



‘Bidenomics’ and Indiana impacts

Indiana to receive billions of dollars in Biden era funding

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — In April 2022, Gov. Eric Holcomb announced \$189 million for 154 Next Level broadband expansion projects, this coming atop a \$100 million program in 2019. But on a helicopter flight coming back from Evansville in late June, there was yet another high-five moment. The governor had received word from U.S. Commerce Sec. Gina

Raimondo that Indiana would be receiving \$868 million to extend high-speed internet to the proverbial “last mile.”

“What this announcement means for people across the country is that if you don’t have access to quality, affordable high-speed Internet service now – you will, thanks to President Biden and his commitment to investing in America,” Raimondo, a former colleague of Holcomb’s when she was governor of Rhode Island, said. “Just like



the Rural Electrification Act a century ago and the Interstate Highway System that followed it, this is our generation’s opportunity for a transformational infrastructure investment.”

Holcomb was ecstatic, calling this motherlode of federal funding a “game changer.”

Continued on page 3

Raised in a small town

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Like John Mellencamp, I grew up in a small town. I was raised in a small town. And Hoosier folk in small towns adapt with the times. When I was in first grade at Edgewood Elementary School in Michigan City, we would say the Pledge of Allegiance and then my teacher would read a verse from the Holy Bible.



In 1962 with the Engel v. Vitale case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that school-sponsored prayer violated the establishment clause of the 1st Amendment. Four years later, my father took the managing editor job at the Peru Daily Tribune, and we moved 100 miles south. And in our new town, we found an end-around on the school prayer issue. In Peru, there was the “Rolling



“They’re too smart to ask and I’m too smart to say ‘yes’.”

- Mitch Daniels, telling Politico he has had informal talks with No Labels, the centrist group seeking an independent 2024 presidential candidate.

STATE AFFAIRS PRO

Howey Politics Indiana
<https://stateaffairs.com/pro/indiana/>

Brian A. Howey
Senior writer & columnist

Alison Bethel
Editor-in-chief

Mary Lou Howey
Editor

Tom Davies & Jarred Meeks
Reporters

Scott Nixon
Chief Operating Officer

Subscriptions

HPI, HPI Daily Wire \$749

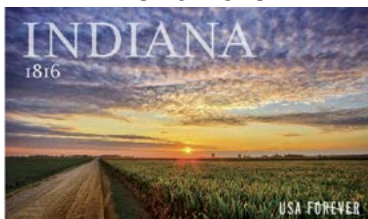
Contact HPI

bhowey2@gmail.com
Howey's cell: 317.506.0883
Washington: 202.256.5822
Business Office: 800.680.7479

© 2023, Howey Politics

Indiana. All rights reserved. Photocopying, Internet forwarding, faxing or reproducing in any form, whole or part, is a violation of federal law without permission from the managing editor.

Jack E. Howey
editor emeritus
1926-2019



Chapel" that had been established in 1944.

The classroom-style mobile unit would park on a city street outside the public school, and most of the kids in my class would be excused for an hour of gospel lessons. According to Perurollingchapel.com, it has shared the Gospel with more than 20,000 children in the past 76 years. The Chapel is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization that provides a free weekday religious education for any public school student who, with parental permission, would like one.

I tell this story

after the furor this past week over country music star Jason Aldean's video "Try That In a Small Town."

He sings, "Got a gun that my granddad gave me/ They say one day they're gonna round up/ Well that s--- might fly in the city/ Good luck. Cuss out a cop, spit in his face/ Stomp on the flag and light it up/ Yeah, ya think you're tough. Try that in a small town/ Full of good ol' boys, raised up right/ If you're looking for a fight."

Aldean sings as the video shows 2020 civil disturbances in the wake of the George Floyd police homicide.

Appearing in Cincinnati last weekend, Aldean told his fans after a "long-ass week" of controversy, "I love our country, I want to see it restored to what it once was before all this bullshit started happening to us."

Aldean tweeted last Tuesday, "In the past 24 hours I have been accused of releasing a pro-lynching song ... and was subject to the comparison that I (direct quote) was not too pleased with the nationwide [Black Lives Matter] protests. These references are not only meritless, but dangerous. There is not a single lyric in the song that references race or points to it— and there isn't a single video clip that isn't real news footage – and while I can try and respect others to have their own interpretation of a song with music, this one goes too

far."

Aldean is hardly the first country music star to delve into this rural/urban divide. Nor is he a country boy (he's from Macon, Georgia, population 500,000). NPR reports that this is "far from the first country song to attack cities using racist dog whistles. 'Try That' is most clearly a



descendant of Hank Williams Jr.'s 'A Country Boy Can Survive' (1982)', which claims, 'You only get mugged if you go downtown,' while warning: 'I got a shotgun, a rifle and a four-wheel drive, and a country

boy can survive.'"

NPR continues: "Aldean's latest release invokes and builds on a lineage of anti-city songs in country music that place the rural and urban along not only a moral versus immoral binary, but an implicitly racialized one as well. Cities are painted as spaces where crime, sexual promiscuity and personal and financial ruin occur, while the 'country' is meanwhile framed as a peaceful space where happiness reigns."

Que up The Animals' "House of the Rising Sun" or The Temptations' "Papa Was a Rolling Stone", The Beatles' "She's Leaving Home" or even Stevie Ray Vaughn's "Willie The Wimp (And his Cadillac Coffin)".

Aldean was on stage performing when a Las Vegas gunman massacred 60 concertgoers (while wounding at least 413) at the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival on Oct. 1, 2017. In the wake of that massacre, Aldean said, "No one, including me, wants to continue to see senseless headlines or families ripped apart."

The song, he said, "refers to the feeling of a community that I had growing up," adding, "My political views have never been something I've hidden from, and I know that a

lot of us in this country don't agree on how we get back to a sense of normalcy where we go at least a day without a headline that keeps us up at night. But the desire for it to — that's what this song is about."

According to Raymond Williams's 1973 book, "The Country and the City", this has been analyzed in song and print for more than 300 years. These comparisons start in the Bible, which contains "cautionary tales against leaving home in search of indulgence, as described in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Animosity towards urban areas in country songs grew particularly pronounced in the post-World War II decades — just as the majority of country listeners urbanized," Williams observes.

Williams notes that songs like Ray Price's "City Lights" and Stonewall Jackson's "Life to Go" (both recorded in 1958) "depicted cities as dirty, lonely, violent places." Cities outside the South were a frequent target, as in Bobby Bare's "Detroit City" (1963), Ben Peters's "San Francisco Is a Lonely Town" (1969) or Buck Owens' "I Wouldn't Live in New York City (If They Gave Me the Whole Damn Town)" (1970).

In 1975, Simon & Garfunkel's "My Little Town" describes the emptiness of rural American culture, where "everything's the same" and where there is "nothing but the dead and dying back in my little town." Eleven years later, Bruce Springsteen sang of his New Jersey origins: "Words were passed in a shotgun blast / Troubled times had come to my hometown."

In 1985, Mellencamp sang: "No, I cannot forget from where it is that I come from. / I cannot forget the people who love me. / Yeah, I can be myself here in this small town, / And people let me be just what I want to be."



Three decades later, with America now overtly weaponized, paranoid and ardently politically polarized, Aldean sings, "Full of good ol' boys, raised up right. / If you're looking for a fight / Try that in a small town . . . / See how far ya make it down the road. / Around here, we take care of our own. / You cross that line, it won't take long / For you to find out. I recommend you don't / Try that in a small town."

There were a total of 505 murders in Indiana in 2020, or 75 for every 100,000 people — the 15th-highest murder rate among states. For comparison, the national homicide rate stands at 6.5 per 100,000. Though Indiana has a higher-than-average murder rate, its overall violent crime rate is lower than average. There were a total of 358 violent crimes reported for every 100,000 people in the state in 2020, compared to 399 per 100,000 nationwide.

I checked on my old hometown for crime stats. According to FBI crime statistics released in September 2022 and adjusted for population, Peru had a violent crime rate of 475 per 100,000 people, compared to 358 for all of Indiana and 388 for the U.S. In Indianapolis, the FBI's 2020 Uniform Crime report had 871 violent crimes per 100,000 people. In Evansville it was 379 per 100,000 people (based on 2019 statistics).

Augmented by video clips of downtown Indy being trashed during the 2020 Floyd protests, there is more than a kernel of truth about this urban/rural divide. ❖

Brian Howey is senior writer and columnist for Howey Politics Indiana/State Affairs. Find Howey on Facebook and Twitter @hwypol.

Biden Indiana, from page 1

While 92% of Hoosier households use devices to connect to the World Wide Web, 14% of Indiana households do not have access. "Since 2018, Next Level Connections has invested more than \$575 million from grants & matching funds to connect 72,000+ homes and 83 counties," Holcomb posted following the announcement. "The new federal funding will empower the program to expand broadband in the coming years and give more Hoosiers the power of connectivity."

These were funds forged by Biden's American Rescue Plan (ARP) passed by Congress on party-line votes and signed into law in late 2021, which only Indiana Democrat Reps. Andre Carson and Frank Mrvan helped pass. "In fact," said Indiana Democrats, "Kyle Hupfer, Todd Young, Jackie Walorski, Larry Bucshon all described these investments as 'socialism.'"

But this latest \$868 million is only a fraction of federal funds flowing into Indiana since Biden took office in 2021.

Last month, it was announced Indiana's Family Social Services Administration would receive \$29 million in funding for opioid crisis response and substance use disorder services.

In June GM, Samsung SDI announced a \$3 billion battery manufacturing plant in Indiana. "GM and Samsung's announcement today is another example of how companies are investing in America, building the industries of the future in America, and creating jobs in America," Biden said.

There is the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law which is the single largest dedicated bridge investment since the construction of the interstate highway system. None of the nine Hoosier congressional Republicans voted for the bill. Based on formula funding alone, Indiana would expect to receive approximately \$6.9 billion over five years in Federal

highway formula funding for highways and bridges. On an average annual basis, this is about 30% more than the state's federal-aid highway formula funding under current law.

"Americans rely on our transportation infrastructure every day — to get to work, school, loved ones, and to move goods across our economy," said U.S. Transportation Sec. Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend. "The once-in-a-generation investments in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will improve people's lives in every state in the nation by increasing access to safe, clean, reliable transportation."

Indiana can also compete for the \$15.77 billion Bridge Investment Program for economically significant bridges and \$15 billion of national funding in the law dedicated to megaprojects that will deliver substantial economic benefits to communities, according to the White House. Indiana can also expect to receive approximately \$156 million over five years in formula funding to reduce transportation-related emissions, in addition to about \$178 million over five years to increase the resilience of its transportation system.

The American Rescue Plan

And then there is the American Rescue Plan, passed in 2021 as part of COVID-19 pandemic relief. Its Indiana impact include:

- It funded the \$500 million first round of Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI). The second round of READI funding will come solely from state funds, thereby broadening eligibility.
- The state's unemployment rate has fallen from 4.7% in January 2021 to 3.1% in December 2022 (it stood at 3.2% in June), as the state added 155,000 jobs and now has more jobs than it did pre-COVID.
- A record 170,000 new small business applications in Indiana. In 2021 and 2022, Hoosiers applied to start 170,000 new businesses, the highest two-year total on record, according to the White House.
- ARP provided direct pandemic recovery funds to all 625 Indiana towns, cities and counties — avoiding cuts and investing in public safety, housing, workforce development and other critical areas.
- Over 280 school districts in Indiana were provided funding to support academic recovery and student mental health and reopen safely.
- 3,270 child care programs in Indiana received

support to help keep their doors open, impacting up to 157,000 children.

- Working family tax relief through the expanded child tax credit totalled 822,000 for Indiana families with 1.4 million children.
- The earned income tax credit was expanded for 382,000 workers in the state. It provided up to \$1,500 of tax relief to an estimated 382,000 Indiana workers without dependent children.
- Saved 157,000 Hoosiers an average of \$875



Appearing at Purdue with Sen. Todd Young and Gov. Holcomb were U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Commerce Sec. Gina Raimondo. (Fox59)

per year on their health care. With the Inflation Reduction Act's extension of these savings, 185,000 Hoosiers signed up for quality, affordable care in the 2023 ACA open enrollment period.

- Emergency rental assistance made 97,000 payments to help families meet their ongoing rent and utilities costs and 87,000 payments to help families address past due rent and utility bills.
- 259,000 Indiana college students received direct financial relief through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Program in 2021 alone. In 2021, 66 Indiana colleges and universities made direct financial assistance payments to 259,000 college students to help them stay enrolled and cover their bills.
- 1,188 Indiana Restaurants received vital relief through the American Rescue Plan's Restaurant Revitalization Fund.

Inflation subsiding

Then there are national trends. June numbers show inflation has been cut by more than two-thirds from its peak — down to 3% year-over-year from 9.1%. The White House calculates, "A single hour of work 12 months ago could only pay for 5.5 gallons of gas, a figure that has since risen to a bit more than 8 gallons. The increase appears to reflect a 27% drop in

prices at the pump compared with a year ago, and also average wage gains of about 5%.”

“After a punishing stretch of high inflation that eroded consumer’s purchasing power, the fever is breaking,” Bill Adams, chief economist at Comerica Bank, told The Wall Street Journal, which reported: “Wall Street is more convinced than ever that inflation is subsiding. That’s giving investors hope that the Federal Reserve might be able to pull off what once seemed impossible: Containing pricing pressures without tipping the economy into recession. The economic data that came out this past week could hardly have been better.”

Morgan Stanley is crediting Biden’s economic policies with driving an unexpected surge in the U.S. economy that is so significant that the bank was forced to make a “sizable upward revision” to its estimates for U.S. gross domestic product, CNBC reported on Monday. Biden’s Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is “driving a boom in large-scale infrastructure,” wrote Ellen Zentner, chief U.S. economist for Morgan Stanley, in a research note released Thursday. In addition to infrastructure, “manufacturing construction has shown broad strength,” she wrote.

As a result of these unexpected swells, Morgan Stanley now projects 1.9% GDP growth for the first half of this year. That’s nearly four times higher than the bank’s previous forecast of 0.5%. “The economy in the first half of the year is growing much stronger than we had anticipated, putting a more comfortable cushion under our long-held soft landing view,” Zentner wrote.

CHIPS Act impact

On that manufacturing front, The Wall Street Journal reported in April that production at U.S. factories rose last year, but few things were produced at a more furious pace than factories themselves. Construction spending related to manufacturing reached \$108 billion in 2022, Census Bureau data show, the highest annual total on record — more than was spent to build schools, health care centers or office buildings. New factories are rising in urban cores and rural fields, desert flats and surf towns. Much of the growth is coming in the high-tech fields of electric-vehicle batteries and semiconductors, national priorities backed by billions of dollars in government incentives.

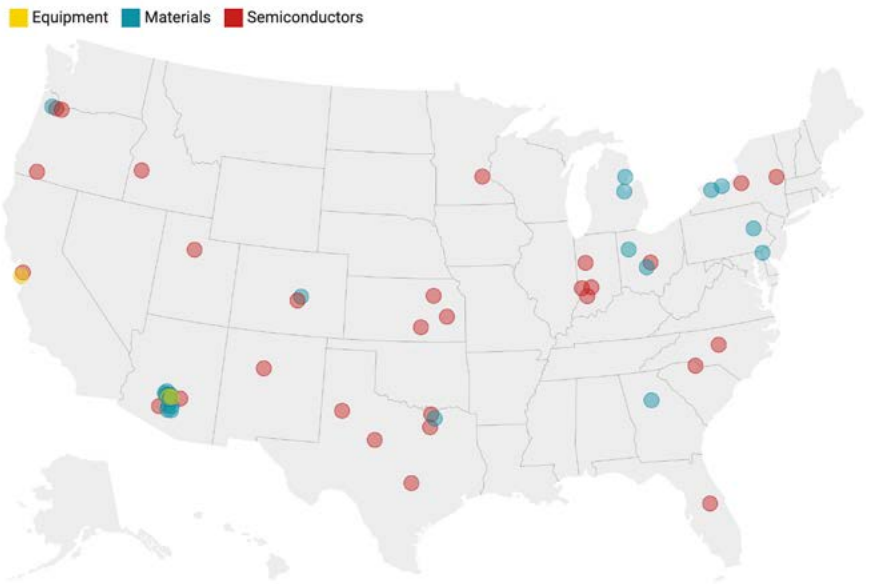
“Since the President took office, companies have announced over \$500 billion in investments in the United States, including over \$200 billion in semiconductor and electronics manufacturing and nearly \$225 billion in clean energy, electric vehicle, and battery investments,” a White House National Economic Council report stated this month. “Inflation-adjusted spending on manufacturing construction overall has increased by nearly 100% since the end

of 2021. After years of flat investment in manufacturing construction in the United States, trends are moving in a different direction.”

Biden signed the CHIPS and Science Act, co-au-

The CHIPS Act in Action

Semiconductor supply chain manufacturing investments announced from May 2020 to May 2023



thored by U.S. Sen. Todd Young (but without the support of most of the Indiana GOP congressional delegation) in August 2022. The Semiconductor Industry Association said that from the time the CHIPS Act was introduced in the Spring of 2020 through the months following its enactment, companies in the semiconductor ecosystem announced dozens of projects to increase manufacturing capacity in the U.S. Over 50 new semiconductor ecosystem projects announced across the U.S., including the construction of new semiconductor manufacturing facilities (fabs), expansions of existing sites and facilities that supply the materials and equipment used in chip manufacturing. Over \$210 billion in private investments have been announced across 20 states to increase domestic manufacturing capacity, including 44,000 new high-quality jobs announced in the semiconductor ecosystem as part of the new projects, which will support hundreds of thousands of additional jobs throughout the broader U.S. economy.

The SIA cites four Indiana projects since Biden signed the CHIPS Act, including Skywater in West Lafayette (\$1.8 billion in investments and 750 jobs), Trusted Semiconductor Solutions in Oden (\$34 million invested and 40 jobs), NHanced Semiconductors of Oden (\$236 million invested with 413 jobs); and Everspin Technologies (also of Oden, which is located about 5 miles from the Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center) which is expected to generate 35 jobs.

Wall Street rebound

The Nasdaq-100 finished the first half of 2023 with a gain of 39.4%, compared to the S&P 500’s gain of

16.9%, making this the best start to the year for the tech-heavy Nasdaq-100 since its inception in 1985. According to CNBC, the Dow is bringing up the rear with a comparatively measly 6% gain.

Lost in translation

So far, all of this economic news isn't translating into solid political support for Biden, who led former President Trump 49%-44% in a hypothetical general election Quinnipiac Poll matchup last week among registered voters. This is essentially unchanged from June, when Biden had a slight lead over Trump, 48%-44%. Americans give Biden a negative 38%-54% job approval rating, compared to a negative 41%-54% job approval rating in June.

The Real Clear Politics polling composite on Biden's overall job approval stood at 41.8%. On the RCP direction of the country, just 23.8% say the U.S. is on the right track, compared to 67.2% saying it's on the wrong track.

Clearly, the White House and Biden reelection campaign have a messaging dilemma.

This prompted Axios to observe on July 14: "If you spend your life looking at economic data, these look like the best of times: Inflation is a mere 3%. Unemployment is hovering near 50-year lows. But that's not how the bulk of Americans see it. Americans' views of the economy are colored by their politics as much as the actual state of the economy. A crucial question for the 2024 election cycle — not to mention the national state of mind — is whether the quite solid economic backdrop will start to translate into a broader sense of things-on-the-right-track, can-do optimism in the year ahead.

"In October 2020, just before President Trump lost reelection, Republicans' economic sentiment was 26 points higher than Democrats' in the University of Michigan consumer sentiment survey," Axios observes. "In February 2021, after Biden took office, Republicans rated the economy 28 points worse. A similar pattern occurred between the parties around the 2016 and 2008 elections, when partisan control shifted hands. We seem to be experiencing something similar right now. Attitudes about the economy and President Biden's approval ratings are both being driven by bad vibes and the scars of the pandemic."

Horse Race outlook

In the almost 29 years of providing election analysis, HPI has never witnessed this kind of disconnect between the economy and a sitting president's political standing. Part of this is probably the fact that Biden would be the oldest president ever reelected (82). The other key aspect is the baked-in partisan divide.

The unprecedented as-

pect of the 2024 presidential election cycle is that Donald Trump looks to be the likely Republican presidential nominee, despite more than 70 current criminal charges pending out of Manhattan and South Florida, and more on the way from DOJ Special Prosecutor Jack Smith and a Fulton County, Georgia, grand jury.

HPI's political instincts say that if the U.S. economy continues on its current torrid pace and Donald Trump faces additional indictments, setting up a dizzying campaign/court docket schedule (his South Florida top secret

Major U.S. indexes in 2023

Year-to-date performance



document trial is set for May 2024, about six weeks before the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee), this could spin into a historic GOP drubbing.

Yes, the indictments seem to be pushing GOP primary voters back into Trump's camp, but his RCP composite favorables are 39.4% favorable and 56.7% unfavorable. A Monmouth Poll had Trump leading Gov. Ron DeSantis 54%-22% (Mike Pence was tied for fourth at 3%). "Trump has successfully pushed a politics of grievance where the system is out to get you. In that light, the criminal charges seem to make him an even stronger advocate in the eyes of many Republicans," said Monmouth University pollster Patrick Murray. "The president has been touting 'Bidenomics,' but the needle of public opinion has not really moved. Americans are just not giving him a lot of credit when it comes to the economy."

According to the July 19 Monmouth Poll, just 30% of the American public believes that the U.S. economy is in better shape than most other nations. In fact, 32% say the U.S. economy's recovery from this situation is worse than

other countries and another 33% say the U.S. recovery is about the same as the rest of the world.

The Quinnipiac Poll last week had one data point that should be terrorizing the Biden campaign: Trump leads among independent voters 46%-42%.

❖



What Chambers entry into INGov race signals

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Sometime between now and Labor Day, the Republican gubernatorial field is expected to fill out with the probable entry of outgoing Commerce Secretary Brad Chambers. He would follow the footsteps of his predecessor, Jim Schellinger, who lost a nail-biting Democratic primary in 2008 before joining the Holcomb administration.

A Chambers entry could mean several things:

1. He would be another "self-funder" entry into the GOP field, joining U.S. Sen. Mike Braun and Fort Wayne businessman Eric Doden in that category. Braun wrote close to \$10 million in checks to his 2018 U.S. Senate campaign, and Doden and his family have donated close to \$1



million thus far.

2. Word on the street and in the hallways is that his campaign will be built to include Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer and Executive Director Matt Huckleby. We've also heard Jennifer Hallowell's name come up in the context of a coming Chambers entry. Hallowell responded to an HPI email about the race, saying she was unaffiliated with any campaign "at this point."

3. This could set off a fascinating new era for the Indiana GOP, which is an absolutely dominant political machine. Two possible successors to Hupfer if he decides to depart after six years at the helm include former communications director Pete Seat and former state senator Randy Head. Both Seat and Head lost recent convention nomination floor fights for treasurer and attorney general. Indiana Republicans have never had a female chair, and Hallowell's name comes up in that context, as well as Republican National Committeewoman Anne Hathaway. Sources tell HPI that Hathaway has a full plate with next year's Republican National Convention and Hallowell, like Hathaway, has a thriving consulting business. But, there is a chance to make history, just as Democrat Ann DeLaney did way, waaay, waaaaaay back in 1993. It's interesting that Indiana has had only one female party chair and one minority (Democrat Robin Winston during the Gov. Frank O'Bannon era) in its two centuries plus.

4. We are watching with keen intensity the Rev. Micah Beckwith's Republican lieutenant governor campaign. He has generated news with the East Hamilton County Library Board, where he is a member. Beckwith, who sup-

ports the policy of reclassifying books and removing them from the "teen section," told Fox59 he believes it's the board's duty to set standards. He pushed back on characterizing this policy as a "ban," saying the books will still be in the library but not in the teen section. Traditionally, the gubernatorial nominee picks a running mate, though in 1996, Stephen Goldsmith allowed the GOP convention to select the LG, which turned out to be conservative newspaper publisher George Witwer. The Goldsmith-Witwer ticket was upset by Lt. Gov. O'Bannon. With abortion rights likely to be a 2024 cycle issue, should Beckwith prevail at the convention, it could push the GOP further to the right. In 2022, GOP convention delegates sidelined Secretary of State Holli Sullivan, choosing instead Diego Morales, who had accused Gov. Holcomb of "abusing his power" during the pandemic.

5. For a while, it seemed that Democrats were coalescing around former Republican Superintendent of Public Instruction Jennifer McCormick. But her \$250,000 campaign finance report was underwhelming, coming less than two months after she officially entered the race. But as any operative will tell you, the low-hanging fruit comes during your first reporting period. Paging John Gregg.

Holcomb on possible endorsement, candidates

Gov. Holcomb said he would "wait and inspect" the individual proposals of the 2024 gubernatorial candidates before considering a possible endorsement, and the governor maintained the validity of his 2018 call for then-Attorney General Curtis Hill's resignation. Speculation persists around a possible Chambers gubernatorial run. Some

have considered Chambers to be a strong contender for Holcomb's endorsement since Holcomb has, to date, not endorsed his 2016 and 2020 running mate Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, though she is still considered to be a candidate for his endorsement. But on July 20, the governor told reporters to dismiss any notion that his decision has already been made and the assumption by some that he is simply



waiting for Chambers to file before giving him his endorsement. "Everyone should stop thinking that way," Holcomb said in response to the assertion. "I'm turning my cards face up. I'm waiting to inspect the candidates' plans to take this state to a better place." - **Jarred Meeks, State Affairs Pro Indiana**

Hill would eliminate equity office

Republican gubernatorial candidate Curtis Hill on Monday joined in the right-wing attacks on government

diversity programs by saying he wants to eliminate the Indiana Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity that Holcomb created three years ago. Hill said in a campaign statement that he wanted to “eliminate all state-funded programs that exist only to pander to identity politics. Unnecessary government offices that exist only to pander to identity politics agendas and that do not lead to tangible, positive outcomes are a drain on Hoosiers and need to be ended.” Holcomb announced he was creating the equity office in August 2020 in the wake of protests over the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Holcomb said in a speech that he would “work to be a barrier buster and to bring greater equity and opportunity within your state government.” Holcomb’s office didn’t immediately reply to a request from State Affairs for a response to Hill’s statement. Doden released a statement signaling a similar stance, while the Braun and Crouch campaigns didn’t immediately comment. Doden said he would “not support spending taxpayer dollars on the DEI agenda and programming. It is wrong to base hiring decisions on anything other than an applicant’s ability to do a job.” Doden maintained that “these programs are about virtual signaling instead of their stated goals of inclusion.” - **Tom Davies, State Affairs Pro Indiana**

Crouch endorsements

In a tweet Monday, state Rep. Ryan Lauer, R-Columbus, announced his endorsement of Crouch for governor of Indiana. “I’m excited for Hoosiers to have my friend Suzanne, a dedicated public servant with the right experience and a strong conservative leader, running to lead our great state,” read a statement from Lauer. “She will do an incredible job and I encourage all Hoosiers to support Suzanne!” Hamilton County Commissioners Christine Altman, Steve Dillinger, and Mark Heirbrandt also endorsed Crouch saying, “As lieutenant governor, Suzanne Crouch has consistently demonstrated effective leadership and possesses a unique understanding of local government and financial matters. Her responsiveness and proactive approach have been instrumental in advancing various projects in Hamilton County efficiently. Her unwavering dedication has made her an invaluable ally, and she remains committed to equipping her local partners with the essential resources to deliver top-notch services. It is with great honor that we endorse her as the next Governor of Indiana.” Crouch was also endorsed by Spencer County Sheriff Sherri Heichelbech and Warrick County Sheriff Michael Wilder.



Braun endorsement

Whitestown Town Council Vice President Clinton

Bohm announced his endorsement of Mike Braun for governor in a tweet Tuesday. “Mike Braun has shown through his service in the business community, the state legislature and the United States Senate that he has the business acumen and integrity necessary to move us forward,” said Bohm in a statement. “His goals and plans are what we need as a state to continue our progress to be best in the Midwest and continue to strive to be best in the nation.”

Candidates paying consultants

The three GOP governor frontrunners are spending a lot on consulting (Capital Chronicle). Braun gave Daniels Spaulding Consulting LLC \$194,000 so far this year. The company is a “full-service fundraising, consulting and event planning firm,” according to LinkedIn. Braun also paid Mark It Red about \$65,000 for polling and consulting. Similarly, Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch has spent around \$240,000 on consulting this year and Fort Wayne businessman Eric Doden about \$194,000 — spread across various companies.

Statewides

Rokita posts \$374K

Attorney General Todd Rokita raised \$374,000 for his 2024 reelection bid. But if you look close, the majority of that — at least \$250,000 — comes from out-of-state donors (Capital Chronicle). For instance, Jerald Block and Robert Salim, two attorneys in Louisiana, each gave \$25,000. He is also spending a lot of money: \$173,000 so far this year. Included in that spending was almost \$20,000 for “event expenses” in Utah with Adventure Collective. The company’s website says it provides luxury adventure travel packages: “Epic Adventures. Luxury Accommodations. Unforgettable Experiences.” Think skiing, hiking and flyfishing.

U.S. Senate

Rep. Houchin endorses Banks

On Monday, U.S. Rep. Erin Houchin announced her endorsement of U.S. Rep. Jim Banks for the Senate seat that Mike Braun is giving up to run for governor. “I am pleased to endorse Congressman Jim Banks for the U.S. Senate,” Houchin said. “Throughout his service to our state, Congressman Banks has proven himself to be a strong supporter of our shared conservative values ... I have every confidence that he will serve our state with honor and distinction once elected. I proudly endorse Congressman Banks for Senate and encourage all Hoosiers to join me in supporting his campaign.”

Mental health focus of McCray’s campaign

Dr. Valerie McCray has been in the race for U.S. Senate since the end of the 2022 election (Darling, WIBC). A Democrat who is a clinical psychologist, McCray has a big focus on mental health as part of her campaign. She

said from gun violence to climate change to abortion, all of it is connected to the nation's mental health. McCray wants to take her expertise to try and help people in bulk by affecting policy in Washington. McCray said that her mental health expertise would also be useful in solving the issue of gun violence throughout the country. She supports extra gun control measures for younger people, mainly teenagers. She suggests a similar licensing structure to acquire guns like there are different levels of driver's licenses. She also believes that women should be able to seek out an abortion if they so choose. McCray joins a crowded field of candidates on both sides of the aisle for Indiana's Senate seat being left behind by Mike Braun, who intends to run for governor. McCray joins former legislator Marc Carmichael, Indianapolis Councilor Keith Potts, Marshall Travis and Aleem Young in the Democratic primary.

Congress

4th CD: Bookwalter blasts Baird over pilots

Republican Charles Bookwalter, who is challenging U.S. Rep. Jim Baird, criticized the congressman for voting no on an FAA bill amendment that would require airlines to rehire pilots who'd been fired for not getting the COVID vaccine. "No voter in the 4th Congressional District should vote to reelect someone who thinks our airline pilots should be fired for not wanting to get an experimental vaccine," said Bookwalter. "Americans should not be forced by the government or their employer to have anything injected into their bodies. This is a serious violation of our individual liberty and it opens the door to the worst tyranny. Several pilots were fired for not getting the COVID vaccine, but many others quit or took early retirement in order to not have to get this experimental shot, contributing to a serious pilot shortage that has hurt our economy. We can never let this happen ever again. We should be sticking up for our pilots, who keep us safe in the skies, instead of allowing them to be bullied by being forced to choose between an experimental vaccine and a paycheck."

Baird maintains big cash lead

In second-quarter FEC filings, Rep. Baird reported raising \$48,602 and had a cash balance of \$342,779. Challenger Charles Bookwalter posted \$44,214 raised, \$19,389 disbursed, and had a \$26,331 cash balance.

Mayors

Indianapolis: Shreve with armed supporter

Indiana Democrats said in a press release that Republican mayoral nominee Jefferson Shreve "once again has shown his true colors on the issue of gun safety. Less than two weeks after announcing a political plan to hide from his long-held support of the gun lobby by copying Mayor Joe Hogsett's public safety plan, Jef-

erson posted a photo of a canvassing event this week-end where he proudly smiles next to a Republican Party official that is openly and unsafely carrying a handgun in his waistband." Chairman Mike Schmuhl said, "In the aftermath of Jan. 6, it should trouble every Indianapolis resident to see a candidate for mayor appearing with armed supporters in official campaign photos. No carefully crafted statement from his political consultants can say as much as this: A picture that's worth a thousand words about Jefferson's history of support for the gun lobby."

Hogsett announces mental health program

Mayor Joe Hogsett and the Office of Public Health and Safety highlighted the start of the Clinician-Led Community Response Pilot Program. This new program aims to provide mental health support to those experiencing crises in the community to reduce unnecessary entanglement in the criminal justice system. "We are excited to launch this program this month, which represents a critical step forward in our efforts to support our community members when they need it the most," said Mayor Hogsett. "Our goal is to provide effective and compassionate support to those experiencing a crisis, and the Clinician-Led Community Response Program will provide a unique and powerful new tool for achieving that." Clinicians are responding to 911 calls based on specific information the caller provides to the dispatcher. 911 dispatchers are trained to ask specific questions to determine if a clinician-led response team is only required to respond without law enforcement. Once determined, a clinician

The first debate: Who's in?

DATE · AUG. 23, 2023
TIME · 9 P.M. ET
LOCATION · MILWAUKEE

SPONSORS · FOX NEWS, YOUNG AMERICA'S FOUNDATION & RUMBLE
MODERATORS · BRET BAIER & MARTHA MACCALLUM

QUALIFIED?		MONEY GOALS	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	FOURTH
Yes	Donald Trump	✓	N	N	S	S
Yes	Ron DeSantis	✓	N	N	S	S
Yes	Vivek Ramaswamy	✓	N	N	S	S
Yes	Nikki Haley	✓	N	N	S	S
Yes	Tim Scott	✓	N	N	S	S
Yes	Chris Christie	✓	N	N	S	S
Yes	Doug Burgum	✓	S	S	N	N
Not yet	Mike Pence		N	N	S	S
Not yet	Asa Hutchinson		N	S	S	N
Not yet	Francis Suarez		S			

and peer support specialist will respond, assess the person having a mental health crisis and define the next steps.

Presidential 2024

Daniels had informal talks with No Labels

Mitch Daniels said that he has had informal conversations with backers of the centrist group No Labels about their efforts to run a third-party presidential ticket. But the former Indiana Republican governor scoffed at the idea that he would be a candidate for such a unity campaign. "They're too smart to ask, and I'm too smart to say 'yes,'" Daniels told [Politico](#) in an interview when asked whether he was weighing a third-party bid on behalf of the organization. As for the conversations he's had with the group, Daniels said it was not "any direct engagement" but, rather, conversations roughly a month ago with a few of the organization's backers. "The flack they're taking from the left end of the political spectrum makes me more sympathetic to them," Daniels said. "It's not surprising because the left is authoritarian to the point of being tyrannical. Let's not hear any more about voter suppression out of people trying to squash somebody's right to even get out of the ballot."

McIntosh ducks Pence

Club for Growth President David McIntosh, a friend and supporter of Mike Pence, told Politico Playbook that his organization could support Vivek Ramaswamy and U.S. Sen. Tim Scott in addition to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis for the GOP presidential nomination. But he also said they'd support former President Donald Trump, with whom the group has feuded, if he's the nominee.

Pence not on debate stage yet

Pence still hasn't made the 40,000 donor threshold for the first GOP presidential debate next month. "We're not there yet," Mike Pence told CNN over the weekend, of his campaign remaining short of meeting the donor criteria. "We're literally working around the clock" to get 40,000 individual donors, he said, and he's "confident" he will make the debate stage in the end. "People every day are going to MikePence2024.com and donating even a dollar to get us on the stage," he said ([Slate](#)). Pence is in New Hampshire this week and is scheduled to make public appearances throughout the state from Wednesday through Friday. Marc Short, a longtime Pence adviser, told [The Washington Post](#) that he was confident Pence would make the debate stage and that the campaign offers Pence the opportunity to "reintroduce himself to the American people. Everyone in Washington wants to be the pundit to predict the way it's going to turn out. ... They were wrong in 2016, they were wrong in 2012." Short added that comparing Pence's candidacy to that of previous vice presidents is "not apples to apples" given the dynamic of a former president running.

Pence raises \$1,250 from hometown

The Columbus Republic reported that Pence raised a total of \$1,250 from Columbus residents as of the end of June. The 1977 graduate of Columbus North High School filed paperwork to run for president on June 5 and formally launched his campaign two days later at an event in Iowa. The fundraising numbers carry additional significance because they are tied directly to the GOP's first presidential debate next month.

Trump predicts violence, Pence unworried

Trump warned on a conservative talk-radio show last week that it would be "very dangerous" if he went to prison over the Jan. 6 insurrection, as his supporters are "a passionate group of voters." Pence, who encountered a large group of passionate Trump voters out for his blood two years ago, doesn't seem worried. "Everyone in our movement are the kind of Americans who love this country, who are patriotic, who are law-and-order people, who would never have done anything like that there or anywhere else," Pence told CNN's Dana Bash on Sunday's "State of the Union." "I have more confidence in the American people than that. I hear my former running mate's frustration in his voice, but I'm sure the American people will respond in our move-



ment in a way that will express, as they have every right to under the First Amendment, to express concerns that they have about what they perceive to be unequal treatment of the law. But I'm not concerned about it beyond that." The winding answer seemingly left Bash flabbergasted, prompting her to note why someone like Pence of all people should be concerned. "It's pretty remarkable that you're not concerned about it, given the fact that they wanted to hang you on Jan. 6," she said through a laugh before attempting to move on. But Pence wouldn't let that stand, refusing to let the CNN anchor "use a broad brush" to classify everyone at the Capitol on Jan. 6 as being perpetrators of violence.

DeSantis eyes RFK Jr. for CDC or FDA

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said that if elected president, he might pick Robert F. Kennedy Jr., noted vaccine conspiracy theorist, to lead the FDA or CDC. Former VP Mike Pence was quick to spot the opportunity with an attack aimed to appeal to the Christian conservative voters whose support DeSantis desperately needs. "When I am President, I will only consider Pro-Life Americans to lead the FDA, CDC, or HHS," Pence said. "[P]ro-abortion Democrats like RFK Jr. would not even make the list." ❖

Florida's slavery school curriculum

By **SABRINA HAAKE**

GARY – Last weekend Gov. Ron DeSantis, with a straight face, told reporters he had nothing to do with the Florida Board of Education's new curriculum peddling a softer side of slavery. "I wasn't involved with it. I didn't do it... It was not anything that was done politically."



Insert eye roll here.

It was anything but apolitical. All seven members of Florida's Board of Education are appointed to four-year terms by the governor, and DeSantis' attempts to restructure society through educational control are legion.

Did DeSantis momentarily forget his relentless "anti-woke" drive to dictate classroom instruction? Is education in Florida so abysmal that Floridians can't see the connection between his endless "Stop Woke" initiatives targeting minorities, and his latest attempt to re-write their history?

DeSantis, campaigning for president on a promise to "destroy leftism," has targeted minorities at unprecedented levels. Civil rights are so tenuous in Florida that the NAACP, Human Rights Campaign, League of United Latin American Citizens and Equality Florida have each issued travel and relocation advisories warning Blacks, gays and immigrants in Florida to take extra safety precautions.

DeSantis' claim that his hand-picked education board acted independent of him is risible. Seven months before the new standards were released, DeSantis rejected a high school Advanced Placement African-American course, claiming it was "woke" and lacked "educational value."

Two months before the latest standards were announced, DeSantis signed a bill into law that bans diversity, equity and inclusion programs from Florida's public colleges and universities. When questioned, DeSantis first deflected, then explained how Florida's new classes will teach that slavery gave slaves skills they could use later in life. "They're probably going to show that some of the folks that eventually parlayed, you know, being a blacksmith into doing things later in life."

Suggesting that enslaved people were learning a trade that could personally benefit them "later in life" boldly erases yet another fundamental and horrific truth about slavery; enslavement nearly always lasted until the enslaved person died.

DeSantis, who expanded "Don't Say Gay" to all grades in Florida, including high school, is obsessed with what he calls "woke indoctrination" in schools. His same education board has repeatedly rejected mathematics and social studies textbooks for public schools, champion-

ing the far-right book-banning craze. Florida now ranks second, only behind much-larger Texas, in the number of books banned to date. As of February, Florida had banned a hard total of 566 books. For perspective, Oklahoma, ranked as the nation's fourth-worst book-banner, banned 43. Indiana has banned 18 books.

DeSantis dismisses alarm at Florida's book bans as "a leftist hoax," the same thing he calls climate change. It doesn't take a calculator to understand that Florida's 566 banned books greatly exceed all other states' except Texas. Perhaps math in Florida, like American history, is also a matter of perspective.

Florida's Board of Education now mandates that students be taught, among other things, that enslaved people "developed skills which, in some instances, could be applied for their personal benefit." Under the new curriculum, Florida teachers must also deliver false equivalencies — between slavery and serfdom, offense and defense — as they teach that historical massacres of Black people in America were examples of "violence perpetrated against and by African Americans."

One such massacre occurred in 1921 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, when a white mob destroyed more than 35 blocks of nascent Black wealth. One hundred years later, America's Black Wall Street has yet to rematerialize.

Categorizing this event under "violence by and against" African Americans is a shameful stab at both-sidesism. Blurring the lines between criminal offense and defense is always an attempt to reduce accountability.

Criminal law recognizes that defending your family against a marauding band of arsonists frothing at the mouth isn't legally equivalent to starting the fire. Under Florida's 'stand your ground' laws, long championed by DeSantis, Tulsa's Black residents could have preemptively macheted every white person who approached, given rampant lynchings and racial violence of the time. They didn't. The terror came to them.

Slaughtering hundreds of Black people who were financially successful against all odds, and wiping out legacies of Black enterprise that could have traced a different economic trajectory for Black America, should never be minimized or miscategorized. Aside from lying, false equivalencies erase historical context and permit conservatives to conveniently question why Black Americans still struggle under economic opportunity that only appears to be facially equal.

Like Trump's "very fine people on both sides" defense of neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, both-siding slavery is an attempt to defend the indefensible. In a post-truth political climate where alternative facts challenge the rule of law, it's hard to say what's more dangerous — DeSantis trying to rewrite American history, or DeSantis claiming he had nothing to do with it. ❖

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

In the Constitution, Congress comes first, but in reality, not so much

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – There’s a reason the founders started with Congress when they created the blueprint for our representative democracy: It’s the institution closest to the American people. This isn’t just political theory. For all their faults, members of Congress throughout our history have made an effort to stay close to and understand their constituents.



They still do. More than any other branch of government, Congress reflects the feelings of the diverse and ever-evolving population of the United States — even if, with population shifts boosting rural power in the Senate these days and gerrymandering affecting House districts, the

proportions are out of whack. So one of the more puzzling aspects of the evolution of power in Washington has been the extent to which Congress has sat by over the decades while its strength has ebbed.

For the most part, we think of this in terms of its relations with the presidency, with everything from war powers to budget-making to an increasing reliance on executive orders putting presidents of both parties in an ever-stronger position to set and steer the national agenda. But recently, CNN’s Zachary Wolf drew attention to a similar process taking place vis-à-vis the Supreme Court. The mechanisms are different, but the result is the same: Congress loses room to maneuver.

Wolf was actually delving into a recently published book by University of Texas law professor Stephen Vladeck, “The Shadow Docket: How the Supreme Court Uses Stealth Rulings to Amass Power and Undermine the Republic.” Vladeck’s chief concern is what for the last few years has come to be called the “shadow docket,” referring to cases that are not formally heard by the Court, with oral arguments and then long written decisions and dissents, but instead are generally unsigned orders that arrive without explanation.

They can be quite consequential. As Vladeck explained to Wolf in their interview, the Court last year intervened in redistricting cases in Alabama and Louisiana in such a way that it “helped to give the Republicans the majority they currently have in the House.” It did so in 2020 and 2021 as well, especially to address cases involving COVID-19 regulations. The Court’s power, Vladeck points out, lies not just in its decisions, but in choosing which of the many issues arriving on its doorstep it will decide. In fact, that’s not just true of cases on the shadow docket.

Until about a century ago, the Court was required to make a decision on any case under its jurisdiction. That, Vladeck argues, “made it a lot harder for the justices to have an agenda. It made it a lot harder for the justices to target particular disputes and look around for cases.” The reason it can now pick and choose — and hence steer the national agenda — is because Congress gave it the power to do so, especially with the 1988 Supreme Court Case Selections Act, which granted the Court full authority over whether to hear appeals from circuit court decisions. So it chooses which 80 or so cases it will hear out of the 5,000 to 7,000 it is asked to review each term.

To be sure, it’s hardly the case that the Court has avoided precedent-setting decisions in the past, dating all the way back to *Marbury v. Madison* in 1803, when the Court gave itself the power of judicial review over executive and legislative decisions.

Still, if you think about our recent political history — especially around abortion — you can see Vladeck’s point: The Court does not reflect the thinking of a majority of Americans. For members of Congress who would rather not have to cast unpopular votes on controversial issues that could cost them a seat, having the White House or the Supreme Court make those decisions can be handy. But as Vladeck argues, “When we look at the Court today — at the ethics issues, the docket issues, the legitimacy debates — a lot of what’s going on here is a court that’s just not remotely checked and not worrying about being checked.”

Congress historically had the authority to exercise control over the Court’s ability to set the agenda, he insists, and there’s no reason it can’t again. The balance of power in Washington demands it. ❖



Lee Hamilton is a senior advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a distinguished scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a professor of practice at the IU O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

‘Lamestream’ media and giant turtles

By **JACK COLWELL**
South Bend Tribune

SOUTH BEND – Are Indiana’s mainstream media covering up dangers to Hoosiers from a killer snapping turtle, 9 feet in diameter, that decapitated a human victim in Lake Monroe near Bloomington? And could this type of terrible turtle be found also in the St. Joseph River and on the banks of the Wabash? No. And no.



But a Facebook post on July 16 told of Purdue University forensic scientists announcing that decapitated human remains discovered in Lake Monroe “appear to have been the result of a

gruesome attack by a giant snapping turtle” measuring an estimated nine feet and being around 300 years old.

The satirical account went viral, with over 14,000 shares in the first days and hundreds of comments, some calling it “fake news,” others taking it seriously as a reason to avoid Lake Monroe.

Stories in the news media quickly pointed out that the quoted Purdue scientist, Dr. Eric Paddlejack, doesn’t exist. A detailed account of all the rest that was wrong appeared in a story in The Bloomington Herald-Times by Rachel Smith. Her story also appeared in The Tribune.

That story and others in the mainstream print and broadcast media reported assurances from the Monroe County coroner that no decapitated remains had been found in Lake Monroe and statements by Indiana Department of Natural Resources officials that there is no such thing as a nine-foot, 300-year-old snapping turtle in Lake Monroe or anywhere else.

Kevin Goodman, author of the post, confirmed it was satire. He said he posted it on his personal Facebook page with the intent that it be reviewed by “a handful of people” who knew he was working on a satirical piece about man-eating snapping turtles for possible submission to “The Onion,” famed for its humorous satire.

There was no malicious intent. Goodman quickly added a disclaimer that it was not an actual

news story and was written as satire.

And the viral spread of the story of a killer turtle did no serious harm. Sure, some believers in whatever is on social media — and never seeing or not believing clarifying truth in the news media — could skip a trip to Lake Monroe. Too bad. Nice place. Lots of boats that were never attacked by Jaws or an angry turtle.

But this example of the untrue that goes viral illustrates the dangers of misinformation in social media that is planted with malicious intent:

- Chinese misinformation promoting conspiracy theories of the coronavirus originating here.
- Russian misinformation designed to sway our election choices.
- Domestic misinformation seeking to demonize political foes or segments of the population.

Clearly, many Americans fall for malicious misinformation, whether from Facebook, blogs, the dark web or other sites. They choose to believe even some of the strangest claims, theories and fake news rather than facts. In fact, the belief of misinformation seems sometimes to be solidified by contradictory information in the news media.

What if Indiana’s mainstream media (or lamestream, if you prefer) were covering up dangers to Hoosiers from that killer snapping turtle?

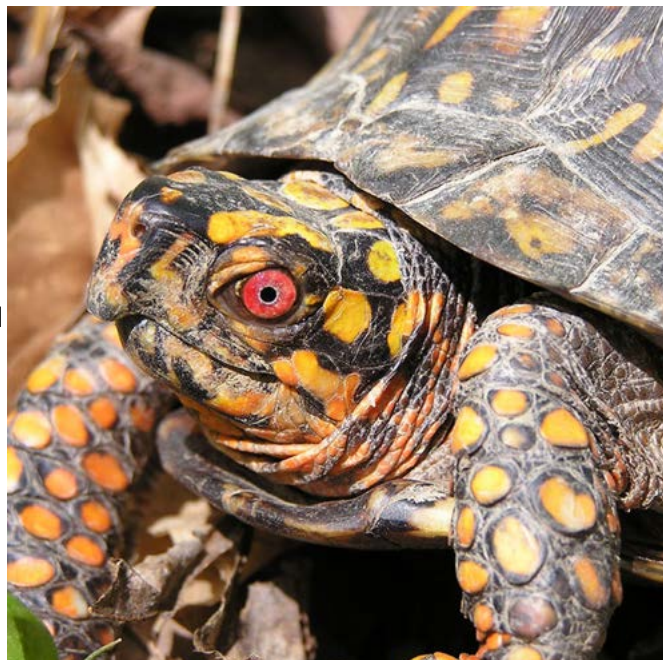
Well, then Dr. Paddlejack would be right in saying it’s rare for snapping turtles to inflict life-threatening injuries, “but in this case, the size and age of the turtle suggest an aggressiveness that is beyond ordinary.”

It would be the Monroe County coroner who didn’t exist, or if real, was hiding the truth in insisting that nobody was decapitated by a 9-foot turtle or any other turtle. It would mean those little snapping turtles you see can grow into monsters worthy of a Loch Ness comparison.

It would mean staying out of the water at Lake Monroe or any other lake or river or pond where a deadly turtle could snap off your head.

What do you think? Could the story of the Lake Monroe turtle be true? It was, after all, on Facebook. ❖

Jack Colwell has covered Indiana politics for over five decades for the South Bend Tribune. Email him at jcolwell@comcast.net.



Populists are wrong: Life is better today

By MICHAEL J. HICKS

MUNCIE – America’s populist movements, on both the left and right, are wedded to the notion that our past was better than our present. This nostalgia takes many forms. Some of it is a longing for a time without cell phones, the internet or social media. For others, it is a wistful desire to see stronger cultural institutions, such as families, churches, unions and civic groups.



Most of us can sympathize with this feeling, even if we don’t wish to return to the past. This longing can even be constructive if we work to create new institutions that survive in the 21st Century.

For some folks, the desire is really for a fictional view of the past. On both sides of the political aisle, this longing can spiral into a surprisingly open admiration for authoritarian movements. Some of this is fostered by noxious racist or classist ideologies. More of it is attached to the belief that the economy was better in the past and that more active management of the economy can restore us to a golden age of the past.

This idea has surprising durability. However, it is mistaken across nearly every domain. Indeed, it is so false that it shouldn’t need to be debunked, but I suppose we all are prisoners of distant recollection.

There’s a meme that comes with this debate that shows magazine illustrations of the 1950s. It claims that once upon a time, a family of four could afford a house, own a car, take vacations and send the kids to college — all on one income. The implication is that you cannot do so today, but is any of this true?

The average home in the 1950s was 983 square feet, which is about one-third the size of the modern home. One can purchase such a home right here in Muncie, Indiana — fully renovated with modern appliances — for \$52,900. So, places exist where one can hold a low-income job and afford the sparse luxuries of the 1950s.

I could produce a long spreadsheet showing how easy it is today to financially replicate a 1950s lifestyle, but doing so would largely overlook the details of the 1950s lifestyle; much of what we consume today is so qualitatively different that the products of old are impossible to match. Automobiles are a perfect example.

Today’s automobiles last, on average, almost twice as long as 1950s automobiles, and they are far more fuel efficient. We could easily wrap this calculation into the cost of driving 100 miles. But, there’s a catch; in the 1950s, the death rate per miles driven was a bit more than five times

higher than it is today. Risk of extreme injury has likewise plummeted. This is due to better technology in mundane things like seatbelts. There are also 300-some semiconductors in today’s car that help to deploy airbags, sense road conditions and adjust the lighting.

It is more difficult to assess the changing cost of travel when accounting for the reduced chance of death or severe injury. This is but one problem associated with comparing the past to today. As relative prices change, families will adjust their consumption. They will buy fewer or cheaper items and spend the savings elsewhere. Changes in quality are reflected in the behavior of consumers, so naturally, we would need to adjust the way we compare the past to the present.

The difficulty of the comparison permits populist demagogues to mislead us about the past. One common conspiracy theory claims that the federal government is lying about inflation. The claim is based on the fact that every decade or so, the statisticians at the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) adjust the list of goods used to calculate inflation. Of course, the reason the BLS does this is to more accurately reflect the changes families make in buying goods due to quality or relative prices, not to lie about inflation.

If the BLS did not make these adjustments, we’d still be measuring the price of bituminous coal for household heating, and we’d overlook the cost of health insurance, airline tickets and telephone and subscription TV services. No one suggests that our measures of inflation are perfect, but if you read somewhere that the BLS is lying, you are reading a crackpot.

There are a couple of other ways to think about the large quality changes we’ve seen. One method still relies upon measuring income, but instead of simply using prices, we create something called a “time price” of a good. The “time price” is how long it would take the average worker with a high school diploma to buy the item. There’s a terrific book on the subject, “Superabundance” by Marian Tupy and Gale Pooley. The gist of the book is that nearly everything we buy today has a much lower time price than it did at any time in the past.

Tupy and Pooley focus on lower-income workers and examine everything from the hours it takes to provide 2,000 calories per worker in a family to a large basket of commodities that are inputs to everything else. What they report is that over the past century, the standard of living of Americans has risen about four-fold. Most of that growth occurred after World War II and continues to grow today.

The time price measurements reveal a huge drop in the time it takes to buy typical goods, from food to housing to transportation. However, costs for services have not dropped as much, for two reasons. The first is that labor costs within a region are tied to average worker productivity. We are very productive at making goods. Most of our productivity gains in services regard changes in quality. The second reason is that we demand more

services.

The perfect example of this is in cancer deaths. In the 1950s, close to 35 of every 100,000 women died of breast cancer each year. Today, that number has dropped to fewer than 20.

At the same time, the share of household spending on this disease has grown substantially. We pay more for diagnostic equipment and analysis of scans, and we spend much more on treatment. This reflects our preferences matched with the opportunities of economic growth. It is that which has raised our lifespans by 15% since the 1950s.

So when the populists of the left and right argue

that we are worse off now than we were 30, 50, or 100 years ago, ignore them. They are dead wrong. What they really want is for you to have less choice in what you buy because they want more control over society and our economy. These authoritarians belong only in history books, not on ballots. ❖

Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University.

Who is responsible for the public interest?

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Americans recognize three major sectors of society: The private sector (businesses and households), the public sector (governments) and the not-for-profit or philanthropic sector (churches and numerous well-intentioned groups).

Each segment of each sector believes it acts in the public interest. Businesses believe they are satisfying consumer wants and desires. Households uphold the sanctity of the home. Governments express the will of the people. Not-for-profits act in accord with moral principles.



These beliefs are nowhere expressed better than in zoning or land use disputes. Currently, there are two such cases in Marion County. On the Northwest side: a \$500 million project would encompass

commercial, retail and residential components. It's big and oppressive to nearby homeowners who see their arboreal setting and domestic tranquility tragically disturbed.

Closer to downtown Indianapolis, a not-for-profit youth center wants to expand its program and its footprint by building on an adjacent acre of mature park land. The center is morally upright in supporting its program expansion. The neighbors, who treasure this bit of publicly accessible green space, are justifiably outraged.

The Northwest side project pits two private sector components against each other and a city commission will decide which party wins. Based on the history of this commission, betting favors the business over the homeowners.

The youth center is a different story. Here there is a public aspect that this commission should take into

account. Diagonally across the street from the small park is a wasteland on which sits an abandoned grocery and a parking lot used to rent U-Haul trucks.

Because not-for-profit agencies are given exclusion from certain income, sales and property taxes, they have an obligation to act in the public interest. What they do, however, is mostly without government oversight, just like private business. There's a bit of regulation here and there on worker safety and rights, honesty in weights and measures, harmlessness of product and environmentally responsible action.

Not-for-profits are very often funded by other not-for-profits. What public audit confirms the receiving organization is acting in the public interest? Annual reports are produced with accounting firms validating procedures, but no routine external audit exists for the activities supported by or undertaken by not-for-profits.

In this case, we have a valuable asset and a deplorable liability. It makes sense to retain and preserve that asset and make every effort to turn that liability into another productive asset.

The commission that gives permission and the philanthropic organizations that give funds would act in the public interest if they take a broader look at the center's project and insist on retention of the asset (the park) and redevelopment of the nearby liability. In addition, the neighbors concerned about the park might buy it or get a foundation to buy it. That means people who care would have to do more than agonize. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com. Follow him and John Guy on "Who Gets What?" wherever podcasts are available or at mortonjohn.libsyn.com.

No time for isolation with a revitalized NATO

By NATE LaMAR

NEW CASTLE – The mid-July summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Vilnius, Lithuania, was the second to take place following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. But it was the first to take place following the most recent expansion of NATO. Finland joined in April. On July 10, Turkey’s President Erdogan ended his veto against



Sweden. It is therefore now up to Turkey’s Parliament to ratify Sweden’s membership. These are challenging, though encouraging, times for an alliance that had become moribund before the war.

As a young lieutenant in Germany, I was fortunate to have a very atypical assignment working at the grassroots level of NATO. Instead of being stationed at a more common Cold War-era U.S. Army unit on a compound with thousands of soldiers, civilian employees and dependents,

I was the liaison/linguist officer for a detachment of 40 Americans on a Bundeswehr (German Army) base of 2,000 German soldiers and lived “on the economy” in a rural town. In such a small unit, officers wore many hats; I also served as a platoon leader, S-2 (intelligence officer), executive officer and acting commander.

By this time, as the Cold War was over, terrorism had become a bigger concern within NATO (IRA, PLO, ETA, etc.). Having earlier graduated from the Individual Terrorism Awareness Course at the JFK Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, NC, I taught counterterrorism within our Group, whose area covered much of two German states. My unit was inactivated in 1992, at which point I chose to depart active duty, was honorably discharged and returned home to begin my civilian career and, later, MBA school.

Many more Cold War-era units in Germany were inactivated during this same period. As a result, NATO became a hollowed-out alliance, with most allies spending less and less on their defense (the so-called “Peace Dividend”). While it was refreshing to see many formerly communist countries gain their freedom, with most becoming

NATO members, many allies became dependent on Russian petroleum.

Many of these newly free NATO members partnered with various national guards. For example, the Indiana National Guard helped train Slovakia’s army, while the California National Guard helped train Ukraine’s army. Some formerly communist countries who did not join NATO became part of its Partnership for Peace (PFP). Although neutral, Austria, Ireland and Switzerland are all PFP members. Kosovo, whose security forces are partnered with the Iowa National Guard, has applied to join the PFP.

Having watched the NATO public forum simulcast from Vilnius, I was reminded that

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are true frontiers of freedom. In fact, Vilnius is located about halfway between the border with Belarus, a Russian ally, and Kaliningrad, the Russian enclave on the Baltic Sea. Among the panelists were Sens. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., and Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., who co-chair the U.S. Senate NATO Observers Group. They were joined by a French senator and the speaker of Lithuania’s Senate. All stated that China is watching NATO’s response to Russia’s war in Ukraine very closely. Could Taiwan be next?

As I now represent my employer on NATO’s Industrial Advisory Group (NIAG), I am reminded that next year’s NATO Summit will take place in Washington, D.C. At that time, our country will be in the midst of a presidential election that could include an isolationist as one of the major party nominees. This is clearly not the time to turn back the clock to 1920s/1930s isolationism.

Putin invaded Georgia in 2008 and Crimea in 2014. The world did nothing. Every time history repeats itself, the price goes up. Ukraine needs us and NATO needs our continued leadership of the alliance. ❖

Nate LaMar, an international manager, also served as Henry County Council president from 2009 to 2019.



The dwindling crossover governors

By **KYLE KONDIK**
and **J. MILES COLEMAN**

CHARLOTTESVILLE – New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu’s (R) announcement last week that he will not seek a fifth two-year term as the Granite State’s governor gives Democrats a key takeover target next year. But his departure might also help reduce the dwindling number of “crossover” state governors.

We often note the number of House and Senate seats where the winner of the district or state is of a different party than the party that won the district or state for president in the most recent election. There is a greater share of crossover governors than crossover House and Senate members, but the number of crossover members in all three categories has been declining.

Setting aside the three nominal independents who caucus with Democrats in the Senate – Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, Angus King of Maine, and Bernie Sanders of Vermont -- there are just five “crossover” senators out of the 100 total. Two Republicans represent states Joe Biden carried in 2020 – Susan Collins of Maine and Ron Johnson of Wisconsin – and three Democrats represent Donald Trump-won states: Jon Tester of Montana, Sherrod Brown of Ohio, and Joe Manchin of West Virginia. The fact that all three of those Democrats are on the ballot in 2024 while neither of those Republicans are helps explain the Republicans’ golden opportunity to flip the Senate this cycle.

To put it in historical perspective, there were 24 “crossover” senators out of 100 immediately following the 2004 election and 21 immediately following the 2012 election.

In the House, there are just 23 members who hold crossover seats: 18 Republicans and 5 Democrats. That imbalance gives Democrats an opportunity of their own to win back the House this cycle. Likewise, this number has generally been declining – there were 59 crossover members elected in 2004 and 26 elected in 2012 (the House became considerably more sorted on presidential party lines in that election/redistricting cycle and has basically stayed so ever since).

The governorships are not as sorted by presidential partisanship as the House and Senate, although it seems quite possible that they will be more sorted following 2024 than they are now. There are five Republicans in

Biden-won states, and there are four Democrats in Trump-won states.

Relatively speaking, governorships are likelier to fall in the crossover category than House and Senate seats – 18% of the governorships are crossovers, whereas just 5% of the House and the Senate are. Governors likely have a little more ability to separate themselves from national political factors, and sometimes they are out of step from their national parties – but in-step with state electorates – on important issues. For instance, Gov. Phil Scott (R-VT) is supportive of abortion rights, while Gov. John Bel Edwards (D-LA) is not.

Still, just like with the House and Senate, the amount of gubernatorial crossover has been declining over time.

Let’s take a look back at how things stood after the 2007 and 2015 gubernatorial elections, respectively. Those elections, like the ones this year, took place three years after the most recent previous presidential election. And like the 2020 presidential election, both the 2004 and 2012 elections were close at the national level – all three were decided by between 2.5-4.5 points in the national popular vote.

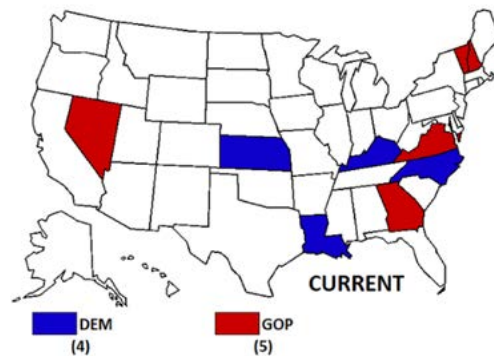
As the maps show, there was considerably more crossover at the gubernatorial level in these past two periods than there is now: 21 crossover governorships following the 2007 elections and 17 following 2015. One can see some ancestral down-ballot lineage on these maps, as Democrats were much stronger 15 years ago in Greater Appalachia than they are now, for instance. But some of this lineage remains, such as with Republican success in Vermont and New England more generally. Red presidential states Kentucky and Louisiana have elected Democratic governors in the recent past, and the party still holds them as of this moment.

One thing that likely contributes to the greater amount of crossover at the gubernatorial level is that most governorships are elected in non-presidential elections – just nine of the 50 states hold their gubernatorial elections only in years concurrent with the presidential election (Delaware, Indiana, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Utah, Washington, and West Virginia), although New Hampshire and Vermont have just two-year terms, so those two New England governorships are contested in both midterm and presidential years. An additional five states have odd-numbered gubernatorial elections (New Jersey and Virginia, last contested in 2021, and Kentucky, Louisiana, and Mississippi, which are on the ballot this year). That leaves the lion’s share of all the governorships to be contested in midterm years.

Midterms can often produce big waves against



Map 1: Current crossover state governorships



the presidential party, and we see some of that aftermath on these maps. For instance, Democrats won the Ohio governorship for the only time since 1986 in 2006, but then lost it in 2010's Republican wave. The anti-George W. Bush wave of 2006 also helped insulate some crossover Democrats: in 2002, Democrats in Arizona, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Wyoming all prevailed in close races but, as incumbents, each was reelected with more than 60% of the vote in 2006. Things got better for Republicans in 2010: They flipped several states that Barack Obama carried in 2008, most notably in the Midwest. In 2014, another red-tinted Obama midterm, most of those crossover GOP incumbents were reelected. There are also some odd circumstances reflected on this map, such as the 2003 recall of California Democratic Gov. Gray Davis leading to the two-term governorship of Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger (reflected on the 2007 map) and Republican Alaska Gov. Sean Parnell's loss to a fusion independent/Democratic ticket led by former Republican Bill Walker in 2014.

That Republicans did not have that strong of an election in 2022 also helps account for the low number of crossover governors. They tried and failed to flip governorships in Biden-won battlegrounds Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, although they succeeded in another such battleground, Nevada. Still, the total number of crossover governorships dropped, as Democrats flipped Biden-won states Arizona, Maryland, and Massachusetts.

The 2023/2024 outlook

Overall, the number of crossover state governorships might decrease in 2024, although of course what happens in the presidential race will have an impact on the numbers. For instance, maybe the Republicans will win back key presidential battlegrounds like Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. That would create new crossover governorships in those states, because all currently have Democratic incumbents who won't be on the ballot this cycle. A GOP victory for president in Georgia or Nevada would remove a crossover governorship because those states have Republican governors.

But let's focus on the current crossover governors and see how the list might shrink.

This year, open-seat Louisiana is likely to flip to Republicans, and that state is going to vote Republican for president in 2024 barring some radical and unforeseen realignment over the course of this election cycle. Republicans also would like to flip Kentucky, but we continue to see Gov. Andy Beshear (D) as a small favorite there. A couple of recent polls by the respected Republican firm Public Opinion Strategies showed Beshear up 10 points in June and 4 points in July. One could argue that the race is tightening – although the polls had different sample sizes and were conducted for different clients, as the Lexington Herald-Leader noted in a story on the surveys – but we also think it's notable that the only recent public polling in the race has been from Republicans, and none of those

polls has shown the popular Beshear trailing. Still, this is another opportunity for the crossover list to shrink this year, as Kentucky, like Louisiana, is a lock to vote Republican for president.

Next year, Democrats will be defending an open seat in North Carolina. Since 1992, Republicans have only won one gubernatorial contest there (2012), while Democrats have only claimed the state's electoral votes once (2008). Still, we rate the 2024 North Carolina gubernatorial race as a Toss-up, as margins are often close in the state – it could very feasibly break the same way for president and governor. Meanwhile, in New Hampshire, the open seat is now a Toss-up thanks to Sununu's aforementioned retirement. That state is likelier than not to vote Democratic for president – if Democrats sweep, that would eliminate another crossover governorship. If Phil Scott retires in Vermont, the Democrats could also eliminate a crossover governorship there. In fact, there is a possibility that Democrats could hold all six New England governorships at the same time starting in 2025 – they already hold the other four, and could win New Hampshire and Vermont as open seats (a Morning Consult poll released this week ranked Scott as the nation's most popular governor, and we seriously doubt he'd actually lose reelection if he sought another term).

We don't believe Democrats have ever held all the New England governorships at once since the founding of the GOP in the 1850s – correct us if we're wrong, but we went back and looked and couldn't find such an instance. This is despite the fact that the region is heavily Democratic at the federal level: Democrats have won all six states in each of the last five presidential elections; they currently hold all of the region's House seats; and Susan Collins of Maine is the region's only Republican senator. On a similar note, if Republicans sweep both Louisiana and Mississippi this year and flip North Carolina in 2024, they will hold the governorships of all 11 formerly-Confederate states concurrently for the first time since Reconstruction. During the 20th century, Georgia only had Democratic governors – and since the Peach State flipped red in 2002, combinations of Arkansas, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Virginia have kept Democrats alive in the South.

The other crossover governorships are not up until 2025 (Virginia, which will be an open seat because Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin by law cannot run for reelection) or 2026 (Republican Gov. Brian Kemp of Georgia and Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly of Kansas will both be term-limited, while Republican Gov. Joe Lombardo of Nevada is eligible to run for a second term).

So while gubernatorial results and outcomes seem to mirror presidential partisanship less than federal races do, the overall trend of increasing partisan consistency up and down the ballot could be a theme of this cycle's gubernatorial races. ❖

Ken de la Bastide, Anderson Herald Bulletin:

Will the 5th Congressional District seat go to the highest bidder in the 2024 election cycle? The 5th District seat, which includes parts of Hamilton County and all of Madison County and Tipton County, has been a stronghold for the Republican Party for decades. Following redistricting by the Legislature, the district now includes a portion of Delaware County. The result is a dilution of a suspected strong Democratic party base of voters in Anderson and Muncie. It also favors GOP candidates emerging from heavily Republican Hamilton County, but in recent years Madison County has rivaled its neighbor to the west in terms of GOP Election Day strength. Four years ago, current Republican Congresswoman Victoria Spartz won the party's nomination after incumbent Susan Brooks announced she would not seek reelection. Spartz loaned her campaign \$1.5 million, which fueled her victory in the 2020 primary and she went on to defeat Democrat Christina Hale that November in a race that saw \$15 million spent. Spartz has announced that she will not seek re-election in 2024, which throws the Congressional seat into play. Currently there are three announced candidates for the GOP nomination and more could be expected. No Democrat has expressed an interest in running for the seat which, in all likelihood, will remain in GOP hands. The three Republicans are Madison County Prosecutor Rodney Cummings, state Rep. Chuck Goodrich and Siddharth Mahant, both of Hamilton County. So why is the nomination up for grabs to the highest bidder? According to Howey Politics Indiana, the most recent campaign finance reports show Goodrich with a balance of \$1.28 million and Mahant with a balance of \$1.02 million. Cummings has about \$17,000. Both Goodrich and Mahant have loaned their campaigns \$1 million at this early stage. Both own companies and can be expected to not hesitate to open the spigot and let the cash flow. ❖



John Krull, Statehouse File:

Why are the people who complain the loudest about political correctness and the "cancel culture" among the first to scream when someone disagrees with them or expresses a contrary opinion? The furor over country singer Jason Aldean's "Try That in a Small Town" song and video is but the latest example. Both the tune and the video are a messy mishmash of MAGA-style chest-thumping, assertions of victimhood that somehow are supposed to justify violence and vigilantism. Logically and factually, the song and its pairings in the video with incendiary images make about as much sense as an old Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote cartoon. If anything, the video is less subtle. It's filled with images from, one presumes, Black Lives Matter protests, intercut with footage of Aldean and his band lip-syncing before a courthouse festooned with a giant American flag.

The courthouse, it turns out, is one from which a Black man was lynched in 1927. That's not surprising. The MAGA crowd's understanding of history seems to have been gleaned from 1940s comic strips and old movie serials. ❖

Carl R. Trueman, Wall Street Journal:

Stories of students canceling speakers have become commonplace in recent years. Last week South Bend, Ind., saw a new riff on this theme when Notre Dame sociology professor Tamara Kay sued a student newspaper for defamation, alleging that it misrepresented comments she made about abortion. At issue are articles published in October 2022 and March 2023. Ms. Kay disputes the latter article's assertion that she was "posting offers to procure abortion pills on her office door." The defense brief says this was based in part on a sign posted on Ms. Kay's office door: "This a SAFE SPACE to get help and information on ALL Health-care issues and access — confidentially and with care and compassion." Ms. Kay also alleges the March article falsely attributes statements to her at an appearance before the Notre Dame College Democrats; the paper says a transcript shows the quotations are substantially true. The Rover has filed a motion to dismiss the lawsuit under Indiana's anti-SLAPP legislation designed to protect freedom of speech. While the lawsuit's immediate context is Notre Dame and its Catholic identity, the underlying issues raise deeper and broader questions about religious educational institutions and academic freedom. ❖

Charlie Sykes, The Bulwark:

Some of you are old enough to remember when we had occasional "Silly Seasons," which, not coincidentally, often occurred during the long lulls of summer. For a few weeks, the media would become obsessed with the frivolous, the outlandish, and the bizarre. Alas, our seasons of unseriousness have now become endless, because we do not live in serious times, do we? Over the last few days, the Right melted down over the "Barbie Movie," with no discernible impact at all at the box office. We embroiled ourselves in a fiery debate over whether slavery (and the Holocaust) actually taught valuable life skills; the NY Post ran a cover story about dog bites in the White House; Kevin McCarthy floated a performative impeachment of Joe Biden; Elon Musk murdered Twitter; Mayor Rudy admitted that he lied about Georgia election workers; and the GOP is trying mightily not to notice that its front-runner is losing his mind as he awaits the next tranche of indictments. Meanwhile, a funnel cloud appeared over the Capitol, and the seas may be setting new temperature records. ICYMI: I offered a Public Service Announcement a few days ago: You did not, in fact, take crazy pills this week. It's just the news cycle. ❖

IU, Purdue ending legacy admissions

INDIANAPOLIS — After the U.S. Supreme Court overturned affirmative action and effectively ended race-conscious admissions in June, a different kind of advantage in admissions drew attention: legacy status ([Indiana Public Media](#)). Legacy students, those who have parents or family members who attended the same school, get a leg up in admissions at most of the nation's most competitive schools. This isn't the case for two of Indiana's most selective schools.

Some of the nation's schools, such as Wesleyan University, ended prioritizing admission for children of alumni, and others, such as Harvard University, face civil rights lawsuits from activists and the NAACP claiming the practice unfairly benefits white students. Purdue University and Indiana University were among the few not considering legacy status. Spokespeople from both universities confirmed the colleges have not considered alumni relationships in admissions. IU reported for the last academic year the university considered class rank, GPA and rigor of coursework "very important" for admission decisions. About two-thirds of the class ranked in the top 25 percent, and more than a third had a 4.0 GPA.

McConnell freezes during presser

WASHINGTON — Mitch McConnell's sudden freeze during a Wednesday afternoon press conference jolted the Senate Republican Conference, eliciting hopes from allies, detractors that he will fully recover from any health issues ([Politico](#)). And President Joe Biden even called his old senatorial colleague to check on him. "I told him I got sandbagged," McConnell said, a reference to Biden's public fall over a sandbag earlier this year. "I'm fine. I'm fine, that's the important

part. Got to watch those sandbags." The Senate minority leader abruptly stopped his opening remarks at an afternoon press conference on Wednesday, causing alarm when he left for a few minutes and then returned to answer questions. A McConnell aide said the senator was feeling lightheaded. McConnell returned to the press conference and took questions from reporters.

Plea deal for former Evansville director

EVANSVILLE ([WFIE](#)) - The trial for former Evansville Parks Director Brian Holtz has been canceled due to a plea agreement. A pre-trial hearing was held Wednesday in Gibson County with Special Prosecutor Stan Levco. Court records show Holtz pleaded guilty to two amended counts of forgery, an amended count of official misconduct, and five amended counts of counterfeiting. His sentencing is set for September 26. Investigators say they found dozens of incidents dating back to 2017 that involve Holtz submitting counterfeited invoices, involving more than \$13 million.

Feds conceal UFO retrievals

WASHINGTON ([AP](#)) — The U.S. is concealing a longstanding program that retrieves and reverse engineers unidentified flying objects, a former Air Force intelligence officer testified Wednesday to Congress. The Pentagon has denied his claims. Retired Maj. David Grusch's highly anticipated testimony before a House Oversight subcommittee was Congress' latest foray into the world of UAPs — or "unidentified aerial phenomena," which is the official term the U.S. government uses instead of UFOs. While the study of mysterious aircraft or objects often evokes talk of aliens and "little green men," Democrats and Republicans in recent years have pushed for more research as a national security matter due to

concerns that sightings observed by pilots may be tied to U.S. adversaries. Grusch said he was asked in 2019 by the head of a government task force on UAPs to identify all highly classified programs relating to the task force's mission. At the time, Grusch was detailed to the National Reconnaissance Office, the agency that operates U.S. spy satellites. "I was informed in the course of my official duties of a multi-decade UAP crash retrieval and reverse engineering program to which I was denied access," he said. "I would advise my Republican friends leading this effort to do a lot more listening and not jumping to unfounded conclusions. We have to be careful about the kinds of questions that are raised because our adversaries and opponents are watching. We have to be very careful because our national security is at risk," said U.S. Rep. Andre Carson in an interview with CNN after the hearing ([WIBC](#)).

Hunter Biden pleads not guilty

WILMINGTON, Del. ([AP](#)) — President Joe Biden's son Hunter pleaded not guilty Wednesday to two tax crimes after a deal with federal prosecutors unraveled during a court hearing following the judge's concerns over the agreement. Hunter Biden was charged last month with two misdemeanor tax crimes of failure to pay more than \$100,000 in taxes from over \$1.5 million in income in both 2017 and 2018, and he was expected to plead guilty after he made an agreement with prosecutors, who were planning to recommend two years of probation. That deal is now on hold. But during the hearing Wednesday, there was a dispute in court over whether the initial agreement gave him protection against any future charges. U.S. District Court Judge Maryellen Noreika, who was appointed by President Donald Trump, raised concerns about the language of the deal.

