

What's at stake for Jan. 6 panel

Capitol cops reveal how close we came to a twin constitutional crisis and violence

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – One thing that stood out after the Capitol and D.C. Metro police testimony Tuesday before the fledgling House Jan. 6 Select Committee was how close this “insurrection” came to being an atrocity that could have ignited a violent nationwide spasm.

D.C. Officer Daniel Hodges, who repeatedly referred to those breaching the U.S. Capitol as “terrorists,” was asked why police didn’t use their guns to stop the breach. There were “thousands of terrorists ... only hundreds of us,” Hodges said. “If it had turned into a firefight, we would’ve lost.”

That was a chilling revelation. There were five deaths on Jan. 6, including two supporters of President Trump and three Capitol officers who died (two by suicide



in its aftermath). There had been only one shot fired, by an unidentified Capitol defender, killing Ashli Babbitt of California as she attempted to jump through an interior Capitol window. Trump has elevated her death to martyrdom.

Dozens of videos compiled by the committee and

Continued on page 4

Rebounding pandemic

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – I didn’t see this coming. I figured that most Hoosiers would jump at the chance to get the COVID vaccine; that the anti-vaxers made up only about 5 or 10% of the population, as any school administrator could confirm regarding those who don’t want to comply with RMM vaccine requirements that have been in place

for decades. Ditto for Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who said today, “Honestly, it never occurred to me we would have difficulty getting people to take the vaccine.”

But now at a time when the pandemic was supposed to be disappearing in the rearview mirror, Tuesday’s Indiana State Department of Health report



“The truth is that the vaccinated and unvaccinated are experiencing two very different pandemics right now. If we don’t confront that, the nation can’t address either appropriately.”

- Dr. Aaron E. Carroll of IU in his New York Times [column](#) on Wednesday.



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Jack E. Howey
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 1926-2019



showed 1,085 new cases, the first time it's been over 1,000 since May 8. On Wednesday that grew to 1,248 cases with 12 deaths. The seven-day positivity rate, which runs a week behind, continues a month-long climb to 6.3%, the highest since Feb. 9, with some 15 counties over 10%.

According to CDC stats as of Tuesday, only 58% of Hoosiers age 18 and up had received one dose of the vaccine which rank us 12th in the nation; only 54.9% had received both doses. In a state of 6.7 million people, less than three million have been vaccinated. In the U.S., the numbers were these: 69% for one dose, 60% for both.

A frustrated U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon, MD, tweeted Wednesday: "New CDC recommendations on masking are not based on science but instead based on politics including kowtowing to teachers unions. The problem is tens of millions of Americans are unvaccinated. Vaccinated people are very rarely spreading the virus. When does it end? Never?"

While Gov. Eric Holcomb had received near universal credit for dealing with this unprecedented modern pandemic, he's maintained a much lower profile this summer. During the first year of the pandemic, Holcomb got high marks for transparency, which included a weekly Zoom press conference with Health Commissioner Kristina Box and Chief Medical Officer Lindsay Weaver.

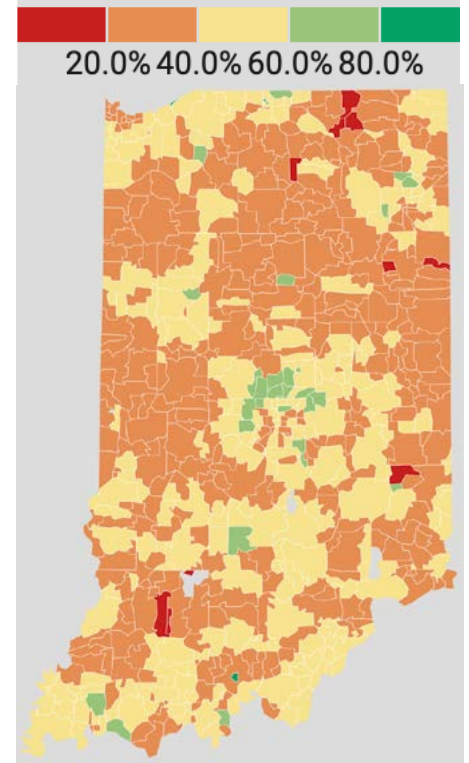
He hadn't weighed in on the latest wave until Tuesday. "You just look at the numbers, you look at the cases, you look at the hospitalization rates, you look at the deaths – it's overwhelmingly unvaccinated," Holcomb said Tuesday in Westfield.

With his current emergency order expiring at the end of the week, he said he's reviewing the CDC's new guidance before he decides the path forward for Indiana. "If this isn't persuasive to get vaccinated, I don't know what could be," he said.

Despite encouraging Hoosiers to get vaccinated, at this time he's not considering a vaccine mandate for state employees. It's something at

least one other state and city have implemented for their workers. "I'm not leaning toward that but obviously, I've got some updates to make by the end of this week. We're looking at what the CDC just put out. I want to see the EUA, emergency use authorization, turned into permanent. I do understand parents and students

Percent Population Fully Vaccinated

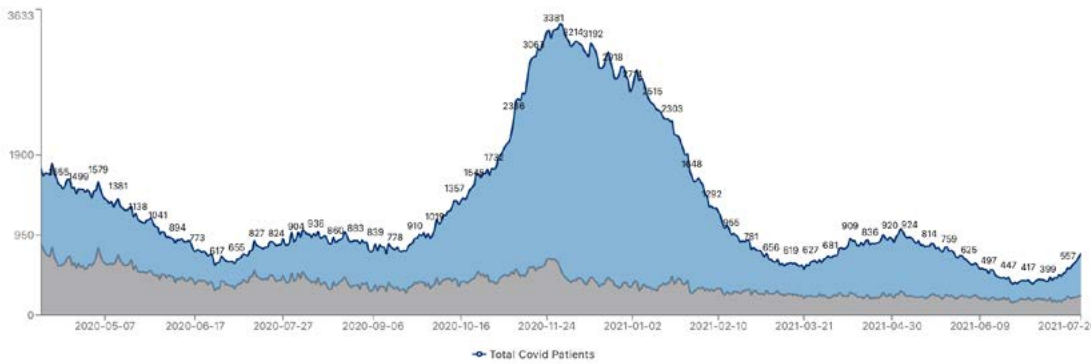


who are waiting until it becomes permanent."

The last time Holcomb addressed the pandemic in May, he told the press, "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 (getting vaccinated), it's their personal responsibility." What we did learn this week is that his inaugural gala will take place on Aug. 21. With a good part of the Republican Party apparently unvaccinated, this appears to be a second-generation super spreader event in the making.

The problem, as new Indiana University President Pamela Whitten and Colts Coach Frank Reich can attest, is that the state's gap-

Statewide COVID-19 Hospital Census



ing half-unvaccinated population isn't just someone else's "personal responsibility." Whitten and Reich had been vaccinated and have since contracted a mild case of COVID.

What health officials from ISDH to the CDC, to Dr. Anthony Fauci can't tell us emphatically is whether a breakthrough COVID infection is transmissible.

This collision of being vaccinated and exposed became a crashing new reality for this writer. On Monday, I was a candidate for Marion County jury duty and faced the prospect of being in a crowded room in a county with a 44% vaccination rate. The dilemma was that on the homefront, I have a five-month-old unvaccinated granddaughter, and a 92-year-old vaccinated mother living in a retirement facility. My mother reports that employees of her facility are all vaccinated, but there are disturbing CDC statistics that reveal less than 50% of Hoosier nursing home employees are vaccinated.

What the?

As a citizen, laws, rules and regulations keep me from wantonly running red lights, driving 120 miles an hour on I-65, or operating a motor vehicle while drunk. As the saying goes, your right to swing a fist ends just short of my nose. But the governor now insists that the willfully unvaccinated are just practicing their own special kind of "personal responsibility."

On Wednesday, we learned that an outbreak of the unvaccinated has brought the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy to a standstill.

In the past week, other governors have begun speaking out. A vexed Alabama Republican Gov. Kay Ivey said, "It's the unvaccinated folks that are letting us down. Folks are supposed to have common sense. But it's time to start blaming the unvaccinated folks, not the vaccinated folks."

And Republican Utah Gov. Spencer Cox said, "It's very sad." In recent weeks he's spoken with families "whose loved ones have died or who are in the hospital, in dire circumstances right now, because they refused to

get vaccinated. Completely preventable." He blamed conservative media who have cast a doubt over the vaccine, saying, "They are killing their own supporters."

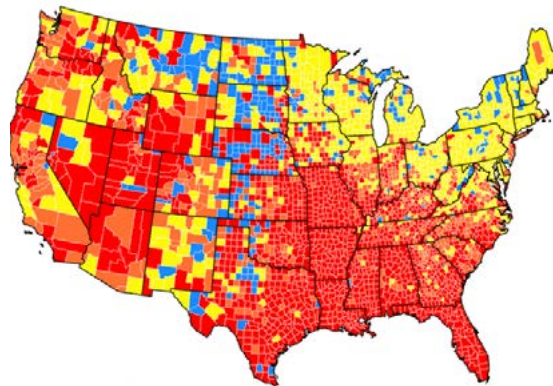
This is why this avoidable pandemic spike is creating the call for "mandates." The Veterans Administration has joined a number of medical

centers (including IU Health) mandating employee vaccination. New York City and California are enacting mandates, and Chicago is considering one.

The NFL just informed clubs that if a game cannot be rescheduled during the 18-week season in 2021 due to a COVID outbreak among unvaccinated players, the team with the outbreak will forfeit and be credited with a loss for playoff seeding.

President Biden said on Tuesday that the federal government is considering making vaccines mandatory for its workforce, including the armed services. "That's under consideration right now," Biden said.

This sets the stage for a deepening of the political crisis that continues to grip the nation. Except the red and blue presidential Electoral College maps have been replaced by red and blue COVID vaccination rate maps and overlaying infection spikes ... coming once again in July when this pandemic genie was supposed to be rebottled.



The risk for Indiana medi-

cal systems is that by now, this pandemic was supposed to be relegated to the past. Worth pondering now is whether the burned out ICU nurses are up for a fourth and fifth wave of pandemic "personal responsibility."

And with the new COVID spike coming with younger Americans and Hoosiers, are we setting up another disastrous school year? The first three waves largely missed our kids, including those age 12 and younger who cannot get the vaccine. We may not be so lucky with fourth and fifth spikes.

Throughout this pandemic, we've witnessed a medical miracle in the development of these vaccines within a year, only to watch them squandered by the politicized ruling class. The United States is awash with unused vaccine, while the rest of the world craves for such. What we're experiencing now is a dynamic that was sooooo avoidable, and it makes me wonder if it's a harbinger for a second long, dark winter if COVID keeps mutating. ❖

Jan. 6 Committee, from page 1

news organizations such as the New York Times revealed many insurrectionists were heavily armed – with body armor, bear spray and other chemicals, and weaponry. The U.S. was facing a constitutional crisis as Trump sought to “overturn” the election and stop congressional certification of the Electoral College declaring Joe Biden the winner on Jan. 6.

It would be difficult to gauge how a gunfight in the halls and entry steps to the Capitol could have been a total rupture of the civic dynamic, potentially sending thousands of Trump supporters and opponents into the streets of American cities.

For that restraint alone, the cops defending the Capitol should have a revered place in our history.

Officer Hodges’ testimony mentioned “terrorists” 15 times and he was pressed by U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin as to why.

Hodges said that he came “prepared” to explain why he uses the term to describe the rioters. Hodges then recited how U.S. criminal codes describe “domestic terrorism.”

“U.S. Code title 18 part 1 chapter 1.1.3, B as in brown, section 2.3.3.1. The term domestic terrorism means activities that involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any state and B, appeared to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, or to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping and occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States.”

Beginning with a March 26 Fox interview with Laura Ingraham and repeated to Washington Post reporters Philip Rucker



and Carol Leonnig for their book “I Alone Can Fix It,” Trump described the insurrectionists this way: “Right from the start, it was zero threat. Look, they went in – they shouldn’t have done it – some of them went in, and they’re hugging and kissing the police and the guards, you know? They had great relationships. A lot of the people were waved in, and then they walked in, and they walked out.”

Asked about former President Trump’s assertion that rioters were “hugging and kissing” Capitol Police officers, Sgt. Aquilino Gonell replied, “It’s a pathetic excuse for his behavior, for something that he himself helped to create. I’m still recovering from those hugs and kisses that

day. Hearing the former president call Jan. 6 a ‘love-fest’ is upsetting, it’s a pathetic excuse for his behavior for something that he himself helped to create, this monstrosity.”

For nearly three hours, the four officers described “medieval” hand-to-hand combat with the insurrectionists.

Metro Officer Michael Fanone: “I was at risk of being stripped of and killed with my own firearm. I heard chants of ‘kill him with his own gun.’ My fellow officers and I were punched, pushed, kicked, shoved, sprayed with chemical irritants and even blinded by eye-damaging lasers by a violent mob. I was electrocuted again and again and again by a taser. I feel like I went to hell and back to protect them and people in this room, but too many people are now telling me that hell doesn’t exist or hell wasn’t that bad. I thought about using my firearm, but knew if I did, I’d be quickly overwhelmed and in their minds that would provide them with the justification for killing me. So instead I decided to appeal to any humanity they might have. I said as loud as I could, ‘I’ve got kids.’”

Officer Fanone called out congressional deniers of the insurrection: “The indifference shown to my colleagues is

disgraceful," he said, pounding the table, his voice rising. "What makes the struggle harder and more painful is to know that so many of my fellow citizens, including so many of the people I put my life at risk to defend, are downplaying or outright denying what happened."

Officer Gonell: "To be honest, I did not recognize my fellow citizens who stormed the Capitol on January 6, or the United States that they claimed to represent. On Jan. 6, for the first time, I was more afraid to work at the Capitol than my entire deployment to Iraq. Even though there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary, including hours and hours of video and photographic coverage, there is a continuous and shocking attempt to ignore or try to destroy the truth of what truly happened that day, and to whitewash the facts."

"It was an attempted coup," Gonell said. "If it had been another country, the United States would have sent help."

Metro Officer Hodges: "To my perpetual confusion, I saw the thin blue line flag, a symbol of support for law enforcement more than once being carried by the terrorists as they ignored our commands and continued to assault us. It was clear the terrorists perceived themselves to be Christians. I saw the Christian flag directly to my front, another 'Jesus is my savior.' 'Trump is my president.' Another 'Jesus is king. Men alleging to be veterans told us how they had fought for this country and we're fighting for it again. One man tried to start a chant of four more years. Another shouted, 'do not attack us. We're not Black Lives Matter,' as if political affiliation is how we determine when to use force." Hodges was seen on Jan. 6 trapped in a Capitol door in deep anguish.

Capitol Officer Harry Dunn called for a "moment of silence for my fallen colleague, officer Brian Sicknick, who died from injuries he sustained in the line of duty defending the Capitol of our beloved democracy.

"Jan. 6 still isn't over for me," Dunn said, describing how insurrectionists wearing MAGA hats and "Trump 2020" T-shirts repeatedly called him and his Black colleagues the n-word, the first time he had heard that while wearing a Capitol PD uniform. "How is this America?" he asked.

Questioned by Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson on what the panel needed to learn, Officer Hodges replied, "As patrol officers, we can only, you know, deal with the crimes that have happened on the streets, the misdemeanors and occasionally the violent felonies. But you guys are the only ones we've got to deal with

crimes that occur above us. I need you guys to address if anyone in power had a role in this, if anyone in power coordinated or aided and abetted or tried to downplay, tried to prevent the investigation of this terrorist attack because we can't do it. We're not allowed to. And I think a majority of Americans are really looking forward to that as well."

Fanone urged the committee to look into "whether or not there was collaboration between those members [of Congress], their staff and these terrorists."

Officer Dunn said that Jan. 6 rioters had "marching orders" that led to violence during the insurrection.



He had been involved in other protests, saying, "There were some skirmishes, but never the attempt to overthrow democracy. This was maybe their second or third time that they had came up on Jan. 6. And even then, as belligerent as they were, it didn't account to this violence. So the only difference that I see in that is that they had marching orders, so to say."

"When people feel emboldened by people in power, they assume they're right," Dunn said, echoing officers who quoted rioters as saying, "President Trump sent us."

"One of the scariest things about Jan. 6 is that the people that were there, even to this day, think they were right. They think they were right," Dunn said. "And that makes for a scary recipe for the future of this country. I think that's why it's important that you all take this committee seriously and get to the bottom of why this happened and let's make it never happen again."

Rep. Banks reacts

Last week, U.S. Rep. Jim Banks, R-Columbia City, was poised to join the panel after being appointed as one of five Republicans by Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy. But House Speaker Nancy Pelosi yanked Banks and U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan off the committee in an unprecedented action. Both had backed contesting the election certification. Banks had met with Trump twice this summer, once at Bedminster and another time on the Texas/Mexican border.

Banks' communications director is Buckley Carlson, seen by Pelosi and committee Democrats as a potential leak to Fox News talk show host Tucker Carlson, his father.

Banks surfaced during the testimony, tweeting, "Pelosi Republicans do not want GOP to win back the majority in the midterms."

After the hearing concluded, he was interviewed by Fox News anchor Bret Baier, who noted, "The testimony was damning, to see the video again today was jarring. You cannot watch this testimony and say this is not a big deal. We don't know where this is going to go yet."

Fellow Fox anchor John Roberts added, "To say that it was violent was not in doubt today."

Baier asked Banks a two-pronged question on why Republicans are saying the committee is a partisan effort, and why were the Capitol Police so ill-prepared.

Banks responded, "Let me first say these were tragic stories on a tragic day on Jan. 6. These stories the officers tell should never have happened. I heard Officer Harry Dunn say something that is most notable in this entire hearing in that they were not prepared for what happened that day.

"If I had been able to be in that room and do my duty as the ranking member, I would have asked the question that neither Republicans and Democrats asked which would be to unpack that statement: Why weren't they prepared on Jan. 6 when there was intelligence three weeks before that told us something dangerous was going to happen that day?" Banks continued.

Banks stressed that he wanted the Capitol PD union chief to testify. "Why would we not allow another voice of the capitol police union to be on hand to give his testimony? He was rejected. He would have unpacked that question as to why weren't they prepared? Because it was a systemic failure of leadership at the highest level of the capitol police that left them unprepared, no training that left them ill equipped on Jan. 6. That's a travesty and that's a part of the hearing that was left unexamined because no one asked those questions."

Baier asked Banks if he believed the committee was designed to "malign conservatives" and is an example of the "Democratic Party's authoritarian agenda."

Banks replied, "I do. Today was the beginning, but imagine where it goes from here. Keep in mind that without the minority leader being able to submit my name and Jim Jordan's name to actually be there today, the voice of the minority wasn't there. This has never happened before in this institution. Congress was created before to hear the majority view, the minority view. Never before has the speaker rejected names from the minority party to participate in a hearing like this. This has a long way to go. It's not lost



on the American people that every word that comes out of Liz Cheney's mouth or Bennie Thompson has been scripted by Nancy Pelosi to talk about her narrative, and not other narratives like why was the Capitol vulnerable to begin with."

Banks cited Republican committee member U.S. Rep. Adam Kinzinger as having a "deep hatred for Donald Trump." He added, "Clearly, this is politically designed by the Democrats to stop Republicans from winning back the majority in the mid-term elections. Democrats want to talk about Jan. 6; they want to beat up on Republicans. They don't want to talk about rising inflation, crime waves in the cities, immigration at the border, anti-Americanism and critical race theory ... they want to talk about this. Every word that comes out of every mouth on this committee has been strategically supplied by Nancy Pelosi for her narrative."

Cheney vows to get testimony

U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney said in a statement that she wants the committee to attain testimony from all involved. "If those responsible are not held accountable and if Congress does not act responsibly, this will remain a cancer on our constitutional republic, undermining the peaceful transfer of power at the heart of our democratic system," she said. Cheney, who was ousted from House GOP leadership earlier this summer, said subpoenas for House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Donald Trump are possible. "The American people ... deserve to know about every phone call that was made, in and out of the White House."

She told the media after the hearing, "We will investigate every aspect."

HPI's takeaways

President Trump summoned his MAGA supporters, said to be 30,000 to 40,000 strong, to a "Stop the Steal" rally on the Ellipse, promising, "It will be wild." In addressing the crowd, he added, "We're going to walk to the Capitol."

As recent published books reveal, Trump watched the ensuing insurrection from his dining room just off the Oval Office. Trump received a phone call from McCarthy during the insurrection, who told Fox News Sunday host Chris Wallace in January, "What I talked to President Trump about, I was the first person to contact him when the riot was going on. He didn't see it. What he ended the call was saying – telling me, he'll put something out to make sure to stop this. And that's what he did, he put a video out later." Jan. 13 on the House

floor, McCarthy said, "The president bears responsibility for Wednesday's attack on Congress by mob rioters. He should have immediately denounced the mob when he saw what was unfolding. These facts require immediate action by President Trump, (to) accept his share of responsibility, quell the brewing unrest and ensure President-elect Biden is able to successfully begin his term."

Two weeks later, on Jan. 27, McCarthy visited Trump at Mar-a-Lago to kiss the ring. "Today, President Trump committed to helping elect Republicans in the House and Senate in 2022," the statement from McCarthy's office reads. Trump's team told Fox News the former president would promote GOP House candidates in the next election.

McCarthy waffled for weeks on how to handle the proposed Jan. 6 bipartisan commission, which he ultimately rejected. He then pulled his five select committee appointees after Pelosi bounced Banks and Jordan.

From a messaging and crisis communication standpoint, McCarthy, Banks and House GOP leadership are on shaky ground, particularly with independent voters who could determine control of Congress in 2022. As Banks articulated on Fox News Tuesday, their key talking point appears to be: Ignore that man behind the curtain (i.e. Trump) and his exhortation for supporters to help stage his coup; it's Speaker Pelosi's fault that the Capitol was so vulnerable. ❖

The U.S. needs to create a pandemic commission

By CRAIG DUNN

CARMEL – The United States got lucky this time! Everyone, and I do mean everyone, dropped the ball and was totally unprepared for the Covid-19 pandemic. We were very fortunate that the Covid-19 virus was a big sissy as far as pandemic viruses go and that we didn't witness the extinction of mankind due to our lack of preparation, slowness of response, scientific confusion, political ineptitude and the rampant ignorance and pig-headedness of our population.



It may seem ridiculous to refer to a virus that has led to the deaths of over 600,000 Americans as a big sissy, but in the pantheon of viruses, it could have been terrifyingly worse. It

could have been worse not because our response could have been worse, but because the virulence of the virus could have been worse.

Covid-19 largely bypassed our younger population, unlike the 1918 influenza pandemic, and tended to target those who were elderly or who had other health issues. That is just plain dumb luck and not good public policy.

It should not be our government's public policy to play Russian roulette with our nation's health. The time to develop a coherent plan for dealing with a potential pandemic is not during the throes of a presidential campaign, but it should be done on an ongoing basis, in a transparent manner, with continuity and devoid of political interference.

In addition, any pandemic plan should be nationwide in nature and should not leave critical decisions up to

50 state pandemic gurus and their knuckleheaded legislatures. Our states are not isolated entities when it comes to public health. A decision made in Michigan just may kill people in Indiana and vice versa. I'm all for states' rights but by the same token, if a state can't sit out and avoid participation in times of war, it should not have the right to sit out a fight against a pandemic.

It appears to me, that from the beginning of Covid-19, until the present day, our leaders, including our public health officials, have been far more interested in scoring political points than in saving lives by reducing the spread of the virus. There is plenty of blame to go around on both political parties. This type of conduct may be cute when you're dealing with farm policy or transgendered paratroopers, but it is the same kind of conduct that could easily kill you.

An argument could be made that ineptitude and lack of preparedness are the historical hallmarks of our government. We've been caught off guard by two world wars, terrorists, the housing crisis and a litany of other disasters. Congress has done a marvelous job of conducting special commissions or witch hunts to look for someone to blame. Congress would do itself and our country a big favor if these commissions would be conducted in a hall of mirrors. The blame would then be starring the members squarely in the face.

It is ironic that we have a pandemic that has led to the deaths of over 600,000 Americans and yet Speaker Nancy Pelosi is more intent on investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol disturbance than she is looking for the root cause of Covid-19 or how the pandemic might have been handled more efficiently. As Mr. Kammeyer, my eighth-grade history teacher, would say, "Those who ignore the mistakes of history are doomed to repeat them."

Now is the time to create a National Pandemic Study Commission, to explore the roots of the Covid-19 Pandemic and its variants and to analyze both successful and unsuccessful public policies in dealing with it. The study commission should be bipartisan, but devoid of any current elected officials. It should consist of both public

health and economic experts. The commission should be allowed to grill Gov. Andrew Cuomo on his policies of sending Covid patients into nursing homes. It should also be allowed to have Gov. Kristi Noem tell why her state's benign indifference to the pandemic was the correct response.

The ultimate goal of this commission would not be to point fingers and assess blame, although a certain amount of that will inevitably occur. The goal should be to forge a coherent strategy to implement in the future when some new virus pops its head up and threatens our society. While I understand that each new virus will be different, many of the key issues will remain constant. When and how should international travel restrictions be imposed? Do masks work or not? Should people go to work or not?

When should each type of business be closed or put under restrictions? What should each hospital's and nursing home's policies and procedures be during a pandemic? Should available vaccines be mandatory for the public? How should public education respond? What should government's financial responsibility be to those affected by the pandemic?

Now is the time to act to avoid a future disaster that might ultimately pose a systemic threat to our nation, its people and our economy. Do not wait until your battleships lie at the bottom of Pearl Harbor. Do not wait until the twin towers come crashing down. Do not wait until a housing crisis destroys our economy. Act and act now!

My mom was not a highly educated person, but she had committed just about everything that she read in Readers Digest, The Saturday Evening Post and Poor Richard's Almanac to memory. She was fond of telling the seven Dunn children that ole Ben Franklin used to say, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

This was true in 1735 Philadelphia and it is still true today. ❖

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

August redistricting hearings set; GiaQuinta wants them after maps

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Republican majority legislators have scheduled a series of public meetings across the state on Aug. 6-7 in each of Indiana's nine congressional districts. House Democratic Minority Leader Phil GiaQuinta said that additional hearings should be scheduled after the actual maps are drawn.

Legislators are expected to return to the Statehouse in mid-to-late September to redraw the district boundaries. The meetings will be grouped into geographic areas, including north, south and central. The northern group meetings will be in Lafayette and Valparaiso on Friday, Aug. 6, and in Fort Wayne and Elkhart on Saturday, Aug. 7. In addition, the southern group will host meetings in Anderson and Columbus on Friday, Aug. 6, and Evansville and Sellersburg on Saturday, Aug. 7. The central meeting will held in Indianapolis on Wednesday, Aug. 11.



State Rep. Tim Wesco (R-Osceola), chair of the House Committee on Elections and Apportionment, will chair the redistricting meetings in the north, and State Sen. Jon Ford (R-Terre Haute), chair of the Senate Committee on Elections, will chair the meetings in the south. Wesco and Ford are expected to co-chair the central Indi-

ana meeting. "We look forward to hosting these important meetings across the state to hear directly from the public on Indiana's redistricting process," Wesco said. "Hoosiers can be confident that we'll continue to meet all of our statutory and constitutional requirements."

"Public input on redistricting is extremely important to the map-drawing process," Ford said. "We look forward to hearing from Hoosiers from all over Indiana during these meetings." Campus meeting room information will be updated as it's available on the Indiana General Assembly's website at iga.in.gov. Meetings will be livestreamed and archived at iga.in.gov.

GiaQuinta said in a letter to House Speaker Todd Huston and Senate President Pro Tempore Rodric Bray that more hearings should be scheduled following the release of preliminary maps. "The public will be commenting on abstract concepts rather than detailed proposals," GiaQuinta wrote.

Indiana Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl reacted to the General Assembly redistricting hearings, saying, "Over the last decade, Hoosiers have witnessed 'right to work' laws create a 'work more for less' economy, manufactured culture wars like RFRA unfairly attack our friends and family members, and a system that has gutted public school funding and diminished our children's future – all tracing back to gerrymandered district maps drawn by the Indiana Republican Party. Hoosiers need balance to be restored.

"The Indiana Republican supermajority will no doubt be tempted to continue to rig the system against Hoosiers who simply want to choose their representatives in free, fair, and competitive elections," Schmuhl continued. "Indiana Democrats are ready to take this vital democratic debate across the state and demand that Republicans value and respect all Hoosier voices – not just

elected Republican officeholders and operatives behind closed doors. Our state cannot go through another decade with this imbalance in our government. We will hold them accountable now and in future electoral cycles ... we will never stop fighting for a better Indiana."

Donnelly makes jobs pitch in Anderson

About 50 local Democrats and interested residents gathered to hear former U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly push for passage of the American Jobs Plan (de la Bastide, Anderson Herald Bulletin). The American Jobs Plan has been proposed by President Joe Biden to spend \$2.7 trillion on improving infrastructure throughout the country and creating millions of good jobs. "What's so interesting about it is, every dollar is paid for," Donnelly said of the Biden proposal. "It's not going to add to the federal deficit at all, but what it does do is bring investments to Anderson and Muncie and the people here." Donnelly said that a few years ago, a multitrillion-dollar tax cut was passed that gave our money away and wasn't paid for. "It's rebuilding Indiana, and people will be able to continue to go back to work," he said in a field near the new downtown Transit Center. "We lost millions of jobs during the pandemic and just last month saw a million jobs come back."

Governor

Doden begins his 92-county tour

Indiana's only declared candidate in the 2024 governor's race begins his 92 county listening tour today, but not before sitting down with WANE 15. Eric Doden sent a message to potential Republican candidates with his first report to the Indiana Election Division. He raised nearly \$1 million to signal this race will likely be expensive and he will be able to compete in any ad war across Indiana's multiple TV markets. But will voters respond to his message? Doden does not like mandates from the state. "I don't really think government should be mandating things," he starts. "I think government's role is to educate." He says he would not have imposed a statewide mask mandate to curb COVID-19 but would have allowed cities and counties to require Hoosiers to mask up if they determined a local need. "I think a lot of what should happen is between you and your health provider – even in terms of vaccination. I know I certainly asked my health provider, 'should I be vaccinated?' They had a very strong opinion that, given the fact that I had already had some immunity to COVID, that I should not. They may change their mind but that's between me and my health provider." He's running, he says, to help Indiana's smaller towns with their distressed properties. "We have about 80 cities that are between 2,500 and 30,000 (people). And in a lot of those cities, and we've started studying this, about 80% of their core historic assets are in distress."

INGOP diversity class graduates

Over 300 friends and supporters of the Indiana Republican Party celebrated the graduation of the inaugural cohort of the Indiana Republican Party Diversity Leadership Series last Friday. Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel, Gov. Eric Holcomb, and Indiana Republican Party Chairman Kyle Hupfer spoke during the luncheon.

"Things like this just don't happen," McDaniel said.



"This is intentional. This is a partnership of Gov. Holcomb, Chairman Hupfer, and everyone in this room. Expanding coalitions and growing our party has been a passion of mine since I became chair of the RNC. Not just to win votes, but to build authentic relationships and share our message with all communities."

Holcomb said, "We grow opportunity in Indiana. The future of our state is in this room. That future is in sharing our Republican message with communities that haven't always heard from us."

Chairman Kyle Hupfer added, "Our hope is this is really a beginning. We share a message of unity, inclusion and opportunity."

The class of 15 graduates represents a wide range of backgrounds and communities across Indiana. The class includes members of law enforcement, military veterans, faith leaders, entrepreneurs and leaders from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Presidential

Harris flagging in polls

Vice President Harris has some ground to make up in order to be perceived more favorably by the public, a complicating factor for the Biden administration as it maps out its midterm strategy (The Hill). Six months into office, polls indicate Harris is viewed less favorably than President Biden. Vice presidents historically do not outperform the leader at the top of the ticket. But her lower ratings haven't gone unnoticed. In a trio of recent surveys, Harris earned a combined unfavorable rating of 46 percent, according to an aggregate average compiled by RealClearPolitics. That number is 3 points below Biden's 43 percent in the same category. ❖

Three years ago I said Pete should run for WH

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Three years ago, in a column published on July 29, 2018, I wrote that Pete Buttigieg, then mayor of South Bend, should run for president.

Shows what I know about politics. Mayor Pete ran for president. He lost. He could instead have easily won a third term as mayor. And he would not now face pressures of dealing with the nation's roads, rails, airports and bridges and seeking a trillion dollars to fix them.



Actually, I said in that column that I thought Buttigieg would indeed run for president, "and will not win." But he would win by losing. I never thought Buttigieg would win the presidency in 2020, although it seemed possible after his spectacular showing in Iowa and New Hampshire. Even before that, he had some chance. If Donald Trump could be elected,

who couldn't be president?

Buttigieg became one of the finalists for the Democratic nomination. "Favorites" with more impressive titles fell one after the other. He would have had an even better chance if his win in the Iowa caucuses hadn't been obscured by all the delays in counting the votes.

Even if Mayor Pete had become came Nominee Pete, I don't think he would have defeated Donald Trump. I agree with the analysis that Joe Biden was the perfect challenger for Trump, offering the perfect contrast, the only Democratic contender who would have defeated Trump in those close battleground states.

Buttigieg had won by losing before. He lost his first race, as Democratic nominee for state treasurer in a Republican landslide year. He was impressive, however, leading to support for his successful race for mayor. He was impressive once again in seeking but failing to win for Democratic national chairman, gaining national recognition.

When I wrote that the mayor of South Bend, then just 36

years old, should run for president, some readers kindly suggested I was crazy for suggesting it and Buttigieg would be crazy if he did it. He wasn't crazy. Think what you will about me.

I thought, and I'm sure he did too, that there was nothing else to prove as mayor. It was time to seek other challenges in government and politics. But president? Shouldn't he first seek governor or senator as a stepping stone? No. Those stones were too slippery for a Democrat in Indiana.

However, if he could qualify for the presidential debates, could Buttigieg, with his sincere style and intellect, enhance a national reputation? He qualified. He won extensive name recognition and gained national support as others fell flat.

If Trump had won reelection, Buttigieg still would have emerged as a prominent Democratic spokesman, with a future in politics and all kinds of job offers in education, with foundations or in private enterprise.

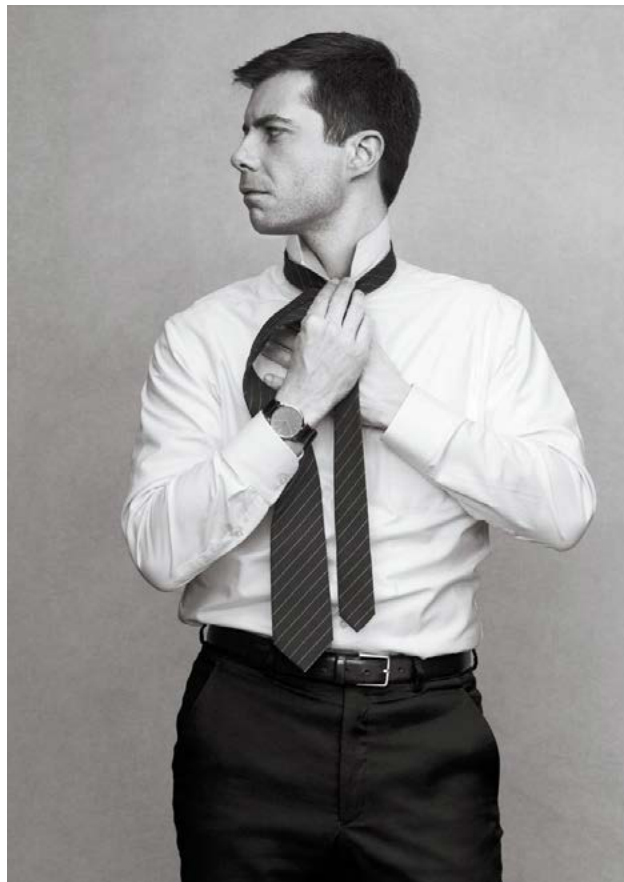
If a Democrat won the presidency in 2020, I suggested, Buttigieg could be named to a powerful Cabinet position or something else challenging on the national scene. No, I wasn't thinking specifically of transportation secretary. Nor was he.

Well, if anybody back in 2018 feared that Mayor Pete and his husband Chasten would be left still with crushing student debt and uncertain job prospects after a silly, costly presidential adventure, there was no need to worry. Forbes recently told of how the presidential run brought "gobs" of money.

"Round-the clock cable appearances made him famous, and fame led to money," Forbes reported, citing such things as the three books Pete and Chasten Buttigieg have written and Pete's Cabinet salary of more than \$200,000. "They went from earning the sort of modest salaries you might expect from a middle-school teacher and a small-city mayor to hauling in more than \$1 million," Forbes calculated.

Win by losing? Yes. Not just financially, never Buttigieg's utmost concern, but in national influence and opportunity to implement the biggest infrastructure program in American history. ❖

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



Reasons to celebrate Indiana's fiscal status

By **LARRY DeBOER**

WEST LAFAYETTE – Happy belated New Year, everyone! I mean the Indiana Fiscal New Year 2022, which started on July 1. The State Budget Agency celebrates the event every summer with a budget closeout, looking back at the year just ended and ahead to the next biennium.



This time, “celebrate” is the right word.

This was a budget year for the Indiana General Assembly, and legislators passed a spending plan for the next two years based on a revenue forecast. The April revenue forecast seemed very optimistic, increasing predicted revenues for the remainder of fiscal 2021 by \$463 million. That’s a very big number.

The same forecast increased predicted revenues for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 by \$1.967 billion. That’s almost \$2 billion. I don’t have an adjective to truly describe how big that number is. It’s a very, very big number.

Can the economy possibly generate that much growth while we try to recover from recession? Yes, it can, and more. In April, May and June, revenues were \$1.2 billion above that very, very big April forecast.

The forecast came about two weeks before the end of the General Assembly’s budget session. The legislature found uses for about \$1 billion of that added \$2.4 billion. We wondered, where is that extra \$1.4 billion, and where is the extra \$1.2 billion from April, May and June?

The Budget Agency’s closeout gives the answer. It’s in the bank. The Budget Agency says that state balances are \$3.9 billion as of July 1. That’s 20.8% of total revenues, which is the biggest percentage since 1999.

Balances are useful to guard against shortfalls in revenue, like in 2020. They’re also useful for cash flow, to pay the state’s bills, even in months when revenue collections are low. The Budget Agency has always liked balances to be between 10% and 12% of revenues, to serve these purposes. Balances were in that neighborhood during most of the last decade.

It’s great to have money in the bank, but balances are taxes that were paid to support state services. Instead they’re in the bank, earning interest, but not much of that. Some level of balances is needed, but 20.8% is way too much.

The General Assembly thought big balances might be a problem. (We should all have such problems!) Therefore, they put a section in the budget bill saying

that, if balances were greater than \$2.5 billion by the end of fiscal 2022, the extra amount would be dropped into the pre-1996 Teachers Retirement Fund. That needs some explanation.

Indiana established a pay-as-you-go pension system for teachers in 1921. The state would make an appropriation to spend out of current revenues each year, to meet the promised benefit payments. Then came the baby boom, and lots more teachers were hired. By the 1990s, it was clear that when all those teachers retired, the future pension payments would grow to a very large share of the budget.

The state started a new teachers’ pension system in 1996, funded with contributions from employers and employees. The pre-1996 pension promises remain, however, so future pay-as-you-go appropriations will still be needed. Depositing money into the pre-1996 fund means that those appropriations will be lower. Future taxpayers will be on the hook for less. The Budget Agency expects that \$695 million will go to the pre-1996 fund in fiscal 2023.

Another law passed in 2011 tells the Budget Agency what else to do with big balances. If balances are more than 12.5% of the budget at the end of an odd-numbered fiscal year, half of the excess amount goes to the pre-1996 Teachers Retirement Fund. That’s an additional \$545 million to reduce the future cost of pension benefits.


The other half of excess balances will be refunded to taxpayers in fiscal 2022. The calculation is pretty simple: Divide the refunded amount by the number of state income taxpayers. Since there are about 3.1 million taxpayers, a total refund of \$545 million means about \$175 per taxpayer. It will be credited against your tax payment, or added to your refund.

So celebrate the Indiana Fiscal New Year! This time, we’ll even get presents. ❖

Deboer is a professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University.

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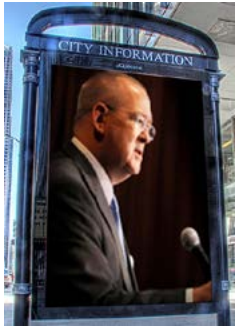
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YOUR FRIENDS ALL HANG OUT HERE... DO YOU?

Ending pandemic UI was a rare mistake

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE – In May, Gov. Eric Holcomb's announced an early end to pandemic unemployment assistance. This decision was a rare policy mistake for an administration that had spent more than a year handling COVID with admirable attention to data and good judgement.



The mistake was also unusual in that the predictable result was economic damage to those Hoosiers who were most affected by COVID. This was a marked departure from the administration's more than yearlong focus on the health and wellbeing of those most impacted by the pandemic.

Fortunately, the courts reversed that decision and payments resumed earlier this month. Labor markets are slowly improving, so fewer families would've been substantially harmed by the payment turbulence. Ultimately, the decision to end pandemic unemployment assistance early will be only a footnote to an administration that performed commendably through the worst crisis Indiana faced since the Civil War.

The sole reason I write about the topic is that this episode illustrates how inchoate Indiana's workforce decision process has become. Moreover, the fiasco with pandemic unemployment assistance illuminates the folly of the Division of Workforce Development's culture of supporting businesses at the expense of taxpayers as a whole. Hopefully, this incident will lead to a more mature approach within the administration and the DWD.

The CARES Act passed in March 2020, authorizing supplement types of unemployment insurance to self-employed persons. The act also provided an additional \$300 per week in UI payments. The payments were later extended until mid-autumn of this year. The purpose of the payments was to bolster the pandemic-affected economy and support the minority of families affected by COVID job losses. These pandemic payments came solely from federal tax dollars, so state tax coffers were unaffected.

The pandemic unemployment insurance payments were as close to a 'free lunch' for Hoosier taxpayers as anything we'll ever receive. So, it is puzzling how a provision signed by President Trump and unanimously passed by the Senate would become target of partisan opposition in less than a year. Of course, this is because by April 2021, many businesses complained about a looming labor shortage presumably caused by generous pandemic unemployment payments. But even more mystifying is how anyone could've examined labor force data in April or May

and concluded there was a labor shortage in Indiana.

By the end of April, Indiana's economy had stopped growing. Over the first four months of the year, employment nationwide grew by a healthy 1.1 percent, but Indiana's employment actually dropped by one-tenth of a percent (0.1%). From January through April, the state experienced an employment decline of more than 3,400 workers. This decline was broad-based, leaving Indiana as one of the worst-performing economies in the nation. This alone should've been strong evidence that something other than the lack of workers was weighing on the Hoosier economy.

In the days leading up to the May decision to suspend pandemic UI, data was flowing in that didn't just challenge the notion of a labor shortage, but also absolutely crushed that claim. From the peak of 2021 UI in mid-January through mid-May, the state's UI system reported that almost 170,000 workers left the system. So, the decision to terminate the pandemic UI payments was made after four months of declining employment, when a whopping 170,000 Hoosier workers had already lost benefits.

Labor markets are dynamic, and so data on workers, wages and available jobs are sometimes hard to evaluate. For example, in a normal four-month period, we'd expect maybe 25,000 Hoosiers to retire. Accounting for some of these 170,000 workers who were leaving UI, backfilling recent retirements and adding the loss of overall employment means that from January to early May, just under 150,000 workers lost benefits without finding work.

This means that just as Indiana announced it had a 'labor shortage' and would end the pandemic UI early, the state's own labor market data made clear there was a 'labor surplus.' But there was even more data nationwide that suggested little or no evidence of a labor shortage. Wage growth in early 2021 was also muted. As the decision to end UI was made in May, wage growth nationally beat inflation for only two of the six previous months. Moreover, 'help wanted' ads in April and the first three weeks of 2021 were only 12% higher than 2018, the last strong year of economic growth in the state.

The wholly unvarnished truth of the matter is that when Gov. Holcomb announced the end of pandemic UI, there was absolutely no credible evidence from labor markets of a shortage of workers. Sure, there were businesses complaining about the difficulty of finding workers. No doubt many of them did and still do find it difficult to attract workers. However, those claims just cannot outweigh piles of contradictory evidence.

Businesses are taxpayers, and businesses deserve to be heard by elected officials, but when claims by businesses can be easily refuted by the state's own data, their concerns cannot be taken seriously enough to guide public policy. The culture of state government that values business voices over all other considerations is a bad one for Hoosier taxpayers, and, more importantly, it is bad for

business. This episode suggests a broad reevaluation.

It is worth noting that in the weeks since the May announcement to end pandemic UI, the very poor justification for that decision has actually deteriorated. Between the January highs and the end of June this year, the UI rolls shed a full 237,000 workers, while Indiana businesses created only 21,300 jobs.

Indiana's economy did a bit better in May and June than over the previous six months. Still, Indiana has grown employment at less than 40 percent the national rate this year.

The claims of a labor shortage in May turned out to be patently false, and in the month that UI ended, the

state's unemployment rate actually rose. I don't know what advice the governor received from the Division of Workforce Development when it came to ending this program. I'm hopeful that somewhere within that agency, someone argued that the data didn't warrant such a decision. If not, it is time to change both culture and staff. ❖

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.

Labor's ongoing loss

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – This week, we break new ground. The conclusion of this column will precede the data supporting it. But don't consider this a permanent feature. We'll return to slugging through the data soon enough.



Indiana workers, like their brothers and sisters nationwide, find their compensation declining as a share of GDP (the value all goods and services). The details may not make the nightly news on Fox or MSNBC, it might even escape attention on NPR, the fact is of long duration and wide-spread.

The issue is a progressive transition of income from workers to business owners and managers. That may sound Marxist, but it is very much consistent with the most

admired attributes of capitalism.

What do we expect of capitalism? Innovation – in successive waves of advanced iPhones and home entertainment. Capitalism, as we know and admire it, is designed to reward innovators who please consumers. Capitalism encourages the empowerment of consumers by the transfer of knowledge from a few to the many, via manufacturing and simplified filtering of knowledge.

That is how I can drive a car, work on a computer, eat good food, enjoy the Cubs (win or lose), and live so very long. Imaginative people have found ways of doing things and incorporating that knowledge into goods and services benefiting others, who do wondrous things without possessing such knowledge.

Because men and women of all races and ethnicities learned to capture fire and to produce abundance from the land, we of impure blood today are polluting the world, passively awaiting the next innovative wave to restore some semblance of environmental equilibrium. This

would be satisfactory if the knowledge creators, those who tinker with or think about chemicals, particles, hormones, metals, with all forms of matter, and with complex processes, were rewarded adequately. But they are not.

Patents and preemptive contracts preclude the people who advance our society from the compensation they deserve. The "ordinary" worker on the line, who finds a better way to do the job, rarely receives compensation commensurate with the profit gained by shareholders and administrators. The clerk at a desk, who speeds up a process benefiting millions, often does not gain even slight recognition.

If we do not value people who improve our lives, what do we value? From 2001 to 2019, the compensation of workers nationally declined from 57.4% to 53.6% of GDP. Compensation for Hoosiers went from 57.9% of state GDP to 52.4%, the third worst change among the 50 states.

GDP measures the value of all the goods and services produced in the marketplace. Compensation includes wages, salaries and employer contributions to public and private benefits. In this country, workers' share of GDP declined in 47 states. In Indiana, those shares fell in 80 of our 92 counties.

I have the numbers but not the space to tell the full story. ❖

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

A pandemic of the unvaccinated

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News

ANDERSON – The note from a California woman seemed earnest enough. “Why is it not possible to hear both sides of the vaccine debate without labeling either side as crazy or expert?” she asked. “Why not let people decide for themselves what they feel is correct or incorrect?”



She suggested a column I had written in mid-April gave vaccine critics short shrift.

“I am curious, though, what you would say to the relatives of those who have passed away CLEARLY from the adverse effects of these vaccines,” she wrote.

She mentioned the case of 39-year-old Kassidi Kurill, a Utah woman who received a second dose of the Moderna vaccine on Feb. 1 and was dead by the end of the week.

Contrary to my reader’s assertion, though, Dr. Erik Christensen, chief medical examiner for the Utah Department of Health, told Fox News in mid-March there was no evidence of a link between Kurill’s death and the vaccine. “We don’t have any indication of that,” he said.

The woman’s father, Alfred Hawley, told Fox News at the time he did suspect the vaccine, but he also said he had gotten a shot himself because as a 69-year-old diabetic he was at high risk for serious complications if he were to contract the virus.

“It appears she was the odd one out that had the terrible reaction,” he said.

My California reader is in a similar age group, but she made a different choice, in part because of her son’s experience. She said he spent seven hours in an emergency room after getting his second shot and is still feeling the effects a month later.

I thanked her for her note, and I apologized if I had given her the impression I was suggesting anyone who questioned the vaccines was crazy. “That was not my intent,” I

wrote. I was really referring, I said, to crackpots such as Mike Yeadon, the former Pfizer executive who claimed anyone who had already taken a vaccine was doomed to an early death.

“Thanks for replying,” she wrote back, “but again, though I hope Yeadon is completely wrong in his assertions regarding the future for recipients of vaccines, it is impossible at this point to say that what he predicts is false, as the fact still remains mRNA vaccines have no long term safety data at all. To claim his information is false is also misinformation.”

She mentioned Doris Cahill, a professor at University College Dublin, “and a whole cadre of highly respected immunologists” who have come out against the vaccines. “One has to wonder why they would sacrifice their long careers unless they firmly believed in what they were saying,” she wrote.

That is exactly the sort of argument these so-called experts use to defend their whacky claims, and it’s an excellent question. Why do they do it? For the attention?

This discussion is growing more urgent in light of the recent rise in virus statistics. During an appearance in Las Vegas, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra spoke of a “pandemic of the unvaccinated.” “If you are dying today in America from COVID, it’s because essentially you’re unvaccinated,” he told reporters. “Why would you want to die? Why would you want to imperil your loved ones and your family and your workplace and your place of worship?”

My California reader, though, is convinced the vaccines are unnecessary. We can all get through the pandemic, she wrote, by wearing a high-quality mask. “There is no need for big brother to censor negative information nor to push vaccines on those who don’t want them,” she wrote. “We still have free will in this country and free thought. Let’s keep it that way.”

She closed with a slight twist on an old saw. “Truth,” she wrote, “is always stranger than fiction.” Well, maybe not always. ❖





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Time for our Indians to change their name

By **DAVE KITCHELL**

LOGANSPOURT – Like many Hoosiers, I can say that the first professional baseball game I witnessed was in Indianapolis. It was on a day back in the 1970s when the Indianapolis Indians, then the triple A affiliate of the vaunted Cincinnati Reds, lost to the Evansville Triplets, an affiliate of the Brewers.



In addition to Reds legends such as Ken Griffey who rose through the ranks of the franchise to stardom and a world championship, there were the likes of Henry Aaron, long the greatest home run hitter in MLB history.

Times have changed.

The Washington Redskins have become "The Washington Football Club" pending a new

name. The Cleveland Indians have become "The Cleveland Guardians. It's been many moons since St. John University switched from the Red Men, since the Miami of Ohio Redskins became the Redhawks and since the Eastern Michigan Hurons became the Eagles.

It's often been said that Indiana is slow to react to change that happens in other areas of the country, and that is particularly true in this case. In a state that prides itself as an amateur sports capital, the home of the NCAA and the Colts, Pacers and Indy 11, it stands to reason that it is long past time to change the name of the Triple A franchise.

It has a prominent place in downtown Indianapolis, but it would have a deeper place within us if team officials took the lead in finding a new identity and a direction for a team that has been highly successful on the field.

Yes, if the team was owned by the Pokagon Tribe, it could make a case for retaining the name. But it doesn't, and it can't. In a city that takes pride in its African-American legends from Oscar Robertson to Major Taylor and George McGinnis, civic pride has to be applied equally to Native Americans, the minority that once was the major-

ity in what is now Indianapolis and what has always been Indiana.

Perhaps adopting the Aeros, the name chosen by the late Art Angtotti in his quest to bring Major League Baseball to Indianapolis, would be a fit. For that matter, maybe the Racers would work as an homage to the former hockey franchise and the Indy 500, or the Caps, as a tribute to the former minor league football team. Or maybe just the Native Americans, which would pay tribute to the reality that Indiana's history is more about the Potawatomi, the Miami and the Shawnee than the Pirates, the Reds and the Rangers.

If Indianapolis wants to continue on its vector of being the Circle City that courts and attracts world class events and companies, it will do a classy thing and as Indiana's Michael Jackson once pleaded, "Make that change."

It's required to teach Indiana history in every fourth grade classroom. If generations of Hoosiers learned anything from that year of their education, they should support a change in the Indianapolis Indians' name and the players who represent whatever name is chosen to replace it. That will say more about the caliber of the franchise and raise it above AAA to the major leagues of public acceptance.

The great Trail of Death wound through Indiana in the 1830s. As we approach the 200th anniversary of that somber, chilling episode in our state's history, we can bring some closure to a difficult chapter in our cultural evolution.

To these organizations who promote diversity from the Black Expo to the Latino community, let's play ball with



the American pastime as it is represented in Indiana's capital. ❖

Kitchell is a former journalist and Democratic mayor of Logansport.

What happened in Texas CD6 election

By **J. MILES COLEMAN, NISHITA GHANATE** and **PARAKRAM KARNIK**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – In a result that’s being framed as a black eye for Donald Trump, last night in the Dallas area, a (mostly) Republican electorate sided against the former president. Texas’ 6th District became vacant in February, when then-Rep. Ron Wright (R, TX-6), who was just sworn in for a second term, died of COVID-19 complications.

For much of the campaign, the late congressman’s widow, Susan Wright, was a tenuous frontrunner. With the help of a late Trump endorsement, Wright placed first in a May all-party primary, while Republican state Rep. Jake Ellzey claimed second. The candidates met in yesterday’s runoff.

As the runoff campaign wound down, an upset looked increasingly feasible: Ellzey, who was often seen around the district wearing a cowboy hat, emphasized his background as a Naval aviator, and ran an energetic campaign. Ellzey’s efforts paid off, as he won the runoff with just over 53% of the vote. As an aside, considering now-Rep. Mike Garcia’s (R, CA-25) win last year, this has been a good stretch for former Navy pilots running in special elections.

Three years ago, Ellzey came up short in his first bid for Congress: the late Rep. Wright defeated him 52%-48% in a Republican runoff. Wright ran up the score in his home Tarrant County (TX-6’s most populous county), while Ellzey, who represents Ellis County in the legislature, did well there, and in Navarro County. Given the similar circumstances, it seemed that yesterday’s election would fall along those geographic lines. But that wasn’t entirely the case.

As with 2018, Ellzey ran best in Ellis County, but as Map 1 shows, he did considerably better in Tarrant County this time. Though Trump’s support was obviously not sufficient, it still may have helped Wright in rural quarters of the district, as she picked up Navarro County.

Limiting our analysis to Tarrant County, the light blue precincts that Ellzey picked up supported President Biden by a 56%-42% spread in last year’s general election. The red precincts that stuck with Wright supported Biden as well, but by a slimmer 52%-47%. So while this suggests Democratic voters broke to Ellzey, turnout was especially low in most of Biden’s best precincts. In fact, across the board, turnout was extremely low, even by special election standards.

Just about 40,000 votes were cast yesterday, or just about 12% of the 340,000 cast in the TX-6 regular election last fall. Granted, no one should expect a special election turnout to come anywhere close to a general

election turnout, particularly a very high-turnout election like 2020’s was. But this was still low. By comparison, a recent special election in NM-1 won by a Democrat over a Republican had about 130,000 votes cast, or about 41% of the 320,000 votes cast last November. That this was a Republican vs. Republican contest surely dissuaded a lot of voters from coming out – turnout was about double for the first round of voting, when Wright and Ellzey advanced to the runoff from a crowded field. So beware of drawing any major conclusions from it – although it does seem fair to say that Trump’s involvement in the race didn’t spur much participation.

While it may be too early to write off the significance of Trump’s endorsement in Republican contests, next week’s contest in Ohio’s 15th District will represent another test of the former president’s clout. In that Buckeye State race, Trump has endorsed former lobbyist Mike Carey, who is in a crowded primary field, which also includes several current and former state legislators.

Though he didn’t have the former president’s backing, Ellzey is not anti-Trump. Big-name Republicans, such as Rep. Dan Crenshaw (R, TX-2) and former Gov. Rick Perry (R-TX), endorsed him, so we can expect him to be a reliable party vote in Congress. Once Ellzey is sworn in, Democrats will hold 220 seats to the Republicans’ 212.



Polling shows tightening California Recall

A recent poll by Emerson College in collaboration with Nexstar Media shows that Gov. Gavin Newsom (D-CA) may have a larger issue than he may have thought when it comes to defeating his recall effort. It shows that 43% of California voters support a recall effort, while 48% oppose, with 9% undecided. On Tuesday, another poll, this time from the UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies poll co-sponsored by the Los Angeles Times, found 47% support for the recall, with 50% opposed. The recall is Tuesday, Sept. 14.

Party affiliation & vaccination rates

It is no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic has become increasingly partisan as numerous public safety measures, such as social distancing and mask mandates, have received support from Democrats while often facing intense backlash from Republicans. A Pew Research Poll from February, at a time when it was harder for many Americans to get access to vaccines, found that 96% of Democrats as opposed to 72% of Republicans supported requiring face masks on public transportation and 66% of Democrats supported closing K-12 schools for in-person learning, compared to only 25% of Republicans. But does this party divide extend to the vaccine, the potential solution to the pandemic?

Polls suggest the answer is yes. In May, Gallup found that 46% of Republicans compared to only 6% of Democrats did not plan on getting vaccinated, a 40-point

difference. An Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll from mid-July reported a similar finding: 43% of Republicans said they aren't vaccinated and probably or definitely won't get the vaccine, compared to just 10% of Democrats.

We looked at vaccination data and checked if there was any correlation with the 2020 presidential election results. Of the 10 states with the highest rates of people who have gotten at least one dose, all 10 were won by Joe Biden last year. Similarly, of the 10 states with the lowest vaccination rates, nine were won by Trump with the one exception being Georgia, a state Donald Trump lost by less than one percentage point.

Looking at the aggregate data, the correlation coefficient (a measure on a scale of -1 to 1 determining the strength of a linear relationship between two variables) between vaccination rates and Biden's vote share by state was 0.806, proving a strong correlation between Biden support and vaccination rates. The correlation between Trump's vote share and vaccination rates was also very similar, -0.812, which indicates that there is an inverse relationship between Trump's share of the vote and vaccination rates (Trump doing better was correlated to some extent with vaccination rates being lower).

We also looked at vaccination rates against the presidential results across counties/independent cities in Virginia. Of the 10 counties/cities with the highest vaccination rates, eight were won by Biden, and of the 10 with the lowest vaccination rates, eight were won by Trump. However, the correlation coefficient decreased in strength to 0.406 and -0.413 for Biden's and Trump's vote share, respectively. These numbers still indicate a relationship between party identification and vaccination rates; however, it is a significantly weaker relationship than the one seen at the national level. Varying voter turnout rates, third party voting, and larger child populations are all potential reasons the relationship is weaker, but regardless, it is evident that party identification has some influence on the decision to get vaccinated.

Another potential explanation for the weaker relationship also could be lower vaccination rates in places with larger communities of color, whether because of hesitancy to get the vaccine or a lack of access to it. Georgia, a Biden-voting outlier on the state level, has a 32.6% Black population, which is significantly larger than the 13.4% Black population nationally. This may also shed

Table 1: States with the 10 highest COVID-19 vaccination rates

State	At least one vaccine dose	Biden vote share	Trump vote share
Vermont	75.2%	66.1%	30.7%
Massachusetts	72.1%	65.6%	32.1%
Hawaii	71.0%	63.7%	34.3%
Connecticut	69.2%	59.2%	39.2%
Maine	67.9%	53.1%	44.0%
Rhode Island	66.5%	59.4%	38.6%
New Jersey	65.2%	57.1%	41.3%
Pennsylvania	64.9%	49.9%	48.7%
New Mexico	64.8%	54.3%	43.5%
New Hampshire	64.3%	52.7%	45.4%

Table 2: States with the 10 lowest COVID-19 vaccination rates

State	At least one vaccine dose	Biden vote share	Trump vote share
Mississippi	38.6%	41.0%	57.6%
Idaho	40.7%	33.0%	63.7%
Louisiana	41.0%	39.9%	58.5%
Wyoming	41.2%	26.6%	69.9%
Alabama	42.0%	36.6%	62.0%
Tennessee	44.1%	37.5%	60.7%
Georgia	45.1%	49.5%	49.2%
North Dakota	45.1%	31.8%	65.1%
Arkansas	45.5%	34.8%	62.4%
West Virginia	45.9%	29.7%	68.6%

some light on outliers in the Virginia data. For instance, Virginia has a 19.9% Black population as compared to 15.8% for Goochland County -- the smaller Black population may provide some indication as to why the county has a higher-than-expected vaccination rate. Prince Edward County and Norfolk city, the two places that voted for Biden but are among the bottom 10 in vaccination rate, are, respectively, 32.8% and 41.1% Black, which may help explain their lower-than-expected vaccination rates. Lancaster County is an outlier with a higher-than-expected vaccination rate but a larger Black population as compared to the rest of Virginia, but the data suggest that governments may need to expand vaccine access among minority communities. ❖

Dave Bangert, [Based in Lafayette:](#) On Friday, less than a week ago, medical staffers at Lafayette's Franciscan Health campus on Creasy Lane looked at beds at capacity from all sorts of ailments and surgeries and then at the emerging number of COVID-19 cases bad enough to warrant hospital stays. On that morning, Franciscan's Lafayette facility had 10 COVID-19 cases, up from five a few days earlier. Dr. Daniel Wickert, vice president of medical affairs with Franciscan, said that wasn't nearly close to the 70 or so the hospital had seen during the peak of the pandemic late last year into early 2021. But for a staff running on fumes, some opting out of bedside roles and growing reluctant to shoulder extra shifts 18 months into the pandemic, Wickert said those five cases were taking their toll on a facility dealing with a rise in non-COVID upper-respiratory illnesses and catch-up on elective surgeries. "I asked the question last Friday: We were at 10, what if we went to 20?" Wickert said Wednesday. "Could we handle that? The answer was, No. And in less than a week ..." By Wednesday morning, Franciscan had 16 positive cases requiring hospitalization, with another 13 suspected cases. Of those, nine patients were in the intensive care unit. Of those, four were on ventilators. How many of those are part of a nationwide wave in delta variant COVID-19 cases wasn't clear, Wickert said. But of those 36 actual or suspected cases, all but one patient was unvaccinated, Wickert said. "Now we're asking, Can we handle another 20?" Wickert said. "No. But we might have to. ... We're stressed over here." A few miles away at IU Health Arnett Hospital, Dr. Jim Bien, chief medical officer, tells a similar story. COVID-19 cases in the three to five range a few weeks ago are now 14 to 16 at the Lafayette hospital, Bien said. "We can handle that, so it's not an overwhelming number of COVID cases," Bien said. "But I will say the patients we're seeing are younger and they're coming to us sicker, so the length of stay is longer. ... Our people – people at both hospital systems – are just fatigued and worn out. Yes, I'm worried." ❖

Aaron E. Carroll, [New York Times:](#) Case counts are rising, some hospitals are filling up, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is again recommending universal masking in areas where cases are surging. But to suggest that Covid-19 is an escalating emergency in the United States is not quite right. The truth is that the vaccinated and the unvaccinated are experiencing two very different pandemics right now. If we don't confront that, the nation can't address either appropriately. The C.D.C.'s announcement will lead many to believe that the pandemic is getting worse. But if you and most of the people in your area are vaccinated, things are substantially better than they used to be. Hospitals are relatively clear of Covid-19. Few deaths are occurring. People may still be worried, and some may be masking, but much of

their panic is that the stuffy nose they woke up with may be Covid-19. Sometimes it is. As has always been the case, breakthrough infections of Covid-19 remain possible. Such reports have become more frequent. Because the vaccines are not 100 percent effective, some vaccinated people will get infected, some will get sick, and in rare cases, some may even be hospitalized. The success of the vaccines has long been predicated on preventing severe illness, which they do, rather than on preventing any infection. If the vast majority of vaccinated people who get Covid-19 recover with no real issues, how much should we worry? There are four other endemic coronaviruses in circulation. They all cause colds. It would be a major victory if we could relegate SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, to this group. For the vaccinated, right now, that victory has largely been achieved. One of the reasons we can't celebrate yet is that none of this is true for the unvaccinated. For them, the pandemic has not changed much. Hospitals are filling up again in states where rates of vaccination are low. The very elderly are still at higher risk because a breakthrough infection is more dangerous for them. Children aren't eligible to be vaccinated yet, and while they're at relatively low risk for severe illness, they may need some extra protection. It's critical to act at a local level to protect all such people in our communities. Others should mask up around them, try to limit indoor contact with them and sit a little farther away. That's what we did before the vaccines, and it's still good practice. Specific masking recommendations for those at highest risk make sense. The single best thing we can do for such people, though, is to get everyone around them immunized. ❖

John Krull, [Statehouse File:](#) It's not often an entire state sees a member of the bench administer a public spanking to a 51-year-old man. Now, courtesy of Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita, Hoosiers have witnessed such a humiliating spectacle. Marion County Judge Patrick Dietrick did the paddling. Dietrick rejected every one of Rokita's arguments the attorney general made to insert himself into the dispute between Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb and the Indiana General Assembly about who can call the legislature into session. (The Indiana constitution says only the governor can but the self-styled constitutional purists in the legislative branch have developed cases of selective illiteracy.) Rokita, who has elevated pandering to the Trump wing of the Republican Party into a cause resembling a jihad, sided with the lawmakers. He contended that the governor could not hire outside counsel—and thus initiate litigation—without his permission. He argued that he could represent both sides in the battle—and serve as arbiter, too. He asserted that he alone could represent the state in court and was the sole interpreter of whether the law violated the Indiana Constitution. Wrong, wrong and wrong again, the judge said. ❖



Senate votes 67-32 on bipartisan plan

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan group of senators struck an agreement on a roughly \$1 trillion infrastructure package Wednesday after grinding months of talks, hammering out enough details to propel the deal past its first procedural hurdle just hours later

([Wall Street Journal](#)). The Senate voted 67-32 to begin consideration of the bill, above the 60 required and reversing a failed effort a week earlier when many specifics of the deal were still under negotiation. U.S. Sen. Todd Young voted yes and U.S. Sen. Mike Braun voted no. Braun said, "Congress can't keep spending trillions of dollars we don't have. The infrastructure package announced today continues the trend in Congress of insane deficit spending. Let's not forget, this is just the first step in the Democrats' plan to pass their \$5.5 trillion tax and spend liberal wish list. Our nation is facing a nearly \$30 TRILLION federal debt crisis." Republican negotiators said Wednesday they now had enough confidence in the details of the agreement to allow it to move forward. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) backed the motion. Negotiators cast the agreement and vote as proof that bipartisanship was still possible in a deeply divided Washington. "Despite the popularity and the need for it, Washington hasn't been able to get it done. This time, we're going to get it done," said Sen. Rob Portman (R., Ohio), the lead GOP negotiator in the talks. Completing the infrastructure agreement, which lawmakers and aides said would provide for roughly \$550 billion in spending above projected federal levels, is the first step Democrats hope to take toward approving much of President Biden's agenda on Capitol Hill in the coming months. That includes Democrats' parallel \$3.5 trillion child care,



education, healthcare and climate-change plan. Mr. Biden supported the bipartisan approach and cheered the deal Wednesday, calling it "the most significant long-term investment in our infrastructure and competitiveness in nearly a century."

FedEx shooter was suicidal

INDIANAPOLIS — The former employee who shot and killed eight people at an Indianapolis FedEx warehouse in April acted alone and was not racially or ethnically motivated, authorities said Wednesday ([AP](#)). Brandon Scott Hole, 19, used the April 15 attack as an act of "suicidal murder" and believed he would "demonstrate his masculinity and capability" while fulfilling a final desire to experience killing people, Indianapolis police and federal authorities said during a news conference. Eight employees, including four members of the city's Sikh community, were killed in the attack.

COVID surges 853% since June 27

MUNSTER — A total of 1,248 Hoosiers tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday, the highest daily case count since April 29 and a whopping 853% increase compared to the 131 coronavirus cases tallied in Indiana on June 27, just one month ago ([Carden, NWI Times](#)). Data released by the Indiana Department of Health also show 781 Hoosiers currently hospitalized with COVID-19 and 12 newly reported COVID-19 deaths in the state — bringing the number of confirmed and probable Hoosier deaths due to COVID-19 to 13,993. The surging number of COVID-19 infections in Indiana are concentrated almost entirely in individuals who so far have chosen not to get the free COVID-19 vaccine at any of the 1,062 immunization sites in the state, including pharmacies, health clinics and hospitals. In "yellow" Hendricks County, located east of Indianapolis, the Indiana Law Enforce-

ment Academy on Wednesday temporarily suspended its police training class after 10 students tested positive, and 50 more students were in isolation due to COVID-19 symptoms or because they are considered close contacts of a positive case. The majority of the 117 students are unvaccinated, according to ILEA Director Tim Horthy.

U.S. economy grew at 6.5%

WASHINGTON — The U.S. economy was officially back and fully recovered from the pandemic as of June, although a recent surge in covid cases could threaten new uncertainty ahead ([Washington Post](#)). The economy grew 6.5 percent in the quarter ending in June, as covid vaccinations and unleashed consumer spending added momentum to the recovery. For the first time since the pandemic took hold, economic output eclipsed its pre-pandemic high.

Task force suggests Jordan Ave. rename

BLOOMINGTON — A task force made up of Bloomington and Indiana University representatives has suggested two new names for Jordan Avenue ([Indiana Public Media](#)). The Renaming Task Force recommends Eagleson Avenue for the city-owned section from Davis Street to 17th Street. The university-owned section from 17th Street to Fee Lane, also known as the Jordan Extension, would be Fuller Lane or Mattie Fuller Lane. The Eagleson family has been a prominent African American family in Bloomington for four generations. Mattie Fuller was a successful businesswoman and suffragist who made the donation that founded Bethel AME Church. The IU Board of Trustees voted last October to remove the Jordan name from various campus locations. They had been named for former IU President David Starr Jordan, who had been at the forefront of the American eugenics' movement.