

# Horse Race: Crucial cycle for INDems

Zody sees uptick in candidate interest, but Trump's impact remains the wildcard

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

KOKOMO – Indiana Democrats are facing a “must win” 2018 election cycle if they want to take advantage of a potential wave election. The combination of President Trump’s historic low approval polling, the traditional mid-term election millstone of the incumbent White House party, the emerging Russia scandal and the need to cut into Indiana Senate and House super majorities

make this cycle vital if Indiana is to return as a true two-party state.

“Both the House and Senate have seen a surge in interest from potential candidates and are ahead of where they were in terms of candidate recruitment at this point in the last midterm cycle,” said Democratic Chairman John Zody. “Both caucuses will challenge in the traditionally competitive seats while contesting races



up and down the state. House Democrats are aggressively pursuing candidates across the state and have 60 candidates lined up to seek reelection or challenge Republicans,

**Continued on page 3**

## Pence, Chuck and Nancy

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

COLUMBIA CITY – Traveling with Gov. Eric Holcomb last July, he shared a private email from former State Sen. Earline Rogers. Essentially, the Gary Democrat said: “I retired too soon. I would have loved to have worked with you.”



It is Exhibit A in something Americans yearn for: Bipartisanship. Many of us are tired of the inertia in government, particularly in Washington. President Trump was elected to bust up an ineffective, calcified system. Earlier this month, when he reached out to “Chuck and Nancy” to forge a hurricane relief and debt ceiling deal, the result was a quick



**“If Sen. Donnelly doesn’t vote for tax reform, we’re going to come here and campaign against him like no one has before.”**

*- President Donald Trump pushing his tax reform plan in Indianapolis after traveling on AF1 with Sen. Donnelly*



**Howey Politics Indiana  
WVHowey Media, LLC 405  
Massachusetts Ave., Suite  
300 Indianapolis, IN 46204  
www.howeypolitics.com**

**Brian A. Howey**, Publisher  
**Mark Schoeff Jr.**, Washington  
**Jack E. Howey**, Editor  
**Mary Lou Howey**, Editor  
**Mark Curry**, photography

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**317.602.3620**  
email: HoweyInfo@gmail.com

**Contact HPI**

bhowey2@gmail.com  
Howey's cell: 317.506.0883  
Washington: 202.256.5822  
Business Office: 317.602.3620

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rebound in the polls, from the mid-30s in the Gallup daily tracking to 41% on Sept. 24.

Why is Gov. Holcomb getting such good marks from Democrats, even Region Democrats? He doesn't really need their votes, having two towering Republican super majorities in the Indiana General Assembly. Instead, it's just good policy and that makes for good politics, a key tenet in Mitch Danielsism. One of Holcomb's initial forays was to go to previously Pence-ignored East Chicago, bring together Democrat Mayor Anthony Copeland, Democratic Lake Commissioners, U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky and Sen. Joe Donnelly in order to get the stakeholders focused on a long-term fix on the lead crisis.

**This should** be a lesson for Vice President Mike Pence. Like Holcomb, as governor he had the super majorities, so Pence could pay nice guy lip service to legislative Democrats, then forge his agenda with guaranteed GOP votes. A some issues, Democrats joined Pence initiatives, but he didn't really need them. Having them produced nice "bipartisan" headlines that his staff promoted. Looking at him as a congressman for a dozen years, I couldn't find a single major piece of legislation that he co-sponsored with a Democrat.

Pence was a congressional ideologue, using his office and his rapid ascension into House conference leadership to stage rhetorical picket lines (i.e. "Let's pick a fight" on Planned Parenthood). It was good for the Christian, Conservative and Republican brand Pence hoped to eventually ride to the White House.

But 2017 finds Pence scraping up with the reality of actually getting things done. As his hero, President Ronald Reagan, realized, you have to reach out to Democrats on the major stuff.

Twice this summer Vice President Pence saw his partisan efforts on health reforms blow up in his face. On a hot July night, he spent hours lobbying in Sen. John McCain just off the Sen-

ate floor on the repeal/replace plan. He left just minutes before McCain skewered the Republican bill, citing a lack of "process" that included hearings, amendments, and CBO scoring.

It happened again last Friday when McCain rang the death knell on Graham/Cassidy just before Pence took the stage in Anderson, ostensibly to push President Trump's tax reforms. Pence appeared oblivious, telling folks in his old congressional district, "The good news is the Senate's close to



moving forward with legislation to repeal and replace Obamacare as we speak. President Trump and I firmly believe that the Graham-Cassidy bill is the right bill at the right time to repeal and replace Obamacare."

**While Trump** (reportedly) and Pence believed in it, a CBS Poll found only 20% of Americans supported the bill, only 18% of independents and only 46% of Republicans backed it. Why? Because it would have thrown close to 30 million Americans out of health insurance coverage. It would have ravaged Red State budgets as Medicaid was carved away and then blown into oblivion in 2027. While Pence, Trump legislative liaison Marc Short and Sen. Cassidy insisted the bill wouldn't end coverage to folks with pre-existing conditions, the experts begged to differ. There was one non-expert, late night talk host Jimmy Kimmel, who called them all out, becoming a rally point against the bill.

Then came Monday, when at the only scheduled Graham/Cassidy Senate hearing, the optics resulted in Capitol Hill cops arresting and dragging away wheelchair-bound oppo-

nents of the bill. These were disastrous visuals that will certainly end up in 2018 cycle campaign ads.

Pence frequently joined the Senate Republican Tuesday luncheon, but he didn't have enough mojo to pull in the entire caucus. He has virtually no relationships or heft with Democrats that Trump will need for future deals on tax reform and infrastructure.

**Trump is clearly headed** in that direction. He is openly feuding with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Speaker Paul Ryan, both Pence allies, and former aide Steve Bannon has declared a "revolution" against the GOP establishment of which Pence is a most conspicuous member. On Monday, Pence was in Alabama campaigning for a "loser," Luther Strange, while Bannon stumped for Roy Moore, who won the GOP primary the next day.

The Associated Press reported on the twin Tuesday disasters; for Trump, the failure added one more justification for his ongoing grudge against McConnell, and provided another reason to turn his back on Republicans and make deals with Democrats instead, as he's begun to do of late. Indeed, he said in a private bipartisan meeting of House Ways and Means members Tuesday that he would work with Democrats on health care if the Republicans "didn't get repeal done," according to Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., who was present. Neal quoted Trump as saying, "You get a better deal if it's bipartisan." It took him nine months to realize that.

Preparing to depart to Indianapolis Wednesday, Trump told reporters, "I will negotiate with Democrats to see if I can get a deal."

**Is this a lesson Pence** is preparing to learn? It better be. While Pence has proved to be an ultra-loyal Trumper, spraying his boss in glowing accolades even in the most embarrassing moments, Trump has repeatedly proven that loyalty is a one-way street. Just ask Attorney General Jeff Sessions. Or HHS Sec. Tom Price, who got a "we'll see" vote of confidence from Trump just before he departed for Indianapolis.



If Trump truly moves to the moderate center, seeking support from Democrats, can Pence change his stripes, start attending Democrat luncheons, build relationships with the Chuck and Nancy crowd? Two thoughts emerge: He'd better, and I have my doubts.

This clashes with two spokes on the Pence stool – the Conservative and Republican legs – that Pence has long claimed as his compass. He is entering an era when moderation and Democratic alliances will be crucial. Democrats see a sunny face and good humor that cloaks a legendary ideologue.

Since he linked up with Trump in July 2016, Pence has been willing to throw off his long-held principles (i.e. free trade). If Pence no longer proves to be the useful tool to Trump, and you've got to believe the president is mulling and stewing over the fact that Pence and Short couldn't get repeal/replace over the top, then the vice president might not want to get between his boss and the bus. McConnell and Price are already in hot water over that.

**All of this fuels a working** hypothesis here and in other quarters that Trump is not a Christian, conservative or even a Republican. He's the first independent president, achieving a hostile takeover of the GOP. He accomplished something Strom Thurmond, George Wallace, John Anderson and Ross Perot could only dream about.

Trump has picked a fight with the NFL over kneeling during the National Anthem. Politico observed: "In private, the president and his top aides freely admit that he is engaged in a culture war on behalf of his white, working-class base, a New York billionaire waging war against 'politically correct' coastal elites on behalf of his supporters in the South and in the Midwest."

If Pence somehow ends up under the Greyhound Firestones, we could be witnessing the type of cleaving that found Teddy Roosevelt and William Howard Taft facing off against each other in 1912.

Mike Pence, the bipartisan warrior, who's in a good mood about it? We'll see. ❖

## INDems, from page 1

eight in districts where Democrats did not have a state representative candidate in 2016."

Zody added, "Look for more candidate announcements as we get closer to 2018. Regardless of the political climate nationally, they are working hard and smart at building good campaign organizations. We take nothing for granted and will also continue to talk about the positive things Democrats across this state are doing to build stronger communities."

Other Democrats, speaking to HPI on background,

say that the emergence of nasty social media and the promise of the 2016 cycle that was clipped by the Trump/Pence upset has made recruiting harder. They note that the John Gregg/Christina Hale gubernatorial ticket and losses by Shelli Yoder in the 9th CD has dampened enthusiasm in some sectors.

Matt Zapfe of the Senate Majority Campaign said that only Republican incumbent State Sens. Joe Zakas and Jim Smith have yet to decide whether to seek reelection. "They'll have a decision soon," Zapfe said.

He noted that some common themes are emerging in Senate races, with Democrats Chris Gambill in SD38

and Anna Murray in SD46 both talking about living wage and the repeal of right to work. "They are making appeals to the working class Trump voters," Zapfe said.

As far as whether it will be a Democratic or Republican year, that could go either way. As in 2016, President Trump is a complete wild card. He might be helping Zody recruit, but his unpredictability is proving to be a factor. "If Republicans in Congress don't get tax reform done, I don't know if Trump's base turns up again," Zapfe said.

Conversely, if national Democrats aggressively seek Trump's impeachment in the Russia scandal, that would probably motivate the base, much of it turning out for the first time last year. American voters hate to be told their vote didn't count or have it negated. Those themes are fueling Steve Bannon's "revolution" within the Republican Party that could spur a number of U.S. Senate primary challenges to incumbents. In 1998 as President Clinton was being impeached, conventional wisdom was that it would be a boon for Republicans. But it backfired as Indiana House Democratic candidates ran the table and retook the lower chamber.

Democrats have candidates in nine of the 25 Senate seats on the ballot in 2018, with incumbent Sens. Frank Mrvan, Karen Tallian, and Minority Leader Tim Lannane announcing they will seek reelection.

Candidates have announced in these districts:

**SD17:** Former Libertarian Gary Snyder is seeking to challenge freshman Sen. Andy Zay, who was appointed to office. U.S. Rep. Jim Banks won the district unopposed in 2014 with 20,000 votes. Snyder is seeking to exploit the cold beer controversy.

**SD26:** Democrat Anderson Fire Chief Dave Cravens has announced for this seat that will be open since State Sen. Doug Eckerty announced Tuesday he will not seek another term. Eckerty won the seat unopposed in 2014 with 22,329 votes. Cravens (pictured) said, "I own a



small business that my wife and I have kept local for over 20-plus years. Over the last decade we have developed several commercial real estate properties across the community. I have held several positions in local municipal government and have many years' experience in dealing with multi-million dollar budgets. I believe in hard work and the working man and I believe I will be the man that works the

hardest as the next Indiana state senator of District 26." Eckerty told the Muncie Star Press, "Serving my constituents of Madison, Delaware and Henry counties for the past seven years has been both a rewarding and humbling experience. I look forward to spending more time with my family, including my wife, children and grandchildren, one of whom was recently born." Eckerty told Zapfe that "there are good people up in Yorktown area talking about the race. We're starting to hear some names." Zapfe said that Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer, who lives in the district, is "starting to get calls. There's a lot of interest and a lot of talent in that district."

**SD29:** This could be a rematch from 2014, when State Sen. Mike Delph defeated gay Democrat J.D. Ford, 15,140 to 12,744. Hillary Clinton carried the district in 2016 and it is considered trending Democratic. Another Democrat seeking the nomination is Julia Kathary, who says on her website, "The necessity, or need, I've experienced in my life has infused me with innovation. I'm an idea-generator and a solution-builder. I've needed to be those things throughout my life. Indiana, specifically State Senate District 29, needs me to bring my experience in

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creating doable solutions to return balance to the instabilities that Hoosiers are facing." Kathary will campaign on issues that include "autonomy of our own bodies and choices," livable incomes, as well as "equality and justice for all" and "reliable access to affordable health care and mental health care." Ford is serving as the director of development for a non-profit agency in Indianapolis and lists gerrymandering, voting rights, pre-kindergarten, jobs and workforce development as key issues. On gerrymandering, Ford notes, "For the perfect example of a gerrymandered district, look no further than Senate District 29. This district stretches from Main Street Carmel to Main Street in Zionsville and all the way down to 10th Street of the west side of Indianapolis. This is a clear example of legislators picking their own constituents. I was disheartened to see that House Bill 1014 died in the General Assembly." Delph will report close to \$250,000 on his year-end report and is doing everything expected to seek reelection. He just needs the permission of his wife, Beth, who has expressed concern about the state of politics these days. Delph is expecting a GOP primary challenge from Carmel Redevelopment Commission President Corrie Meyer and Zionsville Councilwoman Susana Suarez, a former aide to Gov. Eric Holcomb.

**SD31:** Democrats Derek Camp and John Paul Cosgrove will seek to challenge State Sen. Jim Merritt, who is expected to seek reelection. Camp (pictured) is president of the Indiana Young Democrats. The Purdue graduate has worked at a bankruptcy trustee office assisting debtors in successfully discharging their debt. He started his own business in 2014, providing DJ services for weddings and other events. He lists ending gerrymandering, confronting the opioid crisis, good wages, education and the environment as issues he will campaign on. Camp explained, "Too many Hoosiers are suffering from the current opioid crisis. Narcan is very helpful in preventing unnecessary death, but more resources must be devoted to services preventing addiction itself." Cosgrove does not have a campaign website. Merritt has been active on addiction and child welfare issues. He ran unopposed in 2014, winning with 18,414 votes.



**SD38:** Chris Gambill will seek to challenge State Sen. Jon Ford, who upset State Sen. Tim Skinner in 2014,



**Democrat J.D. Ford goes door to door with U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly in Carmel during the 2014 campaign. Ford is seeking a potential rematch with State Sen. Mike Delph, who has not declared whether he will seek reelection.**

winning 13,585 to 12,580. The 59-year-old attorney told the Terre Haute Tribune-Star he is seeking elected office for the first time because of "the public cynicism that exists about public officeholders" who are often not viewed as an adequate voice for their communities. "What we need is an advocate in the Legislature, one who can persuade others that there is a particular legislative agenda that ought to be pursued to help the people of this city," he said. He listed education as the issue that is the most fundamental for moving the state forward, and cited a teacher shortage as a new school year begins. He made clear his opposition to school vouchers for students to attend private schools. He called for a "living wage" to replace the state's minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, which he called a "poverty wage," revocation of the state's right to work law and equal pay for women, and said he supports equal rights for all, regardless of race, ethnicity, sex or sexual preference. Gambill was joined for his announcement by Senate Democratic Leader Tim Lanane of Anderson and state party Chair John Zody, a Vigo County native. Both said Gambill would be a strong voice for Vigo and Clay counties in the Senate. Vigo County Democrat Vice Chair Kim Worland told the Tribune-Star she expects several candidates to file for the May 2018 primary election.

**SD46:** Jeffersonville attorney Anna Murray will challenge State Sen. Ron Grooms. Grooms is "all in" for reelection, Zapfe told HPI on Wednesday. The incumbent defeated Democrat Chuck Freiburger 16,950 to 13,168 in a 2014 rematch. Murray appears to be from the Bernie Sanders wing of the party, with Facebook posts backing his call for single-payer health insurance. On immigration, she noted, "I've seen a lot of 'illegal' immigrants in my

office, and they are hard-working and kind people who, if they could, would gladly pay their fair share of taxes, get a driver's license, Social Security number and be contributing members of society. But our immigration laws are so difficult and so expensive, and take so long, that many cannot become citizens. If your complaint about immigrants is that they're not paying their fair share, then the solution is easy:



Allow them to become citizens so that they can. That'd be a lot better than wasting all our money on a wall." On Sept. 13, she posted, "Together, we can fight the broken insurance system, but the only way we can win against this multi-billion dollar industry is if we all come together. Tell your representatives you support healthcare for all!"

**Zody cites Trump 'spark'**

Zody believes the 2018 cycle will allow Democrats to cut into the GOP super majorities. "President Trump's

election was the spark some folks needed to realize it was time to get involved and we've seen a wave of new volunteers," he told HPI. "The party has been aggressively channeling that new energy into building a strong grassroots organization. We held 20 organizing events around this state this summer, training 250-plus new volunteers and talking with Hoosiers about the issues that matter. President Trump's election might

have been what got these new volunteers in the game, but they know they can have a great impact on local and state races – in addition to federal elections – as 2018 approaches."

**U.S. Senate: The Moore effect**

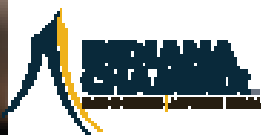
On Wednesday, the name "Richard Mourdock" popped up in Google news alerts. Why? The Alabama special Senate Republican primary elected Roy Moore, who has twice been turned out of office as the state's Supreme

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Court chief justice for deying the Constitution. National pundits are linking Moore to Mourdock and Todd Akin. In the 2012 cycle, both Mourdock and Akin suffered Senate race meltdowns that proved to drag down Republicans across the nation as President Obama won reelection and Joe Donnelly won the Indiana Senate seat.

Moore has railed against gay couples, believes Muslims like U.S. Rep. Andre Carson shouldn't serve in Congress, and has talked about "reds and "yellows" when it comes to native Americans and Asians.

Donnelly challengers, U.S. Reps. Todd Rokita and Luke Messer, attended Wednesday's rally by President Trump, but they didn't get to sit with Donnelly on Air Force One.



Donnelly has become a Trump target on the tax reform legislation taking shape. Both Messer and Rokita embraced Trump on his criticism of NFL and NBA players who are kneeling during the National Anthem. Trump "speaks for the vast majority of Hoosiers and Americans who are disgusted watching athletes who make hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars disrespect our great nation," Rokita said in a fundraising email. Rokita's comments came a day after Rep. Messer, R-Shelbyville, tweeted: "Stand for the national anthem. @realDonaldTrump is right. Athletes should stand and honor our great country."

Rokita campaign spokesman Tim Edson observed on Wednesday: "Every state has unique dynamics, but Roy Moore's victory over Sen. Luther Strange in the Alabama Republican primary runoff last night makes clear the anti-establishment fervor among primary voting Republicans is still a powerful force. If the Republican primary for president were held again today, the results would be the same in Indiana, and across the country. The outsider candidate in Alabama tapped into the same anti-elite message that elevated President Trump in the 2016 Republican primary. Looking ahead to 2018, the dynamic is going to be alive and well among Indiana's Republican primary electorate too, and with an early date, the Indiana Republican Senate primary will serve as a bellwether for the nation. Hoosier Republicans are not going to let Republican elites pick their nominee."

### Braun won't take PAC funds

State Rep. Mike Braun of Jasper has stated in his campaign literature he is the "only candidate who can hold (Sen. Donnelly) accountable for the burdensome regulations and misguided liberal policies that are hurting Hoosiers." (Phillips, Brazil Times). He has served in the Indiana General Assembly and on a local school board in Jasper and he thinks he can make a difference in Washington.

"I've got a big hill to climb," he said. "There are six of us running. Four of us come from outside politics." Braun sees himself as a small businessman with the ability to think like a businessman and an elected official at the same time. "I'm hoping I have just enough experience where I'm not tainted by the system," he said. "I am a conservative living in the trenches." Instead of taking money from political action committees, he said he would raise money through individual donors.

### President

#### Quinnipiac shows Trump 'unfit' for office

President Donald Trump is not "fit to serve as president," American voters say 56 - 42%, and voters disapprove 57 - 36% of the job he is doing as president, according to a Quinnipiac University national poll released today. There are deep party, gender and racial divisions on whether President Trump is fit to serve, the independent Quinnipiac University Poll finds:

- Trump is not fit, Democrats say 94 - 5% and independent voters say 57 - 40%. Republicans say 84 - 14% that he is fit.
- Men are divided 49 - 49%, as women say 63 - 35% he is not fit.
- White voters are divided as 50% say he is fit and 48% say he is not fit. Trump is not fit, black voters say 94 - 4% and Hispanic voters say 60 - 40%.
- American voters disapprove 62 - 32% of the way President Trump is handling race relations. Disapproval is 55 - 39% among white voters, 95 - 3% among black voters and 66 - 28% among Hispanic voters. President Trump is doing more to divide the country than to unite the country, American voters say 60 - 35%.
- The anti-Twitter sentiment remains high as voters say 69 - 26% that Trump should stop tweeting. No party, gender, education, age or racial group wants to follow the Tweeter-in- Chief. Voters say 51 - 27% they are embarrassed to have Trump as president.

"There is no upside. With an approval rating rating frozen in the mid-thirties, his character and judgement questioned, President Donald Trump must confront the harsh fact that the majority of American voters feel he is simply unfit to serve in the highest office in the land," said Tim Malloy, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Poll. "A divider, responsible for the deepening chasm of racial discord. That is the inescapable characterization of President Trump from voters who see race relations deteriorating on his watch.

### Congress

#### Congressional approval falls to 15%

A series of polls published this week suggest a strong headwind developing for congressional Republicans. The Quinnipiac Poll shows American voters disap-

prove 78 - 15% of the job Republicans in Congress are doing, worse than their 70 - 25% disapproval in a June 29 Quinnipiac University poll. Even Republican voters disapprove 61 - 32%. Voters disapprove 63 - 29% of the job Democrats in Congress are doing, virtually unchanged from June. Voters say 47 - 38%, including 44 - 32% among independent voters, that they would like to see Democrats win control of the U.S. House of Representatives in the 2018 Congressional elections.

Fewer than three in 10 Americans – 29% – hold a favorable view of the Republican Party according to a new CNN poll conducted by SSRS. That is down 13 percentage points from March and is the lowest mark for the GOP since CNN began asking the question in 1992. The previous low point for the GOP was 30%, hit twice – in October 2013 following the federal government shutdown over President Barack Obama’s health care law, and December 1998, in the wake of the House of Representatives approving two articles of impeachment against then-President Bill Clinton. Overall, 20% of Americans approve of the way Republican leaders in Congress are handling their jobs, while 72% disapprove. That includes just 39% of Republicans who approve of the job GOP leaders are doing.

In a Washington Post/ABC poll, two-thirds of Americans oppose launching a preemptive military strike against North Korea, with a majority trusting the U.S. military to handle the escalating nuclear crisis responsibly, but not President Trump. Roughly three-quarters of the public supports tougher economic sanctions on North Korea in an attempt to persuade it to give up its nuclear weapons, while just about one-third think the United States should offer the isolated country foreign aid or other incentives. The Post-ABC poll finds 37% of adults trust Trump either “a great deal” or “a good amount” to responsibly handle the situation with North Korea, while 42% trust the commander in chief “not at all.” By comparison, 72% trust U.S. military leaders, including 43% saying they trust them “a great deal.” A scant 8% of Americans surveyed think North Korean leader Kim Jong Un can act responsibly.

And an NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll shows a majority of Americans support congressional action to continue the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, but Republicans – and particularly President Donald Trump’s most loyal supporters – want to end it. The survey, which was conducted after Trump announced a phasing-out of the program unless Congress acts in six months, shows that 53% of all Americans want lawmakers to codify DACA, which allows many young people who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children to stay in the country. By contrast, about a quarter – 23% – say Congress should take no action so that the program ends. Among Republicans, however, a larger share want to see DACA nixed; 39% of Republicans say the program should be ditched, while 29% believe it should continue through congressional action. The difference is even starker when Republicans are sorted by their allegiance to the president and their party.

Finally, as more than 40 subdued Republican senators lunched on Chick-Fil-A at a closed-door session last week, Sen. Cory Gardner of Colorado painted a dire picture for his colleagues (Hulse, New York Times). Campaign fundraising was drying up, he said, because of widespread disappointment among donors over the inability of the Republican Senate to repeal the Affordable Care Act or do much of anything else.” Republicans say the fundraising drop-off has been steep and across the board, from big donations to the small ones the party solicits online from the grass roots. They say the hostile views of both large and small donors are in unusual alignment.” It comes as the DCCC announced a record campaign haul for August.

#### CD4: Sen. Crane won’t run

State Sen. John Crane, who represents the northern half of Putnam County from the middle of Washington Street in Greencastle north, has announced that he will not be seeking the 4th District U.S. Congressional seat in 2018 (Greencastle Banner-Graphic). Currently only Diego Morales and former Workforce Development Director Steve Braun are the only Republican candidates, a surprise in what many observers believed would be a crowded field. “I am greatly humbled by so many people I respect who have approached me over these past six months and asked me to consider running for this higher office,” Sen. Crane said in a statement issued over the weekend. “While I recognize the serious times in which we live and the ongoing need for principled conservative leadership in the 4th District, there is only one person in world who can be a father to my kids for such a time as this. The continued investment in my family and training up next generation leaders remains a high priority for this season of our lives.”

#### Manning won’t run for Senate

Retired NFL quarterback Peyton Manning said he is not planning to run for US Senate to replace retiring Tennessee Republican Sen. Bob Corker, who announced Tuesday that he will retire at the end of 2018. When asked about the race, Manning told Nashville radio station 104.5 The Zone that he has “zero consideration” of a Senate run. “Someone said I was gonna run a team, somebody said I was going to be a broadcaster, now they’re saying I’m going to be a senator. Next week I’m going to be an astronaut,” Manning joked. Manning said he has an “interest in politics and in our country,” but has no interest in being a politician. ❖





# Mel Hall prepares for 2nd CD race

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Mel Hall, a potentially formidable Democratic challenger to oppose Republican Congresswoman Jackie Walorski, is poised to announce candidacy. If he decides for sure to run, Hall says, he will announce very soon.



Hall is former chief executive officer of Press Ganey, the South Bend firm that conducts consumer assessments for hospitals nationwide. He recently returned to South Bend after three and a half years as chief executive at another health-care-related corporation headquartered in Nashville, Tenn.

Health care will be a big issue, if he opposes Walorski. "You don't just throw some-

thing out and start from scratch," Hall says, criticizing Walorski for her repeated votes to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

The ACA, Obamacare, needs improvement, substantial amendment, but has many good parts in expanding health care that should be retained, Hall says. He also notes complaints about Walorski avoiding town hall meetings with constituents and debates.

"To be successful, you have to show up," Hall says. "You have to hold yourself accountable."

Hall has met in Washington with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. The DCCC, already targeting Walorski, would be likely to provide substantial funding and resources if Hall is the Democratic nominee. His campaign consultant would be Mike Schmuhl, former campaign manager for Sen. Joe Donnelly back when Donnelly defeated Walorski in the 2010 congressional campaign and also campaign manager for South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg. Schmuhl confirms he now is an advisor to Hall as Hall looks at the expected candidacy.

**A poll in the field** last week was designed to test his chances against Walorski. Hall would likely face opposition in the Democratic primary election next May. Now, already rounding up significant support, he ranks as the favorite to win the nomination.

He wouldn't be rated now, however, as a favorite to defeat Walorski. Although Hall would be a potentially formidable contender, Walorski already has proven to be formidable. She is now in her third term and won by a landslide in 2016, carrying nine of the 10 counties in the 2nd District, just barely losing in St. Joseph County, where a Democratic congressional candidate needs to win big. Very big.

**She is rated as "safe"** in national evaluations. Hall realizes that he would have to sway some Republican voters as well as Democrats in the Republican-flavored district. He says his exploratory talks have included Republicans and that his business background and faith in free enterprise have brought indications of GOP support. Although never having run for elective office, he has supported candidates such as Donnelly and Buttigieg.

Hall, 64, has a diverse background. He grew up on a farm near Marion and for a time worked with the Methodist Church in a tough inner-city area of Detroit. He is a Methodist with a master's degree in divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary and a doctorate from the University of Notre Dame in sociology, research methods and organizational development.

At Press Ganey, he was chief executive officer as it expanded to No.1 in health care evaluation, conducting surveys for 58% of the hospitals in the nation.

Hall says he started thinking about the congressional race "six or seven months ago," as he was paving the way for a successor and merger at SpecialtyCare, Nashville-based provider of clinical services, where he was chief executive officer, and planning his move back to South Bend. ❖

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



Mel Hall has moved back to South Bend from Tennessee to challenge U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski in 2018. Other Democrats could enter the race.

# Fickle Trump pushes tax reform in Indy

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – President Trump returned to Indiana and before an adoring crowd, unveiled a four-point tax reform plan and a smiled threat to U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly. But behind the scenes of bravado, reports are that Trump is troubled by the framework he touted so ardently at the Indiana State Fairgrounds on Wednesday.

"We're here in Indiana to announce our framework to announce historic tax relief for the American people," Trump said before a crowd of business leaders, Republicans and Democrat U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly. "This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity and I can say it's something I'm very good at. I've been at this for a very long time."

Then Trump put Sen. Donnelly on notice: "If Sen. Donnelly doesn't vote for tax reform, we're going to come here and campaign against him like no one has before."

Donnelly joined U.S. Sen. Todd Young, Rep. Susan Brooks and Rep. Jackie Walorski on the Air Force One flight to Indianapolis. Also in the VIP wings were potential Donnelly Senate opponents U.S. Reps. Todd Rokita and Luke Messer, who Trump identified as "Mike Messer."

Donnelly said of the speech, "I work for Hoosiers, not President Trump or any political party. As it stands, the framework released today is missing many details that will be critical to determining whether working- and middle-class families truly stand to benefit. These Hoosiers will be foremost in my mind as I continue to engage with my colleagues in the Senate and also with the White House to try to craft a tax reform bill that will provide greater economic security to these families and also create and protect jobs here in Indiana."

Trump noted that President Reagan achieved along with Speaker Tip O'Neill the last major tax reforms in 1986 with a Democratic House majority. "Tax reform has historically not been a partisan issue and it doesn't have to be a partisan issue today," Trump said. "I am asking all Americans, Democrat, independent and Republicans to come together and ask for tax reform that will truly, truly, truly make America great again. Call your congressman, call your senators, let them know you're watching and waiting. Today is the day of decision. With their action, their actions will give the future to all of us. With your help and your voice, we will bring back our jobs and our wealth

and we will bring back our American dreams."

Though Vice President Mike Pence wasn't present, Trump lauded his sidekick. "Indiana is a tremendous example of the prosperity unleashed when we cut taxes," Trump said. "This state has low taxes and regulation and are we cutting regulation."

In his first year in office back in 2013, Gov. Pence achieved an income tax cut that was packaged as the largest in history. "Businesses all across the country have taken notice," Trump said. "Thousands of new jobs have followed. The people of this state chose well, including electing someone who signed the largest income tax cut in the history .... Mike Pence. It's time for Washington to learn from the wisdom of Indiana."

Trump laid out a four-point plan that included:

- 1. No taxing the first \$12,000 for a single person and \$24,000 for a couple. "An American couple won't pay a dime on the first \$24,000 of income. More people will be taxed at a rate of zero."

- 2. The income tax brackets will come in at three levels: 12%, 25% and 35%.

- 3. Trump said he would propose eliminating most itemized deductions that benefit the high-income. "Our framework will make the tax code simple and easier to understand. Americans waste so much money,

billions and billions of dollars and many hours each year, to comply with the tax code," he said. And Trump vowed to end the death tax, saying it would help farmers and ranchers.

- 4. And Trump vowed to cut the corporate tax rate. "We will reduce the corporate tax rate to no higher than 20%, that's way down from 35 or 39, which is substantially lower than other industrial nations," Trump said. "This is a revolutionary change."

Trump explained, "Members of both parties should agree we need a tax cut that keeps jobs in our country and brings jobs back to our country. For the millions of small businesses, sole proprietors or partnerships, cap the tax rate at 25%. This will be the lowest top marginal tax rate for businesses in more than 80 years. It will give businesses more reason to boost investment in American. Listen to this, write off cost of equipment in the year they buy it. That's called incentive."

## Trump not pleased with framework

But President Trump has built an escape hatch from his own tax plan, according to Mike Allen of Axios. In Indianapolis yesterday, he bragged that it's the "largest tax cut in our county's history." But in the West Wing earlier, Trump resisted the framework that had been cooked up by congressional leaders, plus economic adviser Gary



Cohn and Steve Mnuchin. If Trump shows the fickleness he showed on repeal-and-replace (championing the House plan, then later calling it "mean"), that could increase the chances the plan sinks, with him blaming Congress. On Monday, there were some tense moments for Republicans at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, as word got out Trump wasn't thrilled with the framework, Trump wanted to propose an even lower corporate rate. On Monday, Republicans on the Hill were genuinely uneasy, and thought there was a chance POTUS wouldn't sign off. Axios added: Tax reform is now an existential issue for House Speaker Ryan and Senate Leader McConnell. If they botch this, as they did health care, both chambers could lose their Republican majorities.

### Indiana reaction

Messer urged support for the president's plan. "This is a great day for Indiana's workers and a great day for the American economy," Messer said. "President Trump's tax plan will bring more jobs, fairer taxes and bigger paychecks to Hoosiers. I'm excited the president is here in Indiana, where we've led the nation in delivering the kind of tax cuts and pro-growth policies that get our economy moving. I look forward to working closely with him and anyone else ready to deliver for Hoosier workers."

As for using "Mike Messer," the congressman said, "Well... you win some, you lose some! You still have my support for Tax Cuts @realDonaldTrump!"

U.S. Sen. Todd Young said that Trump offered a "convincing case" to Americans and Hoosiers. "For the first time in 30 years, the prospects for a simpler tax code that lowers taxes for the working class and provides relief for small business owners looks good. Let's seize this opportunity and deliver on our promises to the American people."

While traveling with President Trump on Air Force One, Young also spoke with President Trump about the need for key infrastructure investments in Indiana, including Northwest Indiana's South Shore double-tracking project and West Lake Corridor project. Senator Young said the following about that conversation.

Indiana Democratic Party Chairman John Zody reacted, saying, "President Trump is returning to the Hoosier State to tout Indiana's tax cut-fueled growth, but any accomplishments he'll mention will surely be news

to working families. While some corporations and banks reaped hundreds of millions of dollars worth of benefits, the average income of a family in Indiana is still stuck in the bottom third of states. Meanwhile, the 'historic' tax relief that Vice President Pence promised Hoosiers only added up to a paltry \$50 per household last year, barely enough for one tank of gas. If President Trump is serious about crafting a deal that helps the working-class men and women who voted for him, he'd be better off using Pence's tax rules as a lesson in what not to do."

Indiana House Speaker Brian Bosma was positive. "With one of the top business climates in the nation, Indiana's economic environment stands in stark contrast to the dysfunction of federal tax policy and job-killing regulations," Bosma said. "We've worked hard to pass conservative, common sense policies, which have led to lower taxes and less regulations on Hoosiers and businesses alike. The effects of a burdensome federal tax system that discourages growth trickle down to the American worker through less take-home pay and less opportunity. It's time for Congress to reform and modernize the tax code, and create an environment where businesses can grow and workers can succeed."

Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer also liked the Indiana angle. "President Donald Trump's visit to Indiana to unveil his federal tax reform plan is an historic recognition that the Indiana model of putting taxpayers first works," he said. "And now, with his leadership and our proven blueprint at hand, we are on track to put American taxpayers first, too. Indiana has proven time and time again that cutting, capping and eliminating taxes directly contributes to job growth and economic prosperity. I'm confident that by enacting President Trump's plan to simplify the code and bring tax relief to the middle class and job creators, we will increase our global competitiveness, add jobs and grow economy for years to come, just as we've

done in Indiana. It's the Hoosier Way, and we're about to take it national."

Indiana Chamber President Kevin Brinegar added, "The Indiana Chamber is advocating for a plan that will accelerate economic growth and expand jobs, and allow the U.S. to be more competitive with other countries. We believe President Trump's tax proposal will do that. In addition to making things simpler and fairer for taxpayers, the president's plan is projected to be revenue-neutral after the first few years, due to the enhanced economic growth that's expected. It's vitally important to overhaul the tax code to maximize economic growth and not saddle future generations with additional debt." ❖



U.S. Sen. Todd Young, Rep. Susan Brooks, Jackie Walorski and Sen. Joe Donnelly after disembarking Air Force One on Wednesday.

# Trump compiles a list of ‘victories’

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – President Trump has been racking up some political wins these recent weeks. The fact that he often talks like some crude guy sitting at a bar rather than the president of the United States can obscure his successes. So can the obsessive desire of his critics that he is seen as failing in everything.

The pundits tried to explain away Trump’s rise in polls by saying it was because he cut a deal with Schumer and Pelosi. That’s just silly. The Democrats who view him as a sexist, racist, war-monger and buffoon would not respond to a pollster that he is doing a good job even if you pulled off every one of their fingernails.



Which raises the critical point that there is no evidence that in a re-vote for president that the Democrats would win. The ups and downs in the polls are caused by the voters who supported Trump even though

he was not their preference.

Let me go through some “victories” for Trump for which he gets little credit, and which many political pundits seem to think are losses. He understands that he has to keep the two major parts of the side that doesn’t want Democrats to govern somewhat united even if the so-called analysts do not understand this. Thus some victories look like losses to the biased.

**Health care:** This has been masterfully handled by Trump in political terms. He has long favored a single-payer system favored by Democrats. I and other conservatives thought that he would undermine Republicans on this issue. He did not. He went along with Speaker Ryan, and backed his proposal – not driving it, it wasn’t his first choice, it was the House Republicans – but it was defeated on the Hill.

**The Republicans wanted** to try again. Trump again backed up the Senate Republicans, twice. They failed. Trump had Vice President Pence, who had been part of the House leadership, justifiably play point. He failed.

The problem is that the Republicans were united in opposition but for many and sometimes conflicting reasons. They favored repeal but were unwilling to risk building a consensus alternative view because they knew it was virtually impossible. It was easier to just yell “repeal ObamaCare.”

As for President Trump, it wasn’t his fight though even most of his core wanted it repealed. He let the conservative Republicans try their best. He ran on an agenda

alleging that Congress was failing to their job. Trump looked correct.

**Texas/Florida:** The country was, in fact, better prepared for a disaster. Contrary to everything any of us every expected from the president, he stayed in the background and let the system work. While not perfect, the Texas effort, immediately followed by Florida – the nation’s second and third largest states – have been handled in a way that those of us involved in post-Katrina reforms could hardly have hoped for. If this had been done by President Obama, they already would be printing a commemorative stamp of him.

**Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are new challenges.** It is a major test for our disaster response system. Logistically they are different challenges from states on the mainland. They do not have strong local tax bases, governments, or island charitable resources. Whether the administration can respond as needed here is important but not relevant to the lack of credit given for its relative success in Texas and Florida.

**UN speech:** Liberals heard fingernails on chalkboard. But they aren’t going to like Donald Trump even if suddenly he preached One Worldism. What many Americans wanted to hear was that a president was putting America first as the oath of office pledges. It often seemed that President Obama was apologizing for America more than advocating for it. It was a minor victory, but it appealed far beyond the core of Trump voters.

**Decline in White House chaos:** These days most Republicans love boring days. We wake up hoping the day will be boring. Admittedly, we have that tendency anyway. General Kelly has worked to make this happen to the degree possible.

**Piles of backlogged nominations have been forwarded to the Senate.** Since the media and liberals on the Hill love such crusades, where are the wails of anguish about unqualified, neo-Nazi, confederate statue-hugging nominees? Most of the president’s nominees, if you read their biographies, are pretty talented people even if you don’t agree with them. This is a major victory for the president. He said he’d nominate qualified people and he has. And, if these nominations, especially for the courts, are not acted upon in a somewhat reasonable manner, the ground has been laid for the Senate passing a pile of these by a simple majority vote.

**Talking logically about a wall/fence:** The overwhelming majority of Americans want better control of the border. Cranking down his incendiary rhetoric and working toward real solutions is a huge victory.

**Millionaire athletes disrespecting America:** This isn’t about race. Jane Fonda was white. Millions of Americas saw red then too. Trump didn’t create this mess; Colin Kaepernick, groveling owners, and enabling players began this before Trump even announced his campaign. He is just getting the benefits from it.

**Judge Roy Moore winning the Alabama primary:** Why is this bad for Trump? His core supporters

won. He backed up the Senate majority leader, even to the point of backing a very flawed candidate against his own base just because the Senate Republicans asked him to. His response to senators will justifiably be: "Hey, I backed you up but I can't fix your problems."

**Meanwhile, Trump** "my way or the highway people" are unleashed. If it costs the Republicans the Senate, then it will be a Trump loss but, in all fairness, he

couldn't fix the mess the Alabama establishment created regardless what he did.

President Trump will continue to go up and down in the polls, but finally, not every day is a bad day.



**Souder is a former Republican congressman from Indiana.**

## Constructing Indiana's future

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Finance is confusing, manufacturing is inspiring, retail is risky, but construction is so ... permanent. What we build shapes lives for generations. We identify with the built environment. It opens us to the world and constrains our behavior in that world.



Construction is so fragmented. We know the few big firms in automotive manufacturing, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, food processing, etc. But can you name the top firms in building highways, sanitary sewers, homes, offices, pipelines, airports? Construction is local and layered with sub-contractors. The company that excavates does not do the paving, paint the lane markings or install the signage.

Government regulations are everywhere, yet is the oversight and enforcement adequate? Labor shortages abound, despite union and non-union, public and private training programs. For Indiana, 2015 federal statistics show 13,000 construction establishments with 117,000 employees. That's 9% of all business establishments and 4.4% of all employees. And those figures are accurate but wrong.

**Construction is a seasonal activity** in this climate. The employment data are only for the week including March 12. How's your weather during the second week of March?

In addition, many firms not classified as construction companies provide services and products to construction projects. Thus the construction sector data understate the magnitudes of the activity. Many of the occupations that support construction do not have significant barriers to entry; hence small businesses abound in construction. If you can paint a wall, you have a chance to get a sub-

contract for painting a building. If you can operate a backhoe, you might dig a ditch for a water line.

Indiana wants to promote small businesses. Construction is a place to do that. Small businesses (fewer than 10 employees) account for 81% of all construction establishments in Indiana and 25% of construction workers. Further, construction is the sleeper industry of the future.

**Most politicians now know** the word infrastructure. They are learning it means more than roads and highways. It means developing and redeveloping the means to reduce the damages of natural disasters. These are statewide activities, but local construction projects. Our state agencies can be at the forefront of helping small businesses participate in these important efforts.

That's why it's strange to see the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) put barriers in the road for small business. INDOT requires firms bidding under certain circumstances to provide certified financial reviews. In English that means firms need an accountant to go over their books and write a report saying all is OK. How much does that review cost? Three, five, 10 thousand dollars? The reviews must be provided to INDOT annually. It's not a one-time affair. All it does is get the firm on a list from which it may be chosen for a sub-contract. It's a gamble.

Is this any way to treat firms we want to help? Or are we slamming the door in the face of small firms that could contribute to our built future? ❖

**Mr. Marcus is an economist, writer, and speaker who may be reached at [mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com](mailto:mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com).**

# Hurricane relief vote is unconscionable

By **SHAW R. FRIEDMAN**

LaPORTE – There comes a time in every elected official's career when they've got to stand up and do the right thing, politics or ideology be damned. The recent vote that extended the country's debt limit while passing desperately needed hurricane relief was one such vote



and on that standard, Reps. Todd Rokita, Luke Messer and Jackie Walorski all failed the test miserably.

It doesn't take Democrats like myself to call them out. I leave that to one of their fellow Republican members of the U.S. House – Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas who serves as the chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, who said very clearly to his fellow members of

the Republican caucus that a "yes" vote was absolutely needed for this country's disaster and relief fund "to keep it solvent because FEMA is going through half a billion dollars a day" in Texas and would soon be forced to tend to suffering and flooding in Florida. Put simply, the GOP head of Homeland Security called a vote against this package "unconscionable."

As McCaul put it so well, "when I had people dying and hurting in my home state, it was my duty and moral obligation to help them." Todd, Luke and Jackie oughta to look in the mirror and ask themselves how they are going to explain their votes the next time they see Chairman McCaul or any other members from Florida or Texas in the hallway.

**It's clear that** these three members of Congress representing parts of Indiana clearly let crude and cynical politics drive their decision-making, to the point that they were among just 90 members of the U.S. House who voted against much-needed hurricane relief.

It was clear to all but the most rigid, unbending ideologues that FEMA's emergency relief funds had been taxed beyond belief with the damage and destruction wrought on the Texas coast by Hurricane Harvey, and that's why even Republican members of Congress from Indiana like Susan Brooks and Larry Bucshon put aside their understandable concerns over deficit reduction, by voting

for the \$15.25 billion package, which also increased the nation's debt limit and funded the government for the next few months.

Republican U.S. Sen. Todd Young, seeing that the President Trump had backed the bill after his meeting with Sen. Chuck Schumer and Leader Pelosi, joined a bi-partisan coalition of U.S. senators – some 83 in all – to pass the aid package. Even deficit hawks like Mick Mulvaney, a former congressman who now serves as U.S. budget director, pleaded with his fellow Republicans in caucus to pass the much-needed aid package.

**Raw, partisan politics aside,** every one of us has to hope that in times of national crisis, when there's a chance for elected officials to alleviate the suffering and misery of our fellow citizens in places like Texas and California through an emergency relief package, those same elected officials will join together and do "the right thing."

Fortunately, some 316 members of the U.S. House, including solid majorities from both parties, voted for this desperately needed aid package. They knew that issues of debt reduction could certainly be part of any upcoming debate on tax reform or infrastructure spending or even on various defense procurement bills.

But when it comes to the most basic function of our federal government – providing for the security and safety of our citizens – one would think that the politics would stop for folks like Rokita, Messer and Walorski. Sadly, voting against a package backed by President Trump and favored by bipartisan majorities in both the Senate and House, shows they've now allowed crude political

maneuvering to overcome any sense of what's in the best interest of their fellow citizens or the "common good."

**As Republican** Mike McCaul stated, this bill was needed to quickly get relief money out to victims of Hurricane Harvey, but another spending bill will be needed soon to help victims of Hurricane Irma, as "this was just a down payment to keep the disaster relief fund afloat."

Reps. Rokita, Messer and Walorski should have to answer to their constituents for a vote that was clearly out of the Hoosier mainstream; a mainstream that has always believed that the public sector needs to stand up and be counted in times of crisis or emergency. It was indeed an "unconscionable" vote,

as Republican McCaul put so well, and it will stand as one of the darkest stains on the legislative record of all three members of Congress. ❖



**Shaw R. Friedman is former legal counsel for the Indiana Democratic Party and a longtime HPI contributor. He can be contacted at [friedman@netnitco.net](mailto:friedman@netnitco.net).**

# Lacking confidence in U.S. election system

By LEE HAMILTON

BLOOMINGTON – Voting is the most basic step a representative democracy asks of us. So why do we remain in an endless national standoff on how to fix our elections?

A dozen years ago, the preface to a report on federal election reform began with these words: "Polls indicate that many Americans lack confidence in the electoral system, but the political parties are so divided that serious electoral reform is unlikely without a strong bipartisan voice."



I can find no part of that sentence that's not still true. Americans still lack confidence in the electoral system. The political parties are still divided. Serious electoral reform remains unlikely. Perhaps the only change is that the commission issuing the report was co-chaired by a Democrat and a Republican – former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State James Baker – who genuinely tried to find a bipartisan approach to our election system's problems. Since then, we've careened into a pitched political battle on the issue.

At one level, I'm baffled by the lack of progress. I sat on that commission, and what seemed obvious to us then seems even more obvious today. Voting is the most basic step a representative democracy asks of us. We do three things when we vote: We select the officials we want running the government; we suggest the direction of government policy; and we reaffirm our belief and our stake in representative democracy. You can't get more important than that. So why do we remain in an endless national standoff on how to fix our elections?

The answer, of course, is that in politically divided times, changes to elections are seen through partisan eyes. This is disappointing, because right now there should be plenty of room for agreement. We face genuine challenges to our electoral system that even the most partisan of Democrats and Republicans could come together on: Aging machines, long lines at the polls, cyber attacks by hostile entities, foreign interference, inadequately trained voting

officials, voter lists that are not up to date. It's a long list. But where the two sides fall apart is on the most basic of questions: How readily do we give access to the voting booth? I'll lay my cards on the table. I believe in wider access. Creating a Congress and an overall government that are more representative of the American people rests on expanding the electorate and beating back the barriers to voting.

The more people who vote, the better the chance to strengthen the political center formed by moderates and pragmatists. The lower voter turnout becomes, the more sway held by the most ideologically intense voters, who reward the most polarizing candidates, and the more likely deep resentments are created among those citizens denied the right to vote.

This is not to dismiss concerns about voter fraud. We do need to make sure that the person arriving to vote at a polling site is the same one who's named on the voter list. And we're headed in that direction. The number of states requiring a voter ID has increased dramatically over the last couple of decades; today about 50 percent of American voters live in states that require a voter to produce an ID before casting his or her ballot.

Yet the ambivalence many of us feel about this is understandable. We want to ensure there's no fraud, but at the same time we are aware that stringent ID requirements disenfranchise a lot of people who may have trouble acquiring an ID; they don't have a driver's license, passport, or birth certificate. So the requirements can be an effective way to block minority groups or others from voting. And there's this political reality: Many of those who call the loudest for restrictive ID laws are targeting groups that they think will vote against them.

Though we want to ensure that only those people eligible to vote are actually voting, we also want to ensure that all those who are eligible to vote find it convenient to do so. There's a lot of work to be done on that front, at every level of government. The entire system needs top-to-bottom review and strengthening. And so far, I see no evidence that we as a nation are taking this need seriously. ❖

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar, IU School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice, IU School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

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**YOUR FRIENDS ALL HANG OUT HERE... DO YOU?**

# Roy Moore's rolling tide

By **KYLE KONDIK** and **GEOFFREY SKELLEY**  
**Sabato's Crystal Ball**

CHARLOTTESVILLE – There were no surprises in Alabama on Tuesday as former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore (R) dispatched appointed Sen. Luther Strange (R) by about 10 points, 55%-45%, in the state's Republican primary runoff. Most of the final polls in the race showed a margin around that mark, and as people have a bad habit of only noting when pollsters miss, pollsters deserve kudos for getting this one right.

Strange's defeat came despite endorsements from President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence, overwhelming support from the GOP establishment, and a huge spending edge over Moore. Overall, Strange and his allies -- particularly Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's (R-KY) Senate Leadership Fund -- outspent Moore and his allies almost five-to-one on television advertisements and ran about four times as many ads. But as we discussed in our preview of the Moore-Strange runoff, Moore's profile and his base of support always seemed more in line with Trump than Strange's, and the former jurist won nearly every county in the state. The president even seemed unsure of his Strange endorsement when campaigning on behalf of the beleaguered senator the Friday before the election, when he said at a rally that he "might have made a mistake" in backing Strange. And on Election Night, Trump deleted multiple tweets that he made expressing support for Strange in the leadup to the runoff contest.

**Throughout the campaign,** Strange was hampered by his connection to McConnell and DC Republicans, as well as the nature of his appointment to the Senate by disgraced ex-Gov. Robert Bentley (R). McConnell and SLF fought tooth and nail via massive expenditures in the race to push Strange across the finish line. Other big GOP groups, like the National Rifle Association and the Chamber of Commerce, also ran ads on behalf of Strange. The last thing McConnell wanted was a political wild card like Moore in his caucus, especially replacing a fairly reliable vote like Strange. As evidenced by the latest failure on health care, the majority leader already has plenty of

difficulty getting key GOP legislation passed. McConnell is unpopular among base Republicans, and he proved to be an extremely useful target for Moore and his allies.

As an appointed senator, Strange always had a slightly tougher road. While 94% of elected incumbents have won renomination since the start of popular elections for Senate in 1913, only 80% of appointed incumbents have. That's still a solid success rate, but Strange became the 24th appointed incumbent seeking reelection to lose his party's nod. Additionally, incumbents have now lost 18 times in primaries that went to a runoff (out of 31 instances): four failed to make the runoff and 14 lost in the runoff. Of those, appointed incumbents are now zero for six with Strange's loss.



**Turning to the December** (not November) special general election, Moore will face former U.S. attorney Doug Jones (D). Some Democrats are already referencing in hopeful tones the name of former Sen. Scott Brown (R), who unexpectedly won a 2010 special election in heavily-Democratic Massachusetts. A Jones win is unlikely, but there are a couple of reasons why it's not totally out of the question. First, the overall environment appears at least somewhat pro-Democratic, in the sense that President Trump's approval rating is down to some degree everywhere, even in Alabama, compared to where he started. We also know that historically candidates from the non-White House party tend to do better in legislative elections. In special elections for state and federal legislative seats since Trump's elec-

tion, Democrats have out-performed Hillary Clinton's 2016 margin by about 12 points, and Barack Obama's 2012 margin by eight points.

**Additionally, Moore** is a particularly polarizing politician. In November 2012, he only won the Alabama chief justice election 52%-48% even while Mitt Romney was winning about 61% of the vote at the top of the GOP ticket. It doesn't seem far-fetched to imagine some more-centrist Republicans in places like Birmingham and Huntsville at least considering a vote for Jones. As one person with ties to the state recently said to us, "Better three years of Jones than a lifetime of Moore" (the election is for the remainder of Sessions' term, which runs through 2020).

Given these factors, the Crystal Ball is shifting the Alabama race rating from Safe Republican to Likely Republican. The odds that Moore will become the next senator from the Yellowhammer State are quite high, but our new rating reflects the fact that there might be a very small opening for Democrats. ❖



# Visclosky pushes Region public transit

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – Public transportation, and a source of funding, has long been an uphill fight for Northwest Indiana. And it still is today, both in terms of computer rail and bus service. Federal funding for the expansion of commuter rail from Hammond to St. John, as well as double-tracking the existing South Shore Rail operation, seemed a virtual lock until President Donald Trump entered the picture.

U.S. Rep. Peter Visclosky, who has been the godfather of both projects, sits high on the House Appropriations Committee which will provide federal funding for both South Shore projects. Visclosky has been saying for years that he will secure the federal money if the state and local communities come up with a match.

The match has all but been secured, but that was before Trump was elected president and cast doubt

over the future of transportation projects. That’s why not only Visclosky, but also Gov. Eric Holcomb, who is a South Shore supporter, are putting pressure on Mike Pence, the vice president and former Indiana governor, to see that the federal money flows this way. Although Pence never went out of his way to funnel money to Northwest Indiana, he and Holcomb are close.

With the South Shore in potential jeopardy, so is Lake County bus service, long a transportation step-child. At issue is the potential loss of the Lakeshore South bus route that runs from Hammond south to Ridge Road through Munster and Highland. The route is funded with \$200,000 annually from the federal government and the same amount from the Gary Public Transportation Corp.

The GPTC is planning to withdraw its funding and urge communities along the Lakeshore South route to fund the local share. There will be a public meeting to discuss the future of the route on Oct. 4 at the Hammond Public Library.

The Lakeshore Route was one of the creations of former Calumet College President Dennis Rittenmeyer, who championed expanded Lake County bus service for more than a decade. Rittenmeyer is retired and living in Florida.



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



**Photography With Punch**  
 Mark Curry On Indiana Politics  
 mark1tcphotography@gmail.com  
 http://mark1tc.smugmug.com/Political/

**Dave Bangert, Lafayette Journal & Courier:** In the red meat test of President Donald Trump's blast of NFL players who dare to take a knee during the national anthem, a letter sent by Rep. Todd Rokita's Senate campaign showed just how well this weekend's flare-up checked the maximum number of boxes for wedge issues. Just to be clear, in case it might not be for a Republican betting everything on all things Trump, here's where Rokita stood, in his own words: "President Trump said what needed to be said." In a letter sent by Hoosiers for Rokita – complete with a "Donate Now" button – the Brownsburg Republican luxuriated in the uproar that ensued, the additional knees taken before Sunday's kickoffs and the black-and-white dividing lines provided by the president. "The media is melting down over it," Rokita said, "but the truth is, he speaks for the vast majority of Hoosiers and Americans who are disgusted watching athletes who make hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars disrespect our great nation – a nation that affords them the opportunity for that type of success." Better still, Rokita found a ripe opportunity in the flag to corner bigger prey. "(Sen. Joe) Donnelly says Trump's supporters are his supporters, too," said Tim Edson, a Rokita campaign strategist. "I'm sure they'd love to know where Sen. Donnelly stands on actions disrespectful to the country." U.S. Rep. Luke Messer, Rokita's main rival in the May 2018 GOP primary, was on the same page, tweeting this on Saturday: "Stand for the national anthem. @realDonaldTrump is right. Athletes should stand and honor our great country." ❖



**Jon Webb, Evansville Courier & Press:** No one knows who Eric Holcomb is. A Morning Consult survey released in July found that one-fourth of the more than 4,000 registered voters questioned had no idea who he was. You may not know either, so I'll tell you: He's the star of the beloved puppet-centric kids' show "Holcomb's Holler." I'm kidding. He's the governor of Indiana. I know some of you were pulling for the puppet show. But even if you don't know him, he can still hurt you. Holcomb and 14 other Republican governors signed a letter this week expressing their support for the GOP's latest attempt to carpet bomb your health insurance. That's in contrast to a rival bipartisan group of 10 other governors who came out against the bill. The groups plan to meet on the street corner at sunset, switchblades in their pockets, songs in their hearts. Republicans have until Sept. 30 to ram it through. By 2020, it will kill Obamacare's Medicaid expansion, which fully funds Indiana's HIP 2.0. That puts health-care coverage for more than 421,000 Hoosiers in jeopardy, according to the state's August enrollment numbers. In place of expansion dollars, each state will receive block grant money. That would reduce Indiana's federal funding by billions of dollars, according to multiple analyses. And if there's less money to fund insurance for low-income

individuals, logic says less people will be covered. Oh! And that block grant money is only guaranteed through 2026. After that, Congress would have to re-appropriate it. And we know how good Congress has been at passing health legislation. From the looks of it, Graham-Cassidy will only hurt Indiana. So why is Holcomb doing this? Because he's a good soldier. He doesn't have the clout to buck party leadership, like, say, Ohio Gov. John Kasich. And he knows that you, a member of an Indiana electorate that flocked to Trump last year, likely thinks Obamacare is the "disaster" the president crows about on Twitter every day – even though that, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, there are currently zero counties in the country without an insurer in the Obamacare exchange. And this bill does nothing to fix Obamacare's problems. The high ACA premiums Republicans bark about could likely go up in some markets, considering Graham-Cassidy ends subsidies for those enrolled in the marketplace. This thing doesn't even require your employer to give you affordable coverage.

None of this will hurt Holcomb. The predicted dire consequences of Graham-Cassidy wouldn't kick in until ol' Eric trounces whatever sorry excuse the Democrats put up against him in 2020. By then, he'll be starting his second and final term. ❖

**Peter King, Sports Illustrated:** So Trump actually was the divider-in-chief this weekend. In two-plus minutes of a speech pumping up the candidacy of an Alabama Republican senate candidate, the president of the United States detoured to cursing at grown men who would choose to protest silently before football games. How would you guess strong and principled men would respond to anyone, never mind the president, calling them SOB's? In a week, five or eight protesters became in excess of 250. Three full teams—Pittsburgh (other than Army veteran Alejandro Villanueva), Seattle and Tennessee—boycotted the anthem Sunday, and other groups either knelt or sat. "He [Trump] attacked our brothers, my brothers, and me," said Carolina veteran Julius Peppers, who stayed in the locker room during the anthem before the Saints-Panthers game. More than that, it seemed Trump got players so angry that these protests are likely to continue well into this season. Trump was at it again Sunday, while protests—players either demonstrating or locking arms in solidarity on the sidelines—happened at 14 NFL games from London to Los Angeles. He tweeted about "boring games" on a day when five of them in the early window came down to the last minute. Last second, in one case. Trump's buddy Tom Brady, battered by a consistent Texans rush, threw his fifth touchdown of the day with 23 seconds left to beat the Texans 36-33. The Bears won on a walkoff overtime 19-yard run by Jordan Howard. Newbie Colts quarterback Jacoby Brissett eked out a three-point win when Cleveland's DeShone Kizer threw an interception on the last play of the game. ❖

## No IU comment on fed Adidas probe

WASHINGTON — The federal investigation that sent shock waves through college athletics and the sports apparel industry this week began in late 2014, when a little-known financial adviser to a few professional athletes in Pittsburgh became an FBI informant (Washington Post). That November, according to court documents unsealed Tuesday in New York, Marty Blazer agreed to help the FBI investigate the black market surrounding major college sports. Since 2000, Blazer later would admit, he had paid college athletes if they agreed to become his clients when they turned pro, and he could introduce FBI agents to others he had met along the way. How far the fallout from this investigation extends — how many schools, coaches and athletes will be implicated — likely depends on a series of conversations that will take place over the next few months between prosecutors and lawyers for the 10 men arrested late Monday and Tuesday on charges that include conspiracies to commit money laundering, wire fraud and bribery. Adidas sponsors more than 90 NCAA programs, according to the company's website, including high-profile basketball teams at Indiana, Kansas and Michigan State. Officials at Indiana and Michigan State did not reply to requests to comment.

## Russians trolled Carson as Muslim

WASHINGTON — The Russian government tried to influence the 2016 presidential election by masquerading as an authentic US Muslim organization on social media and posting incendiary memes about Hillary Clinton — while simultaneously using other accounts to send Islamophobic messages to right-wing users, a report says (Perez, New York Post).



Sources tell The Daily Beast that the Kremlin-backed internet trolls created a fake Facebook group called "United Muslims of America" and then used it to stir the proverbial pot for months.

The real "United Muslims of America"... has hosted events with numerous members of Congress in the past — including Democrats Andre Carson and Eric Swalwell. The lawmakers are both members of the House intelligence committee that is currently investigating President Trump's ties to Russia.

## Senate passes Young resolution

WASHINGTON — A news release indicated the United States Senate unanimously passed a bipartisan resolution introduced by Senator Todd Young (R-IN) and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Ben Cardin (D-MD) calling for an urgent and comprehensive diplomatic effort to address political obstacles in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen that are preventing humanitarian aid from being delivered to tens of millions of people who desperately need it. The resolution calls on all parties to the conflicts to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need. The resolution also expresses support for efforts to hold accountable those responsible for deliberate restrictions on humanitarian access.

## Traffic amnesty proposed

INDIANAPOLIS — A proposed traffic amnesty program would help Hoosiers pay back debts and reinstate suspended licenses (Chapman, WFYI). It could allow more than 400,000 Hoosiers to become legal, licensed drivers once again. Nearly 1 in 10 Hoosiers have suspended licenses because of financial reasons — not safety violations — according a report from students at Indiana University. The traffic amnesty program would

provide a short-term solution in a payment program through the courts... Democratic Rep. Robin Shackleford (Indianapolis) brought the proposal to a legislative study committee. "This half a million people it's affecting, we want to make sure can get back to work," Shackleford says.

## Purdue engineers eye heroin solutions

WEST LAFAYETTE — Tackling Tippecanoe County's heroin epidemic will require a broad approach that spans fields such as medicine, public safety, law enforcement and mental health (Paul, Lafayette Journal & Courier). But Purdue University engineers believe they also can play a role in finding solutions to one of the biggest challenges currently facing Indiana. Such collaboration was the focus of a discussion Sept. 12 at Purdue by Jim McClelland, who was recently appointed Indiana executive director for drug treatment, prevention and enforcement... Over the past six years, researchers have partnered with Lafayette Police Department, among other agencies, to design iVALET, a tool that uses troves of data to visualize crime statistics and forecast when and where an incident could happen.

## Man arrested for Goodnight threat

KOKOMO — A Kokomo man is facing multiple charges after arriving drunk at City Hall, telling police he was Mayor Greg Goodnight and later explaining he was there to confront the mayor about "taking his home away from him." Duane Muller, 31, is facing misdemeanor charges of resisting law enforcement, public intoxication and false informing after Kokomo Police Department officers found him on the night of Sept. 17 in the lobby of City Hall, where he attempted to pull away from officers and later admitted his plan to "walk right up to the Mayor's office."