



# As wave builds, Souder confident

*But Obama-inspired turnout is the 'wild card'*

By **MARK SCHOEFF JR.**

WASHINGTON - Even if a Democratic tsunami washes over the election in 12 days, Rep. Mark Souder (R-3rd CD) expects to stay afloat. "I'm more confident than I have been since May," Souder said in an HPI interview on Wednesday. "I'm pretty confident I can win."

Internal polls show Souder solidifying his support at 50 percent, a number that will be hard for his challenger, Democrat Michael Montagano, to overcome with a libertarian, William Larsen, also in the race. Howey/Gauge will poll the 3rd CD tonight and Friday with results released on Tuesday.

Despite scoring mostly easy victories in his northeast Indiana district since first capturing the seat in 1994, a Souder win this year is not a certainty. The Democratic presidential nominee, Sen. Barack Obama, is running surprisingly well in Indiana, especially in the Elkhart area on the western edge of the 3rd CD.



U.S. Rep. Mark Souder aboard the USS Mackinaw. Souder defeated U.S. Rep. Jill Long in the Republican wave of 1994 and now faces a building Democratic wave this year. (Souder Photo)

Obama's astute campaign, which includes more than three dozen offices across the state, has put him in a position to become the first Democrat to win the state since 1964. The Illinois senator is benefiting from high levels of voter disapproval for President

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# Polls all over the map

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - With less than two weeks before Election Day, we sense a durable lead for Gov. Mitch Daniels and a distinct possibility that Barack Obama will be the first Democratic presidential candidate to carry Indiana since 1964. This is based on the sparse but growing amount of recently published data in Indiana, national trends, candidate and operative behavior near and far, and anecdotal evidence.



"Indiana is the Moses of national politics. We've been wandering around the wilderness for 40 years."

- U.S. Rep. Baron Hill and this morning's Obama rally in Indianapolis



## HOWEY POLITICS INDIANA

is a nonpartisan newsletter based in Indianapolis and published by NewsLink Inc. It was founded in 1994 in Fort Wayne.

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### Subscriptions:

\$350 annually HPI via e-mail;  
\$550 annually HPI & HPI Daily  
Wire.

Call **317-631-9450**.

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Tonight, the fourth 2008 Howey-Gauge Poll takes to the field for trusted data. Howey-Gauge will present its final results in a special edition mid-day Tuesday, Oct. 28 - one week out. At 3 p.m. Tuesday, HPI subscribers will be invited to join a conference call to hear a discussion of our numbers, other polls and for a question-and-answer sequence (See page 3 for details).

The most recent numbers come from a North Carolina based firm, Public Policy Polling, Big 10 Battleground and Zogby International. PPP showed Obama leading John McCain 48-46 percent and Gov. Daniels with a 57-36 percent lead over Democrat Jill Long Thompson. Conversations with informed and reliable sources in both parties generally reinforce those numbers, that are similar to internal polling they have seen. Zogby (Oct. 17-20) had McCain leading in Indiana 52.8 to 42.3 with 4.9 percent undecided. But the Big 10 Battleground Poll (Oct. 19-22) had just the opposite: Obama up 51-41 percent.

**One Republican** operative said that earlier this year, the Daniels campaign successfully separated Indiana from the national right/wrong track numbers. It is something the Daniels' re-elect has maintained since last winter: that Hoosier voters will consider Indiana issues in the gubernatorial race and national issues when it comes to the presidential race. If we were to see the state and national right/wrong track numbers align, that would be an ominous development for the governor's re-elect.

But beyond that there is a spirited debate over a question we posed more than a month ago: whose coat-tails are likely to be longer? Daniels' or Obama's?

**Multiple sources** tell HPI that further down ballot, it is unclear whether the governor will have more influence than the Democratic presidential nominee on the two statewide constitutional offices and Indiana House races. That stands to be one of the major story lines on the evening of Nov. 4 and beyond. The PPP poll tends to bear this out. In the attorney general race, Democrat Linda Pence led Greg Zoeller 42-39 percent; and in the superintendent race Republican Tony Bennett had a 38-36 percent lead over Richard Wood. In past elections, the statewides tended to follow the gubernatorial race. There is activity on both those fronts. Pence has leveled an attack ad at Zoeller while Daniels has included Bennett in

one of his latest ads. The Pence attack is risky. In this environment, we believe that the attack mode on an issue (an attorney general's contract with a lobbying firm owned by Republican operative Brose McVey) the public has little understanding or interest.

Another new Daniels TV ad began running this week that addressed what we believed to be a potential vulnerability: the unraveling of the economy and Wall Street, which potentially conflicted with his message that he's brought change and jobs to the state. In an ad titled "Tough Times" the female narrator notes, "In a weak national environment, you want the best job hunter you can find." When national disaster hits, voters want someone "who knows how to organize." In a weak economy, Daniels "kept the



**Barack Obama on his way to the podium at the American Legion Mall in Indianapolis at noon today. (HPI Photos by A. Walker Shaw)**



books balanced and taxes down." The ad ends, "The tougher the times, the more you need the best help you can find. That's why we hired Mitch." The ad shows Daniels announcing the Honda plant in Greensburg, at the tax reform press conference with legislative leaders, and comforting flood and tornado victims.

These are messages that Daniels delivers in person at campaign stops and economic development announcements. The final debate in Bloomington on Oct. 14 didn't provide an opportunity to reassure the public the way Obama did at his Oct. 8 Indiana State Fairgrounds speech. Thus the ad, which we believe successfully addressed the poisoned economy and dovetails it into the governor's base message. In 2007, campaign ads for Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson came off as tone deficient between the campaign mantra and the street level tax revolt that swept the city.

Thompson returned to the airwaves after a seven-week financial meltdown. While Republicans have charged that the Democrat was in "attack" mode, we found it mild and not very effective. Thompson still suffers from a lack of vision and these ads don't appear to us as being game changers.

### ***The Palin moose on the table***

If there was a game changer that played out on Hoosier soil, it was Sarah Palin's visit to Noblesville last Friday that was sandwiched between a Washington Post endorsement of Obama that cited Palin's lack of qualification to be a heartbeat away, and then her appearance on NBC's Saturday Night Live a day later. On Tuesday, an NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll showed Obama pulling away with a 52-42 percent lead. It was the first NBC/WSJ that had Obama breaking the 50 percent barrier. Fueling that was the 55 percent who didn't believe Palin was qualified. Palin's posi-

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**3rd CD**



tive/negatives also zipped into dangerous "ticket drag" territory: 38/47 percent. Her SNL appearance (complete with a dancing moose) tended to play right into the lightweight stereotypes that have developed over the past seven weeks.

Then there was an NBC affiliate question posed to Palin by a third grader: what does a vice president do? Palin: "They're in charge of the United States Senate, so if they want they can get in there with the senators and make a lot of good policy changes." Yikes. We would have loved to have seen Sen. Lugar's or Bayh's faces after hearing that one.

Palin comes back to Indiana for a 6:30 p.m. Saturday rally at the Fort Wayne Memorial Coliseum with singer Hank Williams Jr. Doors open at 4 p.m.

Appearing in Indianapolis at mid-day, Obama paid homage to the U.S. Marines who were killed in the Beirut barracks 25 years ago to the day. "We revere their sac-

rifice," Obama said on the American Legion Mall. "We will never forget them." He added that the soldiers in uniform now "don't serve a red America or a blue America."

He took aim at remarks by Palin that there were "pro-American" parts of the country calling it a cheap shot often seen in the final days of the campaign - "all aimed at stopping change. Change never came without a fight," Obama said. "Who's looking out for the Steelworkers? Who will fight for the teachers? Who will fight for the Teamsters? That's the kind of president I want to be. Indiana, if you're willing to work for us, to join us in this moment of change, knock on doors, organize, join your neighbors and your friends, we will not just win here in Indiana, but we will change the country and the world."

"To me, the voters have reached a comfort level with Barack Obama," says Democratic pollster Peter D. Hart, who conducted the NBC/WSJ survey with Republican pollster Neil Newhouse. "The doubts and question marks have been erased."

However, an Associated Press/GfK Poll that found





Obama at 44 percent and McCain at 43 percent, supports what some Republicans and Democrats privately have said in recent days: that the race narrowed after the third debate as GOP-leaning voters drifted home to their party and McCain's "Joe the plumber" analogy struck a chord. Three weeks ago, an AP-GfK survey found that Obama had surged to a seven-point lead over McCain, lifted by voters who thought the Democrat was better suited to lead the nation through its sudden economic crisis.

### More polls

The poll that tended to show the Obama/McCain as a true horse race had been Zogby-Reuters, that had the race in the 2 to 3 percent range just a week ago. That abruptly changed on Wednesday when it showed Obama with a 51.6 to 42 percent lead for Obama. Again Obama crested above the 50 percent mark and showed a gain of 1.3 percent from the previous day.

Pollster John Zogby explained on his website: "Three big days for Obama. Anything can happen, but time is running short for McCain. These numbers, if they hold, are blowout numbers. They fit the 1980 model with Reagan's victory over Carter -- but they are happening 12 days before Reagan blasted ahead. If Obama wins like this, we can be talking not only victory but realignment: he leads by 27 points among Independents, 27 points among those who have already voted, 16 among newly registered voters, 31 among Hispanics, 93%-2% among African Ameri-

cans, 16 among women, 27 among those 18-29, 5 among 30-49 year olds, 8 among 50-64s, 4 among those over 65, 25 among moderates, and 12 among Catholics (which is better than Bill Clinton's 10-point victory among Catholics in 1996). He leads with men by 2 points, and is down among whites by only 6 points, down 2 in armed forces households, 3 among investors, and is tied among NASCAR fans."

Other polls indicate similar trends: An Ipsos/McClatchy poll of 773 likely voters taken Oct. 16-20 shows Obama leading McCain 50-42; The ABC News /Washington Post daily presidential tracking poll of 1,324 likely voters taken Oct. 17-20 shows Obama leading McCain 53-44 percent.

Our Democratic and Republican sources appear to be united thinking that Obama has a 2 to 3 percent lead in Indiana. Palin's Noblesville visit might have calmed a nervous base, but she is of little help with the vital independents and thinking Republicans we've talked to who are increasingly alarmed at Palin's comments and conduct. With Obama back in Indianapolis today - and at least one Democratic source tells us another couple can be expected in the final 10 days - the stage is set for a Hoosier blue hue. McCain, meanwhile, is busy putting out fires in places like Ohio and Florida. Quinnipiac polling released today had Obama leading in Florida 49-44 percent, Ohio 52-38 percent and Pennsylvania 53-40 percent.

By the time of the Howey/Gauge Poll conference call next Tuesday we'll have a great deal more information.



## Souder, from page 1

Bush and from anxiety caused by the collapse of the financial markets over the last six weeks.

Republicans underestimated the residual impact of the Democratic primary, which featured heavy advertising and a large turnout resulting in a razor-thin win by Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-New York, over Obama.

Meanwhile, Republicans were split between several candidates before tepidly settling on the eventual

nominee, Arizona Sen. John McCain. But now the party is coalescing.

"That solidification is bringing the Republicans back home to me," Souder said.

Although McCain is gaining ground, "Obama is doing a lot better than you would expect in a district like mine," Souder said. Souder predicts that he will garner more votes than McCain.

**The incumbent** benefits from what he calls weak opposition. Montagano has "turned into a little bit of a joke," Souder said. Souder criticizes his sharply negative campaign that has referred to Souder as "Mike."

"If I was running against (2006 opponent and former Ft. Wayne City Council member) Tom Hayhurst this year, I would be in a fight to the finish," Souder said.

Montagano is a young at-



Democrat Michael Montagano of Bristol has pressed Souder with impressive fundraising. (HPI Photo by Ryan Nees)



torney who recently worked for the National Collegiate Athletic Association, according to his campaign bio. The NCAA is located in Indianapolis. He also has worked for former Gov. Joe Kernan, former Rep. Tim Roemer and current 2nd CD Rep. Joe Donnelly.

**A graduate of DePauw** University and Indiana University Law School, Montagano and his wife, Bethany, now live in Bristol in Elkhart County, where Montagano's family has a long history.

The Montagano campaign did not respond to an HPI interview request. The candidate has come under fire from media in the district for lack of accessibility. But Montagano has gained momentum from Obama's strong support in Elkhart County, which has been especially hard hit by the economic downturn. Montagano has raised \$620,869 in 2008 but had only \$31,256 on hand as of Sept. 30.

Souder has raised \$767,193 in 2008 and more than \$1 million in the election cycle, a record for a congressman who usually only collects as much money as he needs to win. Souder had \$451,756 on hand as of Sept. 30.

Montagano has received a big boost from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which has spent about \$487,000 in independent expenditures on the race. More than \$450,000 has gone into television ads attacking Souder. The rest has funded direct mail.

The DCCC is going after Souder for supporting Bush administration economic policies, voting for congressional pay raises and taking taxpayer-funded foreign trips.

"Mike Montagano continues to win over Hoosier voters with his refreshing message of strengthening the economy, fighting for middle class tax cuts, and fighting for affordable health care," said Ryan Rudominer, a DCCC spokesman.

The National Republican Congressional Committee is weighing in on Souder's behalf with about \$84,000 in television advertising that attacks Montagano. The GOP campaign arm likely will spend more with independent expenditures before election day.

**Souder has put about \$300,000** into television and radio. His own ads have focused on his family's background in Grabill, where they founded a popular furniture store.

"We'll be outgunned for the last three weeks of the campaign," Souder said. "We may get it down to 1.5-1...or close to even. And our stuff is a lot more effective. At least we spell his name and my name right. All they have is wild attacks."

But Souder is in enough trouble that he requires help from the NRCC in a year when the organization is strapped for funds. In September, the DCCC had about \$40 million more on hand than the NRCC, which had less than \$10 million.

One Washington GOP strategist groused about

Souder's predicament. "This has turned into a real race due to a lackluster campaign effort," he said. "He's being out-raised by a political novice."

Souder makes no apologies for his approach to campaigning. "I'm not a banker," he said. "I don't store up money. I do my job. I win elections. I work hard. I'm thankful for every dollar I get. I don't worry about snide comments from Republican operatives."

The 3rd CD has become a reliable Republican district after it swung back and forth between Democrats and the GOP before his arrival, Souder said. He argues that he's securing the seat this year with strong support in Fort Wayne and Allen County.

**One worry for Souder** seems to be receding--his vote earlier this month in favor of a \$700 billion rescue of financial markets. "It's hurt a little bit, but it's also helped me," Souder said. "Well-known Democrats say they're crossing over to vote for me. As a (base) switcher issue, it's declining."

But one big unknown remains. With registration soaring, about 14 percent of the voters coming to the 3rd CD polls this year will be new.

"That's a wild card," Souder said. "They're much less connected to a traditional party vote." ❖

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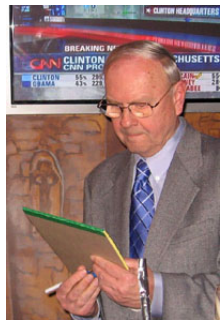




## Joe the Plumber

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND - First, I'd like to congratulate Joe the Plumber. As a small businessman, Joe has plunged away day and night in quest of success. He achieved it in the final presidential debate, capturing attention of both John McCain and Barack Obama.



They mentioned Joe 26 times. They talked directly to Joe, ignoring the rest of us. Associating with Joe contrasted with Obama's repudiation of palling around with a washed up terrorist and McCain's denial of palling around with a washed up president.

Joe is for McCain. That's why the Republican presidential nominee brought up "my old buddy Joe." It showed that McCain is looking ahead to problems looming in the future.

The White House is old, its plumbing a potential problem. All presidents want to avoid a White House leak. But if there is one, a President McCain would know he could call on the nation's most famous plumber. Joe would be there for McCain.

A President Obama would have to deal with his own backed-up drain. Joe admires Obama only for "a tap dance . . . almost as good as Sammy Davis Jr." In fact, Joe would like to clog up the drain that he fears from Obama tax policies.

Polls taken right after Joe's big night showed that he wasn't the only winner in the debate. Obama won, too, perhaps more on style than substance. Obama stayed calm and appeared a bit bemused in response to McCain attacks.

You can do that when you're ahead with time running short in the campaign.

McCain was doing the best thus far in the debates before he got sidetracked in discussing for too long subjects that too few undecided voters care about. Some Congressman Lewis. Who? Some old weatherman. What TV station? Some ACORN. Isn't that for squirrels?

It's the economy, Sen. McCain.

McCain did deliver the most effective response.

With Obama continuing to hammer at the theme

that McCain would provide four more years of Bush, McCain replied: "Sen. Obama, I am not President Bush. If you wanted to run against President Bush, you should have run four years ago. I'm going to give a new direction to this economy in this country."

As a great philosopher once said: "It ain't over 'til it's over." It won't be over until the night of Nov. 4, or even later if results are close enough for continued battling over ballots, 2000 style.

Still, with the focus now on the economic crisis, an issue that isn't helpful thus far for McCain, his chances for a comeback dwindle.

McCain supporters are justified now to begin the "if only" laments that are characteristic of sports fans. You know: "If only Notre Dame had a field goal kicker."

So it is in politics, too, that supporters of a candidate who trails start the "if only" routine, sometimes with ample evidence, sometimes not.

"If only the economy hadn't crashed."

That's for sure for McCain.

He was doing well, even ahead briefly in the polls right after the Republican National Convention. Then, with the credit crisis and the stock market plummeting, voters turned attention to the economy, an issue on which Obama seemed stronger. Americans tend to give credit to or fix

blame on the president and the president's party for what happens in the economy.

"If only he didn't say 'the fundamentals of our economy are strong.'"

It's true that this statement by McCain, no doubt intended to prevent panic, were somewhat taken out of context to ridicule him.

"If only he had picked Mitt Romney instead of Sarah Palin for vice president."

With the economy always seen as a McCain weak point, Romney could have provided some credentials in that field. Palin could provide no help

on the issue. But if McCain comes back to win, his choice of Palin will be viewed as no hindrance. If he loses big, she will be blamed for helping to pull him down.

"If only there was another debate."

Actually, although the candidate who trails usually wants one more chance, I doubt if McCain would want a fourth debate. Neither would Obama. There is, however, one famous debate figure who would welcome another opportunity in the national spotlight: Joe the Plumber. ❖





## Turning Indiana blue

**Publishers note:** Salon.com's Walter Shapiro joined HPI and friends at our Nashville cabin last Saturday night after he finished this report on our front porch. It is reprinted here with his permission.

**By WALTER SHAPIRO**

Oct. 20, 2008 | INDIANAPOLIS -- In presidential elections since the Depression, Indiana has been the lone industrial state where the elephants always roam. For all the talk of independent Hoosiers, the state has gone Republican in 16 of the last 17 races for the White House, with Lyndon Johnson in 1964 the sole exception. In 2004, the networks began painting Indiana Republican red exactly two minutes after the polls closed with the breathless verdict justified by George W. Bush's eventual 60 to 39 percent rout of John Kerry.



So what was Sarah Palin doing in the northern Indianapolis suburb of Noblesville Friday afternoon motivating the GOP faithful? Why are Barack Obama and the Republican National Committee advertising heavily on Indianapolis television? How come most recent polls (there have been only a handful of statewide surveys this month) show Obama within striking distance of the lead? Why has Indiana become 2008's most unlikely battleground state?

So what was Sarah Palin doing in the northern Indianapolis suburb of Noblesville Friday afternoon motivating the GOP faithful? Why are Barack Obama and the Republican National Committee advertising heavily on Indianapolis television? How come most recent polls (there have been only a handful of statewide surveys this month) show Obama within striking distance of the lead? Why has Indiana become 2008's most unlikely battleground state?

**Obama's unexpected** strength here cannot simply be attributed to the Chicago media market, which reaches only about 20 percent of the state, or a heavy African-American vote (Indiana is 86 percent white). The hotly contested May 6 primary, which Hillary Clinton won by a 51 to 49 percent margin, did attract 1.27 million Democratic voters, about 300,000 more Hoosiers than turned out for Kerry four years ago. Indiana -- whose economy more revolves around manufacturing than that of any other state -- has also lost 150,000 factory jobs since 2000, and its 6.2 percent unemployment rate in September was close to a 20-year high. "What has changed in Indiana," says Dan Parker, the Democratic state chairman, "is that in manufacturing towns, people are voting less on social issues and more on the loss of jobs."

But if Obama wins the state, more

than anything it will be due to the best voter-contact operation Indiana has ever seen. Even Murray Clark, the Indiana Republican chairman, says with grudging admiration in his voice, "Obama's done these things right. That's how he nearly beat Hillary in the primary."

**Ignored for decades** by presidential candidates, Indiana in 2004 boasted a dubious distinction -- the lowest turnout rate among registered voters (57.4 percent) of any state in the union. Had the Obama campaign been pinched for cash instead of raking in a jaw-dropping \$150 million in September, Indiana probably would have remained the Midwest's leading flyover state. Instead, buoyed by the primary turnout, the Obama team saw opportunity amid the decades of neglect. As Emily Parcell, the Indiana Obama coordinator puts it, "Unlike Iowa, where every election is hard fought and where a good field operation can add only about 3 percentage points, there is a much greater opportunity for a good field operation here. Hoosiers are not used to Democrats coming to their door. They're not used to being told about early voting."

Finding Democratic voters in fast-growing suburban Hamilton County, just north of Indianapolis, seems as unlikely as spying a herd of giraffes frolicking in a mall parking lot. In 2004, Bush rolled up the kind of victory in Hamilton County that Vladimir Putin might envy -- obliterating Kerry by 51,000 votes with a 74 to 25 percent margin. Yet Obama has two storefront offices in the county (among 44 offices statewide) and is running an aggressive canvassing operation. This unusual commitment of resources is not



Barack Obama drew an estimated 35,000 Hoosiers at today's rally on the American Legion Mall, bigger than the 20,000 at the Indiana State Fairgrounds earlier this month. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)





lost on the Republicans. "Obama's campaign has targeted the Doughnut Counties" -- local lingo for the eight counties that ring Indianapolis -- "particularly Hamilton County," says Clark, the GOP chairman. "They are targeting upscale voters, particularly women."

**About a dozen Obama** canvassers headed out Saturday morning from the newly opened campaign headquarters in affluent Carmel; I accompanied Barbara Kirk, a retired psychotherapist wearing a black Obama T-shirt with a peace sign in place of the "O," and Beth Maier, a photographer who just moved to Indiana with her husband, a medical scientist. They were making the rounds in the Smokey Ridge neighborhood, where houses list for about \$500,000. Carmel, where 89 percent of all high school graduates attend four-year colleges, is not anything like a typical Indiana community. But this is an area where the downside of the Bush era's hard-right tilt of the Republican Party can be observed -- as upscale moderate voters who might be attracted to John McCain for economic reasons recoil because of the social conservatism symbolized by Palin's presence on the ticket.

Laurie Dwyer, a youthful looking 62-year-old woman wearing a Citadel T-shirt (her husband's alma mater), is just this sort of repentant Bush 2004 voter. "I don't say that I'm a Democrat or a Republican," Dwyer told the Obama canvassers, after admitting that she would be voting for their candidate. "I just think that McCain did us all an injustice by choosing his running mate. McCain has made so many mistakes running his campaign, who knows what he would do as president." Offered an Obama lawn sign, Dwyer, presumably thinking about the reaction of her neighbors, said softly, "I better not." (Her precinct went for Bush in 2004 by a vote of 780 to 247.)

**A few blocks away**, Bruce Babcock, a lifelong Republican and a retired executive with a Fortune 100 company, had no reluctance about advertising his newfound

political allegiance with an Obama sign. "Bush has not done a very good job. And the Republicans don't deserve another chance at all." Babcock's last words were designed to underscore that he has no animus toward McCain: "They'd have to resurrect Lincoln to get me to vote Republican."

There is a danger in political reporting of extrapolating too much from anecdotal evidence. And a candidate's canvass list should never be confused with a random sample, though it can be an effective way to identify up-for-grabs voters. But my personal theory (and it explains my fascination with Hamilton County) is that affluent



Sarah Palin found an adoring but polite crowd of more than 20,000 at Verizon Wireless Center last Friday. (HPI Photo by Chuck Schisla)

Republican suburban voters may be the leading edge of a pro-Democratic political realignment that could represent Karl Rove's lasting gift to the GOP.

**Take John Salter**, a 35-year-old doctor and 2004 Bush voter who stressed to the canvassers that he was in the income bracket (above \$250,000 a year) that would pay higher taxes under Obama than McCain. Still, his words and tone suggested that he was leaning toward voting Democratic. "In the end, I care about my money," Salter said. "But I like it when Sen. Obama says that we all have to do our part. And maybe my part is to pay more taxes."

Make no mistake, McCain is going to win Hamilton





County (the largest of the suburban Indianapolis counties) by a hefty margin. But the error that Kerry made in battleground states like Ohio in 2004 -- a miscue that may have cost him the White House -- was to concede suburban and rural counties to the Republicans and concentrate on maximizing the Democratic vote in urban areas. Shaving, say, 50,000 to 100,000 votes off the Republican edge in the Doughnut Counties could help make for a long night of vote counting in Indiana. Brian Howey, the founder of Indiana's most influential political journal, predicts, "If Obama wins the state, it will be as narrow as Hillary's primary win." Howey is impressed by the vigor of Obama's ground effort in Republican areas: "These are tools that will offset the racial factor -- or whatever you want to call it -- in southern Indiana."

### Conservative

Democratic voters in the Ohio River towns like Evansville and Madison may prove an insurmountable obstacle to Obama's dreams of joining LBJ, Franklin Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson as the only Democrats to carry Indiana in the past 120 years. As Jennifer Hollowell, the former executive director of the Indiana Republican Party who is now overseeing the McCain campaign's efforts here and in Wisconsin, argues, "There are a lot of Democrats in southern Indiana who are socially conservative and fiscally conservative. Barack Obama is a liberal. His message is not going to appeal to a majority of Hoosiers."

Both Holloway and Clark suggested, without spelling out the details, that the McCain campaign intends to invest greater resources in Indiana during the closing two weeks of the campaign. Still, the day after Palin's visit to Noblesville (in Hamilton County), associate editor Russ Pulliam wrote in a column in the Indianapolis Star, "McCain opened the door to Obama in Indiana by taking the state for granted." There were no McCain ads visible (at least to me) on Indianapolis television over the weekend, although an RNC spot lambasting Obama for his lack of "executive experience" (unlike, of course, fellow senator McCain) was in full rotation. By my reckoning, I saw four different Obama ads in two days, with the most frequently aired commercial featuring Indiana's Barney Smith, a laid-off RCA worker from Fairmont, repeating the same catchphrase that he used in his speech to the Democratic convention, "It's

time for a president who puts Barney Smith before Smith Barney."

**It is intriguing that** the Friday afternoon Palin rally, which drew about 20,000 people to a partly open-air music arena, was almost exclusively designed to motivate the GOP's conservative base. With the seats under the pavilion (as opposed to standing room in the rear) mostly reserved for volunteers who made at least 100 phone calls, the McCain campaign estimates that 90,000 telephone pitches were made in advance of the Palin visit. As Clark explained, "There were not a whole lot of voters who will be persuaded to vote for McCain because of Palin coming here, but there are a lot of ancillary benefits."

The Palin event itself was surprisingly pallid, with few new attack lines from the vice-presidential candidate, whose amplified voice does not carry well in an outdoor setting. Maybe Hoosiers are unusually polite, but there was not even a hint of an ugly undertone to the rally, besides the good-natured ritual booing

the first time Palin referred to the "mainstream media." But Palin's predictability had its appeal to the GOP faithful. "She was exactly what I see on television all the time," said Regina Jackson, a manager for a product development company, who lives in Pendleton in Madison County, just to the east of Hamilton County. "What I like about her is that her message is always the same. It never changes." Less than two months after being vaulted from obscurity onto the national ticket, Palin is already into her greatest-hits phase.

**With its 11 electoral votes, Indiana** -- like Virginia and North Carolina (which were closer and more contested in 2004) -- is a Republican state that McCain simply cannot afford to lose. But Democrats here are still in a pinch-me-I'm-dreaming mood as they find themselves on the front lines of a battleground state. "We've never had attention before," marvels Dan Parker, the state chairman. "We've been attention starved." While overcoming a 500,000-vote deficit from 2004 remains a daunting challenge for Obama, many Hoosier Democrats would be privately thrilled if on Election Night, Indiana sits there for a few hours in the middle of the television maps -- neither red nor blue -- as it takes a long-awaited star turn as "Too Close to Call." ❖





## Indiana jobless rates are highly variable

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS - Again I apologize for filling a column with numbers. But there is no other way of depicting the unemployment situation in Indiana. As we have learned in the current financial crisis, the lack of knowledge is root of calamity.

In August, the latest date for which we have information, Indiana's unemployment rate was 6.4% compared to 4.5% a year earlier. Nationally, the unemployment rate had gone from 4.7% in August 2007 to 6.1% this year.



Morton Marcus  
Column

This stronger movement in the unemployment rate for Indiana than in the U.S. is typical at the start of a recession. We make the products firms and people can stop buying when money gets tight: for example, parts for autos and appliances.

We went from having the 21st highest unemployment rate in August 2007 to 15th place among the states in 2008. Our unemployment rate increase of 1.9% (6.4%-4.5%) was among the top dozen changes. Arkansas, Kansas, and Oklahoma were the only states to see their unemployment rates fall in that year's time.

The unemployment rate is obtained by taking the number of persons unemployed and dividing it by the number of persons in the labor force. (The labor force refers to people living in a place regardless of where they work. It is simply the number of persons holding jobs plus the number actively seeking employment.) If the percent growth in the number employed does not equal the percent increase in the labor force, the unemployment rate rises.

In Indiana this past year, the labor force grew by 39,000 (1.2%) while the number holding jobs declined by 25,000 (-0.8%). When added together, the growth in the labor force and the decline in employed persons equal the 64,000 growth in the number of unemployed persons.

This does not mean that every person entering the labor force became unemployed. Some found jobs while others who had jobs lost them. For Indiana to have avoided an increase in its unemployment rate during the past twelve months, it would have had to create 37,000 jobs but instead it lost 25,000. Add those two numbers together and you get the 64,000 increase in the number unemployed.

But the state data hide as much as they reveal. In August 2007, the highest unemployment rate (7.0%) in the state could be found in Fayette County; only 26 counties had unemployment rates above 5.0%. Fayette saw its

unemployment rate rise to 11.2% in August 2008 while 80 counties now exceeded 5.0%.

Economists differ when the unemployment rate is too high. In the past, rates ranging from 3.0% to 7.5% have been suggested as the danger point. But it may be that rapid changes in unemployment rates are as serious as sustained high levels of unemployment. If that is the case, many Hoosier counties have been through a traumatic year.

During the past year, the number of persons employed declined in each of Indiana's 92 counties. The greatest loss was 7,600 in Marion, the largest county. Next was Elkhart County with a decline of 4,600 followed by Lake at 3,600.

But the 7,600 increase in the number unemployed Marion County had less effect on the unemployment rate than the decline of 4,600 in Elkhart County. Marion County's unemployment rate went from 4.6% to 6.2% while Elkhart's more than doubled from 4.4% to 8.9%. Elkhart County's 4.5% rise in its unemployment rates between 2007 and 2008 was exceeded only by Adams County's 5.4% (4.0% to 9.4%).

The diversity of unemployment rates across the state is mirrored in the data for individual cities. For example, in Elkhart County, the City of Elkhart's unemployment rate went from 6.0% to 10.4% and Goshen climbed from 4.4% to 8.8%. This means that the balance of the county had unemployment rates of 3.8% in 2007 and 8.2% in 2008. These geographic differences may be helpful in forming policies for economic relief and ultimately economic development.

**Mr. Marcus is an independent economist, speaker, and writer formerly with IU's Kelley School of Business. Contact Marcus for a speaking engagement at [mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com](mailto:mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com) or 317-626-8853. ❖**

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## Daniels' Major Move

**Indiana Governor:** Republican: Gov. Mitch Daniels. Democrat: Jill Long Thompson. Libertarian: Andrew Horning. **2008 Outlook:** Unlike Barack Obama's appearance at the Indiana State Fairgrounds earlier this month, he acknowledged Thompson at this morning's rally in Indianapolis. The Public Policy Polling (1,411 Likely Voters -- MoE +/- 2.6%, Oct. 18-19). has Daniels leading 57-36 percent. We expect a spate of polls over the next week. Howey/Gauge will announce fresh numbers on this race next Tuesday. Daniels continues his Major Moves rollout on Wednesday, breaking ground on the Hoosier Heartland project at Lafayette and the SR14 expansion in Fort Wayne. Daniels picked up endorsements from two of the state's largest newspapers, the Indianapolis Star and the Times of Northwest Indiana. The Times wrote, "In all three gubernatorial debates this fall, Horning proved the comedian and Thompson the vicious attack dog — neither of which Indiana needs for a governor. Daniels has been the sole voice of sanity and reason, offering solid ideas with the details showing they can work. The bottom line is that Daniels has proven himself to be an out-of-the-box thinker who gets good things done for the people of Indiana. He was honored this year by Governing Magazine for his accomplishments and for being a strong state leader. There is no question in this contest. Daniels has earned a final term to continue working on an agenda that comes from a proven record of success. Clearly, this is not the time for change in Indiana. The Times strongly endorses Daniels." After a six-week hiatus, Thompson returned to the airwaves with an ad titled, "We Won't." Campaign manager Travis Lowe sent out an e-mail Monday afternoon telling supporters they could



get a sneak peek at the ad if they contributed \$25 that day. The 30-second spot features Long Thompson talking directly to the camera and criticizing incumbent Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels' performance the last four years. Here is the ad verbatim: "Gov. Daniels would have us believe Indiana is doing as well as can be expected. Well, I think we can do better ... much better. "We can do better than having only two-thirds of our students graduate from high



**Gov. Daniels at the groundbreaking of the Hoosier Heartland highway in Lafayette. Major Moves allowed the final leg to Logansport to accelerate. (Lafayette Journal & Courier Photo)**

school. We can do better than losing thousands of our best jobs. And I completely disagree with Mitch Daniels using George Bush economics – outsourcing state jobs to other states and foreign countries. We shouldn't be doing any of that, and if I'm governor, we won't." Daniels had a busy policy week. He announced his intention to seek more child support compliance by suspending scofflaw licenses. He also announced a million dollar cleanup of the Grand Calumet River in Lake County. Indiana Right to Life is using the Internet to spread its ad against Democrat Jill Long Thompson. "Jill Long-Thompson is the most extreme abortion activist to ever seek the office of governor in Indiana," the e-mail says. "Most Hoosiers are completely unaware that she supports abortion for the full nine months of pregnancy, taxpayer funded abortions, and even using tissue from aborted babies for research. Please help us to get the word out by viewing our new ad below, then passing this along to at least 10 family members and friends." **Status:** Likely Daniels



**Thompson's long awaited TV ad doesn't appear to be a game changer.**

## Congressional

**IN-1** Rep. Pete Visclosky \$63,335.00 raised;



\$1,123,798.49 COH, Leyva, no report.

**IN-2** Rep. Joe Donnelly \$142,887.86;

\$559,233.97. Luke Puckett \$53,708.39; \$17,509.71

**IN-3** Rep. Mark Souder \$216,987.38;

\$451,756.49. Mike Montagano \$152,485.49; \$31,255.90

**IN-4** Rep. Steve Buyer \$270,674.86; \$806,324.83.

Nels Ackerson \$128,782.53; \$100,632.78

**IN-5** Rep. Dan Burton \$199,774.70; \$359,866.96.

Mary Etta Ruley TBA TBA

**IN-6** Rep. Mike Pence \$142,557.48; \$417,601.56.

Barry Welsh \$3,233.21; \$9,380.03

**IN-7** Rep. Andre Carson \$245,415.79;

\$186,951.99. Gabrielle Campo \$20,720 \$11,836

**IN-8** Rep. Brad Ellsworth \$267,651.31;

\$735,413.07. Greg Goode \$48,802.93; \$43,860.25

**IN-9** Rep. Baron Hill \$206,928.26; \$684,909.30.

Mike Sodrel \$177,387.86; \$263,642.79

**3RD CD:** Republican: U.S. Rep. Mark Souder.

Democrat: Michael Montagano. Libertarian: William Larsen.

**2008 Outlook:** The government's economic triage plan is controversial enough that Souder worries that his "yes" vote could mean a pink slip from northeast Indiana voters (Smith, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). "I would have a very substantial lead if it wasn't for that," he said Saturday. But Souder's Democratic opponent, Michael Montagano, hasn't criticized Souder's vote or tried to convince dissatisfied voters that he would have made a different decision. "It's not my place," Montagano said about second-guessing Souder's vote or indicating whether he would have done something different. After the vote, Souder said casting a "no" vote would have been an "incredibly easy thing to do" from a political standpoint because the legislation is unpopular among northeast Indiana residents. He said the 2,000 calls and e-mails ran 10-to-1 against the rescue plan. "I'm not going to let everybody say two years later that Souder was more worried about his re-election than the country," Souder said. Cook Political Report moved this race from "likely" to "leans." We agree. **Status:** Leans Souder

**4TH CD:** Republican: U.S. Rep. Steve Buyer.

Democrat: Nels Ackerson. **2008 Outlook:** Buyer formally received the endorsement of the Indiana Farm Bureau PAC. Indiana Farm Bureau President Don Villwock released the following statement, "Congressman Buyer has had an outstanding voting record on Farm Bureau issues. He has been with us in the past and we look forward to working with Steve Buyer in the next Congress." The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) PAC has pledged their continued support for Congressman Buyer by endorsing him for re-election. In their letter to Buyer, the VFW stated that their endorsement "is based on your strong support for veterans, national security/defense, and military personal issues." **Status:** Leans Buyer

**5TH CD:** Republican: U.S. Rep. Dan Burton.

Democrat: Etta Ruley. **2008 Outlook:** The Indianapolis Star endorsed Ruley. **Status:** Safe Burton.

**9th CD:** Republican: Mike Sodrel. Democrat:

U.S. Rep. Baron Hill. Libertarian: Eric Schansberg. **2008**

**Outlook:** Sodrel and Schansberg said at a public forum and debate Tuesday night that they would support jettisoning the current federal tax system in favor of one based on a single income tax rate or a new, high sales tax (Louisville Courier-Journal). But incumbent Rep. Baron Hill, a Democrat, said he opposes both ideas, arguing the proposals would be tougher on poor families and better for the rich. "I believe in tax reform," Hill said during a two-hour event at the Jasper Arts Center. "I think we need to reform the code. It's much too complicated. People shouldn't have to go out and hire a bunch of accountants" to complete their returns. A debate about the so-called "fair tax" and the "flat tax" emerged as one of the largest differences among the three candidates running in a rematch in the 9th Congressional District. They repeatedly addressed the issue of taxes and spending, with Sodrel and Schansberg endorsing the fair tax but saying they also could vote for a flat tax. The fair tax is a proposal that would eliminate current income and payroll taxes and replace them with a 23 percent sales tax. Low-income families would receive what's called a pre-bate, an advance payment meant to compensate them for at least a portion of the sales tax they would pay on goods. Sodrel said such taxes now make up about 22 percent of a product's cost. The fair tax would make those products cheaper for Americans, he said, and more competitive abroad. "It really should be called a jobs proposal," Sodrel said after the debate. Hill, however, said the fair tax would be a "serious mistake that would have a gigantic effect on our economy." A \$10,000 car purchase, for example, would come with a \$2,300 tax bill, he said. "I think that's going to have an adverse effect on our economy," he said. Cook Political Report moved this race from "leans" Hill to "likely." **Status:** Leans Hill

## Statewides

**Attorney General:** Republican: Greg

Zoeller. Democrat: Linda Pence. **2008 Outlook:** This race is hearing up. The Public Policy Polling has Pence leading Zoeller 42-39 percent. That lead didn't prevent Pence from running an attack ad (complete with grainy black & white photo) of Zoeller alleging he hired Republican operative Brose McVey's lobbying firm. In return fire, Zoeller challenged Pence to name one county prosecutor who wants her to take over the prosecution of criminal cases in their county as she has pledged in her campaign advertising. "In cases where children are victimized by violence, the attorney general has the important role of keeping these





criminals in jail," Zoeller explained. "My opponent talks of wanting to prosecute, but has no experience in the real work of the office." Copies of recent decisions were distributed that highlighted the work performed by the office of the attorney general. "My opponent either fails to understand the vital role of the office or is deliberately misleading the voters for political reasons," said Zoeller. He noted the hard work of the office in support of prosecutors and law enforcement and the proven track record of a 93% success rate for appeals. "I know what office I am running for and as attorney general I will continue to focus on keeping those convicted of victimizing children in prison and off the streets," Zoeller added. Last week Marion County Prosecutor Carl Brizzi, Putnam County Prosecutor Tim Bookwalter, Hendricks County Prosecutor Patricia Baldwin, Floyd County Prosecutor Keith Henderson, and Elkhart Prosecutor Curtis Hill Jr. attended a joint news conference to pledge support and show appreciation of Zoeller's service as chief deputy attorney general for Indiana. Zoeller has also been endorsed by the 14,000 members of the Indiana Fraternal Order of Police. **Status:** Tossup

## Legislature

**HD15:** Republican: State Rep. Don Lehe. Democrat: Myron Sutton. **2008 Outlook:** Lehe appears to be in better shape than some expected, but with part of his district in Lake County, we're keeping this race in tossup. Perhaps a slight edge to the incumbent. Lehe and his opponent, Myron Sutton, say jobs and education are at the top of their list of issues to take to the Indiana statehouse. Who'll get to promote those issues on the House floor remains to be seen. Sutton, a Democrat who lost to Lehe by 26 votes two years ago, is vying again to represent the sprawling district that encompasses rural, suburban and urban areas across four counties, three media markets and two time zones. "People aren't happy with the way things are going," said Sutton, a former Newton County Sheriff. District 15 has lost jobs to the slumping economy, he added, and the

## Indiana House Horse Race

### Democrats

51

HD26 (Open) Polles vs. Truitt  
 HD63 (Open) Messmer vs. Burger  
 HD46 Tincher vs. Heaton

**HD75 Avery vs. Strauss**

**HD37 Reske vs. Gaskill**

### Republicans

49

#### Tossups

HD15 Lehe vs. Sutton  
 HD31 Harris vs. Pearson  
 HD44 Thomas vs. Michael  
 HD89 (Open) Swatts vs. Barnes  
 HD97 Elrod vs. Sullivan

#### Leans

HD35 Lutz vs. Mengelt  
 HD4 Soliday vs. Chubb  
 HD92 Hinkle vs. DeKemper

#### Likely

**HD20 Dermody vs. Cooley**

#### Safe

**Democrats: Fry, Dembrowski.** Austin, Bischoff, Blanton, Robertson, Lawson, Harris, C. Brown, Bauer, Cheatham, Niezgodski, Dvorak, Pelath, Stevenson, Reardon, Dobis, V. Smith, VanDenburgh, Bardon, Klinker, Herrell, Tyler, Grubb, Kersey, Pflum, Pierce, Welch, Battles, Goodin, Stemler, Cochran, Oxley, Stilwell, Avery, Van Haaften, Riecken (Open), GiaQuinta, Moses, DeLaney (Open), Pryor (Open), Bartlett, Porter, Crawford, Summers, Day.

**Republicans: Clements, Yarde,** Borrer, Neese, Wolkins, Walorski, Ruppel, Friend, McClain, J. Thompson, Richardson, Turner, Davis, Torr, Steuerwald, T. Brown, Borders, Foley, Culver (Open), Leonard, Dodge, Cherry, Saunders, Knollman, Eberhart, Burton, M. Smith, Koch, Duncan, Crouch, Lehman (Open), Espich, Bell, Pond, Noe, Bosma, Murphy, Behning, Frizzell.

❖

school district is not adequately preparing students for the job market. "Indiana's lost over 63,000 jobs since Jan. 1. These families are moving out of the state," Sutton said. Lehe, a Brookston farmer, acknowledges that many jobs have left the state, and said he would continue to work toward what Indiana already has started to create and expand jobs. One way to do that, the Republican candidate said, is to continue offering economic development initiatives and expand property tax savings. "We need to continue tax caps so they can't be changed so easily," he said. Economic incentives are fine, Sutton said, but the state needs to devise a plan to retain businesses after their tax abatement period expires "We need to get a system in place so that if they're going to take tax breaks and leave when they're done, they need to pay them back," Sutton said. Status: Tossup

**HD 26:** Republican: West Lafayette Councilman Randy Truitt. Democrat: John Polles. **2008 Outlook:** Sources tell HPI that Truitt had about a 14 percent lead this summer and it went down to the 8



or 9 percent range when the Purdue students returned. But early voting at Purdue has been heavy and there is anecdotal evidence that there are a lot of Obama voters pulling the Democratic straight ticket. We see this as too close to call. During a Tuesday debate, Truitt promised to put constituents' concerns first, and Polles pledged not to get sidetracked by legislative nonsense (Lafayette Journal & Courier). "Hoosier families are struggling," Truitt said, explaining his support for Gov. Mitch Daniels' plan to make the tax caps approved by the legislature this year permanent in the state constitution. But Polles called that plan "reckless," and cited Purdue experts as saying it would take up to three years to determine the full impact of the caps, which limit residential property taxes to 1 percent of a house's value. Truitt said he agrees with some, but not all, of the streamlining suggestions offered in the Kernan-Shepard report, a study of ways to help Indiana government operate more efficiently. Polles said he objects to the "one-size-fits-all" approach to the report but agreed that streamlining should be considered. Neither said he would be in favor of a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. On the issue, Truitt said only that he believes in marriage as the union between a man and a woman; Polles said there are already laws on the books that define and protect traditional marriage. **Status:** Tossup

**HD31:** Republican: State Rep. Tim Harris. Democrat: Joe Pearson. **2008 Outlook:** Republicans have drawn blood, noting that Pearson states he is a "certified" teacher when the DOE website shows he hasn't been for years. Harris is using that in mailers. The story has gotten some local media play. Given the closeness of this race in 2004 and 2006, we think it's too close to call. **Status:** Tossup

**HD37:** Republican: Kelly Gaskill. Democrat: State Rep. Scott Reske. **2008 Outlook:** We sense this race has tightened up. The Anderson Police Department has released three audio clips used as evidence during the investigation of an intimidation complaint made against Reske. Three of the clips are on the Anderson Herald-Bulletin website. On Oct. 3, Anderson police said the investigation would be closed and no charges filed after no criminal intent was found. The complaint was filed Sept. 25 by Mike Gaskill, the husband of Kelly Gaskill. In it, Gaskill said Reske threatened his insurance business and his family. Reske responded that Gaskill misunderstood him when he said negative campaigning would hurt everyone involved. Gaskill said both he and his daughter, Heather, heard the conversation and that she recorded segments of the phone call on her cell phone after things turned threatening. The phone conversation followed a series of negative advertisements aimed at Reske and paid for by the House Republican Campaign Committee. Gaskill's husband said that the Republican didn't sanction the ads. Anderson police Detec-



GASKILL

tive Mitch Carroll investigated Gaskill's complaint and announced on Oct. 3 that the case had been closed. "The finality of it is that there was no criminal intent found," Carroll said. "There will be no charges." **Status:** Leans Reske

**HD44:** Republican: State Rep. Amos Thomas. Democrat: Nancy Michael. **2008 Outlook:** This race is tighter than a drum. Republicans are concerned that the undecideds may break toward Michael. **Status:** Tossup

**HD46:** Republican: Bob Heaton. Democrat: State Rep. Vern Tinch. **2008 Outlook:** Another race that we believe is tightening. Heaton has been hitting Tinch on pension and health care for life issues that were devastating to incumbents in 2004 (Larry Borst) and 2006 (Bob Garton). Daniels coattails are expected to mean more here than Obama's. Might be a pickup for the GOP. **Status:** Tossup

**HD63:** Republican: Mark Messmer. Democrat: DuBois County Commissioner John Burger. **2008 Outlook:** This race is in the gutter with Burger dropping a direct mail piece accusing Messmer of making an e-mail threat. Republicans say the e-mail was forged. Like HD46, we don't think Obama has big coattails here and Daniels is expected to do well in this district. **Status:** Tossup

**HD 75:** Republican: J.D. Strouth. Democrat: State Rep. Dennis Avery. **2008 Outlook:** This is the late-breaking race of this cycle. Avery represents a 60 percent Republican district with a heavy pro-life tilt. Strauss has been able to climb into this race and some sources tried to convince us this is a tossup. We've moved it up to ... **Status:** LEANS AVERY.

**HD 89:** Republican: Christopher Swatts. Democrat: John Barnes. **2008 Outlook:** Another donnybrook. Barnes is taking aim at unpaid bills and small claims court cases related to Swatts in three different townships. Republicans say these were problems Swatts had as a young man. The ad says that in one case, "Swatts didn't show up in court." The ad ends: "How can we trust Chris Swatts with our money when he can't manage his own?" The GOP had been running TV ads aimed at Barnes over his opposition to property tax caps. **Status:** Tossup

**HD97:** Republican: State Rep. Jon Elrod. Democrat: Mary Ann Sullivan. **2008 Outlook:** Elrod has put out direct mail taking aim at "Millionaire Mary Ann," noting that she has donated \$60,000 to Democratic candidates in recent cycles. We sense that Elrod might be able to hold on, but it's still too close to call. **Status:** Tossup ❖





**Jerry Davich, Post-Tribune:** Oh, to be a fly on the wall over a ballot booth on Election Day during the most historic presidential campaign of our lives. Oh, to watch how many white voters enter the voting site sticking to their promise of voting for Sen. Barack Obama, only to vote for Sen. John McCain instead. Oh, to peek at them in the ballot booth -- all alone with their consciences and love of country -- after months of saying all the politically correct things to pollsters and pundits, friends and family. Finally, they can be true to themselves. Finally, they can vote with their hearts, not their heads. Finally, without admitting to another soul, they can cast their race-based votes. Think I'm off-base? Or stirring the race-relations pot? Or lacking faith in our country and the democratic process? Think again, all you political Pollyannas, and take off your rose-colored glasses. Sure, the polls have Obama leading by several percentage points over McCain. But those polls are based on what voters say they'll do on Election Day, not what they'll actually do in the voting booth. I personally know quite a few white voters who simply are not willing to vote for a black man -- any black man. Period. Ever. Not for president of the local PTA board, let alone president of this country. ❖

**Doug Ross, Times of Northwest Indiana:** Everybody's talking about the presidential race this year. But how powerful will those coattails be? The answer -- until the results become apparent late on Nov. 4, at least -- depends on who you listen to. One candidate, a white Democrat, told me of knocking on doors in southern Lake County and encountering what, at least to the candidate, was a surprising number of racists who won't vote for Barack Obama simply because of his race. It seems that a number of voters -- though perhaps not in southern Lake County -- who will vote for Obama precisely because he is black. His win in this election would be one more barrier broken, the rationale goes. But enough of race relations and back to the traditional use of "race" in campaign season. I have asked many candidates over the past few weeks how their specific race will be affected by the presidential election, and some are clearly nervous. State Rep. Shelli VanDenburgh, a Democrat who replaced Bob Kuzman last year and has just one legislative session for experience, is reminding voters in District 19 that they can split their vote. She worried that Republicans who voted in the Democratic primary because that's where the hottest races were will vote a straight Republican ticket for the general election. As for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Jill Long Thompson, she professes to be excited about the coattail effect. "I think it's having a very positive impact," she said. "I think that Barack Obama is an incredible candidate," she gushed on Wednesday in a meeting with The Times editorial board. "He's very direct,"

which resonates with voters, Thompson said. According to the polls, at least, Thompson is either neck-and-neck with Republican Mitch Daniels, the incumbent, or is somewhat behind him. Any coattail effect from an Obama win in a state that traditionally elects Republican presidential candidates could put her over the top. "I think there will be a lot of straight-ticket voting around the state," she said. Earlier this month, I asked visitors at <http://nwi.com> to say whether they would vote a straight ticket this year. The results surprised me -- 38 percent said yes, while only 62 percent said no. That's with a sample size of 892 respondents in a completely unscientific poll. Is that a sign of complete disgust with President Bush's policies? Will it buoy all Democrats? ❖



**Leslie Stedman Weidenbener, Louisville Courier-Journal:** Finally, Hoosier Republicans are getting a little TLC from the campaign of their presidential nominee, John McCain. No, McCain still hasn't appeared in the state since early July. But he did send his not-so-secret weapon -- running mate Sarah Palin -- who did everything needed to boost the enthusiasm of a group of GOP loyalists tired of watching ads for Democrat Barack Obama. On Friday at the Verizon Wireless Music Center in Noblesville, just a few miles northeast of Indianapolis, Palin wowed a crowd of about 20,000 supporters. She hit all the right notes -- lauding McCain, criticizing Obama and even laughing at herself a little bit, the kind of self-deprecating humor that people love. "I gave a national interview recently and it didn't go over too well" with the national media, Palin said. "I was just giving Tina Fey more material for her sketches." During her Friday speech, she played up McCain's reputation as a maverick and an independent thinker. She talked about his experience in battle and said he will fight for Americans. And she said he's not afraid to use the word "victory" when he talks about Afghanistan and Iraq. "Our opponent gives speech after speech about the wars America is fighting," she said. Just once, "I wish he would say that he wants America to win." ❖

**Gary Gerard, Warsaw Times-Union:** What a choice we have coming up in a couple of weeks, eh? Barack Obama or John McCain. OK, can I be frank here? If you think either of these guys are gonna make good on any of the blather they've been spewing during the campaign, you're a certifiable lunatic. You think we're gonna get health care, education programs, infrastructure improvements, tuition credits, a balanced budget by 2012, a balance in trade and whopping tax cuts all at the same time? Are you nuts? But that's OK. That's what politicians do. They tell us a bunch of stuff that we want to hear, and then after they're elected they may or may not follow up. ❖



## Judge keeps Lake vote centers open

SOUTH BEND - Early voting centers that Republicans contend increase the risk of voter fraud will remain open in Gary, Hammond and East Chicago under an order from a special judge, who said closing them could jeopardize people's fundamental right to vote (Associated Press). Lake Superior Court Judge Diane Kavadias Schneider sided with Democrats, who have argued that many residents of the three cities cannot get to Crown Point to cast early ballots and will not have time to vote Nov. 4. Kavadias Schneider acknowledged that "regretably, Lake County has had a history of public corruption and voter fraud." But she said several safeguards are in place, including a state law requiring voters to present photo identification, and access to registration checks through a state voter database.



## Bogus absentees will be investigated

INDIANAPOLIS - The Indiana Election Division has received 30 to 40 unofficial absentee-voting applications from residents in recent days, prompting the Indiana Democratic Party to call for an investigation into who is distributing the bogus forms (Associated Press). Pam Potesta, the Democratic co-director of the Election Division, said yesterday that the forms did not request as much information as the state's official form.

## Parker asks Rokita to probe applications

SOUTH BEND - St. Joseph

County Clerk Rita Glenn said Wednesday she is asking the county election board for advice on handling some invalid applications for absentee ballots she has received this week (South Bend Tribune). Meanwhile, Daniel J. Parker, chairman of the Indiana Democratic Party, has asked Secretary of State Todd Rokita to investigate the matter. Rokita's communications director, Jim Gavin, said the office is investigating the issue.

## Kelty apologizes

FORT WAYNE - Two days after pleading guilty to filing false campaign documents and deceiving a grand jury, Matt Kelty asked his supporters and detractors for forgiveness (Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). The former mayoral candidate spoke to the media Wednesday, flanked by wife Tami and attorney Robert Gevers II. "I wish to say I'm sorry," Kelty said. "I believe the electoral process deserves better than I gave. Fort Wayne deserves better, and I only ask for forgiveness." The admissions come after more than a year of claiming his innocence and after his legal saga severed the local GOP into two factions. In fact, Kelty opened his prepared remarks by saying he initially thought the charges against him were politically motivated. He went on to say he began to realize he was at fault and failed his obligation as a candidate for mayor.

## Mellencamp cuts radio ad for Obama

WASHINGTON - A radio ad endorsement of Barack Obama by Hoosier rocker John Mellencamp repeats a charge the Obama campaign thinks will resonate with Hoosier voters: that John McCain supports tax breaks for companies that move jobs overseas. But independent organizations have said the tax the Obama campaign is referring to is not a main factor in overseas job migration. "This is John Mellencamp and I've seen a lot of

small towns, but now I'm seeing small towns across America dying," Mellencamp says in the radio spot, which was released Thursday as Obama returned to the state for a campaign stop. "John McCain will keep giving tax breaks to companies shipping American jobs overseas."

## Fire kills Bartholomew auditor, former sheriff

COLUMBUS - A devastating house fire early Wednesday killed Bartholomew County Auditor Nancy McKinney and her husband, former Bartholomew County Sheriff Jimmie McKinney (Columbus Republic). Their bodies were found inside the McKinnneys' large log cabin-style home after an accidental fire destroyed the house before 3 a.m. Wednesday.

## Legislators seek halt to FSSA rollout

EVANSVILLE - After months of hearing complaints about Indiana's efforts to modernize its welfare system, two committees of state lawmakers are recommending the project be halted temporarily and not expanded until problems are fixed (Evansville Courier & Press). Two Evansville lawmakers — Rep. Suzanne Crouch and Sen. Vaneta Becker, both Republicans — have drafted legislation regarding the program for consideration by the General Assembly when it meets in January. Lawmakers of both parties say they are besieged with complaints from constituents and health care providers that the state's new automated welfare system causes long delays, loses critical documents and is difficult for the elderly and disabled to navigate. So far, the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration has rolled out the welfare modernization program to 59 of Indiana's 92 counties, including Southwestern Indiana.