confederate charge a day later.

Had the Union lost at Gettysburg on July 4, the political will of the North to continue would have evaporated. There would have likely been a United States of America, the Confederate States of America, the Republic of Texas and, perhaps, a half dozen other nations. There would have been nations with slavery, regional wars, and the accompanying Pandora’s Box of atrocity and horror.

While raising my sons, there were the normal parental concerns of sending them off to war on a foreign battlefield, but up until now, the notion that they face a second American civil war seemed far-fetched. In the America they grew up in – we grew up in – the regional battles Hoosiers and young men and women from Alabama and Texas took place on football fields, basketball courts and baseball diamonds.

Ominously, that could change. When a significant portion of one of our two main political parties refuses to accept the results of a presidential election, that calls into severe doubt the fragile American experiment. A YouGov poll in October 2020 found that 56% said they expect to see “an increase in violence as a result of the election.” Some 40% “strongly agreed” that the United States could be “on the verge” of a second civil war. “This is the single most frightening poll result I’ve ever been associated with,” said Rich Thau, president of Engagious, one of the three firms who sponsored the poll.

The Washington Post reported on last week that a third of nearly 700 Republicans seeking U.S. House and

Senate seats have embraced Donald Trump’s perverse and baseless notion that the 2020 election was “rigged” and “stolen.” There are hundreds of other candidates for secretary of state, governor and attorney general taking the same campaign stance.

The Atlantic’s Tim Alberta writes in the article [“The Senator Who Decided to Tell The Truth”](#) about Michigan State Sen. Ed McBroom, a conservative, pro-life Republican. He chaired the Michigan Senate Oversight Committee, which released a bombshell report in June: “Our clear finding is that citizens should be confident the results represent the true results of the ballots cast by the people of Michigan. There is no evidence presented at this time to prove either significant acts of fraud or that an organized, wide-scale effort to commit fraudulent activity was perpetrated in order to subvert the will of Michigan voters. The Committee strongly recommends citizens use a critical eye and ear toward those who have pushed demonstrably false theories for their own personal gain.”

McBroom has been doubted by constituents, who would rather believe a Russian or Chinese website designed to discredit American democracy and sow division. “It’s been very discouraging, and very sad, to have people I know who have supported me, and always said they respected me and found me to be honest, who suddenly don’t trust me because of what some guy told them on the internet,” McBroom said. “And they’re like, ‘Yeah, but this is a good guy too.’ And I’m like, ‘How do you know that? Have you met him? You’ve met me. So why are you



choosing to believe him instead of me?”

Late last week, the [New York Times](#) posted a 40-minute video investigation of the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. It documents in vivid detail, from thousands of videos it obtained, the origins of the mob that was incited by President Trump, how the U.S. Capitol was breached in eight places, the deaths of two Trump supporters, and the hours of hand-to-hand combat that Capitol and Washington Metro Police endured resulting in more than 140 injuries.

My takeaway from this spasm of violence was, given all the mayhem, it's a wonder there weren't more casualties. Despite the beatings that police endured, they only fired one shot. The video raises questions on why they were so ill-prepared, why it took the Pentagon hours to respond to the incident, which had been planned in broad view on the Internet. It revealed how close the insurrection came to derailing the "peaceful transfer of power" that has forged the American democracy experiment and how fragile that has become.

Last Wednesday, the U.S. House in a party line vote created a select committee to investigate the Jan. 6 insurrection, after the Senate rejected a bipartisan Sept. 11-style commission last month. Sens. Todd Young and Mike Braun voted against that commission.

The day before, former Indiana governor and vice president Mike Pence said at the Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, "Now, there are those in our party who believe that in my position as presiding officer over the joint session that I possess the authority to reject or return electoral votes certified by the states. The Constitution provides the vice president with no such authority before the joint session of Congress. And the truth is, there's almost no idea more un-American than the notion

that any one person could choose the American president. The presidency belongs to the American people and the American people alone."

Pence added, "In the years ahead, the American people must know that our Republican Party will always keep our oath to the Constitution, even when it would be politically expedient to do otherwise. Now, I understand the disappointment many feel about the last election. I can relate. I was on the ballot. But, you know, there's more at stake than our party and our political fortunes in this moment. If we lose faith in the Constitution, we won't just lose elections. We'll lose our country."

President Ronald Reagan said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same."

I keep thinking of my young sons scaling Little Round Top, at a time when the American experiment in democracy seemed to present an unlimited vista to excel and celebrate. Now I am deeply concerned that my grandchildren may watch the lethal horrors that came to be known at the Peach Orchard, the Wheatfield and Cemetery Ridge. ❖

History continues on its surprising course

By **JOSHUA CLAYBOURN**

EVANSVILLE – In the middle of the 19th Century, the very idea of the German soldier was considered an absurdity. Southern Germany in particular was perceived as unsuited for war, especially versus the true martial races of Europe – for example the French.

Then the Germans beat the Austrians. Then the Germans occupied Paris. Then the Germans plunged the continent into two generations of war. What was conventional wisdom on the Germans – that they were fundamentally not a nation for war – was abruptly reversed. A beaten country, a perennial plaything of its neighbors, suddenly became the supreme aggressor, earning respect and fear in equal measure in a metaphorical heartbeat.

This isn't the only time this has happened. It happens quite a lot if you look.

The Russians were an incoherent and staggering nation in 1941, wracked by revolution and tyranny, the country of the humiliation at Brest-Litovsk. They were

so enervated that they nearly lost a war to Finland, and the German dictator concluded that Russia was ready for the taking; just kick in the door, and the whole rotten structure comes down. Four years later, Russian soldiers scoured ravaged Berlin for his corpse.

The Arabs were a collection of disgraced and humiliated peoples in 1967, their lands lost, their armies scattered, their plans for genocide and victory foiled by a tiny foe that was smarter, more energetic, more daring than they. Their shattered aspirations would never be revived. There was just something about them that precluded competition and contention in the modern world. Six years later, Arab armies brought a stunned Israel to the very brink of collapse.

The Chinese spent nearly a century as the wretched subjects of the greed of the Europeans, the Japanese, and the Americans. Their cities were colonized, their pride was ruined. Their capital was occupied again and again. Their imperial palace was burnt. They tore themselves apart, warlord upon warlord, and when they at last allied with their erstwhile national tormentors against Japan, their best quality was their ineffectiveness. China had nothing to offer but numbers. When the Communists took over in 1949, it seemed another dreary chapter in its decline. One year later, Chinese armies under brilliant leadership shattered one American army and ejected another from the snows of North Korea.

The list goes on and on. The Yankees were a Whiggish people with no martial tradition, but then they reduced the proud South to ruins. The Irish were habituated to seven centuries of subjugation, but then they beat



the British Empire. Here's the point: History does not go in any particular direction. People change. The quality of nations changes in a moment. Peace breaks out without warning; danger emerges in a flash.

Everyone who believes that some particular country or region cannot in a moment change is showing that they understand none of this. War and chaos, and peace and prosperity, both lurk around every corner. A fragile culture and set of leaders help determines what emerges.

There's a story in "Atkinson's Liberation Trilogy" of an American soldier who discovers some graffiti in

a French settlement near the frontier. There is the first line of the graffiti, signed and dated 1918. Then there is the second line, signed and dated 1945. The signatory is another American soldier, and it is the same man in each year. He scrawls a short message below:

"I would like to not have to come back again." He didn't. But if we are fools, perhaps his great-grandsons will. ❖

Claybourn is an Evansville attorney and author of the book "Our American Story: The Search for a Shared National Narrative."

DeJoy and delay

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Joy would abound in post offices throughout the land if it were not for the "De" before "Joy." Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, Donald Trump's appointee last year in strategy to sabotage delivery of absentee ballots, still directs the postal slowdown we all experience.

President Biden can't fire DeJoy. That can be done only by a nine-member Postal Service Board of Governors, all of whom until recently had been appointed by Trump. Slowly replacements are being confirmed. It takes time.



"Get used to me," DeJoy told critics at a congressional hearing earlier this year. He's not planning to go anywhere but to stay on, playing a part in Trump's revenge.

He's unpopular with many Republicans as well as Democrats in Congress. They all hear complaints from constituents about slowdowns in postal service and concerns about further cutbacks.

Many families had problems last Christmas with packages arriving after the holiday even though mailed in time for promised pre-Christmas delivery. My family did.

Don't blame your carrier or other postal workers for delays. They weren't the ones who ordered mail-sorting machines removed and other cutbacks.

In a Christmas card to my mail carrier, who provides excellent service, I added a happy new year wish for a new postmaster general. The carrier, in a reply card, agreed that removal of DeJoy would bring real joy. Of course. I didn't have to guess about prevailing views of postal employees.

DeJoy did apologize to customers affected by delays during the holiday season.

He had to be careful after all in trying to fix blame on those workers still seeking to let "neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night" keep them from "swift

completion of their appointed rounds." The public hails that long-time concept of service. A Pew Research Center poll shortly before DeJoy took over found that 91% of Americans had a favorable view of the post office.

Maybe he's driven that favorability down a bit, but his own favorability has taken the harsher hit.

There never was any secret about why DeJoy was appointed. The wealthy businessman was a megadonor to Trump. Maybe too mega. The Justice Department now looks into some possible campaign finance violations.

Trump counted on DeJoy's loyalty to deal in the way Trump wanted with absentee ballots. As soon as the former president realized that Democrats were counting heavily on absentee ballots, and that he was losing, he set out to suggest that those ballots would be fraudulent.

If the post office could delay bunches of those ballots until after the deadline for receiving them in some key states, that could curtail the Democratic vote and help Trump secure reelection.

Even if they arrived in time to be counted, a delay could raise suspicion about their legality. That was part of Trump's plan. And he used it successfully to sow doubt about the outcome.

But the delays caused by such tactics as suddenly removing mail-sorting machines, reducing employee overtime just as demand grew and seeking other "cost saving" measures were so blatant that Congress, the news media and the courts focused on the tactics and forced delivery of the deluge of ballots to voters and then to the polls.

As much as DeJoy wanted to swing the election, as Trump appointed him to do, he was unable to deprive "those people," the absentee voters Trump feared, of having their votes received and counted. Trump still clings to conspiracy theories, but he must be as disappointed in his postmaster general as he is in his vice president.

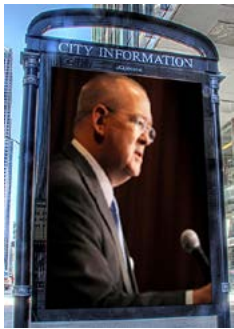
Mike Pence wouldn't try to send the official results back to the states. And DeJoy didn't try to install machines to send hundreds of thousands of official absentee ballots to some dead ballot office. ❖

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

The ideals of Independence Day

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – Independence Day weekend is a good time for reflection. The style of that rumination needn't be tedious; after all, hamburgers, beer and s'mores beckon.



For me, it's as simple as re-reading the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence.

The words can be so familiar that we fail to absorb just how radical these ideas were and remain. It begins, "We hold these truths to be self-evident. . ."

Written at a time when our nation was ruled by a hereditary king and one in five people were enslaved, the perfection of these

words continue to resonate. That world-changing revolution made clear that the principles that tore us from England were few but transcendent. These ideas came directly from the Enlightenment, and its core argument that individual liberty, reason and tolerance formed the basis for civilization. The Declaration repeated five interlocking ideas.

They begin with the idea that each of us has inherent value, which is preserved by rights or protections. These rights are given to us by God, not government. This liberty cannot lawfully be denied, as it flows from the simple act of being human, not from religion or ancestry or race. Governments exist to secure these rights. Great Britain failed to do so. For these reasons we broke the bonds with England, and became a new nation.

These ideas remain shockingly radical and inspiring. When asked what sentence could not be translated into Newspeak, George Orwell (a subject of a later, different King George) offered that lone sentence from our Declaration of Independence. These words are repeated today by protestors in Hong Kong, and by those striving to craft a Constitution in Afghanistan. Ironically, those ideas penned by a young Virginian slaveholder remain the most important and liberating political sentence ever written.

Our infant nation and its founders got the words and ideas right in 1776. But we failed, often spectacularly, to match our words with deeds. More than a decade later, as our founders labored with the Constitution, they acknowledged those looming shortcomings as we strived for a "more perfect Union." They did not view it as perfect in 1788, and we must not think it so today. This column is too short to list our failures to match our national behavior with our ideals. It is sufficient to note that we permitted the enslavement of millions of people who both Enlightenment's reason and our own Declaration of

Independence made clear should be full citizens.

Today there is growing tension over the interpretation of the historical events I describe. Some of this is natural. Scholars seek to emphasize different parts as we learn more and see the world through a more distant lens. Still, I know of no sentient adult who believes our great nation is perfect. Neither do I know of anyone who has offered a better definition of ideal government than that outlined in our founding. For the sake of honesty, we ought to acknowledge both these truths.

No better example exists than that of the 1619 Project, the New York Times critique of American racial progress and institutions in America. This admonishment of the United States is framed around our failure to realize the goals of our founding documents. There are faults with the 1619 Project, but it hardly offers a new vision. The only really radical part of the 1619 Project lies in harkening back to the as-yet-unfulfilled words of 1776.

A louder debate surrounds what is called Critical Race Theory. A number of states have passed legislation limiting what portions of this approach can be presented in school classrooms. This is fast becoming a touchstone of our culture wars. However, insofar as I can tell, CRT isn't taught in any Indiana classrooms; maybe that's because CRT remains a subject to be taught and challenged in college or graduate school.

Still, there is a body of derivative work of CRT that focuses instruction on the role of racial identity. Though the examples in K-12 are blessedly few, there are documented instances of students being separated by race for instruction. In the worst of these examples, elementary students are then made to admit guilt of systemic racism, or told that they are victims of these systems. It should come as no surprise that these classroom practices likely violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. We don't need new laws, just effective courts.

As is the purpose of the culture wars, much of this debate diverts us from more important work. We do need to continue to talk and write about race in America. Both the 1619 Project and CRT may be poor vehicles for a constructive discussion. But, if that is so, the burden lies with their critics to summon better ways to confront lingering issues of race. We cannot legislate ideas away, nor restrict access to them.

The only effective way to confront a bad idea is with better ones.

The failings I observe with CRT lie in its rejection of the individual. This should not be hard to fight and we need not appeal to the 18th Century language of the Enlightenment or our founding documents. We could easily call upon the words of Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, James Baldwin, Maya Angelou, Martin Luther King Jr. or John McWhorter to challenge the racial identitarian precepts of Critical Race Theory.

Still, for the diehard critic of CRT, there's some risk of reading the work of these authors. In finding that much of CRT is misguided, you may also find parts of it ring

true. This would be particularly true if you read Douglass' speech, "What to the Slave is July 4th," or listen to Baldwin's interview with Dick Cavett in 1968. Both will make you uncomfortable, and give you a lingering sense that despite our immense progress, we all have a longer road to travel. Together.

If the 1619 Project and CRT provoke us to find ways to "form a more perfect Union," we should be grateful for them. In a free nation, discussing even bad ideas has merit. If these ideas are mistaken, we should still thank their authors for sharpening our argument. We

should also thank them for providing another opportunity to explain those self-evident ideals upon which our nation was founded, and that we rightly celebrate on this holiday. ❖

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.

Education in the Hoosier Holyland

By MORTON J. MARCUS

INDIANAPOLIS – Some people say Hoosier education is a failure. That's probably false. Others report Hoosiers are poorly educated. That's true, if we measure education by degrees earned or years of schooling completed.



In 2019, before the COVID crisis, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated 33.1% of Americans 25 years and older in the United States had a bachelor's degree and/or a professional or graduate degree. Indiana ranked 42nd among the 50 states at 26.9%.

We were between New Mexico (27.7%) and Alabama (26.3%). Massachusetts (45%) led the nation; West Virginia (21.1%) trailed all states.

With college degrees now frequently expected, younger adults are more likely to hold the necessary degrees than their older relatives. Nationally, 37% of persons 25 to 34 years old have such degrees. Only 31% of Hoosiers in that age range do. At the other end of the age scale, 29% of Americans 65 years and older hold bachelor and higher degrees, compared with 22% of senior Hoosiers.

Why are Indiana residents well below the educational attainment of average Americans? One possible reason for the poor showing of Indiana's residents is that our universities and colleges offer quality education and attractive settings for out-of-state and foreign students. This enables our academic recruiters to enroll non-resident students in our schools, students who will pay more in tuition than do in-state students.

Upon graduation, students often discover Indiana employers don't offer stimulating jobs matching contemporary education and provide non-competitive compensation. Under such circumstances, job seekers may choose

elsewhere beyond our borders, away from the perceived nowhere of Hoosier communities.

Thus, the answer may be primarily economic rather than cultural. Compensation paid by Indiana employers appears to be too low to retain and attract better-educated workers. The value of the products and services offered by Indiana businesses does not justify higher compensation. The value is low because we make commodities and produce unexceptional services.

Corn, beans, and steel are bought and sold without much differentiation, novelty, or distinctiveness. Patents are transitory even for pharmaceutical products, and the competition is fierce. Auto parts can be sourced from anywhere. There are few brand names that bring Indiana to mind.

Often our larger firms are owned by distant corporations with their ingenuity based outside Indiana. Others are too small to invest in something different or have difficulty finding capital sufficient to break into larger markets.

Now, our state government, via its latest regional program (READI), blames the dullness of our communities for our deficient economic and population growth.

The state administration and the legislature are betting half a billion dollars they can make Indiana more attractive to well-educated people. But what does Indiana do to stir the blood of business owners beyond tepid taxes and relaxed regulations? ❖

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

Confederate flags send message of hate

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News

ANDERSON – Flying from the back of a speedboat on a weekend set aside to celebrate our nation's independence, the Confederate battle flag seems oddly out of place. After all, this is Indiana, a state that fought on the other side of the Civil War.



The battle flag, of course, never really was the banner of the Confederacy. Erin Blakemore examined its history in a January article for National Geographic. She was writing in the wake of Jan. 6, a day when insurgents carried that flag during an assault on the U.S. Capitol.

"When rebels fired on Fort Sumter in April 1861, they flew a blue banner with a single white star called the Bonnie Blue Flag," she wrote. "But as secession got underway, the Confederate States of America adopted a flag known as the 'Stars and Bars.'" That flag had three stripes, two red and one white, and a white star for each Confederate state on a blue background. In the heat of battle, though, the flag looked too much like the Union's "Stars and Stripes," leading some Southern troops to mistake their own comrades for the enemy.

To avoid such friendly fire, Gen. Pierre Beauregard commissioned a new flag designed by William Porcher Miles, a Confederate congressman and Beauregard's aide-de-camp. The flag borrowed an X-shaped pattern known as St. Andrew's Cross and emblazoned it with one star for each seceding state. That banner eventually became known as the "Southern Cross," and in the years after the Civil War, it developed something of a split personality.

Groups such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy claimed the flag represented Southern heritage and the noble fight for states' rights, but groups pushing the racist Jim Crow laws that followed Reconstruction claimed the banner as their own.

In the years after World War II, the Dixiecrats used the battle flag in their fight against integration. Robed Ku Klux Klan members carried the same flag three decades later as they confronted Black demonstrators demanding diverse hiring practices at stores in Mississippi.

Byron De La Beckwith, the white supremacist who killed civil rights activist Medgar Evers in 1963, wore a Confederate flag pin on his lapel throughout the 1994 trial that led to his conviction.

At the dawn of the 21st Century, the NAACP launched a 15-year economic boycott seeking to force South Carolina to remove the battle flag from its state capitol. The flag finally came down after pictures turned up on social media showing Dylann Roof, the white supremacist who killed nine churchgoers in Charleston, proudly posing with that same flag.

"Heritage or no," Blakemore wrote, "the Confederate flag retains its associations with centuries of racial injustice. ... For many on the receiving end, ... the Confederate battle flag embodies everything from hatred to personal intimidation – a far cry from the sanitized Lost Cause narrative that helped fuel its rise."

Now, as I sit on a lake on a beautiful Fourth of July weekend, I'm reminded of the images of white supremacists carrying that banner on a rampage through the Capitol, and I wonder what the guy in that boat is thinking. What message is he trying to send?

Is he proud of his Southern heritage? Does he even have a Southern heritage?

I'm tempted to ask him, but I think better of it. He has another flag I have not yet mentioned.

It looks, at first glance, like your standard American flag, but on closer examination, I see that the stars are actually pistols and the stripes are made up of assault rifles.

Perhaps, it's best not to tempt fate. Let him send

his hateful message, I guess. He has that right. And I have the right to think less of him for it.



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Where both parties over perform in U.S. House elections

By LOU JACOBSON

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – The three biggest sources of excess seats for the GOP today – Texas, Ohio, and Florida – could provide additional excess seats in the coming redistricting round, given the fact that each state has unified Republican control of state government. The Democrats’ options for squeezing out additional seats are more limited because many of their biggest sources of excess seats have a commission system for redistricting.

Presidential voting vs. House representation

As the political world heads into a frenzied, once-every-decade redistricting process, it seemed like a good time to look at which states currently bless one party with a disproportionate share of U.S. House seats – and whether, nationally, one party has benefited from these excess seats more than the other.

“Excess” seats for one party may stem from gerrymandering, but they don’t have to. The vagaries of how a state’s population is distributed may make it hard to draw districts in precise alignment with the overall partisan balance in that state. But how the lines are drawn can make a difference, at least on the margins.

We began our analysis by calculating the percentage of House seats currently held by each party in each state (the “actual” breakdown), along with the percentage won by Joe Biden and Donald Trump in the 2020 election (the “ideal” breakdown). The 2020 presidential race isn’t the only metric we could have used to determine baseline partisanship for each state, but it’s the most straightforward.

Next, we subtracted the “ideal” percentage of seats from the “actual” percentage of seats and then multiplied this percentage by the total number of seats in the state’s congressional delegation. The result of this calculation was the number of “excess” seats that one party holds today beyond its percentage of the presidential vote in 2020.

(Some technical notes: We ignored the 15 states with only one, two, or three House seats, because states this small would distort the comparison. We also assumed that the currently vacant House seats will be filled by members of the same party once special elections are held. And we did not factor in the pending expansions or contractions in the state delegations due to reapportion-

ment.)

So what did we find? Here are the states where Republicans are currently faring better in House seats than their percentage of the 2020 presidential vote would indi-

States where Republicans overperform in House

State	Dem Seats	GOP seats	Biden %	Trump %	GOP excess seats
Texas	13	23	46.4	52.0	4.3
Ohio	4	12	45.2	53.2	3.5
Florida	11	16	47.8	51.1	2.2
South Carolina	1	6	43.4	55.1	2.1
Indiana	2	7	40.9	56.9	1.9
Oklahoma	0	5	32.3	65.4	1.7
Utah	0	4	37.2	57.5	1.7
Alabama	1	6	36.6	62.0	1.7
Tennessee	2	7	37.5	60.7	1.5
North Carolina	5	8	48.6	49.9	1.5
Arkansas	0	4	34.8	62.4	1.5
Louisiana	1	5	39.9	58.5	1.5
Missouri	2	6	41.3	56.7	1.5
Kentucky	1	5	36.1	62.1	1.3
Georgia	6	8	49.5	49.2	1.1
Wisconsin	3	5	49.5	48.8	1.1
Iowa	1	3	44.9	53.1	0.9
Kansas	1	3	41.4	56.0	0.8
Mississippi	1	3	41.0	57.6	0.7

cate.

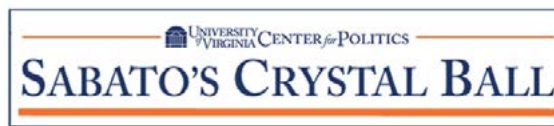
Collectively, these 19 states gave Republicans 32.4 seats beyond their presidential performance. Not surprisingly, 17 of these 19 states were won by Donald Trump, and the two that were not – Georgia and Wisconsin – were each decided by less than a percentage point in 2020.

Even more strikingly, all 19 have Republican-controlled legislatures.

Some of the most impressive GOP overperformances have come from relatively small states. The party

has squeezed extra seats out of such states as Arkansas, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Utah — states that have only four-to-seven House seats total. However, there are no Democratic-held House seats left in Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Utah and only one Democratic seat left in South Carolina, a seat that has protection from the Voting Rights Act. So in these states, the GOP has essentially maxed out in excess seats (Democrats did win an extra seat apiece in three of these four states in 2018 – Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Utah – showing the risks to a dominant party of spreading its voters too thin in its congressional map. But the Republicans recaptured these seats in 2020).

But the three biggest generators of excess seats for the GOP – Texas, Ohio, and Florida – will be closely watched during this redistricting cycle for potential additional Republican gains. In Texas, Republicans control the governorship and the legislature, and in the past, the party



has not been afraid to draw aggressive maps (as were Texas Democrats when they were in control decades ago). Republicans also control the governorship and the legislature in Ohio and Florida, although citizen-initiated changes to and restrictions on the redistricting processes in both states could serve to rein in some of the partisan advantage.

How about the states where Democrats are overperforming their presidential performance in the House? Here's the list:

Here, we mostly see a list of solidly blue states:

States where Democrats overperform in House

State	Dem Seats	GOP seats	Biden %	Trump %	Dem excess seats
California	42	11	63.4	34.3	8.4
New Jersey	10	2	57.1	41.3	3.1
Massachusetts	9	0	65.6	32.1	3.1
Illinois	13	5	57.4	40.5	2.7
New York	19	8	60.8	37.7	2.6
Connecticut	5	0	59.2	39.2	2.0
Maryland	7	1	65.4	32.2	1.8
Washington	7	3	58.0	38.8	1.2
Oregon	4	1	56.5	40.4	1.2
Virginia	7	4	54.1	44.0	1.0
Nevada	3	1	50.1	47.7	1.0

Each of these 11 states backed Biden in 2020, and they all have Democratic legislatures.

While the Democrats have 11 states producing noteworthy excess seats for their party, compared to 19 for the Republicans, their total number of excess seats ended up pretty close to what the GOP notched: 28.1 excess seats. Rounded, that's a 32-28 edge for the GOP in excess seats. Were it not for the exceedingly close margin in the House today, that would almost be a rounding error in a 435-member chamber.

The Democrats' biggest boost came from the nation's most populous state: California is currently giving the Democrats 8.4 excess seats. Ironically, the districts were drawn by a nonpartisan commission rather than by a partisan legislature. Even more impressively, the Democrats' number of excess seats in California was actually stronger prior to the 2020 election cycle, when the GOP managed to flip four seats in California.

By contrast, the state that gives Republicans their biggest excess-seat advantage offers only half as many seats as California — Texas, with 4.3 excess seats for the GOP.

Looking ahead to the current round of redistricting, the Democrats' options for increasing their excess seats is more limited than the Republicans' options. California, New Jersey, Virginia, and Washington state have commissions of one type or another while Massachusetts and Connecticut already have all-Democratic delegations.

The states with the biggest potential for additional excess seats for the Democrats are Illinois and New York.

Finally, there are five states where the partisan breakdown for House seats is roughly in balance with the presidential vote divide in 2020. They are Arizona, Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania. Perhaps appropriately, three of these five states were also core battlegrounds in the 2020 presidential race: Arizona, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

These states are not the most obvious places to look for additional excess seats in the next round of redistricting. In Arizona, Colorado, and Michigan, commissions will draw the lines (the first draft of the Colorado map came out a couple of weeks ago). Minnesota, meanwhile, has a Democratic governor and a split legislature; Pennsylvania also has a divided state government, as well as a Democratic-majority state Supreme Court that already threw out a map mid-decade.


Here's another way of looking at the patterns of excess House seats: There are very few states where the losing presidential party has secured any excess seats. The GOP has roughly one excess seat in Wisconsin and Georgia; Biden won both, but both states voted for Trump in 2016 and were on a knife's edge in the 2020 presidential balloting.

In other words, the pattern of excess seats is yet another indication of how unified each state has become, up and down the ballot. ❖

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

Bill Theobald and Janet Williams,

Indiana Citizen: Jeb Bardon knew it was over for Democrats in Indiana a decade ago, as soon as he saw the new maps. Drafted behind closed doors by a small group of the Republicans who had solidified their control of the Indiana General Assembly in 2010, House Bills 1601 and 1602 – using fresh census data to redraw the state’s congressional and legislative districts for the next 10 years – were pushed through the House and the Senate during a few days at the end of the 2011 legislative session. “It was almost like being at a wake in a funeral home,” said then-state Rep. Bardon, member of a House Democratic caucus left demoralized by its new minority status and a fruitless six-week walkout. Democrats were going to be “blown into oblivion,” he thought at the time, and it’s turned out even worse than he expected.

The 2011 redistricting set the stage for a Republican supermajority in the House, expanding from 60-40 after the 2010 election to 69-31 in 2012 (the first election with the redrawn legislative maps) to the current margin of 71-29. In the Senate, where Republicans already held a 37-13 supermajority, their margin has been as lopsided as 41-9 in the decade since the 2011 redistricting. They now hold 39 seats. Going into 2010, Democrats had a 5-4 edge in the Indiana congressional delegation. Republicans flipped two Democratic seats in 2010 and added a third with the new map in 2012, giving them a 7-2 margin that hasn’t changed since. The redistricting process in 2011 – one that Republicans extolled as being the most open in history – remains shrouded in mystery a decade later.

The biggest questions: Who actually drew the maps? And to what degree were they the product of GOP strategists involved in Project REDMAP, an operation launched by the national Republican State Leadership Committee in early 2010 and aimed at gaining the state legislative majorities needed to control the 2011 redistricting process? Those who could provide the answers aren’t talking. None of the Republican legislative leadership at the center of Indiana’s 2011 redistricting agreed to interview requests from *The Indiana Citizen*.

Indiana was among several states, including Iowa, Kentucky, Oregon and Maine, where the RSLC spent a total of \$3 million on state legislative races, according to a REDMAP summary report produced by the RSLC. “What they did was focus on states where Republicans could control every step of the process,” said David Daley, author of “Rat F**ked, Why Your Vote Doesn’t Count,” an account of the GOP’s strategy in Project REDMAP first published in 2016. “They tried to focus on winning trifectas” – both legislative chambers as well as the governor’s office – “in states where just a handful of seats separated Republicans and Democrats,” he said. Indiana – where Democrats controlled the House, 52-48 – was one of them. From Wisconsin to Michigan and Ohio to Texas, the RSLC spent millions, including \$18 million after Labor Day

alone, to win seats in state legislatures, RSLC documents show. ❖

Lesley Weidenbener, IBJ: I’ve lived in Indianapolis now for more than 25 years. During those 2-1/2 decades in the city, my office has always been downtown. I live in the Garfield Park neighborhood, but more often than not, I shop downtown, I eat downtown, and I bring friends and family downtown when they’re visiting. You might think all that time makes me especially attuned to how downtown is changing—and how the perception of downtown is changing. It doesn’t. In the same way you don’t notice your spouse aging, it’s easy for changes to a place to occur subtly over time in a way that slips right by. That’s not always the case, of course. There was no missing the huge impact that last summer’s social unrest had on downtown.

The boarded-up buildings and graffiti that remained for weeks—even months—after a weekend of riots left downtown incredibly sad. The pandemic, of course, emptied the streets, closed lunch spots and made downtown downright lonely. Still, I was startled when some extended family members recently expressed shock that I continue to come downtown every day—and that I worked in the IBJ office on Monument Circle regularly through the pandemic. They assumed it was too unsafe. They asked whether I’m afraid when I walk to get lunch or to my car at night. They asked whether I’ve ever been attacked or witnessed a shooting. The answer to all of those questions is no. No. I haven’t ever, nor do I now, feel unsafe. No. I’ve never been attacked. No. I’ve never witnessed violence. Have I been asked for money by a panhandler? You bet. Have I walked by homeless people sleeping on the street? Many times. But I haven’t been harassed. ❖

Holman W. Jenkins Jr., Wall Street Journal: The problem isn’t Hunter Biden – it’s Joe – as major media outlets may be discovering, sort of, with the White House’s absurd intervention in the younger Mr. Biden’s latest career as a budding Van Gogh. In fact, the intervention smells like a scheme dreamed up by Hunter himself, designed to call attention to his connection to the president, advertise it and enable it, while pretending to do the opposite. For details, see a long account on the front page of Friday’s Washington Post. Under the plan, a New York gallery will keep secret the identities of those paying up to \$500,000 for his novice pieces, but of course this wouldn’t stop the buyer from letting Hunter know who just bought his art or from turning up later as Hunter’s guest at a White House event. All of this is magnificently obvious on its own terms, but even more so in light of the ludicrously detailed, well-documented revelations from the Hunter Biden laptop published over the last nine months by the New York Post and Britain’s Daily Mail. ❖



Judge orders state to resume job pay

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Court of Appeals ruled Monday that the state temporarily continue payment of federal unemployment benefits, affirming an earlier court order that Indiana must restart the extra \$300 weekly payments to unemployed workers (AP). Chief judge Cale Bradford denied a request from the state government to issue a stay on a Marion County judge's order that Indiana must resume participation in the federal government's programs that unemployment benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic. Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb, who has pushed to drop the state from the federal programs before they're scheduled to end on Sept. 6, did not say Monday whether the state would next call on the Indiana Supreme Court to consider the preliminary injunction. "We acknowledge the court of appeals decision today," the governor's office said in a statement. "Notwithstanding, the Department of Workforce Development will continue to work with the U.S. Department of Labor on finalizing the pandemic unemployment insurance benefits to comply with the judge's order."



Rokita sues virtual schools for \$150M

INDIANAPOLIS — The leaders of two now-closed Indiana online charter schools are accused in a new lawsuit of defrauding the state of more than \$150 million by padding their student enrollments and inappropriately paying money to a web of related businesses (AP). The lawsuit announced Monday by the Indiana attorney general's office comes nearly two years after Indiana Virtual School and Indiana Virtual Pathways Academy shut down amid a state investigation that found the two online

schools improperly claimed about 14,000 students as enrolled between 2011 and 2019, even though they had no online course activity. The lawsuit seeks repayment of about \$69 million it claims the schools wrongly received in state student enrollment payments. It also seeks \$86 million that officials say the schools improperly paid to more than a dozen companies linked to them by common business officers or relatives and did so with little or no documentation. "This massive attempt to defraud Hoosier taxpayers through complex schemes truly boggles the mind," state Attorney General Todd Rokita, a Republican, said in a statement. A state audit linked much of the misspending to Thomas Stoughton, who headed the online schools from 2011 to 2017, and who owned or had business associates that operated about a dozen companies that received school payments.

COVID outbreak at Ohio retreat

MIAMISBURG, Ohio — Health officials are reporting a COVID-19 outbreak among people who attended a church retreat in Ohio that also had participants from Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky (AP). Dayton and Montgomery County public health officials said more than 800 people attended the Baptist Church retreat at Camp Chautauqua in Miamisburg from June 27 to July 3. The retreat included attendees and churches from Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois and Indiana. Officials said at least 30 cases among attendees living in Ohio and Kentucky have been identified so far.

Indy Council passes \$3.3M crime plan

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indianapolis City-County Council voted Monday night to approve \$3.3 million in violence prevention investments (Smith, WRTV). The proposal passed with a 23-2 vote. Democratic Councilors Ethan Evans, District 4, and Keith Graves, District 13, voted against the

proposal.

Judge pokes holes in Trump fraud

DETROIT — Sidney Powell, one of the most vocal figures in the push to overturn the 2020 election, stood by her efforts Monday during a contentious and unusual six-hour hearing in which a Detroit federal judge repeatedly poked holes in her team's claims (Detroit News). U.S. District Judge Linda Parker labeled elements of the unsuccessful lawsuit to have Donald Trump named Michigan's winner "fantastical," "obviously questionable" and "layers of hearsay." Parker also said lawyers have a responsibility to investigate assertions they present. Monday's hearing featured the rare occurrence of legal advocates being questioned about their moves to discredit a presidential election with possible penalties hanging over their heads. Facing potential financial sanctions, Powell refused to relent. She said "the duty of lawyers" was to raise "difficult and even unpopular issues."

Mueller calls for Reynolds firing

SOUTH BEND — Mayor James Mueller said Monday that the clerk's newly hired community police review office director, Joshua Reynolds, should resign or be fired, after a Tribune investigation found he had been suspended seven times over his roughly nine years as an Indianapolis officer. "The community and others have made it pretty clear," Mueller said. "It's hard to see a path forward for this hire to be successful. The premise of this position is to build community trust and a bridge between our officers and the community, and at this point, there's not a lot of trust on any side. I would hope he would see there's no successful path forward and resign, but if that doesn't happen, then absolutely she should step forward and take action."