



# HOWEY

## *Political Report*

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## “Bring ‘em on”

### *President Bush will find a very different Indiana on Friday*

By BRIAN A. HOWEY in Indianapolis

When President George W. Bush takes the stage at the Murat Center in Indianapolis on Friday, he will certainly find an adoring crowd and a grateful U.S. Rep. Mike Sodrel who will benefit from the big bucks raised. But beyond the yellow brick walls and ornate turrets lies a different Indiana than the one that in November 2004 gave Bush a whopping 60-39 percent victory over Democrat John Kerry.

It's an Indiana where the President's once lofty approval ratings have plummeted. In a March 2 *Indianapolis Star* poll, only 37 percent approved of Bush's performance and 56 percent disapproved. A year ago Bush stood at 49-46 percent.

Generating much of this misery is the President's numbers on Iraq, where the approve/disapprove stands at 36-56 percent. It comes in a state where citizens have been lining the streets for military funerals in places such as Kokomo, Crown Point and Fairmount, just this- Wednesday.

The March 15 *Survey USA* numbers are equally troubling, with Bush's approve/disapprove at 40/57 percent, an erosion of six points since mid-February. Our prediction of the "Gray Davis Presidency" has arrived, soaked in war and oil. "A 37 percent approval rating in Indiana for a Republican president is unheard of," HPR's Brian A. Howey was quoted in the *Boston Globe*. "Those are Bill Clinton or John Kerry numbers in Indiana. So there is something seriously awry going on right now."

Hoosier Republicans might quibble with President Bush on the issues. But over the past six years, they have seen a man who has come to the state almost 10 times, leaning into the podium, talking conversationally ... *to them*. It's as if the President has forged a personal rapport with Indiana voters.

The implications of this precipitous fall should be troubling for Indiana



President Bush answers questions at a rare White House press conference on Tuesday. HPR forecast the "Gray Davis Presidency" in January 2005. (White House Photo)



**“We have entered a different energy era. What is needed is an urgent national campaign led by a succession of presidents and congresses who will ensure that American ingenuity and resources are fully committed to this problem.”**

— *U.S. Sen. Dick Lugar*

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Republicans. They threaten the three Congressional seats in play -- Reps. Chris Chocola in the 2nd, John Hostettler in the 8th and Sodrel in the 9th -- as well as Indiana House Republicans.

Nationally, the numbers are just as troubling. Bush's approval rating in a *Newsweek* poll this week stood at 36 percent. Congressional Republicans trailed Democrats by 11 percent, 39 to 50. In a recent *NBC News/Wall Street Journal* poll, the question was: "Asked which would be more important in determining how they vote, their own representative's position on national issues or their representative's performance in their district?" 44 percent said national issues and 40 percent said performance in the district. That's a greater percentage choosing "national issues" than in October 1994's 35 percent.

*Newsweek* noted that Presidents Eisenhower, Johnson and Reagan, while enjoying approval ratings in the 50 or 60 percentiles, each saw huge Congressional losses in their final mid-term elections. And *Newsweek* reported on the "fallen unity" Congressional Republicans have for Bush, noting members of the GOP "are uncertain how to pull themselves together in the eight months left before the elections. The toughest question: whether to run, as they have in the past, as W Republicans, or to airbrush the president out of their campaigns."

Charlie Cook of *the National Journal* wrote this past week, "Historically, when parties have suffered unusually large losses in midterm elections, it has been when their voters were either complacent or disillusioned, and the other party was either hungry or angry. That turns tight races into tough losses and races that shouldn't be particularly close into nail-biters."

Cook continued, "Keep in mind that in presidential elections, roughly half of the voting-age population participates. In midterm elections, it is roughly a third. But the drop-off in participation is hardly uniform. Voter turnout among independents is far lower in midterm elections than in presidential years, and as a result, the election is determined pretty much by partisans, and which party does a better job of getting its base out."

*Boston Globe* reporter Charles Savage spent time in Indiana's 2nd CD and reported: Many in Indiana also say the war has not turned out the way they thought it would three years ago, and they question whether Bush has what it takes to lead the troops into a happy ending. Standing behind the counter where she sells bird houses and seed at the farmers' market, Beverly Beisel said she is increasingly fearful that Iraq will inevitably fall apart as soon as U.S. soldiers leave, making a mockery of the deaths sustained until then. "It's not going well, that's for sure," Beisel said. "I don't like that fact that we started it. I thought Bush was actually going after the

terrorists, wherever they were. We thought they had weapons that they were hiding." Drinking coffee at Louie's Café in LaPorte, Ken Schreiber, who commands respect among the regulars because he coached the local high school baseball team to seven state championships, said he doesn't understand why the administration never sent enough troops in to stabilize Iraq's security. Schreiber said he primarily blames the "liberal media" and "partisan politics" for the president's free-falling poll numbers. But he also blames Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld for giving Bush "some bad advice" about how Iraqis would "kiss our feet" for ridding them of Hussein.

"I'm frustrated like everyone else is frustrated," he said. "It's a lingering war like Vietnam. But I still don't think it was a mistake to go in." Most short-term insurgencies last at least seven years. Some go on for decades.

The man Hoosiers trust most on foreign policy is U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar, who over the past several months has appeared to be frustrated with the Bush administration for not listening to Congressional Republicans.

Appearing last Sunday on CNN's *Late Edition*, Lugar was asked about whether Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld should go. Lugar chose neither to defend nor to criticize Rumsfeld. "If President Bush ever wants to visit with me privately about my counsel on his Cabinet, I am sure he will ask me, but it appears to me it would not be helpful for me to make a comment."

Rumsfeld made a comment last week that withdrawal in defeat in Iraq would be like turning 1946 Germany over to the Nazis. Lugar said that Rumsfeld "clearly is correct, and I would say that that is the issue. I think Republicans and Democrats, at least in Congress, a large majority, believe that it would be unthinkable for Iraq to be turned back to the Saddamists and to chaos, and an incubator for terrorism."

## ***Public relations offensive***

U.S. Sen. Chuck Hagel said on NBC's *Meet the Press* Sunday, "We're beyond the American people buying into public relations offensives. This is about policy now. This is about hard, cold facts and realities on the ground."

Heading into his second Indiana appearance in a month, President Bush was doing just that ... a media offensive. But Bush was offering nothing less than blood, sweat and tears.

"I'd say I'm spending that capital on the war," Bush said, in reference to his post-2004 election when he said he had earned and would use his political capital. Later, in



President Bush with Sen. Lugar. (White House Photo)



response to a question about whether a day would come when there would be no more American forces in Iraq, he said that "future presidents and future governments of Iraq" would make that decision.

"I'm going to say it again: if I didn't believe we could succeed, I wouldn't be there," he said. "I wouldn't put those kids there."

"I've heard people say, 'Oh, he's just kind of optimistic for the sake of optimism.' Well, look, I believe we're going to succeed. And I understand how tough it is. Don't get me wrong. I mean, you make it abundantly clear how tough it is. I hear it from our troops. I read the reports every night. But I believe the Iraqis, this is a moment where the Iraqis had a chance to fall apart, and they didn't. And that's a positive development."

Asked by UPI's Helen Thomas why he wanted to go to war, President Bush responded, "No President wants war. Everything you may have heard is that, but it's just simply not true. My attitude about the defense of this country changed on September the 11th. When we got attacked, I vowed then and there to use every asset at my disposal to protect the American people. Our foreign policy changed on that day, Helen. You know, we used to think we were secure because of oceans and previous diplomacy. But we realized on September the 11th, 2001, that killers could destroy innocent life. And I'm never going to forget it. And I'm never going to forget the vow I made to the American people that we will do everything in our power to protect our people."

"And I can understand how Americans are worried about whether or not we can win. I think most Americans understand we need to win. But they're concerned about whether or not we can win. So one of the reasons I go around the country, to Cleveland, is to explain why I think we can win. And so I would say, yes, I'm optimistic about being able to achieve a victory, but I'm also realistic. I fully understand the consequences of this war. I understand people's lives are being lost. But I also understand the consequences of not achieving our objective by leaving too early. Iraq would become a place of instability, a place from which the enemy can plot, plan and attack."

### ***Chocola, Sodrel air brushed in***

With Hoosiers falling away from the president they have long loved, the actions of Congressional Republicans have been interesting.

Chocola and Sodrel both expect to face severe chal-

lenges in the fall from Democrats Joe Donnelly and Baron Hill. Both are using early visits from the president to raise big bucks -- Chocola raised \$600,000 from the President's Bethel College appearance. But while both are personally loyal to Bush, it seems unlikely at this point that Bush would be invited back next fall as those races head for the homestretch.

Neither would opt for the "airbrush out" language that national pundits would use.

Chocola seemed resigned to what could be a growing and hostile environment in his 50/50 district. "It is certainly different than any other year," said Chocola, who is running his third campaign. Of President Bush's plummet in the polls, Chocola told HPR, "No one knows what the impact is going to be on races. We're just trying to do the right thing and prepare."

When HPR caught up with Sodrel last month, he said of the Iraq War, "I think it will shift with the draw-down of American troops in Iraq in 2006. I think it will be less of an issue in November than it is today. Some of the other issues, the price of gasoline is under \$2 a gallon now. But I guess no one really knows what the issues will be in November."

Several weeks later, Sodrel had to find some discomfort that the Pentagon was actually preparing to increase the number of troops. Many Hoosiers believe that move comes three years too late; that we never went in with enough security forces to bring some perception of normal life. Instead, Americans were greeted with Bush saying of insurgents in the summer of 2003, "Bring 'em on" while insisting in May of that year that "major combat operations are over."

Sodrel explained, "When you visit Iraq, it is much better and much further advanced than what you read here in the United States. I talked with Gen. Casey, who is the commanding general there, and Ambassador Khalizaid as well as individual soldiers. I had lunch with them and they believe in the mission. They believe they are doing what they were sent to do. I think the real key is getting the Iraqi government organized. It's not our style of government."

The political danger for Members like Sodrel, Chocola and U.S. Rep. Mike Pence is that when they go to Iraq, it's only for a couple days, with nights in Kuwait and flak jackets strapped on. They say we've never lost a battle (neither did the Israelis in Gaza). It's awfully hard to make an independent analysis of security in one of the most unsecure places in the world. And, perhaps, as politically insecure as some Hoosier congressional districts this fall. ❖



President Bush with U.S. Rep. Chris Chocola.



## Passing of the guard continues in Lake County with King departure

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

Gary Mayor Scott King resigned today, citing family financial pressures and the need to put his kids through college.

"This job was just an incredible experience. It's a great job -- except for the pay," King explained at a morning press conference. "I have a great love for this city, but I have a greater love for my family. It's that time for me."

The move ended days of speculation, with rumors ranging from him taking a job with the Daniels administration to a pending indictment. Over the past several years federal agents have been eyeing Gary city and school government. But last week, an indictment had been dropped against Deputy Mayor Geraldine Tousant, who then resigned.

That set in motion King's decision to bring former nine-term North Township Trustee Dozier Allen Jr., on as deputy mayor. There was speculation that Allen would serve out King's term that expires in 2007.

But Lake County Democratic Chairman Rudy Clay expects to hold a caucus within 30 days to choose a successor.

The *Post-Tribune* reported that State Reps. Charlie Brown and Earl Harris were researching the caucus question.

Elsie Franklin, Gary Democratic chair, told the *Post-Tribune* on Wednesday that she was uncertain how long Deputy Mayor Dozier Allen Jr. may serve under state law. "Gary is the only city in Northwest Indiana that has a deputy mayor," she said. "The gray area is whether (King) has the right to appoint him for the rest of his term. My understanding is it has to go to caucus."

**King left the Democratic Party** in 2005 and declared himself an independent. Since then, the Gary mayor, first elected in 1995, became a close ally of Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels. King, along with his close friend, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, helped Daniels push through his controversial Major Moves highway initiative that will lease the Indiana Toll Road.

King said he wants to pursue other professional opportunities. He is a defense attorney and talked about doing government consulting.

King's resignation completes what has now become a

wholesale turnover in Lake County's big city mayors, after East Chicago's Bob Pastrick was defeated by George Pabey in December 2004 and Tom McDermott Jr. defeated Duane Dedelow in Hammond in 2003. In another key power alignment, Clay was chosen by the Indiana Democratic Central Committee to succeed former Democratic county Chairman Stephen Stiglich, who twice failed to muster a quorum for re-election a year ago. Stiglich died last summer

**The decision to resign** offers up an enticing power scenario not only for Allen, but for Clay.

Clay is facing a spirited challenge for his Lake County commissioner's seat from Roosevelt Allen, Dozier Allen's brother.

But the real plum would be the Gary mayoral seat and Clay will have to decide shortly whether to continue his re-election or challenge for what could be a vacant mayoral seat.

King was the first white mayor to be elected in Gary since 1967, when Richard G. Hatcher began almost three decades of African-American rule at the helm of the Steel City. Hatcher was succeeded by Thomas Barnes.

During that period, the steel industry went through a major contraction in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The city took on a violent reputation as "Murder Capital USA."

King won in 1995 promising an end to business as usual and sought an array of economic development initiatives that

included building a downtown baseball stadium, bringing a national beauty pageant to the city's Genesis Center, and seeking to make the Gary-Chicago Airport the coveted third facility to handle the Chicago metro air traffic.

**King leaves the political scene** during a fascinating era. Gov. Daniels teamed up with U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky to create the Northwest Regional Development Authority in 2005. Visclosky has been active in pushing the Marquette greenway plan for the Lake Michigan coast, and has pushed the "Good Government" initiative. A substantial report was issued by Virginia-based Maximus last winter, urging the northern Lake County cities to privatize some functions and look a multi-city consolidations.

There has been talk of Hammond, East Chicago and Gary consolidating into what would be Indiana's second largest city. While that seems to be a far-fetched proposition, the changes to Lake County government will now occur with the political giants - King and Pastrick - on the sidelines. ❖



Gary Mayor Scott King (HPR Photo)



## Battle for the House enjoined

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

The Battle for the House was essentially enjoined over the weekend when House Republicans and their Democratic challengers began the debate over Major Moves in their various communities.

State Rep. Troy Woodruff faced off with Democrat Kreg Battles in Vincennes. State Rep. Billy Bright and Democrat Dave Cheatham debated in North Vernon. State Rep. Jackie Walorski engaged the debate with her fall opponent, former Mishawaka mayor Bob Kovach.

Cheatham, a former legislator and teacher, said he would have supported the Democratic alternative to bond against Indiana Toll Road revenues. Bright countered that the state would be earning interest, and the private company leasing the toll road would be paying Indiana interest, saying it was a better deal for taxpayers.

In an account published in the *Columbus Republic*, Bright countered that state government has proven it cannot run the 52-year-old road, which still is a long way from being paid off. Instead of paying interest on bonds, Bright said the consortium from Australia and Spain would be paying Indiana interest. Bright pointed out that a similar lease on the Chicago Skyway toll road has increased traffic by 40 percent and has been a successful venture. The old way of doing business in state government created a \$2.8 billion road-fund deficit by 2005, he said. "Indiana's infrastructure is crumbling," said Bright.

**At Vincennes**, Battles used the Democratic logic used on the House floor. "Major Moves is a bad deal for Hoosiers," Battles was quoted in the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*. "We're letting a foreign company profit off of Hoosier dollars." Battles also noted that public opinion was unanimously against Major Moves.

Rep. Woodruff told a Vincennes town hall meeting, "Because we were able to show fiscal responsibility and fiscal restraint for a change, we were able to take \$100 million and put it back to taxpayers in the form of property tax relief. These are amazing accomplishments that we've been able to do because we've had the ability to say we're not going to let this state grow anymore."

But Battles was unimpressed. "We're letting a foreign company profit off of Hoosier dollars. The rosy talk of Major Moves and property tax is a myth," said Battles, a Lincoln

High School teacher. "Even with the 5 percent decrease this year, we will see an increase in property taxes. We're looking at a property tax increase because of this year's legislation."

**In the northern Toll Road country**, State Rep. Steve Heim explained in the *South Bend Tribune* that he grew up in the North Liberty area and remembers years ago hearing people talk about the need to improve U.S. 31. Now, because of Major Moves, construction will begin in 2008. "It's going to be a reality," said Heim, who is expected to have a stiff challenge from former state senator and Knox Mayor Nancy Dembowski.

Walorski estimated that the \$40 million to be directed toward St. Joseph County will provide \$12.5 million for South Bend and \$5.5 million for Mishawaka, and said she will deliver the checks personally (*Wensits, South Bend Tribune*). There were calls for rescinding the wheel tax in both Elkhart and St. Joseph counties, but there was no action taken.

Walorski told the *Indianapolis Star* that people had been stopping her on the streets of Lakeville and telling her she was "doing the right thing."

The combination of the time and Toll Road issues is "basically, in a nutshell, why I'm in the race," said Democrat Bob Kovach, a former Mishawaka mayor who is running against Walorski (*Schneider, Indianapolis Star*). "Republicans, strong Republicans, people I never would have thought would oppose a Republican governor or General Assembly, are saying that (the Toll Road deal) is absolutely wrong," Kovach said.

David Niezgodski, who is seeking the Democratic nomination in HD7, the seat being vacated by Rep. Tom Kromkowski, predicted that it won't be known for a long time whether the legislation will be a good deal for Indiana. "The overwhelming majority

of people in the state of Indiana do not believe this is a good deal," he said in the *South Bend Tribune*. "The overwhelming majority of people in St. Joseph County do not believe this is a good deal. And I don't believe those people are going to change their minds in the next eight months."

**At Elkhart**, where he faces a primary challenge from Republican Lorell Nihart, State Rep. Tim Neese scheduled three speeches in his district and unabashedly praised Gov. Daniels. "This governor, like him or not, he's been criticized for doing too much too soon," Neese said in the *Elkhart Truth*.



Republican State Rep. Marlin Stutzman (right, top) will now have to sell Major Moves to voters this fall while Democrat Kreg Battles (left) plan to go on the offensive.





"Personally, I'd rather have that kind of a governor."

In State Rep. Marlin Stutzman's district, local officials stared at the coming windfall and offered cautious words.

**Stauben County Council President** Bill Booth told the *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, "It really bothers me to think my 1-year-old grandson is going to be 76 when this thing finishes. I'm not sure that part was good," he said. "That's one of the reasons I think we definitely need to invest a large percentage so we can work off the interest versus just going out and fixing everything up. If you build a lot of roads do you have money to maintain them? "I want to sit back a little and take some time."

"I can't imagine the phone calls I'll get," said Jeff Brill, LaGrange County highway superintendent. But the majority of officials contacted by the *Journal Gazette* say the strategy will be to stretch the dollars as far as possible through investment, while still spending the interest on needed road and bridge improvements. The money also can be used for special economic development projects. "This is a one-shot deal for the next 75 years," said Phil Curtis, president of the LaGrange County commissioners. "For the size of our county and with 40 percent of the population being Amish we can't build that many buggy trails."

"It's unfortunate it ever became partisan," Stutzman

said in the *Indianapolis Star*. "But Pat Bauer made it so, because he saw political advantage."

House Speaker Brian Bosma crossed the state, attempting to frame the issue in places such as Logansport, Kokomo and Elkhart. State Rep. B. Patrick Bauer said in a statement that Bosma should have saved his time and energy rather than try to convince the public that the legislative action was a blessing for people here.

According to Bauer, people know that Bosma, Walorski, Heim and Neese "played a key role in taking the Indiana Toll Road away from them and giving it to a foreign investor."

**Then there was the take** of State Rep. David Orentlicher, the Indianapolis Democrat who ended up talking about the plan in mostly Republican adoring Noblesville. Orentlicher was quoted in the Noblesville Daily Times as saying there were good reasons on both sides to oppose or support the plan. He argued the 75 year term of the deal will have a significant impact on what future administrations will be able to do with road construction for generations to come. He also said that Republican bore some responsibility for the partisan nature of the debate. "We did not find that House Republicans or the governor were most receptive to making this a bipartisan effort," Orentlicher said. ❖



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## Bayh jumps into the fray

By MARK CURRY

The Howey Political Report

WASHINGTON - Democrats hoping to tarnish President Bush have once again managed instead to focus more attention on their own party's shortcomings.

The call by Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wisc.) on March 13 to censure the president for secretly ordering warrantless wiretaps further divides the Democratic Party by spotlighting disagreement between moderates and those eager to bring the current administration to an ignoble end.

As Indiana Democrat Sen. Evan Bayh and others have pointed out it's not even clear Bush broke any law. Still, the resolution's loudest supporters include some of the most popular bloggers on the net, and they have unambiguously labeled all opposed or silent on the issue as cowardly, enabling DINO's (Democrats In Name Only). Only two of 48 democrat senators have signed as co-sponsors to S. Res. 398, Barbara Boxer of California and Thomas Harkin of Iowa.

Republicans are doubly pleased. Not only did the resolution create intraparty flak for potential Democratic presidential contenders like Bayh and Hillary Clinton, but it also provided raw material the GOP used to motivate Republican voters just as polls began to indicate even the faithful were becoming dissatisfied with party leadership.

An NBC/Wall Street Journal survey conducted before the resolution was introduced found Democrats were much more likely than Republicans to express high interest in the November midterms.

"Nobody knows what will transpire between now and November and how much intensity each party's voters will have," explained Charlie Cook of the *Cook Political Report*, "but as of now, Democrats have a pronounced intensity advantage and enough of one to probably outweigh the GOP organizational edge."

Observers from both parties said the Republicans probably will not find much leverage with the issue, although that hasn't stopped them from trying. Conservative pundits and GOP political operatives are happy to dwell on the fact that Democrats have proposed to "give aid and comfort to the enemy" by censuring a wartime president. Yesterday's *Investors Business Daily* included an editorial entitled "*If Democrats Win The House...*" which stated, "Under a Democratic House, impeachment would be the judiciary panel's first order of business."

The Republicans "have sent an editorial on the censure attempt to 15 million contributors," according to resolution-supporter James Zogby of the Arab American Institute. "By warning the party faithful of what Democrats may do if they gain control of either Houses of Congress in November, Republicans hope to spur 2006 election fundraising."

## On To New Hampshire

Bayh's opposition to the censure resolution, the flagging luster of the GOP brand, and prospects for Democratic victory in midterm elections are sure to be on the minds of those who will meet with the senator when he travels to New Hampshire Sunday and Monday. Such trips afford Bayh the chance to meet as many Democrats as possible in a state that prefers its politics up close and personal. One politically active New Hampshire native eager to learn more about Sen. Bayh recently explained to HPR, "We don't like to vote for

someone unless we've had the opportunity to shake their hand."

Judging from his Sunday schedule, Indiana's junior senator is well acquainted with the concept. "Come listen to Senator Evan Bayh [speak about] the issues that are facing our country and about the power that young democrats have to make a difference by voting, working in the community, and running for office," reads the invite to a 10:15 a.m. brunch in Portsmouth with the New Hampshire Young Democrats.

Then, at 2 p.m. Bayh is slated to appear about 40 miles away in Manchester during a fete on behalf of

Alderwoman Betsi Devries, and finally it's another 40-minute drive north to the Franklin Democratic Committee Spaghetti Dinner. Bayh spokeswoman Meghan Keck explained to HPR in an email that the senator's support in both states "would include helping them raise money and campaigning with them or anything else they would find helpful."

As senator and possible presidential contender, Bayh lends a heightened level of interest to otherwise local venues. Appearances such as these may be good for the party but also are in keeping with an effort to establish roots that could one day blossom into a full-fledged primary campaign. Success this weekend depends on first impressions, which bodes well for a senator known for his ability to work a room and connect one-one-one with voters in individual encounters. How the people will react to Bayh's take on the controversial and often divisive issues in today's politics remains to be seen. ❖ *Mark Curry, based in Washington, D.C., is covering the Bayh presidential campaign for HPR.*



A visit to New Hampshire affords Bayh the opportunity to meet with voters in small gatherings such as this during a visit last July. (All America PAC Photo)

**Leslie Stedman Weidenbener**, *Louisville*

*Courier-Journal* - With all the deserved hype surrounding the governor's Major Moves plan -- with its lease of the Indiana Toll Road -- the issue of property taxes got a little lost in the legislative shuffle. Republicans who control the House said lowering homeowners' bills this year was their top priority entering the session. And Republicans who control the Senate were aiming to reduce local government's dependence on property taxes. But only one of those two ideas actually succeeded -- albeit quietly. The short-term, immediate property-tax restraints advocated by House passed. The longer-term proposals adopted by the Senate did not. Why not both? This is an election year, and few in the House, where every seat is on the ballot and party control can be swung by just a couple districts, want to be voting for a tax increase, even if it means using the revenue to reduce property taxes. That's essentially what the Senate had proposed -- letting local officials impose higher income taxes if all the revenue was used to either curb the growth of property taxes or to outright reduce them. Senate Tax Chairman Luke Kenley, R-Noblesville, and a number of his Senate compatriots have been endorsing such a change for the past few years. But House Speaker Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, said his members aren't ready to give local governments more authority to levy taxes (even to lower property taxes) until the General Assembly addresses local government spending. Plus, several of his caucus members have signed no-new-tax pledges, making it tough for some of them to vote for an income-tax increase. This has been frustrating for Senate Republicans, who have put themselves on the line, voting for such increases. But it became obviously to Kenley this year that the House wasn't going to budge. So, in his words, he "caved." He gave the House Republicans the immediate tax relief they were seeking, ensuring them great fodder to use for their campaigns. At least for now, homeowners should be pleased with the results. ❖

**Jack Colwell**, *South Bend Tribune* - As political

rhetoric intensifies in this election year, it's time again to provide translations of what the candidates really mean with some of their statements. **Candidate:** I pledge a vigorous, all-out, fighting campaign. **Translation:** I'm really gonna get dirty. **Candidate:** My campaign will be waged on a high level. **Translation:** I've got to talk in generalities. I don't know a thing about the office I'm seeking. **Candidate:** I'll bring a businesslike approach to the office. **Translation:** Yeah, I'll bring business to my biggest contributor's corporation and my campaign manager's law firm. And I'll run the office to make a profit -- for me. **Candidate:** Although my opponent had some harsh things to say about me during the primary campaign,

he has won the nomination, and we must unite for victory for our party in the fall. I pledge to do everything in my power now to work for his election. **Translation:** I'm gonna cut up that lying jerk in the fall.

**Morton Marcus**, *Syndicated* - The 150 men and

women who make up the Indiana General Assembly have finished their annual freak show, folded their tents and departed Indianapolis. In their wake, they left some truly terrible legislation and another record of neglect for the interests of Indiana's too-long-suffering population. What was wrong with this session of the General Assembly? Your local editor will not grant me the space to be either sufficiently complete or detailed. Let's start with the governor's Major Moves program. It just squeaked by, only after truly dumb amendments were put into the bill. Although the route for I-69 has been set by numerous studies, this legislature decided it is not to run through Perry Township in Marion County. Dumb. Perry Township will be the greatest beneficiary of I-69. The failure to control land developers in that township has already created a traffic nightmare along SR 37. That four-lane road was built to be the route of I-69, but a toothless Indiana Department of Transportation could not prevent development along the SR 37 corridor. During the past 25 years, we have generated grotesque sprawl from I-465 on south beyond Bloomington. There is to be no toll on I-69 from Indianapolis to Martinsville. Dumber. This will move traffic from SR37 and SR67 to I-69, clogging that road.. There is no rational reason for this exclusion other than pernicious local politics. From what I can tell (ever try reading a state law?) the legislature did resist the temptation to lower toll rates for residents of counties through which the northern Indiana Toll Road passes. Why would a citizen of Allen or DeKalb County not be eligible for the same discount as that offered to drivers from Steuben County? However, we have another homestead tax credit for owner-occupants of residential property. That applies to this year, while next year the homestead exemption (a reduction in the assessed value of property) will be raised from \$35,000 to \$45,000. These are yet more subsidies for people who tend to vote and further slaps in the face for renters and for businesses. These irresponsible policies induce people who can not afford to own homes to buy them nonetheless, a practice that increases foreclosures. The legislature did not restructure government financing by shifting child welfare costs from counties to the state. This failure was a direct insult to the counties which have disproportionate case loads through no fault of their own. Finally, a two-percent cap will be phased in all types of property by 2010. This is another arbitrary way to destroy the fiscal independence of local governments. But what do our legislators care as long as they get reelected.





## Bush poll numbers at historic low

**TRENDLINE NO. 1:** *Dow Jones* reports that initial claims for U.S. jobless benefits "fell more sharply than expected less week, suggesting that labor markets generally remain on solid footing. Initial jobless claims fell by 11,000 to a seasonally adjusted 302,000 in the week ending March 18, the Labor Department said Thursday.

## 2006 Congressional Races

**Congressional District 7:** Republican: Ron Franklin, Eric Dickerson. Democrat: U.S. Rep. Julia Carson, Bob Hidalgo, Kris Kiser, Joseph "Hippie Joe" Stockett.

**Geography:** Indianapolis. Media Market: Indianapolis.

**People:** Urban 99.7%; median income \$36,522; poverty 13.5%; race white 63, black 29.4%, Hispanic 4.4%, Asian 1.3%; blue/white collar

26/58%; **2000 Presidential:**

Gore 55%, Bush 43%; **Cook**

**Partisan Voting Index:** D+6.

**2002 Results:** Carson 77,478 (53%), McVey 64,379 (44%).

**2004 Results:** Carson

121,303, Horning (R) 97,491,

Campbell (L) 4,381. **2006 Forecast:** Kiser is running for office in Indianapolis, where he claims he has been a resident for the past year according to an interview he gave to Indianapolis' GLBT newspaper, *The Word*. Property tax records for the District of Columbia, however, where he formerly worked as a lobbyist, show that he is claiming a home-stead deduction on two condominiums he owns there (*Advance Indiana*). **Primary Status:** LIKELY CARSON.

**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 hungry for victory will have a clearer target in their sights when Hostettler announces his re-election bid Friday in Evansville (Langhorne, *Evansville Courier & Press*). Hostettler's 4 p.m.

appearance at Vanderburgh County Republican Party headquarters will wrap up a re-election announcement tour that began earlier this week at the Warren County Courthouse in Williamsport. Karen Hammonds, Hostettler's sister and campaign spokeswoman, said he will appear in each of the 8th District's 18 counties this week. She called "inaccurate" the notion that Hostettler is supported primarily by conservative Christians and fundamentalists. "For some reason, that receives a great deal of media coverage, but Congressman Hostettler's support is much broader than that," Hammonds said. "He is supported by fiscal conservatives, young families, representatives of veterans' groups, businessmen. We have many teachers who work as volunteers. The support is much broader." Hammonds estimated that Hostettler's successful 2004 re-election bid involved more than 500 volunteers. FEC records indicate The Friends of John Hostettler Committee had \$36,587 on hand at the end of 2005, compared to Ellsworth's \$370,706. Hostettler typically lags behind his opponents in fundraising. "Typically, that's when the contributions come up," she said with a chuckle. **Status:** TOSS-UP



## 2006 State Races

**House District 26: Republican:** Tippecanoe County Councilwoman Connie Basham. **Democrat:** Joe Micon.

**Geography:** Lafayette, West Lafayette, Tippecanoe County.

**2002 Results:** Scholer 5,630, Micon 4,731. **2004 Results:**

Micon (D) 10,077, Basham (R) 9,471. **2006 Forecast:**

Basham officially announced she is running to represent Indiana House District 26, which encompasses parts of Warren and Tippecanoe counties, including West Lafayette (Shaw, *Lafayette Journal & Courier*). That seat is now occupied by Joe Micon, a Democrat who defeated Basham by about 600 votes in the 2004 election. Basham said she wants to ensure Pat Bauer, the Democratic minority leader in the house, "does not control district 26 from his seat in South Bend." Josh Teasdale, a senior at Purdue University, said he supports Basham because she will cooperate with Gov. Mitch Daniels. "I'd like to see the West Lafayette representative help the governor's agenda." Micon said the race is largely a test of whether voters support the performance of Republicans under Daniels. "Like it or not, the past two years have been about change," he said. "And I've voted with the governor in many instances when those changes were supported by the majority of my constituents." House Speaker Brian Bosma, at the announcement Tuesday, noted that Micon used "progress, not partisanship" as his slogan in the 2004 race. Yet, the representative followed the other 46 Democrats in the House in voting against Major Moves, Bosma said. **Status:** LEANS MICON. ❖



## Buyer seeks funding for Rolls-Royce fighter

INDIANAPOLIS - Taking our nation's security needs and concerns to Indiana, U.S. Rep. Steve Buyer arrived at Rolls-Royce in Indianapolis to thank the employees for the important role they play for our national security and also to exhibit the capabilities at the plant, express support for the Joint Strike Fighter alternative engine program, and announce \$3.6 billion in National Guard and Reserve components funding requests (*HPR*). "Every employee at Rolls-Royce Indianapolis should be proud of the vital role they play in the name of freedom by bringing meticulous care and craftsmanship to their product, making our men and women in uniform the safest and most effective in the world," Buyer said. Buyer spoke about the effort to restore funding for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter alternative engine program of which Rolls-Royce and General Electric have partnered to develop. Having invested over \$1 billion in the project, DOD cut the program from the President's FY07 budget, just six months after signing a \$2.4 billion production agreement with Rolls-Royce. "I urge Congress, DOD, and the President to reconsider the elimination of competition for the engine development for the Joint Strike Fighter. With proven results and having already made a significant investment in the development of the JSF alternative engine, we need to see this one through for the future safety of airmen and airwomen. History has shown that competition of such programs is better for the safety of our forces and better for the taxpayer. I will do all I can to help Congressman Pete Visclosky to make a strong case for innovation, competition,



safety, and jobs here in Indiana," Buyer commented.

## Daniels signs lethal defense bill

INDIANAPOLIS - Gov. Mitch Daniels has signed into law a bill specifying that a person who feels threatened may use deadly force against an intruder (*Louisville Courier-Journal*). House Bill 1028 says that people have no duty to retreat -- or try to escape -- if they believe they are being threatened on their property or in their vehicle. "I'm very pleased," the bill's author, Rep. Eric Koch, R-Bedford, said yesterday. "It was an opportunity for the people of Indiana -- speaking through their elected representatives -- to establish what I think is a very fundamental right, that is a right to defend yourself, your family and your property from harm." The bill, however, does not specifically provide protection from civil lawsuits. The National Rifle Association backed the bill in Indiana and 15 other states, including Kentucky, where the measure is pending. It is also law in Florida and South Dakota and has been approved by legislators in Mississippi. The NRA has dubbed the legislation "the castle doctrine." But the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence calls it the "shoot-first" law. "It's really a terrible bill," said Peter Hamm, communications director for the Brady campaign. "There is no problem out there that needs to be solved."

## Richard unveils energy strategy

FORT WAYNE - Mayor Graham Richard on Wednesday announced his intention to develop a comprehensive energy and clean-air plan for the city to reduce energy costs and improve air quality (*Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*). Richard announced his plan at Canterbury High School during his final

"Report to the People." The reports substitute for Richard's State of the City address. To develop the energy plan, Richard said he is appointing a "green ribbon" commission made up of community and business leaders. The commission will be instructed to develop a plan to include goals and performance measures. "This is about our security. It's about an opportunity to make a better community," he told the crowd of about 70 residents, city workers and politicians. "Air quality is one of the most essential elements of having a good quality of life."

## DNR moves to ban fenced hunting

INDIANAPOLIS - Hunting deer and other animals inside fenced areas would be banned in Indiana under state regulations that have now moved a step closer to taking effect. On Tuesday the state's Natural Resources Commission approved the rules, which could take effect in about two months (*Louisville Courier-Journal*). Gov. Mitch Daniels and Attorney General Steve Carter still must approve them. Kyle Hupfer, director of the state Department of Natural Resources, sought the new rules after announcing in August that he believed preserves that hold such hunts for deer or elk were not authorized under state law.

## Cop indicted in East Chicago vote fraud

HAMMOND - A Lake County police officer was among 12 people indicted Wednesday for vote fraud in East Chicago (*Post-Tribune*). Ponciano Herrera, a 12-year veteran of the Lake County Police Department, an associate of Sheriff Roy Dominguez and an East Chicago precinct committeeman, was charged with four counts of perjury and four counts of fraud, all felonies. ❖