

McDermott takes aim at Sen. Young

5-term Hammond mayor says Washington has 'corrupted' the incumbent

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – In June 2020, five-term Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., did something that John Brademas, Phil Sharp, Mike Pence and Dick Lugar did, suffering a defeat in his first congressional race.



His 1st CD Democratic primary loss to U.S. Rep. Frank J. Mrvan in

the pandemic-delayed election by about 2,800 votes, despite raising more than \$150,000 more than the winner, threw McDermott for a loop. "I went through a crisis, the process of grieving," McDermott told HPI on Monday morning. "I was mad and I was in denial. Then there was acceptance. I did the whole thing. I went out and bought two cars."



He said that suffering that defeat was ultimately for the best. "It was good for me at the end of the day," McDermott said. "I'm really in a good place."

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The Afghan blame game

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

CHICAGO – The current blame game riveting Washington these days falls into the "Who lost Afghanistan?" folder.

A week ago, the brunt of this fell on President Biden as optics of doomed Afghans running and latching on to a C-17 cargo plane rolling toward takeoff took on metaphoric proportions. The truth is that in this "graveyard of empires," the final analysis is complicated, spanning four Republican and Democratic presidencies, with no tidy answers.

President Biden passed the Truman test when he said a week ago, "I am president of the United States of America and the buck stops with me." He added,



"Today I'm calling on more companies in the private sector to step up with vaccine requirements that will reach millions more people. I call on you to do that - require it."

- President Biden, announcing the FDA's full approval of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.



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"Our mission in Afghanistan was never supposed to have been nation-building. If anything, the developments of the past week reinforce that ending U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan now was the right decision. American troops cannot and should not be fighting in a war and dying in a war that Afghan forces are not willing to fight for themselves."

After that first day of terrible optics, the reality is that the U.S. and NATO allies are conducting a Berlin airlift scale mission. As of Monday, some 38,000 American and Afghan allies have been evacuated, which is logistically historic. That appears to be around half the estimated 15,000 Americans and 60,000 Afghan allies needing a lift by the Aug. 31 deadline.

Given the collapse of the Afghan government (which had received more than \$1 trillion in U.S. aid) and military (which received \$800 billion in U.S. training), and the medieval mindset of the still-gathering Taliban government, you can make the case that the chaos and atrocities could have been worse; could have been catastrophically worse. That worst case scenario could still happen, because we're talking about Afghanistan here.

Biden's management of this airlift in the midst of some 400 statements by his predecessor, Donald J. Trump, who set in motion this process, rings with irony: "Joe Biden gave our enemies all around the World a great and lasting victory when he unexpectedly and inexplica-

bly removed our great soldiers from Afghanistan before taking out our U.S. citizens and allies, along with abandoning many billions of dollars of highest-grade military equipment. Leaving our military till the end was such a simple decision that anyone with intelligence and common sense would have made, but he called it wrong and instantly created perhaps the greatest embarrassment for our country in its history – and it is far from over!"

But on April 18, Trump, who had invited the Taliban to Camp David in 2020, said: "Getting out of Afghanistan is a wonderful and positive thing to do. I planned to withdraw on May 1st, and we should keep as close to that schedule as possible." On June 26, he bragged: "I started the process. All the troops are coming back home. They couldn't stop the process. Twenty-one years is enough, don't we think?"

Former vice president Mike Pence added in a Wall Street Journal op-ed, "The Biden administration's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan is a foreign-policy humiliation unlike anything our country has endured since the Iran hostage crisis."

Question for HPI readers: After watching Trump and Pence "manage" the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020, is there even the tiniest possibility that they would have managed the crisis they helped initiate any more competently?

Or as former Trump national security advisor John Bolton said last

week, "Like Tweedledee and Tweedledum, while Biden bears responsibility for bungling the implementation, I have no confidence Trump would have executed it any more competently."

Meanwhile, the "conservative" media have switched from angst surrounding the stranding of America's Afghan translators and allies, to demonizing them as potentially unvetted immigrants. Charlie Kirk, who operates the pro-Trump group Turning Point USA, said that Biden "wants a couple hundred thousand more Ilhan Omars to come into America to change the body politic permanently." Fox host Tucker Carlson warned: "So first we invade, and then we are invaded."



Biden's "honeymoon" appears to be over with a CBS News Poll over the weekend showing his approve/disapprove numbers at 50/50, while NBC had him at 49/48%. In the CBS poll, 63% back President Biden's withdrawal from Afghanistan, but 44% say the withdrawal has gone "very badly" and 30% say it's gone "somewhat badly" while 26% say it's gone somewhat well or very well. Biden gets a 47% approval on Afghanistan and 53% disapprove.

But more revealing is that with both Republican and Democratic voters, Afghanistan barely monitors as a top issue in either the CBS or NBC polls. That tells me that once the cable news shows have moved on to the next wildfire, hurricane or mass shooting, the impact on coming elections will be small to nil.

For historical perspective, we reviewed President Gerald Ford's Gallup ratings. Ford took office on Aug. 9, 1974, after President Nixon's resignation and his first job approval rating was a robust 71%. Ford's job approval rating plummeted to 50% in late September 1974, after he pardoned Nixon. By January 1975, his approval rating had fallen below 40%, and it remained at that level until April 1975. His lowest approval ratings were 37% readings in January and March 1975, a month before North Vietnam took Saigon, some two years after Henry Kissinger announced "peace is at hand." On May 12, 1975, Cambodian

Khmer Rouge forces seized the U.S. ship SS Mayaguez and held the American crew hostage. Ford ordered military action to rescue the crew, which was released while the United States was undertaking that action. Roughly 40 U.S. military personnel lost their lives in the brief fighting. A late May/early June Gallup Poll saw Ford's approval rating spike from 40% to 51%. It remains one of the largest "rallies" in presidential approval Gallup has ever measured. By August 1975 his approval rating fell below 50%, and by November it was back to about 40%.

Glen Johnson, political editor for Axios, observed on Monday that President Biden aimed three messages at three specific audiences during his Sunday afternoon remarks on Afghanistan:

- To Fox News viewers: "One, planes taking off from Kabul are not flying directly to the United States. They're landing at U.S. military bases and transit centers around the world."

- To moderates in both parties: "Number two, at these sites where they're landing, we are conducting ... security screenings for everyone who is not a U.S. citizen or a lawful permanent resident. Anyone arriving in the United States will have undergone a background check."

- To progressives: "Number three, once screened and cleared, we will welcome these Afghans, who helped us in the war effort over the last 20 years, to their new home in the United States of America. Because that's who we are. That's what America is."

Biden's bottom line: "I think that history is going to record this was the logical, rational and right decision to make."

Obviously, time will tell. But here's a bet I'm willing to wager now: If there's a Biden/Trump rematch (and I put that at about a 60% chance of happening given Biden's age and Trump's age, health, legal and financial challenges), this Afghanistan sequence will be long forgotten by October and November 2024. ❖

McDermott, from page 1

That "good place" now has McDermott preparing to challenge U.S. Sen. Todd Young in 2022. McDermott filed his FEC paperwork last week, then headed to the Indiana Democratic Editorial Association convention in French Lick. It's a path similar to Lugar's, who lost his first Senate race to Birch Bayh in 1974, only to come back two years later to defeat U.S. Sen. Vance Hartke.

Young is undefeated, having beaten former senator Evan Bayh to win the seat in 2016, and before that, vanquishing either former or current members of Congress including Democrat Baron Hill and Republicans Mike Sodrel and Marlin Stutzman.

"Losing was good for my soul," McDermott said just minutes after concluding his weekly Monday morning staff meeting. "Congressman Frank and I are in a good place even though a year ago we were swinging at each other." McDermott appeared with Rep. Mrvan at an Indiana Democratic Party rally backing President Biden's American Rescue Plan earlier this summer. "He helped my city voting for the American Rescue Plan."

McDermott's Democratic credentials are solid, having served as Lake County party chair as well as on the Democratic National Committee. But he says he has a long history of attracting Republican support. His father was a two-term Republican mayor of Hammond between 1984 and 1992. McDermott upset Republican Mayor Duane Dedelow in 2003 by 52.1% to 47.9%, a margin of just 700

votes. After a narrow first reelection by virtually the same margin, McDermott has been a Region juggernaut, winning his last two terms with 82% and 87% of the vote.

He says that Sen. Young has become “corrupted” by Washington money influences as well as by Donald Trump. Young voted to acquit Trump during two impeachment trials. “He’s a veteran, an Annapolis grad, and quite frankly, should know better,” McDermott said, citing Young’s recent flip on President Biden’s infrastructure deal after Trump denounced it. Politico reported earlier this year that Young had sought Trump’s endorsement, even though he does not face a GOP primary threat. Trump withheld the nod after Young called U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene an “embarrassment” to the Republican Party.

While McDermott is a vociferous Trump critic, saying he has “damaged” numerous American institutions, he believes that he shares the former president’s read on voters. “What I’m saying is that President Trump tapped into something that I can tap into also,” McDermott explained. “I think his style and my style are somewhat similar. But the way he looks at the world and the way I look at the world are completely different and I want to make that clear.”

McDermott joins a Democratic field that includes Gary Human Rights Committee Director Haneefah Khaaliq (who has raised \$25,524) and Dr. Valerie McCray of Indianapolis. He will be a prohibitive favorite to win the nomination.

McDermott promises to be an unconventional candidate. On his “Left of Center” podcast earlier this summer, he challenged Young to an actual boxing match. After he finishes a triathlon he’s been training for most of the summer, McDermott plans to build out his campaign staff, continue his twice-a-week podcast, and seek his first state-wide office.

Here is our HPI Interview with Mayor McDermott:

HPI: So Monday mornings are busy for a mayor?

McDermott: I read Rudy Giuliani’s book called “Leadership” and it’s how to be a mayor, basically. He was a really good mayor; he recommended a number of things and I still do all of them every single day for 18 years.

HPI: What are some of the things you follow from that book?

McDermott: Mayor’s night out. Close relationships with the police. I have a great relationship with the police. When he was mayor of New York, it was something he prided himself on, sweating the small things like the “broken windows theory.” Every Monday morning I have staff meetings. Once a month I have public forums called “Mayor’s Night Out” and I’ve been doing them since I became mayor; all my department heads have to be there.

We put it on live on Hammond TV. My staff meeting is one third of my staff every week; over three weeks I see my entire staff.

HPI: Your father was a Republican mayor of Hammond. What did you learn from him?

McDermott: My Dad gave me the most excellent advice I ever had. I’ll never forget when I first became mayor, my Dad said, “Never touch money.” I’ll never forget it. My Dad is still with us and he tells me a lot of great things. I said, “What do you mean? I have to raise money.” And he said, “Tom, you have staff to do that for you. You have supporters. But don’t ever touch a check. Divorce yourself from that whole game.” It was some of the best advice I’ve ever had and quite frankly, Brian, over the years as a public official from Northwest Indiana, because of that very reason they were involved with fundraising, I’ve always disassociated myself from that.

HPI: What did you learn from French Lick over the weekend? Did you meet with Evan Bayh and Joe Donnelly?

McDermott: Yes and yes. I had met with Joe before I got down there but I did meet with Evan. He just lost his wife and I didn’t want to talk politics with the senator at this point. He’s still grieving. He was there

with Beau. Joe Donnelly and I shared a meal last week. And I talked with Chairman (Mike) Schmuhl, who I’m a tremendous fan of. I’ve been going down to French Lick since before I became mayor and there is renewed energy in the party right now and it’s because of the chairman. He’s brought excitement back to the party. You could tell the energy was different this year.

HPI: When you sat down with Joe Donnelly, what kind of advice did he give you in running a Senate campaign?

McDermott: Yes. Joe and I are real close. I consider him my mentor in politics, and I’ve had a lot of them. We’re similar kinds of people; we see things similarly. We both went to Notre Dame. I knew Joe Donnelly’s wife before I knew Joe Donnelly because she worked at Notre Dame Law School when I was a student there. He’s real proud of me for taking the next step, but he didn’t whitewash it for me. I have a tough race ahead and he gave me great caution on what to focus on. He’s been through what I’m about to put myself through.

HPI: So are you getting the green light from Schmuhl to make this run?

McDermott: I don’t want to put words in the chairman’s mouth and Joe’s mouth, but they are happy for me. I’ve met my two (primary) opponents. They are both awesome ladies and I wish them well. What I’m really excited about is the members of the party – the ones that get it done, the ones that volunteer and raise money –

seem really glad I'm putting my name on the line to take on the toughest Hoosier the Republicans have. I consider Todd one of the toughest candidates in the state. If I take him on, it gives a lot of younger Democrats hope to take on their county commissioner, their county councilman, their mayor.

HPI: On paper, Todd Young looks very tough, with close to \$5 million raised. What's the scenario you believe you can pull off an upset next year?

McDermott: The thing I've got going for me is most Hoosiers I know and most Americans I know are not happy with what's going on in Washington, D.C., and, in particular, the U.S. Senate where Todd Young is one of the leaders. He's a veteran, an Annapolis grad, and quite frankly, should know better. If I were every blessed and honored to be Indiana's next U.S. senator, I would represent all 6 million Hoosiers who live in our state. I think that Todd looks at a person like me, a Democrat from Lake County, and writes me off. I don't even matter to him because I don't donate to him, so he doesn't care about a guy like me. It isn't going to matter to most Hoosiers whether Washington lobbyists loves me. But he is tough and I acknowledge that. I'm definitely the underdog. I have no problem being the underdog; my first race for mayor of Hammond against Mayor Dedelow, I was definitely the underdog and I dismantled him. I'm in this race to win it.

HPI: Your criticism of Sen. Young centers on his two votes to acquit President Trump in impeachment; his vote against the American Rescue Plan and now President Biden's infrastructure plan. What are your talking points and how will they resonate with swing voters?

McDermott: We have to hire a campaign manager. Basically I have a two-person staff, me and Kevin Smith. He's been my campaign manager every time I've run and we both agree we're going to have a full-time campaign manager who's going to be my boss and Kevin's boss. We have plenty of time to talk about issues and what my talking points will be. It's still super early in the process. One of the problems is his insincerity and who's important. Is it the amount of money that you raise, is it the former president who lives in Florida? Or is it the 6 million people who live in Indiana? The 6 million Hoosiers, that's who I'm going to bust my butt for. Todd has become distracted by his time in Washington, D.C. I've served with Naval Academy graduates and they are excellent Americans. Todd was a good congressman even though we're in different parties. He got elected to the Senate and I was impressed and happy for him. And then he gets in there and it seems like he's become ... I'm not saying he's corrupt, but he's become corrupted. There was a quote and you ran it, Brian, and it disturbed me. When Todd announced his reelection, he said, "I don't care if it takes

\$150 million. I'm going to raise whatever it takes to win this race." Honestly, right there I thought, "What is going on with this guy?" That was a big moment for me: This guy has totally lost credibility. I'm honestly not going to raise more than Todd Young. It's not about that. I want Republicans to support me. I'll need it. I'm not going to ignore 50% of Indiana's population because they're Republican. I am going to try and earn their respect. I just think Todd has forgotten who's important.

HPI: What will be your pitch to Republicans?

McDermott: I grew up in a two-party family. My Mom and Dad divorced when I was a baby. My Mom was a secretary and she was a total Democrat. Every summer I would fly out to see my Dad in Hammond where he was the mayor and a wealthy business owner. My whole life I got to see different sides of the fence. My Mom, my sisters and I struggled. Then I would fly across the country and my Dad would give me \$20 to go out to the movies and I would look at the \$20 bill and be so tempted not to go to the movie because I never had \$20. That was a great education. I'm glad I am a Democrat but it doesn't mean I'm a liberal. There are some things progressives will agree with, my stance on marijuana which I think should be decriminalized and legalized. I have had a free tuition plan for the past 13 years and it's a wonderful program. At the same time, I have a lifetime permit to carry a weapon and I do. I believe in the 2nd Amendment. I also realize we have a problem in America in that too many people are getting shot.

HPI: How many students have come through your College Bound program?

McDermott: There are about 150 per class, and there are four (high school) classes, so maybe 500 or more per year. We've been doing that since 2007. Each family is entitled to receive up to \$42,000 over four years. It costs the city of Hammond \$3.5 million per year. It's one of the reasons my city hasn't lost population; it's in people's financial interest to stay. Their house becomes a lot more valuable because you need that homestead exemption. There's a lot of things a kid has to do, including 40 hours a year of community service. It's one of the best things I've ever done as an elected official. It's been life-changing for many in my city.

HPI: You mentioned your support for the 2nd Amendment, yet many guns used in Chicago homicides come from your city. Will that be a potential issue in 2022?

McDermott: America has a gun problem. I carry and there's a weapon in my car right now, but America does have a gun problem. I'm not looking to take anyone's gun, but I also can't be afraid to talk about these issues. The thing is American leads the world in mass shootings and it's not getting better. I live up here near Chicago and it's getting worse. We've scared politicians on both sides of



the aisle when we talk about this issue. This is something our forefathers would be ashamed about. I don't think our forefathers envisioned semi-automatic weapons and mass killings of civilians when they made the 2nd Amendment.

HPI: What happens next with your campaign?

McDermott: I have some pretty good ideas on who should be my campaign manager. The second important hire is someone who is good with money and who knows how much we'll need to raise to become competitive in Indiana. Step No. 3 will be hiring someone who is excellent with social media; someone who's not afraid to shake up the system a little bit. You asked earlier how I can compete with Todd Young; well nobody's ever seen a candidate like me in Indiana. I am not a humongous fan of President Trump at all. I think he did a lot of damage to our country. However, what we have to realize in our party is that President Trump did something effective to get elected. What he tapped into is something I've tapped into. I'm a very popular mayor; I get 75% of the vote. I get Republicans crossing over. This was a Republican city when I took over. So what I'm saying is that President Trump tapped into something that I can tap into also. I think his style and my style are somewhat similar. But the way he looks at the world and the way I look at the world are completely different and I want to make that clear. My

podcast "Left of Center" ... I'm still going to do it twice a week. I'm still going to say the things that I say and a couple of times I'm probably going to shake up the system and get in trouble with the media. When I see Todd Young, I don't think that's who he really is. I think it's a mask.

HPI: You're undefeated as a mayor, but you lost to Frank Mrvan in the real strange 1st CD race during the pandemic last year. What did you learn from that loss?

McDermott: What did I learn? It was a tough time for me. I went away for about a month. I didn't want to see anybody. I went through a crisis, the process of grieving. I was mad and I was in denial. Then there was acceptance. I did the whole thing. I went out and bought two cars. It was good for me at the end of the day. I'm really in a good place. I love my job, but I think I can do better service at the federal level. I think if people across Indiana get to know me, they will appreciate my style. I look at Pete Buttigieg for inspiration. He ran for Indiana treasurer and lost; then became mayor of South Bend. Then he ran for national chairman. I was on the DNC and he wasn't. He runs, drops out, makes contacts and then runs for president. We've been calling it in the party "losing up." That's what Secretary Pete calls it, "losing up." ❖

Holcomb's under-the-radar inaugural gala

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Gov. Eric Holcomb's two successful runs for governor have come in strange, strange circumstances. His first 2016 nomination came after Gov. Mike Pence resigned from the ticket to run for vice president. His reelection bid came during a pandemic. His inauguration last January came with only a tiny crowd in the gallery while attendees wore masks.

So who could blame Holcomb for wanting to stage his second "Black Tie & Boots" gala, even if it came during the dog days of August?

Holcomb did, but under muted circumstances. Other than the announcement in late July that there would be such an event, the gala was under the radar. A concert scheduled for earlier in the week was cancelled. There were few social media postings from the event which appeared to be moderately attended.

We spent part of Monday morning searching for evidence that the gala took place. There were no postings from the governor and campaign's Facebook and Twitter feeds.

Part of the reason was – apparently – the fact that this event came during the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. On Friday, the Indiana State Department of Health reported more than 4,100 new cases. ICU bed availability has shrunk to just over 20%. Indiana ranks in the top 10 states in new COVID cases.

From an optics standpoint, Team Holcomb figured that under the radar was the best approach. In viewing the small amount of social media postings from attendees,



this was beyond a “mask optional” event. We couldn’t see any masking at all.

While Gov. Holcomb has been a proponent of vaccination, social distances and masking, persistent polling has shown that about a third of Republicans either won’t be vaccinated, or is reluctant to do so. Two days after the gala, the FDA announced full approval of the Pfizer vaccine (Gov. Holcomb had received the Johnson & Johnson one-shot vaccine).

There were some aspects of note: Despite waging legal battles over the constitutionality of Holcomb’s pandemic response and vetoes, Attorney General Todd Rokita was there. Chairman Kyle Hupfer introduced Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch. Also in attendance were three treasurer candidates: Pete Seat, Morgan County GOP Chairman Dan Elliot, and Suzanne Jaworowski.

Outside the JW Marriott were a couple dozen anti-mask protesters along with 2020 Libertarian gubernatorial nominee Donald Rainwater.



Gov. Holcomb makes remarks at his gala inaugural ball at the JW Marriott Saturday. He posed with Howard County Republicans. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch and Attorney General Todd Rokita, who were sworn in with Holcomb last January, were also on hand.

Democrats gather at French Lick

Conversely, Hoosier Democrats gathered for the annual IDEA convention at French Lick last Thursday through Sunday. Evan Bayh was there with son Beau, igniting speculation that the third-generation Bayh might seek the open secretary of state seat in 2022 that helped launch the elder’s career in 1986.

Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett gave the 9th CD dinner keynote. One attendee told HPI, “He didn’t speak as a mayor, but more like a future candidate for governor.” Hogsett joined Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott’s “Left of Center” podcast recorded on the French Lick Springs Resort veranda. Hogsett recalled his first trip to IDEA back in 1984 when Evan Bayh helped campaign for Democrat gubernatorial nominee Wayne Townsend.



Libertarian announces for SoS

Jeff Maurer of Carmel announced he is seeking the Libertarian nomination for Indiana Secretary of State in 2022 (IndyPolitics). Maurer’s career spans tech, transportation,

and budget, and finance. He lives in Carmel, Indiana, and serves the Carmel community on the Economic Development Commission and the Home Place Advisory Board. Maurer said, “I’m excited to announce this campaign to bring Hoosiers votes you can count and elections you can trust.” Maurer believes many Hoosiers don’t trust the election results and are concerned about fraud. The Secretary of State is solely responsible for ensuring that every eligible vote is counted correctly and that Hoosiers trust the results.

Arizona ‘audit’ delayed

The report detailing the conclusions of a GOP-backed review of ballots cast last year in Arizona has been delayed after the chief executive of the private company conducting the widely pilloried audit and two other members of his team tested positive for the coronavirus ([Washington Post](#)). Arizona Senate President Karen Fann (R) announced the delay Monday, saying that Doug Logan, chief executive of the Florida firm Cyber Ninjas, and two other members of the audit team had been infected and were “quite sick.”

NBC Poll reveals pandemic foreboding

The NBC Poll released Sunday revealed 37% say the worst is behind us when it comes to the coronavirus, while 42% say the worst is yet to come. That’s a significant reversal from April, when 61% of Americans said the worst was behind us, versus 19%. “It is the domestic storm, Covid’s Delta wave, that is causing more difficulties at this stage here at home and for President Biden,” said NBC poll co-pollster Jeff Horwitz (D). Bill McInturff, the GOP half of the poll, agrees: “The best way to understand this poll is to forget Afghanistan.” ❖

Biden's big Afghan mess

By CRAIG DUNN

CARMEL – Fill in the blank: According to former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, President Joe Biden is a _____ (fool, idiot, cretin, moron, dolt, halfwit, dunce, dullard or imbecile). Score yourself 100 points if you said imbecile and 95 points if you chose one of the other synonyms for imbecile.



Blair made this amazingly undiplomatic and rude summation of Biden after the president's disastrous handling of the United States exit from Afghanistan and his completely tone deaf and clueless response to the international uproar caused by the unprecedented self-inflicted crisis.

Now I don't normally agree with and quote someone who liked to fly on Jeffrey Epstein's Lolita Express, ala Bill Clinton and Prince Andrew, but Blair's bluntness speaks volumes about just how big a mess that the United States finds itself in.

Another British statesman summed up our current mess in Afghanistan quite well when talking about Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's disgraceful appeasement of Adolf Hitler after the 1938 Munich Agreement. Winston Churchill summed up his disgust with Chamberlain by famously saying, "You were given the choice between war and dishonor. You chose dishonor, and you will have war."

This is the same situation that the United States faces today. We chose the dishonor of rushing our withdrawal from Afghanistan with little or no forethought invested in the process, abandoning our friends and allies along the way and now, according to numerous credible foreign policy experts on both the left and right, we have now subjected our country to the very real dangers of increased terrorism and possible war.

To put it bluntly, we are swimming in a pool of excrement of our own creation and it did not have to happen. Like the current human crisis on our southern border, record inflation rates and soaring energy costs, this Afghanistan debacle can be squarely placed on the desk of President Joe Biden.

Just how out of touch with reality our president has become was painfully obvious in the photograph

circulated by the White House press office that showed Joe Biden, while Kabul was being overrun, people being beaten and shot, Americans threatened and poor unfortunate souls tumbling thousands of feet from our rescue planes to their deaths, sitting alone at Camp David on a Zoom call with his national security team.

Alone, not a single senior security advisor accompanied the president to Camp David. This tells me that not only is Joe Biden incapable of carrying out his duties as president, but that our entire national security apparatus is in desperate need of an overhaul from top to bottom. Perhaps if the entrenched apparatchiks in the national security establishment had spent more time doing their jobs and less time playing "gotcha" with President Donald Trump, they might have been of some service to their country.

Make no mistake, although the buck for this mess stops squarely in front of the president, his intelligence advisors, foreign service professionals and Department of Defense experts all bear the mark of the Afghanistan beast. The heads of the national security advisor, the CIA director, the secretary of state and the secretary of defense should all roll for this unprecedented tragedy.

Four primary disasters have occurred because of Biden's Afghanistan screw up. The first is the immediate chaos created by our hasty half-witted exit. Not only has the president imperiled thousands of American citizens trapped by the Taliban in Afghanistan, but he has also put into jeopardy the lives of many of our allies who have



joined us in the Kabul Taliban jail.

Just like in 1884 when the British forces, diplomats and their families became encircled in the Sudan, in the town of Khartoum, our citizens and allies now find their lives in the hands of the modern-day Mahdi of the Taliban, ISIS and Al Qaeda. Remember the anguish, fear and anger that you felt, if you were an adult at the time of the Iran

hostage crisis in 1979 when 52 hostages were tortured, mistreated, humiliated and paraded on television daily. We now have nearly 35,000 American citizens and unknown thousands of British, French, German and other allies in the exact same situation of encirclement.

In addition to our NATO and Western allies, we have countless Afghan friends and comrades who risked their lives and the lives of their families to help the American forces help them rebuild their country and bring freedom and basic human rights to a people long denied. While some of our Afghan friends may escape, I have no doubt that thousands will be tortured and killed as a result of our precipitous exit. For all of you feminists who voted for Joe Biden, congratulate yourselves for leaving the women and children of Afghanistan in the worst possible predicament that could happen.

The second disaster we face as a result of the Afghan disaster is the untold damage to our current relationships with our allies who followed us into Afghanistan. We asked or demanded their support as a litmus test of their resolve against international terrorism. They followed us and we have given them a fecal sandwich as their reward. Try putting that coalition together again anytime soon! If you have doubts, please see former Prime Minister Tony Blair's analysis of our president.

The next disaster is the unspoken message sent to Japan, India, South Korea, Israel, Australia, the Ukraine, Poland and Taiwan about the reliability of friendship with the United States. No longer can Japan depend on the United States to support her in the event of conflict with China. The same is true for Taiwan, India and Australia. The Afghanistan message has been heard loud and clear by our friends around the world. We can no longer count on the United States to act honorably and fulfill treaty commitments.

The final disaster created by our shameful conduct in Afghanistan is one that will haunt the United States and the rest of the world for decades to come. We entered Afghanistan to destroy the terrorist network of Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda. After 20 years, over 2,000 lives lost, thousands of American sons maimed and \$1 trillion spent, we now have a dominant, terrorist-friendly Taliban running Afghanistan, a rejuvenated Al Qaeda flexing its muscles and the seeds of a rebirth of ISIS firmly planted in fertile soil. In addition, we have left behind millions of dollars of sophisticated weaponry, aircraft and high-tech means of destruction that now will be used against the United States and our friends.

As a result of an unholy alliance of socialists, social engineers, corporate elitists, unproductive malcontents, complicit mainstream media outlets, dark state operators and never-Trumpers, we have been given the most unqualified, moronic, duplicitous, fallacious and bumbling president in our nation's history.

Joe Biden was allowed to run for president while hiding from the American public in his basement and now we must all pay for his incompetence and

senility. Joe Biden has surrounded himself with advisors and an entourage that are more concerned with critical race theory, transgenderism, global warming, wealth gaps, political correctness and destruction of the American moral fabric than with defending our country against all threats foreign or domestic.


A few hundred protestors who stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6 terrorized Biden, Chuck Schumer, Nancy Pelosi, CNN, MSNBC, The Washington Post and the New York Times while the real threat to our country, a disastrous rush to escape Afghanistan, was in full force. Shame on the enablers who have assisted the decline of our country and its humiliation at the hands of an enemy that is a living remnant of the Dark Ages. Joe Biden and his cabinet and allies must go and go now. They have failed to meet their constitutional duties and we have no further need for their lying, scheming ineptitude.

I say to the current administration and its congressional leadership the words spoken by another Brit, Oliver Cromwell, who said in 1653 upon dismissing the Rump Parliament, "It is high time for me to put an end to your sitting in this place, which you have dishonored by your contempt of all virtue and defiled by your practice of every vice. Ye are a factious crew, and enemies to all good government. Ye are a pack of mercenary wretches and would like Esau sell your country for a mess of pottage, and like Judas betray your God for a few pieces of money. Is there a single virtue now remaining amongst you? Is there one vice you do not possess? Ye have no more religion than my horse. Gold is your God. Which of you have not bartered your conscience for bribes? Is there a man amongst you that has the least care for the good of the Commonwealth? Go, get you out! Make haste! Ye venal slaves be gone! So! Take away that shining bauble there and lock up the doors. In the name of God, go!" ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman.

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

This Trump vaccine is truly amazing

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – The Trump vaccine is amazing, developed more quickly and with more effectiveness than once thought possible, already saving hundreds of thousands of lives here and around the world.



The former president's Operation Warp Speed for vaccine development deserves praise from all in this divided land, including from Democratic critics who scoffed at the name and warned that Trump could be dangerously rushing development to save his faltering reelection bid. So, give Trump some credit.

But wait. He doesn't want it. He doesn't boast about the speed and effectiveness of the Trump vaccine or urge unvaccinated Americans to take the life-saving shots.

On Saturday at a MAGA rally in Alabama, Trump was booed when he mentioned the vaccine. "And you know what? I believe totally in your freedoms. I do. You've got to do what you have to do," Trump said. "But I recommend take the vaccines. I did it. It's good. Take the vaccines." Some boos rang out from the crowd, who were largely maskless. "No, that's OK. That's all right. You got your freedoms."

And in a strange twist, vaccination rates are much lower in states Trump won than in states he lost. The result is that the new wave of a stronger virus variant is striking harder, hospitalizing more and killing more in those Trump states, states where conspiracy theories about the Trump vaccine abound.

OK, naming the vaccine after Trump is a stretch. But not entirely. Health and science experts in his administration – even though he often showed disdain for them – do deserve credit for pursuing vaccine development at warp speed. And he didn't get in the way to stop them. Trump supporters now refusing to take the vaccine could be less hesitant if it were more directly connected with him.

And what if Trump had won reelection? He no doubt would be hailing the vaccine as "the most effective the world has ever seen" and proclaim how "everybody knows that I successfully stopped the pandemic." More of the loyal Trumpsters would be vaccinated.

There also could have been some negative impact on the vaccination rollout. Joe Biden deserves credit for the speedy rollout, taking federal responsibilities of the

type Trump refused to take in responding as the virus spread. The rollout still would have come, though slower – much, much slower – if a reelected President Trump appointed a loyalist like Rudy Giuliani or the My Pillow guy to run it.

Why is Trump, concerned about his legacy and eyeing another presidential bid, not boasting about his role in warp speed development of an effective vaccine? The answer appears to be that once Biden became president, Trump wanted no role in helping the new administration or even in acknowledging that there is a new administration. He also was bitter that Warp Speed wasn't speedier, getting the vaccine out to Americans before the presidential election.

On Nov. 9, 2020, just six days after the election, Pfizer announced that its vaccine was 90% effective in trials and could be headed for emergency use authorization by the FDA. Trump responded with a tweet: "STOCK MARKET UP BIG, VACCINE COMING SOON. REPORT 90% EFFECTIVE. SUCH GREAT NEWS!"

He was bitter, however, that the news didn't come before the election. He soon was tweeting his conspiracy theory that Pfizer, the FDA and Democrats delayed the development news because they "didn't want to have me get a Vaccine WIN, prior to the election."

Thus, despite the successful Warp Speed, Trump can't look favorably on the vaccine because it came too late to help him win reelection. Whether an election-eve announcement would have swung the election is far from certain. Voter views on Trump's handling of the pandemic had pretty firmly set in and were negative.



As the new virus variant sweeps through states with low vaccination rates and threatens impact nationally, more of the skeptical, now seeing the rise of hospitalizations and deaths, are going for shots. There are sad stories of some waiting too long and wishing they hadn't as they fight for their lives.

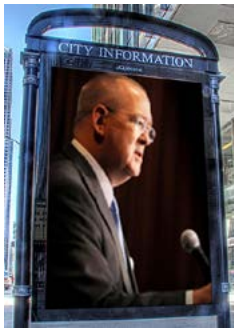
Even more of the reluctant could look favorably on the Trump vaccine if seeing need for the protection so that they'll be around to vote for Trump in 2024. ❖

Colwell has covered Indiana politics for the South Bend Tribune.

More questions than answers on COVID impact on workplace

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – My 18-month work-from-home experience has come to a formal end. No one, except maybe my wife, is more excited than I. The experience has caused me to muse upon the leadership and management differences the COVID pandemic yielded, and what the effect on individual business and the workplace might be.



COVID had very different effects on the work performed by each group of workers. In nearly all cases, the lack of physical proximity caused by the pandemic required us to reschedule and reform instruction for executive education or academic classes. We struggled to become acclimated with four or five major conference software offerings, but

within a few weeks it turned out to be a fairly straightforward technology fix.

In terms of purely administrative tasks, most of what we did could continue to be managed through digital systems we already had in place. But, like most businesses, we still send and receive mail and sign documents such as checks and performance evaluations. With people working remotely, we had more hardware and software challenges to solve without the direct support of our technology office – a challenge, but ultimately most of us became a bit better at troubleshooting software and hardware problems.

Accounting for people and hardware became a tougher task, but signing checks, approving software purchases, mailing letters or accounting for our equipment isn't our mission. It supports our mission, but it's not why we as an office exist. Indeed, a handful of other offices on campus may do those things to the detriment of productive work, but my office focuses on productivity.

For many operations, particularly many who could work at home, worker productivity isn't easy to measure. Some supervisors focus on measuring inputs, such as hours worked. That is easy to do, but doesn't really tell you much about the quality or usefulness of the work. So, the effect of COVID on direct supervision of those tasks had little effect on our work. I suspect most offices that shifted to remote work were similarly affected.

Another method of supervising work involves measuring outputs, such as the number of words written in a day, or the number of calculations performed in a week. As with measuring inputs to production, this is easy but mostly not informative. In some settings, the output

measure for productivity is appropriate. This is one way to measure productivity for businesses that do piece work or for workers who are still learning their craft. COVID still permitted evaluating work like this. We continued to use it on some elementary tasks, such as assigning work that would help teach students. However, the productivity of complex, important work simply cannot be measured this way.

Most workplaces that involve abstract or non-routine tasks must focus on the outcomes of their work. Outcomes may be curing cancer or convincing customers to buy more of a product. For my office it is doing research that effectively informs public policy. All of these can be measured by inputs, such as the use of chemotherapy drugs or advertising campaigns. Additionally, all can be measured by outputs, such as the number of surgeries or from surveys of consumers. COVID affected all of these activities insofar as they interfered with in-person activities. Still, in terms of affecting outcomes, such as cancer survival, client profitability or good policy, the workplace changes caused by the pandemic had little direct influence. There was an indirect effect.

More abstract tasks benefit from direct human interaction and collaboration. The pandemic clearly reduced the quality of human interaction. Some of the impacts are obvious, such as the teaching experience. I spent 40 years assessing comprehension in my classroom by judging the body language and facial expressions of my students. Those are very hard to discern on Zoom, requiring me to add more pauses for student feedback and comments.

The development and quality of abstract tasks are those most affected by remote work. Like most workplaces, there is a fairly detailed technical aspect to our work. Discussing the technical aspects of our jobs, such as explaining the mathematical models we use and working through pitfalls of different approaches, was much weakened by COVID.

This type of human interaction concerning the technical details of a project or workflow is part of every workplace, not just a university research center. This accumulated judgement of co-workers is vital for management success, no matter how humble or routine the operation might be. COVID weakened those interactions across a wide range of businesses.

Still, after almost a year and a half of COVID, one in six workers is still operating remotely, and maybe one in three has some type of remote work capacity in their homes. This large shift to remote work will remain with us well past the forecastable future.

My first big hunch is that we will rush back into meetings, collaboration sessions, in-person training and other human interactions. I'm eager to speak in person to students and colleagues I've seen only occasionally over the past year and a half. This adjustment will have some productivity consequences that are similar to our rush to our home offices in March 2020.

The world of remote work also caused us to drop a lot of tasks we were doing beforehand. It also caused us to focus more intently on human interaction remotely. I suspect most offices will learn to mix personal and online work more effectively in the years to come. So, COVID might become a gateway for more flexible workplaces that blend combinations of in-person and remote work. These mostly seem like welcomed changes.

The work changes to the pandemic will also continue to favor certain types of workers. Not all jobs can be performed remotely or flexibly. There is an education divide in this work, but it is not as stark as often thought. Physicians need to work mostly in person, whereas there appears growing demand for remote work in customer ser-

vice and data entry that can absorb workers of nearly all skill levels.

As we continue to deal with the pandemic, the future of remote work and its effect on offices and businesses leaves more questions than answers. When it is all said and done, I'm just happy to be leaving the windowless nursery I'm using for a home office. ❖

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.

The Census and Indiana housing

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – The Census Bureau's Aug. 12 release of 2020 data gives us a small window into changes in the Hoosier housing market. While Indiana gained 301,700 (4.7%) in population from 2010, our stock of housing units grew by 127,600 (4.6%). But those numbers hide much of what was going on.

To start, changes in the number of persons, as well as the composition of the population, have important implications for housing. From 2010 to 2020, the growth in

Indiana's population was composed of an increase of 317,000 (6.5%) persons 18 and older, with a decline of 15,300 (-1.0%) in the population under age 18.

Fewer children reduces the number of bedrooms a family desires and allows an older population to spread out in existing homes. Nonetheless, many older persons seek smaller quarters, if they are able to downsize and give up excessive memorabilia.

However, working from home, which began well before COVID, increased the demand for more space per house, condo, or apartment. Further, delays in marriage and pregnancy (or should that be pregnancy and marriage?), which characterized the past decade, increased the demand for more single person housing.

That increase of 127,600 (4.6%) in the number of Hoosier housing units is a net number. The data we have in this release do not indicate how many units were built or retired from the housing stock in the past 10 years. (A retired unit may be one that has been torn down or converted to a use other than housing.)

More importantly, a housing unit can be occupied or vacant. Occupied units increased by 165,400 (6.6%) and vacant units decreased by 37,800 (-12.9%). Vacancies fell statewide from 10.5% to 8.7% of the housing stock during the decade. Except for seasonal vacancies, empty and abandoned units can represent adverse economic conditions. Or they can be the seeds of community hope.

There are two ways of looking at the relationship between housing and population. Total population divided by the number of occupied housing units gives us the standard metric for crowding. In 2010, that figure was 2.59 persons per unit, and slipped to 2.54 in 2020. The decline in the number of children and other factors mentioned above account for that slight change.

But who makes housing decisions? It's not children, no matter how influential they may be. The number of persons age 18 and older divided by the number of occupied units is a measure of housing demand. In 2010, that metric was 1.949 and (please don't laugh) slid to 1.947 in 2020.

How was it, in a time of dramatic and often traumatic change, a key measure of Indiana's housing market was virtually constant? Growth in population (4.65%) was almost perfectly matched by growth in the housing stock (4.56%). Was this the wisdom or the failure of the market? Or does the answer lie with government policies?. ❖

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



Sen. McConnell pushes the vaccine

By KELLY HAWES
CNHI Indiana News

ANDERSON – Mitch McConnell and I don't agree on much, but we agree on this. "I think for everyone who is eligible, vaccines, vaccines, vaccines are the solution to the problem," he said during an appearance at Eastern Kentucky University.

The Senate minority leader has been beating the drum on vaccines for months, even launching an advertising campaign in his home state of Kentucky. The 60-second commercial began airing on 100 radio stations July 29.



In the message, McConnell recalls his bout with polio as a child. Then, he says, it took decades to develop a vaccine.

"This time, thanks to American investment and ingenuity – and especially thanks to the tireless work of our scientists, doctors and health care heroes – it took less than a year for us to develop three highly effective COVID vaccines," McConnell says. "It's nothing short of a modern

medical miracle."

It's worth noting, of course, that the messenger RNA vaccines developed by Pfizer and Moderna were actually three decades in the making. Still, McConnell's point stands. The only way we're going to defeat COVID is through more Americans rolling up their sleeves.

"If you haven't been vaccinated, do the right thing for you, for your family, and get vaccinated right now," he says in the ad.

The Senate minority leader has his work cut out for him. A survey for the Kaiser Family Foundation in late July found 53% of unvaccinated adults believe the vaccine poses a bigger risk than the virus itself.

In spite of the challenge, McConnell's message has been consistent. "These shots need to get in everybody's arms as rapidly as possible or we're going to be back in a situation in the fall that we don't yearn for – that we went through last year," he said last month. "This is not complicated."

McConnell hasn't singled out the offenders by name, but he has repeatedly urged people to "ignore all of these other voices that are giving demonstrably bad

advice."

Is his campaign having an impact? It's hard to say. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 52% of Kentucky residents, some 2.3 million people, had taken at least one dose of a COVID vaccine on the day the ads began airing. Nearly 46%, or just over 2 million people, were fully vaccinated.

Three weeks later, more than 55%, or nearly 2.5 million people, had taken at least one dose and more than 47%, or more than 2.1 million people, had been fully vaccinated.

In the meantime, COVID cases are spiking. Kentucky recorded almost 3,700 new cases on Aug. 18. That compares to 164 at the beginning of July. The number of new cases nationwide on Aug. 18 was more than 162,000. That's up from roughly 65,000 on July 1.

McConnell seems truly surprised that convincing people to take these lifesaving shots has been so hard. "It never occurred to me that people might be reluctant to get vaccinated," he has said more than once.

During his appearance at Eastern Kentucky University, McConnell urged reluctant constituents to focus on facts. "Let's put the opinion business aside," he said. "Ninety-seven percent of the people in the hospital now – in Kentucky and around the country – are unvaccinated. That's not opinion. That's a fact."

Mitch McConnell is a shameless politician who is capable of truly ruthless behavior in the halls of Congress. He does what it takes to win regardless of how many enemies he might make along the way. Still, when a man is right, he's right, and in this instance, McConnell is right. I



only wish a few more folks from his side of the aisle would join in the chorus.

This isn't about politics. Do the right thing. Get a shot. ❖

Brian A. Howey, HPI: I never met Marine Sgt. Jeremy R. McQueary, but anyone traveling on State Road 46 heading into Nashville, Ind. crosses a bridge named in his honor. On Feb. 18, 2010, while on combat support mission in Helmand Province in Afghanistan, McQueary was killed by an improvised explosive device in the midst of a war at that point was going on nine years. Sgt. McQueary had been inspired by his father, Dallas, to serve. He graduated from Columbus East High School in 2002, just months after the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and the citizen patriot downing of Flight 93 that had been aimed at the U.S. Capitol. Less than three months after Sgt. McQueary's death, U.S. Special Forces found and terminated the life of Osama bin Laden, the al-Qaeda mastermind of those Sept. 11 attacks. One could make the case that it was at that point that the United States achieved its mission; that was the time we should have exited Afghanistan, the so-called "graveyard of empires." Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, observed on Wednesday, "For more than 20 years ... " it was American warriors like Sgt. McQueary who helped "prevent an attack on the homeland." "This is personal," Gen. Milley said. "To each of them, I want you to know personally, your service mattered." In dedicating that State Road 46 bridge in Sgt. McQueary's honor, then Indiana Gov. Mike Pence observed on Nov. 11, 2013, "Sgt. McQueary demonstrated what it means to be a true family man. His contributions to this community and nation are invaluable. And so, for his service, for putting on the uniform, wearing it with pride and serving under circumstances so few can understand, we owe a debt of gratitude to Sgt. McQueary which can never be repaid." I choose to remember Sgt. McQueary this week because of the U.S. military pullout of Afghanistan, and then the stunning collapse of the Asian nation's 300,000-man army while its government fled. ❖



carry us into decades of war in Afghanistan and Iraq. I wanted to know if it was wise to call what we were doing a war, which is normally a formal political relationship between recognized nations. I also asked if he thought it made sense to imply, by using a term such as "war," that Osama bin Laden and his allies were enemy combatants, rather than terrorists and criminals. Lugar's response was Lugar-like, an informed and subtle analysis that stacked one well-reasoned paragraph after another until it formed a fortress of logic. But his endorsement of the Bush administration's policy also was more qualified than I expected. He granted that my questions were valid ones that he had pondered himself but said that 9/11 had been a huge and, in many ways, unprecedented assault on the United States. It demanded a decisive response. The use of military power was the easiest and most legally defensible way to meet the challenge. Then I posed the questions that most troubled me. What constituted victory in this "war on terror?" When would we know it was over? Lugar paused for a long moment before he answered. "That," he said, speaking slowly, "is the \$64,000 question." At that moment, I felt real dread. I thought then — as I do now — that if Dick Lugar didn't have an answer to that question, it meant that the United States didn't have an answer. ❖

Shadi Hamid, The Atlantic: The United States never understood Afghanistan. American planners thought they knew what the country needed, which was not quite the same as what its people wanted. American policy was guided by fantasies; chief among them was the idea that the Taliban could be eliminated and that an entire culture could be transformed in the process. In an ideal world, the Taliban wouldn't exist. But it does exist, and it will exist. Western observers always struggle to understand how groups as ruthless as the Taliban gain legitimacy and popular support. Surely Afghans remember the terror of Taliban rule in the 1990s, when women were whipped if they ventured outside without a burka and adulterers were stoned to death in soccer stadiums. How could those dark days be forgotten? America saw the Taliban as plainly evil. To deem a group evil is to cast it outside of time and history. But this is a privileged view. Living in a democracy with basic security allows citizens to set their sights higher. They will be disappointed with even a relatively good government precisely because they expect more from it. In failed states and in the midst of civil war, however, the fundamental questions are ones of order and disorder, and how to have more of the former and less of the latter. The Taliban knew this. After its fall from power in 2001, the group was weak, reeling from devastating air strikes targeting its leaders. But in recent years, it has been gaining ground and establishing deeper roots in local communities. The Taliban was brutal. At the same time, it often provided better governance than the distant and corrupt Afghan central government. Doing a little went a long way. ❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: Nearly 20 years ago, I sat next to U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Indiana, at a dinner. This was three months after 9/11. President George W. Bush had declared war on terrorism. Lugar was a speaker at the dinner. I was the emcee. There was at that time no more respected voice in the field of foreign policy than Lugar's. Lugar had helped bring about a peaceful resolution to a disputed election in the Philippines that easily could have turned into a brutal, bloody civil war. He had success in these arenas because he always did his homework, and he looked at the world with a realist's eye. He understood that not everyone on the planet valued the same things and that, often, the key to resolving potentially catastrophic disputes involved finding out what the parties involved really wanted or feared. That night, as we munched our way through the salads and entrees, I asked Lugar about the coming conflict, one that would

FDA fully approves Pfizer vaccine

WASHINGTON — The U.S. gave full approval for use of the Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer Inc. and partner BioNTech SE Monday, a move quickly followed by announcements from the Pentagon, the New York City school district and others that they would begin requiring vaccinations ([Wall Street Journal](#)). The FDA's full approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine comes as U.S. hospitals are seeing a surge in cases tied to the Delta variant of Covid-19. The U.S. gave full approval for use of the Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer Inc. PFE 2.48% and partner BioNTech SE BNTX 9.58% Monday, a move quickly followed by announcements from the Pentagon, the New York City school district and others that they would begin requiring vaccinations. The Food and Drug Administration's approval was seen by public health officials as a key step to convince hesitant individuals to get the shot and to encourage employers to mandate it. "Today I'm calling on more companies in the private sector to step up with vaccine requirements that will reach millions more people," President Biden said. "I call on you to do that—require it."



IN hospitalizations highest since Jan.

INDIANAPOLIS — Statewide hospitalizations due to COVID-19 continued to rise over the weekend, according to Monday's report from the Indiana State Department of Health ([IBJ](#)). COVID hospitalizations in the state rose from 1,778 on Saturday to 1,857 on Sunday, hitting the largest number since Jan. 27, when 1,915 people were hospitalized with the virus. More than 22% of Indiana's intensive care unit beds are occupied by COVID patients. The department said 1,685 new cases of COVID-19 were

reported on Sunday. The cumulative total of cases increased by 8,400 over the weekend. COVID information for Indiana schools was updated on Monday, with results through Friday. The state reported 3,504 new cases of COVID-19 in students, 172 new cases in teachers and 218 new cases in staff. Total case numbers during the pandemic rose to 40,715 for students, 6,598 for teachers and 7,881 for staff. The numbers were reported by 1,948 schools that have experienced at least one case of COVID and 138 schools that have no reported cases. Another 282 schools have not provided information.

'Alarming' increase in Allen County

FORT WAYNE — An "alarming increase" in COVID-19 cases in Allen County — coupled with a lagging vaccination rate and rapid increase in hospitalizations — led the county's top health officer Monday to urge residents to get vaccinated and wear a mask indoors and in schools (Rodriguez, [Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). People should wear masks regardless of whether they are vaccinated, said Dr. Matthew Sutter, Allen County Department of Health commissioner. His statement was labeled a "public health advisory." Sutter's strongest words were directed at school boards, saying they should revise optional masking policies. "We strongly recommend school boards adopt universal masking in Allen County K-12 schools," the statement said. He also warned that hospitals "are rapidly filling up with very ill" COVID-19 patients. "It's critically important we not overwhelm our health care systems or our health care workers," the statement said.

Tippecanoe schools opt for facemasks

LAFAYETTE — Faced with COVID-19-related quarantine rates that were eight times greater than in neighboring Lafayette schools — and with some school board members

harboring doubts about how effective masks are and whether state contact tracing procedures were fair — the Tippecanoe School Corp. board reversed course Monday morning, instituting a mask mandate for classrooms and other indoor spaces (Bangert, [Based in Lafayette](#)). In Hamilton County, Noblesville's East Middle School has moved to a virtual format following a COVID outbreak involving 60 people with 200 in quarantine ([WIBC](#)). Pike County schools have also moved to virtual.

Councilor Olson dies in Elkhart

ELKHART— Mary Olson, the city of Elkhart's longest-serving councilmember, died Monday after a battle with pneumonia, according to friends. She was 74 ([Elkhart Truth](#)). Olson, a Republican, served on the city council for nearly 30 years. She was first appointed in 1993 to fill the term of the late Charles Darling, an at-large seat she has held for seven terms, often leading the ticket as the highest vote-getter. She worked for former Congressman Jon Hiler and served as president of the Indiana Association of Cities and Town.

Pelosi confronts Dem moderates

WASHINGTON — Confronting moderates, House Democratic leaders tried to muscle President Joe Biden's multitrillion-dollar budget blueprint over a key hurdle, working overnight to ease an intraparty showdown that risks upending their domestic infrastructure agenda ([AP](#)). Tensions flared and spilled into early Tuesday as a band of moderate lawmakers threatened to withhold their votes for the \$3.5 trillion plan. They were demanding the House first approve a \$1 trillion package of road, power grid, broadband and other infrastructure projects that's already passed the Senate. Despite hours of negotiations at the Capitol, the House chamber came to a standstill.