



HOWEY

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Weekly Briefing on Indiana Politics

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Shame

Family values, legislative 'bobble heads,' and an embattled new Governor

Take a time trip through Child Protective Services

By BRIAN A. HOWEY in Indianapolis

Rex McFerren was director of the Allen Superior Court's Appointed Special Advocates program when he observed, "With politicians, it's always a zero-sum game. They don't want to make the tough decisions because they don't want to raise taxes by 30 cents.

"They talk about Christian values but the way they approach this funding emergency is more depressing than an alcoholic father molesting his daughter. The politicians play on the great white middle class fears of raising taxes."

This quote was in an article I wrote as a reporter for the *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette* during that city's catastrophic crack cocaine crisis. In that story, I wrote about Child Protective Service caseworker Garry Hamilton, who had a caseload of 66 children as part of Family Services On-Going Team 1. It was well beyond the recommended 25 case loads by the Indiana Commission for Abused Children and Their Families. Caseworker Jim Roark had 60 children. Patrice Shade had 60. Jill Harges had 52. Laurel Cruze had 54. Shonda Stuart had 46. Dorothy Powell had 45. DeLoris Ramsey had 47.

My *Journal Gazette* story was published on **Dec. 13, 1992**.

Nearly 13 years (and no new taxes) later, Hoosiers were reading about Marion County child welfare caseworker Denise C. Moore, who was charged when twin children were killed after she placed them in a home after a lack of proper background checks.

Moore had a caseload of 100 children.



Gov. Daniels is resisting putting fiscal needs on the backs of children. (HPR Photo by Brian A. Howey)



"Today's decision makes traditional marriage safe again for the time being. This is not the final answer on this issue. The only way to settle it for certain is to change the constitution."

— Speaker Brian Bosma

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News from Dept. of Redundancy Dept. p. 4

Sodrel wary of SS reform; Baron Hill mulling 2006 rematch p.5

Howey: Indiana and Minority Leaders p.8

Columnists: James, Colwell p.9

Ticker: Labor eyes wage issues p.10



This is an analysis of epic child abuse, where Indiana's legislators and past governors must bear a significant portion of the burden that normally is assigned to abusive parents, beleaguered bureaucrats, and caseworkers such as Moore, who was convicted of obstruction of justice last weekend, but found innocent on the two more serious charges.

In wrapping up his defense of Moore, attorney Jack Crawford said she had become a "scapegoat for the system." In an account published by the *Indianapolis Star*, Crawford derided the agency's managers, referring to them as "bobble heads" and "trained monkeys."

"If she is convicted, things will go on as usual in the Marion County Office of Family and Children," Crawford told jurors during closing arguments. "All the bobble heads will skate, and there will be other instances, and it will happen again, and they will say the same things. The person at the bottom of the hill has it all roll down on them, and that's not fair. The trash can of garbage in that agency is bigger than this room. They want to take that trash can and dump it on this lady."

The system is a mess, Marion County Prosecutor Carl Brizzi agreed, but he added that is no excuse for Moore's conduct (*Indianapolis Star*). "For individuals who assume the responsibility for taking care of the most defenseless people in our society, they cannot shuffle that responsibility onto the system," Brizzi said. "If there's a problem in the system, then the problem starts with people like Denise Moore."

With which we take notable exception.

The problem in the system stems from an abject lack of courage and willingness to do the right thing in the Indiana Statehouse.

The fact that Moore had a 100-child caseload is virtual criminal neglect on behalf of the State of Indiana.

Governors, legislators knew of terrible flaws

Indiana's recent governors and legislative leaders all knew about these terrible child protective system flaws and the huge CPS caseloads. There were other sensational cases where the system was found to be ineffective, overloaded and corrupt and exposed by national journalists such as the *Chicago Tribune's* Bob Greene.

And nothing ever happened. Until Jan. 19, 2005, when new Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels announced in his first budget that his administration would be hiring 800 new caseworkers to join the 900 swamped caseworkers already in place. Four hundred will be hired in 2006 at a cost of \$16 mil-

lion, with 200 coming on each of the next two years.

The night before, during Gov. Daniels' first State of the State address, he explained, "The wolf is not at the door, he is inside the cabin."

"So no more accounting tricks," Gov. Daniels insisted. "No more raids on pension funds; no more coerced borrowing from schools and local government. And no more self-deception; this crisis will not go away on its own. Without bold and difficult action now, the lines of spending and income will never cross. Tonight, it falls on me to propose a program full of steps I find regrettable and unpleasant, but steps that I believe our duty commands if we are to end our fiscal embarrassment."

Of the proposed tax hike, Daniels explained, "I ask the most fortunate among us, those citizens earning over \$100,000 per year, for one year, to pay an additional one percent on the income they receive. With this money, we will achieve a balanced budget not two years from now, but in the year immediately ahead."

And, perhaps, protect Indiana's most vulnerable children.

While the tax increase would actually replenish Indiana's reserves, Gov. Daniels acknowledged what HPR has been reporting since last summer; that the United States may already be at the halfway point of the current business cycle. The "national recession" Democrats such as House Minority Leader B. Patrick Bauer keep talking about actually ended in 2001. "I read those headlines and I say, "Hello Pat, it's been over for three and a half years," Daniels said.

"First of all, cycles don't last 10 years. We've had a couple that were that long. But if you look at the whole of America economic history, expansions tend to be shorter than that," Daniels said. "I said the other night the spending restraint in my proposal would get us the balance after two years, and that's too long a wait for me, IF everything went right and if the revenue held up. We've gone ahead and used the 4.6 percent estimate, but I tell you we should all be very grateful 30 months from now if, in fact, revenue has been that good. That's pretty healthy growth over a long time and it's after this economy has been expanding for awhile. We cannot count on it running just on and on.

"I'm not willing to bet the farm on that or even some bigger windfall."

GOP's House Divided

But the message doesn't appear to be sinking in, particularly with Statehouse Republicans, even after Daniels repeatedly said on the campaign trail that he would confront



Speaker Bosma and Sen. Bayh, at the inaugural, both resisted any new tax hikes in Indiana government. (HPR Photo)



the tough problems. House Speaker Brian Bosma said the very Republicans who champion "family values" are reluctant to back a tax increase, even on the rich. "We will look for every alternative to a tax increase," Bosma said over the weekend (*Louisville Courier-Journal*). "We'll look to cuts, we'll look to delays, we'll look to suspensions. We'll look at every means possible before we move to a tax increase."

Way & Means Chairman Jeff Espich explained, "I think we can put a budget together that is workable and do it without a tax increase" (*Louisville Courier-Journal*). Senate President Robert Garton told the *Columbus Republic* he didn't think the tax hike would pass.

Gimmicks, it would seem, still rule the early thought process in the legislature, even in the new Daniels era.

And then there was Supt. Suellen Reed, who listened to the governor make his case for universal sacrifice and holding the line on budgets, but told the *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette* she was still hopeful for a windfall. "The General Assembly's just starting," she said. "I don't give up until the gavel falls. The governor said Indiana's school buildings are larger per student, more expensive per square foot, and more tilted to nonacademic facilities than makes good sense.

"The communities need to make those decisions themselves," Reed said.

The Grover Norquist Show

Daniels' Republican colleagues in the legislature weren't the only ones spraying his budgeteering with buckshot. *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Robert Novak reported that organiz-

ers of the annual Conservative Political Action Conference, "Stunned by the unexpected tax



increase Daniels and President Reagan two decades ago (White HousePhoto)

newly elected Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, are considering disinviting him from their meeting in Washington next month."

And Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform noted on its website that Daniels "shocked his most loyal supporters on Tuesday when he proposed raising taxes to fund state spending increases." Shocked?

"Mitch Daniels took office just eight days ago! This is the fastest any governor claiming to be a Reagan Republican had folded under the pressure of the big-spending interests," Norquist said. "Daniels is not serious about reform. Raising

taxes is what you do instead of reforming broken government. Mitch Daniels has just sent a signal to the world that Indiana is closed for business."

Daniels gave Statehouse reporters a historical primer during his meeting with them last Friday. "I just want to make a quick little historical note here," Daniels began. "There was once upon a time a governor whose small government credentials are not much in question, who came to office and inherited a very, very large deficit, and having done everything he could think of to reduce it on the spending side, reluctantly asked for a tax increase. A much larger one than I requested. That was Ronald Reagan in 1967 in California. I think he probably felt much as I do that this is the very last thing you do. And he, like I, have a constitutional duty."

And, again, Daniels urged legislators to come up with other solutions. "If there are other ways to get there, I'm all ears," Daniels said. "So I look forward to working with the legislature. If they have different and maybe better ideas, I'd be happy to accommodate them. The only things I'm inflexible about are no gimmicks and no more deficits."

Epilogue on the Mean Streets of Fort Wayne

Grover Norquist describes himself as "Harvard-educated and street-smarted by years as a Washington insider."

HPR invites Grover Norquist, Speaker Bosma, President Garton and the 148 other members of the Indiana General Assembly to spend a day with one of Indiana's overloaded CPS caseworkers and get some real street smarts.

As a *Journal Gazette* reporter more than a dozen years ago trying to get a grip on the crack cocaine catastrophe, I ended up on the mean streets by traveling with people who fearlessly walked them, such as CPS caseworker Garry Hamilton. They were paid between \$17,000 and \$30,000 a dozen years ago; not much more now.

In one family's sexual abuse case, a caseworker such as Hamilton had to get the father into sexual perpetrator's counseling; get the mother in counseling; get the daughter in victim's counseling. He had to arrange alcoholic treatment for the father; set the entire family up for an assessment; then follow up on all that activity, document all that activity for the court, which had to have it several days in advance of any review hearing. The caseworker had to set up all these appointments and arrange for transportation. That's all based on one child in one family. Imagine dealing with 50 or 100. If an appointment gets blown, the entire process sometimes has to be restarted. So much for weekly contact with each family on the case list, or making the proper evaluations.

As caseworker Jim Roark explained a dozen years ago, "My clients aren't case files, they are people."

And family values go awry... at the Statehouse, where tiny, tiny, tiny family jewels haven't been up to doing the right thing for Indiana's most troubled kids. ❖



Marriage Bulletin from the Dept. of Redundancy Dept.

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS -- Within hours after the Indiana Court of Appeals upheld the state's marriage law that says legally recognized marriage can only be between a man and a woman, House Speaker Brian Bosma was still calling for a constitutional amendment.

"It absolutely is important to continue with the constitutional amendment," Bosma was quoted in the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. "Today's decision makes traditional marriage safe again for the time being. This is not the final answer on this issue. The only way to settle it for certain is to change the constitution."

Sen. Dennis Kruse told the *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, "Good judges don't legislate from the bench. They are not hired to make law. They are hired to interpret law, and this law was pretty clear."

Bosma led a showdown over the constitutional amendment last February and March, as part of a national strategy orchestrated from Karl Rove's Rose Garden office. It was a stunning strategy, that prompted 11 states to offer up constitutional amendments protecting "traditional marriage." It was responsible for the record voter turnout that propelled President Bush to a second term. All 11 state amendments passed last November. It was one of the most clever and cynical political posturing in American history. House Republicans walked off the floor when then House Speaker B. Patrick Bauer refused to call it down.

House Democrats ended up paying a huge political price, losing their majority, 52-48 last November.

Within hours of the Appellate ruling, Bauer declared, "Today, the House Democrats were vindicated. We felt last session to amend the constitution because someone filed a case was unreasonable. The constitution is a precious docu-

ment that should be rarely amended."

So if marriage was safe ... is safe ... and likely will continue to be safe due to what Sen. Kruse described as a pretty clear Indiana law, why are Bosma and Kruse still pushing for a constitutional amendment that appears to have been established by the Department of Redundancy Department?

Politics.

Pure politics. Face-saving politics. Survival politics.

Bosma became House speaker when the House Republicans defeated five incumbent Democrats, using the same sex marriage issue as a bogeyman hunting down families on the Hoosier prairie. And it's still that way. Those operatives already preparing 2006 House races are saying, "We're only one court ruling away from the law being overturned." But American society is one court ruling away from a lot of things. Bosma knows that in retribution, he'll be lucky to get a single Democratic vote on the biennial budget and other sensitive issues (thus, the Republican posturing on the cruelest of all Hoosier political realities: Gov. Daniels tax increase proposal on the rich). House Democrats feel

that Bosma and State Reps. Troy Woodruff, Billy Bright, John Smith, Bill Davis and Bruce Borders not only used the same sex marriage issue as a classic political wedge, but the GOP betrayed a deal with Democrats and used the lifetime health benefits for members.

So look for the Son of Marriage Constitutional Amendment to rise up in the House and Senate and validate the election year wedgies, and to try to bolster the social credentials of freshman Republicans who might be facing dramatic re-election battles in 2006 when mid-term elections won't have the Bush/Daniels tailwinds they experienced in 2004. If it gets to the House and Senate floors by March, it will have wide support from Republicans and Democrats, who know the potency of the wedge. It easily passed the Indiana Senate in 2004 by a 42-7 vote. ❖



House Republicans saving marriage before the Court of Appeals saved it. (HPR Photo)

Brinegar on the Borst recount

Indiana Chamber of Commerce President Kevin Brinegar took issue with one aspect of HPR's "50 Most Influential" commentary on Jan. 6. HPR reported that the Chamber had financed Sen. Larry Borst's primary recount with challenger Brent Waltz.

Brinegar explained, "We certainly did not finance the recount." The Chamber contributed \$14,197.37 to Borst's re-election. But that money came before the May 2004 primary,

the Waltz upset and subsequent recount, Brinegar said.

Brinegar, however, acknowledged that he pressed for a new election after some irregularities were reported. "I certainly did call Mike Murphy before the deadline to make that decision," Brinegar said of the Marion County Chairman. Murphy declined to call for a new election. "I did encourage him to call for the special election," Brinegar said. "If there was a way for us to change the outcome and have an opportunity for Larry to legally win, we'd do it." ❖



Sodrel cites deficit concerns on Social Security reform

Baron Hill mulls rematch; Dems promise '06 fight

By MARK SCHOEFF JR.

The Howey Political Report

WASHINGTON - If President Bush wants to restructure Social Security, newly minted Republican Rep. Mike Sodrel (9th CD) may be part of his toughest audience on Capitol Hill.

Fresh off a slim victory over three-term Democratic Rep. Baron Hill, the burly and avuncular Sodrel is cautiously approaching reform of the national retirement program.

"I'm going to be hard pressed to support anything that's going to increase the budget deficit," Sodrel said in an HPR interview in his office during inauguration week. He was still moving in, and the walls remained bare.

"And I would not vote for anything that would jeopardize benefits for people that are currently retired or those that are about to retire," he said. "I've got a lot of people in my family on Social Security. So I tell them the same thing, 'Trust me. I'm not going to cause a problem with Social Security.' My Mom really doesn't want to live with me."

President Bush is likely to highlight in next week's State of the Union address a proposal to overhaul Social Security in part by diverting some payroll taxes and creating personal savings accounts. Transition costs have been estimated between \$1 trillion and \$2 trillion. The projected Social Security shortfall is \$3.7 trillion over the next 75 years as fewer workers support more retirees.

But the White House this week probably heightened Sodrel's fiscal concerns by announcing that the budget deficit would rise to \$427 billion this year due to increasing costs of rebuilding Iraq. "There are parameters that would have to be met before I support a bill," Sodrel said last week. "We just can't afford to increase the budget deficit at this point."

Democrats Watch Sodrel Votes

How Sodrel votes on controversial issues such as Social Security reform will be watched closely by 9th CD Democrats, who vow to fight back in 2006 after seeing Hill lose the seat by 1,485 votes out of about 287,000 cast. A recount that Hill requested was called off after a few days in

December when it became clear that the outcome wouldn't change.

Hill is mulling a rematch. "I'm talking to family and friends, but I haven't made a final decision," Hill said in an HPR interview this week. Local Democrats say he will not be challenged in the primary, if he runs. Hill, who has not yet taken a new job, said he will make a determination about the race "over the next couple of months."

Whether Hill or someone else runs, the party would become more involved in the congressional race next time, said Mike Jones, 9th CD Democratic chairman. "We're trying to have an effective, unified voice coming out of the party in all 20 counties," Jones said. "We're putting together a system

of tracking his votes. We want to try to ensure that what Congressman Sodrel is saying here is on the same page as how he's voting in Washington. He will have a voting record. Now he's being looked at through the same kind of microscope."

Sodrel credits his victory to Hill's voting record, which Sodrel asserted was too liberal for the district. The *National Journal*, a Washington policy magazine, said Hill's votes were more liberal than 62 percent of the rest of the House of

Representatives. "I think the people of the

district may have tolerated part of that voting record," said Sodrel. "But taken in its entirety, for some people it may have been a social issue, for other people a tax issue, for somebody else it may have been a trade issue. This is a conservative district. Even Democrats in the district tend to be conservative."

Moral Values Votes

And that's exactly how Hill positioned himself: as a fiscally conservative Democrat who was moderate on social issues. But the political milieu of 2004, especially in Indiana, favored Republicans; President Bush and Republican gubernatorial candidate Mitch Daniels swept the state. Some estimates put the Kerry vote in southeastern Indiana at 28 percent.

"I thought we ran a very good campaign last time," Hill said. "We dotted the i's, we crossed the t's. I think we just got caught up in the Republican landslide. In spite of all that, we almost won the race."

Hill's loss may have been due to the "moral values" vote. "It was probably the decisive factor for some people," Sodrel said. "The folks in the Ninth District, it (doesn't) matter what party they are, they love mom, the flag and apple pie."



U.S. Rep. Mike Sodrel at Gov. Daniels' inaugural. (HPR Photo by Brian A. Howey)

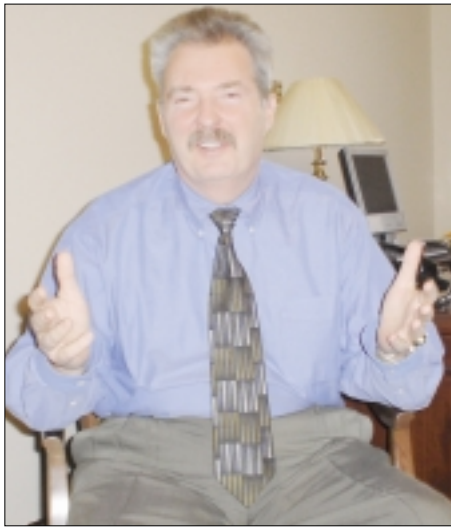


They want 'under God' left in the Pledge of Allegiance, and they expect you to do whatever you need to do to keep it there. I don't think God needs to be run out of the courtroom, the boardroom, the classroom, and every place else you find Him like some of the folks are trying to do. They're not going to be happy until he is run out of the public square."

Hill staunchly defends his stance on social issues and says that the national Republican Party and local groups distorted his record. One organization, Citizens for Truth, put up 38 billboards around the district criticizing Hill on moral values. One of them was inscribed, "Baron Hill supports flag burning." Another said: "Baron Hill supports removing God from the Pledge of Allegiance."

Hill called the attacks lies. "I didn't spend the last six years trying to get pornography back into the library. At least I don't think so," he said. "I voted for a Sense of the Congress Resolution that would keep 'God' in the Pledge of Allegiance. The Republican Party in Washington spent well over \$3 million in this race saying things that were just not true. This wasn't fuzzy math. They were saying anything."

The House Republican political organization spent nearly \$2 million to defeat Hill in one of only 20 House races nationwide decided by fewer than 10 points. Hill spent about \$1.6 million while Sodrel spent about \$1.5 million. Sodrel is the first Republican to hold the seat in 40 years. Before Hill was elected in 1998, the seat belonged to Democratic Rep.



Rep. Sodrel in his undecorated Capitol Hill office. (HPR Photo by Mark Schoeff Jr.)

Mr. Sodrel Goes to Washington

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Following are excerpts of a Jan. 18 meeting between the newest member of the Indiana congressional delegation, Republican Rep. Mike Sodrel (9th CD), and HPR Washington correspondent Mark Schoeff Jr. Sodrel will hold office for the first time after defeating incumbent Democratic Rep. Baron Hill by 1485 votes out of about 287,000 cast. Sodrel has owned and operated four bus and trucking

Lee Hamilton for more than 35 years.

Transportation's Political Payoff

In addition to the moral values dust ups, the race pivoted on local transportation issues such as funding for Ohio River bridges to Louisville. Sodrel, the owner of four bus and trucking companies based in Jeffersonville and Bloomington, was appointed to the House Transportation Committee. It was fitting for his district, which stretches from Cincinnati to east of Louisville along the Ohio River and north to Bloomington and offers all four modes of transportation: highway, rail, water and air. Sodrel's family has been in the transportation business in the region since his ancestors established a flatboat business in the 1860s.

In the 21st Century, Sodrel said he will work with the Daniels administration to bring transportation money home. "Gov. Daniels is trying to make a real effort on issues that are joint to develop some lines of communication," said Sodrel. "I'm sure there will be projects in the state that the governor will look to us for support."

One of those may be the bridges. But Sodrel is keeping expectations modest. "No predictions," he said. "They always say underpromise and overperform, so that's what we're going to try to do."

Sodrel likely will enjoy much political payoff from transportation. It always gives him something to talk about with constituents. During a chat with visitors in his lobby after the HPR interview, he made geographical references by saying, "I used to drive a truck through there," and later said, "I've made my living on the road my whole life. I like bridges."

Learning Washington's Patois

But for now, Sodrel is trying to learn the political patois of Washington. "When someone talks to you up here about a cut, sometimes a cut is not as much of an increase as they would like to get," he said.

"Back home, a cut is a cut. If somebody got a 2 percent raise, they wouldn't tell you that they got cut 3 percent. I have to get caught up on the terminology." ❖

companies in southern Indiana for the last 40 years. He will maintain his home in New Albany and rent an apartment on Capitol Hill while he is in Washington.

HPR: What is the initial difference between coming in here (Capitol Hill office) and going in every morning and turning on the lights in your bus and trucking business?

Sodrel: The mathematics are a lot different inside Beltway. We'll try to get them to start using Hoosier common sense -- multiplication tables, addition and





subtraction. When someone talks to you up here about a cut, sometimes a cut is not as much of an increase as they would like to get. Back home, a cut is a cut. If somebody got a 2 percent raise, they wouldn't tell you that they got cut 3 percent. I have to get caught up on the terminology.

HPR: How does your (business) background and perspective differ from that of your colleagues? What are you bringing to the mix that's unique?

Sodrel: One veteran legislator shook my hand and said, 'Gee, it's nice to have somebody else who's signed more checks on the front than on the back.' It brings a different perspective to the process.

HPR: The idea of values has become political currency, not only for Republicans but also Democrats. Tim Roemer, who is running for national Democratic chairman, is talking a lot about values, trying to widen the tent of the Democratic Party. In your view, what does values mean?

Sodrel: It's generally a defense of the American culture. In its broad sense, it takes up the tradition American values. A lot of people have difficulty describing it, but they know it when they see it. For me, it's not a matter of political currency. It's the way I was raised. It's what I am.

HPR: You've had a long career in business, but you're sort of a blank slate when it comes to public service. Who are some of your role models?

Sodrel: I have a long history of serving the public in various organizations, which tells you something about the person and how they lean. I was president of the Boy Scouts Council, past chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, president of the Rotary Club. I served on various not-for-profit boards and the Boys and Girls Clubs. I've always tried to make a contribution to the community.

HPR: What's your outlook for the transportation committee? What are you going to try to do?

Sodrel: The I-265 bridge connection there in southern Indiana in Clark County will certainly be high on the list. Governor Daniels has appointed an inter-governmental coordinator. There hasn't been much coordination between the state and federal government in the last few years. Governor Daniels is trying to make a real effort on issues that are joint to develop some lines of communication. I'm sure there will be other projects in the state that the governor will look to us to support. The unique thing about the Ninth District is that we have all four modes of transportation. We've got highway, water, rail and air. And my family has spent four generations in it.

HPR: You'll be a freshman on the committee. How influential do you think you can be?

Sodrel: I certainly hope we'll be able to make an impact in the first term.

HPR: Do you have any predictions about (funding for) the (Ohio River) bridges?

Sodrel: Nope. No predictions. They always say underpromise and overperform, so that's what we're going to try to do.

HPR: Are there particular small business issues that you're going to bring to the Small Business Committee?

Sodrel: Oh, how shall I count the ways? For small business, the cost of health care is an issue. Tort reform is an issue. The death tax is an issue. Taxes overall (are) an issue. Regulations is an issue. Every regulation and requirement placed on the private sector in the last 50 years has been an unfunded mandate. Nobody ever wrote a check and said, 'Here's the money to comply.'

HPR: What about tax reform? Do you have a Sodrel agenda going into that?

Sodrel: We'd like to have it simple. There are a number of competing plans out there. Some talk about the VAT (value added tax), the flat tax, national sales tax. We'll spend more time digesting that in the next two to three weeks. Unless somebody points out the errors of my ways, I like the national retail sales tax, as long as it replaces every other tax.

HPR: Do you have a particular approach to trade?

Sodrel: My whole approach to trade is that trade has to benefit American workers and American business. We have always been a trading nation. We were trading in 1776. We have always had imports and exports...I didn't make any bones during the campaign that I would not have supported PNTR (permanent normal trade relations) with China...I'm not an isolationist or protectionist. As individuals, we do business with businesses that treat us well. We go back and do business with them a second time. Our trading partners have to keep up their end of the bargain as well if we're going to go back and trade with them again.

HPR: You're here coming off a recount and a 1485-vote win. Whichever Democrat runs against you in 2006, I'm sure they'll say, 'Mike Sodrel is beatable.' How does winning by such a slim margin affect your thinking day-to-day and your approach to the next race?

Sodrel: It doesn't. I intend to do a good job for the constituents of the district that sent me here. They'll be the best judge in 2006 of whether I've done the job they wanted done. The best thing I can be doing right now is doing a good job for the people of my district. The election will take care of itself if I take care of them. ❖





Indiana's lackluster record of minority leadership

INDIANAPOLIS - It was a mere two years ago that when you surveyed most of the major Indiana sporting outposts, standing tall were African-American coaches: Mike Davis for the Indiana Hoosiers basketball, Tyrone Willingham for Notre Dame football, Isiah Thomas for the Indiana Pacers, and Tony Dungy for the Indianapolis Colts.

Today, only Dungy remains. A couple more post-season losses to the New England Patriots and you wonder how stable his tenure would be.

Thomas and Willingham were dismissed. Mike Davis is on the firing line, though he now has a bit of a tailwind with a recent seven-game winning streak nudging his record above .500 for the first time this season.

As an IU alum, I'm conflicted about Davis. He was thrust into the limelight after he witnessed a student draw Coach Bob Knight into a shouting match, which violated the General's double secret probation. He responded in his first full season by taking the Hoosiers to the national title game. He seemed to have a bright future. But he's serving under his third athletic director and this year's pre-conference schedule (Notre Dame, Kentucky, North Carolina, UConn, Charlotte) was ridiculous. But the team's play seems inconsistent and undisciplined. There are players like Marshall Strickland, who appear to be the kind of malcontent that Knight would never have tolerated, and earned a place in the annals of Hoosier basketball lore by blowing a missed free throw (he made it) that resulted in a near catastrophic loss to Purdue. Hoosier fans are now booing their own players, which is utterly disgusting.

IU is paying too many fired coaches already. Our athletic department budgets have been blown. And there is a sense of fair play weighing in. It seems to be with all the instability swirling around Mike Davis, he ought to have the benefit of the doubt, and his current contract, to see if he can right the Hoosier fortunes under the new President Adam W. Herbert.

There's another reason for my concern.

Indiana is beginning to compile a track record of allowing African-Americans to get a slice of the Hoosier leadership dream ... but only for a little bit.

Hoosier Republicans put Abraham Lincoln over the top during the 1860 convention, but that very same year, elected a Copperhead legislature that was eventually dismissed by Gov. Oliver P. Morton. That set the tone for a century. After the Civil War, Indiana was seen as a northern state,

but our African-Americans weren't fully citizens. The Ku Klux Klan took the state over in 1924 (though there were enough decent people to quickly get it back). Yet it wasn't until the 1960s that a black citizen could feel comfortable going into any diner, bus station, filling station, and not be worried about Jim Crow's northern cousin. It took Oscar Robertson to crash the color barrier at the high school basketball level in the 1950s. Before then, Crispus Attucks had to play schools such as Smithville instead of nearby Shortridge or Washington.

On the political front, there is a similar pattern. Katie Hall became the first African-American to crash the Congressional color barrier in the 1980s, but she was quickly challenged and defeated by U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky (and, notably, she ended up in prison). While Gary has elected two black mayors, there have been no mayors of color to follow Richard G. Hatcher or Thomas Barnes in any city of size. Robin Winston compiled a stellar stint as chairman of the Indiana Democrats, but it was a short two years.

State Rep. Bill Crawford was Ways & Means chairman for a term, before the Republicans retook the House. Outside of Gary, there have been a handful of legislators from Lake and Marion counties, who have had staying power, but only Crawford has risen to a position of true leadership.

Attorney General Pamela Carter was elected despite a racially-motivated campaign against her in 1992, but voluntarily left after one term. She probably would have been re-elected. Other statewide -- Dwayne Brown

and Attorney General Karen Freeman-Wilson -- were defeated for re-election, though Brown had ethical issues and Freeman-Wilson had been appointed. We've not had a minority on a gubernatorial ticket. Gov. Daniels' most conspicuous minority appointment backed out last week.

We've elected two black sheriffs -- Oatess Archey in Grant County and Frank Anderson in Marion County. Archey was re-elected two years ago and Anderson will be up in two years and looks strong. Lake County Sheriff Roy Dominguez will face a tough re-election battle in two years from former sheriff John Buncich seeking to regain his old job.

The only African-American who has established and maintained real staying power outside of Gary is U.S. Rep. Julia Carson in Indianapolis. There's a decent chance that when she departs the political arena, someone such as State Rep. Carolene Mays or Clerk of the Courts David Lewis will be in a position to pick up her mantle.

But there are questions to ponder in the coming Black History Month: Why haven't black Hoosier leaders had more staying power? Is it latent racism? Lack of preparation? Lack of commitment by the parties? ❖





Rich James, *Post-Tribune* - Who was that masked man? Oh, he's a lone ranger for sure. But once the mask comes off, what have you got? On Monday morning, you had a white Republican in a sea of mostly black Democratic faces at two Gary celebrations of the life of Martin Luther King Jr. Go figure. Less than two weeks into his tenure as Indiana governor, Mitch Daniels chose to spend the King holiday in Gary. He could have saved himself some time and taken part in similar celebrations in Indianapolis. This is the same governor who ripped into the hearts of state employees the day after he took office and wiped away their collective bargaining rights. So, several days after pulling the rug out from under the workers, he waltzes into the most heaving union area of the state to break bread with those who, by and large, equate Republicanism with racism. Go figure. Not unexpectedly, there wasn't a red carpet for the governor. Outside the Gary Frontiers Service Club breakfast, the Northwest Indiana Federation of Labor handed out fliers expressing its displeasure with Daniels' move to take away bargaining rights from 23,000 state workers. Perhaps the greatest irony of Daniels' venture into the King celebration was that the civil rights leader was murdered in Tennessee while leading a struggle for collective bargaining rights. Nevertheless, Daniels was here, and he stayed all morning — a departure from what Democratic governors have done in the past. This is the same governor who — two weeks after booting the union out of the Statehouse — turned into a chameleon and proposed a one-year income tax hike on his biggest supporters — those who make more than \$100,000 a year. Could it be that George W. Bush didn't rub off on this guy? Thank you, Jesus. It really doesn't matter why Daniels came to Gary. What counts is that he was here. While Lake County Democrats have every right to be leery of Hoosier Republicans, something seems different with this guy. Is there something happening here? Could be. ❖

Jack Colwell, *South Bend Tribune* - After leading Republicans in battle in a battleground state during the presidential campaign, Chris Faulkner wants now to lead the GOP back home in Indiana in Democratic-tending St. Joseph County. Faulkner will seek election March 5 as St. Joseph County Republican chairman. The 31-year-old political consultant has backing, at least informally if not yet in outright endorsements, from some key Republicans. With the eroding of old-time Democratic margins in the county, Faulkner hopes to combine advanced campaign technology with targeted grassroots efforts to enable Republicans to win more offices at the county level and in South Bend. "Nothing is off the table, including mayor of South Bend in 2007," Faulkner says. "The votes are there." ❖

Sylvia Smith, *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette* - He never mentioned Iraq in his inaugural speech, but the war permeated President Bush's first address of his second term and will seep through every aspect of his programs and proposals for the next four years. Most likely, the war and what evolves in Iraq as a result will be the Bush legacy that history books reduce to the kind of one-sentence capsulization that turns Abraham Lincoln into the president who freed the slaves and Harry Truman as the president who authorized the first use of the atomic bomb. There is much, much more about Lincoln and Truman worth noting, but ending slavery and bombing two Japanese cities are our historical shorthand. Bush's could be that he invaded Iraq, ousted a dictator and germinated democracy, which then spread throughout the region, leading to world peace and the end of terrorism. Or not. ❖

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Union leaders concerned about wage legislation

INDIANAPOLIS - Leaders of unions representing construction and other workers from across Indiana held a news conference in the Statehouse rotunda to share their concerns about anti-construction worker legislation with the leaders of the Indiana General Assembly. The House Employment and Labor Committee announced Wednesday's schedule, including a hearing on House Bill 1184, an attack on the common construction wage, and other anti-worker legislation. In response, approximately two hundred union local and building trades council leaders converged in the Statehouse rotunda Wednesday afternoon to share their concerns

and recommendations regarding that bill and other legislative attacks on working people. "Speaker Bosma began this session by telling the newspapers that they did not want to attack construction workers this session," noted Ben Ramsey, executive director of the Indiana State Building and Construction Trades Council. "Now the legislature and its leaders have an opportunity to avoid the kind of massive demonstration on the Capitol which occurred in 1995. We stand ready to work with Gov. Daniels and the legislative leadership to meet Governor Daniels' goal of raising wages and the



quality of life for all Hoosiers," said Ken Zeller, president of the Indiana AFL-CIO. ❖

Three gaming commission members submit resignations

INDIANAPOLIS - Three of the seven members of the Indiana Gaming Commission -- including Norm Melhiser of New Albany -- have submitted resignations in response to requests from Gov. Mitch Daniels (*Louisville Courier-Journal*). But more could come this week. Daniels mailed letters to the seven members -- along with members of 16 other boards and commissions -- last week requesting the resignations by tomorrow. He said he expects those members to "do the right thing" by resigning so he can appoint people who back his own policies and philosophies. So far, a total of 17 board members have resigned, said the governor's press secretary, Jane Jankowski. Two board members -- neither on the gaming commission -- have refused. ❖

Talley, Peterson eye tax hike

INDIANAPOLIS - Marion County residents could face a \$15 million local tax increase this summer to help fix a county justice system that officials say is strained beyond the breaking point. Proposals to ease jail crowding and add courts, prosecutors and public defenders have been floated before (John Strauss, *Indianapolis Star*). But a proposal to increase the County Option

Income Tax was shot down last year. This year, the prospects for a tax increase look much different. On Wednesday, new City-County Council President Steve Talley said he supported an increase in the tax, known as COIT. Mayor Bart Peterson also said the increase might be necessary. ❖

Alderman wants slots consensus

INDIANAPOLIS - The chairman of the House Public Policy Committee said yesterday that he won't allow a vote on legislation to permit slot machines at racetracks until the special interests competing for the resulting revenue find a compromise (*Louisville Courier-Journal*). "There's so much conflict about how the money would be spent," Rep. Robert Alderman said after a four-hour meeting on two slot-machine bills. "We need a better consensus." Two bills -- both filed by Republican House members -- would permit 2,500 slot machines at Indiana Downs in Shelbyville and Hoosier Park in Anderson, a track whose majority owner is the Louisville-based Churchill Downs. Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson said using slots to pay for a stadium means it will be funded by those "who choose to pay" and not mandated through a tax increase. Daniel Gangler, a member of the Indiana Coalition Against Legalized Gambling, warned that casinos are not economic development. "Gambling is simply poor public policy," Gangler said. "Let us find a more excellent way." ❖

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