



INGOP's history with Donald Trump

After 91 criminal charges,
Banks embraces Trump
while Pence twists

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**
and **JARRED MEEKS**

INDIANAPOLIS — Five days before a grand jury in Georgia increased the number of criminal charges for Donald J. Trump to 91 felonies from 78, the Indiana GOP U.S. Senate frontrunner Jim Banks received an unprecedented endorsement from the Indiana Republican Party and quickly announced his fealty to the former president.

"President Trump endorsed me early in my campaign, and I endorse President Trump as well, and he has my full support," Rep. Banks told a press scrum after his speech, making no mention of former Vice President Mike Pence, one of a dozen challengers to Trump for the 2024 presidential nomination.

This comes in a state where the GOP establish-



Donald Trump at his first arraignment in New York City earlier this summer. He now faces 91 criminal charges.

ment was slow to embrace Trump in 2016, with Gov. Pence backing U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz in the presidential primary race

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An abortion island

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana is turning into an abortion island. Girded by gerrymandered General Assembly maps, along with an anemic and broke Democrat Party, a year ago Republican supermajorities passed and Gov. Eric Holcomb signed some of the most restrictive anti-abortion measures in the United States.



But on a single-issue referendum vote on Tuesday, Ohio voters followed a national trend, rejecting by a 57% no vote a measure that would have increased the threshold for constitutional amendments from a simple majority of 50% plus one to 60%. That sets the stage for November, when voters in our red state neighbor to the east are expected to ensure



"I truly do believe in a time of historic challenges at home and abroad, states hold the key to leading America. I promise, should I have the opportunity to be your president, you will have a champion of states in the Oval Office."

- Mike Pence, at NCSL

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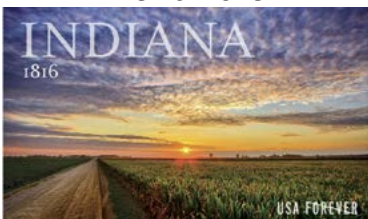
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continued abortion access. Ohio voters were against the amendment by 14 percentage points in a state that voted for Donald J. Trump in 2020 by about eight points.

According to Ballotpedia, in 2022, there were six ballot measures addressing abortion — the most on record for a single year. Measures were approved in California (67%), Michigan (56.7%), and Vermont (77%) to preserve abortion access. Measures for constitutional amendments outlawing most abortions were defeated in Kansas (59%), Kentucky (52.3%), and Montana (53%).

In Kansas and Kentucky — which are as conservative as Indiana, though both have Democrat governors — voters rejected ballot measures to state that nothing in their state constitutions creates a right to abortion or requires government funding of abortions. In Kentucky, more than half rejected a constitutional amendment. In Montana, voters rejected a measure called the Born-Alive Infant Protection Act.

In Michigan, voters passed Proposal 3, the Constitutional Right to Reproductive Freedom in 2022.

While Michigan, Ohio and Kentucky have a constitutional amendment process that requires a citizen signature threshold to appear on a ballot, Indiana's process requires two bills in separately elected general assemblies to pass a constitutional amendment to qualify for the ballot. That will not happen on the abortion issue in the supermajority House and Senate.

But Indiana voters are not unlike those in Michigan and Kansas. In a 2022 Hoosier Poll by Ball State University's Bowen Center, 56.7% — identical to the Michigan result — believe abortion should be legal in

all or most cases. Most Hoosiers — more than 76% — find abortion to be an important or at least somewhat important issue. Hoosier voters were almost evenly split on whether they would vote for a candidate that has a different stance on this issue, with 48% saying they would not and 52% saying they would or might still vote for such a candidate.

What does this mean for Hoosiers?

Abortions had been legal up to 22 weeks. But Holcomb quietly signed SEA 1ss last August — there was no ceremonial gathering with pro-life supporters for the signature. Now, abortions in instances of rape or incest will only be allowed up to



V28, N1

Thursday, Aug. 4, 2022

As Indiana restricts, Kansas speaks

House expected to vote on SB1 restrictions Friday

By BRIAN A. HOWEY
 INDIANAPOLIS — For nearly eight hours on Tuesday, the Indiana House Criminal Courts Committee heard polarizing testimony on SB1, with virtually no one supporting the bill. For activists like David Mervar who often wore pro-life T-shirts and MAGA hats, abortion was, plain and simple, "murder" and OB-GYNs are "baby killers."

There were a dozen or so physicians who testified in white coats. "I am asking you to let me do my job," Dr. Caroline Rouse, a physician with Riley Children's Health's Maternal Fetal Medicine. "My job is to prevent and prevent complications and death as best I can. Not to wait until catastrophe occurs and then act. In cases where pregnancy increases the risk of serious complications and death, discussing abortion is my medical and ethical responsibility."



"The current wording of impairment of life or physical health is not only too broad, but it also fails to give clear guidance for physicians to determine whether a pre-viability delivery would be allowed," Dr. Christina Francis, an OB-GYN from Fort Wayne. "This has the danger of either allowing abortions for any reason or making physi-

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10 weeks of pregnancy. Fetal anomaly abortions are only permitted up to 20 weeks.

This means that for Indiana women seeking an abortion, instead of traveling to Indianapolis, Bloomington or South Bend, they will have to drive to Chicago, Kalamazoo, Lansing or Louisville, and after the expected passage of the abortion access amendment in November, they may have to drive to Ohio cities like Toledo, Dayton, Columbus or Cincinnati.

As for the political atmosphere, Republicans seeking the 2024 gubernatorial nomination — U.S. Sen. Mike Braun, Lieutenant.

Gov. Suzanne Crouch, Fort Wayne businessman Eric Doden and former Attorney General Curtis Hill — are all ardently pro-life.

The lone Democrat running, former Republican Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jennifer McCormick, is pro-choice. She told me last June, "I do support the standards that were set by Roe. I support a woman's right to choose."

McCormick's campaign has had little traction after she posted just \$250,000 on her mid-year campaign finance report (compared to well over \$4 million for Braun and \$3.8 million for Crouch and Doden).

Indiana Right to Life CEO Mike Fichter noted that not one legislator who voted for SEA 1ss lost in 2022. "In spite of predictions by some pundits and pollsters that Indiana went too far in its approach to protecting unborn children, yesterday's election results serve as a reminder that Indiana is a pro-life state," Fichter said the day after the election.

Beyond McCormick's gubernatorial candidacy, few Democrats are stepping up, though many campaigns begin to take shape between Labor Day and next February's filing deadline. One is Matt McNally, who is seeking a rematch against state Rep. Jerry Torr, R-Carmel, after he

lost in 2022 by 52.4% to 47.6%. Citing "supermajority rule" since 2014 and the signing of SEA 1ss, McNally said, "I believe decision makers at our state capitol have embraced extreme policies that are out of step with our Carmel and Westfield communities."

Beyond Indiana, the recent referendum results have gotten the attention of Republicans. "The Ohio result tonight, coming on the heels of the shellacking in Michigan and the unexpected loss in Kentucky, needs to be a five-alarm fire for the pro-life movement," Patrick Brown, a conservative scholar at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, tweeted late Tuesday.

"There shouldn't be any sugarcoating over what happened last night. It was a major setback in what became a very public fight between pro-choice and pro-life groups," Bill Stepien, the campaign manager for former President Donald Trump's 2020 campaign, said on Fox News. "This happened in Ohio, which is not a pink state anymore. This is a state that is red." ❖

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Trump, from page 1

that would secure the Manhattan billionaire the Republican nomination, earning 53% of the vote. Only two of the party's RNC delegates — the late Rex Early and Sullivan County Chairman Bill Springer — were aligned with Trump. Delegates like Joshua Claybourn of Evansville and LaPorte Mayor Blair Milo resigned their convention nominations in protest after Trump became the GOP standard bearer.

As Donald Trump's celebrity candidacy began to catch on nationally in late summer 2015, a number of Hoosier Republicans sounded the alarms. RNC committeeman John Hammond III called Trump "unfit" for the presidency and acknowledged that some GOP flanks were open to a "strongman."

Allen County Chairman Steve Shine said Trump was a release valve, allowing people to "vicariously vent their frustrations." The late congressman Mark Souder, writing in an August 2015 HPI column, said, "It disturbs me that so many self-described conservatives have seemingly bought into Trump as a solution. First of all, he's a liberal Democrat, not a conservative Republican. There is no philosophical underpinning to his views. And how can Christians possibly back him? Christ talked about kindness and love, not anger."

"He's no sheep in wolf clothing," Souder added. "He's a wolf in wolf clothing."

Longtime GOP operative Pete Seat observed in an



Oct. 1, 2015, Howey Politics Indiana column, "Americans simply love villains and in Donald Trump they have found one."

State Rep. Ethan Manning told HPI columnist Maureen Hayden on Oct. 1 that he fears the Republican presidential primary has turned into "a circus gone bad." Leading candidate Donald Trump may be entertaining, but Manning called him "damaging for the Republican brand."

Former U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar, in a late summer 2015 speech at the University of Illinois, observed, "A kind of indirect national debate is currently underway between those who recognize the destructive potential of political incivility and partisan warfare and those who glory in them and recast them in positive terms. The very real risk of this is that we further weaken important norms concerning what constitutes civil behavior in our politics and our society."

All of this angst was mitigated after Trump's 53% Indiana primary victory when the field had narrowed to four candidates. And then Trump chose then-Gov. Pence for his ticket in an attempt to lure an evangelical base, which proved to be a decisive move. Trump would not only carry Indiana's 11 Electoral College votes that November, he pulled Eric Holcomb to a 7% win over Democrat John Gregg in what had been a close gubernatorial race, and U.S. Rep. Todd Young would defeat Evan Bayh by double digits, sidelining that dynastic Democrat.

With VP-elect Mike Pence wresting the Trump transition team away from former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, the fledgling administration was formed with some two dozen Hoosiers at cabinet and sub-cabinet level positions and on the White House staff. U.S. Sen. Dan Coats would become director of National Intelligence; Alex Azar would head the sprawling Health & Human Services; Dr. Jerome Adams would be surgeon general; Seema Verma, director of Medicare/Medicaid; Ted McKinney would be under-secretary at the USDA; Kip Tom was named ambassador to the United Nations food program.

It was a rollicking four years, with the Trump administration facing the COVID-19 pandemic; and there was a peculiar relationship between Trump and Russian President Putin. There was his "perfect" phone call with Ukraine President Zelenskyy that ignited Trump's first impeachment in 2018.

The president would fire Director Coats by tweet. And after losing the 2024 election by more than 7 million votes and 306-223 in the Electoral College, Trump commenced a path that resulted in the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection and a banana republic-style coup d'etat that would ultimately be thwarted by previously loyal Republicans.

At a rally at The Ellipse, Trump made a lie-filled speech, telling his supporters that the election had been stolen and that Joe Biden would be "illegitimate." Trump vowed he would "never concede" and urged the massive crowd to march to the Capitol where hundreds had already gathered under tight security. "We're going to walk to the Capitol," Trump said. "You'll never take back our country with weakness."

The Capitol was quickly overwhelmed, and security perimeters were breached. Protesters could be seen breaking windows and entering the Senate chamber, sitting where Pence had been just an hour earlier.

Trump tweeted around 2:20 p.m., "Mike Pence didn't have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution, giving States a chance to certify a corrected set of facts, not the fraudulent or inaccurate ones which they were asked to previously certify. USA demands the truth!"

Pence, who had been a loyal lieutenant for four years, refused to yield, and actually took command to clear the U.S. Capitol as Trump was transfixed by TV coverage of the insurrection. After the Electoral College count was completed in the wee hours of Jan. 7, Pence would say, "My oath to support and defend the Constitution constrains me from claiming unilateral authority to determine which electoral votes should be counted and which should not. My role as presiding officer is largely ceremonial. Some believe that as vice president, I should be able to accept or reject electoral votes unilaterally. Others believe that electoral votes should never be challenged in a Joint Session of Congress. After a careful study of our Constitution, our laws and our history I believe neither view is correct."

Pence ended the three-page letter saying, "So Help Me God."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who watched in horror as Trump helped Georgia Democrats win two U.S. Senate seats (and the majority) on Jan. 5, said, "If this election were overturned by mere allegations from the losing side, our democracy would enter a death spiral. We'd never see the whole nation accept the election again. I believe protecting our constitutional order requires respecting the limits of our own power. It would be unfair and wrong to disenfranchise American voters and overrule the courts and states on this extraordinary thin basis. I will vote to respect the people's decision and defend our system of government as we know it."



As smoke lifted, Hoosiers bailed

As the smoke cleared from the Capitol insurrection, Hoosiers serving in the Trump administration began to bail. Pence said in March at the Reagan Library, "President Trump was wrong. I had no right to overturn the election. And his reckless words endangered my family and everyone at the Capitol that day, and I know history will hold Donald Trump accountable. Make no mistake about it, what happened that day was a disgrace."

Verma said she was "repulsed" by the Jan. 6 mob that she witnessed through her office window. Azar resigned, saying in his letter to Trump, "The attacks on the Capitol were an assault on our democracy and on the tradition of peaceful transitions of power that the United States of America first brought to the world." Dr. Adams told The Washington Post, "People still are afraid to touch anything that is associated with Trump. The Trump hangover is still impacting me in significant ways."

Asked by The New York Times earlier this year if renominating Trump would be a mistake, John Hammond said, "To win 50% plus one in the Electoral College requires us to find an alternative and I think we've got plenty of good choices. We can't be a cult of personality any longer." Former RNC member Marsha Coats, wife of Director Coats, was quoted in Bob Woodward's book "Rage" asking Pence, "How are you stomaching this?" with Pence responding, "Stay the course."

On Tuesday, U.S. Sen. Todd Young told Republicans that Trump was poised to lose the 2024 election if nominated for a third time, suggesting to the IndyStar, "Someone who can actually win come next November."

But not all bailed.

In addition to Banks' renewed endorsement of Trump, the Hoosier gubernatorial field came to his defense since the Georgia indictments came down late Monday.

U.S. Sen. Mike Braun reacted to the Georgia indictments Tuesday, saying, "Another week, another attempt by President Biden and his party's prosecutors to put their leading political rival behind bars and interfere with the 2024 presidential election. President Biden's weaponization of the justice system will cause irreversible damage to our nation and divide us further."

Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch went a step further telling the NWI Times on Tuesday that the entire criminal justice system is engaged in a "war on conservatives" that "continues unabated and without shame."

"Regardless of the indictments in Georgia, Hoosier voters know a double standard when they see it. If elected governor, I will never allow our courts to be weaponized against political opponents," Crouch said.

Fort Wayne businessman Eric Doden likewise declared that "using the legal system for political gain degrades both it and our entire election process" (NWI Times). "I've had enough of federal political theater and personality politics — and so have the voters I talk to. We're fed up," Doden said. "Indiana doesn't need more politicians who obsess over political theater and personalities. We need leaders at the state level who will focus on real problems and real solutions for Hoosiers."

And former attorney general Curtis Hill claimed Tuesday "Democrat district attorneys across America" have been commanded to "find something, create something, anything at all to nail Trump," or else lose financial support for their next campaign.

Charges Trump is facing

Monday's Georgia indictments against Trump and 17 others were described as a "a criminal enterprise" under RICO statutes, which traditionally have been brought against organized crime mobsters and street gangs. The Trump campaign was called a "criminal organization." The indictment says the defendants, including Donald John Trump, "conspired and endeavored to conduct and participate in a criminal enterprise in Fulton County, Georgia, and elsewhere."

The allies include former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows, former Trump Justice Department official Jeffrey Clark, and lawyers Rudy Giuliani, Jenna Ellis, John Eastman, Sidney Powell and Kenneth Chesebro.

In its 98-page indictment of Trump and his henchmen, the Fulton County grand jury laid out the criminal conspiracy in full: "Defendant Donald John Trump lost the United States presidential election held on November 3, 2020. One of the states he lost was Georgia. Trump and the other Defendants charged in this Indictment refused to accept that Trump lost, and they knowingly and willfully joined conspiracy to unlawfully change the outcome of the election in favor of Trump. That conspiracy contained

common plan and purpose to commit two or more acts of racketeering activity in Fulton County, Georgia, elsewhere in the State of Georgia, and in other states."

According to The Washington Post, Georgia has one of the most capacious RICO statutes in the country. The state's legislature enacted it specifically to "apply to an interrelated pattern of criminal activity" and mandated courts to "liberally construe" it to protect the state and its citizens from harm.

The gist of the four criminal cases against Trump, via CNN:

- Manhattan prosecutors' hush-money case: 34 counts against Trump.

- DOJ special counsel's classified documents case: 40 counts against Trump.

- DOJ special counsel's election subversion case: four counts against Trump.

- Atlanta prosecutors' Georgia election meddling case: 13 counts against Trump.

It will be federal and state courts which will lead a fact-finding and legal reckoning since Election Day 2020. Trump, who is leading for the GOP nomination by more than 40%, is now facing five criminal trials in 2024 and beyond.

More than half of Republicans — including 77% of self-identified MAGA Republicans — said the pre-Georgia indictments and investigations against Trump were an attack on people like them, according to a CBS News/YouGov poll, while 86% of Republicans felt the indictments were an attempt to stop Trump from campaigning (Politico Playbook).

Seven in 10 Republican primary voters said Republicans needed to stand behind Trump in the face of investigations, including nearly half of voters who are planning to support a candidate other than the former president, according to the latest New York Times/Siena College poll. And more than 80% of Republicans said the charges in the most recent indictment were politically motivated, according to an ABC News/Ipsos poll.

Trump's second attorney general, Bill Barr, said earlier this summer, "For the sake of the country, our party and a basic respect for the truth, it is time that Republicans come to grips with the hard truths about President Trump's conduct and its implications. Chief among them: Trump's indictment is not the result of unfair government persecution. This is a situation entirely of his own making. The effort to present Trump as a victim in the Mar-a-Lago document affair is cynical political propaganda."

Former Republican Georgia Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan called Monday's indictments a "pivot point" for the Republican Party, reiterating the 2020 presidential election was



"fair and legal." Duncan added, "As Republicans, we need to take our medicine and realize the election wasn't rigged. Donald Trump was the worst candidate ever, in the history of our party ... and now we are going to have to pivot from there."

It was Georgia Republicans — Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and Gov. Brian Kemp — who helped thwart the Trump campaign's alleged racketeering efforts to set up an alternative slate of Electoral College electors. Since 2020, both were emphatically reelected, despite opposition from Trump. Kemp said on Tuesday, "The 2020 election in Georgia was not stolen. For nearly three years now, anyone with evidence of fraud has failed to come forward — under oath — and prove anything in a court of law. Our elections in Georgia are secure, accessible, and fair and will continue to be as long as I am governor. The future of our country is at stake in 2024 and that must be our focus."

And Raffensperger tweeted, "The most basic principles of a strong democracy are accountability and respect for the Constitution and rule of law. You either have it, or you don't."

Perilous times ahead

We are now facing at least four "trials of the century." This will be an epic stress test for American democracy, placing both the legal and political sectors under searing duress.

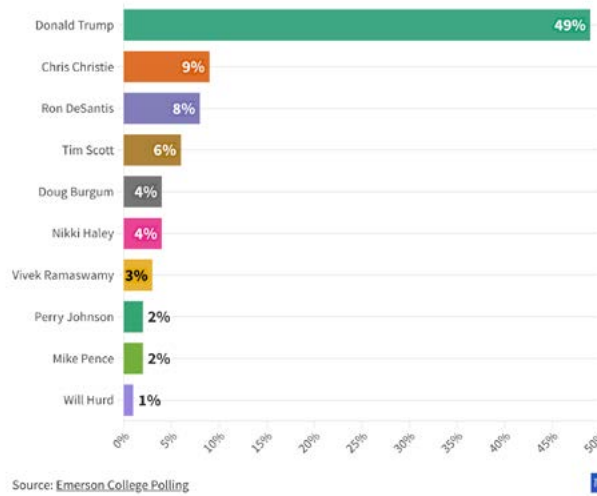
A week ago, Trump lodged a threat on his social media site Truth Social, writing, "IF YOU GO AFTER ME, I'M COMING AFTER YOU!"

Trump on Monday morning stated in a Truth Social post, in regard to former Lt Gov. Duncan who was slated to testify before a Georgia grand jury this week,, "I am reading reports that failed former Lt. Governor of Georgia, Jeff Duncan (sic) will be testifying before the Fulton County Grand Jury. He shouldn't."

Trump has been lobbing insults against Pence, who will almost certainly be a star witness in the federal Jan 6 case. "WOW, it's finally happened! Liddle' Mike Pence, a man who was about to be ousted as Governor of Indiana until I came along and made him V.P., has gone to the Dark Side," Trump said in a Truth Social post. "I never told a newly emboldened (not based on his 2% poll numbers!) Pence to put me above the Constitution, or that Mike was 'too honest,'" Trump added. "He's delusional, and now he wants to show he's a tough guy."

Following Special Counsel Jack Smith's July indictment of Trump over the Jan. 6 insurrection, on Friday

Among these candidates, who would you be most likely to vote for in the Republican presidential primary in 2024?



federal Judge Tanya Chutkan warned Trump against making "inflammatory" statements about the case. "I caution you and your client to take special care in your public statements about this case," Chutkan told Trump lawyer John Lauro during a hearing.

"I will take whatever measures are necessary to safeguard the integrity of these proceedings," said Chutkan. "The fact that he's running a political campaign has to yield to the orderly administration of justice. If that means he can't say exactly what he wants to say about witnesses in this

case, that's how it has to be."

What's over the horizon? Will Trump's wagging tongue force a judge in Washington, Fort Pierce or Atlanta to revoke his bail and jail him for contempt? Should that happen, what will the political reaction be on what is now seen as a hardened, radicalized MAGA base, some calling for a "civil war."

In March, Trump pushed back on suggestions that people remain calm. "OUR COUNTRY IS BEING DESTROYED, AS THEY TELL US TO BE PEACEFUL!" In July, Trump reposted a video on Truth Social, where he says, "If you f--- around with us, if you do something bad to us, we are going to do things to you that have never been done before."

Kari Lake, the defeated Arizona gubernatorial candidate, said in Georgia earlier this summer, "If you want to get to President Trump, you are going to have to go through me, and you are going to have to go through 75 million Americans just like me. And I'm going to tell you, most of us are card-carrying members of the NRA. That's not a threat, that's a public service announcement."

With each indictment, social media lights up with an array of threats. After Jan. 6, 2021, they must be taken seriously.

Epilogue

Some 80 years after the American Revolution, Indiana Republicans played a crucial role at the national convention in Chicago nominating a native son, Abraham Lincoln. It was a precursor to the Civil War that would ignite in April 1861.

Since 1776, the American republic has faced cataclysmic events about every 80 years, the last one occurring eight decades ago with the Great Depression and then World War II.

It was Pence's ascension to the Trump ticket that ultimately brought around Hoosier Republicans to the billionaire who would notch a historic upset in 2016. Despite

Pence's decision to save the republic as we know it four years later, the former veep is now somewhat of an outcast here in his home state, as Trump's Indiana MAGA base remains stalwart in his camp.

Where will this lead us? A bitter election in 2024 where one of the candidates campaigns from a prison cell in an orange jumpsuit, just as Hoosier Socialist Eugene Debs did in 1920? A constitutional crisis? Mobs in the

streets? A second civil war?

Thomas Jefferson's 1787 letter to William Stephens Smith (son-in-law to John Adams) was a precursor to the two founding fathers' bitter 1800 campaign that the former described as the second American revolution.

"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants," Jefferson wrote. ❖

5 CD field expected to grow, get expensive

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY, JARRED MEEKS and TOM DAVIES**

INDIANAPOLIS – The Republican race for the open 5th CD is about to take some interesting and expensive twists.

According to informed and reliable sources, an aide to U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy is expected to move to the 5th CD and seek the GOP nomination. Maximillian T.

Engling is deputy outreach director for Speaker McCarthy. The source said he expects Engling to follow the path of former congressman Trey Hollingsworth, who moved into the open 9th CD from Tennessee in 2016, spending more than \$2 million

of his own and family funds to win a crowded primary. Engling is an Indiana native and had a going away party in DC in recent days, preparing to move to Carmel.

Engling is expected to join State Rep. Chuck Goodrich, trucking executive Sidharth "Sid" Mahant, and Madison County Prosecutor Rodney Cummings in the race. Both Goodrich and Mahant have given their campaigns \$1 million of their own funds to run. Cummings posted \$17,748 on his mid-year report and had a cash balance of \$8,776.

Sources say that former state senator Mike Delph, who currently serves on the staff of out-going U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz, is also weighing a bid. Our source said if Delph declares, Rep. Spartz is expected to move \$389,293 cash in her FEC account to Delph, who lost a 2018 reelection bid to Democrat J.D. Ford 57-43%. In 2014, Delph had defeated Ford 54-46%.

The 5th CD source tells Howey Politics that Mahant is expected to double anything that Rep. Goodrich puts in the race.

Engling has been member services director for Speaker McCarthy since January. From 2019 to 2023 he held the same position for McCarthy when he was House minority leader. From 2017 to 2019 Engling worked on the House Commission on Congressional mailing standards.

From 2013 to 2017 he was a staffer on the House Administration Committee.

U.S. Senate

INGOP endorses Banks

The Indiana Republican Party endorsed U.S. Rep. Jim Banks, R-Ind., in his Senate bid, and the congressman endorsed former President Donald Trump in the latter's reelection campaign on Thursday. Banks received the endorsement from Indiana Republican Party leaders during the party's 2023 State Dinner Thursday night, at which Banks was the final speaker. The endorsement means the Republican National Committee can now support Banks' run.

Banks, who said he is still collecting petitions, got the endorsement in what is still an open primary election. Republican John Rust, chair of a major egg farm, has filed paperwork with the Federal Elections Commission

(FEC), signaling his intent to run for the open seat. Democrat Keith Potts, a member of the Indianapolis City-County Council, has also announced a Senate bid, as has Democratic candidate and former state Rep. Marc Carmichael.

But

Indiana Republican Party Chairman Kyle Hupfer said Rust "isn't eligible to run" because Rust doesn't have a primary voting record that allows him to run without a county chair's signature, which, according to Hupfer, will not be given to Rust. When speaking of Banks, Hupfer said, "In layman's terms, you can now start calling him the presumptive nominee."

"In a cycle like this where the Senate is going to be incredibly important for the Republican Party to win back, it's going to be incredibly expensive," Hupfer said. "To take this state off of the table early, from the party's perspective — that we're not going to have a primary, that



we're not going to have to spend money in a primary — is going to be incredibly beneficial, not just here in Indiana but across the country. "[We] pretty much should have sealed it up tonight," Hupfer said, acknowledging, though, that another candidate could still run.

Banks said the party's endorsement was "an incredible honor" and "unprecedented." When asked if Banks' endorsement was the first such endorsement of a candidate this early in a primary election bid, Hupfer said it was "the first in a long, long time."

Banks told State Affairs earlier this year that his campaign was "focused on winning the primary and that's going to be a \$7 million to \$10 million goal for our campaign to raise for the primary. If I don't have a primary opponent that means more resources to use in the general. Of course, we're hoping for that." According to FEC filings, Banks' campaign has collected \$2.2 million so far.

"I think it's a testament to how we've unified the party," Banks said. "We have President Trump's endorsement. We have the endorsement of the National Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee. And we have endorsements from sheriffs and commissioners. I think we are up to 350 endorsements that we have (secured) so far." Banks also used the occasion to make clear his support of Trump.

"President Trump endorsed me early in my campaign, and I endorse President Trump as well, and he has my full support," Banks said, making no mention of former Vice President Mike Pence, who served as the governor of Indiana while Banks was a state senator.

Banks had previously signaled support for Trump but seemingly hesitated after the 2022 mid-term election results, when Trump-backed candidates underperformed, telling Fox News Sunday that "I'll save my endorsement for another place and time for the 2024 race." In April, however, Banks told State Affairs that Trump was his "preference" while not explicitly saying it was an endorsement.

In a hyper-partisan speech Thursday night, Banks lambasted the "radical left" and laid out policy promises for his Senate race, including that he would continue to "fight" in "a war to save this country." He called for the U.S. military to be sent to the southern border "to take out Mexican drug cartels" and "treat them like the terrorists that they are." He also claimed President Joe Biden is "in bed with the Communist Party," while decrying the president's "woke" initiatives.

The 3rd District congressman also used the occasion to celebrate legislation that was recently passed into law in Indiana, including this year's Senate Enrolled Act 480, last year's House Enrolled Act 1041, and Senate Enrolled Act 1 from the special session.

GOP candidates differ on DEI views

Last week, notable Indiana Republicans offered disparate remarks concerning their stances on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs. Rep. Banks laid into

federal diversity programs as a "woke DEI bureaucracy." Meanwhile, two Republican candidates running to replace Gov. Eric Holcomb targeted the equity office he created for elimination, to which the governor responded by declaring his administration would continue to "lean into" embracing diversity.

As the Indiana Republican Party celebrated graduating its third Diversity Series class during its annual State Dinner last week, Banks gave the last speech of the night and was formally endorsed by the state party in his Senate bid. "More minorities are Republicans today than ever before because we represent the values of working-class Americans," Banks said last week, after the dinner, when asked by State Affairs whether federal-level DEI initiatives are separate in his mind from state party diversity efforts. "It's the same with all types of Americans, and it's made our party more diverse. And there's a lot to be proud of and celebrate about that. Tonight was a good celebration of that. ... That doesn't have anything to do with the federal government pushing a woke DEI bureaucracy in the military and telling kids that America is racist and evil and telling our troops the same thing. That's a whole different subject and issue that we have to fight back against to save this country," said Banks.

The Republican Diversity Series has been frequently touted by state party Chairman Kyle Hupfer, who was also Holcomb's 2020 reelection campaign manager.

Holcomb, meanwhile, last week stood his ground on the state's Office of Equity, Inclusion and Opportunity that he created three years ago in the wake of protests over the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Former state Attorney General Curtis Hill, one of the Republican hopefuls to replace the term-limited Holcomb in the 2024 elections, said last month he would shut down the diversity office and "eliminate all state-funded programs that exist only to pander to identity politics." Fort Wayne businessman Eric Doden indicated a similar stance on the state diversity effort.

Holcomb gave a firm defense of the diversity office when asked by State Affairs about that criticism.

"This administration is going to lean into embracing diversity, as long as I'm here," Holcomb said. "There's no ands, ifs, or buts about it. This is about we the people, all created equally, and we'll go out of our way to make sure that that's felt by all."

Governor

Holcomb on LG selection

State Affairs asked Gov. Holcomb whether he supported convention delegates selecting the lieutenant governor nominee, Holcomb said: "I always have." Then was asked shouldn't the governor nominee's choice carry the day? "I think it's both," Holcomb said. "I was fortunate to have the delegates' support. Typically you would secure the nomination yourself as governor and then post-primary you would come out and say — even if it was a badly

kept secret – you would say ‘This is my preference, will you join me?’ and usually that’s been the case,” Holcomb said. “That will be the case going forward. Now, if people want to announce early, that’s their prerogative. I didn’t.”

Crouch backs universal pre-k

Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch is all in on universal pre-K. Crouch told Axios yesterday that if she is elected governor next year she would push lawmakers to move Indiana’s state-funded pre-K program, On My Way Pre-K, toward universal access more quickly. “We can’t get there overnight because, quite honestly, we don’t have the infrastructure or the people to be able to do that,” she said. “But I think, because of the importance of early childhood education to the workforce of today and tomorrow, it’s important that we work towards that.”

Doriot endorses Crouch: In a tweet Tuesday, state Sen. Blake Doriot announced his endorsement of Suzanne Crouch as governor. “Like me, Suzanne served in local government and understands the importance of working together to get things done,” read a statement from Doriot. Suzanne is a constitutional conservative who will fight to protect faith, family and freedom.”

McCormick visiting 92 counties

Democrat gubernatorial candidate Jennifer McCormick tweeted earlier this week: “Our movement has committed to all 92 IN counties. We are working to make that happen. Thanks for the support in Henry, Jasper, & Kosciusko Co. this weekend. Overwhelmingly people are ready for a governor who is a public servant, empowers others, & strives toward excellence.”

General Assembly

Whitcomb, Clark running

General Assembly races are beginning to develop for the 2024 cycle. Over the past 48 hours, Democrat Trish Whitcomb announced she will challenge State Rep. Jim Lucas, R-Seymour, in HD69. And in the open SD24, Hendricks County Sheriff Brett Clark said he will seek the GOP nomination to replace retiring State Sen. John Crane. Whitcomb is the daughter of the late Republican Gov. Edgar Whitcomb. She said she intends to “bring back civility, compassion and integrity” back to the Indiana Statehouse. Rep. Lucas generated headlines earlier this summer when he was arrested and pled guilty to a DUI charge. Whitcomb will kick off her campaign at 5:30 p.m. tonight during a rally at the Mellen-camp Plaza in Seymour. Whitcomb has been involved in dozens of campaigns around the state, including serving as the Campaign Manager in Democrats’ last successful statewide campaign



when Glenda Ritz won the race for State Schools Superintendent in 2012. Whitcomb graduated from Seymour High School and earned a degree in education from Butler University. She is the former Executive Director of the Indiana Retired Teachers Association and is the former President of the Indiana Federation of Democratic Women. While at the Federation, it had the most successful fundraising and membership growth in its history. Whitcomb is currently uncontested in the Democrat primary. HD69 includes the central and eastern half of Jackson County and parts of Bartholomew, Jennings, Scott and Washington counties.

Cities

South Bend: Council candidate arrested

South Bend common council candidate arrested: A candidate for the South Bend Common Council has been arrested and is facing domestic battery charges (WSBT-TV). Roosevelt Stewart is accused of hurting his 15-year-old daughter. Roosevelt is running as a Republican Candidate in District 2 for the South Bend Common Council.

Parties

Massillamany open to state chair run

Hamilton County Republican Chairman Mario Massillamany told HPI/State Affairs Wednesday that he is open to take the state party reins should current Chairman Kyle Hupfer step down to run the coming gubernatorial campaign of Brad Chambers. “I raised \$350,000 for the party this past year. I am chair to the largest Republican Party in the state,” he told HPI.

Presidential 2024

Pence fundraiser in Carmel Aug. 28

The Mike Pence presidential campaign will have a fundraiser in Carmel hosted by Forrest and Charlotte Lucas. Mike and Karen Pence will host a private round-table at 5 p.m. and the general reception will be at 5:30 p.m. on Monday Aug. 28. The cost is \$13,200 per couple or \$6,600 per person. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis held a similar reception on July 12 at the Lucas home, drawing more than 300 donors.

View from Penciland

“We’re ready,” Marc Short, Pence’s senior adviser, told Politico about the coming first GOP presidential debate in Milwaukee next week. “It’s let’s-get-it-on time. We’ve been waiting for this for a while.” Pence aides say the prospect of sharing the stage with Trump will provide exactly the kind of contrast for which they’ve been pinning: Pence, staid and sober and studious on policy, versus a mercurial and braggadocious bluffer.

Pence unveils plan to expand federalism

Former Vice President Mike Pence unveiled a new plan to “expand federalism” on Wednesday at the National Conference of State Legislatures — the latest stop on his presidential campaign trail.

The former Indiana governor spoke to a crowd of Republican legislators who gathered for a breakfast in his home state. He called for a return to federalism, referring to the division and sharing of power between the national and state governments, with an emphasis on returning many powers to the states. Pence said America in the last century has veered “away from the wisdom of our founders when it comes to federalism.”

Pence has already rolled out an “energy expansion” plan and a strategy for “ending inflation.”

“I truly do believe in a time of historic challenges at home and abroad, states hold the key to leading America — by your example and by the policies that you can advance and develop,” Pence told the legislators. “I promise, should I have the opportunity to be your president, you will have a champion of the states in the Oval Office.”

The first proposal in Pence’s new plan is to abolish the U.S. Dept. of Education, a long popular conservative talking point. His plan claims Washington “bureaucrats” are “using the power of federal purse strings to use K-12 education as a liberal social experiment.”

However, in granting what are currently federal monies to the states, Pence would require states to “grant children the flexibility to use their tax dollars at the school of their choice — public or parochial.” Education Week, citing Census data, reports that approximately 10.5% of school funding comes from federal programs.

“On housing, highways and welfare, we’re going to return funding and block grants to the states — no strings attached,” Pence told the crowd, citing the second point in the plan. “Three, we’re going to repeal all Obamacare mandates and give states the power to implement health care assistance programs to the benefit of their people to reduce the cost of health insurance.”

The federal government stewards 640 million acres (28%) of the nation’s land, and Pence, under his administration, would begin selling “millions” of acres back to the states. “I believe that we can preserve our national treasures, cherish our great heritage in our national parks,” Pence said. “But I believe the time has come for the United States government to return a portion of these lands back to the States and the American people for development.” His chief concern is that federal agencies have not properly maintained all of the lands and that states would be better suited for identifying land needs.

Pence also aims to reduce “duplicative” welfare programs at the federal level, prohibit any regulations that

impose unfunded mandates on states, convert all federal housing programs to state-administered block grants, and enact rules and legislation to limit the federal use of eminent domain.

Overall, Pence’s plan includes the key assumption that states are better managers of resources than the federal government, a premise that has been backed by prominent thinkers such as the late economist Milton Friedman. Pence argued that because many states balance their budgets, they would inherently stand a better chance at balancing the nation’s budget in an effort to curtail its growing national debt.

53% believe Trump was illegal in Fox Poll

In connection with efforts to overturn the 2020 election, over half of registered voters think former President Donald Trump did something illegal. That’s according to a new [Fox News Poll](#) conducted before Trump and 18 others were indicted in Georgia for alleged efforts to challenge his 2020 election defeat in the state. Trump was also indicted Aug. 1 on federal charges related to 2020 election subversion allegations. Fifty-three percent believe Trump did something illegal when it comes to efforts to change the 2020 election results, including most Democrats (90%) and 6 in 10 independents (62%). About 1 in 10 Republicans think the former president did something illegal (13%). Voters are also increasingly likely to think Hunter Biden did something illegal when it comes to his foreign business dealings in Ukraine and China. Half, 50%, feel that way, up from 44% in April and a low of 37% in February.

ABC Poll shows 63% believe Trump charges

In a week where former President Donald Trump was indicted for a fourth time, a majority (63%) of Americans say that the charges approved by a grand jury in Georgia related to efforts to overturn the 2020 election results in the state are serious (47%) or somewhat serious (16%), according to a new [ABC News/Ipsos poll](#). A plurality of Americans -- 49% -- think Trump should have been charged with a crime in the Georgia case, while 32% do not think he should have been. Fifty percent of Americans say Trump should suspend his presidential campaign, while 33% don’t think he should, per the ABC News/Ipsos poll conducted using Ipsos’ KnowledgePanel.

Biden approval only 36%

President Joe Biden has devoted the past several weeks to promoting the positive impacts of his policies — but his efforts have yet to meaningfully register with the public. Only 36% of U.S. adults approve of Biden’s handling of the economy, slightly lower than the 42% who approve of his overall performance, according to the new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. ❖



Walorski tragedy thrusts Yakym from business into Congress

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

MISHAWAKA – A little over a year ago, Rudy Yakym III was a businessman and a good friend to U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski. As with many of us, he took a gut punch on learning of her death and that of two staffers and a Nappanee woman in a car accident on Aug. 3, 2022.



Then-House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy was shaken by Walorski's unexpected death. "This news is absolutely

devastating," McCarthy wrote in a Tweet. "Jackie was a dear friend, trusted advisor, and the embodiment of integrity who achieved the admiration and respect of all her colleagues in the House. She always put others first."

Prior to her funeral, Walorski's husband Dean Swihart and her mother, Martha, endorsed Yakym, who first met the congresswoman when Walorski served in the Indiana House in 2006, later joining her second bid for Congress in 2012, serving as Walorski's finance director. He worked in broadband, commercial real estate and logistics. In 2015, Gov. Mike Pence nominated Yakym to serve on the Indiana Judicial Nominating Commission.

By the end of August 2022, Team Walorski handed over a pair of 2nd CD nominations to Rudy Yakym III. Yakym won on a first ballot, and after his 13 opponents withdrew from the second caucus, he was proclaimed the heir to the late congresswoman's political legacy by acclamation after winning a 205-86 first-ballot caucus against former attorney general Curtis Hill.

"Due to the tragic circumstances that I came into this office, the primary ended up being the caucus," Yakym, who sits on the House Budget and Infrastructure committees, recounted. "It was a five-day caucus. We launched at 11 a.m. on Aug. 15, a year ago yesterday, for an 11 a.m. Aug. 20 caucus. So the normally year-long primary process was compressed to five days. The normal six-month general election process was compressed to 80 days. So I went from being a guy in business to a member of Congress in 100 days."

On Wednesday, fresh after attending the dedication to the Jackie Walorski VA Center, Rep. Yakym — who held onto his seat by defeating Democrat Paul Steury last November, 64.6% to 32.4%, respectively — sat down with

Howey Politics Indiana/State Affairs. The Q&A has been edited for clarity and brevity.

HPI: I believe I covered my first congressional race in your district in 1984, the year you were born.

Yakym: That is the year I was born and I will tell you that I grew up paying attention to politics and obviously followed your work closely. Your weekly column is published in the South Bend Tribune. I also know you were very close to Jackie and covered her work closely and sorry for your loss as well. I actually was just with Congressman Banks who led the bill to rename the Jackie Walorski VA Clinic and we just had a dedication ceremony this morning.

HPI: Tell me about your relationship with Jackie. When did it begin and how did it evolve? What did she mean to you in your life?

Yakym: I actually met Jackie when she was a state rep., back in 2006 or 2007. I got to know her through her work and as I got to know her, we became friends. Thinking about running for Congress the first time in 2010, I volunteered on her race. I really got to know her in 2011, 2012. She had just lost her first race for Congress and she came up to the hospital to visit my wife, as we had just given birth to our second child, Rudy IV. She was holding Rudy and we talked about her race and

whether she would run again. She said, "Rudy, I know you've been thinking about leaving the current job you're in. If you do, I would like for you to consider coming to work with me full-time. I'll run again if you're in and I want you to be my finance director." I was her finance director, volunteering on her race for four months. I had two kids at home and very little money at the time. And then ended up working in a paid position on her 2012 campaign. Went back into business and stayed

friends with her all the way up to the day she died, Aug. 3, of last year.

HPI: What did you learn from her? She was all over her district.

Yakym: Jackie was tenacious. She was a fighter. She never took no for an answer. I'll give you an example: Today at the dedication of the Jackie Walorski VA Clinic, a story was shared. There was a veteran who served overseas in war. He came home and he had a service dog when he was overseas. The dog had been retired. This veteran wanted to adopt the dog. This veteran was going through some things personally and thought it would be great to adopt the dog. He was told, 'That's not really a possibility. We don't do that in the military.' He called Jackie and she went to bat for him and was originally told no, that was not going to happen. So she said, 'Well, I'll just call the general.' She just started making phone calls



and would never take no for [an] answer. She was able to secure this dog for that veteran. The two of them were reunited. At Jackie's funeral, the veteran showed up and he brought his dog. He was just so thankful. I just remember Jackie was somebody who just never took no for an answer. She was always ready to wake up and go to work for the people in the 2nd District. She traveled to every county in the district multiple times over. She listened to Hoosiers and would take their concerns to Washington. She was someone who really understood and taught me what the role of a representative is and means. It is our job to represent; it is our job to advocate. In a body of 435 members, we are not a sole decision maker on anything.

We are part of a body. It is our job to represent the district in that body. That's something Jackie ingrained in me when she was a representative in the state and also as a federally-elected representative.

HPI: In my coverage of Jackie, she spent an inordinate amount of time on agriculture, manufacturing and defense sector issues. Have you picked up those batons? I notice you've got WOTUS legislation. And then what have you started on your own policy initiatives?

Yakym: We've picked up those three batons; you out-laid them very well. Those issues weren't only important to Jackie, I think the reason they were important to her [was] because they were important to the district. Look at the district: We're a manufacturing district, an agricultural district, and we're a district that has military interests, especially with Grissom Air Reserve Base; but also, we have more than 55,000 veterans in the district. Those are all interests we have picked up and carried forward. I would add to that my service on the House Budget Committee: One of the missions I am on is to restore fiscal responsibility to our nation's capital. We've really lost that over the course of a number of years. This is not necessarily one party's fault; both parties have made contributions toward that. That's why I'm on the budget committee. My No. 1 choice was to be on Ways & Means. My second and third choices were transportation and infrastructure. Being on the Budget Committee means I deal with tax and budget issues. Given my business background, I'm happy to represent Hoosier interests.

HPI: Rep. Walorski was engaged on the issue of Trump-era tariffs, some of which have carried over to the Biden administration. She had some memorable hearings on the tariffs. Can you give us an update on that and how those tariffs are impacting the 2nd CD?

Yakym: In a macro sense we're interested in the issues of trade, both inbound and outbound. They are really impactful for the 2nd District. There are issues we've worked on the inbound side. These are issues we

hear from our businesses all the time. It's interesting to see some of the sea change on it. We had a number of businesses who wanted no tariffs at all. Now that some of them are on, let's say as related to China, we have a number of businesses who have moved their manufacturing interests to another country in the Far East ...

HPI: Like Vietnam?

Yakym: Vietnam is a big one. Some of them have redomesticated their production. What businesses are looking for more than anything is stability. What we



actually hear from some of our businesses is they want those tariffs to continue, simply because they've already made the investment somewhere else. Once that investment is made and you remove the tariff, it's a scalpel approach when we remove things as opposed to just taking a hatchet.

You have to be thoughtful on all policy [at] a macro level so there is predictability. We've also been very active in working on outbound issues as well. The Mexican government tried to ban GMO corn. A lot of that corn is grown in Indiana. We worked with and led the Hoosier delegation in signing a letter to the U.S. Trade Representative to ensure they open a formal dispute with the international trade wars to make sure Mexico abides by the USMCR that was passed a few years ago.

HPI: You mentioned Mexico and another issue from the Walorski-era was immigration reform. Last time I looked, Indiana had 150,000 unfilled jobs. What are manufacturers and farmers telling you? And would you be interested in forging a bipartisan solution like Mike Pence attempted to do 15 years ago?

Yakym: I would like to see comprehensive immigration reform. I'd like to see it in a macro sense in three separate issues that are all intertwining. No. 1, we have to secure the southern border. We've roughly got 300,000 people a month coming across the southern border, or about 10,000 a day. That equates to 1% of the total number of people in the country every year are coming across [the southern border] illegally. Issue No. 2 is what do you do with the people who are already here? You've got 15 million or more here already, which a third of the country cares about. You have another third who cares about the third issue that you referenced, which is the legal immigration system. Today if a business in this community has an unfilled job and there's a foreign worker who wants to come here, who wants a VISA and takes a job that's unfilled, that process is convoluted and confusing. No one understands it or knows where to go. What I'd like to see on a macro sense on that issue is for us to really start to think about the legal immigration system for what it is economically. That is a supply of labor into the marketplace.

When we look at it as a supply of labor and then peel the onion back further, and say, 'If our unemployment rate in a place like Elkhart County back in 2009, when we were in the middle of the Great Recession, is 17%, we should turn the spigot off.' No one comes into Elkhart County to take jobs when there's an unemployment rate of 17%. But at the height of COVID, when we're manufacturing well north of 500,000 RV units per year, and the unemployment rate is 1.7%, we ought to then turn the spigot on and allow people to come in legally at a rate to fill the jobs we don't have people for. If we change our thoughts and look at it on economic terms we'll be far better off. A comprehensive approach to address all three of those is warranted. We did pass HR2, which passed out of the House. It was a pretty comprehensive border security package, though I am not at all hopeful that the Senate is going to take that up in [its] current form.

HPI: You've been active on the Waters of the U.S. issue (WOTUS). What is the Biden administration doing that concerns you and district farmers?

Yakym: We've heard loud and clear from our farmers that the issue with WOTUS is the administration has taken it too far. For example, you've got a puddle on a farm and the administration will come in and declare that a navigable water, therefore they have jurisdictional authority over that puddle. What we're trying to do legislatively is to get the administration back to where it should be, which is navigable waters.

HPI: What other big budget committee issues are you working on?

Yakym: What our spending levels will be going into next year That's a big conversation we're having inside the family right now. The Debt Ceiling bill we passed earlier this year allows us to, maybe for the first time in American history, spend less money next year than we did the prior year. That's a huge deal. You've got to be able to thoughtfully bend the curve on spending to a much more reasonable and rational rate. The other issue when we return on Sept. 12, we'll be having hearings on a budget markup. The Budget Committee published a 10-year plan to balance the budget. If we do nothing, we've got \$16 trillion in additional debt that will be added to the current \$31 trillion, probably now \$32 trillion. The Deficit Increase Bill passed earlier this year will save \$1.7 trillion to \$2 trillion. We're looking at an additional \$14.8 trillion ... to \$15 trillion in deficits we'll rack up over the next 10 years if we do nothing. So we're looking to pass a plan that balances the budget in the next 10 years. You'll see a plan from us in late September.

HPI: My colleague Jack Colwell had a column last week saying Democrats might as well put up a help wanted sign to find a challenger for you. Where does your reelection campaign stand?

Yakym: It doesn't deter us [from] waking up

and working hard every single day to represent Hoosiers in the district. On our tour this month, our "Make It, Grow It, Move It" tour, we've got over 60 stops planned. On the political side, we've been working hard to raise money. We've not formally announced for reelection, but I do intend to run in 2024. Our job is to work hard on the ground every day to represent Hoosiers, but also to earn their vote. Votes can never be taken for granted. One of the things I've said before is it is the right of the people of the 2nd District to install me into this job, and it is their right to change their minds. I'm on a two-year contract. If you want your contract renewed, you've got to go out into the field and play the game that causes the fans, the voters, to say, "You know, we'd like to renew this contract." One of the things Jackie taught me was one of the things our Founding Fathers intended, is this seat belongs to the people of the 2nd District. There are 750,000 people in this district. Those 750,000 people collectively go to the polls and it is their right to do that. I wake up everyday thinking, "How do I earn that right today?"

HPI: We have the Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump facing 91 criminal charges. What's your take on that? What would your message be to the folks in the 2nd CD?

Yakym: What I called for from day one is that we need to have equal justice under the law. If you're the Department of Justice, you have to also look at and go after Hunter Biden and the Biden family for the things they're doing. You can't go after one hardcore and one with a softer approach. You've got to treat them both equally. I don't believe that is

happening. I also believe you have a situation here where most of the material facts in this case have been known for quite some time: two years. To only now, after he's declared for a presidential campaign, be bringing these charges up is a little frustrating. You can't delay until he's a presidential candidate when the material facts have been known for two years.

HPI: You were appointed by Gov. Pence to the Indiana Judicial Nominating Commission, so you've had a relationship with him. Have you made a decision on who you're backing for president? And would you consider backing the favorite son, Mike Pence?

Yakym: Here's what I'm confident of: Coming out of the 2024 race we will have a Republican president. Period, end of story. I also feel the Republican primary voters, and I'm one primary vote, I feel confident the Republican primary voters will make the right decision on who that should be.

HPI: You're not endorsing or backing anyone right now?

Yakym: At this point, I have not endorsed or am backing anyone. Part of my job and our real focus has been on Indiana's 2nd District. ❖



Upchurch talks about his criminal history

By JACK COLWELL
South Bend Tribune



SOUTH BEND – Desmond Upchurch, the Republican nominee for mayor of South Bend, says he is frustrated by the prospect that Democrats will tar him with two criminal cases in which he pleaded guilty over two decades ago in his home state of North Carolina and the lack of support from his own party.

Frustration is compounded by realization that no Republican has been elected mayor of South Bend since 1967.

"I think this is still a winnable race," Upchurch said during a long

discussion over coffee in which he freely admitted guilt in the criminal cases, assault involving a girlfriend and a larceny charge involving a credit card.

"I slapped her," Upchurch said of the altercation with the girlfriend. He said he pleaded guilty because, "I mean, I did it." Although the charge did not cite domestic violence, Upchurch said, he has talked of his own incident in speaking here about preventing domestic violence.

In the other case, Upchurch said, he allowed use of his credit card in what was first charged as embezzlement, but was reduced to larceny. He again pleaded guilty. He said "about \$800" was involved.

Both cases were in Durham County, where the 46-year-old candidate was born and raised. He said there was no sentence to jail in either case and he was excused from a required anger management class in 1999, when he joined the Army. He said he served for two decades, with three combat tours in Iraq, and completed duty as a recruiter in South Bend, concentration on enlisting Notre Dame pre-med students for future Army health care.

Upchurch told of problems in obtaining support from local Republicans.

He conceded that rumors of the past criminal charges and concern that Democrats are aware of them could be scaring away some Republicans and leaving him with scant funding for the fall race against Mayor James Mueller, the Democratic incumbent.

"They're worried I will bring down the rest of the ticket," Upchurch said.

He disagreed with that, saying that he as the first Black Republican nominee for mayor could reach into Black precincts for support and that he could take advan-

tage of recent Democratic voter apathy.

Upchurch also lamented that a fund-raising lunch that he had scheduled with Sen. Todd Young was cancelled, "even though I was ready to put it on." One Republican official with knowledge of the cancellation said he was one who warned Young's staffers that an appearance with Upchurch could be problematic.

"I may have turned off people during the auditor's race," Upchurch said in discussing lack of party support. He came within 1 percentage point of being elected county auditor last year. However, it was a Republican year, with party nominees winning numerous county races.

A criticism of Upchurch is that he also could have won with the Republican tide if he had campaigned more actively.

Upchurch said his campaigning was disrupted by three deaths in his family and attending three weddings, one out of the country. That, he said, could have created the "unfortunate depiction . . . that maybe I wasn't that serious."

He said he also was running against a popular and qualified Democrat and, just as now, didn't get much financial help from his party.

Whether he will get party support now, he said, will be shown in campaign finance reports that will reflect party priorities.

In openly discussing the past charges, Upchurch



could be seeking to get ahead of any late-campaign attack by Democrats and an investigation of the North Carolina details by Clifton French of REAL News Michiana.

Upchurch contended he still could "have a great shot" at upsetting Mueller to become the first Republican elected mayor since 1967 and first Black mayor ever. ❖

Jack Colwell has covered Indiana politics for over five decades for the South Bend Tribune.
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GOP can learn from Rupertus Meldenius

By CRAIG DUNN

CARMEL – I don't normally lobby my representatives and senators at either the state or national level to pass specific pieces of legislation. I figure that they have enough on their hands that they don't need another self-interested constituent seeking governmental solutions to their life's problems. The last time I went into full lobbying mode was in 2009 when the Indiana State Senate was actively debating anointing the sugar cream pie as our official state pie.



I became apoplectic that a gelatinous mass of sugary goo would become our official pie instead of the apple pie that I was raised on. Oh sure, I could understand the selection of sugar cream pie as the public enemy number one of the American Diabetic Association, but not the official pie of the state that claims Johnny Appleseed as its own.

No, although I've worked hard over the years to help elect my fair share of Republican representatives and senators, I've not used my work for them nor my friendships with them to lobby them for passage of certain legislation, at least until now. I am now advocating for the creation both in Indiana and nationally of Rupertus Meldenius Day.

Meldenius was a German theologian during the 30 Years War who wrote a treatise on the conflict, now largely forgotten, which started with the memorable, often quoted and misattributed sentence, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."

If there ever was a sentence that summed up the ideal religious, political and organizational philosophy, this was it. Ole Rupertus Meldenius deserves his own day for coming up with the wise words. I suggest March 4 as a suitable date.

At this point, you may be asking exactly why Craig has gone off his rocker and why you've wasted valuable time reading the previous two paragraphs. Stay with me. This has a point. I think. As I've watched the 2024 presidential campaign begin to unfold, I've been disturbed, to say the least, by the

lack of coherent vision displayed by any of the Republican candidates.

First, we have candidate Donald Trump and then we have a dozen other candidates acting as wannabe Donald Trumps. No one that I have seen has expressed a clear-cut vision of America's future and how we best can get there. Folks, let's admit it, we have a world of problems and challenges confronting our country. We owe over \$30 trillion.

Social Security and Medicare will soon be bankrupt. Our education system lags behind that of our principal competitors. We have untold numbers of people addicted to drugs and living in boxes and tents in virtually every city. Crime is out of control and our law enforcement officers are in fear of doing their jobs. Wokeism has crippled free speech, free thought and freedom of association. We have more than a lion's share of challenges that go largely ignored by our Republican candidates. Please note, the Democrats are masters of the art of kicking a can down the road, but I don't expect better of them.

Candidate Trump spends all of his campaign time whining about the past and his perceived persecution. The only thing he has offered up for the future is his goal of dismantling virtually every alphabet organization and exacting revenge and retribution for every perceived indignation that he has suffered. If you want four years of a United States bogged down in the Trump Get Even Tour, good luck with that.

As noted, the other serious candidates seem paralyzed by the fear of saying something that will alienate Trump's supporters. News flash! Trump's supporters are not going to vote for you. If you stay on the course of not trying to offend Trump while looking for enough votes to win the nomination, you are sadly misguided and will fail. Americans are looking for someone with the vision and message to inspire them to greater things, the kind of

vision and messaging that made John Kennedy and Ronald Reagan heroes. Calling other candidates fatsos, big ears, DeSanctimonius or poopy pants, just won't get the job done.

This brings me back to Rupertus Meldenius. The Republican Party needs a candidate who can identify the core principles and essentials that our party stands for and asks for unity in reaching those core values. We need a candidate who can clearly understand what issues are non-essential and asks us to allow individuals to enjoy their liberty.

Finally, we need a candidate who approaches the key issues we face with a sense of charity that understands that we



live in a complex world devoid of simple answers or fixes. The presidential candidate who can effectively verbalize the segmentation of issues into the essential and the non-essential and do it with a spirit of charity, love and understanding, will win the Republican nomination and will go on to be the president of the United States.

The Republican Party has long been the party of great ideas and vision. The end of slavery, economic and personal freedom, sound economic principles, strong national defense, an unshakable belief in the Constitution, law and order and civil rights have been the clarion call of

Republicans since the inception of the party. We have always seen America as that shining city on a hill radiating a thousand points of light. We can be that party again, if we truly aspire to be.

So, here's to our representatives and senators recognizing the great idea of Rupertus Meldenius, an idea with a much longer shelf life than a sugar cream pie.

March Fourth! ❖

Craig Dunn is the former chairman of the Howard County Republican Party.

Voters will have another chance to weigh in on abortion issue

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI Indiana



ANDERSON – Indiana now has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the country.

Since Aug. 1, the procedure has been available only in a handful of hospitals and only in very limited circumstances, to preserve the life or health of the mother or in cases of rape or incest. For the most part, abortion in Indiana is now defined as

a criminal act.

The timeline for these exceptions is also a bit foggy. The law defines the beginning of a pregnancy as the moment when a sperm cell fertilizes an egg. The clock starts ticking then, but the expectant mother likely won't know she's pregnant for at least a few more weeks. Still, the deadline for a victim of rape or incest to obtain an abortion is 10 weeks. Any later than that, and the woman, or perhaps the girl, will be forced to travel to a state with less restrictive laws.

For a woman whose life and health are in danger, the new law grants a bit more time, 20 weeks post-fertilization. But what happens if the condition doesn't emerge until later, after this artificially imposed deadline has passed? Attorneys challenging the law are asking the Indiana Supreme Court for clarification.

The law does specify that a woman can't be prosecuted for obtaining an illegal abortion, but it says a physician who carries out such a procedure stands to lose his or her license to practice medicine. This is a dramatic change from the law that was in place just weeks before.

For more than a year after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the nearly 50-year-old precedent enshrined in Roe v. Wade, Indiana stood as a beacon for women in

states where the laws were more restrictive. Now, Indiana is one of the states women will be forced to flee.

On the day after this new law took effect, Planned Parenthood held a news conference to stress that its facilities were still operating. "No matter what extremists are doing to attack your right and your choices about your own bodies, Planned Parenthood will be here for you now more than ever," said Rebecca Gibron, CEO of the multi-state affiliate serving Indiana. "Planned Parenthood health care centers in Indiana are here with open doors, and we'll be here tomorrow and every single day after."

Katie McHugh, an OB/GYN at Planned Parenthood, predicted more women would die as a result of this new law. "We are third in the nation right now for maternal mortality," she said. "I fear that we will be in a race to the top with the other states that are banning abortion access."

When Gov. Eric Holcomb signed this law a year ago, guys like me were suggesting the Republican Party might pay a price in the coming election. After all, polls had consistently found most Hoosiers supported a woman's right to choose. A survey last fall by Ball State University put that number at 56%, and it found more than three out of four respondents saying a candidate's stance on abortion would be at least somewhat important in deciding how to vote.

Still, when Hoosiers went to the polls last fall, not a single legislator who voted for this new law lost his or her seat. Mike Fichter, CEO of Indiana Right to Life, was quick to point out the miscalculation. "In spite of predictions by some pundits and pollsters that Indiana went too far in its approach to protecting unborn children," he said, "yesterday's election results serve as a reminder that Indiana is a pro-life state."

Will that still be the case next November, when Hoosiers have had a chance to live with these restrictions for more than a year? I guess we'll find out. ❖

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A more thoughtful take on quality of life

By MICHAEL J. HICKS

MUNCIE – Any occasional reader of this column will know that I write often about the importance of quality of life in a region's economy. Much of my technical research in academic journals and writing with think tanks, like Brookings, also involves the role quality of life plays in regional prosperity. Today, nearly most governors and mayors acknowledge the key role of quality of life in their state or city. So, I am heartened that the work of so many economists, sociologists and urban planners is finally getting the attention of policymakers.



Still, there are some frustrating hurdles to overcome in explaining quality of life. Just to be

clear, I'm no longer very worried about convincing folks that quality of life is important. Most elected leaders understand it is important. If you lead a state, city or county that is not prioritizing quality of life, you face a difficult economic future, and you serve as a valuable example to those who are addressing their shortfalls. I would not wish to interfere with that important public service.

What frustrates me about the quality-of-life debate is its immaturity. When policymakers talk about quality of life, it seems they immediately mention something like, "We don't have mountains; we don't have ocean beaches." Or, I hear, "We need to get better downtowns or restaurants or bars."

To be sure, plenty of folks like mountains, oceans, nice downtowns, good restaurants and bars. People also like warm Januarys and cool July days, walking trails, dog parks and gyms. However, running through a hypothetical list of amenities is the worst way to think about improving quality of life. There's a better approach.

Measuring quality of life is conceptually straightforward. The best way is to simply calculate how much more or less people are willing to pay for an identical house located in different locations. Whichever one is higher, is a better place. Then of course, you can extend that process to every county in the country. The "unexplained" home value in each place is a measure of local quality of life. Of course, to do this you must create the "identical" home using a statistical model that counts square feet, year built, number of rooms and the like. Economists have been doing that for half a century; it's just easier now with faster computers.

The other half of the equation is to measure how much more or less an identical worker would accept in wages to work in a place. Workers demand a wage

premium to live in undesirable places. Of course, this metric means creating statistically identical workers, by accounting for education, occupation, job tenure and the like. Again, we've been doing that successfully for half a century as well.

By combining the unexplained home value and wage premium, we get a pretty good measure of quality of life in a county. What's superb about this approach is that it measures what people actually do, not what they say they like. This process also considers those who live in a community, as well as the preferences of those who choose to live elsewhere, which is something survey work almost never does.

This process requires no assumptions about what people like or dislike. That's a critical element because we are such a wonderfully heterogenous species. If we uniformly only liked mountains or ocean beaches, there'd be no one residing in the area from central Ohio to the Rockies, or South Alabama to the Arctic Ocean. Alas, people do live in these areas, and the interests and desires of these people need to be considered.

This, of course, does not mean that amenities don't matter. But, instead of assuming what folks might like, we can go back to our measure of quality of life for sophisticated insights. You see, we have detailed data on every American county. I have perhaps 500 or 600 amenities for each place. These range from the average January temperature from 1945 to today, to the miles of shoreline, to the quality of schools, daily average particulate pollution, violent crime rate, the share of residents who belong to congregations, and the number of gyms and golf courses. We have these and 500 more amenities.

These data allow us to ask, "What amenities most predict a high quality of life?" We can do so for the whole nation, and for multi-state regions, such as the Great Lakes states. Something like that ought to guide our policy choices. The insights are important because Indiana does very well on some measures of quality of life, and on some amenities. However, the state does very poorly on many others.

Across several studies, we report the most predictive amenities for quality of life, and put them into three buckets: Natural amenities, public amenities, and private amenities. Many, many other economists have done the same thing. One consistent result is that state and local government play a very big role in all three of these, but in ways that may not be immediately obvious.

Government cannot reasonably affect mountains, oceans, or weather. What government can do is provide cleaner air and water, and turn more places into parks and locations that people can enjoy. Indiana does well in some of these areas. Our state parks are fabulous, and we have significant natural amenities. But, like other Great Lakes states, there are untapped opportunities in our natural environment.

In terms of private amenities, the role of government is critical, but narrow. You don't need to attract the

"right" shops or stores. Rather, simply get out of the way of private businesses. Indiana does this extraordinarily well. Starting a new business, entering a new occupation, or investing in someone else is easy here. We have very few restrictive occupational licenses, and an accommodative approach to a new business. So, if consumers demand a new restaurant or gym, the free market of entrepreneurs has few constraints on meeting that demand.

Indiana's problem is that in the areas that are the strongest predictor of quality of life, we do poorly. Our challenge is that the largest predictors of quality of life are those affected by good local public services. These are firstly school quality, then crime, then the health of residents. These are all things in which state and local government plays a critical role.



A walk down memory lane

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Come with me now to those exciting days of yesteryear, in 2012, when the average weekly wage in the United States was \$1,000. It was thrilling as we emerged slowly from the financial bubble of 2008.



Our national rate of increase in wages was 4.7% compared to a year earlier and it didn't bother us that only 14 of the 50 states enjoyed that stratospheric level above \$1,000. Only three states were \$200 above \$1,000, and nine states \$200 under \$1,000. Income disparity, we are told, is a condition of nature. Mississippi, Idaho and South Dakota just didn't

have the natural resources of New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts.

The bottom three are physically separated and very different from each other. The top three are close both geographically and in character. Perhaps, low wages suit the life styles of the people who earn them. Is it Chardonnay versus Kool-Aid?

Where was Indiana back in that golden year of 2012? Our average weekly wage was \$816, 39th in the nation. That figure was the lowest in the Great Lakes region, but, by the grace of a benevolent Heaven, \$15 above that of Kentucky. Let us now fast forward to 2022, last year for those who have forgotten where we are in Pope Gregory's calendar. Without adjusting for inflation, all 50 states, except Mississippi, are now above \$1,000 in average weekly wages. Connecticut has been replaced by California in the top three states. Indiana still ranks 39th.

Where average weekly wages for Hoosiers were

The only place Indiana rises close to the national average in any of these metrics is in our crime rate. So, in the areas that matters most, and are most sensitive to public policy, we lag the nation substantially. These facts cannot be wished away by one-off local investments, large business incentives or begging college students to remain in the state. It won't be that cheap. ❖

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18.4% below the national level in 2012, we were...wait for it...18.4% below the national level in 2022. Sadly, the other four Great Lake states (Ohio, Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin) remain at a higher level than Indiana. But we are redeemed by the persistence of Kentucky below us. That's been the Hoosier way: Keep the engine running, but make no progress in the race.

However, after compiling this record of stability, Indiana is stepping out on the track with a new concept to gain ground. The much-vaunted Indiana Economic Development Corporation, lovingly known as the IEDC, has revealed a new strategy. As they did in Boone County, so will they do elsewhere. Unkindly identified as the Boone Boondoggle, IEDC secretly bought farm property north of Lebanon along I-65 for the benefit of Eli Lilly and Purdue University. This was a brave break from tradition. Previously, the private sector identified where to locate and the state happily accommodated with infrastructure, training grants, and tax forgiveness.

Or was it new? Who sat in the meetings that chose Boone County? Who was there when it was decided to move huge quantities of water from the Wabash River to this less soggy site? The IEDC is unconstrained by rules of transparency. And now two of its former leaders may be vying for the governorship. Ain't the Deity good to Indiana? ❖

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Jonathan Rauch, The Atlantic: The Republican Party's strongest alternative to former President Donald Trump is in trouble. Trumpy Republicans want the real thing, not an imitation. Non-Trumpy Republicans just aren't impressed. The candidate himself has yet to find a compelling message. The result is that once again, as in 2016, Trump is likely to prevail because Republicans cannot coalesce around an alternative—even though a candidate who is experienced in government, solidly conservative, and acceptable to most factions of the party is right there in front of them. I speak, of course, of former Vice President Mike Pence. Pence? Seriously? His polling is in the single digits. He had to scramble to get into the first Republican presidential debate. But Republicans, if they're smart, won't write him off, because he is their best bet to win in 2024 and move past Trump without splitting the party. Consider the position Republicans find themselves in. First, and most obviously, their front-running candidate is fighting four criminal prosecutions. To say that this will be a distraction for him and the party is putting it mildly.

Regardless of Trump's entanglement with the law, he is a lousy candidate. He has already lost once to Joe Biden, and nothing has changed dramatically in his favor since then. Biden has weaknesses of his own, but his flaws — his age, his lack of vision, his muddled messaging — recede into the background against Trump's chaotic volatility. He is well positioned to run another version of his 2020 front-porch campaign, emphasizing his steadiness, the strong economy, and a thousand infrastructure projects while Trump noisily defeats himself. Biden is a weak incumbent who is only strong against Trump. In the days when party insiders played a key role in choosing presidential candidates, they looked for exactly the qualities that Mike Pence exhibits: the ability to govern, to unify the party, and to win in November. From their point of view, Pence should be the obvious favorite. Though humbled by Trump's populist revolution, the party establishment still matters. It ought to be investing in Pence by talking up his chances, opening the dollar spigots, and offering support and endorsements.

Party elders should see him, not DeSantis, as the logical alternative to Trump. They cannot coronate him (even if they wanted to), but they can boost his credibility now and signal that, should he do well in the early contests next year, they will quickly close ranks behind him. The other Republican candidates should be prepared to do the same. In 2016, Trump won the nomination because too many candidates stayed in the race too long. In 2020, Biden won the presidency because most of the other candidates cleared the field for him as soon as he emerged as the front-runner. The lesson for Republicans is not rocket science. Strategic discipline—coalescing quickly around



an alternative to Trump—is essential in 2024. Of course, Pence's chances depend mainly on Mike Pence. No amount of boosting can rescue him if he withers on the stump or voters simply don't want him. Remember, after all, the story of John McCain in 2008. Though his campaign seemingly collapsed, he came back to win the nomination because primary voters saw that he was their most electable candidate. ❖

Jonathan V. Last, The Bulwark: Here is a theory I cannot test, but which I believe to be true: If Mike Pence were to walk through the crowd at a Donald Trump rally — for instance, the recent giant event where 50,000 Trump supporters swamped the town of Pickens, South Carolina — he would need a security detail. He would not be safe without one, and he might not be safe with one either. In fact, I have a hard time believing that any Secret Service team would agree to go along with such an excursion. Enough Trump supporters hate Pence that much. By contrast, I believe Pence could safely walk through the crowd at a Joe Biden event — like his June 17 rally in Philadelphia — without any security. Some Biden supporters might make snide comments, but it seems equally possible that others might shake his hand and thank him for saving the republic on January 6, 2021. Not to belabor the obvious, but, for Pence, this is a problem. Because Pence is running for president as a Republican. Yet for the country, this isn't just a problem; it's an almost biblical tragedy. Mike Pence is the man who told his tribe the truth. They turned on him for it. And now, having finally found the courage to leave, he's desperate for acceptance among them once again. For his part, Pence is sanguine about this unpleasantness. Last month, when asked about Trump's latest threat — that it would be "very dangerous" for America if he were convicted of crimes — he waved away the possibility. "Everyone in our movement are the kind of Americans who love this country, are patriotic or law-and-order people who would never have done anything like that there or anywhere else," Pence told CNN's Dana Bash. Bash was brought up short. "That's pretty remarkable that you're not concerned about it, given the fact that they wanted to hang you on January 6," she said. Pence responded, "The people in this movement, the people who rallied behind our cause in 2016 and 2020, are the most God-fearing, law-abiding, patriotic people in this country, and I ... won't stand for those kinds of generalizations, because they have no basis in fact." Never in American politics has a candidate so dutifully followed the instruction of Jesus: "To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also." So whatever you want to say about Mike Pence, I'll bet that if a bunch of MAGA Proud Boys demanded his tunic, he'd offer them his cloak too. God bless him. ❖

ISP searches home of Jamey Noel

JEFFERSONVILLE — A home owned by Jamey Noel — a mainstay in local and state GOP politics and the former sheriff of Clark County — was searched Wednesday by Indiana State Police (Cunningham & Suddeath, [News & Tribune](#)). ISP Capt. Ron Galaviz said warrants were served at the Old Tay Bridge home in Jeffersonville as part of an investigation into a Clark County public official. He said ISP doesn't confirm the names of suspects during an investigation. The search was related to allegations of public corruption, tax evasion, fraud and ghost employment, according to Galaviz. It was unclear as of Wednesday evening whether any arrests were made. The home that was searched is on the tax rolls as belonging to Noel. Members of the Jeffersonville Fire Department were seen carrying in saws and an axe into the house while ISP was searching the residence. The search was ongoing as of 7 p.m. Wednesday. Noel finished his second consecutive term as sheriff in 2022. He was unable to seek a third term last year due to state law. His replacement, Republican Scottie Maples, who held high-ranking positions with the Clark County's Sheriff's Office under Noel, released a statement Wednesday evening indicating he'd alerted ISP of "potentially criminal behavior" by his predecessor's administration uncovered during a review of the department's budget. "Because no one is above the law, I referred the evidence we uncovered to the Indiana State Police to ensure an impartial and independent investigation," Maples said in the news release, referring any additional questions to ISP. "We'll continue to cooperate with the independent investigation in every way we can." Clark County Prosecutor Jeremy Mull said the ISP is working with a special prosecutor. He declined to identify the special prosecutor. Noel is the chair of the Clark County



Republican Party and the 9th District GOP.

Noblesville library trustee replaced

NOBLESVILLE — Noblesville school board members voted Tuesday to appoint an English teacher to the Hamilton East Public Library Board, removing a fellow school board member from the library board: the president who was behind a push to remove "inappropriate" books from young adult sections ([IndyStar](#)). Bill Kenley, an English teacher at Noblesville High School, will replace current HEPL Board President Laura Alerding. The school board's vote was 3-2, with Alerding and fellow board member Misti Ray dissenting. Alerding was one of the library board members who voted for and helped develop the board's collection development policy, a review of all youth books to move "inappropriate" content to the two library locations' adult sections.

Task Force 1 heads for Maui search

INDIANAPOLIS — A 70-member team from Indiana Task Force 1 will soon deploy to the island of Maui, Hawaii, after being activated as a Type 1 Urban Search & Rescue. Earlier this week two members, including a K-9 unit, deployed from Indiana to Maui as the search for survivors continues after deadly wildfires hit the island ([WRTV](#)).

Cannabis proposal makes Ohio ballot

COLUMBUS, Ohio ([AP](#)) — A proposal to legalize recreational adult use of marijuana in Ohio was cleared Wednesday to appear on statewide ballots this fall after the Republican-led state Legislature failed to act on it. The measure would allow adults 21 and over to buy and possess up to 2.5 ounces of cannabis and to grow plants at home. A 10% tax would be

imposed on purchases, to be spent on administrative costs, addiction treatment programs, municipalities with dispensaries and social equity and jobs programs.

UAW prepares for strike vote

ROANOKE, Ind. ([WPTA and AP](#)) — About 146,000 members of the United Auto Workers union will vote next week on whether to authorize their leaders to call strikes against the Detroit automakers. Union President Shawn Fain told members in a Facebook Live appearance Tuesday that the talks, which started in mid-July, are moving slowly and have yet to get to wages and other economic issues.

20% of third graders struggling to read

TERRE HAUTE — Indiana reading test scores released Wednesday by the state show nearly one in five third graders still struggle to read in what the secretary of education called a "crisis" ([Terre Haute Tribune-Star](#)). Statewide results of the Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination assessment show 81.9% of the more than 65,000 Indiana's third grade students demonstrated proficiency at reading, a slight improvement of 0.3 percentage points over results for the 2021-2022 school year. "Today, nearly one in five Indiana students is unable to read by the end of third grade," Education Secretary Katie Jenner said in a news release. "This is a crisis that could have a long-term negative impact on Indiana's economy and negative repercussions throughout our society. "We have no time to waste, and together, we must urgently work to improve reading outcomes for Indiana students, including supporting both current and future educators with the knowledge and tools necessary to teach our students to read using evidence-based literacy instruction, rooted in science of reading," she said.