



McCormick INGov; McDermott out

Former superintendent seeks Democrat nod; Hammond mayor says he won't run in 2024

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — With Democrat Jennifer McCormick's official entry into the 2024 Indiana gubernatorial race, Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. has ruled out seeking the Democratic nomination.

"As for me, I don't see the stars aligning for a McDermott candidacy in 2024 at this time,"

McDermott texted Howey Politics Indiana on Wednesday. "Of course, you can never say never and things do change from time to time, but currently I have no plans to campaign for governor in 2024."

McDermott told HPI following his 2022 defeat for the U.S. Senate that he would seek reelection this Novem-



ber (currently he's unopposed) and then run for governor in 2024. Allies of former senator and current Vatican Ambassador Joe Donnelly had told HPI last year that he was leaving his political options open for 2024.

That leaves McCormick as the lone Democrat seek-

Continued on page 3

Guns, cops & GOP

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

KOKOMO — As the Howard County Republican Lincoln Dinner was breaking up late last month, 5th CD Chairwoman Judy Buck pulled me aside and asked me a searing question: "What are we going to do to protect the children?"

This came on the heels of a school massacre in Tennessee that claimed the lives of three 9-year-olds, and a bank atrocity in Louisville.

My response was something along these lines: We now live in a weaponized society. There are 400 million guns dispersed among 330 million Americans. Such militarization of a society comes outside the U.S. Constitution's call for a "well-reg-



"I'm not often at a loss for words, but trying to imagine a world without Bill Oesterle leaves me that way. He was a job creator, a community builder, a lifelong advocate for Indiana and a person with an enormous heart for others." - Mitch Daniels on the death of Bill Oesterle at age 57.

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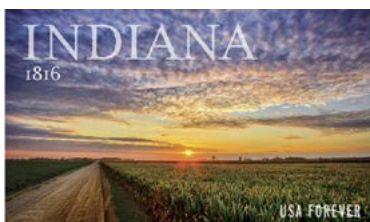
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Jack E. Howey
editor emeritus
1926-2019



ulated militia." I'm not sure what the answer is, but we're going to have to adapt.

Now, we have paranoid and fearful Americans shooting away at kids knocking at the wrong door, or driving down the wrong driveway or, for heaven's sake, chasing a basketball across a property line or having the audacity to ask a neighbor to quit firing an AR-15 at 11 p.m. because an infant was sleeping inside.

This past week, the U.S. crossed the 200th mass shooting incident of the year during the first week of May after the mall shooting in Allen, Texas. (When I last wrote on this topic on April 13, there had been 147 mass shootings.) There are 90 Americans killed by guns every day.

Judy Buck's question conjured up another memory. At the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland, I ended up at the end of a security chute on an intersection island near the Guardian Bridge. I was with Vigo County Chairman Randy Gentry, awaiting a shuttle bus back to our hotel. We chatted with a squad of Akron PD motorcycle cops in to provide additional security.

Across the street came a gaggle of protesters with long-guns, celebrating Ohio's open carry law. The universal contempt of these Akron officers to such a demonstration was openly expressed. When Gentry asked these officers if they had it to do over again, would they choose policing again, the answer was a resounding no.

Why? In retrospect, perhaps the answers can be found with the Louisville shooter – a former Floyd Central star athlete – who gunned down co-workers with his newly purchased AR-15 before lying in wait behind reflective windows to ambush responding police officers, two of whom were wounded. (Officer Nick Wilt was finally removed from his ventilator this past week and is responding to hand signals.) At this writing, the Gun Violence Archive counts 208 American massacres thus far this year. This is a

war being waged by the mentally ill or evil among us on a civilian population.

The number of children (0 to 11) killed as of May 8 includes 93, with 216 injured. There were 526 teenagers killed and 1,278 injured. In four "officer-involved" categories, there were 20 cops killed and 138 injured. In a second "officer-involved" category, there were 495 subject/suspects killed and 301 injured. This is a stark reminder that many of these atrocities include the "suicide by cop" category. Our police officers



Police officers outside the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

patrolling the streets routinely face weapons of war, designed to pulverize their targets, in many cases in civilian settings like malls, churches, concerts, theaters, supermarkets, schools and nightclubs.

In 2016, there were 15,139 gun deaths, compared to 21,009 in 2021 and 20,200 in 2022. We're at 14,817 so far for 2023, which promises to be a record-breaker.

A true bonafide among Republican candidates over the past generation has been to get the NRA's "A+" rating. But the NRA has opposed almost every gun reform at the federal, state and local level.

Gov. Eric Holcomb in 2022 signed legislation ending the need for handgun registration. "HEA 1296, which I've signed today, entrusts Hoosiers who can lawfully carry a handgun to responsibly do so within our state," Holcomb said in a statement. "It's important to note that if a person is prohibited, under federal or state laws, from possessing a firearm before this law goes into effect, that person will still be prohibited. And if

a prohibited person has a firearm, he or she can be prosecuted.”

This past month he signed a bill making it illegal to transform a semi-automatic Glock into a machine gun. He also ordered flags lowered in honor of recent atrocity victims in Tennessee, Kentucky and Texas.

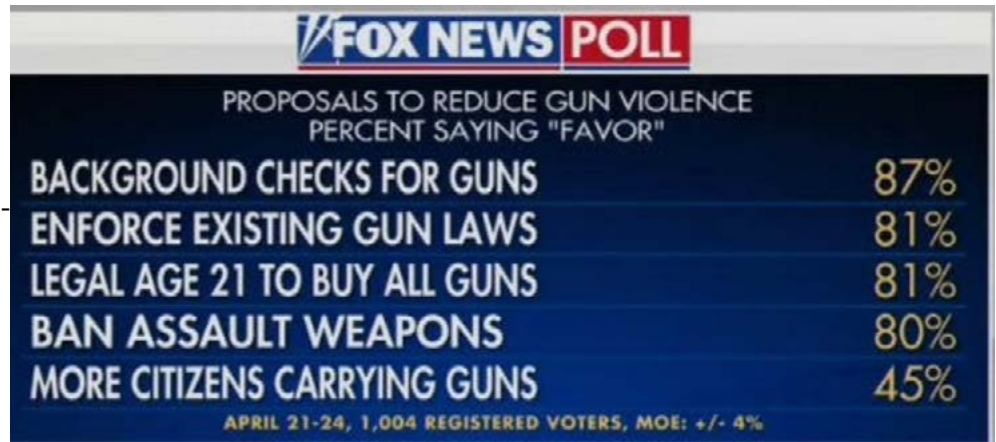
In an April 21-24 Fox News Poll, the answer to Judy Buck’s question may have been answered, all backed by emphatic majorities of Americans. On “proposals to reduce gun violence,” 87% favor background checks for guns, 81% back enforcing existing gun laws, 81% support a legal age limit of 21 to buy all guns, and 80% back an assault weapon ban.

When the poll asked about more citizens carrying guns, 45% said they approved.

How many American households are armed? According to Statista, the share of American households owning at least one firearm has remained relatively steady since 1972, hovering between 37% and 47%. In 2022, about 45% of U.S. households had at least one gun in their possession. According to The Washington Post, citing Georgetown University research, about 6% of Americans own AR-15-style guns, or about 24.6 million people.

Firearms command a higher degree of cultural significance in the United States than any other country in the world, Statista observes. Since the inclusion of the right to bear arms in the 2nd Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, firearms have held symbolic power beyond their already obvious material power.

There has also been a gradual move away from



what a friend (a former cop) and ardent 2nd Amendment rights advocate described to me as the “kill culture.” A century ago, killing was a part of daily life to put food on the table. As society modernized, killing for necessity has been replaced by killing for entertainment, whether it be Hollywood or violent video games.

There will, someday, be a political reckoning for this generation of political leadership who have sought the NRA’s highest imprimatur, and have turned a deaf ear and a stink eye to any common sense gun reform.

I hang out with a decidedly apolitical group of friends. When a societal impulse prompts conversations veering into the political realm, I listen and know when an issue is in a transformational stage. We’re at that point on guns. The fear expressed by family and friends is palpable and real. ❖

Brian Howey is managing editor of Howey Politics Indiana/State Affairs. Find Howey on Facebook and Twitter @hwypol.

McCormick, from page 1

ing the nomination at this time. What she aims to do is exceedingly rare. There has been only one female Indiana gubernatorial nominee in history, when Jill Long Thompson won the Democratic nomination in 2008, only to lose to Gov. Mitch Daniels.

And, there have been only two party switchers to ascend to the governor’s office since the current two-party system took shape in 1856. The first was the legendary Civil War Gov. Oliver Perry Morton, who began the 1850s as a Democrat, then as a Free Soiler (which got him kicked out of the DP), then a Whig, before that party dissolved,

setting off a great migration to the nascent Republican Party. Morton was elected lieutenant governor in 1860 and when Gov. Henry Lane appointed himself to the U.S. Senate, Morton ascended. Morton was reelected in 1864.

The second was Isaac Gray who won an Indiana Senate seat as a Republican in 1868, then won lieutenant governor and governor races as a Democrat in 1876 and 1884.

Beyond Jill Long Thompson, female gubernatorial candidates are relatively rare. Indiana is one of 18 states that has yet to elect a female governor. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch is currently seeking the GOP nomination in 2024. District Attorney Virginia Dill McCarty was the first to run as a Democrat, losing to State Sen. Wayne



Jennifer McCormick celebrates her 2016 GOP superintendent nomination. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

Townsend in the 1984 primary. There were brief candidacies by Democrat State Sens. Vi Simpson in 2003, Karen Tallian and Superintendent Glenda Ritz in 2016 and Republican Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman in the 2012 cycle.

Simpson, Tallian, Ritz and Skillman all failed to generate much fundraising traction. Simpson exited the race in late 2003 when Gov. Joe Kernan opted to get back in after taking office following the death of Gov. Frank O'Bannon in September 2003. Skillman folded her campaign just weeks after announcing in 2010, as the GOP establishment rallied around U.S. Rep. Mike Pence for governor.

When McCarty ran, it was during the Equal Rights Amendment era and she pledged "equal justice under law" as part of her platform. During her campaign, McCarty encouraged women and girls

to take more active roles in politics and government. "All it would do was give us equal rights as far as the government was concerned but it wouldn't affect private employment at all, I thought," McCarty said. "But it became the battleground for the feminists versus the anti-feminists."

Ritz, who upset Republican Superintendent Tony Bennett in 2012, declared for governor in June 2015, before opting to seek reelection two months later. "Now is not the right time for me to run for governor," Ritz said. "Under my leadership, I have brought the discussion of public education into the public discourse and have started to fundamentally change how we support schools. My work is not finished, and my passion is stronger than ever. I am resolutely dedicated to educators, students, and families from Pre-K to graduation."

McCormick would defeat Ritz in 2016, 1,422,146 to 1,239,957, or a 53% to 47% margin. McCormick failed to carry just 10 counties (Perry, Vermillion, LaPorte, Vigo, Tippecanoe, Monroe, Porter, St. Joseph, Lake and Marion).

"I'm not Tony Bennett," McCormick said that October. "I stand on my own proven leadership. It is not a return to many of the reforms that went through during that era. I have my own style and my own concerns."

In October 2018, McCormick stunned the Hoosier political establishment, announcing she would not run for reelection in 2020, in part because of the General Assembly's move in 2017 to make the superintendent position a gubernatorial appointment. It was originally scheduled for the 2024 election, though there was persistent talk of moving that up to the 2020 election cycle.

"As a parent, I would not be happy if my state superintendent were spending time on noise, and that's



Jennifer McCormick after winning the GOP superintendent nomination with Lt. Gov. Holcomb and attorney general nominee Curtis Hill at the 2016 GOP convention. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

simply what this has become," McCormick said. "For that conversation to keep coming up and suck all of our energies out, to me, I'm growing very weary of that. The best way I can help shut that down is to let people know I'm not running again."

"I still have a passion for kids. My team has a passion for kids. We can get things done for kids," McCormick said. "But when the governance structure is becoming a problem for kids, that's not why I intended to get into office. A second term is not on my radar. So I would hope that those who continue to keep the noise going for the sake of political reasons would tone things down."

McCormick did not consult with Gov. Eric Holcomb prior to her bombshell. Holcomb reacted, saying, "I reminded her that we have more time left in this term than we've been here, and there's still plenty to be accomplished. Dr. McCormick has given me a lot to digest as I dig into her legislative priorities. I thanked her and told her today I appreciate and respect her lifetime devotion to children and education, and that we'll take the steps necessary to ensure Indiana has the best team working together to provide the highest quality education for children."

McCormick's bipartisan pitch

In her campaign video kickoff last Thursday, McCormick said, "Let me introduce myself: My name is Jennifer McCormick. Now I'm running for governor of Indiana because it's time to put Hoosiers first. I bring common sense and bipartisanship back to the Statehouse."

She added, "I grew up on a small family farm in New Castle. My community was full of spirit and support, and the public school was the community's front porch."

Neighborhoods were filled with kids, and families had an opportunity to thrive. Yet, as good-paying jobs left my community, I saw families, small businesses, schools, and local infrastructure suffer. I spent a decade as a special education and language arts teacher before becoming a public school principal and superintendent for nearly 15 years.

"In 2016, I successfully ran for state superintendent of public instruction to be a champion for Hoosier kids," McCormick continued. "As state superintendent, I took on politics that were negatively impacting our schools and fought for what was right for kids, teachers, and parents. Now, I'm running for governor of Indiana because it's time to put Hoosiers first. I will bring common sense and bipartisanship back to the statehouse. I've already proved I will stand up to out-of-touch policies that are destroying public education, stripping Hoosiers of their rights and freedoms, and leaving rural communities behind."

Unprecedented supermajority era

The other historical anomaly beyond gender and education politics is the current GOP supermajorities in the General Assembly, which has extended to an unprecedented five cycles since the two-party system began in 1856.

That has brought many smoldering divisive social issues to the fore, like banning books, critical race theory, limiting LGBTQ+ rights, and a recent spate of transgender legislation. Speaking to the NWI Times' Doug Ross in Valparaiso, McCormick framed her candidacy in the "distractions" that prompted her not to seek reelection in 2020. "The answer is nothing other than as a distraction from the real problems because they're complex and they're difficult to solve," McCormick said.

"I really feel like the supermajority wants to hover in that because that is a national trend and it keeps that distraction. That's easier to do than to work on the problems.

"You had a lot of supermajority power, and so someone's got to own it," McCormick said. Instead of owning it, Republican legislators act like, "We're going to pretend like it doesn't happen and we're going to focus on these areas.

"I've heard about the struggles that Hoosiers are facing, and I've also heard about the leadership they expect," she said. "In Kosciusko County, I heard about the fight for public education. In Bartholomew County, I'm hearing about women's rights and making sure that we watch that and making sure we protect it. In Hamilton County, I hear a lot about the desire to return to common sense.

"Hoosiers do not recognize the out-of-touch divisiveness that is coming out of the Statehouse," McCormick said. "They expect a leader who believes in common sense and bipartisanship to solve problems and make Indiana the state that she can be."

She noted legislative action critical of Holcomb's handling of issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. "I know what that's like to have authority stripped because what they did to Gov. Holcomb, they did the same thing to me, and they're doing the same thing to a lot of different offices. So I completely understand that," she said. "However, it's still the governor of the state of Indiana, and I still know people put that at the top of the pedestal. It's a voice, it's a platform. It appoints a lot of committees. It appoints a lot of boards. It can get a lot of things done," she said.

Speaking in front of the St. Joseph County courthouse in South Bend last week, McCormick focused on book banning and charter school funding, saying it was "beyond ridiculous."

"So we will start with book banning, really?"



McCormick told WNDU-TV. "We'll start with the bans on LGBTQ health care rights. I mean the list goes on; we'll talk about you now, public education, which services 90% of our kids, was the most underfunded system of all the schools. The one that services the smallest percentage of students got by far the majority of the money."

State Rep. Vernon Smith, D-Gary, offered his endorsement of McCormick in Gary (NWI Times). "I believe in her," Smith said. "I worked with her for four years. I saw that she was not a politician but a public servant. This woman showed that she cares about people."

McCormick had spent part of 2019 conducting a series of statewide listening tours with State Sen. Eddie Melton (the current Gary Democratic mayoral nominee) when he was weighing a gubernatorial bid. That ignited speculation of a Melton-McCormick ticket. Democrats,

instead, nominated Woody Myers that year.

"Indiana needs more statewide leaders who value the voices of practitioners and community stakeholders, as demonstrated by Sen. Eddie Melton," she said in July 2019. "As state superintendent of public instruction, I am optimistic that a potential 2020 gubernatorial candidate has the foresight and the willingness to elevate educational issues and work collaboratively. This next election will direct the future of our state for generations to come. Decisions regarding the education of our children must be at the very heart of that future."

INGOP reacts

Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer reacted to the 2019 Melton/McCormick listening tour saying, "Today's announcement seems to confirm the rumors of the last few weeks: That Jennifer McCormick is auditioning for a new job, including as the lieutenant governor nominee on the Democrat ticket in 2020. After being on stage at our Republican Conventions in 2016 and 2018, running on GOP ideals in 2016 and accepting campaign aid from thousands of Republican Party supporters across the state, it begs the question whether Jennifer McCormick is still a Republican."

Last week, Hupfer said, "We would like to officially welcome Democrat Jennifer McCormick to the 2024 gubernatorial race and presume that she is seeking the Democrat nomination. With her campaign launch today, Democrat Jennifer McCormick has decided to continue her well-known streak of misleading Hoosiers. But they have come to know that's just who she is — someone who will say or do anything to get elected. But Hoosiers also know this — Democrat Jennifer McCormick believes that teachers and administrators know what's best for our children and that parents should have no say in what happens in our schools. Hoosiers have rejected that position, and they will reject her too."

What are McCormick's chances?

McCormick filed her statement of organization on May 3. The McCormick for Governor campaign had a beginning balance of \$40,160 and an ending balance of \$42,341 as of Jan. 17, with funds migrating from her past superintendent campaign.

By comparison, Friends of Suzanne Crouch reported a year-end cash balance of \$3.19 million. The campaign of Republican Eric Doden reported a year-end cash balance of \$2.8 million. U.S. Sen. Mike Braun reported a cash balance of \$2.9 million and received a \$25,000 contribution from Stephen Hilbert on May 3.

In 2020, Holcomb won reelection with 56.5% to 32% for Democrat Woody Myers and 11.4% for Libertarian Donald Rainwater. Myers carried just Lake, Marion and Monroe counties.

In 2016, Holcomb defeated Democrat John Gregg

51.4% to 45.4%, or by 1,397,396 to 1,235,503. Gregg carried 13 counties.

In 2012, Republican Mike Pence became the first modern governor to win with less than 50% of the vote. He defeated Gregg 1,275,424 to 1,200,016, or 49.49% to 46.56%, while Libertarian Rupert Boneham had 3.5%.

McCormick will likely find gathering support from the wider public education community, which rallied to Ritz in her 2012 upset of Bennett, despite being outraised by Bennett \$1.86 million to \$341,873. Ritz rallied educators with a social media campaign based on the 2011 Egypt Tahir Square political uprising.

If McCormick is the only credible Democrat to seek the nomination, she can potentially make this a competitive race by capturing the divisive issue outflows on abortion, gun reforms, and LGBTQ+ rights, all of which have seen wide polling majorities on a wide range of issues. For instance, last November's Ball State Hoosier Survey revealed that 56.7% believe abortion should be legal in all or



most cases, while 76% find abortion to be an important or at least somewhat important issue.

McCormick tweeted this past week, "Women want to live, work, and thrive where access to medical care is not banned or limited. States who respect this and operate accordingly win."

The Republican primary will likely find the three candidates shifting to the right on abortion and gun reforms. Crouch made it a point to note her tie-breaking Indiana Senate vote on an abortion exception amendment last July. That will be an asset in the primary, but a potential liability in the general. ❖

McCormick's run as a Democrat

By JACK COLWELL
South Bend Tribune

SOUTH BEND – Jennifer McCormick, now an announced candidate for governor, has been victorious in one statewide race, upsetting a favored incumbent. Her expertise is in education, sure to be an issue in Indiana in 2024. Nobody yet challenges her for her party's nomination.



Sounds promising for success for governor?

Except for one important fact in Indiana politics.

McCormick is running as a Democrat in a state where Republicans are in two-decade control of the governor's office. No Democrat has won any office elected statewide since 2012. Republicans hold super majorities in

the state legislature and have solid control of the congressional delegation.

But could the political pendulum swing back to Democrats, who held the governor's office for 16 years before the current Republican domination?

McCormick is endorsed by St. Joseph County Democratic Chair Diana Hess and has support from other prominent party figures for the nomination, whether winning it be full of promise or of hopelessness.

In an ironic twist, McCormick played a part in the long Democratic losing streak. As the Republican nominee for state school superintendent back in 2016, she defeated the Democratic incumbent, Glenda Ritz, who had strong support from teachers and was favored to win.

Teachers, who didn't support McCormick back then, now are likely to support her for governor. Teachers rallied at the Statehouse against what they considered a "war on public education" by the Republican super majorities.

McCormick battles in that war on the side of traditional public schools, calling it "beyond ridiculous" that "public education, which services 90% of our kids, was the most underfunded system of all the schools."

She and other critics of the Republican legislative approach contend that all-out promotion of charter schools and more vouchers for private schools hurts public school systems. Local critics say it led to such things as

the closing of Clay High School.

The main reason McCormick won in 2016 wasn't that she had amazing campaign skill; it was Donald Trump sweeping to victory in Indiana, helping to pull in Republican candidates throughout the state. Ritz and former Sen. Joe Donnelly, the last two Democrats to hold statewide elective office, went down to defeat.

Victory, in what was the last time the superintendent was elected rather than appointed, didn't turn out to be sweet for McCormick.

She and Republican leaders soon differed on education approaches. They took powers away from the superintendent and then made the post appointive.

McCormick switched to the Democratic Party in 2021.

Why?

McCormick, a long-time educator – teacher, elementary school principal and assistant superintendent of Yorktown Community Schools – says she went into the state superintendent post with an approach of "trying to help kids" in a bipartisan way, not pushing political philosophy and party control as paramount. She found that wasn't what was expected by Republican leaders.

Hess began encouraging McCormick to run for governor after she spoke at a fundraising dinner of St. Joseph County Democrats last year.

Back on Dyngus Day, before McCormick formally announced, Hess introduced her at an event as "our likely nominee."

Likely?

Absolutely, if nobody else gets in the race.

Last year there was speculation about Donnelly, now ambassador to the Vatican, coming back to run for governor. The nomination would be his if he wanted it.

But he hasn't come back, with the nomination seemingly less valuable after the terrible showing of Indiana Democrats in the election last November.

Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott, losing Democratic nominee for senator last November, is mentioned. But he was embittered by lack of Democratic organization support at the state and national levels..

Someone still could challenge McCormick for the nomination. But time is short to start raising funds and support.

Republicans running for governor are Sen. Mike Braun, Lt.

Gov. Suzanne Crouch and Fort Wayne businessman Eric Doden, each confident that the winner of the Republican nomination will be governor. ❖



Cummings, Goodrich enter 5th CD while Ruckelshaus ponders

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

NOBLESVILLE — The open 5th CD race is beginning to take shape. State Rep. Chuck Goodrich declared last Friday, joining Madison County Prosecutor Rodney Cummings in the contest to succeed retiring U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz.



They could find the field growing, with former state Sen. John Ruckelshaus and former U.S. Senate candidate Mark Hurt currently weighing bids.

In the 3rd CD race to replace U.S. Rep. Jim Banks, the field stands at five, with former congressman Marlin Stutzman, state Sen. Andy Zay, former Allen County Judge Wendy Davis, former congressional staffer Jon Kenworthy, and Mike Felker all declaring.

In the 3rd CD, Goodrich was introduced by Noblesville Mayor Chris Jensen and House Speaker Todd Huston. "I have a practical knowledge that literally needs to be in D.C.," Goodrich said. "We should require folks to be able to build a business, run a business, make payroll and literally understand why rising healthcare costs are killing our nation.

"I want to bring my conservative perspective to that conversation in Washington, D.C.," Goodrich said. "That's the reason I want to go to D.C., and that's the reason I will go to D.C. I will actually be the conservative voice for all of you and for other people in the district in Congress. The reality is that your voices aren't being heard and it will be heard when I get to Congress."

Huston called Goodrich a "people-first person" with an incredible heart for service. "He's a phenomenal legislator," Huston said (Hamilton County Reporter). "He's the type of legislator we need in Washington, D.C., who gets serious about doing complicated and difficult things and drives them to the finish line. He will be tremendous in D.C. We have to have people who get to work and get things done."

Cummings entered the race in late April. "It's encouraging to see so many people show up here today," Cummings said at his campaign kickoff at the Anderson Museum of Art (de la Bastide, Anderson Herald Bulletin). "I'm ready to face the challenges of our time. The policies in Washington are bankrupting the economy and we have the highest inflation rate. I don't know how we will pay our debt. It's irresponsible."

If elected, Cummings said he would only vote for a balanced federal budget. Cummings said policies are encouraging people not to work. "When criminals complete their sentence, they quit their jobs," he said. "They do better by not working."

Cummings was critical of the lack of border security during the administration of President Joe Biden. "He is failing to live up to the responsibility of protecting our borders," he said. "The states have to pay for medical care and the schooling of children." Cummings was also critical of the discussions taking place about transgender rights for children under the age of 18. "It's not acceptable," he said. "I don't know how we can take the rights away from parents without due process. I will fight to preserve the rights of parents."

Joining Cummings at his campaign kickoff were Hamilton County Prosecutor Greg Garrison and Democratic Lake County Prosecutor Bernard Carter.

Ruckelshaus told HPI that he is still pondering a run, a process that was paused after the death of his 93-year-old mother this past week. "We are deep in the process of evaluating the opportunity to serve Hoosiers again," Ruckelshaus said. "In the end, we will do what is best for our family, the district and America. We Ruckelshauses always do. We are most humbled and honored



to be considered for Congress in whatever the capacity the Good Lord has in mind for us."

Hurt, who practices law in Kokomo and Noblesville, told HPI at the Howard County Lincoln Dinner that he was close to making a decision on the race.

U.S. Senate

Banks blasts Democrats

U.S. Rep. Jim Banks told Kosciusko County Republicans on Saturday that he is worried that the American dream is fleeting, laying the blame at the feet of the radical left and wokeism (Slone, Warsaw Times-Union). Banks is seeking the open Senate seat being vacated by Mike Braun who is running for governor.

"What Rudy and I see in Washington, D.C., today

on the other side of the aisle are people who can't even mouth the words that America is the greatest country in the history of the world," Banks said, referring to new 2nd CD U.S. Rep. Rudy Yakym III. "We serve with Democrats - I almost want to dare them to say it. Just say it. They won't say it because Democrats today don't believe that America is the greatest country in the history of the world."

He said the U.S. has gone from a country that believed inherently in equal opportunities for every boy and girl to a Democrat party - "a party in power today that believes in equal outcomes, and that, ladies and gentlemen, is socialism. That is their agenda. It is to destroy America and turn it into a socialist country. When you send me to the United States Senate, I'm going to wake up every day and do the same thing to fight for (America). I'm here standing before you tonight because I'm sick and tired of go-along-to-get-along Republicans that roll over and don't fight back, and that's never going to be me. Joe Biden is full of more hot air than that spy balloon he let fly across the country. When you send me to the Senate, I'm going to spend every waking day looking for ways to hold China accountable. That's what I did in the House, that's what I'm going to do in the Senate."

Last month, Banks said, he introduced the first bill ever in Congress to sanction China for giving America fentanyl, the leading cause of death for Americans his age. He also said he was the first member of Congress to introduce a bill in the House several years ago to hold China accountable and sanction them for giving the U.S. COVID-19. "They've stolen our jobs. They wrecked our economy. They gave us a pandemic. Now they're flooding this country with fentanyl every day," Banks said, noting that over 100,000 Americans have died of fentanyl poisoning since Biden became president because he opened the border.

Banks also lauded Donald Trump, saying he "secured the border, built the wall," while Biden from day one "opened the border wide open and with it flooded this country with poison that's poisoning our young men and women, and it's time to stop it."

Governor

Crouch endorsed by congressmen, mayors

Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch picked up the endorsements of U.S. Reps. Greg Pence and Larry Buchson, Noblesville Mayor Chris Jensen and Evansville Mayor Lloyd Winnecke. "It's my pleasure to enthusiastically endorse Suzanne Crouch for Governor," Winnecke said. "Through a 30-year friendship, I know Suzanne to be a person of great character and with an unmatched work ethic. She's empathetic to Hoosiers everywhere, yet fully capable of



Hamilton County mayoral noninees gathered in Noblesville last week: Scott Fadness of Fishers, Scott Willis of Westfield, Sue Finkam of Carmel and Chris Jensen of Noblesville.

making difficult decisions. Suzanne's experience in both the administrative and legislative portions of government makes her uniquely qualified to lead our state."

Rep. Pence added, "Suzanne Crouch is a proven conservative who will protect Hoosier values, stand up for families, faith, life and will always support law enforcement. I am proud to offer her my endorsement as our next Governor."

Buchson said today, "I take great pride in endorsing Suzanne Crouch to become the next governor of Indiana. Her track record of conservatism, demonstrated through her tenure in both the State of Indiana legislative and executive branches, inspires confidence in her ability to shape Indiana's future. There is no one better suited to represent the values of our Hoosier community and provide leadership for the state."

Noblesville Mayor Chris Jensen has pledged his endorsement for Crouch. "Suzanne Crouch has what it takes to move Indiana into its next chapter. As mayor, I have never hesitated to call on Suzanne to help and never had any doubt she could get things done. Her vision for the future is inspiring, thoughtful and aspirational. She is the definition of a Hoosier public servant and I am proud to endorse her run for Governor," said Jensen.

Mayors

Martinsville: Mayor Costin wins

Mayor Kenny Costin has won the Republican primary. Costin received 690 votes, taking around 42.5% of the vote Tuesday. Challenger Scotty Manley was second with 586 votes, around 36% of the vote, and former Mayor Shannon Kohl was third with 348 votes, around 21% of the vote (Martinsville Reporter-Times). After the results came in, Costin thanked his supporters. He also thanked both Kohl and Manley for running clean campaigns. Costin said running for office is difficult as candidates have to get out in front of people. "It takes a lot to do that," he said. Costin said, except for one, he has kept his campaign promises

made during the last election.

Indianapolis: Parties take aim at nominees

The two political parties are taking aim at Democrat Mayor Joe Hogsett and Republican nominee Jefferson Shreve. For Republicans, it's crime; for Democrats, it's abortion.

Indiana Democrats: After days of battling the local press through conflicting statements, Indianapolis Republican mayoral nominee Jefferson Shreve's own advertisements from his 2016 state Senate campaign paint a clear picture of the anti-abortion politician he really is. In 2016, Shreve said he would be a state legislator who focused on "protecting the unborn" and released two television ads that highlighted his anti-abortion stance: "The Conservative Republican We Can Count On" and "From the Ground Up". Now, running for a different office with a new set of political consultants telling him what to say, Jefferson is attempting to backtrack from his out-of-touch position on this and other issues such as his close policy ties to the NRA. No amount of "clarification" will hide Jefferson's record: As mayor, he'd be an ally of the state legislature's radical agenda to restrict the rights of women, criminalize abortion and target doctors. "Jefferson Shreve is just another conservative Republican that wants to stand in the way of women making their own health care decisions," said Indiana Democratic Party Chairman Mike Schmuhl. "As a state senate candidate, Jefferson Shreve showed his true colors on abortion – and with the legislature attacking women's rights, the last thing Indianapolis needs is a mayor that won't stand up to the culture war agenda coming from the Statehouse."

Meanwhile, Marion County Republican Chairman Joe Elsener reacted to the eruption of gunfire in Broad Ripple last weekend. "Over the past eight years of Mayor Joe Hogsett's administration, Marion County has fallen victim to a rising tide of violence," Elsener said. "Sunday night's eruption of gunfire in Broad Ripple is just the latest incident in what is quickly becoming another historically violent year in our capital city. It is becoming clearer by the day that Mayor Hogsett's violence reduction plans aren't working. Communities that at one time felt like safe places to live, work, and play are struggling with a public safety crisis that has gone unmet by the mayor and council supermajority. Public safety is foundational to opportunity. Indianapolis needs leadership that is prepared to meet the needs of the moment and get our capital city thriving again."

Shreve disputes IndyStar story

Shreve is disputing an IndyStar story that said he backs criminalizing abortion. "I strongly oppose the prosecution of women who may seek an abortion, and this is a failure by the Indianapolis Star to provide its readers with accurate information," Shreve said in a statement to Howey Politics Indiana. The Star story was excerpted in Tuesday's Howey Daily Wire. "I am also not inclined to devote additional resources for enforcement of marijuana

possession. As mayor, I will work with our police leadership to give them what they need to stop crime in this city. Downtown is failing, crime is skyrocketing, and Joe Hogsett wants to drive this race toward divisive social issues to distract from real problems of governance and leadership." The Star corrected its story on Tuesday: "Jefferson Shreve's comments about disagreeing with the Marion County prosecutor's decision not to prosecute certain crimes were misattributed in an earlier version of this story. He was speaking about marijuana possession and street crimes, not abortion. This story has been updated."

Carmel: Nelson backs school referendum

Democrat Carmel mayoral nominee Miles Nelson delivered a letter to Councilor Sue Finkam asking her to join him in supporting the renewal of the operating referendum for Carmel Clay Schools, which also appears on this November's ballot. "Protecting the funding for our world-class schools shouldn't be a partisan or controversial issue," said Nelson. "Our early and joint support for this year's referendum would send a strong message to our neighbors that their next mayor will be an advocate for our schools. By jointly standing in strong favor of the referendum, we could, together, help take any politics out of this year's vote."

Race expected to be tight

For the first time in 16 years, Carmel residents will have a contested general election to choose the city's next leader, as the race to succeed seven-term Mayor Jim Brainard now features Republican Sue Finkam and Democrat Miles Nelson (Carloni, IndyStar). The November election in Carmel will likely be one of the more closely watched mayoral races in the state as voters decide whether the city will continue under Republican leadership or if Carmel, which has trended purple in recent elections, will make history with its first Democratic mayor. Carmel voters already made a few things clear in Tuesday's primary election, local government leaders and experts told IndyStar. First, Carmel continues to embrace the vision Brainard built for the city over the past 30 years. Finkam has maintained a good relationship with Brainard and has largely been supportive of his policies, despite not receiving his endorsement in the primary. Second, the city's voters appear to prefer more moderate candidates as opposed to those on either party's outer wings.

General Assembly

HD31 caucus set for May 25

Indiana Republican Party Chairman Kyle Hupfer has officially called a caucus of eligible precinct committee members to fill a vacancy in the office of HD31, formerly held by State Rep. Ann Vermillion, who resigned earlier this month. The caucus will be held May 25 at 6 p.m., at Sender Café, 100 S Washington Street, Marion. The winner will fill the remainder of the office's 2023-24 term. ❖

Biden v. Trump may not be in books for '24

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – It was billed as a nationally televised speech on the Vietnam War. But as April Fool's Day 1968 ticked closer, President Lyndon B. Johnson dropped an epic bombshell: He was dropping his reelection bid. "I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office, the Presidency of your country."



It came after he had defeated Sen. Eugene McCarthy in the New Hampshire primary by just a 48%-42% margin. LBJ's approval stood at an anemic 36%. There are several parallels to President Joe Biden after last weekend's ABC/Washington Post poll that showed him with a 38% approval rating while trailing Donald Trump 36%-32% and tying Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis at 32%.

There are plenty of reasons not to put too much stock in a general election matchup still 18 months away, particularly with a poll of adults and not likely voters. But this poll has revealed doubts have risen about how well Biden would perform since he ran in 2020, with 63% saying he does not have the mental sharpness to serve effectively as president, up from 43% in 2020 and 54% a year ago. A similar 62% say Biden is not in good enough physical health to be effective. A YouGov poll this week had Biden's approval at 42%.

ABC's George Stephanopoulos called the poll "just brutal." And it could get worse for Biden depending on how the debt crisis, economic jitters, Hunter Biden indictment, and the coming post-Title 42 border surge goes.

This prompted conservative commentator Hugh Hewitt to predict, "I think the American people are coming to the recognition he really can't do this. I'm expecting an LBJ '68 exit sometime next year."

Hewitt may be on to something. First, Biden had to announce he was seeking reelection. To do otherwise would mean he would spend a little less than half of his presidency as a lame duck. While Biden passed much of his extraordinary agenda with tiny congressional majorities in 2022, he now is faced with a Republican House and grappling with a debt ceiling dilemma as well as a crucial Ukraine counteroffensive sequence against Russia. The policy stakes are monumental.

Then there's the opposition, Donald J. Trump. His lead over DeSantis has been running between 30% and 38%. Everyone else is in single digits. But Trump carries historic baggage, with his verdict of sexual abuse and

defamation in New York on Tuesday, as well as the 34 criminal counts filed against him last month in New York, which seems to have rallied his base. With other indictments in Georgia, Florida and Washington pending. The ABC/Post poll finds 56% of Americans believe Trump should be prosecuted for his efforts to overturn the 2020 election, and 54% want charges brought for his role in the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection. Those are terrible numbers for a general election matchup.

Trump's CNN town hall last night

Donald Trump's primetime return to CNN Wednesday for the first time since 2016 felt like a throwback: Trump with the long, twisting answers; the interviewer at times struggling to fact-check him or return his focus to the question at hand; and then, eventually, both talking over each other as Trump flings insults her way (AP). Wednesday's town hall in New Hampshire was the first time in years that Trump faced prolonged questioning.

Over and over again, a self-assured Trump lied and rewrote history (Politico Playbook). He claimed to have finished the border wall. (He didn't.) He asserted that he'd been "exonerated" from accusations that he attempted to strong-arm Ukraine into digging up dirt on Biden. (He wasn't.) He refused to apologize to Mike Pence for putting him in harm's way on Jan. 6 and insisted that his ex-VP had the power to overturn the election. (He didn't.) He called Michael Byrd — the Black Capitol Police lieutenant who fatally shot Ashli Babbitt while protecting lawmakers during the storming of the Capitol — a "thug." (He isn't.) He called Jan. 6 "a beautiful day." (It wasn't.) He defended his infamous "grab 'em by the pussy" comments.



He wouldn't say if he believed Vladimir Putin is a war criminal, or even if he wants Ukraine to win its war against Russia. "I don't think in terms of winning and losing," he claimed.

Trump, when asked by CNN moderator Kaitlan Collins about the guilty E. Jean Carroll sexual assault verdict, said, "I don't know her. I never met her. I had no idea who she is." Collins asked Trump about his comments in the infamous "Access Hollywood" video in which he bragged about grabbing women's genitals without asking permission. "I can't take that back because it happens to be true," Trump said.

Trump called 2020 a "rigged election" and a "shame" before Collins cut him off, correcting his statements and asking him to publicly acknowledge his loss to Biden. As for the Jan. 6 insurrection, Trump said of the mob that attacked the U.S. Capitol, "They were there proud. They were there with love in their heart. That was unbelievable and it was a beautiful day." He said he would pardon many of the Jan. 6 convicts. Collins asked Trump if he felt he owed former vice president Mike Pence. "No, because he did something wrong." ❖

Salem ‘witch’ hunts and the 1st Amendment

By **SABRINA HAAKE**

GARY – Last weekend I was in Salem, Massachusetts, when I watched the White House Correspondents’ Dinner on my laptop. Everyone poked fun at President Biden, including Biden himself.



Jokes about an octogenarian president who left classified documents at the podium were the perfect backdrop to the evening’s message: A free press is the lifeblood of a free nation. Biden concluded by saying the annual event sends “a message to the world” that a free press “is a pillar of a free society, not the enemy.”

I watched the event just hours after visiting Proctor’s Ledge in Salem, where 19 “witches” were executed in 1692 for saying politically unpopular things. The grey stones bearing their names served a chilling reminder that they used to burn people alive, the cruelest of deaths, for heterodoxy of thought and the courage to speak it. Understanding history, and the oppression our founders were fighting when they drafted the Constitution, is key to respecting the genius of the 1st Amendment. That freedom of speech and press were protected first, as our nation’s most sacrosanct liberties, was no accident.

Speakers at the Correspondents’ Dinner understood that the 1st Amendment is in jeopardy today as never before. It’s not hyperbole. States are banning books, defunding libraries and schools, silencing political opponents, prohibiting disfavored speech at schools and universities, and urging students to report their teachers for thought crimes.

These un-American instincts didn’t materialize out of thin air. Our last president repeatedly referred to the free press as an “enemy of the people,” an attack he continues today. Donald Trump clearly vilifies what threatens him the most, so when he’s not attacking judges, he’s attacking the media. Trump is either unaware or unconcerned that brutal 20th Century dictators, most notably, Mao, Stalin and Hitler, also famously called the media “enemies of the people.”

Today, Trump attacks the media so often and so viciously that America’s faith in a free press is faltering. Nothing could be more dangerous to our civil liberties. Although both liberals and conservatives try to “silence” messages they don’t like, whether through cancel culture, pressure, or simply shouting louder, an ominous legislative trend is spreading through Republican states.

GOP lawmakers are passing laws to punish corporations with “radical left policies” such as providing travel

costs for employee abortions, supporting the Black Lives Matter message, or allowing parents to choose whether their child needs gender therapy. GOP attorneys general are using state power to penalize corporations that consider climate change or diversity when making corporate investments, literally punishing these corporations for even thinking about the costs of climate change and economic inequality. Two states, Tennessee and Montana, literally removed elected state legislators from the debate floor for political speech deemed objectionable.

Republican Govs. Ron DeSantis of Florida and Greg Abbott of Texas are taking it even further, pressing official state agendas and state laws to punish media critics. DeSantis wants to change state law so it’s easier to sue critical reporters, while Abbott now requires private social media companies to print content with which they disagree.

DeSantis is even orchestrating a state campaign of retaliation against the Disney Corporation, declaring, after he stripped it of its special taxing district, that he might do more, maybe build a prison next door to Disney’s Orlando theme park. Disney’s crime? Disagreeing with DeSantis’ hateful and deliberately vague “Don’t Say Gay” law, and daring to say so in public.

Watching these acts of tyranny spread through red states like a contagion, it can feel like America has lost its way. It feels like we’ve forgotten why freedom of speech was deemed so crucial it was enshrined as our first liberty. By celebrating our free press, the annual Correspondents’ Dinner delivers an unspoken reminder of what happens to a nation when the press isn’t free.

In 1933, a movement began in Germany to ban books and issue edicts controlling the content of the press. By the next decade, the German state was dictating the news nationwide. By the early 1940s, the state began to encourage – then it required – citizens to spy on and report their neighbors for suspected violations, and the Gestapo was loosed on a nation powerless to stop it.

In a free America, under the 1st Amendment, as it yet stands, the government cannot punish you for disagreeing with it. Critics of the government cannot be crushed by the state, any more than they can be burned at the stake. I say this as someone who assuredly would have met that fate, and may yet, if we don’t stop what has begun. ❖

Sabrina Haake is a trial lawyer who lives in Gary and represents municipal clients in Chicago. Reach her on Twitter @SabrinaHaake.

One of Congress' most important jobs just got harder

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON — In the pantheon of writings about Congress, California Rep. Katie Porter's new book will almost certainly draw attention for her unvarnished takes on the institution and her colleagues. In "I Swear: Politics is Messier Than My Minivan," Porter finds plenty of targets, including her fellow House members, staffers, lobbyists — and how a seat in Congress is increasingly out of reach for ordinary Americans.



"Congress is full of multimillionaires for the same reason that the NBA is full of tall people," Porter, a single working mother, writes. "It's easier to get recruited and win with such advantages."

That's all good fodder for commentary, but the line that really drew my attention is one that probably won't get much notice. "As I see it," she writes, "the real work of Congress is civic education."

I agree. Nowhere in the Constitution does it say that the job of members of Congress is to educate their constituents, colleagues or Americans as a whole, but the plain truth is that they can't be effective as representatives or as politicians on Capitol Hill unless they do. Serving as trustworthy sources of facts and analysis ought to be a key part of every legislator's responsibilities, both in their chambers and at home.

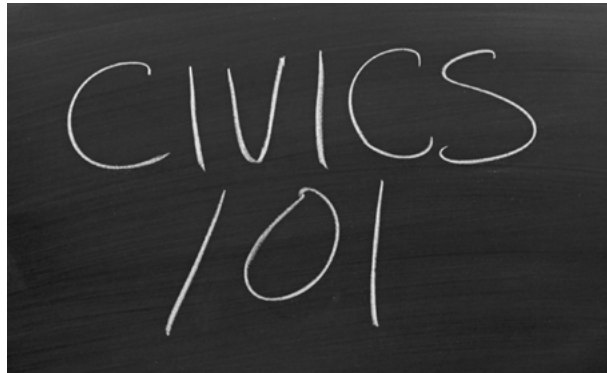
There are a number of reasons for this. The issues Congress deals with are often complicated and full of nuance, but even on some of the most basic facts, there's widespread misunderstanding. No, foreign aid is not a significant part of the U.S. budget; it's less than 1%. No, undocumented immigrants aren't disproportionately responsible for crimes, compared to native-born Americans. No, China doesn't own more than half of U.S. debt; in fact, the largest foreign holder of the debt, at least as of late last year, was Japan, but even it pales in comparison to the almost 22% of that debt held by the federal government itself (Social Security is a big player) and the 20% by the Federal Reserve system.

My point here is not to bombard you with facts,

but to say that they matter when policy is being formulated. That's especially true in Congress, where the starting point for reaching some sort of compromise on any given issue is being able to agree on a common set of facts. To build consensus, you have to clear misperceptions out of the way; in such a politically diverse body it's hard enough to hammer out an agreement when everyone agrees on the basics, but it's impossible when the players can't even find common ground on the facts.

This holds equally true when members of Congress and political candidates try to explain their positions or build support for them with the public. Voters are inundated with "information," some of it reliable, much of it not. Our system asks them to sort through it and arrive at conclusions about what's best for their communities and the country as a whole. Legislators have access to a broad array of trustworthy information and analysis, and in an ideal world would play a key part in helping ordinary Americans work through and understand the issues in front of them.

But, of course, we don't live in an ideal world. Lots of powerful groups — some legitimate, some malign — seek to manipulate public opinion, and they're very good at it. Even worse, some members of Congress and of state legislatures in recent years have shown themselves less interested in purveying facts than in purveying politically convenient misinformation. For politicians who are dedicated to communicating the facts and what they mean for policy, the sheer cacophony of misleading information and trolling by their colleagues makes things much more difficult.



This does not mean, however, that they should just throw up their hands. In the end, representative democracy is a dialogue between citizens seeking to make good judgments and elected officials determined to help them do so. Politicians who are devoted to understanding the facts that underlie complex issues and then

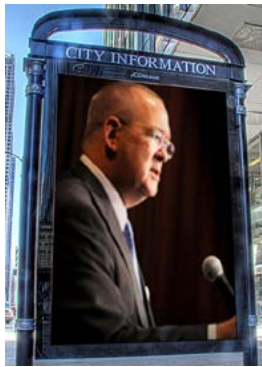
to explaining them to the public at large perform a vital service in our democracy; they deserve our respect and support. ❖

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Money illusion and inflation

By MICHAEL J. HICKS

MUNCIE – Inflation is the decline in the value of currency caused by an increase in the supply of money. The supply of money is increased by excessive government deficit spending or excessively loose monetary policy, typically low interest rates. We measure this decline in the value of currency through an increase in the price of goods and services. That's it. That is inflation.



The United States, along with much of the developed world, is at the tail end of a surge of inflation that is higher than it has been for more than 40 years. This inflation has affected every good and service, as well as tax revenues and spending.

There have also been real effects on prices, unrelated to inflation. Supply chains were clobbered by business closures, and most countries experienced significant labor force shocks due to COVID. People died, and people chose to remain at home. All these affected consumption and prices.

At the same time, COVID caused people to move; some 44 million Americans now work remotely and have much greater latitude to relocate their home. We had an outbreak of avian influenza that forced the destruction of chickens and caused a spike in the price of eggs. Russia invaded Ukraine, causing energy prices to spike.

All these different effects can be confusing, even disorienting. For anyone younger than about 60, this is especially true; inflation has been a peripheral issue thus far in their lives. Growing older is a great gift. Being old enough not to become unhinged over inflation is marvelous.

For younger Americans, who are less seasoned or wise, inflation can lead to what is known as money illusion. That is simply confusing the declining value of currency with a windfall in earnings or tax revenues. Some Nobel Prize-winning research illustrates this concept simply and clearly:

Suppose we all lived on a single island and had a single currency with posted prices for goods and services. We all lived perpetually, and there were no births or deaths, and there was no productivity growth. In that environment, prices and the amount of currency in circulation would never change. Money would simply change hands, at the going price, for all goods and services.

Now suppose someone parachuted money onto the island, instantly doubling the supply of currency. Suddenly, the money available to buy goods and services would double, so nominal demand would also double. But,

nothing else on the island changed. There were no more people to make goods or provide services and no productivity enhancing technology. In the simplest model, the result would be a doubling of all prices, and the economy would return to its original condition. The only differences would be that prices and the supply of money would have doubled.

In a more complex model, some goods would be more desirable than others, so demand for them would more than double. Some people would change occupations, and some products would be less desirable. So, prices wouldn't uniformly double. Also, workers would demand pay increases, and some would get twice their previous earnings, others would get more or less. Some companies might then be more profitable than others, and some workers would be better off, some worse off.

Real world inflation works like this model.

Some prices go up more than others, and some workers see better pay increases than others, while some businesses are less profitable, and others more profitable. This sort of variation or stickiness could cause inflation to last longer, but it didn't cause the inflation, it simply extends the pain.

Money illusion obfuscates the effect of inflation. For example, here in Indiana, the combination of inflation and the real effect of household relocation caused home prices to rise in many places. In turn, the assessed value of those homes rose, as did property tax payments. This has led to a mini-firestorm of anguished taxpayers. But, how bad is it really? Statewide, home price growth has lagged inflation significantly, even in the past 24 months. Today, Hoosiers are paying less of their income in property taxes than at any time in modern history.

Indiana also has tax caps and, more importantly, levy growth caps for local governments. So, even if your property tax assessment rose by 30%, with few exceptions you won't pay more than 1% of your property's value in taxes. More importantly, most Hoosiers won't see property tax growth of more than 5%, which is the maximum levy growth. The result of this arithmetic is that most Indiana property taxpayers will end the next year spending less on property taxes, in inflation-adjusted terms, than they do now and many will face lower tax rates.

The flip side of this is that the cost of government will rise at roughly the cost of inflation. It takes more money to fill a school bus with gas or buy asphalt for roads. The cost of health insurance for police officers will rise, as will all the other inputs to governing. The increase will prove shocking over the coming months.

For example, when Gov. Holcomb's Blue Ribbon Teacher Pay Commission announced a goal of paying teachers an average of \$60,000, the value of the dollar was a lot higher. The next budget will probably meet that goal this fall, but in reality that \$60,000 pay is today worth less than \$51,000. And, unfortunately, inflation is not yet done with us.

Right now, in inflation-adjusted terms, the next

biennium budget is larger than the last two budgets. By the middle of next fiscal year, inflation will have reduced the budget to levels lower than the budget passed in 2019, which included the teacher pay increase. Such are the challenges of budgeting during an inflationary period. Most Hoosier teachers will make less by the end of next year than they did in 2019, once we account for inflation.

The effect of money illusion is especially harsh after periods of long-term price stability. Most Americans younger than 60 are so conditioned to large price drops in goods like cell phones, computers or flat screen TVs, that a general price increase is simply unthinkable. Homeowners who are shocked at a 5% increase in property

taxes make no comparison to the nearly 9% cost of living adjustment in Social Security this year.

The coming year should bring inflation back down to targeted levels of 2% to 2.5% per year. However, prices won't generally decline. Now would be a good time to get over money illusion and adapt to a new world where prices, along with incomes, are all higher. ❖

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Business bailout, or public investment?

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – The Indiana General Assembly went home. We breathed a sigh of relief. Gov. Holcomb didn't veto any of their silly bills. We were disappointed, but silent. The primaries were over. We hoped for a moment of reflection.

But no; the City of Indianapolis, battered by a hostile legislature, announces a half-billion dollar subsidy for another private privy. This time it's an 814-room hotel next door to another expansion of the downtown convention center.

Let's be honest. Because of a two-century-long hostility to urban life, Indianapolis and its

sister Hoosier cities have been strangled by rural fantasies. Suburbs (places that are inferior to urbs) abound. They manifest their rural nature by the amount of lawn each dwelling occupies. They announce themselves by the roar of the riding mower and the sonic screech of the leaf blower.

Suburbs begin as tentacles of housing along public roads on land sold by farmers who then, with crocodile tears, lament the loss of farmland. With water and sewer lines, suburbs grow as nodules of housing with names like Mystic Meadows and Buckinghamtonshire Estates. These lead to the dispersion of retail trade and palatial high schools.

What's left in the cities? The aged and decaying investments of the past. New businesses are lured by improved infrastructure, subsidized in part by the federal government and more specifically by state and county enti-

ties.

So the cities like Indianapolis, Terre Haute, Fort Wayne, Richmond and the mosaic called Lake County turn to funding from visitors. Even fast-growing places like Carmel, Westfield, and Fishers begin to rely on the imported dollars of out-of-towners, conventioners, youth athletic teams, and religious ruminators.

Thus, Indianapolis is determined to build more and more facilities for more and more conventions, ever larger conventions, growing to a multiplication of simultaneous overwhelming events. Imagine both the NRA and the ER Doctors converging on Indy just after MADD and the Bartenders have departed.

Now the City of Indianapolis proposes to own this new hotel which could not obtain funding from the primate, excuse me, the private market. How bizarre is it that Indianapolis, sitting in the center of Indiana's conservative, pro-business, anti-government government would own sports, convention, and now hotel facilities?

Yes, this is the same hamstrung city that cannot, thanks to the regurgitative state legislature, offer decent public transit, public schools, paved streets or effective recycling.

But wait, Indy's private landowners are converting office buildings to private housing. Will the residents of that housing want a downtown populated by inebriates and preachers? Remember, this is Indy's downtown where the courts, the lawyers, the litigants, and the jailed have been exiled to a distant wasteland. A downtown that may soon have two empty city halls.

How soon will the Colts announce their move to Lebanon? ❖

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The campaigns of four veeps

By **JOEL K. GOLDSTEIN**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – Like all its predecessors, the 2024 presidential campaign will focus primarily on the competing choices for president. It is already distinctive in that regard, involving, as it does, two announced candidates who are sitting or former presidents, each of whom is a strong contender to win his party's presidential nomination and advance to the general election. The last time both a sitting president and former president were so involved in a single campaign was 1912, when former President (and former Vice President) Theodore Roosevelt challenged the renomination and reelection of his former protégé, President William Howard Taft, setting up a three-way general election won by Woodrow Wilson.

Yet it is already clear that the 2024 campaign promises to involve the vice presidency in unique and prominent ways, some of which have not yet been publicly discussed. This brief discussion sketches four intersections between vice presidential studies and the 2024 presidential campaign, one each dealing with the presidential and vice presidential selections on each ticket.

1. The vice presidency as springboard: Biden

Let's start with President Joe Biden. The 46th president was previously the 47th vice president, and is one of only 15 people in American history to have held both national offices, one of only 10 ever elected to both positions, and one of only six who initially assumed each position through election. Although one can never be certain how counterfactuals would have turned out, it seems unlikely that Biden would have been elected president had he not been Barack Obama's vice president. After all, Biden had run unsuccessful presidential campaigns in 1988 and 2008 before his vice presidency allowed him to emerge as the Democratic presidential nominee in 2020.

Biden was not, of course, the first modern figure to benefit from the vice presidency's springboard effect. Hubert Humphrey (1968), Walter F. Mondale (1984), George H.W. Bush (1988), and Al Gore (2000) all won presidential nominations after unsuccessful attempts before becoming vice president: Bush won the presidency, Gore won the popular vote, and Humphrey ran a close race. And Richard M. Nixon leveraged his two terms as Dwight D. Eisenhower's vice president to presidential nominations in 1960 and 1968 and election in the latter (and 1972) and almost in the former.

Biden's vice presidency made his presidency possible in several ways. Biden had a highly successful vice presidency in which he conspicuously and skillfully

discharged important assignments. Obama recognized Biden's contributions in visible ways. Biden emerged from his vice presidency as a popular and respected figure with a 61% favorability rating for a president who himself left office with a 58% favorability rating and who remained popular with the Democratic base. And Biden won support from many party leaders that helped sustain his campaign until he won the South Carolina primary after some early setbacks. He secured the 2020 nomination shortly thereafter.

Should Biden win renomination, as seems highly likely, he will join two vice presidential predecessors, John Adams (1788, 1792, 1796, 1800) and George H.W. Bush (1980, 1984, 1988, 1992), as having participated as a national, major party nominee (or equivalent) in four

elections, trailing only Franklin D. Roosevelt (1920, 1932, 1936, 1940, 1944) and Nixon (1952, 1956, 1960, 1968, 1972), each of whom ran in five national campaigns. Of Biden's five vice presidential predecessors who initially became president through election, two were reelected president (Jefferson and Nixon). Perhaps significantly, they, like Biden, were seeking a second consecutive term for their party whereas the three who were not reelected (Adams, Van Buren, and Bush) were seeking a fourth consecutive term for their party.

2. The broken springboard: Mike Pence

The vice presidency seems likely to provide much less bounce for Biden's vice presidential successor, Mike Pence. Pence's selection as Donald Trump's running mate raised his profile as a presidential prospect. The nature of Pence's support for Trump during their term gave sycophancy new prominence until Jan. 6, 2021 when Pence refused to abuse the narrow limits of his role as President of the Senate during the electoral vote count as Trump insisted. No other president in history had ever called on his vice president to send some of his opponent's electoral votes back to the certifying state for review. Angry mobs of Trump supporters invaded the Capitol building, with some threatening Pence by word or action.

Pence's vice presidential springboard has been flattened by two anomalous factors. First, if Pence announces a presidential candidacy – as seems likely – he will be the first former vice president in modern times to run against the president under whom he served for the party's nomination. To be sure, Vice President John Nance Garner opposed a third term for FDR in 1940 and was nominated for president as an alternative but they were both in office at the time. Garner received 61 votes to FDR's 946 at the 1940 Democratic convention. Theodore Roosevelt and Charles Fairbanks, who served together from 1905-1909, both received early ballot support at the



1916 Republican convention. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson faced off in the 1800 presidential race, but they represented opposite parties and served together only because before the 12th Amendment (1804), the vice president was the presidential runner up, a system that also meant that in 1800 the ultimate choice was between Jefferson and his Democratic-Republican running mate, Aaron Burr, each of whom received 73 electoral votes, requiring the House of Representatives to choose a president through the contingent system. Other than Adams-Jefferson and FDR-Garner, no sitting presidents and vice presidents have opposed each other.

Pence's second problem has been that Trump retains the loyalty of much of the Republican Party and he and his supporters appear to dislike Pence, largely because of Pence's behavior on Jan. 6, 2021. Unlike other vice presidents who inherit the support of the presidents under whom they served, Pence has been met with animosity among this group. Accordingly, he measures around 5% in many polls of Republican 2024 preferences, far behind Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

It's a long way to the Republican Convention in Milwaukee in mid-July 2024, but, as of now, Pence's prospects seem more remote than any former vice president/presidential candidate since Dan Quayle in 1996 and 2000 and, before that, Alben Barkley in 1952.

3. Vice President Harris and 2024

Vice President Kamala Harris figures to play a more conspicuous role in the 2024 campaign than most of her predecessors. She is, after all, a historic figure, as the first woman ever elected to national office in addition to her identification with other minority demographic groups that have not generally provided nominees for national office. And she is running with the oldest president in our history. But that doesn't validate the common storyline that Biden's age and concerns regarding presidential succession will make her a campaign liability, a narrative that is at least premature and overlooks ways she is likely to help Biden's prospects.

Like many of her predecessors, including Nixon, Johnson, Spiro T. Agnew, Quayle, Dick Cheney and Biden, Harris has had occasion to read opinion columns predicting or advocating her removal from her president's reelection ticket. Such speculation is inevitable, yet vice presidents are almost never dumped. No vice president has been dropped for almost one-half century since Nelson A. Rockefeller was asked to remove himself from the 1976 Republican ticket in November 1975 because he presented an obstacle to Ford's nomination. The only other two 20th century dumppees were Garner and Henry Wallace in 1940 and 1944, both by FDR, after the former openly broke with the president and after the latter antagonized party leaders. None of these factors applied to Harris, who seems popular with Democratic constituent groups and in step with Biden. And a president who has made inclusivity a prominent theme of his administration seemed highly

unlikely to replace the first woman elected to national office who is also a person of color and who has been an effective public spokesperson on important issues to the administration and its supporters. Indeed, the administration has described itself as the Biden-Harris administration, giving Harris a more visible association than her predecessors.

After Eisenhower had a serious heart attack in September 1955, Nixon's presence on the 1956 ticket became a subject of some controversy. Although Eisenhower seemed disposed to move Nixon to another position, Nixon's popularity with the Republican Party dissuaded him. Eisenhower had intestinal surgery in June 1956. During the 1956 campaign, the Democratic candidate, Adlai E. Stevenson (who had also been the Democratic nominee in 1952), argued that a Republican victory would likely mean Nixon would succeed to the presidency before the term ended. Eisenhower won in a landslide, and the prediction proved wrong. Although Eisenhower sustained a stroke in 1957, he completed his term and lived to see Nixon inaugurated as president in 1969 before dying later that year.

If Trump is the Republican nominee, the age issue will at least be mitigated. Although Biden is 80, Trump will be 77 in mid-June. Although Biden's running mate will be Harris, we don't know who would be on Trump's ticket and how he or she would be viewed as a presidential successor.

4. Some early speculations regarding 2024 Republican vice presidential choice

The Republican presidential nominee, whoever he or she is, will need to choose a running mate. No major party has chosen a cross-party running mate since the mid-19th century, so history suggests that the Republican vice presidential candidate will be a Republican, and the increased polarization of the parties makes a cross-party selection even more unlikely.

The vice presidential choice ultimately will depend heavily on the identity, strengths, weaknesses, and dispositions of the presidential candidate and the context in which the choice is made, variables that are presently unknown and will remain so for many months, perhaps a year or more. Accordingly, even the best political crystal balls regarding the Republican running mate now allow only very speculative predictions.

If Trump is the nominee, his pool of really viable national candidates may be limited. In 2016, figures like Govs. John Kasich and Nikki Haley and Sens. Rob Portman, Bob Corker, Joni Ernst, and Marco Rubio were among those who reportedly disclaimed interest. Although the 22nd Amendment would preclude Trump, if elected, from running again in 2028, thereby tempting some prospective running mates, some other prominent Republicans may view Pence's experience before, on, and after Jan. 6 as a cautionary tale against associating with Trump or be deterred by the need to be his principal campaign defender.

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Bishop Timothy Doherty, Catholic Mo-

ment: Without some serious adjustment in personal and social priorities, we will continue to expect health care professionals to spend more time attending to survivors of gunshots. Or first responders' training to offset avoidable threats, rather than spending energy on maintaining good order. What kind of liberty acquiesces to an escalation of firearms threats? Will my brothers and sisters in ministry increasingly be expected to bring spiritual solace, if not healing, in the aftermath of shootings? If so, this translates as: "God's place in all this is to handle the cleanup and broken hearts." That's pretty crummy theology. At the same time, there should be something we can do about the 40,000-plus annual fatalities related to firearms in our country. Those of us whose families suffer, and those who are first responders, emergency department staffs, school administrators, chaplains and clergy who preside at visitations and funerals in the wake of violent acts also insist on a voice and a vote. ❖



Justin R. Garcia, Washington Post: At the entrance to the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University there's a plaque with a famous quote from its founder, Alfred C. Kinsey: "We are the recorders and reporters of facts — not the judges of the behaviors we describe." That ethos is at the heart of all the institute's research. For generations, the Kinsey Institute has shone a light on diverse aspects of sex and sexuality, in pursuit of answers that bring us closer to understanding fundamental questions of human existence. In a time of divisive politics and disinformation, it is more imperative than ever to preserve and defend the right of such academic institutions to illuminate the unfolding frontiers of science — even, and especially, research that might challenge us as it advances our understanding of ourselves. Thus it is tremendously disappointing that Indiana lawmakers voted late last month to approve a budget that specifically blocks Indiana University from using state funding to support the Kinsey Institute, and that last week Gov. Eric Holcomb signed it into state law. This is an unprecedented action that takes aim at the very foundation of academic freedom. The Kinsey Institute, where I serve as the executive director and a senior scientist, is the leading sex research institute in the world. We publish dozens of scientific and academic articles each year across multiple disciplines. Our faculty are internationally renowned biologists, psychologists, anthropologists, health scientists and demographers. We house the world's largest library and research collection of sexuality-related materials, and scholars from across the globe visit us to study these materials and to train in our research theories and methods. Our unbiased, apolitical, scientific approach to human sexuality makes the Kinsey Institute unique. It is

also what makes the work we do so controversial. ❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: The transformation is complete. In Indiana, the Republican Party now is the party of big government — the political faction that wants to use state power to control people's choices and lives. That much became clear when Gov. Eric Holcomb signed into law the "name" bill passed by GOP supermajorities in the Indiana General Assembly. This new law will require Indiana teachers and other educators to tell parents if their children ask to be called by a different name or a new set of pronouns. Advocates for the law say it empowers parents. Critics say it "outs" children and may expose them to trouble and trauma at home if their families aren't supportive. As is the case with so many of our bitter cultural debates in this state and country, both sides may have a point. Doubtless, there are some caring parents who would like to know if their child is struggling to find his, her or their place in the world — and would be supportive and concerned rather than censorious or, God forbid, even abusive. Yes, now, when the Republicans in this state believe they know more about medicine and patient care than doctors do. These self-proclaimed "family values" conservatives want government to be part — perhaps the most decisive part — of intimate and sensitive family relationships. So much for limited government. So much, for that matter, for family values. ❖

Charlie Sykes, The Bulwark: Try to imagine anyone like Donald Trump surviving in any other segment of our society — business, entertainment, sports, the military. No publicly traded company would consider naming Trump to an executive position, or even to a position on its board. None of his billionaire friends would trust him with their money. Even in our debased political culture, the cascade of rape allegations and indictments would force Trump's resignation as a senator, governor, or legislator. Trump would not be allowed to own an NFL, NBA, or MLB team, and no one would even think of giving him a management job at a local Burger King. It's impossible to imagine him being given any position of authority at any school or university in the United States. Hamilton thought that he had fireproofed the presidency from mountebanks and charlatans because we would seek out only the best and the brightest among us. Instead, we have apparently saved our lowest standards for the presidency. At this point, the Senate would be unlikely to confirm Trump's appointment to any other position of trust. Someone with Trump's character would not be granted a security clearance at any level of government. But we might give him back the nuclear codes and control over the military, the FBI, the CIA, the IRS, and the Department of Justice. Americans might make him, once again, the face of America. ❖

Bill Oesterle dies of ALS at age 57

INDIANAPOLIS — Bill Oesterle died at home Wednesday from complications of ALS. He was 57 years old. He managed Gov. Mitch Daniels 2004 campaign and was a major reason the White House budget director returned to Indiana. Daniels told Howey Politics Indiana, "Bill (along with Jim Kittle) was the person most responsible for talking me into running for office, and the architect of what I honestly believe (and Birch Bayh among others agreed) was the smartest, most effective political campaign in our memory." Daniels said in a statement, "I'm not often at a loss for words, but trying to imagine a world without Bill Oesterle leaves me that way. He was a job creator, a community builder, a lifelong advocate for Indiana and a person with an enormous heart for others." After graduating from Purdue, Oesterle worked for Gov. Robert Orr and with Daniels at the Hudson Institute. He launched Angie's List and in recent years, found Make My Move, a company recruiting remote workers to small downs. Gov. Eric Holcomb described Oesterle's death as a "devastating loss" for Oesterle's family as well as the state. "His zeal and zest for life and others was second to none. A rare individual who could focus beyond the horizon and on the immediate surroundings equally. Bill's passion for improvement and inclusion helped spark transformational growth and development over decades and that will in turn inspire others to do so in the decades to come," Holcomb said in a statement.



Evansville PD shoot man who pulled gun

EVANSVILLE (AP) — Southwestern Indiana police shot and wounded a man who pulled a gun on officers on a residential street, police said Wednesday. The man under-

went surgery following the shooting in Evansville Tuesday afternoon. Sgt. Anna Gray, an Evansville Police Department spokeswoman, said separate vehicles recognized the man, who was wanted for failing to appear in court on criminal mischief, disorderly conduct and drug-related felony charges, said the Evansville Courier & Pre



Morales appears with Orban, Lake

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana Democrats are questioning the decision by Republican Secretary of State Diego Morales to attend a recent international gathering of conservative politicians and influencers in Budapest, Hungary (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). A photo posted Thursday on Twitter by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán shows Morales, Indiana's chief elections officer, nearly standing next to the nationalist leader, separated only by Kari Lake, the failed 2022 Arizona gubernatorial candidate and election-results denier. The secretary of state's office said Monday that Morales was invited to attend and speak as a guest of the conference organizers, and no agency or taxpayer money was used to send Morales to Eastern Europe. Morales subsequently posted on Facebook: "As a conservative Republican, I was proud to be invited to speak at CPAC in Budapest, Hungary this past weekend." "What in the world is Diego Morales doing?" Indiana Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl asked. "Indiana held municipal primary elections less than a week ago, military ballots are still arriving, and several races were incredibly close, yet Indiana's top election official decided to jet off to a

political conference in Eastern Europe for a photo op with Viktor Orbán."

Osili defends hotel funding

INDIANAPOLIS ([WISH](#)) — The president of the City-County Council on Wednesday said city leaders would not have chosen to pursue a hotel bond if they didn't feel it was safe to do so. Council members on Monday introduced a measure that would authorize the city to borrow up to \$625 million in bonds to pay for an 800-room, four-star hotel on Pan American Plaza, across the street from the Indiana Convention Center. The authorization followed an announcement last week that the city would assume all responsibility for funding the project. Council president Vop Osili, a Democrat, told News 8 the city is authorizing an extra \$115 million to provide breathing room in case of cost overruns. Osili said that a four-star hotel "is, for those top-tier conventions, a pretty essential component. We don't want to be drowned out by the other cities."

Title 42 ends tonight prompting influx

WASHINGTON—Title 42, the pandemic-era border measure that for three years has served as a blunt border-enforcement tool for two successive administrations, is set to end on Thursday night ([Wall Street Journal](#)). The policy, introduced in March 2020 by former President Donald Trump, allows Border Patrol agents to swiftly expel migrants back to Mexico even if they ask for asylum. Though the policy has in some ways resulted in increasing illegal border crossings, it still served in the eyes of the Border Patrol and many politicians as a reasonably effective tool to deter asylum seekers. Republicans and some moderate Democrats have decried President Biden's implementation of it, calling it too lax, and have compared lifting the policy with hanging an "open" sign at the border.