



HOWEY

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Iraq War poised as top '06 election issue; Bush recasts

A 'purposeful' stroke of public opinion

By BRIAN A. HOWEY in Battle Ground, Ind.

Rising gasoline prices, increasing property taxes, health care and pension woes ... all will be issues in 2006. But nothing ... *nothing* ... has the potential impact on the elections 15 months away like the war in Iraq.

That's why President Bush's June 29 speech to the nation will be a red letter date, even though it was the least-watched of his primetime speeches. With his numbers sagging in the polls and

Americans becoming impatient with the war, President Bush had to reset the parameters, or as the *Chicago Tribune* noted, "rebrand" the war from a conflict to get rid of non-existent weapons of mass destruction to that of Iraq becoming the central front on the war on terrorism. Bush had to rectify the conflicting messages coming from his administration -- from Vice President Dick Cheney's CNN assertion that the insurgency was in its "last throes" to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld who said earlier this week that it could take 12 years to defeat the insurgency fueled, in part, by Bush's own words in 2003 ("bring 'em on.") Rumsfeld explained, "The U.S. is winning the war, though it could take up to 12 more years to complete the mission."



President Bush speaks to the nation Tuesday at Fort Bragg. (White House Photo by Eric Draper)

The stakes on the Indiana political scene are huge. The war could have a major impact on the re-election prospects of at least three House members -- U.S. Reps. Chris Chocola, Mike Sodrel and John Hostettler. A massive wave such as those in 1974, 1980 and 1994 trending against Republicans could bring seats held by U.S. Reps. Mike Pence and Mark Souder, who ardently supported the war, in play. A trend away from Republicans could impact Indiana House and Senate races.



“The past is the past. The president is addressing the question of what we are doing now and we can all agree that we must finish the job.”

— White House Scott McClellan prior to President Bush's speech Tuesday

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"Yes, it concerns me," Allen County Republican Chairman Steven R. Shine said about the war. "I applaud Bush's overall big plan to have Iraq as the centerpiece of a new Middle East. He has had success in Israel and Palenstine. There is democracy spreading in Eygpt. If he can get Iraq under control and transfer sufficient power to troops and police, bring our troops home, that will bode well for 2006."

Plus, Shine said, he noted that CIA Director Porter Goss recently inferred the U.S. knew the general whereabouts of Osama bin Laden. Shine called "bin Laden's capture a distinct possibility and a 2006 wild card."

President Bush tried to recast the Iraq conflict as an extension of the War on Terror, the one issue he has consistently polled well on. And he mentioned bin Laden by name for the first time in years. "The only way our enemies can succeed is if we forget the lessons of September 11," Bush said, "and if we yield the future of the Middle East to men like bin Laden."

His words marked a clear shift in the strategic mission for the war in Iraq. They also signaled a significant recognition of the nature of combat in Iraq, which has become much more of a guerrilla war than military planners envisioned (*Chicago Tribune*). "Our strategy going forward has both a military and political track, Bush said. "Our strategy can be summed up this way: As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down."

As Knight-Ridder reported, Bush departed "from his usual upbeat assessment of the war's progress," and "offered a sober report on a conflict that features almost daily attacks with explosive devices and car bombs." As White House correspondent Terry Moran said on ABC after the speech, "The message was basically, 'Grip down, America, and buck up. This is war, it is tough.' This President for the first time talked in fairly dark tones about the struggle of war, asking Americans directly to sacrifice. He asked for their perseverance, something he has not done before."

Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, said there is little doubt in his mind that without the connection to Sept. 11, calls for bringing the troops home would be far louder today than they are. "Without a war on terrorism and people feeling a real threat, it would be like Vietnam," he said (*Washington Post*).

Therein lies the greatest political threat to

Republicans in 2006 and beyond. Any notion that the Iraqi army and security forces will be ready to assume defense of the country is speculative at best and represents a political minefield. As U.S. Rep. Steve Buyer told HPR in 2004, it takes the United States eight years to develop a good staff sergeant; more than a decade to develop a competent battle-field commander.



President Bush offers remarks after a briefing by Fran Townsend, in red, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, to the National Security Council regarding the Silberman-Robb Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission Report on Wednesday in the Situation Room of the White House. Bush approved the adoption of 70 out of 74 recommendations by the commission. (White House photo by Eric Draper)

they approve of the way the Bush Administration has conducted the war in Iraq; 56 percent disapprove.

The *Washington Post* reported this morning President Bush's effort to maintain support for the Iraq war is based in part on academic studies of public opinion during wartime. According to the theory, public support for war is based on whether leaders credibly project confidence that the achievement of the goals is possible. The President's full-speed-ahead message articulated in this week's prime-time address also reflects a purposeful strategy based on extensive study of public opinion about how to maintain support for a costly and problem-plagued military mission."

In the two most recent wartime mid-term elections, President Lyndon B. Johnson's Democrats lost 45 House seats in 1966. In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon's Republicans lost nine House seats, 11 governorships and 236 legislative seats that switched party control in four states.

USA Today said in an editorial that "Bush's attempt to cut through his administration's conflicting messages was helpful. With Vice President Cheney claiming the Iraqi insurgency is in its 'last throes' while Defense Secretary Donald

In Iraq, there were more than a million casualties in the 1980-88 war with Iran, followed by Saddam's own military purges, the failed insurrection of 1991 and the flight abroad of thousands of officers. Then there was the 2003 war and the dismissal of the entire Iraqi military after the initial invasion ended.

Iraq's military is starting from scratch. To believe its military will be able to provide its own defense fits more in Rumsfeld's 12-year timetable than Bush's and Cheney's suggestions that it will occur in the next few years.

And that raises a significant danger for incumbent Republicans who just two years ago were beating the war drums. In an Associated Press/Ipsos poll June 20-22, 42 percent said the U.S. made the right decision "in going to war in Iraq"; 53 percent said the U.S. made a mistake; 5 percent were not sure; 41 percent said



Rumsfeld is saying it could last 12 years, small wonder support for the war and confidence in the president's handling of it has hit new lows. ... Winning back public support for completing the job in Iraq starts with a more straightforward approach to the public. Tuesday night was a beginning."

The *CBS Evening News* reported that May "was the worst so far" for car bombings, in which "77 car bombs killed more than 300 people. And June is on track to match or top that, with almost 60 car bombings and nearly 200 dead." CBS added, "If anything, some military experts say, the militants are getting smarter and deadlier."

NBC's Tim Russert observed, "Clearly the President tonight officially redefined this mission. You will recall the primary rationale for the war in Iraq was weapons of mass destruction. They, in fact, did not exist. We are now told by the President that the primary rationale for the war -- the mission -- is to prevent Iraq from becoming a haven for al Qaeda." Russert said another key point is that Bush "also said we will stand down as a military when the Iraqis stand up. A suggestion that that could still be in doubt. And so the President's strategy tonight is to buy time."

Indiana's Republican Congressional delegation was uncharacteristically mum on President Bush's speech to the nation. Normally most of the Congressional offices offer statements on key presidential speeches. But only U.S. Reps. Chris Chocola and Mike Pence issued official comments and none was quoted in Indiana newspapers. "Tonight, the president addressed the nation to mark one year since sovereignty was returned to the Iraqi people," Chocola began. "Since then, 8 million Iraqis have gone to the polls to elect an interim government. Right now is a critical time in Iraq's history. A constitution is being written and elections for a permanent government will occur in December. Ongoing violence by terrorists will not deter us from supporting our troops, the Iraqi security forces, and the Iraqi people. The president reminded us that we will remain resolute in our mission to assist the Iraqi people in their march toward democracy. Iraq can emerge as a beacon of hope and democracy in the Middle East, and the world, with our help. We must remain steadfast in our commitment to our troops, and to those fighting for a free and democratic Iraq because freedom makes our country and the world a safer place."

Pence, who will lead a bipartisan Congressional delegation to Iraq in August, observed, "President Bush offered a clear strategy for winning the war and winning the peace for a free and democratic Iraq. The President gave voice to the determination of the American people and the

best hopes of the good people of Iraq."

But U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh said on CNN right after the speech, President Bush "did a good job saying things that Americans agree on. We all want to be successful in Iraq. We all support the troops. We all want to be successful in the war on terror. What the president didn't do as well, is lay out a clear plan with benchmarks for progress that will end in success. That's what the American people, I think, were looking for."



Opinion in the wake of the speech found doubts being expressed across the political spectrum.

In his column in the *Washington Post*, Richard Cohen said, "Unless Bush rethinks his strategy, fires some people who long ago earned dismissal, examines his own assumptions (what's the point of continuing to isolate Iran and Syria when we need them both to seal Iraq's borders?) and talks turkey to the American people, he will lose everything good he set out to do, including the example Iraq could set for the rest of the Middle East. I know Iraq is not Vietnam. But Tuesday night it sure sounded like it."

The *Wall Street Journal* editorialized in today's editions, "It's not as if there's no room to criticize the President's policy. Senator John McCain insists we need more troops on the ground, and while we think Mr. Bush convincingly rebutted that view in his speech, at least it's an argument worth having. A more serious criticism is the failure so far to inflict harsher penalties on Syria for its continued support for the insurgency. On these and other points, the Democrats could contribute to a victory in Iraq. But that isn't going to happen until more of them, or even some of them, switch from the Pottery Barn to the Home Depot rule: You Can Do It, We Can Help."

^ ^ ^

In a recent letter home, U.S. Army Spc. Nick Idalski said if he had to do it all over again, he would try harder. "I really believe the Army is for me," Idalski wrote. Family, friends and hundreds of people from around the region gathered under a hot sun outside Burns Funeral Home on Wednesday afternoon to honor Idalski's fearlessness and his knack for putting others first (*Times of Northwest Indiana*). "He didn't want to be glorified," said Idalski's brother, Stephan. "He just wanted to help make a difference." Idalski, who would have turned 24 on Sunday, was killed while conducting combat operations in Ramadi, Iraq, on June 21. On Sunday night, hundreds of Crown Point residents lined the streets as Idalski's body arrived from O'Hare Airport in a hearse.





Tough week for Mitch & Bart

Stadiums, budgets cuts and I-69

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

We learned this week from 21-year-old waitress Miracle Resendez at Frankie's Village Restaurant in Roselawn that Gov. Mitch Daniels is a good tipper. "Oh, he was very generous," Resendez told the *Times of Northwest Indiana*.

And there was that new ethanol plant that Daniels helped break ground for in Cloverdale, solid proof of the "enormous future" biofuels will have in making Indiana the "Texas" of homegrown energy.

Even State Rep. Charlie Brown, who was angry about the BMV branch closing in Gary, offered kind words. After Daniels appeared for a cabinet meeting in East Chicago on Wednesday, Brown said, "The governor is really surprising me. He is putting meat on the bone just talking about north-west Indiana being one of the neglected parts of the state. He's showing he means business about doing something to improve the quality of life here."

Having said that, there were problems for the governor.

He lost the first stadium/convention center tax vote in Morgan County. While it was a tiny portion of the financing package, that coupled with the defeat of a wheel tax in Delaware County and a refusal by the Lake County Council to pass tax increases (though it did pass an expensive tax relief package) reveals a potential political rebellion on the tax load in the making, with schools expected to add gas to that fire late this summer. It's worth noting that Noblesville and Carmel both passed their own restaurant tax hikes on Wednesday.

His new stadium authority spent \$12 million to lock in low interest rates, only to have them dip lower, which the *Indianapolis Star* reported as a "bad gamble."

Those two elements, along with the \$45 million payout to the Colts needed to keep the package alive in the Indianapolis City-County Council, could be seen as reducing the comfort margins on a project the governor hopes comes in on time/on budget just before his 2008 re-election.

Then there was the I-69 time line story that generated considerable confusion from Indianapolis to Evansville.

The *Indianapolis Star's* coverage on Tuesday suggested that the project wouldn't be finished in decades.

On Wednesday, the *Evansville Courier & Press* reported, "Confusion reigned in Indianapolis as the governor's office and the highway department leader tried to clarify what they meant by statements made Monday about the time line for building the Interstate 69 extension. But as they tried to

clarify, Gov. Mitch Daniels' spokeswoman and Indiana Department of Transportation Commissioner Thomas Sharp offered differing messages. However, one thing is clear: both Daniels and Sharp are criticizing an *Indianapolis Star* article that said the administration is looking to indefinitely delay the construction of Interstate 69.

"That is not correct," said Daniels' spokeswoman, Jane Jankowski, sticking to the governor's line of saying he wants to build the highway "faster." But faster than what remains the question. Jankowski said the governor's goal is still to move up construction even from the 2012-2018 range.

Sharp denied a comment attributed to him in the *Indianapolis Star* article saying the project might be dropped from the 10-year transportation plan the department is now revamping. "I expect that (I-69) is going to be in the (10-year) plan," Sharp said. "We have to have something going in the next 10 years or otherwise that's not moving (the project) up, is it?"

All this prompted State Rep. Dave Crooks to pull up the welcome mat. "He better not show up again in Southwestern Indiana anytime soon," Crooks said (*Evansville Courier & Press*) of Daniels. "There's a lot of people who voted for Mitch Daniels who thought they were getting Central Time and an interstate built as soon as possible."

Indy (doesn't) work

If the governor had a mixed week, so did his rival, Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson. He announced \$28 million in budget cuts, including the Ireduction of 78 cops and 48 firefighters who will not be replaced after retirement or resignation. "If our Indy Works passes next year, we will restore those cuts," Peterson told *WTHR-TV* this morning.

He was questioned about the police cuts in the wake of a new Colts stadium ("a completely different funding source") and public safety ("we won't cut back on front line crime fighting"). Back in his 1999 campaign against Republican Sue Anne Gilroy, HPR noted that the Republican made Peterson's proposed 200 new cops a "fiscal issue" whereas the Democrats had seized the law and order card.

"The mayor has known about his financial problems for five years now, and he has done nothing," said Marion County Republican Chairman Mike Murphy (*Indianapolis Star*). "He is now trying to scare the public."

But Peterson cast the blame on Republicans. "Indianapolis Works would have cut the cost of government by \$35 million every year, but without it, we're forced to make these cuts," he said. "However, we will go back to the legislature, we will fight for true government reform and we will fight to restore these cuts as soon as humanly possible."

Alas, a blame game for the 2006 election cycle. ❖



Indiana Senate Watch

Trendline: Persistent rumors surround several Indiana senators when it comes to the 2006 elections. We're hearing that Sens. Sue Landske of Lake County and Tom Wyss of Allen County are pondering retirement, though sources tell us Wyss is raising money. State Sen. Billie Breaux is expected to run for Marion County auditor. And we are hearing that there could be primary opposition in store for State Sen. John Waterman. State Sens. Jeff Drozda and Allen Paul are already facing GOP primary opponents. And we're adding State Sen. James Merritt to our watch list with a general election battle looming for him. Another facing a potential tough run in the general election is State Sen. David Ford.



Indiana 2006 Congressional

U.S. Senate: Republican: U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar. Democrat: 9/11 Commissioner Tim Roemer. **1988 results:** Lugar (R) 1,430,525, Wickes (D) 668,778. **1994 results:** Lugar (R) 1,039,625, Jontz (D) 470,799, Bourland (L) 17,343, Barton (A) 15,801. 2000 Results: Lugar 1,425,150, Johnson (D) 680,046, Hager (L) 33,896. **2006 Forecast:** *Post-Tribune* columnist Rich James says there is no way Lugar could be defeated for re-election (see Columnists, page 8). **Status:** *Safe Lugar.*

Congressional District 2: Republican: U.S. Rep. Chris Chocola. Democrat: Joe Donnelly. **Geography:** South Bend, Michigan City, Mishawaka, Elkhart, Kokomo, Plymouth, Logansport; LaPorte, St. Joseph, Starke, Marshall, Pulaski, Fulton, Cass, Carroll and parts of Howard, Porter, Elkhart and White counties. **Media Market:** South Bend-Elkhart, Indianapolis, Lafayette, Chicago. **People:** Urban/rural 73/27%; median income \$40,381; Poverty 9.5%; Race 84% white, 8% black; 5 Hispanic; Blue/white collar: 34/50%. **2000 Presidential:** Bush 53%, Gore 44%; Cook Partisan Voting Index: R+5; **2002 Result:** Chocola 95,081 (50%), Long Thompson 86,253 (46%); **2004 Result:** Chocola 140,496 (54%) Donnelly (D) 115,513 (45%) **2006 Forecast:** Donnelly called on Chocola to "stand up to his friends on Wall Street and tell them he won't support yet another free trade deal that sends more jobs out of the 2nd District to other countries and that he's going to oppose CAFTA when it comes up for a vote

next month." Said Donnelly, "We know the damage NAFTA has meant throughout the 2nd district in terms of factories moving to Mexico and thousands of lost jobs. I believe the proposed Central America Free Trade Agreement will badly hurt Hoosier workers and that it's time for Chris Chocola to stand up for Hoosiers and tell his friends at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that they're wrong on this one." CAFTA would create a NAFTA-like free trade zone between the United States and five Central American countries plus the Dominican Republic. Said Donnelly, "The same groups that promised us all kinds of new jobs with NAFTA are back at it again. The manufacturing base of our country is getting killed under the badly negotiated free trade agreements where companies can move their operations to low wage countries and our people are getting swallowed up in the process." Social Security surplus funds will be protected from general spending and workers will be able to invest in Treasury bills in the plan offered by House Republicans this week. Chocola supports it. "Over and over, people said stop raiding the Social Security surplus and spend that money only on benefits. That's what this plan does," said Chocola. "Critics will say this doesn't fix the solvency issue. Well, it doesn't, and it's not intended to. It's the first step." **Status:** *Leans Chocola*

Congressional District 6: Republican: U.S. Rep. Mike Pence, George Holland. Democrat: Open. **Geography:** Anderson, Muncie, Richmond; Wells, Adams, Blackford, Jay, Madison, Delaware, Randolph, Henry, Wayne, Rush, Fayette, Union, Decatur, Franklin, and parts of Bartholomew, Shelby, Johnson and Allen counties. Media Market: Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Dayton, Cincinnati. **People:** urban/rural 59/40%; median income \$39,002; poverty 9.7%; race: 93% white, 3.8% black, 1.3% Hispanic; blue/white collar 35/49%; **2000 Presidential:** Bush 58%, Gore 40%; **Cook Partisan Voting Index:** R+10; **2002 results:** Pence 118,436 (64%), Fox 63,871. 2002 Money: Pence \$1.2m, Fox \$342,987. 2004 Results: Pence 182,499, Fox (D) 85,123, Roots (L) 4,381. **2006 Outlook:** Holland is challenging Pence in the Republican primary. He has run before as a Democrat and is more of a gadfly candidate. Having said that, Pence will have to deal with a primary opponent who will be articulating concerns of a war that isn't going very well. Holland is a USAF-NATO veteran who describes himself as a Christian and an Eisenhower Republican (*Rushville Republican*). "I share the concerns of all Sixth District voters on the war and the occupation of Iraq, Social Security and the economy," Holland said. "On these citizen concerns, President Bush and Rep. Mike Pence have betrayed our trust, betrayed our Christian values and betrayed our American values." Holland said that since he first ran for political office in 1986 he has stressed



that our country should stay out of foreign entanglements, and go to war only when absolutely necessary. "I have opposed this war because I knew Iraq did not possess any WMD and I conveyed that to Rep. Pence. At no time, despite the claims by President Bush and Rep. Pence of Iraq having WMD, was there ever a scintilla of evidence of WMD found," Holland said. **Status:** *Likely Pence*

Congressional District 8: Republican: U.S. Rep. John Hostettler. Democrat:

Vanderburgh County Sheriff Brad Ellsworth. **Geography:**

Evansville, Terre Haute, Greencastle; Posey, Vanderburgh, Warrick, Gibson, Pike, Martin, Daviess, Knox, Sullivan, Greene, Owen, Clay, Vigo, Vermillion, Parke, Putnam, Warren and part of Fountain counties. Media Market: Evansville, Terre Haute, Indianapolis. Lafayette. **People:** Urban/rural 58/42%; median income \$36,732; poverty 10.7%; race white 93.7%, black 3.7%, Hispanic .9%; blue/white collar: 32/52%. **2000**

Presidential: Bush 56%, Gore 42%; Cook Partisan Voting Index: R+8. **2002 Results:** Hostettler 98,952 (51%), Hartke 88,763 (46%), **2004 Results:** Hostettler 145,576, Jennings (D) 121,522, Garvin (Green) 5,680. **2006 Forecast:** Democrats are encouraged by the results of a new poll that showed Ellsworth strongly positioned against Rep. John Hostettler in Ellsworth's home county (*Roll Call*). The Garin-Hart-Yang poll of 505 voters in Vanderburgh County, conducted in early June for Ellsworth, showed the Democrat defeating Hostettler 61 percent to 29 percent. The county accounts for 26 percent of the total vote in the 8th district, where Democrats have perennially targeted Hostettler. Last year, Hostettler won 50 percent of the vote in Vanderburgh compared to 48 percent for his Democratic opponent, Jon Jennings. President Bush won the county with 59 percent of the vote. Hostettler won the overall 8th district vote 53 percent to 45 percent. "We are not under any illusion that Sheriff Ellsworth enjoys the same kind of standing and name recognition in the rest of the 8th Congressional district," according to the Garin-Hart-Yang memo that accompanied the poll. "We feel confident that with the financial resources to raise his profile outside Vanderburgh County, that Brad Ellsworth has an excellent chance to defeat Congressman Hostettler next November." Hostettler was still saying that "Democrats can't help themselves when it comes



to demonizing and denigrating Christians." Hostettler retracted those words on the House floor, but he nonetheless believes they are true (*WTHR-TV*). "I have come to the point where I'm not going to let it go into the dark night anymore." Hostettler insists national Democrats say things that show an anti-Christian bias. "Do these values reflect a lot of my friends back in Indiana who happen to be Democrats? No. But here in Washington D.C. and elsewhere in this country, this seems to be a pattern to me." House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi thinks, "it's unchristian of Mr. Hostettler and anyone else to characterize other people in their comments about religion." Hostettler says procedural threats forced him to strike his words on the House floor, but won't silence him elsewhere. "I'll continue to voice my concerns about this bigoted approach to Christians and especially evangelical Christians until folks on their side decide to drop it." Hostettler said Saturday that he hasn't heard from anyone from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology concerning the school's presidential search (*Evansville Courier & Press*). **Status:** *Leans Hostettler*

Indiana 2006 Senate

Senate District 23: Republican: State Rep. Tim Brown, State Rep. Jeff Thompson, Fountain County Sheriff Bobby Bass. Democrat: Open. **1998 Results:** Harrison (R) 21,175 Shelby (D) 11,436. **2002 Results:** Harrison 23,811. **2006 Forecast:** Sources tell HPR that State Rep. Tim Brown is the probable frontrunner in this seat being vacated by Sen. Joe Harrison. Status: *Likely R.*

Senate District 31: Republican: State Sen. James W. Merritt Jr. Democrat: Russell Brown. **2002 Results:** Merritt 17,154. Sloan (L) 1,387. **2006 Forecast:** Brown is finishing up law school and is looking at a challenge. He has worked with the Hoosier State Press Association and is a former O'Bannon campaign aide. Sources in both parties tell HPR that Merritt's Lawrence Township district is trending Democratic, leaving the incumbent potentially vulnerable on issues such as Indy Works. **Status:** *LEANS R.*

2006 Local Races

Marion County Prosecutor: Republican: Prosecutor Carl Brizzi. Democrat: Deputy Mayor Melina Kennedy. **2002 Results:** Brizzi 103,478, Osborn (D) 89,541, St. Angelo (L) 4,997. **2006 Outlook:** Brizzi was expecting to have about \$620,000 in the bank after his fundraiser up at Geist on Wednesday evening. **Status:** *LEANS R.* ❖



Howey's grab bag: coroners, crime, health care, and Hillary

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS - Time to clean out the notebook:

With regard to the coroner of Henry County facing sexual perversion charges (see *Ticker Tape*, page 9), why are we even electing coroners?

In a truly reformed state and local government (via a constitutional convention or convocation) a county executive would appoint a county medical examiner as part of his or her cabinet. The executive would be held accountable by voters for the conduct of his administration.

The Daniels administration wants to expand the use of prison inmates used on maintenance projects. Why not allow trustee inmates of non-violent crimes to be paid with credits that could be redeemed at higher education institutions?

Van Bokkelen Economic Development: While Gov. Daniels conducted a cabinet meeting

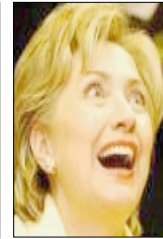
in East Chicago this week, during a town hall meeting in Noblesville earlier this month he had a conversation with a resident there who had been a steelworker in East Chicago. It prompted Daniels to quip that Northern District Attorney Joseph Van Bokkelen had become "the best economic development tool for Lake County" in years. Van Bokkelen has indicted a number of Democratic public servants.

Health care costs: "Is there anything the state can do to help alleviate some of the health care costs, whether it be malpractice laws that help limit the liability of insurance, or hospitals that pay malpractice?" asked Steve Rettig, a resident of Fowler of Gov. Mitch Daniels at a town hall meeting there (*Lafayette Journal & Courier*).

"It's becoming an (epidemic) throughout the country. It's hurting us." Daniels said. He said he would like to see malpractice laws reformed, but he called that just a start to controlling costs. Beyond that, he would like to create health savings accounts, into which people could place their own money tax free and draw it out to pay for health care. "I hope we'll begin to see some moderation in health care costs," he said. "Why? Because we'll all start asking, 'Now doctor, is there a generic version of that drug before I go buy the most expensive thing? Doctor, before I do that, I think I'll get a second opinion.' That's the way we approach the consumption of everything else but health care."



Van Bokkelen



Sen. Clinton

Nexium or Prilosec:

Your columnist has a personal story on this front. As one of millions of Americans who have acid reflux, my doctor prescribed the purple pill, Nexium. I used it and it worked. I also checked to see what a month prescription

would cost, since I had been paying a \$25 co-pay. My friendly Osco pharmacist told me it was \$154 a month. When I changed health insurance plans, I went in for a refill and the pharmacist told me the insurance company wanted me to switch to a generic. It was late Friday, my doctor would have to change the prescription "What do I do for this weekend?" The pharmacist suggested I try Prilosec OTC, now an over-the-counter drug. Which I did. And it works just fine. And the cost for a four-week supply is \$19.95, which is well under my co-pay.

President Hillary Clinton: While President Bush sees a "crisis" in Social Security, I see the real crises in:

1. Health care costs. They are killing the ever-expanding economic group of sole proprietors (of which I am one). If something isn't done, these entrepreneurs are going to be forced out of business because any of us with pre-existing conditions are faced with skyrocketing costs and potential bankruptcy.

2. Pensions: Sen. Vi Simpson told me this week that studies she has seen predict that a third of all private U.S. pensions are dramatically underfunded just as the Baby Boom demographic bulge prepares to retire.

3. Energy. The oil companies are raking in fantastic profits in this era of \$2.25 gas. Isn't it ironic that this is occurring during the Bush-Cheney administration? For the first time in U.S. history, we have a president and vice president not only from the same state (Texas), but from the same economic sector (oil). Little wonder we are in a war in an oil country (Iraq) with an administration that has done virtually nothing to promote fuel efficient transportation.

As for a possible Hillary Clinton presidency, she would probably be the absolute worst person to deal with the health care crisis. She was politically rebuked by her handling of this issue in 1993-94. Would she have the political will to deal with it in 2009?

Health care solutions: Confidants of Gov. Daniels ponder where the solutions are for this health care crisis. My opinion? The states can nibble around the edges, but the solution has to come in a national context.

Moving on health care: Finally, a point of personal privilege to note that lobbyist Jill Fairchild is moving from Anthem to the Medical Society. We hope to keep you busy on the reform path, Jill. ;) ❖



Morton Marcus, *Syndicated* - Private property is a privilege conferred by the government. The use of private property is not unrestricted. When democratically elected governments determine that there are other uses of certain properties, they have the right to buy those properties and use them for the public good. But what constraints should be applied to governments? The opposition in the New London case was based on the idea that the land was to be transferred from one group of private owners to other private owners. Hence, the land was not being taken for "public" use. The Supreme Court decided that "public" use involved a broad rather than a narrow definition. Here, being able to derive greater taxes from the particular properties was deemed "in the public interest." This is a ground-breaking decision with potentially dangerous implications. It establishes an economic principle for the use of land. When private land owners are not employing their resources to best advantage, as measured by the taxes the land will generate, the government may divert the land to others who will increase that value. Thus, in the extreme case, if you or I were to allow our property to deteriorate, it could be transferred to someone who would maintain it in better condition. This policy, if followed, could favor the rich over the poor, the young over the elderly, the skilled over the unskilled. The burden of the Court's decision is now on local governments to use their expanded powers wisely and with compassion. ❖

Gary Gerard, *Warsaw Times-Union* - Certainly, destroying a working class neighborhood and erecting a pharmaceutical research facility, office complex, restaurants, shops, hotel and health club will generate jobs and tax dollars. Certainly the move could be construed as in the "public interest." But "public use"? No way. I fully agree with Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who wrote a scathing dissent: "Today the Court abandons this long-held, basic limitation on government power. Under the banner of economic development, all private property is now vulnerable to being taken and transferred to another private owner ... who will use it in a way that the legislature deems more beneficial to the public in the process." Indeed. Thursday was a sad day for property owners in this country. ❖

Stuart Rothenberg, *Roll Call* - Yet despite similarities between 2006 and the '92, '94 and '96 cycles, there is one huge difference: 9/11. Before Sept. 11, 2001, voters were sometimes willing to take a flyer on a challenger they really

didn't know, simply because they wanted to send a message of change or express their dissatisfaction with an incumbent. But after the terrorist attacks, it's uncertain whether those same voters will put their future in the hands of someone who hasn't demonstrated considerable management skills or who can't be trusted to keep them safe. In this environment, security, safety, maturity, law enforcement experience and proven good judgment become even more valued than ever to voters. This cycle, Democratic insiders are already talking enthusiastically about two candidates with law enforcement backgrounds, which could appeal to security-conscious voters: Sheriff Brad Ellsworth in Indiana's 8th district and retired FBI agent Coleen Rowley in Minnesota's 2nd district. ❖

Rich James, *Post-Tribune* - Whoa! The problems within the Indiana Democratic Party run deeper than I thought. Not only did Republicans steamroll the Democrats last fall, but they also caused some psychological trauma. The party seems to be without heart or soul since the death of Gov. Frank O'Bannon in the fall of 2003. Now, common sense seems to be waning. What caught my eye was a story a couple of weeks ago about the possibility of knocking off Republican Sen. Richard Lugar in 2006. It was reported that a poll taken by state Democrats showed that former U.S. Rep. Tim Roemer — from over South Bend way — would run a close second to Lugar. And Roemer, apparently believing the results, says he might take on Lugar. Unreal.

The only one in Indiana who could run a close second to Richard Lugar would be Evan Bayh — and he's already in the U.S. Senate. But, even Bayh couldn't win. ❖

Jack Colwell, *South Bend Tribune* - Being from a Republican state that hasn't voted for a Democrat for president since 1964 is, however, a problem for Bayh. If Bayh were a senator from Ohio, with popularity there as a governor and senator, he likely would now be a front-runner for the Democratic nomination. A Democrat with Bayh's credentials and an ability to carry Ohio would be a dream candidate for Democrats. If Bayh were a senator from Illinois, a Democratic state he could keep as the base for a Midwest strategy, Bayh would at least be one of the early favorites for the party's nomination. But Indiana? Popular as he is with Hoosier voters, there has been no guarantee that he could as a vice presidential nominee bring the state to the Democratic side. ❖





Buyer reverses himself on veterans funding

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Rep.

Steve Buyer, the Hoosier who heads the House Veterans Affairs Committee, reversed himself Wednesday and said he hoped the House can approve extra funding for veterans' health care by the end of the week (*Indianapolis Star*). But while the Senate approved \$1.5 billion in emergency veterans' funding Wednesday, Buyer said he's not sure what the extra amount should be. "Numbers are being thrown all around, and we're not going to take action until we know what the exact numbers are," Buyer said at a news conference with Veterans Affairs Secretary Jim Nicholson. At a budget review hearing Buyer conducted last week, the Veterans Affairs Department disclosed that it's facing a \$1 billion shortfall, caused in part by inaccurate budget forecasting and a higher-than-expected number of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who need assistance.



Daniels chooses Clark to head RDA

EAST CHICAGO - An aide from Gov. Mitch Daniels' inner circle will head the new Regional Development Authority in Northwest Indiana. John Clark has been the governor's senior adviser for economic growth since the new administration took over in January (*Times of Northwest Indiana*). "I got a lot of feedback from people inside and outside of Northwest Indiana," Daniels said in introducing Clark in East Chicago, where he and his cabinet visited Wednesday. "Many people said the best chairman may be someone seen as

completely neutral."

Henry County coroner to be charged in sex sting

MUNCIE - A Delaware County deputy prosecutor said she plans on filing formal charges against Henry County Coroner Robert S. Troxell by the week's end. Troxell, 34, New Castle, will likely face charges of promoting prostitution, a class C felony, and attempted vicarious sexual gratification, a class B felony, in Delaware County Circuit Court 5, deputy prosecutor Judi Calhoun said. If convicted on both charges, he could face a maximum of 28 years in prison. Authorities said Troxell offered to pay Amy Ruble, 27, Muncie, \$750 to have sex with him in front of her children Monday (*Muncie Star Press*). The proposal took place in an online chat room. Police arrested Troxell at the motel driving a Henry County-owned vehicle with \$750 and a set of motel room keys on him, according to reports. Donna Schwab, a friend of Ruble who witnessed chat room conversation, said the coroner had approached her last month about having sex in front of her 13-year-old son. They knew each other from chat rooms and agreed to meet at Schwab's place, she said. "He said, 'How old is your son,'" Schwab said, recalling the conversation. "How would you feel if we would have sex and let him watch." Schwab said she told him to leave and then relayed the story to her friend Ruble, who at first did not believe him. When Troxell brought the subject up with Ruble on Monday, the two women decided to use their conversation to catch him, Schwab said.



Troxell

Silverman gets an earful in Chesterton about Hope

CHESTERTON - Bureau of Motor Vehicles Commissioner Joel Silverman got an earful on why the Chesterton BMV license branch should remain open from about 150 residents at a public hearing Wednesday. The Chesterton branch is among 24 under review for possible closure (*Times of Northwest Indiana*). Of 12 branches reviewed earlier this year, the decision was made to close nine of them. Chesterton businesswoman Mary Fox said it was "crazy" to close a branch doing almost 50,000 transactions per year. The branches in Valparaiso and Portage could not be expected to absorb that many transactions, she said. Alluding to reports that the Hope branch -- on the first list of proposed closures -- was kept open as a favor to state Sen. Robert Garton, R-Columbus, Fox said that if branch decisions are based on political considerations, "shame on you, commissioner." State Rep. Duane Cheney, D-Portage, gave a veiled warning. He said politically savvy residents of Porter County would remember this issue as their contact with the Daniels administration. "I'm sure you want it to be a positive contact," he told Silverman.

Noblesville, Carmel councils pass food tax

NOBLESVILLE - The vote was not a squeaker, but when the Noblesville Common Council voted 5-2 to establish an additional 1 percent food and beverage tax for city eateries it was clear they heard the voice of protest from those who vociferously opposed the tax (*Noblesville Daily Times*). Earlier in the evening, the Carmel City Council also approved an additional 1 percent food and beverage tax ordinance. ❖