



Clinton, Obama in a Hoosier zone

Presidential candidates connecting with the people

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

FORT WAYNE - With an unfortunate bowling experience behind him, Barack Obama was challenged to sink an 18-footer by Tim Roemer's son Matthew in the auxiliary gym at Wayne High School last Friday, while in the next room more than 5,000 Hoosiers anxiously waited. Obama took off his coat, took a bounce pass and let it fly, ripping through the cords without a hint of rim.

What followed was nearly 90 minutes of adoration. But this was no ordinary day; no ordinary gym. Wayne HS is on the southern fringe of Fort Wayne. To the north are the older suburbs



Sens. Clinton and Obama have been appearing before back big, enthusiastic crowds. This morning, Obama dropped by the Sunshine Cafe in South Bend to talk to laid off workers. (HPI Photos by A. Walker Shaw & Brian A. Howey)



of Waynedale and then the urban core of the Summit City, ravaged 20 years ago by the crack cocaine catastrophe, and idled International Harvester and Falstaff plants. Wayne High serves suburbs and exurbs, and just beyond the tidy lawns of the nearby homes, there are cornfields, the I-469 loop, the small cities of Bluffton and Decatur, Gene

See Page 3

A shunted primary

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - Two polls show the Democratic gubernatorial race within the margin of error. The race continues to be overshadowed by the Clinton-Obama presidential showdown. Indianapolis Star columnist Matt Tully all but declared the Jill Long Thompson campaign the best of the lot. And the candidates sparred over gas prices and health care this week. That's the nutshell. But our conclusion is that this race is hostage to greater forces and since it's so tight, any one of a number of cross currents beyond the two campaigns' control could be decisive.

Just glance at virtually any HPI Daily Wire this week for ample evidence that the gubernatorial race has been shunted into secondary status. Clinton-Obama is receiving most of the political attention. A classic case



“Two heroic hearts who for a short time, traveled toward the sun and singed the vivid air ... with their honor.”

- Ethel Kennedy, reciting a poem while standing under the Kennedy-King Memorial in Indianapolis on April 4, 2008



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in point is Wednesday's edition of the Indianapolis Star, where Jim Schellinger's health care proposal was assigned to a campaign brief in a political roundup. The second extensive public policy position by Schellinger got much greater play in the Times of Northwest Indiana, Louisville Courier-Journal, South Bend Tribune and Evansville Courier & Press. Schellinger's presser at the downtown canal got little TV exposure, even though Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama were not in the state. Schellinger's plan focuses on four areas: making health care accessible and affordable; reducing costs and increasing accuracy; increasing enrollment and preventive care; and ensuring a future supply of health care workers. "We have to focus on making sure every Hoosier has access to quality health care," Schellinger said. "I believe health care is a right for everyone, not a privilege."

Nearly 750,000 Hoosiers currently lack health care, and 123,000 of them are children. "The fact that so many children lack basic care is completely unacceptable," Schellinger said. Schellinger's plan focuses on practical solutions to ongoing problems such as the sharing of patient information among hospitals, reducing prescription drug costs for the uninsured and the development of the health care workforce to meet increasing need. The plan also would make it easier for small businesses to provide health insurance through partnerships and pooling with private insurance companies that would be overseen by the state.

"As someone who runs a small business, I know firsthand the challenges of providing health care to my employees," Schellinger said. "Small businesses are the backbone of our state. If we want them to grow

and prosper, we need to make sure they have the resources they require to provide quality benefits to their employees. This plan provides an attainable vision for improving health care in Indiana. It's not a plan I'm using to run for governor. It's my plan for when I am governor." The entire plan can be viewed at: www.PickUpIndiana.com.



The Thompson campaign said the plan will be costly to taxpayers. "As he's done throughout his career as a corporate CEO who regularly lobbies for increasing property taxes to pay for his firm's building projects, Mr. Schellinger's approach is to simply go to taxpayers and ask them to write another check," said Thompson campaign manager Travis Lowe. "Mr. Schellinger's plan creates more government bureaucracy, puts in place more mandates on businesses and schools and generally throws more money at the system in the hopes of fixing it. This contrasts significantly with Jill's approach to health care reform, which through 'pooling,' makes health care more affordable and accessible to individuals and businesses, without burdening taxpayers."

Tully's analysis gives the distinct impression that Schellinger has underperformed. He assailed Schellinger for squandering his big money lead, being "invisible," running



"syrupy ads" and sounding like a "heartless CEO." Thompson, he said, "started with better name ID and has raised enough cash to be competitive on the crucial TV commercial front." He used Thompson's call for a gas tax suspension last week as an example. Schellinger responded, "You can't balance the books based on one side of the ledger." Alas, the heartless CEO. The question is, was anybody paying attention?

Schellinger communications director Jennifer Wagner observed: "I was a little stunned by Matt Tully's column. We made up all this ground, about 22 points, in the polls. We got a huge endorsement for Joe Kernan. Judy O'Bannon has been campaigning for us in Southern Indiana. To say that we're not campaigning is mind-boggling." Schellinger campaign manager Tim Jeffers noted the campaign has spent 900 gross rating points in Indianapolis and is also up in Louisville.

Something else jumped out at us. On Friday, Thompson unveiled her three-tiered jobs program. It's a great topic on an issue likely to determine the race in November. But Friday is the worst day of the news cycle (unless you think you can get reporters to rework the story for big Sunday newspaper editions, which didn't happen). The story got lost amidst the coverage of Barack Obama's Fort Wayne town hall meeting and the Indianapolis 40th anniversary of the Kennedy-King events of 1968.

The March 31-April 1 Research 2000 poll had Thompson leading 42-41 percent, while SurveyUSA had Schellinger leading 41-39 percent. Given that Thompson had had a 30-point lead late last summer, the fact is that while she is still within the margin of error, Schellinger has significantly closed the gap. "Obviously, he's caught some



fire," Research 2000 pollster Del Ali told the South Bend Tribune. But that fire seems more akin to a Blue Tip match as opposed to the presidential flame throwers. The good news for Thompson is that she has a 15- percent lead with women (19 percent undecided) and a 10- percent lead among African-Americans, and is positioned to capitalize on the Clinton campaign's goal of turning out the female vote and Obama firing up black supporters. Schellinger has a 16-percent lead among men, the

demographic most likely to be overshadowed in the coming primary.

Our take on this race is that being overshadowed by the presidential race, it is likely to be influenced and determined by outflows from that campaign. If the polls later this month show the race within the margin of error, it simply could go either way. We give Schellinger an edge in field work but Thompson appears to be better positioned to feed off the presidential campaigns.

Coming Up: Schellinger is expected to unveil his education program on Friday and government reform next week. A Schellinger direct mail piece featuring the Kernan endorsement is about to hit the mail. Schellinger and Thompson debate at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 15, at IPFW's Mike Downs Center in Fort Wayne. The debate will be broadcast live by Indiana NewsCenter's WISE NBC33, and moderated by Indiana NewsCenter's anchor Linda Jackson. The debate also will be streamed live on www.indianas-newscenter.com. There will be a joint appearance on Kevin Rader's Sunday morning WTHR-TV show. A debate in Terre Haute fell through.

Primary Status: Tossup ❖

Clinton, Obama, from page 1

Stratton Porter's historic Limberlost sanctuary, and gun country. Perhaps not as pronounced as the 8th and 9th Congressional Districts, where a Saturday barbecue draws F-150s and Silverados with gun racks in the windows, but it's conservative, 2nd Amendment territory.

After Obama paid homage on this, the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, and harkened back to King's "arc of the moral universe" which, he said, "is long, but that it bends toward justice," Obama took questions in the town hall format. It had been another bloody week in Fort Wayne with a spate of homicides that pressed detectives. A female questioner asked Obama,

"What are you going to do about guns and gun violence?" For a candidate hoping to carry places like the 8th CD a couple hundred miles to the southwest, where many Democrats will vouch resoundingly for their 2nd Amendment rights, this was tricky territory. Obama plunged in. He started with a history lesson, a Hoosier history lesson.

"We've got two traditons in this country," Obama said. "We have a tradition of lawful gun ownership that dates back to the early stage of this country. And it dates back to Indiana being settled. People had firearms for protection, for hunting, for food. That's part of our tradition that's been passed on from generation to generation." It conjured images of bearded pioneers with rifles, shouting "Who's here?" through the dense forests, or even the



Thanksgiving Day hunts at dawn a generation ago.

"We also have the reality that in our urban communities in particular, gun violence is completely out of hand," Obama said. This brought images of another Indiana, like the harbor at East Chicago, or Pontiac Street in Fort Wayne, or the Meadows in Indianapolis. "So the question is, how do we balance those issues?" Obama asked. "I believe in lawful gun ownership. I believe in the 2nd Amendment. But what I also believe in is that it is important for us to have some common sense restrictions in place to keep guns out of the hands of children, out of the hands of criminals, and so what that means is, strengthening the background checks so they are tightened."

Throughout this, Obama prompted the "all rights" and "amens" from the crowd, perhaps a third African-American. "Make sure that the gunshow loophole is closed," Obama said in the very congressional district that produced a candidate who won by campaigning at the very gunshows. "Making sure that ATF is able to share gun tracing information so that guns that are used in a commitment of crime are traced back to the unscrupulous gun dealers for using them. All of those steps have to be taken and balanced with the lawful ownership of guns and sportsmen and hunters being able to do what they do."

Again, no hesitation. The remarks weren't the slow measured tones of a politician trying to steer clear of a mistake. These were the confident words of a candidate in what we pundits call "the zone." The rhetoric rolls off the tongue resolutely. With fortitude. With confidence. And then ... the segue ... almost as if Antonio Salieri was anticipating the next heavenly bars from Mozart. "I have to make one last point about gun violence," Obama said. "It's important to get handguns, cheap illegal handguns, off our streets. It is also important for our communities and our young people to have a different way of life. And so it goes beyond guns. It means investing in early childhood education. It means not just talking about how great teachers are, rewarding teachers by giving them better salaries, It means after school programs and summer school programs so that our children have constructive activities that will keep them off the streets. It means making college more accessible, two-year and four-year colleges, which is why I propose a \$4,000 tuition credit for every student every year."

The crowd was in full-feed. Every few sentences were embraced with approving voices. "It means making sure the money isn't left behind on No Child Left

Behind," Obama continued. He talked of Dr. King's legacy of a demand for "personal responsibility" and "cleansing yourselves" and "turning the other cheek." It became a passion play and Obama continued, "We're complaining about what's happening to our schools or our young people but we're not doing our job at all. We can't talk about the teachers if we can't turn off the TV sets. If your child misbehaves in school, don't turn around and blame the teacher."

The crowd at this point, 20 minutes into the town hall, was mesmerized and the applause was spontaneous and thunderous.



On the 40th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination, Obama reached back to talk of King's "arc of the moral universe." (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

And this is what's happening in the spring of 2008 across Indiana. Two candidates in the zone. "Hillary Clinton had 5,000 people just as excited at Mishawaka High School," St. Joseph County Democratic Chairman Butch Morgan said. "Both are tremendous candidates. We can't lose."

Last month at the Anderson Wigwam, a legendary Indiana basketball gym, another 5,000 people cheered, screamed and whistled for Hillary Clinton, a mere two miles from the hulking GM plants that brooded over the Anderson Speedway. The decline

of the domestic auto industry spawned unemployment, crime, divorce, abuse, homicides and so much pain as to be uncalculable. The adulation lasted almost two and a half minutes. "I know how energized and resilient the people of Anderson are," Clinton told the crowd. "What you need is a president."

"I want to get serious for a minute," Clinton said. "As Evan said, we've got some big challenges ahead. We cannot continue on the path of George W. Bush. It doesn't work. We know what kind of leadership works; what kind of leadership is required. And that's what this election is about. We have a really momentous choice ahead of us." A hush settled over the Wigwam. "We have to elect a president who starting on Jan. 20, 2009, will bring our nation together. set some big goals again. and call upon Americans to work for immediate results. There isn't anything Americans can't do once we make up our minds. I am optimistic we can turn this economy around. During the 1990s more than 20 million jobs were created in America. Family income was rising. More people were lifted out of poverty than at any time in our history. Look what has happened since."

Succinctly, Sen. Clinton set the challenges, told the crowd what was unacceptable, affirmed what was at stake,



and struck the "can do" tones that won a world war from the very plants that stood idle on this very day.

And there was red meat. "George Bush inherited a balanced budget and squandered it," Clinton charged. America is borrowing money from the Chinese. "We even owe Mexico," she said. Relying on foreign oil and money "is a recipe for decline. It is going to be up to the next president to stand up and loudly say, 'No more!'" The Wigwam sounded like Roy Taylor had just hit a shot the buzzer.

At South Bend Washington High School Wednesday night, Obama talked of the "bet he made on the American people" and talked of the hundred of thousand of hands he's shook and the hundreds of babies he had kissed. "I'm going to kiss that one, he's cute," Obama said, spying a young mother in the crowd. "Not right now!" he continued, laughing. "She was going to pass the baby up." Less than a minute later, he was saying, "I want your voices in my ear as your president."

The immediate challenge facing Obama and Clinton is to win Indiana on May 6; to win as many delegates as they can. But there is a sense that for the first time since 1964 and LBJ, a Democrat could actually carry the state.

Obama made a broad appeal that could resonate when he talked about the Iraq War, for which polls have showed serious erosion of support since the disastrous year of 2006. "Tragically, it has cost us 4,000 lives of brave American soldiers," Obama said at Fort Wayne. "Thousands more have been injured. It has been a strategic disaster. It distracted us from a war that needs to be won in Afghanistan. The big strategic winner is Iran, which is more powerful now than when we invaded Iraq." These are words that independents and many Republicans acknowledge to be true.

Obama linked it to the economic woes that recent polls reveal could turn the upcoming election. "But one of the aspects that has not been talked about as much until recently is the cost," the Illinois Democrat said. "We have spent over half a trillion dollars so far. We are well on our way to exceeding one trillion dollars. That's with a T. On the way to two trillion dollars. For that money, we could have provided health care to every American. We could have provided a scholarship to every student. We are spending \$400 million a day, \$10 billion a month, money that could have been invested right here in Fort Wayne. Right here in Indiana."

The money, Obama said, could be "putting people back to work, rebuilding our infrastructure, rebuilding our schools. rebuilding our hospitals. There's direct interaction between the war in Iraq and our economy." His current TV

ads mention this and the \$3.50 gas Hoosiers are painfully paying at the pump this week. "We are in a weaker position to deal with those issues because of the enormous debts taken on by George Bush as a consequence of this war."

To date, the Clintons have appeared in 19 Hoosier cities. When Obama took the stage at South Bend Washington High School Wednesday night, it marked his third appearance, with at least five more coming between now and Saturday. Once the Pennsylvania primary concludes on April 22, the two Democrats are expected to be crisscrossing the state. Hoosiers haven't seen this kind of exposure to presidential candidates since 1968. And they are embracing the attention with gusto and sincerity. On Saturday, Obama will return to the very gym at Ball State University where Robert F. Kennedy made his first campaign stop, told the crowd that white people were fair and blacks could get a fair shake, only to learn of Dr. King's shooting.

The presidential exposure in Indiana since March 15 has come despite bigger states that might seem to require more attention. While the Clintons saturated Indiana, Hillary's double-digit lead in Pennsylvania began to dwindle. Former Indiana congressman Tim Roemer called Indiana a "microcosm of the United States" and identified the stakes. "When the senator came in, he talked of how important Indiana is," Roemer said. "If Barack wins Indiana, it puts pressure on Hillary to get out of the race."

As Obama and Roemer talked, there came the basketball challenge, with the candidate stripping off his sportjacket and hitting the aforementioned jumper. "He had great rotation," Roemer marveled. Like a candidate in a zone.

ENDORSEMENTS: If there was an endorsement that was an eye opener, it was Republican Bill Ruckelshaus, the deputy attorney general who resigned during the "Saturday Night Massacre" at the height of President Nixon's Watergate scandal, who endorsed Barack Obama. "Senator Obama's ability to attract not only Democrats, but also Republicans and Independents, makes him uniquely qualified to build the broad coalitions needed to address our nation's challenges,"

Ruckelshaus said. Obama was endorsed by South Bend Mayor Stephen Luecke, Michigan City Mayor Chuck Oberlie and Goshen Mayor Alan Kauffman on Wednesday. ❖



Sen. Clinton at the Wigwam in Anderson. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)



RUCKELSHAUS NIXON WHITCOMB



Woody Myers: From the junction of medicine, business & politics

NDIANAPOLIS - HPI's Brian A. Howey sat down with Dr. Woodrow Myers at his 30 S. Meridian St., campaign headquarters to talk about his 7th CD campaign on Tuesday:

HPI: Have you ever read Kevin Phillips' book "American Dynasty"?

Myers: No, I haven't.

HPI: It's fascinating and here in Indiana Democratic politics, we also have a dynastic tradition. How is it running against the Carson dynasty?

Myers: My original plan was to wait until the term she would have occupied in '09 was over and then I'd have a year or more to prepare and I could have leisurely breakfasts and lunches with all the major folks in the district and do it the more traditional, old-fashioned way. That didn't happen, unfortunately. The good Lord had other plans for Mrs. Carson and that changed the schedule.

HPI: So here we have the grandson. What's it been like running against the Carson dynasty?

Myers: I don't consider myself running against the Carson dynasty. If you look at the record, I was one of Mrs. Carson's most active supporters. I dare you to find someone who was more actively financially involved. My son worked for her on the campaign. I believed in her and worked with her, so I don't consider myself running against any kind of dynasty at all. I have a great deal of respect for all the candidates I know.

HPI: You haven't met Hippie Joe Stockett?

Myers: I couldn't pick him out of the crowd.

HPI: Probably the one with long hair?

Myers: But for the people I know, the voters are going to have some choices this time. They're going to have to do their homework, listen to us and make a decision. They've got some good choices. Andre Carson now has the incumbency breaks, so that makes it a more difficult challenge. It is a spirited contest.

HPI: Carson's TV ad says "I'm already in Congress."

Myers: (laughs).

HPI: Do you sense the same weight of incumbency with Andre Carson that you would with Julia?

Myers: I get the sense that voters are pretty smart. They know that Andre is a different person than Mrs. Carson. The voters are going to have to make a decision based on what they see of him and what they see of the other competitors and what they see of me. Our goal is going to be to use the next 30 days to show that I'm the most experienced choice; that I've got the talent, enthusi-

asm and energy to get the job done better for them than anybody else. But ultimately they get to decide. I'm basically applying for a job.

HPI: I hear the word experience and, of course, we're seeing that with Hillary Clinton, and yet I hear you say "change" and I hear that from Barack Obama. You're talking about experience and yet you're an agent of change.

Myers: Well, you've nailed our brochure. Thank you, Brian Howey, for making it work.

HPI: You're trying to get the best of both worlds.

Myers: I think I am the best of both records. I have lived my career at the junction of medicine, business and politics. Everything I have done has involved those three aspects of what we do in American life. I have been a public servant at the city level, state level and federal level. I have worked at the second largest manufacturing company in the world, Ford Motor Co., and I've worked for the largest health care company in the United States, Wellpoint, and I've taken care of patients at Wishard Hospital. If you spend any time at the Wishard Hospital emergency room, that is the place where all the problems of Marion County converge. You've got child abuse, you've got neglect, you've got homelessness, alcoholism, you've got drug abuse, gun violence, everything that is wrong with so-

ciety ends up ultimately in the Wishard ER. I've had the opportunity to see what affects the people whose lives are not going in the right direction in this county. I have insight into those experiences and I want to do something about them,

HPI: When you were Indiana health commissioner you actually would work shifts at Wishard ER.

Myers: I did.

HPI: Tell me how you did that.

Myers: The good news is the director of ER allowed me to do that Friday and Saturday nights. The other good news was I did it for free. They didn't have to pay me; they covered my malpractice insurance. I got the opportunity to see what was going on in the community, to continue to practice medicine, to teach. I got a good chance to work with medical students, interns and residents. For me it was a lot of fun and it gave me a lot of things to communicate with them about what I did and what they are going to do with their careers. I know that experience benefitted me. I hope it benefitted my patients. I fact, one of the most interesting things that has hap-





pened to me on the campaign so far is that people I took care of at Wishard have come up to me and said, "You don't remember me, but you took care of my Mom in ER." That was just another experience that led me to the conclusion that this was another experience and this was the next best way to use my talents.

HPI: You were Indiana health commissioner when the AIDS crisis began, through Ryan White. You worked at Ford, Wellpoint. How would these experiences make you a good congressman?

Myers: I've seen every aspect of health care, and health care is really a metaphor for everything else in society. I've seen it as a physician, certainly with some of the problems that have occurred in my family. I'm a guardian of my 96-year-old aunt. I've seen health care from the point of view of businesses who are trying to create products, from the point of view of insurance companies trying to help employers, from companies who are trying to make new and better products. My own company, Myers Ventures, has me on the board of five different health care companies, four of which are now public. And in those companies, they all have innovative products that are going to improve what we're able to do today for patients. I've seen health care from every vantage point there is. What I've learned from that is the people who have the best health care plans, who have the best experiences in the health care system, are the people with the best jobs. The people with the best jobs are the people who have the best education. We in Indianapolis and Central Indiana have problems in all three areas. The good news is we have a fairly good public health infrastructure with Wishard, Methodist and St. Vincent's. What we don't have are good places to go to get care on an urgent basis. Wishard is so full on many days it takes 30 days to get an appointment for an out-patient visit. That's one of the few places you can go if you don't have insurance. We've got to make improvements. With respect to jobs, we clearly need to do more to bring jobs to Central Indianapolis. I think we're doing a fairly good job in Boone County, in Hendricks County. Some of the people who will work in those plants will come from the 7th Congressional District. We've got to do a better job inside Indianapolis as well. We've got to prioritize the vacant factories. Those are the kind of jobs that are going to offer health care plans so people can get the prevention and care they need. Finally, for people to take advantage of

those jobs, we've got to do a much better job of education. Indianapolis is second worst in the nation in high school dropouts. C'mon! That's unforgiveable. I don't blame Gene White. He's been a breath of fresh air to IPS. He's got to get help. He's been given a \$20 million budget deficit to fight. We are spending \$5,000 a second in Iraq. If my math is correct, what we spend in an hour in Iraq would wipe away Gene's \$20 million headache. We ought to be bringing those dollars home.

HPI: The dropout rate is a real black eye for the city. Should 16-year-old kids just be able to drop out? Shouldn't they be required to go into, say, military prep or Americorps or something? When they drop out, it gives them a free pass to destruction.

Myers: Of course not. The problem is we've got 16-year-olds making very bad decisions. You haven't got parents steering them into a different direction. How can we expect a 16-year-old to have any understanding of what the consequences are? We have to make it enticing for them to stay in school. We've got to make it difficult to leave school. We need to empower people like Gene (White), not burden them.

HPI: What's your take on universal health care in Massachusetts?

Myers: I think they have terrific goals. But I'm a believer that we have to work at the federal level. We can't depend on 50 states to figure out their own way. We have to recreate our system in the mode of universal access for everyone. What that means is we have to make this wonderful system available to all our citizens. When I was chief medical officer at Ford Motor Company, Ford

had plants in 38 counties. I visited 20 of them. I would visit hospitals where the average Ford worker went. I would also visit the hospital where the executives would go. I got to compare health care systems in about 20 counties with the one I know so well here. My conclusion is I would not trade our system for any system, anywhere else in the world, including Canada, England, including Singapore. Even with our problems, we have the best system in the world. The question is, how do we make it better? How can we give everybody access to it and get rid of the waste and inefficiency. The only people in my family that have electronic medical records were Cola our dog and Frisky our cat. The veterinarians have an electronic system in place. Any vet taking care of any pet can get the record immediately. Why can't we do that with people? That's the kind of problem I want to solve. We have to have leadership. We



Dr. Myers with his 96-year-old aunt at his campaign kickoff last winter. (Myers Campaign Photo)



have to have one standard. We have to make Medicare and Medicaid lead the way. The Department of Defense and VA have done some very innovative things with health care. We need to have that exported out of government to the private sector. Those ate the kinds of things I know about, care about and want to do.

HPI: Massachusetts now has 380,000 people, a little over half, in the system and it's swamped. Do we even have the personnel resources?

Myers: No, we do not have the capacity. My profession made a mistake over the last couple of decades. We under-produced the staff needed to take care of the Baby Boom generation. There is going to be a doctor shortage and a nurse shortage even, if we went all out now. We need to increase substantially the number of doctors, nurses and pharmacists we are training in the United States so we can take care of our own people. We are importing some of the best minds from other counties ... that need them there. We used to have the Doctor's Manpower Bureau, but that got killed three or four presidents ago.

HPI: How do you win the primary?

Myers: One vote at a time.

HPI: The buzz in political circles is you have no natural constituency, unlike Reps. Mays or Orentlicher or Andre Carson.

Myers: I do as many interviews as people let me do, go to as many kaffee klatches, neighborhood meetings, community forums, meet & greets. I also use the resources available to me to go on TV and radio.

HPI: How much are you going to spend? I've heard \$1 million (the Indianapolis Star on Wednesday put the figure at \$800,000).

Myers: I don't know. We'll put in whatever it takes to be effective.

HPI: What impact is the Clinton-Obama race having on the 7th?

Myers: The good news is there's a lot of excitement. The bad news is there's a lot of excitement about that race. They are bringing out new voters. They are creating a lot of buzz in Indiana and that's going to increase the turnout. But it crowds available space to get your own message out. I have to be even more aggressive to make sure our voices are being heard.

HPI: Are you seeing new voters?

Myers: One of the most fun experience I've had campaigning was finding a long line on Washington Street of people waiting for the free Dave Matthews tickets for Obama at IU. I worked that line from beginning to end. Those are the voters I need to get. They are coming into the process with an open mind. If I have to depend on the voters who have voted in the district for the last 50 years I probably wouldn't be successful. ❖

Rexford's crazy village

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

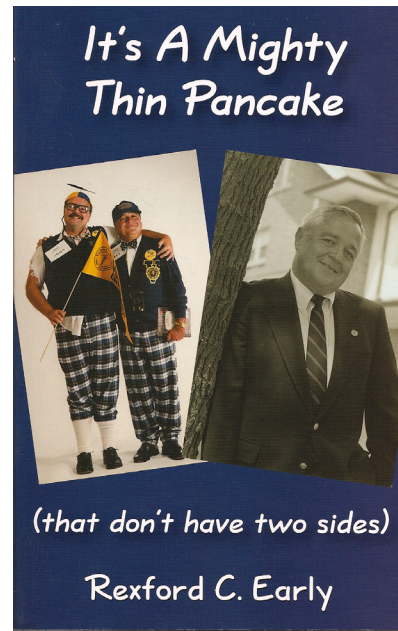
NASHVILLE - The power was out at my weekend cabin on Monday night. This interfered with my plan, which was to sip a bourbon and read Rexford C. Early's book,



Brian Howey's Column

"It's a Mighty Thin Pancake (That Don't Have Two Sides)." So I curled into a ball by the fireplace and began reading by the flickering light, just like ol' Abe Lincoln once did down in Spencer County. About 20 minutes into the book, my wife approached me with a puzzled look on her face. What in the hell was so funny? Well, the first 20 pages of Rex's book.

Here I learned that Rex had mistaken his hearing aids for cashews. Early was named after FDR's domestic adviser, Rexford Tugwell, who was "a little light in the loafers" and a Bolshevik sympathizer. Or as Early puts it, "I was named after a gay communist." The early chapters of the book reveal a hard-scrabble origin for the future Republican state chairman,



(that don't have two sides)

Rexford C. Early

like this one: "Mom was pregnant with me when the bank foreclosed on their small melon farm."

And the story that really split my side was the Wheatfield, Ind., shithouse rat named Fred who was always present when the unarmed and indisposed Early had a constitutional, but whenever he showed up with a .410 Winchester, Fred was nowhere to be found. Rexford Early fooled him when he brought out a .22 pistol, may Fred rest in peace. It led him to tell a Balti-

more Sun reporter at the 1992 Republican National Convention that Dick Lugar was "smarter than a shithouse rat."

"**Much to my chagrin**, he printed that," Early said. "and Marty Morris said that the senator actually read it in the Washington newspapers. He asked Marty what that phrase really meant. I think that Marty succeeded in convincing him that was one of the highest compliments that Rex could give someone."

I first met Early in 1987. He was the Republican



on the Recount Commission (David Hamilton the Democrat) and Evan Bayh was the new secretary of state, who was greeted with a triple recount involving U.S. Rep. John Hiler as well as two state reps. The three simultaneous recounts were among the most harrowing stories my two colleagues and I at the Elkhart Truth, Susan Dillman and Phil Schermerhorn, and I had ever covered. One day above the door in the recount room was a sign that read, "Shit Happens." It was the first time I had ever heard that phrase and Dillman told me, "That's the work of Rex Early." This occurred well before Forest Gump took credit for the phrase.

Early's recollection of the recount was familiar, since he had told me the stories, like riding in Evan Bayh's "new, used car" where he smoked cigarettes and dumped a cup of coffee. "Evan looked like a person who had just drunk a gallon of that stuff you take before a colonoscopy," Early notes. "Evan didn't volunteer driving after that." Early is correct when he says that Bayh angered local Democrats in Elkhart County when he refused to throw out a bunch of unsecured ballots. "I could tell from early on in the process he wanted to be fair," Early writes. "Now he was also very likable. I just hated it when I decided I liked him."

I had another front row seat in the title of Early's book. I was the political reporter for the Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette. In 1992, I spent an afternoon in the backseat of a car with Hillary Clinton when she came to the city to campaign for her husband. The first thing she said to me was, "How's Paul?" The Clintons and Fort Wayne Mayor Paul Helmke were Yale classmates and buddies. Helmke had contributed to Bill Clinton's first campaign. In 1993, President Clinton initiated an economic stimulus package that involved a tax increase. Mayor Helmke, a future Republican U.S. Senate nominee, appeared before the Senate committee to testify ... for ... the stimulus package. "I am sure everyone thought Republican Mayor Helmke would speak against it," Early recalled. "Wrong. As state chairman, I wrote a rather blistering letter to Helmke about his testimony. Some way, the Fort Wayne papers got a copy of my letter (It could have been because I sent them a copy.) It made a front page story." I believe that story had my byline, with Early saying of the tax increase that "it's a mighty thin pancake" It's a phrase

he had used often and here he used it to admonish Mayor Helmke.

There was another funny story about Chairman Early and Journal-Gazette reporter Howey. Steve Shine decided to run for Allen County Republican chairman after Orvas Beers announced he would retire (in part due to the fiasco in the 1992 congressional primary when a wacko named Chuck Pierson won the primary over Beers' choice, a college student named Phil Troyer, for the right to challenge U.S. Rep. Jill Long). I remember Troyer lashing out at Beers and going to Orvas with the quote. "He said that?" Beers asked. This political legend seemed hurt and soon decided to retire. Beers endorsed his long-time Fort Wayne chairman and Shine, a disciple of Beers, ran anyway. Shine conducted kaffee klatch meetings with every precinct man and woman in Allen County and made his case with, by the way, daily coverage of his campaign in the Journal-Gazette.

A few days before the caucus, I asked Early about Shine's chances and he said something like, "If you believe Steve Shine will be the next chairman then you believe in the Easter Bunny." Well, Shine won with over 60 percent of the vote. It was a stunning upset. Still, to this day, I like to remind Early that I still believe in the Easter Bunny.

Throughout Early's book there are wonderfully juicy morsels, like how a constricted Geist Reservoir played into the defeat of U.S. Sen. Birch Bayh; how Dan Quayle was Gov. Whitcomb's "golf course inspector," and there was the trip to the 1972 GOP convention when the Indiana delegation plane's landing gear was stuck at a 45-degree angle and Early, seated behind legendary 8th CD Chairman Seth Denbo, heard him pray aloud to God. Early: "I was not sure I wanted to call God's attention that Seth Denbo was even on the plane." Early was supposed

to drop off a copy of his book before I left for the Nashville cabin, but he forgot my address and ended up gabbing with my neighbors. I told him that his memory deprivation had altered my weekend reading plans. "I am going to be reading 'It Takes a Village,' thanks to you." ❖

Publisher's Note: There's a serious side to Early's book, dealing with the demise of Indiana's political parties and the inertia in the Indiana General Assembly. Watch for Part II of our review of "It's a Mighty Thin Pancake."



Rex Early and Greg Garrison doing some heavy loafin' on Election Night 2007 at the Murat Center.
(HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)



2008 Congressional

Congressional District 5: Republican:

U.S. Rep. Dan Burton, Dr. John McGoff, Clayton Alfred. Democrat: Chester Kelsey, Mary Etta Ruley, Kenny Stall. Geography: Media Market: Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, South Bend. People: Urban/rural 73/27%; median income \$40,381; Poverty 9.5%; Race 84% white, 8% black; 5 Hispanic; Blue/white collar: 34/50%. 2006 Republican Primary Result: Burton 61,150, Alfred 6,869, Wakley 4,822. 2006 General Result: Burton (R) 133,118, Carr (D) 64,362, Sharlow (L) 7,431, Miller (I) 18. **2008**

Forecast: Burton's campaign is fully engaged with a TV ad that recalls the congressman's abusive father, his days as a golf caddie and shoe shine boy. The ad says the 5th CD voters have "taken a shine" to their long-time congressman. The Burton campaign has done TV, radio and gone on the attack, evidence that the incumbent is taking the McGoff challenge seriously. The top U.S. military and diplomatic officials in Iraq agreed Wednesday with a Hoosier Republican's assessment that a hasty withdrawal from Iraq would leave a vacuum that terrorists would fill (Smith, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). If U.S. troops pull out "before conditions are met," Ambassador Ryan Crocker said to Rep. Dan Burton, "you would see a spiral down, and that would lead to expanded sectarian conflict at levels we have not seen before. It would bring neighbors, especially Iran, into the fight, and it would create space for al-Qaida to take root on Iraqi soil." Burton said it's important for the public to hear that message because the war is unpopular, and as people choose their next president, they need to also choose between "a precipitous withdrawal" and "hanging in there and defeating al-Qaida and the terrorists." In a second day of congressional hearings on the status of the war in Iraq, Gen. David Petraeus also agreed with Burton, citing risks of leaving too soon. The McGoff campaign was circulating a Feb. 7, 2007, Roll Call article that linked Burton to Jack Abramoff, the convicted Capitol Hill lobbyist. The Roll Call article notes, "As for the Bob Hope tournament, the Star reported that Burton may have paid at least part of his annual entry fee - this year's was \$12,000 - to the charitable event out of his campaign account, which may not be acceptable given that Federal Election Commission rules allow Members to give campaign funds to charity only if they don't get anything in return. And the donations Burton did make from his campaign account to Eisenhower Medical Center, the main charity involved with the Bob Hope event, apparently were part of Burton's pledge to give away contributions he had received from incarcerated lobbyist



Jack Abramoff." The McGoff campaign is obviously seeking to highlight Burton's ethical status in a political atmosphere they hope will be similar to the one in 2006 that saw three Hoosier incumbent congressmen lose. **Primary status:** Leans Burton

Congressional District 7: Democrats:

U.S. Rep. Andre Carson, State Rep. Carolene Mays, State Rep. David Orentlicher, Dr. Woodrow Meyers, Joseph Stockett III, Frances Nelson Williams, Larry Ledford, Pierre Pullins. **Republican:** State Rep. Jon Elrod, Cat Ping, Lawrence Shouse **2008 Outlook:** Th. The Indiana Democratic Party endorsed Carson. "The Indiana Democratic State Central Committee is proud to support Congressman Carson's re-election effort and know he will continue the tradition of public service that the people of Indianapolis deserve," said Chairman Dan Parker. "Congressman Carson hit the ground running in Congress, and we look forward to working with him as he fights for Hoosier working families in Washington." Carson said, I am honored to receive the endorsement of the Indiana Democratic Party and thank Chair Dan Parker, the IDP, and so many people in Indianapolis for their support. It is gratifying to receive the backing of people across Indianapolis who have watched me get to work in Congress and see that I am providing much-needed relief to working Hoosiers struggling with the rising costs of housing, gas, groceries and health care." The DCCC put more than \$250,000 worth of independent expenditures into Carson's March 11 special election against Elrod (The Hill). Carson won the Democratic-leaning seat that had been held by his late grandmother, Rep. Julia Carson. After he won, the DCCC added Carson to its "Frontline" program, which directs campaign cash to vulnerable incumbents, even though seven Democrats, including two state legislators who vied for the special-election nomination, will challenge him in a May 6 primary. "The DCCC did a wonderful job," said CBC Executive Director Joe Leonard. "Any relationship has stressful moments. The members of the CBC are looking forward to the DCCC working as effectively as it did in Rep. Carson's race in future races." DCCC Chairman Chris Van Hollen (Md.) said it is standard in close districts to support incumbent members, even when they face a primary. "We've treated him like any other Frontline member," Van Hollen said. "This district is not a slam dunk." **Primary Status:** Leans Carson

2008 Indiana Legislature

HD4: Republican: State Rep. Ed Soliday, Shawn Olson. **2008 Outlook:** Word is that the same Right to Work forces that helped Greg Walker defeat Senate President Pro Tempore Bob Garton in 2006 are taking aim at



Soliday. That makes this race worth watching. **Primary Status:** LEANS SOLIDAY

HD24: Republican: State Rep. Rich McClain, Rick Eller. **2008 Outlook:** This is a rematch between McClain and former Cass County Commissioner Eller. We think McClain is in a decent position to win renomination. **Primary Status:** Likely McClain.

HD40: Republican: State Rep. Greg Steuerwald, Dave Berryman, Zach Rice. **2008 Outlook:** This one bears watching. Steuerwald won a caucus to finish the term of State Rep. Matt Whetstone and has been endorsed by Senate Floor Leader Connie Lawson. But the GOP appears to be fractured. **Primary Status:** LEANS STEUERWALD

HD49: Republican: State Rep. John Ulmer, Wes Culver. **2008 Outlook:** Ulmer has a reputation of lackluster, self-funded, unorganized campaigns. Culver is a Goshen businessman who is getting some traction, running against a sitting duck. And don't look for the House Republicans to come to his rescue. They paid dealy bailing out Ulmer in the fall of 2006. **Primary Status:** LEANS CULVER

HD50: Republican: State Rep. Dan Leonard, Terry Abbett, Gary Snyder. **2008 Outlook:** We believe Leonard is in pretty good shape. Former Huntington Mayor Terry Abbett is reported to have health issues. Synder is a former Taylor School Board member in the Kokomo area who moved to the district last year. We think Leonard survives this challenge. **Primary Status:** LIKELY LEONARD

H90: Republican: State Rep. Mike Murphy, Matthew Hamner. **2008 Outlook:** The FOP endorsed Hamner. While Murphy is slated and should be favored, what happens if a lot of Republican voters are lured into the Democratic primary to vote for 7th CD and the Clinton-Obama race? **Primary Status:** LEANS MURPHY.

SD30: Republican: State Sen. Teresa Lubbers, Ken Morgan. **2008 Outlook:** Morgan continues to push his anti-tax message in an effort to unseat Sen. Lubbers (Advance Indiana). Morgan is running a low-budget, door-to-door campaign to get his message out to voters. When Morgan began his campaign, he anticipated that homeowners would receive their tax bills before this year's May 6 primary. A note on his flier shown above notes: "You won't get your tax bills until AFTER the elections. Coincidence?" **Primary Status:** Likely

Lubbers

SD42: Republican: Jeff Sponsel, Max Ellison, Jean Leising, John Heaton. **Democrat:** Warren Goodrich. **2008 Outlook:** Retiring State Sen. Bob Jackman is supporting Jeff Sponsel (Shelbyville News). In a letter dated April 4, Jackman endorsed Sponsel, who now serves as president of the Shelbyville Common Council. "Through my experiences at the Statehouse, I have learned that it is very important to trust your colleagues and build coalitions with them to be able to pass legislation that reflects the needs of the citizens of this district and state," Jackman wrote. "No one person can do this alone, but I feel Jeff is the most responsible individual to represent this district because of his communication skills and respect for the citizens." Key question is whether Jackman will commit any of his \$50,000 warchest to Sponsel. Leising has much higher name ID (in the 75 percent range) and very good fav/unfavs. The former senator is expected to raise more than \$50,000. She picked up the endorsement of Indiana RIGht to Life and the Indiana Family Council PACs on Wednesday. **Primary Status:** Leans Leising.

2008 Indiana Statewides

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Republican: Indiana Election Commissioner Chairman Tom Wheeler, Deputy Attorney General Greg Zoeller, Kyle Huffer, Valparaiso Mayor Jon Costas. **Democrat:** Linda Pence. **2008 Convention Outlook** Secretary of State Todd Rokita won't run, giving his nod to Costas. Zoeller is expected to have the support of Attorney General Steve Carter. He told the Louisville Courier-Journal in today's edition he was still weighing his options. But the real endorsement that will carry dramatic heft is that of Gov. Mitch Daniels. While a Times of Northwest Indiana story suggests that Daniels and Costas have a friendly relationship, the governor wasn't ready to signal his support. Spokeswoman Jane Jankowski said that Daniels would have a "recommendation" sometime in the future. With Daniels from Indianapolis, Lt. Gov. Skillman from Bedford, and New Albany Schools Supt. Tony Bennett lining up for the ticket, Costas makes geographical sense. But the winner will almost certainly be the one with Daniels' imprimatur. **Convention status:** TOSSUP ❖



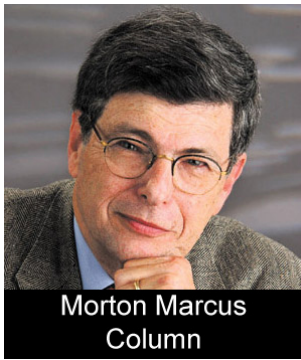
Valparaiso Mayor Jon Costas enters the attorney general race with the endorsement of Secretary of State Todd Rokita. But will he get the nod of Gov. Daniels?



National, local problems have same source

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS - INDIANAPOLIS - Housing remains one of our most domestic industries. The labor used to build the houses themselves is still local. Much of the wood may be imported but other products we put into our homes (furnaces, plumbing, appliances, etc.) are still primarily made in the U.S. from domestic parts. All that is changing.



Morton Marcus
Column

More and more work is being done off-site and more of the components installed have foreign origins.

Now, without our thinking about it, the financing of our homes has become an article of international trade. Once upon a time, our houses were financed locally. We went to Jimmy Stewart at the local savings bank and borrowed the money for our homes. But the folklore of America took over

and home financing became an article of policy and then a commodity bought and sold internationally.

What is that folklore? We have been sold the idea that each and every American wants and deserves to own a home. That's called the American dream. We subsidize home-ownership by giving federal income tax deductions for mortgage interest, property taxes, and certain home-buying transaction fees. This is clear government interference in the investment/consumption decisions of Americans. Uncle Sam stands ready to help you year after year in paying for your house. Do we hear conservatives protesting? This is probably a massive gift to wealthier taxpayers. Do we hear liberals protesting? We hear no protest because we have come to accept the idea that home-ownership is good without question and government (all of us) should subsidize it.

Why should we do this? Because, proponents will tell us, home-ownership leads to better citizenship. People who have a stake in their neighborhoods tend to behave better, take care of property, vote, and give our society stability. Such arguments warm my heart. Why not apply that same argument to automobile ownership? Let's give all Americans the mobility they want and deserve. Interest payments on auto loans and taxes for licensing cars should be subsidized because those who have mobility can get to work, school, doctors, and other necessary destinations with human dignity if they have cars.

Ask any teen: "If you ain't got wheels, you just

ain't nobody." Federal subsidies for home-ownership have been reinforced by the depression-era financing concepts that start with the Federal Home Loan Banks, the Federal Housing Authority, the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) and the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Fannie Mac). All of these are good programs that have helped millions of us live in look-alike large homes on large lots in sprawling, poorly structured, energy-gobbling communities. In Indiana, we have followed the national trend by offering home-owners lower property tax rates than are provided to other property owners.

Why? "Well, them home-owners, them is good folk and votin' folk too." Today's unresolved property tax crisis in Indiana and the international sub-prime mortgage market collapse are both direct results of this ingrained, irrational insistence on home-ownership as an article of public policy. There is nothing wrong with home ownership. I'm for it. But there is something wrong with widespread approval of government's preferential support for this form of asset accumulation and resource utilization preference.

Shouldn't government policy be neutral when it comes to how people invest? Why encourage people to put their money into housing when education or old coins might be more profitable or pleasurable? Shouldn't government policy encourage land use decisions that are beneficial to all of us over the long term? Does committing a large amount of land to urban development today give us the community and environment we will want tomorrow? ❖

Mr. Marcus is an independent economist formerly with IU's Kelley School of Business

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Jack Colwell, South Bend Tribune: The huge Democratic primary turnout won't be due to widespread excitement over the race for the nomination for governor between Schellinger and Jill Long Thompson, a Marshall County resident and former member of Congress. They thus far have engendered little excitement among voters. They still lack name recognition, which both seek to improve now with their own TV spots. A new SurveyUSA poll shows them virtually tied -- Schellinger ahead in percentages, 41 to 39, a lead within the margin for error -- with 20 percent undecided. Excitement abounds, however, over the prospect of Indiana finally having a voice in a presidential primary -- the first loud voice in 40 years -- and a large turnout is expected in the Democratic presidential primary. Hoosiers flocking to the polls to vote for Hillary or Barack, will find on the Democratic ballots as well the names of Jim and Jill. Few are likely to just vote for a presidential choice and walk away. The vast majority will cast votes in other contests on the Democratic ballots in their precincts, especially for governor. Who will be helped or hurt by all those additional presidential primary voters, many of whom haven't focused yet on the race for the nomination for governor? Voters backing Hillary Clinton at least in part because of a desire to see the first woman as president might also like the idea of the first woman as governor and vote for Long Thompson. Schellinger, however, has the support of many of the same Democratic officials who are supporting Clinton. Among them is former Gov. Joe Kernan, who endorsed Schellinger in South Bend last week. The endorsement from Kernan wasn't viewed as surprising since both he and Schellinger are graduates of South Bend's Holy Cross Grade School and St. Joseph's High School and the University of Notre Dame, and Schellinger supported Kernan's statewide campaigns. Schellinger, with an eye on Obama voters who seek change, stakes claim to being the candidate for change in state government. He portrays both Daniels and Long Thompson as having spent too much time in Washington to break away from traditional politics. Geography could play a part. The poll shows Long Thompson ahead in northern Indiana, with Schellinger doing better elsewhere. ❖

Matthew Tully, Indianapolis Star: Many Democratic insiders saw in Schellinger the handsome and friendly face of a man who could raise millions through his business and political contacts, as well as a guy who could bring business credentials to the campaign. Kind of like Daniels -- only less threatening. In the end, Democrats got an aggressive, disciplined and tough candidate for governor. But here's the funny thing: It isn't Schellinger. A month before the May 6 primary, it's fair to say former U.S. Rep. Jill Long Thompson has emerged as the better Democratic candidate. Consider the scorecard: Campaign: Schellinger's

big-budget operation has suffered through a shake-up and a candidate who at times was invisible. Even some backers have grumbled about the lackluster effort. Moreover, after promising a positive campaign, Schellinger recently went negative. That smelled of desperation. On the other hand, Long Thompson's campaign, on a tighter budget, has been free of such drama. Commercials: Schellinger's syrupy first ad did little but try to distance the candidate from his rich-guy reality. Long Thompson, meanwhile, got personal on the economy and bashed Daniels' privatization efforts, which is likely to score her points with Democratic primary voters. Issues: Both talk about the economy. But Schellinger sounds like a CEO when

he talks grandly about jobs; Long Thompson zeroes in on everyday concerns. One example: Long Thompson this past week called for a cut in gas taxes, a classic pocketbook issue. Schellinger responded, "you can't balance the books based on one side of the ledger," sounding like a heartless CEO. Money: Huge-dollar contributions that flowed to Schellinger early on have slowed, and because of his campaign's fumbles last year, he failed to capitalize on his early fundraising lead. Long Thompson has been outspent, but she started with better name ID and has raised enough cash to be competitive on the crucial TV commercial front. One month out, the race is just now heating up. Either candidate could win. But so far, Long Thompson has taken on the establishment and run a much better campaign. ❖

Stephanie Salter, Terre Haute Tribune-Star: For people who like their political contests clear-cut and their candidates one-dimensional, Lee Hamilton's endorsement of Barack Obama for president barely registered this past week. After all, if you're content to dismiss Obama as a gifted speaker but "an empty suit," what do you care that the former Indiana congressman chaired the House committees on both foreign affairs and security? If you get a giggle out of referring to Obama by his middle name (Hussein), how much can it matter that Hamilton also chaired the 9/11 Commission, was co-vice-chair of the Iraq Study Group, and currently serves on the President's Homeland Security Advisory Council? If, on the other hand, you are someone who believes that people and presidential campaigns are infinitely complex, Hamilton's stated choice for commander in chief was a grabber. During his 34 years in the House of Representatives, Hamilton gained bipartisan respect as a deep, careful and open-minded expert on global affairs and the U.S. role in those affairs. According to a story last month in *The New Republic* by senior editor Noam Scheiber, Hamilton has been a kind of off-stage, informal guru for Obama's foreign policy advisers since day one of the campaign. Obama's foreign policy speech writer is Ben Rhodes, who assisted in writing Hamilton's 9/11 Commission memoirs. ❖





Voters will be registered promises county

MUNCIE - A flood of new voter registrations prompted by the Obama-Clinton presidential contest will be processed in time for the May 6 primary, Margie Landers, Democratic member of the Delaware County

Voter Registration Board, pledged Wednesday (**Muncie Star Press**). Landers, who is also the county's Democratic Party chairman, addressed about 50 mostly Democratic activists during a contentious Delaware County Election Board meeting. "We're going to get the job done and I promise you that," Landers said.



Reporter, candidate attacked by official

Reporter, candidate attacked by official

MUNCIE A Republican voter registration deputy faces battery charges after he tackled a newspaper reporter and hit the Democratic 6th District congressional candidate after a contentious Delaware County Election Board meeting Wednesday afternoon (**Muncie Star Press**). The meeting had just ended when Will Statom, GOP registration deputy and secretary of the local Republican Party, attacked Star Press reporter Nick Werner while Werner was interviewing Ball State University student Johanna Perez about hundreds of last-minute voter registrations for Democrat Barack Obama's campaign. "He did not seem very happy that we were stating our opinions," Perez said afterward about Statom. Werner said Statom seemed critical of his reporting, sarcastically saying to make sure he screwed up the story again. Statom had just walked past Werner when Statom turned

around and pushed Werner against the wall, grabbed him and they fell to the ground, according to witnesses. Barry A. Welsh, Democratic 6th district congressional candidate, who attended the meeting, stepped in, and Statom turned around and hit Welsh in the eye. "When Nick went to the floor, I tried to break it up," Welsh said. County sheriff's deputies then stepped in and broke up the fight outside the commissioner's courtroom. Statom refused to comment when he walked out of the county building. He was taken into custody by sheriff's deputies.

Clinton visit cost city \$1,800

MISHAWAKA - The mayor says he isn't demanding that Hillary Rodham Clinton's campaign reimburse the city for overtime costs related to a visit there -- but the city should accept the money if it's offered (**South Bend Tribune**). Republican Mayor Jeff Rea said in a letter to the mostly Democratic city council that he estimates Clinton's campaign stop at Mishawaka High School last month cost the city \$1,865 in overtime. Rea said former U.S. Rep. Chris Chocola voluntarily paid the city for the overtime cost when President Bush appeared at a Chocola fundraiser in 2006.

Candidate wants to recoup abatement

EAST CHICAGO - Union Tank Car Co.'s plan to shutter its East Chicago plant just a few years after receiving city tax abatements became a campaign issue Wednesday in the race to replace state Sen. Sam Smith, D-East Chicago (**Times of Northwest Indiana**). Michael Scott Sr., one of seven Democrats competing in the May 6 primary for Senate District 2, pledged to introduce "clawback" legislation to force defecting companies to repay local tax breaks. Scott, a Gary school board member, took aim

at Union Tank Car, which has said it will lay off more than 400 employees when it closes its East Chicago plant next month. "After years of benefiting from substantial tax breaks granted by the city of East Chicago, Union Tank's plan to displace 445 workers is in clear contravention to the commitments it made to receive tax abatements," Scott said in a news release.

Ballard eyes rolling back income tax hike

INDIANAPOLIS - Mayor Greg Ballard said his goal is to repeal a 65 percent income tax increase the county enacted last year, but he hinged that promise on state legislation to reduce layers of government (**Indianapolis Star**). Giving his first State of the City speech on his 100th day in office Wednesday, Ballard said a local efficiency panel and statewide government consolidation that would eliminate townships should produce "enough savings for a complete repeal" of the increase. "By improving on the fundamentals -- reducing crime, balancing our budget and making government more transparent -- we will continue to make Indianapolis stronger," he said. Ballard said public safety and education still are his top priorities, but he also pledged to increase the international profile of Indianapolis and reduce long-term public debt. Changes in the engineering of the city's \$3.5 billion environmental plan to stop dumping raw sewage into local waterways will save 15 percent to 20 percent and reduce scheduled rate increases for years, he said.

Sanders skeptical

INDIANAPOLIS - Joanne Sanders, the City-County Council minority leader, said the promise sounds good but doesn't represent the reality of the city's budget crisis. A tax overhaul passed by the legislature will force the city to cut \$40 million by 2010, and any repeal of the income tax .