

Trump the ultimate INGOP wildcard

A few Hoosier Republicans express alarm, but party is mostly mute

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

BLOOMINGTON – We have entered the era of Trumpian Indiana. It is one filled with mystery and vacuum. It is one that is releasing demons. With Donald Trump well



positioned for the Republican presidential nomination, fueled by about 35% of the Republican

electorate in about 15 states, Americans and Hoosiers are facing an unprecedented November election with the likely nominees possessing historically high negatives.

All historic templates are now obsolete.

On the Republican side, the Trump phenomenon is being propelled by the uneducated and uninformed (what



Andrean HS students holding a Donald Trump cutout chanted “build a wall” at Latino Bishop Noll students last weekend. (NWI Times Photo)

could go wrong with that?), preparing to nominate a billionaire demagogue who has insulted everyone from the Holy See to disabled citizens. The only entities not feeling the Teflon howitzers are Jesus Christ, Mohammed and God, and they may be next. For Democrats rejoicing at the idea that Hillary Clinton will “cream” Trump, as suggested by the wobbly prognosticators

Karl Rove and Bill Kristol, the sobering dynamic is that the U.S. may be one terror assault away from a President Trump, whose candidacy rocketed past the punditry following the Paris and San Bernardino attacks. ISIS seeks

Continued on page 4

Lt. Gov. Holcomb ascends

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Sooooo, have you been to the Berry Bowl? Eric Holcomb responded, “Yes.”



The Wigwam? TigArena? Northside Gym?

Holcomb, then a U.S. Senate candidate, hadn't made it to the former home of the Peru Tigers, now headquarters of the Miami Indians, but now he knew it had to be on his list. Elkhart's Northside Gym was on his list. But his Facebook page was a chronicle of treys, layups, baseline jumpers and top-of-the-key fadeaways.

Statewide candidates often campaign with a theme. In 1990, Baron Hill walked across the



“We reiterated our commitment to be part of ongoing discussions to keep jobs in Indiana.”

- Gov. Mike Pence after meeting with Carrier and announcing 400 jobs would remain in Indiana



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Former Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman introduces newly sworn in Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb Thursday afternoon at the Indiana Statehouse. (HPI Photos by Mark Curry)

state from Lake Michigan to the Ohio River. Steve Buyer ran for congress in 1992 with combat boots slung over his shoulder. Vance Hartke would always snap a Polaroid shot of himself and whoever he met; his car trunk was full of Polaroid film. Mitch Daniels had RV1. Birch and Evan Bayh would roll up their sleeves and work the room, then go find a Dairy Queen. Holcomb spent a good part of his U.S. Senate campaign shooting baskets in historic hoops arenas, from Knightstown to Milan to Loogootee.

That is, until he received a phone call from Gov. Mike Pence just before the Super Bowl, inviting him to join the ticket. Holcomb became Indiana's 51st lieutenant governor Thursday afternoon, with Gov. Mike Pence introducing him as the "best-prepared person to ever assume the duties" of the office.

Holcomb took the oath of office from Indiana Supreme Court Justice Mark Massa before an overflow crowd in the Statehouse south atrium. Moments later he declared himself to be "people purposed" a decade after he took his first Statehouse job with Gov. Mitch Daniels. He told the crowd, "Gov. Pence offered me a job I never sought," and then vowed to "create and build an even better Indiana." He described his duties that will go far beyond the borders of not only Indiana, but the United States.

Holcomb said the call from Pence, seeking to replace Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann, who resigned on Wednesday, "is all about public service." Holcomb was confirmed by the Indiana General Assembly – 50-0 in the Senate and 91-3 in the House – Thursday morning.

"Hoosiers are literally feeding the world," said Holcomb, who takes the helm of the state's Department of Agriculture and will oversee offices dealing with tourism and rural affairs. Holcomb said that Indiana has become "synonymous with innovation and investment."

"While we create local, we have global impact," Holcomb said, noting that his jobs with Gov. Daniels and U.S. Sen. Dan Coats had taken him to Madrid, Jerusalem and Beijing, but added, "As Dorothy said, 'There's no place like home.'"

Pence cited Holcomb's career in the Daniels administration, with Sen. Coats and former U.S. Rep. John Hostettler, as well as his stint as a U.S. Navy intelligence officer in a time of war, as giving Holcomb the unique resume that inspired his selection. He cited Holcomb's kindness, tenacity and love for the people of Indiana, said, "He's just a great guy and he'll be a great lieutenant governor." For flourish, Pence noted that Holcomb had shot a basketball in all 92 counties during his Senate campaign.

"I didn't ask him what his percentage was," Pence quipped.

Curt Smith of the Indiana Family Institute watched the unfolding pagentry and noted "I hired Eric for his first job," on Hostettler's staff. The clincher? Holcomb's vast knowledge of Abraham Lincoln, a tangible asset in the old Bloody 8th CD.

Holcomb's strength is his people skills and commonality that will translate well to the retail politics he is faced with for the next eight months. He's a man who can describe the guitar riffs of Angus and Malcolm Young of AC/DC and was savvy enough to sponsor a My Man Mitch dirt track car at the Anderson Speedway reaching blue collar voters.

The Pence administration made the crucial pivot, transitioning to Holcomb as lieutenant governor a day after Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann stepped down. Holcomb gives Gov. Mike Pence's reelection campaign a critical on-the-ground component as he girds for a rematch with Democrat John Gregg. Informed and reliable sources have told HPI that Ellspermann was uncomfortable participating in what is expected to be an intensely fought campaign which will see Pence resort to combative advertising for the first time in his career. Ellspermann had signed a no-negative-campaign pledge in 2010 when she upset House Majority Leader Russ Stilwell, and the Pence-Ellspermann ticket did the same two years later. It almost ended in a disaster as Pence narrowly defeated Gregg instead of the landslide win many expected, capturing just 49% of the vote. Since then, the Pence administration has been enmeshed in a number of controversies that had exposed fissures between the various wings of the GOP. Holcomb is expected to salve those wounds.

Holcomb has crisscrossed the state as a deputy chief of staff for Gov. Mitch Daniels, as his 2008 campaign manager, as state Republican chairman, and then for much of 2015 and early 2016 as a U.S. Senate candidate. He abruptly withdrew from that race on Feb. 9 and was named the LG designate by Gov. Pence a day later.

Holcomb comes on board because he is the Indiana Republican Party's happy warrior. He knows the nooks and crannies of the state. He knows how to pleasantly cajole folks to come around. Tracking down ballot petitions for Daniels 2004 reelect, he found an indifferent Southern Indiana county clerk. He promised to come back after lunch, and did, with a bouquet of flowers and a smile. He left with the certified signatures.

On Dec. 3, 2015, a day after the San Bernardino terror assault, Holcomb met with the Muslim Alliance of Indiana to express his support for them. He had the meeting set up before the shootings took place, and decided to keep the appointment. He didn't consider cancelling, even



Gov. Mike Pence looks on as Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb talks with a constituent Thursday afternoon after he became Indiana's 51st LG. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

though he knew there might be a problem with the optics of the meeting from some of his supporters. "Someone else might have considered cancelling," Holcomb told CNHI Statehouse reporter Maureen Hayden. "But we couldn't get there fast enough."

As Daniels' deputy chief of staff, as his reelection campaign manager, as Indiana Republican chairman under both Daniels and Pence, Holcomb's mojo has always been about opening doors. At a time when Gov. Pence talks about non-discrimination while doing nothing to promote a resolution to the simmering civil rights expansion issue, Holcomb talked about inclusion, the big tent, and creating a new pool of Republicans, one bouquet, one layup at a time.

A number of Republicans HPI has talked with hope that Holcomb widens Gov. Pence's tiny, true-believer inner circle, bringing different perspectives that many think haven't been represented in the first three years of the administration.

Holcomb's first job will be to mend the Indiana Republican Party, its business and social conservative wings frayed by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the civil rights expansion. "Eric is going to be a tremendous asset," Indiana Republican Chairman Jeff Cardwell told HPI. "He brings a total new aspect to team. He knows Indiana very very well and he will be building on the foundation that's already in place."

How much damage has there been to the party? "I think it has been overblown," Cardwell said, acknowledging that RFRA and civil rights have been internal stewing points. But Cardwell says that many Hoosier Republicans believe that the "governor made a good point about protecting and defending the constitution of Indiana and the United States. He's going to continue to listen and have an open mind. Ultimately it's going to come down to we cannot do anything to diminish his oath of office." ❖

Trump, from page 1

to entice an American army back into the Middle East.

Hoosier Republicans are still on mute as they watch the Trump phenomenon unfold, much like one would a traffic accident in slo-mo. While no establishment or prominent Indiana Republican has endorsed Trump, virtually none of them is publicly raising red flags in a state that has witnessed vandalism at a Plainfield Islamic Center, taunts aimed at Latino students of "build a wall" at last weekend's Andrean-Bishop Noll basketball game, and an "ethnic cleansing" hatchet attack on a Chinese foreign exchange student in Nashville.

U.S. Sen. Dan Coats told the Associated Press, "I am increasingly concerned by Donald Trump's statements and behavior, and I have serious concerns about his ability to win the general election and provide presidential leadership."

State Rep. David Ober told the IndyStar's Matt Tully, "I just don't understand what people see when they look at Donald Trump and when they listen to him, and how they think that is a temperament we want to see in a president. I am outspoken because I think we are making a huge mistake as a party if we nominate this guy. We talk about being a big tent party but we don't act like it. We are forcing moderates out of one end of the tent and barring new voters from coming into the other end."

Gov. Mike Pence is on record as saying he will support the Republican nominee. National Committeeman John Hammond III pronounced Trump "unfit" for the presidency last fall, and told the IndyStar on Thursday, "Donald Trump is unfit to be the president of the United States. Common sense would dictate that we spend as much time as possible and go through whatever efforts necessary to find a standard-bearer that, one, can win in November and, two, will run this country in a responsible manner. I cannot support Donald Trump at this moment. He's not proven to me to be someone who is ready to serve in the presidency. I'm a rock-ribbed Republican, and my inclination is to support the nominee, whoever that might be. But right now I don't think it's inevitable that it's Donald Trump."

And in a historic screed, Romney denounced Trump on Thursday, labeling him as a "phony" and a "fraud" and warning that his "brand of anger that has led other nations into the abyss." Trump responded in crude fashion, saying, "I backed Mitt Romney. He was begging for my endorsement. I could have said 'Mitt, drop to your knees.' He would have dropped to his knees."

Pence camp rejects Trump media narrative

Robert Vane, contracted by the Indiana Republican Party and speaking for the reelection campaign of Gov.

Mike Pence, responded to a Howey Politics inquiry about a potential Trump nomination by saying, "Forgive me . . . for stating that if the conversation is going to focus on how the Republican Party – and by extension Donald Trump, his supporters, and Republicans/conservatives – is racist, sexist, xenophobic, etc., then we may as well not waste our time. I absolutely 100% reject that narrative, and don't want to engage in a discussion that has a tremendous and unfounded insult as the foundation of that discussion."

From Pence's perspective, Indiana will not be an automatic red state in November. It won't likely go on the GOP Electoral College board at 6:03 p.m. Nov. 8. With few states nominating down-ballot candidates in the primaries and caucuses thus far, it is impossible at this point to gauge what impact Trump will have on a governor who won office with just 49% of the vote in 2012 and is widely seen as vulnerable.

Daniels watching Trump turnout

If there is good news for the GOP, it may be in Purdue President Mitch Daniels' Tuesday night observation: "For whatever reason, there's been a surge of turnout on the Republican side and a falloff from past years on the Democratic side. It may not be indicative of anything later on, but it's a phenomenon worth keeping your eye on."



Daniels appeared with Alexander Heffner on campus Tuesday night and said, "I observed that for all the talk about money in politics, money didn't buy much, certainly on the Republican side. All of the money got wasted or spent on candidates who have failed.

Likewise, all the noise about the establishment this, the establishment that. It's hard to find an establishment. If there is one, they're not very effective because once again their candidates, at least on the Republican side, have not done well at all. If there is an establishment, maybe we see some evidence of that on the Democratic side."

Daniels also observed that we live in a "celebrity driven culture. They may be wonderful actors but they don't know what they're talking about. We listen to them because they're famous."

Heffner described a campaign from the "cesspool" and at one point talked of the Bushes and Romneys coming together to find a convention "dark horse" candidate, the irony being he was seated next to President Daniels.

The ignored GOP autopsy

All of this comes three years after the 2012 "autopsy," a 100-page report titled the "Growth and Opportunity Project" under the direction of RNC Chairman Reince Priebus, which observed, "We must embrace and champion comprehensive immigration reform. If we do not, our

party's appeal will continue to shrink to its core constituencies only" and "there is a generational difference within the conservative movement about issues involving the treatment and the rights of gays – and for many younger voters, these issues are a gateway into whether the party is a place they want to be. If our party is not welcoming and inclusive, young people and increasingly other voters will continue to tune us out."

It was a report a vast majority of Hoosier Republican wouldn't comment on, let alone acknowledge. Now Hoosier Republicans are staring at the likelihood their nominee will be one who has castigated Latinos, seeks to ban Muslims from entering the country, and has been a fountain of crude language and a policy-bereft stream of consciousness more fitting for a TV reality show. Last week, a Washington Post/Univision Poll revealed that Clinton would defeat Trump 73-16% (President Obama won this group over Mitt Romney in 2012 by 71-27%). This has the potential for high impact in swing states such as Florida, New Mexico and Colorado.

Robert Kagan, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, observed in the Washington Post: "Trump is . . . the party's creation, its Frankenstein monster, brought to life by the party, fed by the party and now made strong enough to destroy its maker. Was it not the party's wild obstructionism – the repeated threats to shut down the government over policy and legislative disagreements; the persistent call for nullification of Supreme Court decisions; the insistence that compromise was betrayal; the internal coups against party leaders who refused to join the general demolition – that taught Republican voters that government, institutions, political traditions, party leadership and even parties themselves were things to be overthrown, evaded, ignored, insulted, laughed at? This would not be the first revolution that devoured itself."

For now, Republican campaigns are telling HPI they are concentrating on their own races while a Bellwether Research Poll in December showed Trump leading with 26%, compared to 17% for Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz. Joshua Kelley, campaign manager for Marlin Stutzman's U.S. Senate campaign, said this week that the Trump "outsider" and wrecking ball status is poised to bring out May Indiana primary voters who will latch on to the congressman's message that Washington is "broken" and needs an overhaul. Trevor Foughty, campaign manager for Todd Young's Senate campaign, said he is focused on Young's game plan and not the presidential race or impacts, as if the Senate race will be determined in isolation.

But in increasing numbers, national analysts are girding for a potential Goldwater-style disaster that allowed President Lyndon Johnson to carry Indiana in 1964 and brought in 78 Indiana House Democrats. "At some point, we have to deal with the fact that there are at least

two candidates who could utterly destroy the Republican bench for a generation if they became the nominee," Josh Holmes, a former chief of staff to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, told Politico.

Rove, a former political adviser to President George W. Bush, huddled with Republican governors last week in what was described by the Boston Globe as a "glum" assessment of the potential Trump impact. In a Wall Street Journal column, Rove called Trump the "dream candidate for Democrats" and warned that he would be "creamed" by Hillary Clinton next November. "Although Mr. Trump's antics may not drive away his current supporters, they make him unlikely to win the White House. If you're a candidate who has an 11% approval rating among Latinos, you're not succeeding there. If you have a record of misogynist comments, that's not going to be helpful. If you call all the people you're running against losers, clowns, and dopes, that's not the language of someone who unifies the party," he wrote.

Cardwell has seen this before

Indiana Republican Chairman Jeff Cardwell has seen this dynamic before, does not plan to endorse, and believes that the realities of 24/7 social media are creating the wicked crosswinds. "One of the things I've been trying to do is look back at other years," Cardwell said Tuesday morning. "I know there's always a lot of high stress in business circles. Realtors, or the Lumbermen's Association, we always have a lot of high tension discussions where everybody talks about what if this guy wins? How does this effect long-time planning? It seems we go through his exercise every four years. What does the impact mean for my business? There's always uncertainty."

Cardwell continued, "The thing that is different from years past is the impact the information age is having – the social media, Twitter and Facebook. It's instantaneous communication. It's created a more stressful climate. When we were growing up there three sources of news, the three networks and 30 minutes of news. We had 23 hours of relief. In today's society, there is no relief. That creates a lot of tension and a lot of anxiety than we've had in the past."

Is Cardwell concerned about the potential down-ballot impact, the coarseness of the rhetoric, and the acts of intolerance that are surfacing across the state in the age of Trump?

"The cultural change is due to social media," Cardwell responded. "That's the kind of things you see on social media. A lot of people put things on social media they would never say in person. The shock value is now you've got people actually saying it. It has shocked a lot of people. I don't think there is any question about that."

As for Trumpian impacts on the Pence reelect,



Cardwell said he is focused on the long-range game plan. "We're doing the basics we always do," he said. "We're building the ground game; getting grassroots organizing county by county. The second thing is communications. We're going to do everything we can to take advantage of all the social media channels. The other thing we're doing, the new thing we haven't done in past, is we're embracing the data analytics. We're doing what the private sector has been doing for many years. It takes a lot of the emotions and guesswork out of it. We're using the data to drive decisions."

Grand will back Trump if nominated

Bob Grand, the managing partner of Barnes & Thornburg, was supporting Jeb Bush but is now prepared to back Trump. "Yes, if he's the nominee, I will support him," Grand said Tuesday afternoon. "I can't possibly support Hillary Clinton."

Grand has not endorsed another candidate, he said, "in deference to the governor," and observed that as candidates such as Bush, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and others have dropped out, "It hasn't strengthened any of the establishment candidates. Trump has picked up that support. His candidacy is for real. It is just a different paradigm. It just seems as if he's picking up a lot of voters. They want to give something a chance that is not related to what's in Washington."

Asked if Trump's profane, semi-stream of consciousness and attacks on various minorities bothers him and is something that alarmed the authors of Chairman Priebus's 2013 party autopsy, Grand said, "It bothers me, of course, but so do the activities of the Clintons. Look, the issue here isn't good behavior. Trump would help himself if he just moderated a bit. He's a big personality. That's what has made him successful. I don't support it. I don't relish the positions he's taken. I don't know if I agree with his intent."

Down ballot impacts

Are there potential down-ballot impacts here in Indiana? "It might," Grand said of fallout from a Trump nomination. "With some sources I've talked to, that's really not been a factor. People are not that worried. He is turning out new voters, Republicans," though Grand said these new voters may be "disinterested down ballot."

Grand has met Trump. The Indianapolis attorney negotiated with Trump when he owned one of the Gary riverboat casinos. "He was a pain to deal with," Grand said. "He was an arrogant guy," telling Indiana gaming commissioners "they don't know how to deal." Grand said at one point, Trump was so angry, he and his pilot abruptly left, leaving his staff behind, scrambling to find other

flights home.

Purdue Prof. Jay McCann, appearing on a panel Tuesday night after Daniels and Heffner, said that Trump "may grow the electorate. He may not grow the electorate in his favor." And McCann added, "He is all over the map in terms of ideology. He's very unpredictable. Have him out at a rally and you have no idea what to expect. It's like what they said about Ross Perot. There was quirkiness and unpredictability. He couldn't retain advisors. They couldn't handle him. He couldn't be handled. Trump is like that."

Sabato's Crystal Ball's Larry Sabato, Kyle Kondik and Geoffrey Skelley observe: Even against Trump, Clinton would still face some generic headwinds. President Obama's approval rating has been improving a bit, but it is still a few notches below 50%, which means that Clinton

will probably have to win over at least a very small segment of Obama disapprovers (or maximize turnout among his backers). She also will have to reckon with the challenges of winning a third consecutive Democratic Party term in the White House. Anything bad that happens from now until November, a recession or, heaven forbid, a terrorist attack or other calamity, probably would hurt Obama, and therefore at least indirectly damage Clinton.

The Sabato team continues: While the videotapes of Trump's outrageous utterances will never go away, he may try to rebrand himself in a general election. This is where being unencumbered by a strong consistent ideology

can help a candidate. Trump will have won the nomination by breaking with key parts of the party's orthodoxy: He opposes cutting entitlements, is anti-free trade, and seems quite supportive of universal health care even as he rips the Affordable Care Act, among many other examples. Trump also had terrible favorability ratings with Republican voters when he entered the fray last summer, akin to his low numbers with the general electorate now. Could he turn his numbers around? We are doubtful, especially because his campaign has often appeared hostile to the nonwhite voters who form the core of the Democratic Party, but after the incredible twists of the past year, we're not prepared to rule anything out at this point.

The danger for Democrats is Trump's unpredictability. Most opponents can be gauged and a campaign script can be designed to handle and contain. Op research can provide template responses. But all of that is obsolete now.

There will be a national brawl unlike anything we've seen in the electronic age. The fallout will spew nationally and across the Hoosier prairies. Pundits will be plunged into unreliability as they are assaulted near Trump media pens. The collateral damage will likely be tornadic, with little logic left to determine who stands and who falls and which pieces of straw can pierce wooden beams.

Indiana and America will likely be different places, perhaps profoundly different, come November. ❖



Trump nomination and the GOP Senate map

By **LARRY SABATO, KYLE KONDICK**
and **GEOFFREY SKELLEY**
Sabato's Crystal Ball

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – Let's have some speculative fun, if such a thing is possible in this election year. After recent primaries, it's not a stretch to imagine Donald Trump as the Republican presidential nominee; in fact, the odds at the moment favor this outcome. Now, add a second, more controversial projection: Trump loses the general election handily to Hillary Clinton. If you're a Trump supporter, you will vigorously object.

Yet the conclusion isn't our concoction as much as it is the rather strong belief – and fear – of major GOP officeholders at the national level, as the New York Times reported in an excellent piece over the weekend. On Monday, Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-TX), a former chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, publicly expressed concern about a Trump nomination: "We can't have a nominee be an albatross around the down-ballot races," he told CNN.

We'll revisit this subject many times before November, and it is vital to recall that six months ago, virtually everyone in public office and in the election analysis business dismissed Trump as a flash in the pan who could never be nominated. Still, for our purposes here, let's assume the Republican leadership is correct.

What will happen to the most vulnerable part of the GOP elective empire, the U.S. Senate? The Crystal Ball has argued since 2014 that the current Republican majority is very fragile, and that the seats up in 2016 give the Democrats a fair to good chance of takeover, depending on the presidential outcome, in part.

How does a Trump nomination change the Crystal Ball Senate map?

First, here are our existing ratings. Thanks to the 2010 victories they won on this map six years ago, Republicans are overextended. Democrats have better-than-even

odds of recapturing Republican-held Illinois and Wisconsin, and they have several other targets, while Democrats are defending an open seat in Nevada and another potentially competitive seat in Colorado.

Obviously, the map gets much worse for Republicans. This moves four additional Senate races – Florida, Nevada, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania – toward the Democrats, and others would become more competitive. Ohio would be a toss-up, while Democratic odds could also improve in places like Indiana, Missouri, and North Carolina. As unlikely as it seems at present, perhaps even a Senate institution, Chuck Grassley (R-IA), the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, could find himself in unexpected trouble, particularly if Republicans find their opposition to holding a vote, or even hearings, on President Obama's eventual nominee to replace the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia is unpopular.

Under this scenario, we could see the Democrats winning at least 51 Senate seats, with several others in the realm of the possible. The Republican "Trumpmare" is a Democratic Senate to go along with a third straight Democratic term in the White House. (We'll leave analysis of what might happen in the House and in gubernatorial races to future Crystal Balls.)

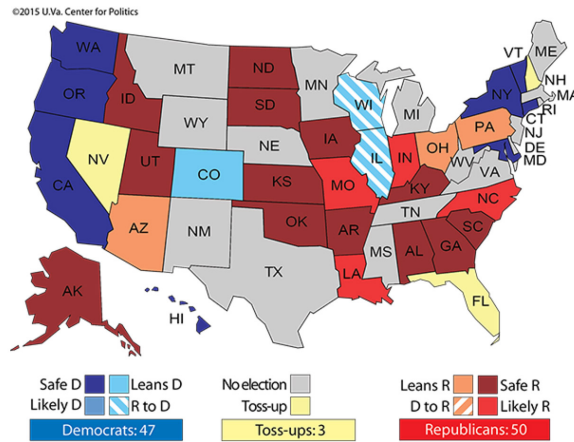
This scenario seems almost too easy for the Democrats, and politics is always more complicated. So is there any way out for the GOP?

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has reportedly already suggested an avenue for his vulnerable members: Disavow Trump publicly, and even air anti-Trump TV ads outlining differences with him. In Democratic and swing states, this might prove a necessity for Republican candidates, though not enough to save them in every case. Also,

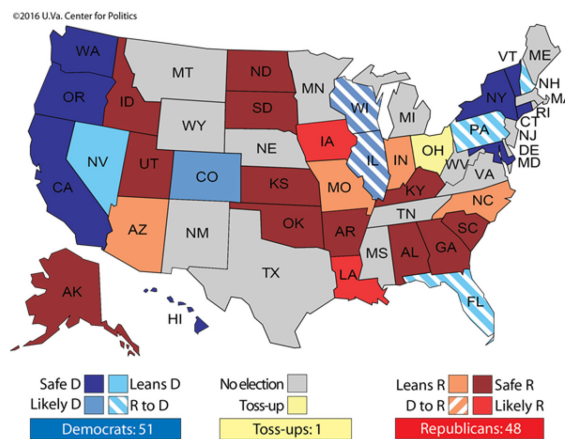
intense Trump backers (a redundant phrase) might withhold their votes from RINOs (Republicans in name only) that are turning their backs on Trump.

McConnell's idea triggered memories from 1964 and 1972, years when the parties went off the rails and nominated candidates for president that were not competitive in November. Both Barry Goldwater (R) and George McGovern (D) won less than 40% of the national popular vote. In this age of intense polarization, when voters are motivated as much by dislike of the other party as by love

Map 1: Current 2016 Crystal Ball Senate ratings



Map 2: Possible 2016 Crystal Ball Senate ratings in the Trumpmare scenario



for their own, this kind of showing is highly unlikely. The 2016 two-party results would likely be within the 55% to 45% range, and possibly much closer.

Nonetheless, our two historical parallels raise a useful question: How did Republicans on the ballot in the year of Goldwater, and Democrats on the ballot in the year of McGovern, survive the landslide at the top of the ticket?

These were different times, and ticket-splitting was more common. However, politicians developed the kinds of answers that some of those on the ballot in 2016 will have to adopt:

- The most common option among those holding office was, "I'm a Democratic (or Republican) official, and I'm morally obligated to vote for the party's ticket." The White House candidate's name wasn't even mentioned. This sentence could be uttered with a certain degree of resignation or disgust that the party had put them on the horns of this dilemma. Most of these pols avoided their presidential nominee like the plague, and they were always in another part of their state when the nominee visited. Essentially, they pretended to be in a parallel universe where no campaign for president was being waged.

- Almost as common was this construction: "I have my own race to run, and my plate is very full. The voters are completely capable of sorting out the presidential contest without me." The candidate avoided taking any stand, and demonstrated a kind of humility by acknowledging voters weren't sitting on the edge of their chairs waiting for his or her endorsement. The opposing party and the news media didn't stop asking questions, of course, but it was a pat answer for all seasons. Ardent Goldwater and McGovern backers weren't happy, but most of them were not offended enough to go fishing or vote for the other party's candidate.

- Some officeholders took very principled (or at least definitive) stands and made crystal clear their party's nominee was unacceptable. Most had already been renominated before having to declare allegiances, so there was no looming threat of a primary defeat. The GOP in 1964 had a large liberal wing in the Northeast and the industrial Midwest, so a stance against Goldwater was easier, even helpful, for some. Mitt Romney's father, Gov. George Romney of Michigan, aggressively opposed Goldwater prior to the summer convention, and then made it obvious that he wasn't voting for the party nominee during the fall. Romney was reelected governor with 56% even as Lyndon Johnson was winning 67% in Michigan. Similarly, in 1972 Democrats had an imposing conservative wing, mainly in the South and Border States. McGovern was anathema to Old South Democrats, and many incumbents left no doubt they would be voting for President Nixon.

A few moderate Democrats tried to straddle the line, but it was a dangerous place to be. U.S. Sen. William B. Spong, Jr. (D-VA), a highly regarded freshman seen by

many as a future majority leader, had refused to discuss the presidential race during the fall. But just days before the election, a reporter overheard Spong say he would be voting for McGovern. It generated big headlines at the worst possible time for Spong, and he lost his bid for reelection in a state Nixon won with 68%.

The Johnson and Nixon landslides were comparable, with each receiving slightly over 60% of the national vote. Yet LBJ's coattails were longer. Democrats gained 37 House seats in a chamber they already controlled by a wide margin, and they added two Senate seats as well. By contrast, Nixon had a "lonely landslide." Republicans only gained 12 seats in the House and actually lost two Senate seats, net. Congress remained firmly in Democratic hands. There were many reasons for the differences, including the fact that LBJ was determined to bring in a swollen majority while Nixon wasn't nearly as dedicated to his role as party-builder. But surely the skill (or lack of same) with which individual, endangered politicians protected themselves in both years was a key factor.

In sum, historical precedent has suggested some possible avenues of escape, or at least management, for threatened Republican U.S. senators in 2016. Whether that's possible in a more partisan era is anyone's guess. Clearly, some red state Democrats tried to run against President Obama in midterms in 2010 and 2014, and almost all of them lost. And in the last two presidential cycles, more than 80% of Senate seats were won by the same party that won the state at the presidential level.

There's another way, though, and we'll have to see if it develops later this spring. What if mainstream Republicans ran a "Real Republican" independent ticket, with a couple of widely respected candidates willing to suffer the excommunication and abuse that would come with such a candidacy? Perhaps the ticket wouldn't make every state's ballot, but surely 40 or more states would be achievable. It is impossible to say how many Republicans would choose this alternative, but we'd bet it would be in the millions, and nationally it might garner mid-single-digit backing or more.

What's our point? "Real Republican" voters would be almost certain to vote for regular GOP candidates down the ballot. This ticket could bring out people who might otherwise skip the election, moderates and conservatives who won't back Trump but also wouldn't consider casting a ballot for Hillary Clinton. These extra voters could be the margin of victory for Republican Senate candidates. It wouldn't surprise us if there were more than one such independent ticket, in one case running on an established third-party line (such as the Constitution Party). The more the merrier for incumbent GOP senators; all those votes could be the cushion they need.

So many possibilities, so many unknowns in this crazy year! What election watcher could ask for more? ❖



The day Scott Walker almost save the GOP

By PETE SEAT

INDIANAPOLIS – He could have been a contender. He could have been the nominee. He could have been president. But on Sept. 21, 2015, Scott Walker did the right thing; he dropped out of the race for the Republican nomination for president.

Where would we be today if others had followed his lead?



The reasons for Walker's abrupt withdrawal were aplenty. He struggled with questions of gravitas, his poll numbers were falling, and supporters were increasingly squishy. The driving force, though, was the campaign's absurdly high burn rate. Walker's team grew too big, too fast and they couldn't keep up with their overhead in those emerging stages of the

campaign. And I almost contributed to the problem.

In March of last year, shortly after Walker launched into orbit following an impressive Iowa Freedom Summit speech, I was summoned to Madison, for a meeting with the governor. Arriving at the pseudo campaign office in the basement of the governor's mansion, I got a glimpse into the burgeoning and blossoming operation, which made later news of financial issues unsurprising. Staffers were scattered about working feverishly to schedule events, while others were huddled with Walker strategizing about the next steps in his campaign. Unlike those already on the payroll, I was there to interview for a job that did not come.

But enough of that. I come here today not to dwell on the past, but to praise Walker for what he almost did for the future. As the political intelligentsia pored over Federal Election Commission reports to highlight excessive disbursements, they glossed over Walker's public reason for suspending his once-promising bid for higher office.

In his snappy press conference withdrawing from the race, Walker asked others to do

"the same so the voters can focus on a limited number of candidates who can offer a positive conservative alternative to the current front-runner. This is fundamentally important to the future of the party and, ultimately, the future of our country."

It seemed, at the time, like a poorly played guise to mask the lack of campaign cash. Walker went on to tell local Wisconsin media that real estate mogul Donald Trump's firmly held plurality of support would likely continue without a winnowing of the field. If the other 15 candidates could not sketch out and act on an exit plan quickly, Trump would secure the nomination. Few believed in that moment that the front runner of September would remain the front runner of March, and yet here we are.

Walker has long been a savvy political analyst, yet as he was moving closer toward has-been (for now) rather than presumptive nominee, his words fell on deaf ears. But what if they hadn't? What if one, two or 10 of the other candidates had heeded his advice and dropped their bids?

What if Ben Carson, John Kasich and Ted Cruz got out before Super Tuesday?

Would Donald Trump still be the front runner? It took far too long for consolidation. It took far too long for natural selection to take its course. It took Bobby Jindal nearly two months to the day after Walker's exit to be the next candidate to drop out. It makes me wish there had been an Iowa straw poll last summer; maybe we wouldn't be waking up to this nightmare every morning if another candidate or two had to save face because they couldn't hack it in Ames.

Unless Dr. Emmett Brown makes good on his DeLorean time machine, we will never know what alternative reality could have been. We will never know if it was at all possible for some of those men, and one woman, to put aside their egos and do what was best for the country. We will never be able to go back to Sept. 21, 2015, and give it another try.

While there's still time to fix this mess, I will always look back on that day as the day that could have been the beginning of the end. Instead, it became the end of the beginning and we are paying the price. ❖

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Pete Seat is senior project manager at the Indianapolis-based Hathaway Strategies. He was previously a spokesman for President George W. Bush, U.S. Sen. Dan Coats and the Indiana Republican Party.

Eric Holcomb is a ‘welcoming Republican’

By MAUREEN HAYDEN
CNHI Statehouse Bureau

INDIANAPOLIS – On paper, Republican operative Eric Holcomb’s first political job was working for a U.S. congressman. But his duties with the NATO Joint Force Command may be most instructive for his chosen career. Stationed as a naval intelligence officer in Lisbon, Holcomb



helped coordinate a multi-nation, simulated attack against an imaginary enemy.

“It was the most political job I ever had,” he said. “Can you imagine trying to get 16 nations to arrive at a consensus? And they were allies.”

Holcomb, 47, is about to step into another kind of combat where consensus-building will be critical. This week he was sworn in as the state’s 51st lieutenant gov-

ernor, as current Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann stepped down.

In taking the role, Holcomb also becomes running mate to Republican Gov. Mike Pence, who faces a tough re-match against Democrat John Gregg, whom he narrowly defeated four years ago, and deep divisions within his own party.

Repairing the rupture between the socially conservative Pence and disaffected, establishment Republicans, who may stay home on Election Day, is among Holcomb’s key challenges. Pence’s ratings took a big hit last year as he championed a contentious religious freedom law that critics saw as a license to discriminate. He further alienated some business leaders this year by rejecting a call to add gender identity and sexual orientation to the state’s civil rights law.

Holcomb has done major repair work before. He ran the 2008 reelection campaign of Gov. Mitch Daniels, whose popularity plunged in his first term nearly as deeply as Pence’s. Daniels returned

to office with a record victory, crushing Democrat Jill Long Thompson by 18 points; in the same year Barack Obama won the state and the presidency, Holcomb got much of the credit for Daniels’ win.

For the effort, Holcomb has been called a bridge-builder for his skills bringing together disparate groups, and an attack dog for his willingness to go after an opponent. Holcomb said his preferred descriptor is “welcoming Republican,” one who is eager to put party interests first.

Holcomb, a former state party chairman and district director to retiring U.S. Sen. Dan Coats, gave up his bid for a U.S. Senate seat earlier this month to take the second-in-command job that pays just over \$88,500 a year. He did so at Pence’s request, when Ellspermann, a moderate and relative political novice, indicated that she wanted out. She’s announced that she wants to become president of Ivy Tech Community College, a position to be filled later this year.

Holcomb likes the analogy of a big-tent party with plenty of room for multiple, even conflicting, views. Actually a big table sounds better. “I’m not one to say there’s no room at the inn,” he said. “I’m one who says there is plenty of room at the table. So scoot on over, and let’s get another place setting.”

Friends say key to understanding the cowboy-boots-wearing Holcomb is appreciating his folksy charm. Holcomb grew up in the small town of Clermont before

going off to Hanover College, a private, liberal arts school. As a boy, his home wasn’t far from a drag-racing strip now known as Lucas Oil Raceway, where he’d ride his bike to collect empty beer and pop cans.

During a previous stint as Daniels’ deputy chief of staff, Holcomb could be found with Democrat friends during fall racing season at the Anderson Speedway for a fan favorite, school buses racing around a figure-8 track. “He’s a man with a lot of friends. That’s a hard thing to do in politics,” said Cam Savage, a Daniels campaign aide who’s known Holcomb since the latter first ran for office in 2000.

Not everyone’s a friend. Late in that 2000 race for state representative, Holcomb ran an ad in local newspapers accusing his opponent, Democratic incumbent John Frenz, of condoning obscenity and bestiality. The basis for the accusation was that Frenz



Eric Holcomb at Howe Politics Indiana’s North American HQ during his Senate campaign. He will now be a vital component for Gov. Mike Pence’s reelection campaign. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

had voted to fund the Kinsey Institute, an internationally known sex research center at Indiana University. What Frenz had actually voted on was the state budget, which included funding for IU and every state university.

Holcomb lost the race. But Democrats call it one of the dirtiest political ads in Indiana political history and point to it as evidence of what Holcomb is willing to do. "When I saw Eric was on the ticket, I knew, they think he'll be the hatchet man," Frenz said. Still, Frenz said he's forgiven Holcomb. "I think it was campaign staff who decided to do it, not Eric," he said.

Holcomb now says the ad was a mistake and a tough lesson in how not to conduct a political campaign. He said so, standing by his wife Janet, at Pence's press conference to announce Holcomb's new role. "I recognize that, and learned from that, and have not taken that ap-



proach since," he said.

Holcomb's colleagues say he's got a gift for energizing a campaign. "He makes you feel like you're part of a something," said Brian McGrath, a friend and former finance director for the Daniels campaign. "He's got vision."

McGrath and Savage both say Holcomb also has the trust of those devoted to Daniels, a fiscal conservative who called for a truce on social issues when he was in office. Daniels' supporters haven't "felt at home" with

the Pence administration, Savage said. Holcomb's presence may change that. In doing so, he could pull disaffected Republicans – and their money – back to Pence. "Let's hope so," Savage said. "At the end of the day, it's in the party's best interest." ❖

Maureen Hayden covers the Indiana Statehouse for CNHI's newspapers and websites. Reach her at mhayden@cnhi.com



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Pence 1 for 2, but a good week with voters

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Gov. Mike Pence was one out of two for the week. He was rebuked by a federal judge over his ban of Syrian refugees, but he appeared to have saved 400 Carrier jobs after meeting with the fleeing company on Wednesday. In both cases, his stances will likely play well with voters.

On Tuesday, federal district Judge Tanya Walton Pratt cited a “near complete absence of harm to the state,” adding the governor’s order “clearly discriminates against Syrian refugees based on their national origin.”



It came after Pence announced last November that Indiana would ban the resettlement of Syrian refugees, citing a fake passport found on a terrorist after

terror attacks in Paris. The Pence administration could never cite where its authority was in the ban. Later that month, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin defied Pence’s order, saying that Catholic Charities would resettle a Syrian family fleeing the civil war there.

Judge Walton Pratt said in her ruling, “The state essentially argues that it is in the public interest for the court to allow unconstitutional discrimination to continue during the pendency of this litigation, discrimination that harms both Exodus and its clients so that it can gain perceived leverage in its dispute with the federal government over immigration policy and whether the federal government is complying with its obligations under the Refugee Act. The court could hardly disagree more with the state’s position. The public interest is served when constitutional rights are vindicated.”

“The state has unsurprisingly cited no legal authority for the proposition that temporary national origin discrimination is any more constitutionally acceptable than permanent discrimination,” the judge said. “Moreover, when questioned at the hearing about the purported temporary nature of the state’s directive, the state was unable to give even a loose timeframe for when the directive might change.”

Gov. Pence has instructed the Office of the Indiana Attorney General to seek an immediate stay and appeal of this order. “As governor I have no higher priority than the safety and security of the people of Indiana,” Pence said in a statement. “During these uncertain times, we must al-

ways err on the side of caution. For that reason, following the terrorist attack in Paris and the acknowledgment by the director of the FBI that there are gaps in the screening for Syrian refugees, I suspended participation by the State of Indiana in the Syrian refugee resettlement program and I stand by that decision.

Pence continued, “So long as the Obama administration continues to refuse to address gaps in the screening of Syrian refugees acknowledged by the FBI and a bipartisan majority in Congress, Hoosiers can be assured that my administration will continue to use every legal means available to suspend this program in Indiana unless and until federal officials take steps to ensure the safety and security of our citizens.”

While Pence’s stance on the refugees was controversial, past and future polling on the issue will likely show continued support for the move, even though actions by Bishop Tobin and Judge Pratt proved to be a rebuke.

On the Carrier issue, Pence sat down with company officials on Wednesday and was able to announce the 400 “high-paying jobs” out of the total 1,400 would remain in the state. And Pence and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation will get \$1.2 million in reimbursements from the company for training grants, according to Matt Lloyd, deputy chief of staff for communications for the governor. “We reiterated our commitment to be a part of ongoing discussions to keep jobs in Indiana,” Pence said after the meeting, calling it a “frank and productive” conversation. WTHR-TV reported that Pence said Carrier cited federal government red tape as a large reason for wanting to leave, saying they considered Indiana to have an otherwise “positive business environment.”

Jobs will be a consistent reelection theme for the governor. Appearing in Richmond last week, Pence said, “I know Richmond has been through some tough times, but I’m very encouraged by the progress and development of the economy the last few years.” Pence said the business environment in Indiana, including yearly tax cuts, has helped reduce unemployment, but it has not eliminated challenges (Richmond Palladium-Item). “The challenge in growing the economy in Indiana, more often than not, is meeting workforce needs,” said Pence,

who asked a representative of each business present to describe how well they are doing. “We’re working to have smarter, more effective 21st Century workforce development.”

If there was a negative story for the governor, it was an IndyStar report that the Indiana bicentennial ef-



Gov. Mike Pence and IEDC Chairman Jim Schellinger meet with the media after salvaging 400 Carrier jobs.

fort has a \$38 million deficit. "We believe that the proceeds from the cell tower lease will more than cover the costs of the bicentennial capital projects," Micah Vincent, Pence's top financial official, told the Star. Later in the week, Pence expressed confidence that the bicentennial costs would be covered.

As for Democratic challenger John Gregg, campaign spokesman Jeff Harris noted that for the year, Gregg has out-raised Pence \$465,000 to \$244,000 in large donations so far this year.

Gregg campaigned in Aurora with Supt. Glenda Ritz and focused on education. "I believe in what you do. Help is on the way. So sit tight, okay?" Gregg told about three dozen

teachers and school administrators in attendance at South Dearborn HS, "I want to get back to the days when teachers can teach and control is with the local school boards."

Ritz warned the crowd, "Honestly, in four more years I'm not sure you'll recognize public education. This is a very, very, very important election that's coming up." She wants to stop Indiana's accountability system of labeling schools on an A-F scale. She argued that it harms students who should be selected for college and jobs based on their own merit, not where they went to school. "I can't wait until we are not labeling schools A, B, C, D, and F," Ritz said to applause. "I advocated right from the start when I started running for reelection that I wanted to make sure we are reducing the testing. I have never been in favor of ISTEP, the pass/fail test. Every teacher who gives it knows who is not going to pass it before we spend millions of dollars giving it. It's an absolute fact," Ritz said.

The Gregg campaign also announced new staffers: Greg Stowers will be special assistant or the candidate's "body man." Karla De La Garza has joined the fundraising staff. **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

U.S. Senate

Young blasts Stutzman at GOP dinner

The two Republican candidates seeking their party's nomination for the U.S. Senate both claim conservative credentials but are campaigning on different messages (de la Bastide, Anderson Herald-Times). Rep. Marlin Stutzman wants to change the national leadership of the Republican Party and align it more closely with the Tea Party faction. Rep. Todd Young is focused on winning the general election in November and working within the system. A week ago Young (9th District) overcame a challenge to be on the May 3 primary ballot over an allegation that he failed to turn in the necessary signatures of registered voters in one of the state's congressional districts.

The challenge was filed by the Indiana Democratic Party and joined by his opponent in the primary, Stutzman (3rd District). Young told a large crowd of Madison County Republicans at the annual Lincoln Club dinner on Saturday that Democrats wanted him kept off the ballot because they know he could beat Baron Hill, the Democratic Party nominee. He said there have been highs and lows in his political life during his six years in the U.S. House. "A low point was when my primary challenger decided to pile on with the Democratic Party," Young said. Stutzman also was elected to the U.S. House in 2010. He said he has worked to change the leadership of the Republican Party caucus. "The system is broken," he said. "Under Speaker John Boehner the controls

got tighter. Only the leadership was making the decisions. "The president and Speaker were making the deals and we were making bad deals," Stutzman said. "We needed a change in leadership. That's why I voted against Boehner in 2014."

Young, Rubio win straw poll

Just as members of the Republican Party across the United States are divided on a presidential candidate this year, Republicans in Madison County are also split on a potential candidate (de la Bastide, Anderson Herald-Bulletin). During the annual Madison County Lincoln Club dinner, The Herald Bulletin conducted an unscientific survey of the Republicans in attendance on Saturday. Of the 126 people who filled out the survey, in the presidential contest Florida Sen. Marco Rubio came out on top, while U.S. Rep. Todd Young was the choice of the 121 people who responded in the race for the U.S. Senate nomination in Indiana. Rubio received 34 percent of the votes in the survey, followed by current front-runner Donald Trump with 26 percent and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz with 24 percent. Ohio Gov. John Kasich received the support of 8 percent of the local response; Ben Carson, 7 percent, and less than 1 percent for Rand Paul, who has suspended his campaign. In the race to win the GOP nomination for Indiana senator to replace retiring Republican Dan Coats, Todd Young received support from 59.5 percent of the people who completed the survey, compared to 40.5 percent for Marlin Stutzman.

Young, Stutzman voting records similar

The two Republicans seeking a U.S. Senate seat from Indiana will try to present a clear choice to primary election voters. What better place to start than with the candidates' head-to-head voting records? There's a hitch: U.S. Reps. Marlin Stutzman and Todd Young voted alike



Supt. Glenda Ritz and Democratic gubernatorial candidate John Gregg campaign together in Aurora. (Eagle Country Photo)

88 percent of the time in Congress during 2015, and they had yet to vote differently this year as of Friday afternoon (Francisco, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Stutzman and Young voted the same on 621 of 704 roll calls in the House last year in which both participated, according to data compiled on OpenCongress.org, a website operated by the nonpartisan Sunlight Foundation. OpenCongress shows that Young sided with the majority of Republicans on 95 percent of his votes while Stutzman did so 94 percent of the time. Their voting records are identical this year. Stutzman and Young have been on the same side for 91 roll calls in which neither congressman abstained, according to a review of votes by The Journal Gazette.

Stutzman to address CPAC

Stutzman is scheduled to speak at the CPAC convention. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Leans Young.

Congress

2nd CD: Dems press Walorski on Trump

Democrats are saying that U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski is refusing to denounce Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump over the Ku Klux Klan issue. "Democratic Congressional candidate Lynn Coleman pressed our own Republican Congresswoman Jackie Walorski to do the same – to join the voices in her own Party and condemn Donald Trump," said St. Joseph County Democratic Chairman Jason Critchlow. "Walorski refused to do so as reported by The South Bend Tribune and Elkhart Truth. Why does Walorski refuse to condemn such behavior?"

Horse Race Status: Leans Walorski.

3rd CD: Banks endorsed by Sasse, Erickson

U.S. Sen. Ben Sasse and conservative blogger Erick Erickson endorsed State Sen. Jim Banks for 3rd CD. Sasse wrote in a News-Sentinel op-ed, "I'm anti-establishment, and by that I mean that Washington is a mess and we must change the way we do business. We have to have more urgency about fighting for the big things, and we should call nonsense on fake budgets and fake math. But saying that by itself is not enough. Being "anti" anything is not enough. It's not enough to persuade anyone to join your cause or your project, whether we are talking about your non-profit, your business or your political party. This is bigger than winning an election. We face a constitutional crisis, and defending the American creed requires candidates who can explain what we are for. That's why I have decided to endorse Indiana State Sen. Jim Banks for Congress in the 3rd Congressional District." Erickson said, "I supported Marlin Stutzman in Indiana's 3rd Congressional District when Marlin ran the first time. He won and is moving up to the Indiana Senate race. That leaves the 3rd District vacant and I hope you will join me in supporting Jim Banks for Congress." Banks also reacted to the federal ruling on Indiana's ban of Syrian refugees, saying,

"It was disappointing to learn that a U.S. District Court judge blocked Gov. Pence's order that would restrict Syrian refugees from settling in Indiana until federal officials can provide assurance that proper security measures are in place and have been followed. Our primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of Americans and this action only makes that job more difficult." **Primary Horse Race Status:** Leans Banks.

9th CD: Houchin gets GOPAC nod

State Sen. Erin Houchin received the endorsement of GOPAC, with the launch of their "2016 Conservative Congress Project." The Conservative Congress Project assists GOPAC-affiliated state legislators running for higher office in their primary and general elections. "GOPAC works diligently to support and foster the talents of conservative leaders and to build a deep bench of proven, tested candidates at both the state and federal level," said GOPAC Chairman David Avella.

Hollingsworth files financial disclosure

The clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives just posted on its website Thursday a financial disclosure statement for 9th District Republican congressional candidate Trey Hollingsworth. It is file-stamped on Feb. 18, 2016, at 3:43 p.m. indicating that it was hand-delivered to their office, the date it was due after he was granted a 90-day extension to file his report (Welsh, Advance Indiana). Hollingsworth's largest asset is an ownership interest he holds in Hollingsworth Capital Partners Real Estate LLC's covering real estate holdings across the country that are worth more than \$50 million. Those real estate investments are generating anywhere from \$1.5 million to \$5 million in annual income for him. Hollingsworth earns a relatively small annual salary of \$34,655 from Hollingsworth G.P. He serves as a managing partner of Hollingsworth Capital Partners and various HGI entities. Hollingsworth claims no liabilities. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

General Assembly

Rep. Wesco faces rematch

The race for state representative in District 21 is going to be a rematch of the 2014 contest (Quiggle, Elkhart Truth). Democrat Jodi Buoscio is again set to face incumbent Republican Tim Wesco on Nov. 8. Buoscio, an Elkhart Memorial High School teacher, lost last time the two candidates faced off, with Wesco capturing two-thirds of the vote. Buoscio said that won't happen this time around. "There is a lot for people to vote on in this election," she said. "They have a full slate of national and statewide positions open, and typically that makes the voter turnout better. I have matured as a candidate from my try in 2014, and I think things will be a lot closer this time." Her focus, as it was two years ago, will mainly be on working families and teachers. She said that the state

needs to do better for working families who are not earning enough. "When I ran in 2014, Indiana was ranked 37th in wage earnings," Buoscio said. "Here we are two years later, and Indiana is ranked 39th. We need to do better for our families." One area of disagreement between the two candidates will likely be LGBT rights. Rep. Tim Wesco contends that the push for LGBT rights is a non-issue. He thinks it's "Indianapolis-driven" and media-driven and said constituents in his district aren't worked up about the issue (Elkhart Truth). "To compare this to the black civil rights movement is ridiculous," he said during a Third House meeting in early February. "There is not a single, verifiable case of discrimination that has occurred in Elkhart County. It is not a problem. So why are we having this discussion?" Buoscio says it is time to extend language protecting everybody from discrimination. "I work with teenagers and we always tell them to treat people the way you would want to be treated," she said. Horse Race Status: Likely Wesco.

Statewides

McCormick lays out 'non-negotiable'

About a month after announcing her candidacy for state superintendent of public instruction, Jennifer McCormick held her first event in Yorktown. McCormick announced Jan. 28 that she would challenge current su-

perintendent Glenda Ritz, then traveled to 18 counties to campaign (Fittes, Muncie Star Press). The one place she hasn't been campaigning is Yorktown, making it clear that she will not talk about her candidacy at Yorktown Community Schools, where she is still superintendent. McCormick presented her "non-negotiables" which included establishing leadership and vision within the Indiana Department of Education, providing districts with needed and quality resources and developing a credible statewide assessment program. Then she asked teachers what issues they were concerned about. McCormick brought up her support for charter schools and vouchers, which Ritz has openly opposed in the past. "It's here," she said. "State superintendent isn't going to change that, so we have to coexist." Instead of trying to get rid of charters, she said she will focus on giving public schools the resources they need to be competitive. After the meeting, McCormick talked with The Star Press about teacher evaluations and state standards. McCormick said she would be more apt to keep teacher evaluations tied to testing with a "credible system," but not if ISTEP stays the way it is now. She isn't looking to change the state standards, again. If the state were to move further from Common Core standards, McCormick said it would be "risky" because universities still rely on high-risk tests such as the SAT or ACT that align to that curriculum. "I think we need to relax," she said. "We need to have some stability." ❖

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Big box taxes and TIF

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – The legislature is currently wrestling with an issue that many folks might view as a fairly mundane tax issue; the appropriate property valuation for big box stores. Folk wisdom is right; tax policy is mundane, but it is a serious worry for some municipalities. The issue also contains an important lesson on tax and economic development policy.



Big box stores like Walmart or Target own both active stores and quite a few empty locations, often referred to as “ghost boxes” or “dark boxes.” The property values of these active stores are assessed on their revenue potential and the cost of the building and structures. The empty stores are judged as worth much less. This has prompted tax courts to force the reassessment of all those open big box stores,

equalizing them to the value of the “ghost boxes.” This will profoundly reduce assessed value and property tax collections in many places.

I don’t know enough about the issue to hold a strong position on which measure of assessed value is correct. I’m not sure anyone else does either. However, I know much about the local impact of big box stores.

The big box phenomenon is a half-century old, and the economics that doomed the local downtown stores are a century old. Big box stores didn’t kill the mom and pop stores, which were already slowly disappearing. What big box stores do is kill other big box stores. This is not only the conclusion of several dozen high-quality economic studies, but it is painfully obvious to anyone who held stock in K-Mart or Sears over the past couple decades.

However, the proliferation of large big box stores, especially the supercenter format, is not merely the outcome of favorable economic conditions. Local governments aided and abetted the explosion of new supercenter stores all around Indiana. The data is incomplete, but I’d wager that most new big box supercenter locations benefitted from local economic development incentives. These were either direct property tax abatements, or more commonly tax increment financing (TIF) that supported construction of a new retail center.

The irony is that in the mistaken name of economic development, local governments incentivized the construction of these new super centers. In so doing, they left in their wake vacant big box stores that dot the Hoosier landscape. This didn’t boost the economy, but simply shifted the geography of retail, typically by a few thousand yards. For anyone who doubts the damage done to schools by TIF districts, here is the smoking gun. Today a significant number of new big box stores lie in TIF dis-

tricts around the state. New, lower property reassessments threaten many TIF bond payments across the state and have many local governments crying to the legislature. I imagine the many school corporations who have suffered mightily from TIF will chuckle at this comeuppance.

The underlying problem here isn’t some arcane tax loophole the legislature can fix, but knuckleheaded economic development policies that are far more common than empty big box stores across our state. ❖

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



County option taxes

By MORTON MARCUS

INDIANAPOLIS – In this bar the wooden walls are soaked by beer from explosions of hostility or hilarity. Boss Bosco was in the last booth sipping eggnog out of season.

“What gives?” I ask.

“Nothing and nobody,” the boss of the Indiana



General Assembly snarls. “I try to do the right thing and I get no support from anybody.”

“So you’re drowning your sorrows in eggnog,” I say.

“Eggnog,” he says, “makes me feel festive and there’s nothing else to feel festive about.”

“What’s this right thing you tried?” I ask.

“County option sales tax,” he answers. “Stop this local whining and squealing about not enough local revenue and let them vote in their own taxes. See how they like it out there with the alligators.”

“You’re willing,” I say, “to let local governments raise revenues with a county option sales tax? After you forced county option income taxes onto local government by taking away much of their property taxes, now you’d give up sales tax revenues?”

“What are you talking about?” he asks. “Nobody said anything about giving up anything. Let the locals increase the sales tax by a penny in their counties, towns, cities, school districts, library districts, mosquito districts, their whatnots, if they’ve got the guts to do it.”

“It would be chaos,” I say.

“Yeah,” he grins and calls for another eggnog.

“You know,” he confides, “local governments really need the money. They’re choking from our fiscal policy pollution. For years, we’ve sowed weeds in their stinking little gardens.”

"Now Boss," I say. "You don't want each jurisdiction having its own sales tax. That would be confusing for businesses and consumers. It would also set up more competition between communities. Wouldn't it be better to raise the state sales tax by a penny and then give that added revenue back to the local governments?"

"No fun," he says. "Anyway we wouldn't know how to give the money back to where it came from because the Department of Revenue (DoR) doesn't have a clue."

He gives me a sly, tipsy look and says, "I ran some numbers. Don't tell nobody. DoR says nobody should use their numbers to compare counties. But I used 'em."

"Ya know," he says, his voice slurring, "DoR, in

2014, they raised over six billion dollars from the sales tax. That, buddy, means about \$1,000 per Hoosier."

"How much could we have given to the counties," I ask, "with a one-penny increase in the sales tax dedicated to local governments?"

"Ya got your hat?" he says. "You betta, 'cause a penny on the sales tax would be worth, give or take a few million, about nine.

"Nine what?" I cry impatiently.

"Nine hundred million dollars," he sighs. "N' I got da spreadsheet wit' da numbas."

As Boss Bosco slumps into sleep, I realize it'll be next week before I see those "numbas."

State power over feds is troubling prospect

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – I don't know about you, but the thought of the 50 states coming together for a constitutional convention scares the heck out of me.

The Indiana Senate has approved Joint Resolution 14 requesting that Congress call a convention for proposing amendments to the nation's Constitution.



Specifically, the resolution asks that amendments be limited to restricting federal spending and federal power generally, as well as imposing congressional term limits.

Is there anything else?

There's something about the states dictating the amount of money the federal government can spend that seems convoluted.

And giving the states a free hand in rewriting the power of the federal government is just as troubling.

And allowing a convention to impose term limits on federal representatives and senators is a frightening proposition as well.

Congress must call a convention if 34 states request one. And if 38 states ratified any amendment, it would become part of the Constitution. Four states have approved the request for a convention.

A convention would be the first since 1787 when one was called to revise the Articles of Confederation, the document on which the nation was founded.

Because a convention hasn't been called since the original one, there's no clear understanding of what it could and couldn't do.

Calling a convention today obviously would be much different than the one more than 200 years ago.

This isn't to say that the federal government doesn't need a little work. But the states shouldn't be the ones to make those decisions.

Shoot, many of the states – and Illinois is a prime example – are about as fiscally responsible as a drunken sailor.

And if the convention poked its nose into the nation's military, we could end up with 50 commanders in chief, each with a finger on the button.

Perhaps the worst thing that could come out of a convention is the adoption of term limits for those who serve in Congress. I suspect the federal government would be in a greater mess if congressmen knew they would have to go home after serving six or eight or 10 or 12 years.

The best thing that has happened for Northwest Indiana is U.S. Rep. Peter Visclosky's 32 years in the House where he has established himself as a high-ranking member of the Appropriations Committee that doles out the money. The problem with limiting federal spending would come home to roost. Because of financial problems on the local level, municipal, county and state governments turn to the feds for help.

For instance, without the money Visclosky has brought home, the Little Calumet River would still be flooding, the runway expansion at the Gary/Chicago International Airport wouldn't have happened, and NWI wouldn't be in the process of reclaiming the Lake Michigan lakefront. And there wouldn't be a chance for South Shore Railroad expansion.

Whether a constitutional convention happens or not, there will be plenty of state reps and senators who will be telling their constituents that they voted for a vehicle that would put the brakes on the hated federal government. ❖

Rich James has been writing about state and local government and politics for more than 30 years. He is a columnist with The Times of Northwest Indiana.

GOP that dumb to nominate Trump?

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Back in early December, I wrote: “I don’t think Republicans . . . are dumb enough to nominate Donald Trump for president.” Any questions?

Q. Looks now like they are that dumb and you’re dumb for thinking they aren’t. Doesn’t Trump have it wrapped up?

A. As that great political analyst Yogi Berra observed: “It ain’t over till it’s over.” But Trump could be almost unstoppable, no matter what Republican and conservative leaders try to do to halt him, if he wins nearly all of the primaries on Tuesday, as polls now project as possible.



Q. Why did you think nominating Trump would be dumb for Republicans?

A. I agreed with Republican leaders who thought Trump would be trounced in a one-on-one race with a Democratic nominee appealing to all of those groups Trump insults, bringing disaster also to other Republican candidates around the nation. Worse. If he did win, Republicans would be responsible for their own rude, crude, ego-driven, never-back-down version of Putin as president.

Q. Change your mind?

A. Nope.

Q. So, are Republicans really dumb?

A. No. Not really. Some are. Most aren’t. Same with Democrats. Neither party has a monopoly on intelligence or on lack thereof in their ranks.

Q. Did you write anything about possible Democratic dumbness back in December?

A. Yep. ‘Twas a bipartisan expression faith that neither party would be dumb enough to nominate someone likely to lead to electoral disaster, as Republicans did with Barry Goldwater in 1964, as Democrats did with George McGovern in 1972. I wrote that I didn’t believe Democrats were dumb enough to nominate Bernie Sanders.

Q. Is it certain that Democrats on Tuesday will reject a real left-winger like Sanders?

A. Remember the words of Yogi.

Q. What was the reaction to writing that Republicans weren’t dumb enough to nominate Trump?

A. Republican friends, including some prominent in the party, said they hoped I was right. They feared a Trump nomination. They regard him as not really a conservative or a Republican. Democratic friends, except for a

few, said they hoped I was wrong. They wanted Trump as a target helping to elect a Democratic-controlled Senate.

Q. Why did a few of those Democrats not welcome Trump for presidential opponent?

A. Because strange things can happen in a presidential campaign. They feared that some event or damage to the Democratic nominee, such as something criminal actually being found in Hillary Clinton’s email, could crown Trump as leader of the free world.

Q. If so many Republicans didn’t want Trump, how come he keeps winning?

A. With all those Republican presidential contenders in the early caucus and primary tests, Trump, appealing beyond ranks of traditional Republican voters, captured enough support to win, while the others split up the remaining majority of the vote.

Q. Any of those others better qualified for president?

A. Can think of at least five.

Q. Why didn’t they go after Trump on his inconsistencies, lack of specifics and wild claims and charges?

A. Too busy going after each other. They thought Trump eventually would self-destruct. And they didn’t want to alienate supporters Trump was bringing to the polls. Each hoped to win those supporters when Trump folded.

Q. What if Trump and Sanders are the nominees?

A. Couple of friends say they’d move to Canada. They wouldn’t. But there would be continued stalemate, with either a President Trump or a President Sanders, likely worse than now, with nothing getting done.

Q. Wait. Don’t both promise great changes?

A. Sure. However, as President Obama finds, a president can’t make many changes without congressional approval. Trump isn’t even on the same page as Republicans in Congress. Sanders would find the House, certain to remain Republican, unwilling to pass any part of his revolution. Isn’t it dumb to think otherwise? ❖

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



Indiana has 4 billionaires

NEW YORK – Carl Cook is the richest person in the Hoosier State, according to Forbes Magazine’s annual list of the world’s billionaires. Cook is the heir to the Cook Medical Group fortune. He is worth \$4.8 billion and is ranked 298th overall. Herbert Simon is the owner of the Indiana Pacers and the co-founder of Simon Property Group. He is worth \$2.8 billion, up from \$2.3 billion in 2014. Dean White is ranked third in Indiana. White is a real estate developer and former owner of Whiteco Industries. He was worth \$1.96 billion in 2014 and is now worth \$2.4 billion. Finally, Indianapolis Colts owner Jim Irsay made the list again with a worth of \$2.4 billion. ❖

George Will, Washington Post: More than anything Marco Rubio said about Trump in Houston, it was Rubio's laughter at Trump that galled the perhaps bogus billionaire. Like all bullies, Trump is a coward, and like all those who feel the need to boast about being strong and tough, he is neither. Unfortunately, Rubio recognized reality and found his voice 254 days after Trump's scabrous announcement of his candidacy to rescue America from Mexican rapists. And 222 days after Trump disparaged John McCain's war service ("I like people that weren't captured"). And 95 days after Trump said that maybe a protester at his rally "should have been roughed up." And 95 days after Trump retweeted that 81 percent of white murder victims are killed by blacks (82 percent are killed by whites). And 94 days after Trump said he supports torture "even if it doesn't work." And 79 days after Trump said he might have approved the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. And 72 days after Trump proved that he does not know the nuclear triad from the Nutcracker ballet. And 70 days after Trump, having been praised by Vladimir Putin, reciprocated by praising the Russian murderer and dictator. And so on. Rubio's epiphany — announcing the obvious with a sense of triumphant discovery — about Trump being a "con man" and a "clown act" is better eight months late than never. If, however, it is too late to rescue Rubio from a Trump nomination, this will be condign punishment for him and the rest of the Republican Party's coalition of the timid. ❖



Stephen F. Hayes, Weekly Standard: Chris Christie, who ran for president on the sober promise to "tell it like it is" and whose campaign was built around the urgency of entitlement reform and restoring U.S. national security, on Friday endorsed Donald Trump, a national security ignoramus who is running for president adamantly opposed to any serious entitlement reform and whose campaign is built around outrage and egesta. It's a development that is important, stunning and unsurprising. Important: The timing of Christie's endorsement was perfect for Trump. The candidate running on strength had been thoroughly emasculated by Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz at the debate in Houston on Thursday. Rubio highlighted his hypocrisy on hiring non-American workers, an attack that left Trump nonplussed during the debate and spinning hard afterwards. Trump defended himself by arguing, a) that he couldn't possibly have known what the Trump bureaucracy had done in its hiring practices, and, b) he had to hire non-Americans because he couldn't find Americans who would do those jobs. When Cruz pushed Trump on his announced neutrality in the Israel-Palestinian conflict and asked what Trump had done for Israel, Trump noted that he'd marched in pro-Israel parades and received awards from Jewish groups. If Trump were not beyond embarrassment, it would have been a thoroughly humiliating performance. The ridiculing of Trump continued into Friday, with

Rubio reading Trump's juvenile tweets during a speech. Enter Christie. Just as the post-debate narrative focused on Trump in a way that undermined his core attribute — strength — Christie's endorsement not only changed the subject but was itself a sign of Trump's strength. Most significantly, Christie's endorsement gives Trump legitimacy that he'd previously lacked — and again, the timing was important. The objective of the Rubio attacks, in particular, was to undermine Trump's strength and portray him as an illegitimate, phony leader. Translated: Trump might appear to you as a strong man and a potential leader but he is neither. In exit polls, Trump has done well with voters who have decided whom to support more than a month out — often winning more of half of those voters -- and he has dominated among voters whose top candidate quality is "telling it like it is." But with the exception of New Hampshire and the aftermath of Rubio's debate, he has lost badly among late-deciders. The endorsement by Christie, whose campaign slogan was "telling it like it is," could win him second-looks from voters who had previously been inclined to dismiss him as unserious. Stunning: Christie's endorsement of Trump certainly shocked the political world on Friday both because it hadn't leaked in advance and because it so directly contradicted the main themes of Christie's campaign. ❖

David Brooks, New York Times: Now, at long last, the big guns are being brought to bear. Now, at long last, some major Republicans like Mitt Romney are speaking up to lay waste to Donald Trump. For months Trump's rivals and other Republicans have either retreated in silence or tentatively and ineptly criticized him for exactly those traits that voters like about him: for being a slapdash, politically incorrect money-hungry bully. But now finally — at long last — major Republicans are raising their heads and highlighting Trump's actual vulnerability: his inability to think for an extended time about anybody but himself. He seduces people with his confidence and his promises. People invest time, love and money in him. But in the end he cares only about himself. He betrays those who trust him and leaves them high and dry. It's unpleasant to have to play politics on this personal level. But this is a message that can sway potential Trump supporters, many of whom have only the barest information on what Trump's life and career have actually been like. This is a message that can work in a sour and cynical time among voters who already feel betrayed. This is a message that can work because it's a personality type everyone understands. This is a time when it is not in fact too late, when it may still be possible to prevent his nomination. The campaign against Trump has to be specific and relentless: a series of clear examples, rolled out day upon day with the same message. Donald Trump betrays.. ❖

Bosma pulls teacher pay bill

INDIANAPOLIS — Lawmakers put the brakes on a controversial proposal that would have allowed superintendents to give extra pay to teachers outside the terms of a school district's collective bargaining agreement (Cook & Schneider, IndyStar). The Republican-controlled House declined to call Senate Bill 10 for a final vote Thursday, and House Speaker Brian Bosma indicated the supplemental pay proposal is dead this legislative session. The Senate killed a similar measure last week. Both garnered intense criticism from the state's teachers unions. Bosma, R-Indianapolis, said "misinformation" and Gov. Mike Pence's reservations about the proposal played a role in House Republicans' decision. Thursday was the deadline for the House to act on bills sent over from the Senate. "We just determined in our discussions this morning — and it was very emotional for some teachers, I think, because they were reacting to the misinformation — that it wasn't worth the effort to put folks through it," Bosma said.



year. Trump countered with a feint, saying he'd called Rubio a "light-weight" in the past but "he's really not that much of a lightweight." Trump then noted that Rubio had mocked his hands as small, widely viewed as an insult about Trump's sexual prowess.

Holding his hands up to the audience, Trump declared, "I guarantee you, there's no problem" in that area. It was a jaw-dropping moment in a campaign that's been full of surprises from the beginning.

Regional Cities, road funding OK'd

INDIANAPOLIS — Legislation for road improvements that would also fund a key piece of Gov. Mike Pence's agenda passed the Indiana House on Wednesday, but not by a large margin (IBJ). An amended version of Senate Bill 333 passed the House 57-35 Thursday. The bill includes the House's road funding plan, which would raise the gas and cigarette taxes to pay for what House Republicans consider long-term road improvements. It also includes \$42 million in funding needed for Pence's Regional Cities initiative. Rep. Jerry Torr, R-Carmel, was the lead author of the 2015 legislation creating the Regional Cities initiative, which helps fund projects to improve quality of life, economic development and job creation. It was originally designed to award two regions with \$42 million each raised through last year's tax-amnesty program, but Pence chose three winners and asked for additional funding from the General Assembly. "It's about regions, areas more than just a city, or one county getting together and trying to create a region that has assets that draws employers ... to help our economy," said Torr.

Jailed councilman bill advances

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana House approved legislation Thursday allowing the East Chicago City Council

to temporarily replace jailed Councilman Robert Battle instead of removing him from office (Carden, NWi Times). Senate Bill 146 passed the Republican-controlled chamber 92-0, but still is a long way from becoming state law. The rules of the Republican-controlled Senate likely do not permit the addition of the councilman replacement process to a measure providing legal immunity to private universities that share student data with the state, since the two subjects are not closely related.

House OKs HIP2.0 to be permanent

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana House has approved a bill that would codify into law Gov. Mike Pence's statewide expansion of Medicaid under President Barack Obama's signature health care overhaul (Associated Press). The measure was approved on a 61-33 vote Thursday. It now goes back to the Senate, where changes made by the House will be considered. Indiana's expansion of Medicaid is called the Health Indiana Plan, or HIP 2.0 for short. It has extended health insurance to thousands of people who did not previously have it. A waiver granted by the federal government allows the state to charge fees to low-income people for coverage. The plan was unveiled in 2015 as a pilot program. The bill would make HIP 2.0 permanent.

FRI probes Islamic vandalism as hate

INDIANAPOLIS — Federal authorities are investigating an act of vandalism at the headquarters of the Islamic Society of North America near Indianapolis as a possible hate crime (Associated Press). An FBI spokeswoman in Indianapolis on Thursday confirmed a hate-crime investigation has been opened. It's in response to vandals spray-painting vulgar graffiti on an exterior wall of the group's headquarters in Plainfield on Sunday.

A crude, scathing GOP debate

DETROIT — Picking up right where they left off, Donald Trump, Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio barked out fresh insults at each other in a Republican presidential debate Thursday night that also featured a crude sexual reference from Trump — and an healthy dose of policy, too (Associated Press). Cruz and Rubio, who earlier had devoted considerable debate time to throwing sharp elbows at one another, were relentless in training their fire on Trump. Rubio justified his attacks on Trump by saying the billionaire businessman had "basically mocked everybody" over the past