



HOWEY

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A Hoosier Tax Apocalypse

Is there any method to the tax madness at the Statehouse?

Col Kurtz: *Did they say why, Willard, why they want to terminate my command?*

Willard: *I was sent on a classified mission, sir.*

Kurtz: *It's no longer classified, is it? Did they tell you?*

Willard: *They told me that you had gone totally insane, and that your methods were unsound.*

Kurtz: *Are my methods unsound?*

Willard: *I don't see any method at all, sir.*

- *Apocalypse Now*, 1979

By BRIAN A. HOWEY in Indianapolis

Let's count the current tax increases on or near the table with HB1120, now up for second reading in the Apocalyptic Senate:

Cigarette taxes will go from 55.5 cents to 75.5 cents.

A 100 percent tax increase on beer and wine (remember, beer prices just went up two years ago due to beer baron laws). An amendment by Sen. Murray Clark rescinded this one on Wednesday.

A \$3 per Colts ticket tax.

A 1 percent restaurant tax on Marion, Hamilton, Hancock, Shelby, Johnson, Morgan, Hendricks and Boone counties.

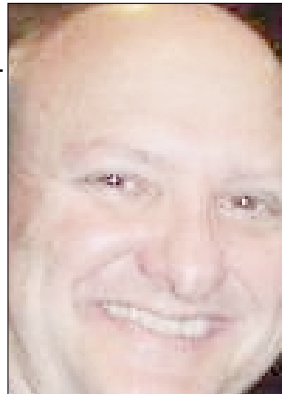
The Marion County hotel tax will go from 6 to 9 percent.

The Marion County car rental tax will go from 2 to 4 percent.

And there will be a shift from property taxes (which are stable during recessions), to income taxes, which are not. That plan by Sen. Luke Kenley allows counties to opt in or out, but would not cap school corporation capital expenses.

What we're seeing in the Indiana General Assembly is a seachange on the part of the Indiana Republican Party and taxes. Faced with approving slots or video poker, cutting education, or raising taxes, Indiana Republicans have opted for the final option in stunning, almost grab bag fashion.

The *Indianapolis Star*, which recently published a series of poll questions,



Sen. Luke Kenley: Are his methods unsound?



“A motion to concur is out of the question. You shouldn't knowingly violate federal law. Why would you vote for something that's clearly illegal?”

— Senate President Robert D. Garton on the House DST amendment

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ranging from gay marriage, to DST, to Iraq, didn't ask or didn't publish results from people on the issues of gaming or tax increases, other than Gov. Mitch Daniels' State of the State tax hike. The newspaper's methodology has also vanished from its website.

Since 1988, Indiana Republicans had been against any kind of tax increase. They were joined by Democratic Govs. Evan Bayh, Frank O'Bannon and Joe Kernan.

Gov. Bayh was able to establish lofty popularity numbers and surpluses through the use of gaming revenues, along with smoke and mirrors, despite a recession. There was a coldly calculated reason for that. Bayh knew what our analysis revealed last winter: that not a single political figure has been defeated for re-election for voting for an "expansion of gambling."

But in this astounding session of the Indiana General Assembly, House Speaker Brian Bosma and Senate President Pro Tempore Robert Garton have made startling and profound decisions in the face of a dire need for more revenue: tax hikes over gaming.

Bosma began the process when he abruptly killed the slots bill carried by State Rep. Luke Messer, the executive director of the Indiana Republican Party. Legislative sources tell HPR that Bosma was worried about making his five vulnerable freshmen vote on gaming issues.

But the alternatives -- a slash in education spending or higher taxes -- are even more potentially precarious.

That was followed by the *Star's* expose on relationships Sen. Jeff Drozda and State Rep. David Frizzell had with Centaur, the Indianapolis-based gaming company with a minority stake at Hoosier Park. That prompted Garton to pull the plug on slots in the Senate, in part retribution for the defeat of Sen. Larry Borst, something he attributed to the "gaming industry" and former Indiana Republican Chairman Rexford Early.

Now Bosma and Garton have their feet standing in ever-thickening cement, refusing to take off their game faces.

The snickering you can hear in the background comes from one House Minority Leader B. Patrick Bauer, the throwback politician who has outwitted a speaker and president. Bauer appears to be playing chess; the Republicans

are playing checkers. If the Senate plan prevails, he has maneuvered House Republicans to vote for tax hikes, something that will provide fodder for the 2006 mid-term elections.

Daniels and taxes

This session began with Garton and Bosma warning Gov. Mitch Daniels not to increase taxes.

Daniels ignored their advice and offered up the 1 percent, one-year tax hike on households earning more than \$100,000. It was a tax that would go away in a year, something that perplexed almost all legislators. That plan didn't include provisions for the Colts stadium and Indiana Convention Center.

There was some popular support. The *Star/13* poll did ask specifically about the Daniels proposal and 59 percent favored the increase, with 32 percent opposed.

What followed, however, was a wild search for revenue via tax increases, brought to you by House Ways & Means Chairman Jeff Espich and Sens. Luke Kenley and Robert Meeks.

When the Senate plan came forth earlier this week, HPR asked Gov. Daniels if he was concerned that the Indiana Republican Party was setting itself up as the party of higher taxes and bigger govern-

ment, with legislative opposition to Mayor Bart Peterson's Indianapolis Works consolidation plan (*see page 5*).

Daniels put on a game face and responded, "I'd be concerned if the Indiana Republican Party became the second Indiana party of deficits, of unending red ink and financial gimmickry. We're here to balance the budget of this state. It's our constitutional duty. I think the Senate has taken a huge step forward in that direction."

That answer was somewhat disingenuous because of the considerable role former Chairman Borst, Garton and Republicans played in the series of unbalanced budgets the new governor complained about. Had Borst or Garton taken a stand, Govs. Bayh and O'Bannon would have had to relent. But they didn't.

Daniels added, "We had the highest per capita spending increase of any state in the country. It's going to come way, way down under the Senate budget or the House budget. It will be the leanest in many years. I'd like to see it



Gov. Mitch Daniels with former U.S. Sen. Dan Coats on Tuesday. (HPR Photo)



come down a little further, to tell you the truth. I think in the beginning, I said in the State of the State we had to balance the budget, we've got to do it this year. We have to get to the back bills we owe our schools. This budget is a very long step in that direction. I think it needs some revenue at least in the first year to do that duty. I indicated a flexibility here. They've got some alternative ideas that I would be obliged to look at."

When Daniels hosted *The Garrison Show* on WIBC Wednesday morning, a caller from Indianapolis questioned him on using increased restaurant tax money to fund the stadium.

"I was watching this thing drift and drift and not happen at all," Daniels responded. "I didn't think we could leave it there. It's better for central Indiana if there is a convention center and a new stadium. I tried to pull something that is fair. Restaurants gets a real boost when people are in town. Many who will pay that are from out of town. Visitors will pay. I ask everybody to relent a little bit."

There was some unscientific evidence that suggested a tolerance for the Colts package. A *Johnson County Daily Journal* cyber poll of 1,844 respondents showed the restaurant tax was favored 63-35 percent.

The problem with that type of unscientific survey and the scientific one the *Star* published is that two separate tax questions were isolated. Nowhere has Hoosier opinion been gauged on the total tax-hike heavy legislative package. Certainly Bauer's House Democrats will be there to remind voters in 2006 what the GOP tried to do.

Watching the votes

Wednesday morning, Indiana Manufacturers Association President Pat Kiely wondered whether Senate Republicans would go along with the tax mania.

"I do think if the Colts/Convention Center package survives it will require a bipartisan vote in both houses with more Democrats needed in the House than the Senate," Kiely explained. "A question you should ask is, will the House Democrats care more about their future than the mayor's? It will be interesting to watch. I think the mayor is the underdog at this point."

Kiely added, "I don't think the tax increases being proposed are viewed the same as raising the sales or income tax. The sleeper issue may be on the property tax side."

Indiana Chamber President Kevin Brinegar agreed. Of Senate Republicans, he explained, "I think they recognize that the budget has been squeezed as much as possible. From the beginning of the session I have had the impression from them that some new revenue would have to be brought to the table. Obviously they have focused on the path of least resistance. With respect to the Colts/Convention Center, it

looks like their desire to avoid further gaming trumps their desire to avoid proposing additional taxes."

Like Kiely, Brinegar believes that Democratic votes will be needed in the House. "The question is how to obtain/leverage them," he said.

A lil' history lesson

Gov. Doc Bowen had been talking about property tax reform since 1968 and campaigned on the issue in 1972 before narrowly winning passage in 1973. In 1987, Gov. Robert D. Orr criss-crossed the state on behalf of his A-Plus Initiative and co-opted the support of business leaders such as Elkhart's Art Decio. In 2002, there was the Coalition -- everyone from labor to educators to business -- who backed the tax restructuring plan.

But in 2005, no one has comprehensively gone to the Hoosier people and made the case for the kind of tax hikes and system changes we find in the Senate budget.

The danger of the current situation, where method seems elusive, can be found in 1982-1984. Gov. Orr passed the largest tax hikes in Hoosier history after the 1982 elections and in 1984 his plurality suffered.

It is almost impossible to defeat a duly elected, sitting governor. But at legislative levels, once the Democratic spin is fully engaged, it's fathomable to see tax hike casualties, compared to gaming.

Indiana Republicans are on totally new turf, more likely to be quicksand than Gibraltar.

Hoosiers have shown some patience on tax issues, recently. The two Indianapolis Public School bonds, the Indianapolis COIT tax hike, and the fact that no Lake County incumbent legislators lost in 2004 shows some tolerance.

Brinegar explained, "Mitch has that bully pulpit. At some point, if he agrees with the final plan, he will need to use it. Then we'll see what kind of response occurs."

From the governor's perspective, making the case for a temporary tax increase would have been far easier and more palatable than defending a grab bag.

As one Statehouse veteran told *HPR*, "We are in a land unforeseen." Or, perhaps, apocalypse later.

HPR sees a potential for some sobriety on the tax orgy before votes are etched in stone. A special session is a good bet, getting better. The \$64,000 question is whether the slots appears as less risky the morning after all the posturing.

*** **

Col. Kurtz: *I watched a snail crawl along the edge of a straight razor. That's my dream. That's my nightmare. Crawling, slithering along the edge of a straight razor ... and surviving. - Apocalypse Now, 1979*





With Borst retired, how goes the Meeks/Kenley finances?

Borst says Bosma will be the key

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS - For the first time since 1975, all eyes on the biennial budget process aren't afixed on Dr. Larry Borst.

Two years ago, he was the all-powerful Senate Finance Committee Chairman Borst. He signed off on any budget or taxation matter. Then last May, he was upset in the Republican primary by Sen. Brent Waltz.

This year, the key shots in the Senate are being called by Senate Tax Chairman Luke Kenley and Appropriations Chairman Robert Meeks.

"Sen. Meeks has done a great job with the budget considering the options and I don't think it would be far off what Larry might have suggested," said Pat Kiely, the former House Ways and Means chairman who now heads the Indiana Manufacturers Association.

The split in fiscal power is working, in Kiely's opinion.

"Sen. Meeks and Sen. Kenley appear to be working well with each other but the real test will be later this week and at the end of the session," Kiely said. "Since the functions have been split, it is one of the reasons we have a separate tax bill in H.B. 1120. But, I also think the separate bill could be great politics, at least for the short run."

Indiana Chamber President Kevin Brinegar said any question on the topic of the Meeks/Kenley process should be "as opposed to Meeks/Borst or Mills/Borst" since Meeks has done the budget twice.

"I would think that Borst would have merged (HB) 1120 and the budget bill before moving them out of commit-

tee," Brinegar said. "Here that approach was more difficult to achieve because now you have the bills in two separate committees with two different committee chairs."

The current Kenley plan will not get universal support in the House Republican caucus. Many there are already grumbling about the myriad of tax increases.

Brinegar observed, "Certainly not all of them. It remains to be seen how many. Clearly Democrat votes will be needed. The question is how to obtain/leverage them."

Borst is now a lobbyist with Baker & Daniels and likes the work he has seen from both the Senate and House. When *HPR* asked Borst about how he thought things would end up on Wednesday, he said, "Maybe any predictions should not be made until we see what happens to those 18 amendments filed for HB 1120 on second reading."

But Borst explained, "I like the idea of sharing the Food and Beverage tax from the several counties in Central Indiana."

And he said that ultimately the calls will be made by forces even higher than the Indiana Senate. "Gov. Daniels gets to make the final determination on the budget," Borst said, adding, "A flat-lined budget is not a thing of beauty. From my viewpoint the likelihood for the need of a special session of the legislature

is diminishing by the day. From day one of the present session, I have said that the school distribution formula would be the key to the session. The House did an excellent job in constructing a formula based on Gov. Daniels' philosophy. The Senate version hardly changed the various elements but did add more money for distribution."

And Borst suggested that it may be House Speaker Brian Bosma who will ultimately be on the hot seat.

"Speaker Bosma will need to work overtime to secure the 51 votes for final passage of both the budget and HB 1120," Borst said.



Former senator Larry Borst

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Indianapolis Works is an endangered species

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS - There is mutual recognition between Mayor Bart Peterson and his Republican adversaries on both ends of Market Street that Prozac City is, as the website Taxpayers4Truth explains, "in a financial crisis."

That website (www.taxpayersfortruth.net) goes on to explain:

* **The Environmental Protection Agency** is telling us we must replace our outdated sewer system.

* **The mayor has told us the Indianapolis Colts** will leave for another city if we do not build them a new stadium.

* **Judges are telling us we must build new jail facilities** because our current jail is overcrowded.

* **Judges also tell us they need** new space for courts.

* **The city has no money to pay for its pension obligations** for Indianapolis police and firefighters.

* **The mayor more than likely will have to lay off police officers** he hired to fulfill an unwise campaign pledge even though he knew the federal grant he used to pay their salaries was a short-term solution. * **The mayor borrowed \$100 million in bonds** to balance the city's most recent budget.

* **The mayor and management of the Indiana Convention Center** say we have to expand the convention center because the current amount of space there is too small to keep and attract large conventions.

In a March 31 letter State Rep. Mike Murphy, who is Marion County Republican chairman, sent to the 36 business leaders who endorsed Indianapolis Works, he explained that the independent CPA firm of Reedy & Peters has "analyzed Indianapolis Works and have found that rather than a \$20 million savings, the program could actually force tax increases as much as \$40 million per year."

And Murphy, who voted for the illegal DST amendment rebuking his own governor, notes that Sen. Richard Lugar "erroneously quoted by the mayor and *Indianapolis Star* as an endorser of Indianapolis Works, has opined that government consolidation never saves money."

Murphy's message, speaking for Lugar, is diametrically opposed to what Gov. Mitch Daniels said of Indianapolis Works on Tuesday, explaining, "My position is as it has been since this was just a vague concept. Local government ought

to be encouraged to set forth ways to take out duplication, overlapping layers and it might save money. I would hope we'd see plans like this in many Hoosier communities, maybe even on the school side of government. We have too much government in this state, much of it antique. I think the best way to reform it would be from bottom up. I'll continue to encourage people to come forward as he did. I hope he gets a sympathetic hearing in the end."

The sympathetic hearings from Daniels' own Republicans have been scant.

This week Mayor Peterson and Deputy Mayor Steve Campbell have been meeting with township taxpayers, with meetings already conducted loaded with anti-Works Republicans. Marion County Democrats are now trying to stoke up its precinct members to show support for the plan.

Now the plan is finding organized opposition not only in the Indiana General Assembly, but in the City-County Council. On Wednesday, State Rep. Greg Porter tried a blast motion to get SB638 on the floor for a vote. But it failed when Speaker Brian Bosma wanted to record only the yea votes, which sent Democrats storming off the floor. That move to keep Indianapolis Republicans from recording a "no" vote is indicative of how politically explosive this thing could be.

Almost simultaneously, City-County Council Minority Leader Phil Borst drafted a resolution that supports sending Mayor Peterson's consolidation proposal to a state committee for more study. Borst said that "a thorough investigation" of the plan (we still think that's the council's role, not the legislature's) is needed before the General Assembly approves the plan.

That resolution carried the name of Democratic Councilor Sherron Franklin, though she told the *Star* she was planning to withdraw her name. Perhaps she felt a little heat.

A coupla train wrecks

Speaking of heat, there are two potential train wrecks in the making. If the plan fails in the General Assembly, Peterson has threatened to lay off police, firefighters and close parks, even after the council passed a COIT increase. Campbell told HPR with passage, cuts could begin as early as May 1. The real train wreck would come in the late summer 2006 municipal budget making process. Will voters then blame Republicans?

The second could come in November 2006. Should those threatened budget cuts go through, the mayor's allies believe the business community will not be pleased. Campaign checks from them to House Republicans might not be as forthcoming. Just this morning, the Indianapolis Chamber was pressing Bosma for a vote. Loss of the House could be a steep price for Republicans defending the antiquated local status quo. ❖



Murphy and Daniels: a wary eye and two ships passing in the night? (HPR Photo)



About that fly on the wall

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS -- Somewhere up the Nung River, past the embattled bridge at Nu Mung Ba, near the Vietnamese-Cambodian border, lies the *Howey Political Report Training Camp for Statehouse Spies*.

After intense training and weeks of cold rice and rat meat provisions, the graduates are secretly placed throughout the State of Indiana. They are a huge reason why you pay for HPR. Without my spies, I would be merely a pawn in the game of life.

My clandestine graduates have served me and my readers well over the years.

One of my most trusted spies wrote a piece - "Our fly on the wall" - in the March 24 edition of *The Howey Political Report*. It was published with the byline "By ANONYMOUS" which should have been a tip that it was not I who wrote this, but an insider.

And it was an insider peek at the Indiana Democratic Central Committee and its selection of new officers, which is rare. HPR and other working press stiffs never get invited to Central Committee meetings, so I'm not sure what really goes on in there (though I was once outside a GOP confab and I think I heard a repetitive whacking sound and a faltering voice that said, "Thank you sir. May I have another?").

My spy reported that there was a 9-9 vote between Hobart Mayor Linda Buzinec and Vice Chair Cordelia Lewis-Burks. It was ultimately broken by State Chairman Dan Parker, himself having just been elected to a full term after he was installed by Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson and U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh after the November 2004 massacre. I've been told that Parker had to ensure his own support was in place and wasn't actively working on behalf of either Buzinec or Lewis-Burks.

Somewhere on I-75 between Cincinnati and Knoxville as I was heading to Florida shortly after that publication, I received testy phone calls from a county chairman, a state chairman and a U.S. Senate chief of staff, all angered and perplexed by this account.

When I returned from the Florida Space Coast, I read an e-mail from Mike Edmondson, the Democratic executive director, who said, "Your piece about last weekend's state committee was absolutely false. Your source, whoever it is, didn't get one thing right. It's amazing to me that you would print such a piece of dirt."

I asked Edmondson to specify the falsehoods and then

explain what actually happened. I did not hear back from him.

Parker explained that he had just had lunch with Lewis-Burks. He emphasized that he had broken the tie that preserved her leadership. He said that with former East Chicago Mayor Robert Pastrick's looming decision to leave the Democratic National Committee, there were concerns that the Region would no longer be represented on the DNC; that all Hoosier representation would have come from the Indianapolis area. Thus Buzinec's candidacy arose.

Sources close to U.S. Rep. Julia Carson, who showed up at the meeting to support the Lewis-Burks candidacy, said that the only problem with Anonymous' account was the description of the playing of the "race card."

"It's wasn't the race card, it was the diversity card," this source explained. That source also noted the AFSCME (Lewis-Burks' employer) puts significant resources into Democratic operations.

At least two other committee members wrote me and said that everything in Anonymous' account was accurate.

As for the long-term impact on what happened in March with the Democrats, my guess is that this will all blow over. It was just another unsettled, unhappy chapter for an unhappy party that just lost a governor, a House speaker and that chamber, and a congressman.

For Democrats out there, that's just a fact of life. The GOP went through this and other wrenching organizational experiences from 1989 through 2002. If Indiana Democrats can get a grip on things, effectively reorganize and get some kind of unified and compelling message out, they could be in a position to recoup the Indiana House and, perhaps, as many as two congressional seats in 2006 (see pages 1 through 3 and page 5).

And if it's any salve for the vanquished, even with the victors there is not universal happiness.

One Republican Central Committee member told us that Republican Chairman Jim Kittle Jr. and Vice Chair Sandi Huddleston "are not popular with half the state committee and they would never get elected without Mitch's blessing. Mitch sent out a letter stating who he wanted on state committee. Without that letter they would never survive."

Now, think about that statement for a minute. This is a chairman who helped set the stage for a return from the desert after 16 long years. Not only that, Kittle wanted to turn over the chair to someone else but Gov. Daniels insisted on his return.

So Parker and the Democrats can proceed knowing that the turmoil is not limited to the loyal opposition.

Well, I've got to go. I'm Fed-Exing some rat meat up the Nung River for a new cadre of trainees. ❖





Gary Gerard, *Warsaw Times-Union* - I just have a real hard time with the concept of death by starvation. I am not a proponent of the death penalty, but it exists in this country. You could take the most vile, heinous criminal imaginable and our government would protect him from a cruel and unusual starvation death. He'd get a nice, tidy lethal injection or jolt of electricity. Another thing I find troubling is the fact that the Florida judge who has been ruling all along has never gone to visit the woman over whose death he presides. Doesn't that strike anybody as odd? If you were the judge, wouldn't you want to meet the woman? Check it out for yourself? Could you imagine lying there with some minimal understanding of what's happening and being unable to do anything about it? According to some doctors, that's a possible scenario. According to other doctors, she's about as alive as a jar of olives. Who knows? Which is another troubling aspect of the case. Everybody's lining up on one side or another without knowing for sure exactly what her condition is. Troubling, too, is the idea that what is going on is perfectly legal under Florida law, giving the fact that multiple appeals have failed and the U.S. Supreme Court sees no reason to intervene. That seems pretty bizarre. It's legal in Florida to starve a brain-damaged person to death absent any clear indication of that person's wishes. They're doing this on the word of her "husband." Of course, the husband's got a girlfriend and a couple kids. So it's not like he's been doting by his wife's bedside through all this. On the other side, there are the woman's blood relatives, who seem to bounce around among emotions from hope to despair, optimism to delusion. I heard the dad talking about telling his daughter they were going to try to get her feeding tube re-inserted. He said she smiled at him. I don't know. I just don't know. ❖

David Rutter, *Post-Tribune* - In their first moments in the next life, I wonder if Karol Jozef Wojtyla and Terri Schiavo will see each other and wave a brief, gentle signal of recognition. And a smile. Yes, a little smile, too. As in, "yeah, I know," he'd say with that boyish grin that became his trademark in the Polish town of his birth. "No one makes it out of life alive, but at least you and I made it to the other side, more or less in one piece. Now we get to find out what's what in the universe." Of the hundreds of thousands of our species dying in the natural order, there is not much that would connect Pope John Paul II and Terri Schiavo except that they became objects of cultural obsession — he as a global spiritual icon and she as a touchstone of unrequited medical and family tragedy. On the other side of existence, of course, such distinctions are likely to be meaningless and useless. Eternity

is a great leveler of previously exercised power. ❖

Carol Jarvis, *M*A*S*H Blog*- We would be well-advised to remember this whole debacle has not been about the Schiavo/Schindler family; it has been about power. This family has been used and now will continue to be used to promote political and religious agendas, and to raise scads of money. Hypocrisy abounds in every aspect of this situation. The context out of which I speak: I have worked at two children's cancer hospitals and was present at the deaths of many of these children. I have witnessed incredible suffering that was a consequence of medical technology, and have been witness to the agonizing, gut-wrenching conversations of these families around end-of-life decisions. My own family faced the end-of-life decision with our 17-year old and thankfully decisions were made in private, with the compassionate support of the medical team. The thought that some group - whether it be governmental or religious - could assert their wishes over that of the family horrifies me. It has taken our society decades to obtain our constitutional right to end medical intervention. Now we are facing a backlash, and we can expect that there will be more court cases such as Cruzan vs. the State of Missouri and Quinlan vs. The Supreme Court of New Jersey. It is too convenient to blame the courts for these cases; whether or not state and federal courts should be the venue to make end of life decisions is irrelevant: our legislators have placed the courts in this position. I don't presume for one minute to know or understand the details of Ms. Schiavo's situation. I do feel tremendous sympathy for all of the family, the medical team caring for her, and the unfortunate judge who had to hear her case and now needs 24-hour armed guards to protect him. ❖

Rich James, *Post-Tribune* - Twenty-two years ago when I was covering the Indiana General Assembly, I wrote a column focusing on the Northwest Indiana delegation to the Legislature. After being with the local legislators on an almost daily basis for several years, I was embarrassed and frustrated. I described the local delegation as having a few good components, lots of bad apples and "some without both oars in the water." The day after it appeared, one member of the delegation came up to me and said, "Rich, what does it mean not to have both oars in the water?" No. I didn't make that up. And when I explained about the oars, I got one of those deer-in-the-headlights looks. Guess what. Things haven't changed a bunch. And some of those who were there then are still there now. ❖



Alderman, Meeks, Moses support legalized gaming

FORT WAYNE - On the heels of state excise police raiding four Allen County establishments accused of possessing illegal gambling machines, three area lawmakers have signed a letter supporting the legalization of such video gaming devices (*Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*). An attempt to regulate and tax these machines has been filed in the Senate via an amendment to the state budget bill. According to the Indiana Excise Police, an estimated 30,000 illegal poker machines operate every day in bars, private clubs, truck stops and neighborhood stores with owners paying out low percentages of winnings under the table. This legislative session, the issue of legalizing the machines, frequently called Cherry Masters, has also been gurgling under the surface as a possible revenue stream for the state. In the letter distributed to some newspapers for publication, Reps. Robert Alderman, R-Fort Wayne, Win Moses, D-Fort Wayne, and Sen. Robert Meeks, R-LaGrange, suggested a simple plan called the three R's: reduce, restrict and regulate. "We believe it is time to reduce gambling in Indiana, restrict gambling to adult locations and regulate gambling aggressively," the letter said. "These illegal machines are stealing from the player and stealing from taxpayers."



Daniels denies excise 'crackdown'

INDIANAPOLIS - Gov. Mitch Daniels was asked by HPR whether his administration had ordered a crackdown on illegal video gaming machines. Press reports out of Muncie and Fort Wayne this past week revealed excise raids on

cherry master machines there. "This is not a crackdown," Daniels said at a Tuesday morning news conference. "There has been no priority. In fact, Chief Huskey's order is do nothing different than what you're doing. But when they get complaints, as they often have, they often investigate. The question is whether they give them a light tap on the wrist or do what they ordinarily do. We discovered there had been a policy that restricted excise police from incapacitating the machines. He had simply said that policy is no longer in effect. It's up to the legislative decide to determine whether this is a law we want to continue indefinitely or modify. We have not changed the policy. There is no crackdown." Asked if Daniels had any advice for the legislature on the matter, the governor responded, "My advice is what it's always been. I think it's very bad public policy to have a law on the books you choose not to enforce."

Clark amendment strikes beer tax

INDIANAPOLIS - The Indiana Senate removed a tax increase on alcohol Wednesday to instead raise cigarette taxes. The Senate adopted the changes to House Bill 1120 on a voice vote. The massive tax bill provides more than \$600 million for the next state budget. Sen. Murray Clark, R-Indianapolis, offered the amendment to delete the increased taxes on beer, wine and liquor -- estimated to raise about \$20 million -- saying it would give Indiana's beer the highest taxes in the region. But increasing Indiana's cigarette tax by another 4 cents, he said, would still keep it below the tobacco taxes levied by surrounding states. The change would raise cigarette taxes by 19 cents to 74.5 cents a pack.

Senate targets casino money

INDIANAPOLIS - State senators rejected a proposal that would have preserved for casino communities more than \$75 million a year in casino-tax revenue (*Louisville Courier-Journal*). They also approved a plan to increase the cigarette tax by 19 cents a pack rather than raise alcohol taxes. Both proposals were offered as amendments to House Bill 1120, which is companion legislation to the state budget. The bill raises about \$190 million annually for the state budget, money that Senate Republicans want to use to increase spending on education and Medicaid. Much of that total comes from what Senate Appropriations Chairman Bob Meeks, R-LaGrange, calls a riverboat redistribution plan.

DST vote could come in house today

INDIANAPOLIS - House members could finally cast votes on the controversial daylight-saving time bill today after leadership spent Wednesday maneuvering behind the scenes (*Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*).

IPS provided buses for Statehouse rally

INDIANAPOLIS - Indiana doesn't have a public education advocate in Gov. Mitch Daniels and too few lawmakers are interested in adequately funding the state's 1,909 public schools (*Indianapolis Star*). That message resonated in a rally Wednesday at the Statehouse, where supporters protested proposed cuts to education spending. "Save our schools!" shouted the 1,500 protesters who carried handmade signs and tiny U.S. flags. ❖