



Analyzing the legislature's 11th hour

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - With time slipping and historic legislation twisting, here is HPR's analysis of the endgame for this session of the Indiana General Assembly. Two events this past week - the Legislative Service Agency's study forecasting a 24-percent rise in property taxes, and the New Castle prison riot - cast shadows over the session. The former is more likely to prompt action than the latter.



SEN. KENLEY: The man of the hour. (HPR Photo)

The prison riot would have been devastating to Gov. Mitch Daniels had he still been ardently pushing his Hoosier Lottery "franchising" legislation and the toll roads, but those have already been pushed to a back burner. It did, however, turn up the rhetoric with Indiana Democrats calling it a "tragedy" (two guards suffered minor injuries; windows were broken, mattresses set on fire). The party

said it "proves" that privatization doesn't work, but that proof could only be in a political sense (and that's a stretch) and certainly wouldn't meet any academic or intellectual benchmarks. The irony there is the New Castle prison was built by a Democratic governor and then sat empty for years while Indiana sent its inmates to other states. Monday's riot, if anything, seemed to heighten the bunker mentality that has characterized the governor's operations this session while adding a hyper-political element that has been in play most of the session.

By Wednesday, House Speaker B. Patrick Bauer was calling for a probe, which seems reasonable. But that prompted a sharp rebuke from Daniels' chief of staff Earl Goode urging him to stay focused. "The General Assembly has four days left to do its duty by passing a balanced budget, providing property tax relief, improving education and health care in our state, giving fairer treatment to our veterans and concluding oth-

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Our leaders in denial

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

CARMEL - I absolutely cringed when I heard Mitt Romney's comments last Friday that we "won" the first phase of the Iraq War, you know, the banana republic style coup d'etat when we severed the head of the Saddam regime. That would be like saying the New England Patriots won the first half of the AFC Championship game against the Colts. And about as meaningful.



Brian Howey's Column

Romney was animated by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's remarks that the U.S. had "lost" the war.

Romney's comments to the press at the Indiana Republican Spring Dinner



"A good pollster would not call someone who doesn't vote. My campaign does not do push polling and we would not ask such a vulgar question."

- Kokomo Mayor Matt McKillip



can be read in their entirety on Page 4. But I have come to the conclusion that there isn't a Republican presidential candidate - as well as President Bush - who is effectively out of denial and getting their grip on what we should do to get out of this epically catastrophic mess we find ourselves in Iraq.

The Democrats aren't much better, though Sen. Obama articulated the need for regional diplomacy that would have a subsequent impact on the Iraq battlefield.

None of the candidates is doing anything close to what retired Gen. Tony Zinni suggests in his book "The Battle for Peace." Zinni explained, "the debate that should be, among the candidates, is how do we redesign the strategy for this region, protect our interests, create the kind of coalition involvement that would help support this and share the burden. We need that kind of imagination out there."

In turning down the White House "war czar" position, retired Marine Gen. John J. Sheehan found "no agreed upon strategic view of the Iraq problem or the region. In my view, there are essentially three strategies in play simultaneously now."

Gen. Sheehan explained, "Activities such as the current surge operations should fit into an overall strategic framework. There has to be linkage between short-term operations and strategic objectives that represent long-term U.S. and regional interests, such as assured access to energy resources and support for stable, Western-oriented countries. These interests will require a serious dialogue and partnership with countries that live in an increasingly dangerous neighborhood."

But this GOP presidential field appears to be either in paralyzed denial, or stealing a page from the

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Richard M. Nixon book of ending war. In 1968, Nixon had a "secret plan" to get the U.S. out of Vietnam that he would not divulge during the campaign that barely defeated Hubert H. Humphrey. It took four years, 28,000 more American lives, the invasion of Cambodia that triggered the most post-Holocaust genocide, and, in the process, it ignited turmoil in American cities and campuses. And we still lost the war. Vietnam vets now make up a huge percentage of the current homeless population in the U.S.



Romney said it will be up to the al Maliki government and his troops to take the lead in a period measured in months not years. The U.S., he said, is in a mere supporting role.

That is outrageously naive. Five days before he said that, six of Maliki's ministers were pulled by the radical cleric Muktada al Sader. The Iraqis are wholly dependent on the U.S. Anyone who thinks Iraq will be able to defend and police itself (remember, it has no judiciary) before the 2012 presidential election is hallucinating.

Romney was asked point blank what his plan for Iraq is. "I support the president's effort at this stage which is to support al Maliki in his plan to bring stability to Iraq by bringing

additional troops in Baghdad and provide security and support. That strikes me as being the best course that we have at this stage. I think we'll know whether it's working in a matter of months, not years."

Ohhhh, my God.

No strategic view expressed there. Defer to President Bush, who is floundering so badly that he is compelled to hire a "war czar" and is having trouble filling the job. The Bush administration is not working on diplomatic solutions even though everyone from Gen. David Petraeus to Sen. Dick Lugar say regional engagement is critical.

And even if Gen. Petraeus is wildly successful, we aren't going to know this for months. The surge cannot possibly be properly assessed for at least a year and probably more.

U.S. Sen. Barack Obama, the Illinois Democrat, spoke on Monday before the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and outlined his views on Iraq, emphasizing diplomacy.

"The first way America will lead is by bringing a responsible end to this war in Iraq and refocusing on the critical challenges in the broader region," Obama said. "In a speech five months ago, I argued that there can be no military solution to what has become a political conflict between Sunni and Shia factions. And I laid out a plan that I still believe offers the best chance of pressuring these warring factions toward a political settle-



ment – a phased withdrawal of American forces with the goal of removing all combat brigades from Iraq by March 31, 2008. I acknowledged at the time that there are risks involved in such an approach. That is why my plan provides for an over-the-horizon force that could prevent chaos in the wider region, and allows for a limited number of troops to remain in Iraq to fight al Qaeda and other terrorists.”

Obama said his plan is clear that the Iraq government must meet a “a series of well-defined benchmarks necessary to reach a political settlement.”

The problem with that is, the Maliki government is too feeble to meet or deliver on any benchmarks.

Obama is correct in joining Lugar to push diplomacy. But as the insurgency kills American troops, dismantles the Baghdad physical plant and more refugees stream into Jordan and Syria (where 2 million already reside uneasily) and the Kurds antagonize Turkey, diplomacy will require years, not months. They will likely spend months arguing about the shape of a peace conference table. And it is unclear who will represent the suicide bombers and decapitators.

Obama explained, “Our interests are best served when people and governments from Jerusalem and Amman to Damascus and Tehran understand that America will stand with our friends, work hard to build a peaceful Middle East, and refuse to cede the future of the region to those who seek perpetual conflict and instability. Such effective diplomacy cannot be done on the cheap, nor can it be warped by an ongoing occupation of Iraq. Instead, it will require patient, sustained effort, and the personal commitment of the President of the United States. That is a commitment I intend to make.”

John McCain, in announcing his candidacy Wednesday,

acknowledged the Iraq war and mistakes, but did little to lay out an explicit plan. “We are fighting a war in two countries, and we’re in a global struggle with violent extremists who despise us, our values and modernity itself,” McCain said. “If we are to succeed, we must rethink and rebuild the structure and mission of our military; the capabilities of our intelligence and law enforcement agencies; the purposes of our alliances; the reach and scope of our diplomacy; the capacity of all branches of government to defend us. We need to marshal all elements of American power: our military, economy, investment, trade and technology. We need to strengthen our alliances and build support in other nations. We must preserve our moral credibility, and remember that our security and the global progress of our ideals are inextricably linked.”

“We all know the war in Iraq has not gone well,” McCain acknowledged before affirming his commitment to the Powell Doctrine. “We have made mistakes and we have paid grievously for them. We have changed the strategy that failed us, and we have begun to make a little progress. But in the many mistakes we have made in this war, a few lessons have become clear. America should never undertake a war unless we are prepared to do everything necessary to succeed, unless we have a realistic and comprehensive plan for success, and unless all relevant agencies of government are committed to that success. We did not meet this responsibility initially. And we must never repeat that mistake again.”

While Obama and McCain revealed a more sophisticated but vague worldview when it comes to Iraq, as opposed to Romney, they still leave much to the imagination as to what they would actually do. ❖



Romney said U.S. ‘won’ first phase of war

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

CARMEL - Hours after Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said the U.S. had “lost” the war in Iraq, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney opened a brief press conference at The Fountains after the Indiana Republican Spring Dinner last Friday night. WXNT-AM provided the audio for this transcript:

Romney: I was shocked by his statement that America had lost the war. That’s not the kind of comment needed for our troops; that’s not the kind of comment we want to send to the world. His comments have been broadcast by al Jazeera

and on front pages around the world. It’s a wrong-headed approach to describing America’s involvement in Iraq. We won the part of the war where we knocked out Saddam Hussein, that phase of the war. We distinguished ourselves and lost a lot of men and women to a tough enemy and we won. Now we’re involved in supporting leaders in Iraq in a process known as nation building. We’re trying to help them in that effort. We’ll see how well it’s working. It’s not worked anywhere near what we hoped it would as a nation. There have been setbacks. There are huge challenges, but we won the war knocking down Hussein.

Reporter: Are we winning the war now?

Romney: Which war?

Reporter: The one that’s going on right now in Iraq.

Romney: It depends on how you define that. Maliki’s government has attempted to bring stability and





security in Iraq and we will see with time whether we are making progress or not. It's very hard for us to tell how his troops are doing. He's in the lead in this effort and we'll support him and we'll know in a matter of months whether this effort is working. If it's not, then we'll have to go to other alternatives.

Reporter: But didn't Sen. Reid cite Gen. McCaffrey in his support in saying that this is going to require a diplomatic solution to fix?

Romney: That's a very different thing than saying we've lost a war. Saying to the world that we lost the war in Iraq only tends to encourage violent jihadists to parade to their followers around the world that they beat America. That's not what happened. We beat Saddam Hussein and his government and his military and won that portion of the war. At this stage we're trying to help the people there rebuild their country. That's something they have to do and we're supporting them in that effort. Yeah, there's a low-level civil war going on. We can talk about what's the right course for us to take at this stage, but to say we lost the war even while we're in the midst of that portion helping them rebuild their country doesn't help Maliki. Doesn't help our troops there. Doesn't help globally to help moderate Islam reject the extreme.

Reporter: What would you do in Iraq?

Romney: I support the president's effort at this stage which is to support al Maliki in his plan to bring stability to Iraq by bringing additional troops in Baghdad and provide security and support. That strikes me as being the best course that we have at this stage. I think we'll know whether it's working in a matter of months, not years. I don't give it 100 percent probability of working. This nation building process is a process that is fraught with difficulty, not only because of the insurgents, but because of the sectarian violence between the Shia and the Sunni. The success of this effort will depend, as Secretary Gates said today, in large measure on the success of the Iraqis and their military. But Maliki's government is going to have to be the winner here.

Reporter: Didn't Secretary Gates tell al Maliki that the American peoples' patience and commitment level is not infinite; that the Iraqis haven't done their job.

Romney: Secretary Gates? Yes, exactly I agree

with him. That's the very point that it's the Iraqi people and the Iraqi leadership that are playing the point position at this stage in rebuilding their country and we're doing our best to help them in their effort. But to say that America lost the war is simply wrong. It is counter productive for the spirit in this country which calls for unity and putting politics aside when you get the water's edge.

Reporter: Why did the Democrats say something like that?

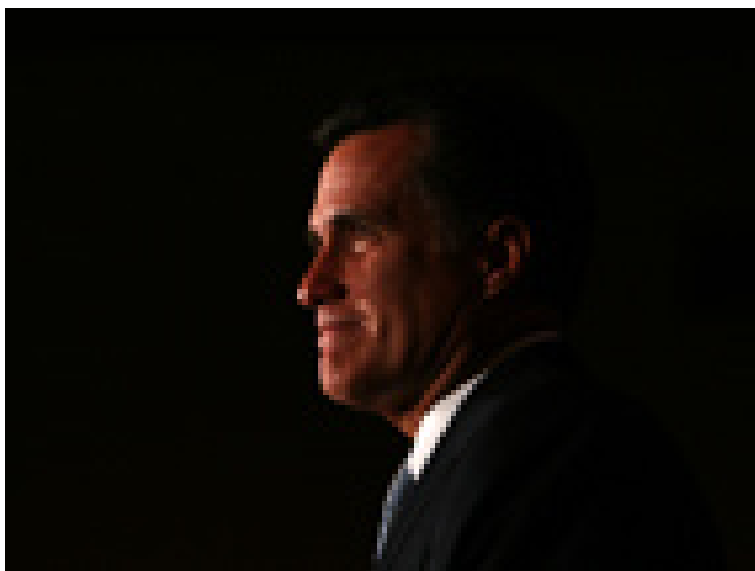
Romney: I don't know. I certainly wouldn't categorize all Democrats in that way. The leadership that has come from Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi in the last few weeks is sorely lacking. It has been, in some respects, disappointing and thoughtless. To go to a terror sponsoring state and meet with Assad as the third leading Democrat in the nation; the

third in line for the presidency is exactly the wrong signal. America stands united. If there is to be a change, we as a nation can vote for change. But while we have a president, we as a nation support the commander in chief. We debate among ourselves, but we don't debate on the world stage and suggest we have two foreign policies or suggesting that our troops have lost. Let me tell you, there are a lot of money, and men and women who have laid down their lives to get to

Baghdad and knock down Saddam Hussein, and to say that we lost that war is absolutely incorrect.

Reporter: Your position on a number of issues has evolved over time ... guns, etc., etc. How is that going to fly in the Republican primary?

Romney: First of all, my position on guns is the same as it's been for some time, which is I support the Second Amendment. I support a proper assault weapon ban. No. 2, I have always opposed same-sex marriage. I'm not in favor of same-sex marriage and that has been my position all along. I did change my view with regard to abortion, in the same way that Ronald Reagan and George Herbert Walker Bush did as they got in office, as they experienced the same thing I experienced. They said, "You know what? I'd like to make it very clear I'm pro life." We were dealing with cloning and embryo farming. During that debate I said to my chief of staff, "It's time to make it real clear that I support and respect human life." That's what I said to that effect two years ago. ❖





11th Hour: From page 1

er important issues," Goode said. If anything sent a shiver down the spines of legislators, it was the LSA's property tax study that predicted a 24-percent average increase. Purdue Prof. Larry DeBoer pronounced those figures as more "accurate" and Republicans like House Minority Leader Brian Bosma warned of a potential "disaster" if Sen. Luke Kenley's property tax reforms crashed and burned.

Kevin Brinegar of the Chamber this morning said the LSA report "really shifted the focus of the discussions from overall property tax restructuring to 'we've got to do something ... NOW!' That has scaled down the breadth and focus of the discussion. It is making the slots even more important."

This situation is vastly different than Gov. Doc Bowen's 1973 efforts or the 2001-02 chapter which was ignited by Lt. Gov. Joe Kernan, revived by Gov. Frank O'Bannon and then forged by then-Senate Finance Chairman Larry Borst, Pro Tem Bob Garton and House Speaker John Gregg in a special session. In 2002, there was a coalition in place - the ISTA, Indiana Chamber, Indiana Realtors, to name a few - who were actively pushing the reforms. That coalition does not exist today. In fact, the ISTA and Chamber are squeamish about passing something when there are fears of unintended consequences that wouldn't be revealed until later. The 2 percent circuit-breaker is such a remedy that is now haunting the process and creating the atmosphere for some type of action this weekend. The ISTA is pushing for a summer of study.

The Chamber's Kevin Brinegar, for example, isn't convinced that a 24 percent increase is even a "crisis" given that it doesn't take into proper context the impact of the homestead exemption. That part of the story has been poorly covered by the Indiana news media.

Gov. Daniels hasn't taken the public alpha role, the kind needed to pull together the teachers, real estate industry, the farm, business and manufacturing entities to form a bloc needed to forge an agreement. His team has been stealthily working the hallways and it remains to be seen if he assumes the "arbitrator/facilitator" role that Gov. O'Bannon assumed in May and June 2002.

In the past, it has been a governor like Doc Bowen who had to be the catalyst for this kind of change.

In signing a legislator pay raise, Gov. Daniels seemed to chide legislators: "All things considered, and in the interest of bipartisan cooperation, I have decided these bills are acceptable: one pay increase in 22 years is not excessive, for example. But now let's see equally decisive action on items of major importance to all Hoosiers, especially taxpayers, school children, and vulnerable Hoosiers. That means an honestly balanced budget, property tax relief, full-day kindergarten, and a health care plan to help the uninsured and reduce the second highest rate of smok-

ing in the America."

Another problem is that the Kenley proposals didn't meet the public light until March, which was extremely late, considering Doc Bowen used the 1972 gubernatorial campaign and the entire '73 session to press his reforms while the Kernan proposals were unveiled in the fall of '01, which ultimately gave it a nine-month gestation period.

So the biggest driver for the Kenley reforms is ... fear ... generated by dozens of headlines and broadcast reports this week citing the 24 percent figure, with assessors in places like Kokomo and Jasper reporting some taxpayer freak-outs. In Lake County, Assessor Paul Karras said Wednesday the latest reassessment will raise average commercial and residential property values - for taxing purposes - by a little more than 30 percent, which differed from the LSA study (**Times of Northwest Indiana**).

It has created the atmosphere that if the sweeping Kenley reforms aren't adopted, at least some kind of stop-gap biennial plan could be put into place to quell the quaking on the back benches.

Slots appear to be the only new funding mechanism in place, particularly with Gov. Daniels insisting repeatedly that the cigarette tax is not designed to enhance revenue. State Rep. Charlie Brown said House Democrats and Senate Republicans were nearing an agreement on how the health plan would work but have yet to determine a per pack tax hike.

The big question surrounding slots is how they would be awarded: to the two existing horse tracks at around \$125 million, or via auction that could raise as much as \$300 million (some are saying even higher).

The problem with the auction idea is two-fold: there is not an existing track record of success in other states for that concept. The auction idea would have to be extensively lawyered, which isn't apparent at this writing. The danger is cracking the golden egg and up to a half billion dollars of new revenue crucial to the Kenley reforms while it lies in the nest resulting in an omelette of failure.

"There are more major policy initiatives that are unsettled and remain for debate and negotiation in the closing moments of the session than in recent years," said Bosma. Speaker Bauer appeared to be optimistic. "I think we can get out of here" without a special session, he said.

Brinegar described the "optimism/pessimism pendulum" and said it is currently swinging pessimistic in a session expected to go late into Sunday night. He said if the property tax segment crashes, there is a "decent chance" conferees would continue to work through May and a quick special session would likely occur in June.

Still, despite all the politics, rhetoric and politically divided chambers, there's still a decent chance a great deal can be accomplished. ❖

HPR NOTE: Watch HPR's Special Report on the political impact of the legislature on Tuesday, May 1.



A push for local reforms

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - A year ago, as Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson's Indy Works proposals were dying in the legislature, there was general praise for the concept from Gov. Mitch Daniels, but little beyond that.

When HPR asked Daniels last December if there was a bigger role for the governor to play in the government reform efforts in Marion, Allen and Vanderburgh counties, he responded, "I may have to try to help a little more actively. My attitude is that this ought to be encouraged."

Throughout the fall and winter, Daniels took the opportunity to encourage local governments to reform themselves, insisting there are "too many layers and too little accountability." Daniels added, "If no one comes through the door, it will come from the top."

Last Friday, that encouragement came in a letter Daniels sent to conferees via State Sen. James Merritt urging passage of HB 1586. "I believe HB 1586 sets an important precedent in giving the chief executive and legislative council of Marion County the ability to consolidate fire protection and tax assessment services," Daniels wrote.

Daniels said, "If they are successful, other communities can copy their approach" or learn from mistakes.

Merritt took the governor's challenge and introduced a long-term solution to the ongoing debate about Marion County consolidation, a plan he says would save taxpayers more than \$6 million a year over a similar proposal passed by House Democrats.

Merritt says his plan would also generate approximately a \$20 million windfall for Marion County taxpayers. Merritt said his goals were to create efficiencies by merging fire departments, consolidating poor relief functions and protecting township taxpayers by capping spending for three years, all without compromising service and safety.

"We have an obligation to our homeowners and taxpayers to eliminate wasteful government," Merritt said. "My plan will improve fire services and free up millions of dollars to put more police on the streets to protect our neighborhoods."

The Indianapolis Star reported on Wednesday that the bill's author, Rep. Bill Crawford, said Tuesday that he would ask both parties in the House and Senate to sign his original version of the bill. He said that if they don't sign, he might place the measure into the budget bill, the only bill the legislature must pass before adjourning Sunday.

The problem with the Merritt proposal is that it came so late in the process, and thus has not been vetted at the committee level. Justin Ohmiller, spokesman for Mayor Peterson, said that while "we appreciate Sen. Merritt's efforts in dealing with this on the Senate side, overall we're really pleased with the progress of Indy Works, especially Rep. Crawford's version. The House version passed with a bipartisan vote. Ultimately, we want to see a bill that will give us savings from fire consolidations that will allow us to fund anti-crime programs. We believe the House version is a better bill."

But there's a bigger picture to consider here. In the next several weeks, the 2008 gubernatorial race will begin to change. Senate Minority Leader Richard Young will be free to campaign full time. Jim Schellinger is expected to begin articulating his policy positions. Jill Long Thompson is expected to formally enter the race and has already staked out anti-privatization as her key issue.

In the last two years, Indiana has made a historical departure from its apathy toward reforming its layers and layers of government. There is Indy Works and unification efforts in Allen and Vanderburgh counties. There is the Good Government initiative inspired by U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky. There are the regional efforts of the RDA and the Central Indiana financing package for the Colts stadium and convention center.

If Indiana is to achieve the kind of dramatic reforms that Gov. Daniels has repeatedly hinted at in front of groups like IACT and the Association of Indiana Counties (as well as in phone conversations with HPR dating back to 2002), the best opportunity could well be 2009 and 2010.

From Daniels' vantage point, he hopes to be re-elected, hopefully with a well articulated vision for continued change that will occur during the 2008 campaign. While Daniels is appearing at community town halls and GOP Lincoln Days touting his achievements, 2008 can be expected to go well beyond past laurels and toward his best opportunity to reshape Indiana to prosper in the 21st Century. Good roads and the development of advanced manufacturing, logistics and life sciences will require a more efficient government structure if they are to truly prosper.

Should he win, he will be in the best position in the first two legislative sessions of his second term to win approval for more responsive and efficient local governments, regional cooperation.

It behooves candidates like Jim Schellinger, a political ally of Mayor Peterson, to develop and express a vivid vision for 21st Century Indiana government. Enconced in his campaign's "war room" environment, it's hard to imagine a corporate citizen like Schellinger to approve of an archaic, antiquated state and local government that we now have, described by former congressman Andy Jacobs Jr. at the Indy Works unveiling as "layers of earwax." ❖



SEN. MERRITT



Obama cites Lugar on WMD

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

CHICAGO - As he did when he officially kicked off his presidential campaign at Springfield last February, U.S. Sen. Barack Obama cited U.S. Sen. Dick Lugar during his world view speech Monday at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs when it comes to securing weapons of mass destruction.

"The third way America must lead again is by marshalling a global effort to meet a threat that rises above all others in urgency – securing, destroying, and stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction," Obama said. "As leaders from Henry Kissinger to George Shultz to Bill Perry to Sam Nunn have all warned, the actions we are taking today on this issue are simply not adequate to the danger. There are still about 50 tons of highly enriched uranium – some of

it poorly secured – at civilian nuclear facilities in over forty countries around the world. In the former Soviet Union, there are still about 15,000 to 16,000 nuclear weapons and stockpiles of uranium and plutonium capable of making another 40,000 weapons scattered across 11 time zones. And people have already been caught trying to smuggle

nuclear materials to sell them on the black market. We can do something about this. As President, I will lead a global effort to secure all nuclear weapons and material at vulnerable sites within four years – the most effective way to prevent terrorists from acquiring a bomb. We should fully implement the law I passed with Senator Dick Lugar that would help the United States and our allies detect and stop the smuggling of weapons of mass destruction throughout the world."

Obama called for a "verifiable global ban on the production of new nuclear weapons material." ❖



U.S. Sen. Barack Obama laid out his world-view at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs on Monday. (Obama Photo)

2008 Presidential Polls

Republican	Date	Giuliani	McCain	Thompson	Romney	Comp. Spread
Zogby	03/22 - 03/26	27%	13%	9%	9%	Giuliani +14%
USA Today/Gallup	04/13 - 04/15	35%	22%	10%	9%	Giuliani +13%
Rasmussen	04/16 - 04/19	28%	15%	12%	10%	Giuliani +13%
Time	04/05 - 04/09	35%	20%	10%	10%	Giuliani +15%
CNN	04/10 - 04/12	27%	24%	11%	10%	Giuliani +3%
Cook/RT	03/29- 04-01	34%	17%	10%	6%	Giuliani +17%
Fox News	04/17 - 04/18	35%	16%	8%	10%	Giuliani +19%
Pew Research	03/21 - 03/25	33%	23%	--%	8%	Giuliani +10
LATimes/Bloombg	04/5 - 04/09	29%	12%	15%	8%	Giuliani + 22
NBC/WSJ	04/20 - 04/23	33%	22%	17%	12%	Giuliani +11%
Democrat		Clinton	Obama	Edwards	Gore	Comp. Spread
Zogby	03/22 - 03/26	32%	22%	13%		Clinton +10%
USA Today/Gallup	04/13 - 04/15	31%	26%	16%	15%	Clinton +5%
Rasmussen	04/16 - 04/19	32%	32%	17%	--	Tie
Time	04/05 - 04/09	33%	26%	25%	--%	Clinton +7%
CNN	04/10 - 04/12	30%	26%	12%	15%	Clinton + 4%
Cook/RT	03/29 - 04/01	41%	17%	19%	--	Clinton +24%
Pew Research	03/21 - 03/25	35%	26%	16%	12%	Clinton +9%
Fox News	04/17 - 04/18	41%	20%	12%	16%	Clinton +21%
LATimes/Bloombg	04/05 - 04/09	33%	23%	14%	13%	Clinton +10
NBC/WSJ	04/20 - 04/23	36%	31%	20%	--	Clinton +5%

Poll note: The NBC/WSJ Poll has the right/wrong track numbers at 22/66%. **Hoosier Support: Giuliani (\$172,450 raised in Indiana):** Marion County Prosecutor Carl Brizzi, Stephen Goldsmith, Tim Durham, Beurt SerVass, Steve Hilbert. **McCain:** Gov. Mitch Daniels. **Romney (\$83,750):** Attorney General Steve Carter; Secretary of State Todd Rokita, James Bopp, Dan Dumezich, Bob Grand, Chris Choccola. **Thompson:** U.S. Rep. Steve Buyer. **Edwards (\$85,000 raised in Indiana):** Robin Winston, 9th CD Chair Mike Jones, Ann and Ed DeLaney, Bruce Kehoe, James Voyles. ❖



2008 Indiana Governor

Governor 2008: Republican: Gov. Mitch Daniels. Democrat: Senate Minority Leader Richard Young, Jim Schellinger. **1996 Results:** O'Bannon (D) 1,075,342, Goldsmith (R) 997,505, Dillon (L) 35,261. **2000 Results:** O'Bannon (D) 1,230,345, McIntosh (R) 906,492, Horning (L) 38,686. **2004 Results:** Daniels (R) 1,302,912, Kernan (D) 1,113,900, Gividen (L) 31,644. **2008 Forecast:** Indiana Democrats are obviously seeing polling data that shows how volatile the "privatization" issue is. Before the smoke had cleared from the New Castle prison Tuesday afternoon, Democratic Chairman Dan Parker was saying the "tragedy" (two guards were slightly injured) and "absolute disgrace" before adding, "Mitch Daniels has sold off everything he can, and this is a real-life example of the risks and consequences of privatization."



Gubernatorial candidates Schellinger, Young and Thompson did not comment on the New Castle situation at this writing. But Thompson spent much of her press conference earlier this month teeing off on "privatization."

Going back to 1995, Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith tried to eradicate the term "privatization," and while he didn't, his defeat in 1996 to Frank O'Bannon came more as a result of bad campaign strategy and his poor handling of the Meridian Street police brawl.

When Gov. Daniels announced his plans for the Hoosier Lottery, he described it as a "franchising" while Democrats were using the term "privatization."

In the wake of New Castle, Daniels described it as a "minor disturbance."

On WIBC-AM on Wednesday morning, Daniels observed, "I'm never surprised by criticism for any different idea. This (idea) is not particularly new. Lots of states do it. Indiana, while leaving this New Castle prison empty, interestingly, was shipping prisoners to Kentucky and Oklahoma, and paying a premium to do it. We were looking for a way to get some Hoosiers hired at New Castle. We're going to need them in about a year or two to guard Indiana prisoners, and this contract with Arizona will all be over then."

As for the criticism over privatization, Daniels said, "Mr. Parker has a hard job. He's supposed to get up every morning and trash me for whatever reason. I sympathize with his dilemma. I would just note that this is just part of trying to make decisions, trying to use the best judg-

ment you can. We'll post-mortem this. But the fact is we're going to hire maybe 300 Hoosiers, have them well-trained on somebody else's nickel by the time we need them, and people shouldn't lose sight of that."

Lost in the prison riot smoke was another 220 jobs Daniels announced in Crown Point early in the week. Gov. Daniels and local officials will gather in Daleville on Monday for what is being called a major economic-development announcement (Marion Chronicle-Tribune). Although officials won't say, the location of the event and the participants indicate the announcement will reveal that IBM will locate a customer service call center there, bringing as many as 500 jobs to the community.

The Region III UAW has officially endorsed **Jim Schellinger** for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 2008, as HPR forecast earlier this week. In a statement released late Friday, Region III President Maurice Davison said, "Jim Schellinger is a unique candidate who can bring our state together. We're supporting him because he supports the issues that are important to our members and our families. He supports the right of workers to join together in collective bargaining in both the public and private sector."

As for the impact of this endorsement, the **Indianapolis Star's** Matt Tully blogged: "As for the Democratic nomination, Schellinger is looking more and more like an unstoppable force every day."

Our take? Can't disagree with Tully's assessment, but it comes in the policy vacuum that characterizes this campaign to date. That should change once the legislature ends and that will free up Sen. Young. Schellinger is expected to unveil his policy positions in the next few weeks, and Thompson will enter the race. Indiana Democrats will have a great deal more information in the next three months and that will give us the first opportunity to determine whether any candidate's train has effectively left the station toward a nomination.



LONG THOMPSON: "I'll run."

Jill Long Thompson spoke to a friendly crowd at the Third District Dinner last week in Columbia City. She told the more than 250 Democrats who attended that she is very close to making her decision but would not move forward without their support of her candidacy (Blue Indiana). The audience supported her with applause, and Thompson, as she walked away from the microphone, responded to them: "I'll run." This obviously was not her formal announcement, but

it's certainly a sign that soon there may formally be three in this race.

Democratic Primary Status: Leans Schellinger. **General Status:** Leans Daniels. ❖



2007 Mayoral

Carmel: Republican: Mayor James Brainard, John Koven. **2003 Republican Primary Results:** Brainard 5,067, Wilson 1,707, Snyder 1,034. **2007 Forecast:** The Brainard campaign has raised a hefty \$304,000 in contributions, as of the latest public report filed last week (**Indianapolis Star**). Koven's campaign reported about \$16,000. Among his claims, Koven said the city government has piled up roughly one-fourth of a billion dollars in debt. "The city's debt now tops \$16,000 per capita for a family of four -- up 450 percent in three years," according to Koven's campaign literature mailed to Republican voters this week. He worries that taxpayers will face a crushing tax hike by about 2011 as the bond payments begin to come due, if new development isn't in place to help pay the bills. Brainard said that some of the increased city budget and debt is for roads and expenses related to newly annexed areas that Koven voted for when he was on the council. Brainard claims Carmel continues to have one of the lowest property tax rates for similar cities and towns in the state. **Primary Status:** Likely Brainard



Crown Point: Republican: Mayor Dan Klein, Gayle Van Session; Democrat Dan Jordan, Karin Mason, David Uran. **2003 Republican Primary Results:** Klein 1,447, Van Session 1,157, Roth 760. **2003 General Results:** Klein (R) 4,289. Isailovich (D) 2,158. **2007 Forecast:** It was a good week for Mayor Klein. He reported \$146,000 in money while Van Session did not file a report. Gov. Daniels came to town on Tuesday to announce 220 new jobs at Plasmatronics, LLC, a national leader in performance ignition systems. "I am pleased to welcome a business of Plasmatronic's caliber to the great City of Crown Point," said Mayor Klein. "Four years ago, we set a vision to attract high-end, great-paying and community-friendly business to the I-65/US-231 corridor. I am proud to see that vision come to fruition and look forward to making Plasmatronics a staple of our hometown." **Primary Status:** TOSSUP.

East Chicago: Democrat Mayor George Pabey, Councilman Anthony Copeland, Edward Williams, Alicia Lopez-Rodriguez. **2003 Democratic Primary Results:** Pastrick 4,083, Pabey 3,805, Randolph 2,289. **2003 General Results:** Pastrick (D) 3,571. Santos (R) 1,027. **2004 Special Democratic Primary:** Pabey 6,697, Pastrick 3,514, Randolph 140. **2004 Special General Results:** Pabey 5013, Santos (R) 417. **2007 Forecast:** Copeland had outspent incumbent Mayor Pabey \$63,449 to \$58,931. Pabey reported raising no money since the last filing period in January (**Post-Tribune**). Candidates Alicia Lopez-Ro-

driguez and Ed Williams' campaigns reported donations of \$16,000 and \$15,000 respectively from a political action committee called the United Political Fund of Lake County -- which recently changed its name from Citizens for Cvitkovich, former North Township Trustee Gregory Cvitkovich's campaign committee. Copeland won his federal court battle with the city Wednesday, earning himself a permit to hold a political rally in a city park (**Times**). City administrators had denied Copeland a permit for a May 5 rally in Veteran's Memorial Park because of a longstanding city policy forbidding politicians from using public parks to pontificate before elections. But Robert Miller, chief judge in the federal Northern District of Indiana, agreed with Copeland that the city policy violated the First Amendment right to engage in free speech in public forums. Miller ordered the city to grant Copeland the permit and denied the city's request that Copeland post a \$10,000 bond for the permit in case anyone was injured at the rally, which is expected to attract at least 200 people. "When the mayor gets elected, he thinks he controls everything. He don't. These are public parks," Copeland said.

Primary Status: LIKELY PABEY.

Fort Wayne: Republican: Allen County Commissioner Nelson Peters, Matthew Kelty, Ivan Hood, Wilbert "Duke" Brown. Democrat: Tom Henry, Fred Steinke, Tom Cook. **2003 Results:** Richard (D) 27,251, Buskirk (R) 19,701. **2007 Forecast:** Peters had a significant money advantage over Kelty: \$149,182 with \$103,000 cash-on-hand compared to \$85,532 for Kelty with \$20,746 cash-on-hand. Kelty's campaign has a \$148,000 debt to the candidate. Peters campaign manager Ozzie Mitson said the number of donors shows broad support. Kelty called for a delay of the Harrison Square project that was approved by the City Council Tuesday night, 6-3. Kelty testified against the project prior to the vote. **Primary Status:** Republican TOSSUP; Democrat: Safe Henry.

Gary: Democrats: Mayor Rudy Clay, Karen Freeman-Wilson, Chuck Hughes, Darren Washington, John Henry Hall, Larry Anderson, Ulysses (Lish) Burnett, Larry Evans, Norman L. Roby, Pierre Strickland, Theresa Moses Sturdivant. Republican: Jayson Reeves, Charles R. Smith Jr. **2003 Results:** King (D) 10,028, Smith (R) 1,201. **2007 Forecast:** Clay held a commanding fundraising lead. Clay had spent \$107,050 and had \$66,749 remaining. That is slightly more than the total raised by opponent Karen Freeman-Wilson (**Post-Tribune**). Challenger Chuck Hughes had not filed an updated report late Friday, but had previously reported raising more than \$100,000, though most of it was in the form of in-kind donations from the Griffith printing company Beryl Martin. Freeman-Wilson said the 2 percent circuit-breaker cap is not a permanent solution to bloated city budgets, anyway. "The 2 percent circuit breaker is a Band-Aid," Freeman-Wilson said. "A Band-Aid over a gash." **Status:** LIKELY CLAY



Jeffersonville: Mayor Rob Waiz Jr. Tom Galligan. **Republican:** 2003 **Democratic Primary:** Waiz 2,187, Galligan 1,708, Muncy 252, Ogden 166. **2003 General Results:** Waiz (D) 3,711, Raymond (R) 2,354, Fisher (L) 118. **2007 Forecast:** Galligan holds a slight money advantage over Mayor Rob Waiz. Galligan has \$7,300 on hand while raising \$27,148. Mayor Rob Waiz raised \$35,157.78 and has \$16,514.01. **Primary Status:** LEANS WAIZ.

Kokomo: Democrat: Councilman Greg Goodnight, Councilman Bob Hayes, Andy Castner. Republican: Mayor Matt McKillip, Councilman Rick Hamilton, Tom Hamilton, Lewis G. Freeman. **2003 Primary Results:** Republican: McKillips 1,565, Donoghue 972, Bolinger 327, McKay 243, T. Hamilton 38. Democrat: Castner 1,360, Lushin 1,358, Alexander 969, Ellis 34. **2003 General Results:** McKillip (R) 5,229, Castner (D) 4101, Dunlap (I) 832. **2007 Forecast:** Republican mayoral candidate Rick Hamilton used words like "disgusting" and "pathetic" Friday to describe anonymous phone calls made over the past two days that cast aspersions on him and his family members (de la Bastide, **Kokomo Tribune**). HPR has learned that the push calls make reference to an alleged abortion for a family member. During a debate Wednesday night, Hamilton said McKillip's endorsement by Indiana Right to Life was in itself suspicious, given the push polling which transpired at the same time. "I thought, 'Why in the world would abortion be an issue in a mayor's race?'" Hamilton said. "I thought, I'm a right-to-life person so why would it be an issue? I'm telling you what, I get it now." McKillip, in return, said the push poll allegation didn't "pass the smell test," because numerous calls were supposedly made to residents in the county. "A good pollster would not call someone who doesn't vote," McKillip said. The owner of an Oklahoma political consulting firm said a legitimate poll being conducted in Kokomo was doctored by opponents of Mayor Matt McKillip (Smith, **Kokomo Tribune**). Last Friday, Republican mayoral candidate Rick Hamilton accused McKillip's campaign of attacking his family through a "push poll," a form of negative campaigning which masquerades as a phone survey. Sources said caller identification showed the calls were made from a New York City phone number. Calls to the number were answered by individuals who identified the company as either "Central Marketing" or "Central Research." McKillip has denied allegations that his campaign is involved with the alleged push poll. The mayor did, however, confirm the Oklahoma City firm Wilson Research Strategies has done polling work for him during the run-up to the May primary. Chris Wilson, owner of Wilson Research Strategies, also confirmed Tuesday his firm has been polling in Kokomo and is proud to be working for McKillip. Wilson said the firm is conducting polls for 15 to 20 mayoral campaigns in Indiana. When asked about push polling, Wilson said his firm doesn't do it. But Allan Suther-

lin, principal of Carmel-based political consultants Stakeholders Inc., said Tuesday he believed Wilson Research Strategies used the tactic earlier this year in Carmel against incumbent Mayor Jim Brainard. "I wish I did know more about them," Sutherlin said. "I was mad when it was happening against Jim Brainard. I don't know who hired Wilson Research Strategies." Hamilton has been trying unsuccessfully to find a link between Wilson and the firm making the alleged push poll. During his interview Tuesday, Wilson first said Central Marketing Services was not involved in polling in Kokomo (**Kokomo Tribune**). When told the telephone caller identification went back to Central Marketing, Wilson called Central "a sister company" of Wilson Research. Wilson said the questions asked — all of which Hamilton's campaign termed false and misleading — were similar except for the final one concerning abortion. Wilson said he suspected someone in Howard County added the most controversial of the statements reported to the Tribune, the allegation one of Hamilton's daughters had an abortion. **Primary Status:** LEANS MCKILLIP; LIKELY GOODNIGHT.

Terre Haute: Democrat: Mayor Kevin Burke, James Horrall, Dale Smith, John Walters. Republican: Duke Bennett. **2003 Democratic Primary Results:** Burke 6,339, Mayor Anderson 2,436, Jenkins 2,414, Walters 148. **2003 General Results:** Burke (D) 7,338, Bennett (R) 3,847. **2007 Forecast:** Burke's campaign raised \$80,637 (**Terre Haute Tribune-Star**). He began the reporting period with \$34,828 on hand, making his total campaign contributions at the end of the reporting period \$115,465. In addition, Burke is the only candidate to so far file a supplemental report, required on any contributions made after the reporting period of \$1,000 or more. Horrall raised \$16,174 during the pre-primary election reporting period. He had no cash on hand at the start of January. Horrall, however, has spent little of his campaign funds, with \$14,540 cash on hand at the end of the reporting period. **Primary Status:** LEANS BURKE.

New Albany: Democrat: Mayor James Garner, Doug England. Republican: Randy Hubbard. **2003 Democratic Primary Results:** Garner 2,512, Scharlow 814, Clemons 714, Goldberg 552, Kersey 68, Tuttle 48. **2003 General Results:** Garner (D) 5,971, Overton (R) 3,893, Hughes (L) 196. **2007 Forecast:** Garner raised \$32,262.22, compared to \$22,487 raised by former mayor Doug England, who is challenging Garner in the Democratic primary. England said he would air television spots in the final days before the May 8 primary (**Louisville Courier-Journal**). Garner said he would, too, "but probably not as many as Doug." Garner said that the campaign has been civil so far and that he and his opponents have avoided personal attacks. "People don't want to see a negative, dirty campaign," he said. "People are tired of mudslinging," England said. **Primary Status:** TOSSUP. ❖



THE BOAR'S NEST

Bush lauds champ Colts

By **BEVERLY PHILLIPS**

President Bush's introductions and long list of acknowledgements at Monday's White House ceremony honoring the Indianapolis Colts included everyone from Colts officials, players and their families to "all the front office personnel, the schedulers, the ticket sellers, the travel arrangers, the people who never get any credit." In acknowledging a long list of congressional members present, including Sen. **Evan Bayh**, U.S. Reps. **Dan Burton**, **Mark Souder**, **Julia Carson**, **Mike Pence**, **Baron Hill**, **Joe Donnelly** and **Brad Ellsworth**, the President quipped, "Some of these guys get elected for the first time, and the first thing that happens is the Indianapolis Colts win the Super Bowl. You're not taking credit, are you?"



Peyton Manning gives President Bush a No. 43 jersey.

April Show celebrates 10th

As federal funding continues to shrink for social services, including deep cuts in funds to support Indianapolis' homeless as reported in the media this week, one near eastside man is making a difference with no federal funding, no block grants, and not a single foundation grant. He even refuses corporate sponsorships.

On Friday, **David Hittle** will open the doors of his turn-of-the-century Arsenal Avenue home to host the 10th annual **April Show**. This year's event will include a memorial tribute to **Harry Blomme**, one of the show's founding artists who overcame homelessness and became self-sufficient through his sought after artwork.

The all-volunteer April Show features art by formerly homeless people and others who have overcome obstacles in their lives, including addiction, mental illness and even prison. One of the featured artists this year is **Kevin Johnson**. He was released from prison in 2003 after serving a 26-year sentence for a crime he committed as a teenager. While in prison, he taught himself to paint and has been a contributing artist for the past four years.

Art prices range from \$8 to \$500 with the artists

keeping 100% of their sales and donating a portion of their profits to a community program supporting homeless teenagers. About 600 people attend the Friday night party each year; many make it a part of their annual Stutz Open House pilgrimage that takes place that same evening. For more information, visit www.aprilshow.org.

Directions: Friday, April 27 - 7 p.m. to 1 a.m.; 322 N. Arsenal Ave., slightly north of New York Street; secure parking at the Plaza Hispano on east New York Street. Free admission, food and drink.



Artist Matt Hall's "Jesus Christ Republican" at the April Show this Friday.

He's ready and Abell

Gary Abell officially joined the governor's staff as communications director on Monday. Abell has been at INDOT for the past two years.

McCain relives Pence moment

Appearing on Comedy Central's **The Daily Show** Wednesday, host **Jon Stewart** asked U.S. Sen. **John McCain** about his "walk through the Baghdad market." Stewart said, "The gentleman you were with, **Mike Pence** from Indiana said it was like a summertime market in Indiana." McCain answered, "What Mike was saying and the rest of us were saying is they take all plastic, and so that's good. And things are safer than they were. Are they safe? No. Are they safer? Yes. Is it better? Yes. Do we have a long way to go? Yes. Is it hard and tough? Yes. Am I saying 'last throes?' No. Am I saying 'mission accomplished?' No."



Strand Labs plays key role in exoneration

Jerry Miller of Chicago made national headlines on Monday when it was reported DNA evidence cleared him of a 25-year-old rape conviction. Strand Analytical Laboratories, the private DNA lab started two years ago by former Prosecutor **Scott Newman**, provided the expert DNA analysis in the Miller case as part of the **Innocence Project**. According to the Innocence Project, Miller is the 200th person cleared by DNA, including five from Indiana.

❖**Got a tip for the Boar's Nest? Send it to: phillipsgroup@comcast.net**



Jack Colwell, South Bend Tribune - Gun control measures sure to be discussed anew after the Virginia Tech tragedy will stand as much chance as the 32 murder victims who were gunned down at close range by Cho Seung-Hui. Presidential candidates now treat proposals for restrictions on types of weapons and ammunition or requirements for more stringent checking on buyers as a third rail, not to be touched. One reason is the theory that the gun issue was indeed deadly for Al Gore in 2000 in some states that might otherwise have provided the electoral votes he needed to go along with his popular vote majority and defeat George W. Bush. Sen. John McCain, who once broke with the National Rifle Association by supporting background checks for buyers at gun shows, was taking no chances when asked after the Virginia Tech massacre whether ammunition clips sold to the public should be limited in size. Not necessary, he said, and he went on to proclaim that he supports "no gun control." Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, once an advocate of strong federal gun controls, no doubt was mindful of the NRA influence in Republican presidential primaries as he proclaimed that "this tragedy does not alter the Second Amendment." Democratic presidential hopefuls were as anxious to discuss gun controls as they would be to jump on any deadly third rail. Gun control, however, is an issue that tends now to hurt mostly those who support it. That's because the NRA and other groups using their Second Amendment interpretation as a rallying cry to convince followers to vote on that issue, that single issue. Meanwhile, those who tend to support some form of gun controls -- a majority of voters, according to the polls -- don't regard that as the single issue on which to vote. ❖

Gary Gerard, Warsaw Times-Union - Here are a few observations regarding Cho Seung-Hui and the worst mass shooting case in U.S. history. First of all, as a parent with two college-age students, I can't imagine that phone call. Or worse, I can't imagine seeing the news and trying - over and over - to call my kids' cell phones and not getting an answer. I can't imagine the pain, the heartache. My thoughts and prayers are with those parents and all the friends and relatives of the victims. Losing a

loved one at a young age is heart-wrenching, regardless of circumstances. But when it's such a senseless act of wanton violence, it makes it much worse. You can rationalize and internalize an accident or illness. But this? I simply can't imagine. Frankly, I don't know how people close to the tragedy deal with the media. For two days on CNN and Fox News Channel, there apparently was no other news. It was all Virginia Tech, all the time. Those news channels are starting to freak me out. The reporters and commentators keep using all this pejorative language to describe the shooter - deranged, nut, loser, freak, crazy, insane, monster, evil, psycho, etc. And as deserving as the guy is of

those labels, I think news people should tone it down a bit. They should give us the news and lay off on the histrionics. Here's why: I envision some other unhinged individual sitting there glued to the endless coverage. This person actually relates to Hui - feels sorry for him - much like Hui said he related to the Columbine massacre guys. I'm afraid continually denigrating Hui could make a person like that fly off the handle. I remember a time when there were rifles and shotguns in the back windows of pickup trucks in the school parking lot. Nobody ever got shot at school.

What's different now? The guns? Hardly. It's the culture that's different. We've lost moral compass. We've strayed away from traditional values. ❖

Rich James, Post-Tribune - If you think Lake County Democrats have cornered the market on political shenanigans, you ought to visit Crown Point. Knock on the door of Republican Mayor Dan Klein, then ask him about "Mayor Dan Klein's To the Point." The four-page, full-color piece of campaign

literature began arriving at Hub homes last weekend. The mayor likely will tell you it is nothing more than the fourth edition of his newsletter to update the residents on the state of the city. Don't buy it. Any mass mailing -- two weeks before an election -- touting the mayor's accomplishments is little more than political propaganda. And what makes it even sweeter for Klein is that the taxpayers paid for the printing and the postage. Bet it was a pretty penny. There are eight pictures of the mayor spread across the four pages. "To the Point" is written in the first person by the mayor and touts the city's many accomplishments. I'll give him credit. There have been some. ❖



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Prison staffing levels questioned by employees

NEW CASTLE - After just one day of training last month, Muncie resident Kara Scott said she knew that the New Castle Correctional Facility was not a safe place to work, and that "something terrible" was going to happen there

(**Muncie Star Press**).

"I was not going back after the first day. It's dangerous," she said Wednesday, a day after 500 inmates rioted, set fires, destroyed furnishings and damaged buildings on the 77-acre campus, located on the north side of New Castle. Scott said she saw inmates unsupervised, some in areas of the prison that were marked secure and for staff only. Some guards walked around wearing almost-empty belts -- no cuffs, no sprays, no tools to help them maintain order or overcome an unruly inmate. Some didn't even have radios. Under the cover of darkness, 202 inmates from the New Castle Correctional Facility were shipped to state-run prisons elsewhere in Indiana early Wednesday morning, after having been caught on tape instigating or promoting Tuesday's riot. Sixty-nine Arizona inmates are now housed in single, segregation cells at the Wabash Valley Correctional Facility south of Terre Haute.



Conferees agree on fire works bill

INDIANAPOLIS - In the span of a few days, the bill giving local governments more control over fireworks went from alive to dead to a done deal (Kelly, **Fort Wayne Journal Gazette**). The four conferees assigned to reach a compromise Wednesday came up with a second agreement on Senate Bill 9 after an earlier accord broke down last weekend. It still must be approved by the House and Sen-

ate by Sunday night. "After all the negotiations, ... this is probably as fair a middle ground as we can find," said Rep. Win Moses, D-Fort Wayne, one of the conferees. Legislators are addressing the issue of fireworks after enacting a law last year that allows the use of fireworks every day from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m., with an extension to midnight on holidays such as the Fourth of July, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

Broad support for seat belt bill

INDIANAPOLIS - Lawmakers may have found common ground on legislation that would require almost everyone in vehicles to wear seat belts in Indiana -- and supporters say the tentative compromise could be the best chance at getting the bill passed (**Louisville Courier-Journal**). The bill would require people riding in back seats and those traveling in sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks to buckle up.

Carter delivers blunt message to DeKalb GOP

WATERLOO - Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter delivered a blunt pep talk to DeKalb County Republicans at their annual Lincoln Day Dinner Tuesday night at DeKalb Middle School (**Auburn Evening Star**). Carter said momentum swung to the Democrats in November's election partly because of "questions of integrity." He said Republicans were hurt by scandals in Congress, a ballooning federal budget deficit, expansion of federal programs, slow response to the Katrina disaster and reports of fraud in the emergency relief system. "Is it any wonder there is a doubt about a commitment to excellence and creativity?" Carter asked. "... the question is whether we can learn from our setbacks. I think we can, but we have to look at those keys of responsible leadership -- integrity, efficiency and creativity," he said. "We can complain about unfair media coverage and complain that

others have faults, too. Or we can recognize that public support cannot be built on excuses -- it must be earned through performance." He said Daniels "has found a way to build roads without raising taxes or increasing our borrowing," made Indiana a leader in ethanol and biofuels and created an inspector general to help catch wrongdoers inside state government. Carter said his office has performed, too. "Last year we pumped \$54 million of unclaimed property back into the pockets of many Hoosiers instead of letting that money continue to sit in a state account," he said. The amount is double the total in 2005 and eight times more than before he took office, he added. Carter said his office runs "the premier do-not-call program in the country." He estimated that it has stopped 28 million unwanted calls to DeKalb County residents over the past five years.

No wheel tax for South Shore RR

INDIANAPOLIS - A proposed tax on cars in Lake and Porter counties won't become law this year, according to the measure's chief backer (Byrne, **Post-Tribune**). State Rep. Chet Dobis, D-Merrillville, said he will not push the tax in the waning days of the spring legislative session. The wheel tax would have been used to help fund the \$1 billion extension of the South Shore rail line south into Cedar Lake and east into Valparaiso. U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky urged state lawmakers to adopt the tax.

Mayoral candidate dies

PORTAGE - Councilman David Highlands, 54, who was running for mayor in the Republican primary, died early Wednesday morning (Post-Tribune). Porter County Coroner Victoria Deppe said Highlands was pronounced dead at 12:02 a.m. at Porter hospital. She said the cause of death is pending.