



Obama reaches out to Coats, GOP

Indiana senator senses new engagement from the aloof President

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – President Obama, seeking to revive a “grand bargain” on spending while doing an end-around on congressional leadership, had dinner with U.S. Sen. Dan Coats and 10 of his GOP Senate colleagues last night at the Jefferson Hotel in Washington.

“The real thing here that is a step forward is the President’s willingness to engage,” Coats told Howey Politics Indiana this morning. “He’s not engaged in the past four years. He started out after the election basically taking his case to the campaign trail. I think it has dawned on him this is no longer working. He was pretty engaged last night.”

“The President greatly enjoyed the dinner and had a good exchange of ideas with the senators,” a senior administration official said of the two-hour dinner that included Sens. John McCain, Tom Coburn, Bob Corker (Tenn.), Kelly Ayotte



(N.H.), Richard Burr (N.C.), Mike Johanns (Neb.), Pat Toomey (Pa.), Ron Johnson (Wis.), John Hoeven (N.D.) and Saxby Chambliss (Ga.).

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Dems & rural Indiana

By **SHAW R. FRIEDMAN**

LaPORTE, Ind. – There are large stretches of rural and small town Indiana that ought to be prime ground for Democratic legislative candidates where we seem to be getting our clocks cleaned more and more. While raw partisan gerrymandering is part of the reason for the defeats, it can’t be blamed all by itself.



Take a fairly wide swath of southern Indiana along the Ohio River where Democrats have seen our numbers reduced dramatically in recent election cycles. There is no reason that a populist Democratic message shouldn’t

The Washington Post

THE FIX by Chris Cillizza

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appeal to working class families there if economic fairness and pocketbook issues are stressed.

Many of these regions have seen tough times where much of their problems have been neglected by the Republicans who govern this state and who hail from the very prosperous Indianapolis suburbs. These neglected parts of the state are places where a well honed Democratic message focusing on ways in which state government can be put on the side of the average Joe or Jill should have some appeal.

Whether it is making sure that utility rates are kept in check, keeping a tight rein on bank lending practices or making sure that insurance companies are regulated closely or ensuring that basic state services like job training or child protection or unemployment benefits are provided, we have every reason to believe that working families should respond well to such a platform. But what's holding us back?

Is it the culture wars where Republicans seem to have been able to demonize Democrats as somehow out of touch with the values of mainstream, Main Street Indiana?

I would suggest it's too simplistic for Democrats to simply go out and try to inoculate themselves as one recent office-seeker did by breezily claiming to be a "gun totin', bible quotin'" candidate and believe that such empty sloganeering is going to overcome years of attacks coming from the Republican Right.

Democrats have to not only talk the talk, but walk the walk. I'd say that we as Democrats have to stand up periodically and not let our normal civil libertarian impulses compel us to defend violent movies or TV shows or video games on 1st Amendment grounds.

Similarly, we shouldn't stand back and allow pop culture to denigrate religion or basic family values which are pretty important to the av-

erage Hoosier. Just as we vigorously defend diversity and tolerance, we need to be just as vigilant in defending basic religious freedom and expression in all forms.

Too often, my well-meaning Democratic liberal brethren scratch their heads and wonder what's the matter with working class whites in rural areas who seem to be voting against their own interests when they elect Republican legislators who are owned lock, stock and barrel by corporate interests, whether they be banks, utilities or even the financial sector.

I think it's time that progressive Democrats who want to have an impact on economic fairness issues be willing to stand up and say "enough is enough" when it comes to those who say that the 1st Amendment means "anything goes."

We need to be just as critical when popular culture or movies are violent or denigrating to traditional family values. For instance, I winced when I read the litany of liberal groups who believed it was okay that a blogger should be allowed to "intimidate" a judge with outrageous on-line comments simply because they felt such expression should be permitted under the 1st Amendment. We need to stand up to hate speech or speech that potentially incites violence as much as anyone.

Let's stop ceding the family values debate to right wing Republicans. A couple of other examples are in order. Though I find the Fox TV show Family Guy occasionally funny, let's recognize that the show's creator - Seth MacFarlane - was absolutely over the top with offensive humor when he hosted this year's Oscars awards. I don't care that it's been 150 years since Lincoln's assassination - the joke about John Wilkes Booth getting into Lincoln's head made me cringe. The song-and-dance number about female nudity in film entitled "We Saw Your Boobs" was not only in



poor taste but utterly offensive to women. Some in Hollywood think that poking fun at different groups or interests is just good yuks and we all need to loosen up. Yet there were one billion people around the planet watching, many of them children, and a certain modicum of good taste would have been welcome rather than jokes that poked fun at an entire gender or certain religious and ethnic groups.

The same with violent video games. We progressives need to understand that not everything is justified on First Amendment grounds or some so-called "artistic freedom." Ditto for off-color jokes or humor that denigrate traditional religion. For instance, I'm not one of those who found the Broadway musical "Book of Mormon" a bit funny. The show, written by the tasteless South Park creators was not only a malicious shot at Mormons but at people of faith everywhere.

No wonder I hear religious shows like "Focus on the Family" which has heavy listenership in rural parts of Indiana regularly taking off after Hollywood and Broadway and seeking to depict Democrats (wrongly) as down on traditional religion.

Hoosier Democrats need to recognize that a platform combining populist, pocketbook issues that reflect well founded concerns of working families needs to be interwoven with a commitment to traditional Main Street, family values.

We've got to stop allowing Republicans who advocate policies more in tune with Wall Street than Main Street to win small towns and rural areas. Let's stop allowing them to depict us as out of touch, or worse yet, that we condone the denigration of small town, traditional family values.

It's time we re-took Main Street and turned some of these working class counties Democratic again. It's up to us to once again put forth a program that small town and rural Indiana residents believe speaks for them. ❖

Shaw R. Friedman is a LaPorte attorney who served as counsel for the Indiana Democratic Party from 1999 to 2004.

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It was a welcome departure from his aloof nature. Obama rarely golfs, plays basketball or invites members to the White House for meals. CBS News reported last year that Obama has only golfed a couple of times with members of Congress. And there was a rare pickup basketball game in 2009 that included then Reps. Baron Hill and Brad Ellsworth.

Coats said that Sen. Lindsey Graham suggested to the President that he reach out to congressional Republicans. In addition to a lunch today with House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan, the White House contacted Coats several days ago about the dinner. "When the President asks you to come to dinner, even if you have some fundamental differences between you, you say yes," Coats said.

Meeting at the Jefferson Hotel with Obama picking up the dinner tab, Coats said,

"It turned out to be a lengthy two and a half hour dinner. My concern initially was that he was going to come in and try and sell us on his plan of more taxes, we're on the wrong track. It wasn't that at all. It was an honest, open, serious discussion about our current plight on our debt and deficit. We each had the opportunity to address this issue in terms of our concern about not getting this resolved after all the attempts, all the wasted gang of this and committee of that."

"We felt the time was now to do it, but we needed presidential leadership to accomplish it," Coats emphasized. "No matter what we did, if the President wasn't

on board, it wasn't going to happen. So we had a very good discussion about all of that. I was pleased with it."

It took place six days after the sequester he proposed nearly 18 months ago kicked in, producing \$85 billion in cuts on discretionary spending while not addressing the real problem, unsustainable entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.



Republican senators leave the Jefferson Hotel in Washington last night after a two and a half hour dinner with President Obama.



Essentially, House Republicans called his bluff, allowing sequestration to kick in.

Obama and his cabinet had been issuing dire warnings about the impact of sequester, but that appears to have exploded in his face as the media have discredited six major points ranging from layoff of janitors and teachers, to 70,000 children being kicked out of Head Start.

Obama's favorable rating in Gallup tumbled from 53% earlier this month to 46% over last weekend. A CBS News Poll revealed that while 38% would blame the GOP over sequester, another 33% would blame Obama.

"There's no doubt that the Republicans in Congress will get more of the blame," Indiana University political science professor Margie Hershey told Indiana Public Media. "There just are not a whole lot of intense, mouth-breathing moderates out there," Hershey said. "They keep waiting for batches of people to come out and say 'Yes! This is what we need – compromise!' Compromise is just sort of a contradiction in terms."

"I have been trying to talk to the President from the Senate floor," Coats said of a series of speeches he has made over the past two months. "I doubt that someone alerts him that Dan Coats is on the Senate floor and come in and see C-Span. So this was an opportunity to be face to face, to be straight up and honest and the President, to his credit, listened, asked questions and I think overall we had a constructive evening."

"Now, everyone left there thinking what I thought: Well, okay, we had a good discussion. We aired our differences, we talked about solutions. But talk is cheap and it's actions that count. We'll see how the President responds to this. He invited Paul Ryan to lunch today. Maybe it's a legitimate reachout. And reachout is the only way we're going to resolve this long-term deficit problem."

It conjured up images of President Reagan and House Speaker Tip O'Neill playing golf or meeting at the White House, cutting deals on his historic tax cuts, the 1986 tax code reforms, and even the health care reforms initiated by Health and Human Services Secretary Otis "Doc" Bowen at the end of the Reagan presidency.

Is Obama finally realizing he needs the personal Reagan/O'Neill touch?

"I think so," said Coats. "It's interesting the sequence of events as it occurred. First of all, the public is

getting fed up with this crisis governing which is a terrible way to govern. It's impacting our economy because of our inability to fashion long-term solutions to our problems. I think he has sensed that. I think for the sequester, the President went on the road and predicted the doomsday starting from the first minute. That hasn't happened. I think he understands the American public, and the small percentage cut in spending while they've had to tighten their belts. We all know about excess spending. He's seen that message, that we need more money and we need to

raise taxes to pay for more government just isn't selling. I think there's a convergence of events that will bring us to serious negotiations and to a solution. But talk is cheap."

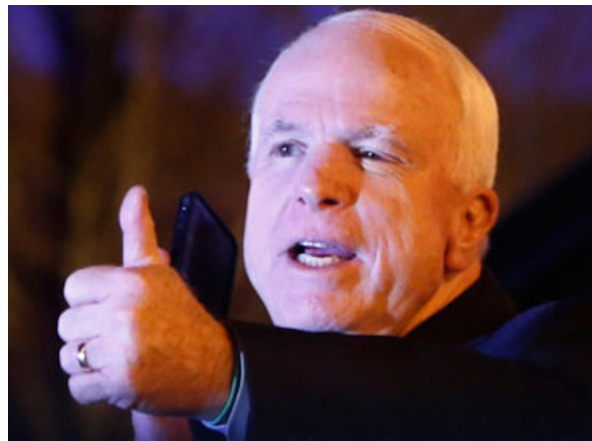
Former Senate majority leader Thomas A. Daschle (S.D.), a Democrat close to Obama, told the Washington Post, "There is no substitute for personal engagement. It creates avenues of communication that lead to opportunities for cooperation. And when that happens, one builds trust and deals get done."

Asked how the conversation went, McCain and Coburn both flashed reporters a thumbs-up sign, the Post reported.

The dinner took place as Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and several senators – including one Democrat – maintain a talking filibuster against John Brennan, Obama's nominee to lead the CIA.

The meeting came as the Indiana chapter of the Campaign to Fix the Debt released its first web ad, titled "Accountability." The ad illustrates the federal government's soaring budget deficits in a way that folks will be able to relate to balancing a family budget. By simply adding eight zeros to a typical family budget, the viewer can clearly see how bad our nation's fiscal situation is.

"Folks in Indiana know that they can't operate a family budget by spending so much more than they take in year after year, so why has it taken years of deficit spending for leaders in Washington to figure this out?" said Jim Schellinger, CEO of CSO Architects and co-chair of Fix the Debt-Indiana. "The ad applies family accounting to the federal budget and clearly lays out the fact that an American family couldn't survive for very long spending so much more than they take in. The scary fact is, our country can't either. Congress should take note from the American people and fix the debt." ❖



U.S. Sen. John McCain gives a thumbs-up sign after he and 10 Republican senators met with President Obama last night.



6 General Assembly issues that could have bearing on 2014 and beyond

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The question to House Minority Leader Scott Pelath was a policy one, but he delivered a very political answer.

The question was this: Why did 13 House Democrats vote against the criminal justice code reform bill despite it passing by an overwhelming margin? “They’ve been through campaigns,” Pelath said. “They know how that issue tends to get politicized.”

Are they afraid of being portrayed as soft on crime, he was asked. “Many of them are newer members and they are not responsible for the criminal code that was created,” Pelath responded. “But people often wonder how their votes are going to be misconstrued and misreported to their constituents.”

And so it goes. Of the myriad of issues swirling around this long, biennial session, an obscure bill could tilt what might be a close Indiana House race in 2014, or an Indiana Senate race in 2016. Some of the issues being debated this winter could define the 2016 gubernatorial race.

So what are the General Assembly issues of this session most likely to have a political impact in the next two election cycles?

Talks with a number of sources indicate the political impact most likely will come from the criminal justice code reform, Common Core and the broader topic of education, abortion, the Pence tax cut, and Medicaid expansion.

But placing the spotlight on these issues leaves it unclear how the bills and joint resolutions of today could impact races in 2014 and 2016. On some topics, such as Medicaid expansion, it’s conceivable a political advantage could cut either way.

So here is HPI’s analysis of the top issues that could help define the political campaigns of tomorrow:

Abortion

In a state that has become overwhelmingly pro-life politically, the most controversial bill would require a

woman to have an ultrasound test before being treated with RU486, the chemical abortion pill. The Indiana Senate eliminated a requirement in SB371 that women undergo an ultrasound after obtaining a drug-induced abortion, but kept the mandate that she have one before taking the drug, the Indianapolis Star reported. The bill later passed the full Senate.

Critics of the bill say that in the early weeks of pregnancy only transvaginal ultrasounds, which require a probe inserted into a woman’s vagina, are reliable. The Star said doctors it consulted agreed, but Sen. Travis Holdman, the bill’s Republican sponsor, said he has been told by several doctors that is untrue.

State Sen. Jean Breaux observed that this potential law is “dictated by a majority of men” and Sen. Vaneta Becker added in a quote that got the most attention: “This



House Speaker Brian Bosma and House Minority Leader Scott Pelath (left) have worked better than with former Democratic leader B. Patrick Bauer, though Pelath says there are actually two GOP factions: ideologues and pragmatists.

bill is not about patient safety. It’s about patient harassment.”

Legislative Democratic leaders believe that the constitutionality of the law will be successfully challenged “within six months,” according to Sen. Tim Lanane.

In this state, where 75 of the 125 legislators on the 2012 ballot were endorsed by Indiana Right to Life, political fallout seems unlikely. But in Virginia, conservative Gov. Bob McDonnell abandoned a similar bill, acknowledging that it “might run afoul” of the Constitution and open up the state to serious legal problems. While Republicans control the Virginia House, the Senate was tied when a similar ultrasound bill passed in February 2012 by a 21-19 vote. It



remained tied after elections last November.

Gov. McDonnell said when he signed the measure, "This bill does not legally alter a woman's ability to make a choice regarding her pregnancy. It does, however, put Virginia in line with 23 other states that have some type of requirement that a woman be offered a view of an ultrasound before an abortion can be performed."

While the Indiana executive and legislative branches are emphatically dominated by pro-life Gov. Mike Pence and Republican super majorities, Ball State's Bowen Center for Public Affairs released a poll last December showing 52% of Hoosiers believe abortion should be legal while 45% said it should be outlawed.

However, the abortion rights movement has been a political non-factor in recent election cycles. It is unlikely that future legislative majorities would correspond with recent polling figures. The Indiana Republican Party is dominated by the pro-life faction to the point that it has become a litmus test for any ascending politician in legislative, congressional and statewide races. A significant segment of the Indiana Democratic Party also is pro-life. Without a chief advocate in the two parties, it is unlikely this issue would become a major change agent, unless someone or group drives home the point that men are initiating invasive procedures on women, and that sentiment is there beneath the surface.

Criminal code reform

House Bill 1006, sponsored by Rep. Linda Lawson, D-Hammond, Jud McMillin, R-Brookville, and Greg Steuerwald, R-Avon, passed the House 80-13, with all dissenters Democrats. The bill passed unanimously out of the Courts and Criminal Code Committee and the Ways and Means Committee before receiving the full chamber's support.

"This bill will update Indiana's current criminal code and provide the courts with a sentence grid that applies a more specific sentence to criminal offenses," said Steuerwald. "The proposed revisions will provide certainty in sentencing by making offenders serve 75 percent of their sentence instead of the current 50 percent." But Democrats and Republicans both see the potential for the bill

to become untracked by critics, and that will likely continue beyond this session.

State Rep. Matt Pierce, D-Bloomington and one of the measure's sponsors, says keeping the bill relatively unchanged is vital. "If people see it as an opportunity to turn into a Christmas tree and add in all their kind of pet criminal law issues on the bill, it will collapse," Pierce said.

Sen. Brent Steele, the Senate sponsor, told Indiana Public Media that he will urge any groups or members who want to change the bill to wait until the summer.

"This is 90 percent of the bill and it won't become effective until another year, so we've got another year to tweak it," he says. "But it's important that we get at least this structure through. This is the skeleton."

But the axiom in Indiana politics is that legislators rarely oppose a "get tough on crime bill." Indeed, since the last criminal code revision of 1977, Indiana has seen cascading epidemics of crack cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines and now synthetic drugs such as bath salts. Legislators loaded up the Indiana Code with an array of corresponding laws. Now some of those will be rolled back to lower levels with lower sentences.

In 2012, a similar bill was killed over concerns by prosecutors in the state that it was too soft on crime. The 2013 version is backed by the state associations of judges, prosecutors and public defenders.

While the large margin in the House tends to confirm bipartisan support, Pelath told reporters that concerns remain that it will eventually be used against some of his members for being "soft on crime." As Senate Minority Leader Lanane observed, "All politics is local."

Medicaid expansion

Gov. Pence has taken a hard line against Medicaid expansion where the federal government would pick up 100 percent of the tab until 2020. "I don't think it serves the interests of Hoosiers in the program or serves the long-term interests of Hoosier taxpayers," Pence said, calling Medicaid a "broken" federal system rife with waste, fraud and abuse.

Pence told the press last week, "First, it is important to point out to people that Medicaid is set to grow significantly in the next few years under the existing program. Last



State Rep. Greg Steuerwald is the point man in the House for the criminal code reforms that look to have a good chance at passing this session.



estimate I heard was some 90,000 Hoosiers. I am very proud to say the budget we submitted fully funds that program. That's not an inconsequential number. We stand by that and will work hard to fully fund that Medicaid program as it exists today.

"Secondly, the Healthy Indiana Plan is a plan we strongly support. It is perhaps the most innovative, consumer-driven health care plan of any state in the country. We are determined to preserve it. In my conversations with the administration, with Secretary Sebelius, and the White House, and colleague governors this weekend, we made it very clear that our first objective . . . is that we preserve that innovative program, which is extraordinarily popular among its recipients. And it's popular because it's good for them . . . and good for the fiscal health of our state. The Healthy Indiana Plan meets both. It removes people from emergency room care to primary care. It encourages people to embrace preventive medicine. It's the kind of program that improves people's lives."

But Democrats and some Republicans are skeptical that the federal government will essentially grant Indiana a block grant to minister to the working poor through the Healthy Indiana Plan, for which there is little data on the cost comparison to Medicaid expansion.

"The federal government is not going to pay Indiana to be stubborn," said Pelath. "That block grant idea is ludicrous on its face. The people of Indiana are not going to want to opt out when we begin to offer health care in a more sane manner. We can't afford what we have now."

Sen. Lanane added, "There's no indication the federal government is going to accept the contingencies of the Healthy Indiana Plan. And, you know, the question becomes, what's Plan B if they don't accept this? Are all our federal tax dollars going to go to pay for health care in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois, and we are, again, the island of the uninsured?"

So this issue could cut both ways. The Affordable Care Act – "Obamacare" – is deeply unpopular here in Indiana, so the Pence position would appear at this point as the safer political move, even as Republican governors strident in their opposition to the ACA (i.e. John Kasich in Ohio, Rick Snyder in Michigan, Chris Christie in New Jersey and Rick Scott in Florida) have gone ahead with the Medicaid expansion.

In Pence's view, he is sticking to his guns, ques-



House Speaker Brian Bosma and Senate President David Long

tioning the federal government promises while adding to the national debt.

In 2009, Gov. Mitch Daniels was a strident critic of the stimulus package, but accepted more than \$5 billion that helped him balance the biennial budget, save teaching and public safety jobs, and fund hundreds of infrastructure projects.

"The thing they've done here is not paid for," Daniels said. "They pretend, but with one quick look – as often is the case with Congress – the spending is real, but the so-called savings or offsets are

fictional."

The danger for Pence is if the Medicaid expansion works well in neighboring states, the federal government keeps its promises and hundreds of thousands of working poor Hoosiers are left with no health insurance options.

This is an issue that is more likely to play out in 2016. The 2014 mid-terms will likely find metrics lacking that could shift public opinion on the matter.

Common Core and education reforms

Indiana adopted the Common Core standards in 2010 as advocated by then Education Supt. Tony Bennett. But he was upset by Democrat Glenda Ritz, who rode a wave of discontent from teachers aggravated by new evaluation standards and by the Tea Party upset with Common Core. Sen. Scott Schneider initially began this session by writing legislation that would have pulled Indiana out of Common Core. But in mid-February, Schneider agreed to a compromise that would suspend implementation while the State Board of Education holds a series of hearings. The Senate voted to halt implementation.

Indianapolis Star columnist Russ Pulliam observed, "The question before the Indiana House and Senate is whether to hit the pause button on controversial Common Core educational standards. The new superintendent of public instruction, Democrat Glenda Ritz, wants to pause. She has been joined by a few conservative Republicans who see Common Core as a nationalization of education standards. The state Senate is pondering legislation to require hearings in each congressional district to review the standards. Defenders of Common Core think the legislation threatens to interfere with progress in improving student achievement. Yet if Common Core is all that it's defenders



have claimed it to be, public hearings should only help.”

It is in this zone where the politics could be most volatile. Bennett was a victim of political retribution over policy initiation and everyone knows it. At the Indiana Chamber’s legislative preview session in November, both House Speaker Brian Bosma and Senate President David Long stated they were not interested in repealing the education reforms, but Bosma underscored how tweaks in implementation would be in order.

In his exit interviews in December, Gov. Daniels expressed some anxiety about the longevity of the reforms after leaving office and without Bennett there holding the line. “On a lot of the reforms we did, the first question is whether they’ll stick or whether they’ll somehow be subverted,” Daniels said. “And if they stick, they have to be well implemented. So those are big ifs.”

There has been talk of a wave of Republican primary challenges in 2014 over the Bennett reforms and Common Core. Republican sources tell HPI that they are surprised such primary challenges didn’t materialize in 2012.

So there is considerable unrest in this quarter that could manifest in some 2014 showdowns, most likely in Republican primaries. That Ritz upset Bennett while raising a mere \$300,000 in tandem with becoming a pioneer in social media isn’t lost on leadership or the rank and file in both the House and Senate.

Thus, the school yard could become the biggest battlefield in the next election cycle.

Pence tax cut

This is another issue that would be more likely to play out in a reelection bid by the governor in 2016. Republicans don’t appear to be widely invested in the issue, as evidenced by the Republican dominated Association of Indiana Counties coming out against the measure. House Democrats tried to maneuver for a vote to show GOP opposition. But the implications of that would be a weakened governor politically if he can’t get his No. 1 legislative priority through this session, as opposed to fueling 2014 legisla-



tive races. And if Pence can’t recover, it becomes an arrow in the quiver.

If Gov. Pence gets a very favorable April revenue forecast and the tax cut passes with a groundswell of support from legislative rank and file Republicans, there are two potential impacts. It would strengthen him politically in the short term. But let’s say the economy tanks as fall-out from the sequester, and Indiana’s \$2 billion surplus descends into a deficit. That would be particularly damaging to a Pence reelection bid. And that’s what Speaker Bosma has been warning about as House Republicans cut it out of the budget.

Bosma appears to have actively taken his opposition to the Pence tax cut to a new level, writing a letter to county Republican chairmen. “I apologize for including you in this ‘family discussion,’” Bosma said in a Feb. 19 letter. “While Senator (David) Long and I encouraged the governor to keep our discussions in his office while we reviewed options and solutions to any disagreement

(as we successfully did on many occasions with Governor Daniels), our members are now faced with public discussions at Lincoln Day dinners and with our party leadership, and I felt it best that you have all the facts to help us move forward.”

Bosma noted that the Tax Foundation rates Indiana’s income tax rate the “best in the nation” and added that he is focused on speeding up the elimination of the inheritance tax.

So there is a rift between the new governor and the veteran speaker. As HPI has analyzed before, this may be the legislative branch reasserting itself after eight subservient years to Gov. Daniels. There was also an affront when the Pence campaign didn’t keep them in the loop when it was unveiled last summer.

The potential political impact here is more about the long-term political health of the governor. ♦



Transvaginal ultrasound inducers for the masses?

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Amidst all the ribald humor, the yuks, and even “Pope LaMarr I” at the Gridiron Dinner the other night, something leaped off the gigantic video screen in the Indiana Roof Ballroom.

It was a photo of a transvaginal probe, or an “ultrasound transducer.” It looks sort of like a two-foot-long, hard plastic wand, with a handle and then a long, slender shaft with a round knob on the end.



In practice, a woman spreads her legs, and the ultrasound transducer is inserted into her vagina and pointed at the uterus, the ovaries and the cervix, producing images. The intent is to produce an image of a fetus in the uterus.

During the stunt at the Gridiron Dinner, the transducer was compared to a mass transit bullet train.

Indiana lawmakers in the General Assembly – mostly men – have voted affirmatively in the Senate on SB371 to require such a probe of pregnant women who are seeking an abortion with the chemical drug RU486.

The bill is sponsored by Sen. Travis Holdman, R-Markle, a man one might presume has had a colonoscopy, which is really his business and not one I care to spend much time thinking about. And while the invasive colonoscopy is recommended in public service campaigns as a strategy against life-threatening colon cancer, Indiana government doesn’t mandate the procedure. If Indiana government mandated colonoscopies for men, the colon cancer rate would almost certainly dive and scores of lives would be saved.

Holdman also sponsors SB373, which would prevent whistleblowers from taking photos and videos inside agricultural and food processing facilities, an invasive commercial and fourth estate procedure.

Sue Swayze, the legislative director of Indiana Right to Life, told WBAA-FM at Purdue University that

the goal of SB371 is to protect the safety of a woman. “I got pregnant vaginally. Something else could come in my vagina for a medical test that wouldn’t be that intrusive to me. So I find that argument a little ridiculous,” she said.

But that’s a decision she makes, and not her government.

This legislation is now headed to the Indiana House where freshman Republican Rep. Sharon Negele, R-Attica, will be the sponsor. That’s a brilliant tactical move by the pro-life movement. Have a woman sponsor the bill.

I write because this is a situation every Hoosier should spend some time pondering. What are the limits of government when it comes to life and what happens to your body?

As a young man, I considered myself “pro-choice,” but after the birth of my first son I went through a personal transformation into a pro-life realm. But this is still tempered by the reality that if abortion is outlawed, the industry will simply move underground and into the black economy. The Republican Party I grew up in wanted government out of our lives, our bedrooms and our bodies. Today’s Republican Party now has an unwritten litmus test on abortion, and a pro-choice candidate will rarely move beyond a legislative seat in a college town, will never enter Congress or become a statewide officeholder.

I was drawn by former congressman Tim Roemer’s “90-10” strategy to make policy decisions that would reduce the number of abortions by 90 percent in a decade.

The dilemma facing the pro-life movement is that it is unlikely that *Roe v. Wade* will be overturned in the



foreseeable future. The movement compares itself to the abolitionists, who toiled for nearly eight decades before the Civil War and the 13th Amendment. Given the political realities, the movement’s tactics have moved into what Curt Smith of the Indiana Family Institute openly acknowledges as “pushing the envelope.”



"The courts have constricted the last step," Smith said. "Clearly technology is showing us there's life in the womb. There's a capacity to see the baby, the fetus, in great detail. It's alive, it's smiling, its heart is beating. We are doing surgeries on babies in the womb. And we are aborting babies in the womb."

Of Sen. Holdman and others who are pushing the envelope, Smith added praise. "I'm very proud of our legislators. They are testing the limits," he said.

Thus, we have the potential for government to be ordering invasive procedures. Some might consider them to be high-tech guilt trips with no medical value.

At a Republican roundtable that included Gov. Mike Pence and Republican National Chairman Rience Priebus this past week in Indianapolis, an older white male made this observation: "I am pro-life, but Roe v. Wade is the law of the land and we will never overturn it. Our candidates should say, 'I am pro-life, Roe v. Wade is the law of the land and I am going to work as hard as I can to make life

better for our children."

That message will be ignored at the Indiana Statehouse. SB371 will likely be passed and Gov. Pence has said he will sign any pro-life legislation that crosses his desk. But it likely won't save any lives.

Once passed, it will be challenged by the American Civil Liberties Union. That group successfully brought a suit over the defunding of Planned Parenthood and that law was struck down by a federal court. Federal courts have struck down a similar law in Oklahoma and there's an injunction on a similar North Carolina law.

So the question I place before you today is this: At what point does government have a mandate to enter your body? It already does with inoculating shots before you enter school. It used to be able to draft you and send you to war.

Is the government overstepping its bounds when it comes to a female vagina? ❖

Gaming changes debated as competition stiffens

By MAUREEN HAYDEN
CNHI Statehouse Bureau

TERRE HAUTE — Indiana lawmakers have been debating whether to give the state's casinos more financial incentives to compete with the shiny new gambling palaces popping up in Ohio.

They're fearful that fickle gamblers will take their dollars — and the millions in tax revenues they generate every year — across the border to one of the four big-city casinos that have opened in the Buckeye State in the last 10 months.



What should worry them more is how easy it is for you to sit at home in your underwear, using your laptop or mobile device to place your bets online.

Americans gambled away about \$4 billion in 2011 using online wagering, according to a recent report by the American Gaming Association. Most of that money was spent through offshore websites, in the nearly 85 countries that have legalized online gambling.

That was the same year the U.S. Department of Justice cracked down on illegal online gambling

here in the U.S., with massive criminal and civil charges against the biggest web-based poker sites.

No matter. The American Gaming Association's report, issued late last year, said that crackdown barely made a dent, and that gaming industry experts see online gambling as the wave of the future whether it's legal or not.

Consider this, from an association survey of those experts: Nearly 70 percent of them estimate U.S. bettors will annually spend between \$8 billion and \$11 billion on Internet gambling five years from now.

Most of the rest think the market will grow more "moderately" — to a size of \$6 billion to \$7 billion annually over the next five years. And that's even if Congress doesn't pass legislation that legalizes and regulates online gaming.

If Congress opts to regulate online gaming, and even if states like Indiana opt not to follow suit, about one-third of those experts predict Americans will be spending between \$14 billion and \$17 billion annually in online wagering by 2018.

The bricks-and-mortar casinos may argue that the threat of Internet gambling is overblown; that most bettors will still want what they offer — acres of slot machines and gaming tables and cocktails and the company of others.

But Americans have abandoned bricks-and-mortar department stores, bookstores and movie theaters in favor of the online alternatives. Why should betting away your hard-earned dollars be any different?

Just more than half of those industry experts surveyed by the American Gaming Association said legal-



The new Horseshoe casino in downtown Cincinnati is expected to siphon off gaming crowds that would once visit Indiana casinos in Lawrenceburg, Rising Sun and Elizabeth.

ized online gaming in the U.S. could help grow the existing casino industry in states like Indiana. But almost one-quarter of them think that legalized online gambling would cannibalize business from existing casino operations.

Here's another factor, to complicate the odds: Casino patrons are an aging crowd — the American Gaming Association puts the median age at 47. They may still like the casino experience, but it's not one that appeals to a younger demographic.

So consider the threat that social media, favored by a younger demographic, may play now that it's stepped into the world of gaming. Last summer, Facebook launched a real-money gambling app that offers winners cash prizes. It's available only to Facebook users in the United Kingdom who are over the age of 18. For now, that is.

Indiana has become dependent on gaming tax revenues, so the stakes just keep getting higher as our casinos face increased competition. But one of the questions that legislators need to ask, in considering giveaways to the industry: Are we chasing good money after bad? ❖

Maureen Hayden covers the Statehouse for CNHI newspapers in Indiana. She can be reached at maureen.hayden@indianamedia.com

Mayors push for meth bills

INDIANAPOLIS - Local officials from around Indiana are making a push for the Legislature to require that people obtain a doctor's prescription to buy cold medications often used to make methamphetamine (Associated Press).

Several mayors are expected to testify next week before an Indiana House committee that is considering a bill that would set tighter limits on how much ephedrine and pseudoephedrine could be legally purchased without a prescription. The House criminal code committee heard testimony on the proposal Wednesday, with the committee chairman delaying a vote until next week because mayors who wanted to testify on the issue were unable to attend because of the winter storm that hit the state. The bill approved by the state Senate last month would allow a consumer to buy up to 61 grams a year of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. That's about an eight-month total of the current law's monthly limit of 7.2 grams.

Sen. Carlin Yoder, R-Middlebury, said he believed people with allergies and occasional illnesses would still be able to buy enough medicine under the tighter limits proposed under his bill. "Unless you really need this year-round, you're not going to bump up to that cap and shouldn't have a problem," Yoder said. ❖



Zody poised as Simpson drops out; Mourdock wing comically talks GOP coup

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – As the two major political parties reorganize, most of the fireworks – some comically induced by the Richard Mourdock wing of the GOP – appear to be coming from this week’s congressional district level after Vi Simpson officially ended her quest to become Indiana Democratic chairman.

With Simpson’s exit, John Zody (pictured right) was the only Democrat to file for state chair, replacing Dan Parker. U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly began signaling his support for Zody last month.



Simpson emailed supporters saying she would not seek the Indiana Democratic Party chair. “Since the election, many of you have asked me to consider running for state party chair,” Simpson wrote. “I gave it serious thought and for several weeks was a candidate for the job. Unfortunately, because of a family matter that is not yet resolved, I have decided I cannot be a candidate at this time.” Simpson added, “I want to thank so many of you who encouraged me to make this run because you want to unify the party and you want to rebuild it from the bottom up. I especially want to thank the 11 district chairs and vice chairs who have been with me since the beginning and who have stuck it out – not because it was easy but because you, too, believe in changing our path.”

Dem CD contests

Democrats will have several CD level contests. Mike Schmuhl will not return in the 2nd CD, concentrating his time as South Bend Mayor Peter Buttigieg’s chief of staff. Schmuhl took over the chair there following the indictment of Butch Morgan last year. There is a multiple candidate showdown for chair that includes Zanzer Anderson (the current vice; Elkhart) and Carol McDaniel (the current treasurer; LaPorte). Vice chair candidates are Lynn Coleman (St. Joe (male) and former assistant previous Mayor) and possibly Terry Bartley (chair of Kosciusko County).

In the 3rd CD, Allen County Democrat Chairman John Court is expected to challenge current Chairman Car-

men Darland, with the backing of Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry.

In the 5th CD, former legislative candidate Katie Morgan is challenging current Chairman Keith Clock of Noblesville. Morgan narrowly lost a race to State Rep. Kevin Mahan last November.

In the 9th CD, Clark County Commissioner John Perkins is challenging current Chairman Wayne Vance, a longtime aide to former Congressman Lee Hamilton.

Longtime 6th CD Chairman Mike Jones – who chaired the 9th CD before redistricting – will become vice chair and Patti Yount will become chair, informed and reliable Democratic sources tell HPI. Another longtime figure, Mary Lou Terrell in the 8th CD, is retiring and is expected to be replaced by Joni Kanizer.

2 GOP CD battles

On the GOP side, former Mourdock campaign manager Jim Holden began making phone calls this past week suggesting he was instigating a takeover of the Republican Central Committee. But multiple high-ranking, influential GOP sources tell HPI that Holden and Mourdock’s influence over the GOP is (choose your favorite word) “nil”, “zero” and “negligible.”

Holden managed Mourdock’s U.S. Senate race. Informed and reliable sources tell HPI that it was Holden who advised Mourdock to use the “God intends” rape remark in the final debate in New Albany. Mourdock said he left the stage expecting “high fives,” but instead found social media exploding over the remark, which cratered his campaign and allowed Democrat Joe Donnelly to win.

Holden apparently was seeking to recruit a candidate to challenge Kyle Hupfer in the 5th CD, but he is unopposed.

In the 4th CD, Howard County Chairman Craig Dunn is seeking the district chair. Duane Sawyer of Brownsburg had talked about running, but did not file by Wednesday’s 2 p.m. deadline.

The only showdowns come in the 6th CD where Michael Dora is facing Mark Wynn, and in the 8th CD where Pam Yoho faces Mark Wynn.

Uncontested are Chuck Williams in the 1st, Sam Frain in the 2nd, Barbara Krisher in the 3rd, Dunn and Hupfer in the 4th and 5th, Tom John in the 7th (replacing national committeeman John Hammond III) and Jamey Noel in the 9th.

County chair elections

Last Saturday, the glass ceiling was broken in Elkhart County where Republicans elected the first female chairman, Mary Nisly, who will replace Dale Stickel who opted not to run. Stickel had encouraged Nisly, the party’s



secretary, to seek the post after he expressed concerns about continued divisions within the party and she defeated Randy Wilson. "There are a lot of people out there that could be voting, and we want to look at why they're not voting and why they're not registering," Nisly told the Elkhart Truth. "Education is a big part of that."

In Madison County, Democrats elected Ludy Watkins over Bob Stinson, making her the first female chair there. "Party unity is my main concern," Watkins told the Anderson Herald-Bulletin. "Teamwork allows common people to make uncommon results."

Former LaPorte Mayor Leigh Morris is now chairman of the LaPorte County Republican Party. Morris, 78, replaced Keith Harris, of Michigan City, who chose not to seek another four-year term. Morris told the South Bend Tribune that among his goals is to revive a party that suffered many defeats in the November election by recruiting qualified candidates.

"I'm pleased to have an opportunity to serve in this role," Morris said.

In the major counties, Allen County Republican Chairman Steve Shine easily won a sixth term, defeating Jason Arp with 74% of the vote. "Thank you, sir, because you helped focus the spotlight on the great Republican party," Shine told Arp after the voting. "Was I irritated? Yes. Was it good for the party? Yes."

In Marion County, Democrats elected Joel Miller to replace the retiring Ed Treacy, while Republicans returned Kyle Walker.

Republican Pete Emigh was reelected in Hamilton County; Mike O'Brien in Hendricks County, Janice Silvey in Hancock County, J.R. Showers in Shelby County, and Sandi Huddleston in Johnson County

In St. Joseph County, State Sen. John Broden won a full term as Democratic chair. He assumed the post in 2012 after the indictment of Butch Morgan over the 2008 presidential ballot petition scandal. Republicans there returned Dr. Deb Fleming as chairwoman. "The whole party has been incredibly supportive since I took over about a

year and a half ago. It was great to feel that support again today and feel that we are doing what we need to do," Sen. Broden told the South Bend Tribune.

Another new face comes in Tippecanoe County where former Lafayette mayor and sheriff Dave Heath was elected to head the Republican Party.

In Vigo County, Randy Gentry was elected to head the Republican Party. In Wayne County, where Richmond Mayor Sally Hutton declined to seek another term as Democratic chair after 28 years at the helm, Jerry Hayden was elected.

Two new chairs were elected in Delaware County. Democrats turned to Muncie Police Chief Steve Stewart after Mike Quirk declined to seek another term. Republicans turned to Will Statom. In Vanderburgh County, Republican Chairman Wayne

Parks was returned in a landslide victory over Roger Mad-den, while Jack McNeely will return to head the Democrats.

In Lake County, Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., was reelected without opposition - the first time that's happened in years - and Republicans elected Dan Dernulc, defeating opponent Allan Katz, 140-113, who had been endorsed by out-going Republican Chairwoman Kim Krull.

Bartholomew County Republicans chose Barb Hackman, the county auditor, as the party's new chairwoman. Hackman replaces the late Ted Ogle, the longtime county leader who died in January (Columbus Republic).

The Howard County Democratic Party elected David Tharp as the new party chairman during its reorganizational meeting last Saturday. The Party's precinct committee persons and vice committee persons also elected Tina Shrock as the party vice chair. Each was elected by acclamation and will serve a four year term (Howey Politics Indiana). "I'm honored to be chosen to lead the Howard County Democratic Party into a new era of success and growth," said Tharp. "I'm excited to work with our new Party Central Committee, labor leaders, Mayor Greg Goodnight, City Council President Mike Kennedy, and our other



County chairs (top, from left) Ludy Watkins, Mary Nisly, Dave Heath, Dan Demulc; (second tier) Joel Miller, Sen. Broden, Steve Shine and Randy Gentry.



elected officials to rebuild our Party.”

The Clark County Republican and Democratic parties held separate reorganization meetings Saturday to elect officers for the next four years (Louisville Courier-Journal). Current county Republican Chairman Jamey Noel and county Democrat Chairman Bob Bottorff will continue to lead their respective parties. Bottorff, a Jeffersonville attorney, was serving the remaining term of former chairman Rod Pate, who resigned in June after nearly eight years as chairman. Noel is a full-time Indiana State Police trooper who also serves as chief of New Chapel Fire and EMS.

Republicans and Democrats in Porter County recently selected officers to lead the parties over the next four years. The Republicans chose Michael Simpson, of Val-

paraiso, as chair (NWI Times). He previously served as vice chair and replaced Joyce Webster of Portage who did not seek re-election. Victoria Gresham, of Portage, was elected vice chair. Porter Democrats re-elected Jeffrey Chidester as chairman, who ran unopposed. He was joined by Kathy Kozuszek, as vice chair, and Debbie Kerr-Cook, secretary, both of whom ran unopposed.

Darrin Jacobs of Spiceland was elected Henry County Democratic Party chairman on Saturday at a party caucus (Muncie Star Press). Jacobs, who succeeds Allan Bramlett, was elected to a four-year term. Tammy Guffey, New Castle, was re-elected party vice-chairman. ❖

GDP, the DNA of MSA economies

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS - The nation's 366 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) accounted for 89 percent of the \$13.3 trillion United States gross domestic product (GDP) in 2011. After the polluted language we've heard from legislators in Washington and Indianapolis, doesn't that sentence give you a nice, clean feeling?



It's a fact, not a self-serving political statement. As relief from the axis of irrelevancy that runs through Washington and Indianapolis, let's enjoy some facts for a change.

GDP measures the market value of goods and services produced. It is not a measure of income, but of output.

Metro areas are imperfect statistical entities. For example, Lake, Porter, Newton and Jasper counties in Indiana are subsumed under the Chicago MSA.

Indiana counties in southern and southeastern parts of the state are lumped in with Louisville and Cincinnati. Nonetheless, we have some interesting data to work with.

2011 was the year when the nation's 366 metro areas together exceeded their previous GDP high point in 2007. That fact hides the truth. As ever, the aggregate disguises the detail. Only 164 of the MSAs had higher GDP values in 2011 than they did in 2007. Over 55 percent of metro areas were still below their 2007 peaks in 2011.

Among those which had cleared the recession were Columbus, Lafayette and Bloomington MSAs. The remaining 13 MSAs that include Indiana counties were still in

recession in 2011. Kokomo and Elkhart-Goshen still had production valued below 2007 levels and ranked at the very bottom of all MSAs in the U.S. for recovery.

However, to quote the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Kokomo, IN and Columbus, IN were two of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in 2011, with overall real GDP growth of 7.1 percent and 7.8 percent, respectively."

What is going on here?

Columbus had the best record of growth in the state from 2007 to 2011 and also from 2010 to 2011. Kokomo had the second best rate of growth from 2010 to 2011, but still trailed all MSAs in growth from 2007 to 2011 because of the particularly hard hit it took in the recession of 2008 and 2009.

Recently there is good news out of the Kokomo MSA with announcements from Chrysler of new facilities and employment opportunities.

When the data for 2012 and subsequent years are released, Kokomo may well be among the national leaders in growth again.

Indiana is not a homogeneous state. Politicians and economists are on shaky ground making broad generalizations about our economic conditions. Individual large companies have major effects in selected communities. One firm going through a crisis can throw off the data for an entire metro area.

Our metro areas do not all change in the same way at the same time. Yes, manufacturing continues to be a common element of most local Hoosier economies.

Nevertheless, careful analysis finds important county or regional differences that should make analysts more cautious and elected officials less dogmatic about economic affairs. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an independent economist, writer and speaker. Contact him at mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com



The difficulty of cutting federal spending

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – Over the last few weeks, as the deadline for the congressionally mandated budget cuts known as the “sequester” came and went, we got a taste of how difficult cutting federal spending actually turns out to be. The news is disconcerting: Thousands fewer food safety inspections, some 70,000 fewer kids in early education programs, people with mental illness losing access to treatment, civilian employees of the military furloughed, ships and aircraft going without maintenance... It’s a long and dispiriting list.



Yet as painful as the sequester might be, most policy-makers know that it is not the main event when it comes to our fiscal challenges. Discretionary spending, the kind getting cut in the sequester, amounts to less than a third of federal spending.

That’s not what many people believe, of course. Whenever I give talks about the federal budget I’m taken aback by where my listeners think most of our money gets spent. At two meetings recently, members of the audience stood up to com-

plain that if we just cut what we give away to other countries in foreign aid, we could resolve our budget issues. This isn’t even close to the truth: Altogether, we spend well less than 1 percent of the federal budget on foreign aid.

If you think of federal spending as a pie, by far the biggest slices go to Social Security and unemployment support, Medicare, Medicaid, and other health programs, which altogether make up well over half. Military spending accounts for about another quarter, while the next biggest slice, about 7 percent, is for interest on the federal debt — a figure that will explode in upcoming years. Everything else we think of as the federal government — spending on highways and the aviation system, money for student loans and other education programs, housing, food stamps, medical research and, yes, foreign aid — comes in at under one-fifth of the total.

The biggest driver of growth in federal spending, as Nate Silver of The New York Times pointed out in a thoughtful analysis in January, is entitlements: Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and other social insurance programs. This is especially true of health care, which accounted for about half of the increase in federal spending relative to the economy over the last 40 years. We cannot

get control of federal spending without reining in health-care spending — and though its rate of increase has slackened over the last few years, no one knows whether it’s a permanent or temporary change.

So if Congress and the White House are serious about tackling federal spending, then the piece they left out of the sequester — entitlement reform — must be on the table. But it’s been hard to tell from their actions that they’re really serious. Members of Congress have been taking to the airwaves for weeks to decry the sequester’s meat-cleaver approach to budget-cutting, yet most of them voted for it. That’s because it’s simpler to impose across-the-board cuts than to make discriminating judgments about individual programs. Members find it easy to demand cuts in federal spending in the abstract, but painfully difficult to cut specific programs.

Americans as a whole do, too: A recent Pew Center poll found they approve cutting government spending in general, but when asked about specific programs, they want to boost funding or keep it the same. Americans are demanding that government cut spending without cutting actual programs.

This is why it takes extraordinary leadership to address our fiscal issues. Americans may bear some responsibility, but our leaders have not leveled with us about what it takes to get a sensible budget and put the economy on a path to recovery. I am hard-pressed to think of an example of government failure to match our political leaders’ inability to lead us to a solution.

Their prolonged fighting is causing businesses to hesitate, workers to remain in limbo, and an economy that needs a boost to continue to stutter. They are denying us the ability to invest in our future, promote economic growth, and deal with the many other challenges our nation faces. Let’s stop the blame game and get to work. ❖

Hamilton is director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.



What can we expect from reassessment

By **LARRY DeBOER**

WEST LAFAYETTE - Every six to 10 years Indiana has a statewide reassessment to update property values for property tax bills. We re-measure the characteristics of real property -- square footage, building materials, home improvements and so forth. We apply new data on prices and costs to these characteristics. Since we waited so long between reassessments, we would update for six to 10 years of inflation all at once. Assessed values would jump. Property taxes in 2013 would be based on new values from a statewide reassessment. What can we expect?

Let's first look at some past reassessments. In the reassessment for 1980 taxes, total assessed value grew 41 percent from the values used in 1979. In the 1990 reassessment the increase was 32 percent. Property price and cost inflation had been higher in the 1970s than in the 1980s. In 1996 assessed value rose 13 percent, a smaller increase because of lower inflation and the shorter time between reassessments. In 2003 assessed value jumped 52 percent, mostly due to the new market-value assessment rules.



But in the reassessment for 2013, assessed value may decrease.

The difference is trending. Every year since 2007 we've updated the prices and costs applied to the characteristics of real property, which is land and buildings. In effect, we've sliced up the big reassessment jump into small pieces that we apply each year. The new price data applied in 2013 will represent a change from trended 2012 prices, not from 2003 prices.

If values hadn't been trended upward enough, there still would have been uncanceled inflation to make assessments jump. Trending has to be done right to eliminate the big increase. The early statewide results show real property assessments falling by about 1 percent. Trending seems to have measured between-reassessment price changes pretty well.

Past reassessments always caused big increases in tax bills for homeowners and decreases for businesses. This happened even though assessments increased for all land and buildings. The reason was personal property, which is mostly business equipment (and inventories before

2007).

Personal property is not subject to statewide reassessment because taxable values for equipment are updated every year. So, in reassessment years the assessments of real property would grow a lot more than personal property. The share of property taxes paid by real property owners would increase. Since nearly all homeowner property is real while nearly all personal property is business-owned, the homeowner share of the property tax would rise and the business share would fall.

The personal property tax shift won't happen this time, because with trending both real and personal values have been updated every year. But in some counties a tax shift to homeowners may happen anyway. The reassessment appears to have decreased commercial and industrial property assessments, while home assessments have increased slightly. The business share of property taxes will drop, and the homeowner share will rise. The effect looks to be small statewide, but in some counties business assessments have dropped considerably. Homeowner tax bills could rise noticeably in those counties.

In the past, reassessment had a big effect on taxpayers, but only a small effect on local governments. Assessments would jump but revenue would not, because most property tax revenue is subject to state controls. Tax rates are set by dividing revenue by assessed value, so tax rates would fall. Revenue would increase in reassessment years just like it did in other years.

But this is the first reassessment under the tax caps, which were created by the 2008 tax reforms and voted into the Indiana Constitution in 2010. The fall in assessed values will cause a rise in tax rates, if local governments try to collect their controlled revenues. Higher tax rates make more taxpayers eligible for tax cap credits, and that's revenue that local governments do not receive.

So a drop in assessed value will cause a drop in tax revenue for local governments, where tax rates are already high. Revenues are proportional to the size of the assessment pie in such places, and reassessment will take a bite out of that pie. Local governments that depend on business property taxes will be affected the most.

The 2013 reassessment could reduce assessed values and tax revenues. It's a brand new world for the Indiana property tax. ❖

DeBoer is a professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University.



One simple amendment could alter sequester

By **JACK COLWELL**

SOUTH BEND – There was a way to convince Congress to act responsibly to prevent the damage from that thing called sequester. One simple amendment would have done it.

The dangers of meat-ax sequester cuts to the fragile economy, to national defense and to important services for their constituents didn't do it. The amendment would have.



Congress just yawned or yapped instead of negotiating as the deadline approached this weekend.

They are determined to do something about that nationwide poll showing Congress is less popular than cockroaches. They seek to drop to - well, let's see - to the popularity of Ronaiah Tuiaosopo at a Notre Dame pep rally.

The amendment would have convinced Congressman Frank Frown, along with other selfless congressional public servants, to prevent the abominable sequester. Here's how: Congressman Frown confers with his press secretary, Joy Tidings, preparing his statesmanlike statements as sequester looms.

Frown: Any more questions from the media creeps back in the district?

Joy: Yes, sir. They're asking for a comment on sequester causing layoffs at the defense plant.

Frown: Tell 'em I'm committed to bringing jobs to the district. That's the No. 1 issue. Jobs. Jobs. Jobs.

Joy: But what do I tell them about the lost jobs?

Frown: Just keep tellin' 'em I'm creating jobs. But there'll be some inconvenience, need for some sacrifice by all of us. We've all got to share in the pain.

Joy: Your least favorite TV reporter called asking about reports that there'll be long delays for passengers at the airport.

Frown: Tell her there'll be some inconvenience, need for some sacrifice by all of us. We've all got to share in the pain. When I get whisked through security, I do notice some of the plain people experiencing some hassles. They'll just have to put up with it.

Joy: I should tell her plain people have to put up with it?

Frown: No! Not that part. Just that there will be some inconvenience, need for some sacrifice by all of us. Stress that we've all got to share in the pain.

Joy: One more, sir. An editorial writer wants to know about some teacher layoffs.

Frown: Say I'm committed to improving education. Meanwhile, there will be some inconvenience, need for some sacrifice by all of us. We've all got to share in the pain. Anyway, the teachers union opposed me in the last campaign. Serves 'em right.

Joy: I guess I shouldn't include that last part.

Frown: Right. Now, I've got more important things to worry about than the danged sequester. Gotta get home this weekend for a mighty important fundraiser. It's called "Bowling with a Frown."

Joy: Gosh sir, you just won well-deserved re-election. You have to start raising funds already?

Frown: Never stops. And gettin' 50 people to contribute just to bowl with me pays for a bunch of my TV attacks next time.

Joy: Sounds like another busy weekend back in the district.

Frown: Right. Couple hours of bowling for bucks. Meet with our campaign treasurer. Travel to three counties to talk to the party chairmen about our new get-out-the-vote program. Get on TV to let the folks know I'm back home. Gotta keep in touch with the people.

Joy: Anything else, sir?

Frown: Yes, make sure the intern is ready to take me to the airport as soon as we adjourn. Wanna make my usual flight. Get away fast. Settle down in first class with a drink. Forget about all this hard work.

Joy: Sir, the flight won't be possible.

Frown: What? They gonna keep us in session more than two hours?

Joy: No, but haven't you heard about that amendment they snuck in sequester?

Frown: Amendment? I don't read amendments. What's it do?

Joy: Says that in the cuts for air travel, Washington's Reagan National Airport is closed.

Frown: They can't do that! Think of the hardship. How can Congress get back home to raise money? Can't have inconvenience like that. Have to go to Dulles? No direct connections. Why should Congress sacrifice? Why should we suffer such pain? I'm calling the speaker right now. Gonna demand a vote on stopping sequester. We'll have a majority in both parties. ❖

Colwell has been covering Indiana politics over five decades for the South Bend Tribune.



Matt Tully, Indianapolis Star: The Tea Party is mad. Although that might seem as obvious as telling you that the sun came up today, the source of the current tea party anger makes things interesting. It's the Republican leadership in both the Indiana Senate and the House that has been ticking the tea party off almost daily of late. The discontent centers on what some believe is too little action on conservative social issues, and too much spending on government programs, from the likes of House Speaker Brian Bosma and Senate President David Long. "We have a supermajority that we elected to do something and they've just punted the ball," said Monica Boyer, president of Silent No More, a Tea Party group in Kosciusko County. "The Indiana legislature is spending like drunken sailors and there is a lot of unhappiness out here." Boyer and others pointed to the legislature's embrace of plans to subsidize improvements at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and to give tax breaks to casinos, and the lack of action on bills to expand gun rights. The biggest complaint, though, stems from the decision by Republican legislative leaders to shelve, for now, Gov. Mike Pence's proposed income tax cut -- a cut that would save the typical Indiana family about \$200 a year. "It seems like they are watching out for everyone except for the moms like me and the families like mine," Boyer said of the legislature. "For my family (the tax cut) is a big deal. We believe we can spend that money better than the state government." "People are surprised," said Jim Bratten of Evansville, state coordinator with Indiana Tea Party Patriots. "They saw such gains among Republicans in the legislature and many assumed that meant more conservative things would be done. That's not the case. There are a lot of questions floating around and people are not happy." Bratten pointed to frustration with a House budget that restores some of the recent cuts to public education, as well as what appears to be a hesitancy to end the state's participation in Common Core educational standards. After years of tough budget cuts at the Statehouse he is tired of seeing legislative Republicans soften their anti-spending rhetoric. It's particularly irritating, he said, at a time when the GOP controls seven of every 10 seats in the General Assembly and has the votes to pass anything it wants. And, he warned, the frustration is certain to spark more of the tea party-backed GOP primaries that have scared so many Republican officeholders in recent years. ❖



Eric Bradner, Evansville Courier & Press: The Rockport coal-to-gas plant once looked like it could be derailed entirely during the Indiana General Assembly's 2013 legislative session. Now, that plant and the state's 30-year deal to buy its product at a pre-negotiated price and

then resell it on the open market, with Hoosier customers benefiting if its rates beat market prices and taking a hit if those rates don't, seems increasingly likely to emerge with only a few scratches and bruises. It's early yet. This year's legislative session doesn't end until April 29, and anyway, complicated issues often aren't worked out until the two final frenetic weeks of the session, when joint House and Senate conference committees meet. But signs are emerging that key legislative leaders prefer to keep their hands out of the deal, leaving key decisions about its future to the state's courts and to the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission. Chief among those signs was a comment by House Speaker Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis. He told reporters Tuesday that the Rockport plant has dominated his time more than all other issues in recent months, and that his "recent epiphany" is that Indiana made a deal with the plant's developers and now ought to keep it. "It's a very thorny issue," the speaker, who has questioned whether lawmakers would approve the whole deal in its current form again even though they have green-lighted various portions of it in recent years, said last week. "The state made a deal, and whether it's a fair deal or not today, we made a deal and we passed the statutes. So, my inclination would be not to overturn a deal but I also believe it might be productive for the utility regulatory commission to take one more, fast look at it to be certain that long-term, this deal is good for ratepayers." ❖

Larry Riley, Muncie Star Press: The replacement of Mike Quirk as head of the Delaware County Democratic Party by Steve Stewart will mean no change for one local tradition: A government employee will run that party. Quirk, like most of his family, has been a public defender and he served as county attorney. He's one of the city attorneys now under the Tyler administration, and last month became attorney for Muncie Sanitary District after Tyler took control of the MSD board. Stewart, of course, is chief of the Muncie Police Department, a 28-year veteran of the force and longtime Democratic Party soldier who rose to the top cop spot after Tyler's 2011 election. Marge Landers served as party chairman before Quirk. She spent three decades in the Delaware County Building in a variety of offices, including stints as chief deputy auditor and clerk. Before her, Tyler himself, then a city firefighter, chaired the party, succeeding Phil Nichols, another city firefighter, who managed the difficult feat of ousting a party chairman when he managed a takeover from Ira "Rip" Nelson, who was head of the county's highway department. Mixing political party leadership with public employment does not serve the welfare of taxpayers or of good government, and inherent conflicts of interest arise. ❖



Indy smoke ban upheld by feds

INDIANAPOLIS - A federal judge has upheld Indianapolis' smoking ban that prohibits smoking in most public places, including bars, bowling alleys and hotel rooms. After the ban took effect last June, a lawsuit seeking to overturn its provisions was filed in federal court in Indianapolis on behalf of more than 40 plaintiffs that included 10 bars, a bar customer and a bar employee. But WTHR-TV and The Indianapolis Star report that U.S. District Judge Richard L. Young said in Wednesday's ruling that the ban's opponents failed to demonstrate "the merits of their claims." Young also wrote in his ruling upholding the ordinance that the smoking ban "advances the public interest, and the legislative choice to include bars and taverns is constitutionally sound."



Senate panel to take up budget

INDIANAPOLIS - An Indiana Senate committee is ready to start its work on the new state budget amid hesitation from legislative leaders over whether to go along with Republican Gov. Mike Pence's proposed 10 percent cut in the personal income tax rate (NWI Times). The Senate Appropriations Committee is scheduled to have its first formal discussion of the budget on Thursday. The House-approved budget plan calls for \$700 million more in school and road spending than Pence proposed and left out the governor's tax cut. The Senate committee is expected to spend the next several weeks holding budget hearings

before advancing a proposal by mid-April.

Sheriff candidate ends campaign

EVANSVILLE - Jim Tucker, a Democratic candidate for Vanderburgh County sheriff in 2014, apparently has abandoned his campaign. Tucker's withdrawal from the race to succeed Sheriff Eric Williams was confirmed by his campaign chairman (Evansville Courier & Press). Tucker, a former sheriff's deputy, said last month that he and his wife were unwilling to endure a campaign potentially dominated by discussion of separate disciplinary actions against him for lying, disobeying orders and failing to turn in a found ring.

Donnelly eyes end to military suicides

WASHINGTON - U.S. Senator Joe Donnelly says he wants greater focus on preventing suicide among active-duty military servicemembers and veterans. That includes increasing outreach to vets (Indiana Public Media). Last year, more combat troops took their own life than died in combat in Afghanistan. And Senator Joe Donnelly says 43 percent of service members who committed suicide never sought help. He says trying to combat the problem of military and veteran suicide needs to involve erasing the stigma of seeking help. "They feel like, 'Well, I don't want to burden somebody' or 'I don't want anybody to have to worry about me' or 'I don't want anybody to have to spend an extra thought on me,'" he says. A member of the Senate's Armed Services Committee, Donnelly says he's also concerned not enough veterans are taking advantage of the programs and support provided by veterans' organizations. "Whether

it is in internet, online ads, whether it is on TV ads, whether it is on radio – that we tell them, 'Look, you have a friend; give us a call, let's see what we can do to work together,'" he says.

Lawsuit says BMV overcharged

INDIANAPOLIS - The Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles has "systematically overcharged" Hoosiers for driver's licenses since 2007, collecting "tens of millions of dollars more" than allowed under state law, according to a lawsuit filed today in Marion Superior Court (Evans, Indianapolis Star). The class action complaint filed by Irwin B. Levin of the Indianapolis law firm Cohen & Malad seeks a return of the alleged overcharges to individuals across the state. The lawsuit alleges the BMV charged drivers under the age of 75 from \$4 to \$7 more than Indiana law allows when they obtained or renewed licenses. "There is specific authority for how much they can charge and what they did instead was, apparently, just made up a number," said Levin. "They just disregarded it." Levin said he did not know how much Hoosiers were overcharged. "The state is going to have to give us that," he said. "But based on our calculations, the number could be as high as \$30 or \$40 million." Dennis Rosebrough, a BMV spokesman, said he had not seen the lawsuit and the agency would have no comment until officials have an opportunity to review the allegations. In 2012 alone, the suit alleges, 2.2 million Indiana driver's licenses expired and required renewal. If all those licenses were renewed, and drivers were overcharged by the lowest amount alleged in the suit, the BMV would have collected \$8.8 million more than allowed by law.