

Hupfer flexing GOP finance, muscle

Chairman says party, Holcomb to report \$2.75 million, takes aim at Sen. Donnelly and Rep. Goodin

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – While there is speculation of an anti-Trump wave heading toward the 2018 mid-term elections, the Indiana Republican

Party is flexing its super majority muscles with the coordinated political wings of

the Holcomb administration and state party preparing to post \$2.775 million on its year-end reports.

In an exclusive HPI Interview with Chairman Kyle Hupfer, he claims



Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer with Mindy Colbert, who heads the GOP and Eric Holcomb for Indiana committee finance. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

the party is in good shape to defend its seven-member congressional delegation despite a potential Democratic wave, believes it has a good chance of defeating U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, as well as picking up seats in the Indiana House with a target firmly affixed to new Minority Leader Terry Goodin.

Hupfer points to internal polling that shows Donnelly tied with a generic Republican Senate nominee at 40%. "Donnelly is not in strong position. He's

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Pence, coup and flame

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

MUNCIE – Mike Pence's excellent adventure has now entered a stretch of rocky road. Joining Team Trump always promised to be a wild ride, but now Vice President Pence has found himself within the scope of Special Counsel Robert Mueller, and serving with the current imprimatur of history's most volatile president. What comes next will be fascinating.

For the past year, Pence appeared to have successfully straddled the percolating controversies engulfing Donald Trump. In February, President Trump fired national security advisor Michael Flynn for lying



“Senator Franken’s conduct and behavior are unacceptable and he should resign. I believe there is more work to be done to protect victims of sexual harassment and to reform the system of filing and settling claims in Congress.”

- U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly



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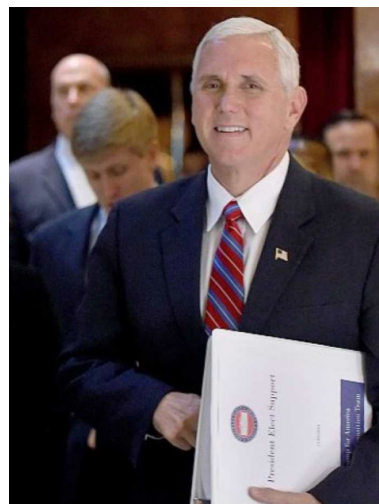
to Pence after just 25 days on the job. But on Friday, Flynn pled guilty to one count of lying to the FBI on two occasions. There is rampant speculation that Flynn cut a deal with Special Counsel Robert Mueller and the events of Friday bring the Mueller probe deeper into the Trump White House inner circle and the transition team. ABC News is reporting that Flynn has promised special counsel "full cooperation" in Russia probe. ABC said that Flynn felt "abandoned" by Trump in recent weeks. If Flynn has an axe to grind, it may be with Pence as the sourced cause of his firing.

On Nov. 11, 2016, Pence replaced New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie as head of the transition team. Christie said Wednesday one reason he was booted was because of his opposition to Flynn joining the administration. "Suffice to say, I had serious misgivings, which I think have been confirmed by the fact that he pled guilty to a felony in federal court," Christie said. The Washington Post reports that Prosecutor Brandon Van Grack said that Flynn spoke with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak about President Obama's sanctions for interfering in the U.S. election after a phone call on the topic with "a senior official of the transition team at Mar-a-Lago." According to the Post, Van Grack said, "Immediately after that phone call, the defendant called the Russian ambassador."

Pence has lawyered up as the probe expanded, hiring Richard Cullen, the chairman of the law firm McGuire Woods last July, two months after President Trump fired FBI Director James Comey and Mueller was appointed special prosecutor. There has been speculation in the legal blogosphere that Pence may be legally exposed, with the New York Times

and Washington Post both reporting that Pence was in Oval Office meetings on May 8 regarding the original letter calling for Comey's firing.

While Harvard Prof. Laurence Tribe and Fordham University law Prof. Jed Shugerman have suggested Pence may have been legally exposed, the events of Friday and Saturday don't even come close to smoking gun status. But the fact is that in two areas of interest to the Mueller Commission, Pence was on the scene. Pence headed the transition committee and



that's where Flynn created legal jeopardy for himself. On transition teams, there are figureheads and then staff performing the tasks. Was Pence a figurehead who was out of the loop there? Or, as the photos of the era reveal with Pence holding binders of papers, was he the main man, fully in charge? On Jan. 15, Pence told CBS about Flynn's conversations with the Russian ambassador, "They did

not discuss anything having to do with the United States' decision to expel diplomats or impose a censure against Russia."

The Moyers timeline

Pence was also present in the Oval Office on May 8 when the original memo, a rationale for Comey's firing, was vetted. Comey was fired on May 9. Veteran journalist Bill Moyers has created an extensive timeline on the entire Russian collusion saga at billmoyers.com. Here is the description of the May 8 meeting, two days after Trump had decided to fire Comey: On the Monday after his weekend at Bedminster, Trump meets with senior White House officials, including White House counsel Don McGahn and Vice President Mike Pence. According to later reporting by the New York Times, Trump announces his decision to fire Comey and reads aloud from the multipage termination letter that he had drafted with Stephen Miller

– described by sources to the Times and the Washington Post as a “screed” and a “rant.” McGahn counsels Trump to delay dismissing Comey and begins an effort to stop the letter, or at least pare it back. Jared Kushner, who had told Trump at Bedminster that he was in favor of firing Comey, urges Trump to proceed. McGahn gives Miller a marked-up copy of Trump’s letter, highlighting sections that he believes should be removed. According to ABC News, Jared Kushner, McGahn, Pence and Chief of Staff Reince Priebus begin to prepare talking points about Comey’s planned firing. Meanwhile, according to The Times, McGahn arranges for Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who had also been considering firing Comey, to meet with Trump in the Oval Office later that day. Trump reportedly gives them a copy of his original letter – the “screed”/“rant” – and Rosenstein agrees to write a separate memo providing his views on firing Comey. Rosenstein later tells Congress that he is aware, when he agrees to prepare his memo, that Trump intends to fire Comey.

On Monday, Politico offered up Team Pence’s Sgt. Schultz “I know noth-ing!” version of events: “As the White House contends with questions about who knew about former national security adviser Michael Flynn lying to the FBI, people close to Vice President Mike Pence are trying to make clear that President Donald Trump’s No. 2 knew nothing at all.

Politico reported: “He was at a homeless shelter in Indiana, clad in an apron and doling out hot meals, the day last December when Egypt submitted a U.N. resolution that drew Flynn and Trump’s son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner into international back-channel dealing. He was celebrating his son’s wedding a week later when President Barack Obama slapped sanctions on Russia over its election meddling, setting off a chain of events that would culminate with Flynn pleading guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts with Russian officials. Pence’s aides have maintained for months that their man was out of the loop, blissfully ignorant of contacts between the Trump campaign and various foreign actors, from the Russian ambassador to WikiLeaks.

“It’s remarkable, as close as he was to the transition, as close as he was to the president, [that] at least what’s come out so far very little ... puts him in key places at key times,” William Jeffress, the attorney who represented Vice President Dick Cheney’s chief of staff I. Lewis ‘Scooter’ Libby during the Valerie Plame CIA leak investigation, told Politico. Within Pence’s circle, there have been efforts to frame Friday’s indictment of Flynn as a vindication of the vice president. Pence had initially defended Flynn during the transition, dismissing the notion that he discussed sanctions with the Russian ambassador

as false. When the content of those conversations was later revealed, Flynn was fired for having misled the vice president. Friday’s revelation that Flynn lied to the FBI was seen in Pence world as additional evidence of the former national security adviser’s mendacity. It was the latest example of the Pence team deploying a playbook that has kept the vice president clean so far. The strategy seems to have kept Pence out of the cross hairs of Robert Mueller’s Russia investigation. While he has retained outside counsel, he has yet to be interviewed by investigators.”



Then came the CNN interview between Chris Cuomo and former FBI special agent Asha Rangappa, who now teaches national security issues at Yale University. She says the transition team timelines don’t work for Pence. “Here’s why it’s problematic either way,” Rangappa said, with regard to Pence knowing or not knowing. “The sanctions conversations were a matter of normal, incoming transition policy. If that’s true, Vice

President Pence is the head of the transition team and he’s the incoming vice president. So, you would think he would know about policy discussions taking place. So, if he didn’t know, then something about those conversations, if he’s kept in the dark, something about those conversations was just not right.”

Cuomo asked, “If all of these people knew and it was going on during the transition, how did the head of the transition not know?” Rangappa responded, “So, we know that in the pleading documents, the statement of offense that Flynn pleaded guilty to – which means these are facts that [Robert] Mueller can actually prove that he was in communication with senior transition officials. And exactly like you said, Chris, if he’s in contact with senior transition officials about policy decisions, how can the head of the transition team not know? If they were keeping him in the dark, why?”

Cuomo asked why Mueller would be interested if it was due to “incompetence, dislocation.” Rangappa answered, “It becomes a matter for Mueller because, again, if this is true that Vice President Pence didn’t know, and this is all happening in some cabal of people underneath him, that makes it less ordinary. We don’t know yet exactly what that conduct was, but we know [acting attorney general] Sally Yates described it to [Don] McGahn as being problematic, and something that Flynn can be blackmailed about.”

CNN reported on Wednesday that sources in “Pence’s orbit” say he is preparing to testify before Mueller. But spokeswoman Alyssa Farah told CNN, “Nothing could be further from the truth. The vice president is focused on passing the largest tax cut in American history.”

The Pence ‘coup’

If Pence getting close to the Mueller flames wasn’t

juicy enough, The Atlantic's McKay Coppins produced an eye-popping cover story, "God's Plan for Mike Pence: Will the vice president – and the religious right – be rewarded for their embrace of Donald Trump?"

The story begins: "No man can serve two masters, the Bible teaches, but Mike Pence is giving it his all." Reporting from Anderson last summer, Coppins writes, "When the time comes, Pence takes the stage and greets the crowd with a booming 'Hellooooo, Indiana!' He says he has 'just hung up the phone' with Donald Trump and that the president asked him to 'say hello.' He delivers this message with a slight chuckle that has a certain, almost subversive quality to it. Watch Pence give enough speeches, and you'll notice that this often happens when he's in front of a friendly crowd. He'll be witnessing to evangelicals at a mega-church, or addressing conservative supporters at a rally, and when the moment comes for him to pass along the president's well-wishes, the words are invariably accompanied by an amused little chuckle that prompts knowing laughter from the attendees. It's almost as if, in that brief, barely perceptible moment, Pence is sending a message to those with ears to hear that he recognizes the absurdity of his situation; that he knows just what sort of man he's working for; that while things may look bad now, there is a grand purpose at work here, a plan that will manifest itself in due time. 'Let not your hearts be troubled,' he seems to be saying. 'I've got this.'"

And then came the bombshell: On Friday, October 7, 2016, the Washington Post published the Access Hollywood tape that showed Trump gloating about his penchant for grabbing women "by the pussy," and instantly upended the campaign. Republicans across the country withdrew their endorsements, and conservative editorial boards called on Trump to drop out of the race. Most alarming to the aides and operatives inside Trump Tower, Mike Pence suddenly seemed at risk of going rogue.

Coppins reports: "Trump's phone calls to his running mate reportedly went unreturned, and anonymous quotes began appearing in news stories describing Pence as 'beside himself' over the revelation. One campaign staffer told me that when she was asked on TV the day after the tape came out whether Pence would remain on the ticket, she ad-libbed that, yes, he was 100% committed to Trump. She remembers walking away from the set

and thinking, 'I have no idea if what I just said is true. It's been reported that Pence sent Trump a letter saying he needed time to decide whether he could stay with the campaign. But in fact, according to several Republicans familiar with the situation, he wasn't just thinking about dropping out – he was contemplating a coup. Within hours of The Post's bombshell, Pence made it clear to the Republican National Committee that he was ready to take Trump's place as the party's nominee. Such a move just four weeks before Election Day would have been unprecedented, but the situation seemed dire enough to call for radical action.

Coppins continued:

"The furtive plotting, several sources told me, was not just an act of political opportunism for Pence. He was genuinely shocked by the 'Access Hollywood' tape. In the short time they'd known each other, Trump had made an effort to convince Pence that – beneath all the made-for-TV bluster and bravado – he was a good-hearted man with faith in God. On the night of the vice-presidential debate, for example, Trump had left a voicemail letting Pence know that he'd just said a prayer for him. The couple was appalled by the video, however. Karen in particular was

'disgusted,' says a former campaign aide. 'She finds him reprehensible – just totally vile.' Yet Pence might also have thought he glimpsed something divine in that moment of political upheaval: A parting of the seas, God's hand reaching down to make his will known. Marc Short told me that in moments of need, Pence turns to a favorite passage in Jeremiah: 'For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future,' Short said, 'Mike believes strongly in the sovereignty of God, and knowing that the Lord has a plan for him.'

"Whatever God had planned for Mike Pence, however, it was not to make him the Republican nominee that weekend," Coppins reported. "Trump proved defiant in the face of pressure from party leaders."

Coppins said Tuesday on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" of Pence, "Behind the scenes, he's always one step ahead. He's always thinking about what comes next. The people I talk to who have known him for a long time say he's a lot more ambitious and a lot more calculating than he lets on in public. That comes through in key moments behind the scenes."

Asked by NBC's Willie Geist about the coup and



Pence, Coppins explained, "It's been reported that he sent a letter to Trump saying he needed to assess whether he would stay on the ticket. But my sources say he went further than that. The RNC was ready to kick the top of the ticket and actually during a meeting in the chaotic 48 hours following the "Access Hollywood" tape release, Trump met with top advisers and Reince Priebus who was chairman of the RNC and he actually said in that meeting according to someone who was there that Pence and Condoleezza Rice were ready to go in terms of forming a new Republican ticket."

As for today, Coppins says senior Trump aides say Pence has a broad portfolio and describes the vice president as "in public so careful showing deference and loyalty and even submission to Trump. He definitely has some pull within the administration. The question is how loyal is he to the president and will that loyalty be able to sustain the constant siege this White House is under?"

Team Pence pushed back on the report, with dismissed former aide Marc Lotter coming to vice president's defense, saying, "Categorically untrue. This is just information trying to drive a wedge between the president and the vice president where one does not exist. There is absolutely no truth to it."

Pence spokeswoman Alyssa Farah denied the Karen Pence "vile" quote, saying, "Regarding The Atlantic's tired, false claim about the VP during the campaign, we denied this in the article and deny it again today. Didn't happen."



Epilogue

In the 201-year history of Indiana politics, there's never been a political chapter quite like this and we've had a couple of humdingers, ranging from Gov. Oliver P. Morton's disbanding a copperhead General Assembly in 1863, to former senator and ambassador Edward Allen Hannegan blowing the 1852 Democratic presidential nomination due to a manslaughter charge that forced Prosecutor Lew Wallace to flee Covington for Crawfordsville.

But those of us with the Pence experience in Indiana find a lot here that doesn't press the boundaries of incredulity. We know that Pence is out-worldly ambitious. We know that that he and his team are cunningly daring. Many Hoosier Republican rank-and-file

questioned the wisdom of his pushing for the Trump ticket, few believing he would actually become vice president. We believed that Pence would wind up on Fox News and would prepare for a 2020 presidential run.

Is it conceivable to us in the Indiana press and within the deep warrens of the Republican Party that on that Oct. 7-9 weekend, Pence would have explored the most audacious power grab in American history with Trump apparently reeling? With my 30 years of covering Indiana politics and two decades of watching and analyzing Mike Pence, the simple answer is, "No."

As for the Mueller probe, Pence is fluttering close to the flame. He's been utterly adroit to date, flitting between the inside loop and oblivion like a phantom. He will have to be at the top of his game in the coming year. ❖

Chairman Hupfer, from page 1

well below 50%," Hupfer said. "I think we're going to have a real strong candidate in that race from whoever comes out in the primary. He'll be able to pull out Trump supporters because Joe Donnelly has voted against tax reform. That's not going to play real well here in Indiana. He's not helped in any way to repeal and replace Obamacare, which continues to be very unpopular here in Indiana."

In addition, he believes Republicans will pick up the House seat of retiring State Rep. Steve Stemler, and says a credible candidate will challenge Goodin, who was elected by House Democrats last week to replace Scott Pelath. "Both will be in play," Hupfer predicted. "I think they're going to have to take some resources and defend some incumbents. If they're out recruiting candidates, we're not hearing it. I'm not exaggerating. Folks down there had a candidate they were recruiting even before

Terry Goodin was named minority leader. I think there will be some pressure on incumbents. When the pressure comes, the dollars will go to the minority leader reelect before they go anywhere else."

Goodin was not available for comment.

Hupfer also said the three statewide campaigns involving Secretary of State Connie Lawson, Auditor Tera Klutz and Treasurer Kelly Mitchell will be coordinated. He, along with HPI Democratic sources, say that no challenger candidates have emerged on that front.

At the advent of the Holcomb administration, Hupfer was chosen to head the party as well as the Eric Holcomb For Indiana committee. Fundraising efforts for both entities overlap, with Hupfer serving as treasurer of EHFI. Likewise, Mindy Colbert serves a dual role as finance director for both the state party and EHFI. "Under the current set up, contributions to Team Holcomb are split 50/50, but the allocation can change depending on

goals and circumstances,” Hupfer explained. “Ultimately this is allowing the efforts of the governor via Team Holcomb to ensure the success of Republican candidates up and down the ballot across Indiana.”

The Indiana Republican Party and the campaigns of Holcomb and Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch will end 2017 in record-breaking end-of-year fundraising positions. Here are the projected cash-on-hand totals for these three committees: Indiana Republican Party, \$675,000; Gov. Holcomb, \$1.6 million; and Crouch at \$500,000. The party raised \$400,000 as a thousand people attended its spring dinner.

The GOP ends the year with more cash on hand than any year since 2005, and with more than double the cash on hand at the end of the two most recent off-election years, 2009 and 2013. Gov. Mitch Daniels reported \$1,388,257 in 2005, and Gov. Mike Pence reported \$1,357,329.99 in 2013. In 2005, Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman reported \$66,746.92 and in 2013, Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann posted \$99,799.02.

Holcomb won the office on a historic 106-day campaign after Gov. Pence resigned the nomination to join the national ticket with Donald Trump. The Indiana Realtors revealed a Public Opinion Strategies Poll that had Holcomb’s approval at 61%, with 20% disapproving. The Indiana right/wrong track numbers stand at 59/34%.

Hupfer has emphasized data upgrades during his first year. “We started the year with an unprecedented

transition process that included over 60 Hoosier Republicans from diverse backgrounds and geographic locations,” Hupfer said. “They met over the course of over two months to analyze and assess party functions and make recommendations that were used in a comprehensive strategic plan. Among the top priorities of the transition team was upgrading our IT infrastructure and data capabilities, which we have done. In addition, we have received an historic investment of resources and personnel from the RNC that put field staff on the ground in Hoosier communities over a year out from the election. Finally, the transition team and the state party rules committee completed a comprehensive overhaul of the Indiana Republican Party rules that resulted in a much more uniform and understandable set of guidelines for our party members.”

In 2018, the party will host its second convention outside of Indianapolis, in Evansville next June. At its Congress of Counties in January, the party will host all five U.S. Senate candidates and conduct a straw poll.

Here is the HPI Interview conducted with Hupfer on Tuesday at party headquarters, with Communications Director Pete Seat sitting in:

HPI: You have a coordinated campaign with the governor ...

Hupfer: Yes, it’s been really well-received. It’s obviously the first time it’s been done in Indiana. We’ve not really seen it from other states, though we’ve had some

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other states inquire about it. It sends a great message that the governor cares about Republican success up and down the ticket; it shows strength not just for the campaign, but for the party. It's allowing us to spend more time talking to constituents and supporters. It's showing up in the fundraising success as well, clearly first-year records for the governor and lieutenant governor for cash on hand for the end of the year, and the party is as strong as it's ever been for a year immediately after an election in more than a decade.

HPI: How do you see 2018 shaping up? Karl Berron shared with me some Public Opinion Strategies numbers that show the General Assembly generic ballot cost, 40% Republican to 37% Democrat. I understand those are normal and not so much a precursor to a Democratic wave.

Hupfer: Those are pretty consistent. Hoosiers realize that Indiana is doing things differently as a Republican Party. The governor has a different approach than others have had. The state party is following suit, whether it's unique state dinners where we invite veterans as our guests and celebrate the military together as we did with our first Team Holcomb Dinner, whether it's the way the governor approaches his day-to-day time spent, talking with Hoosiers across the state to make sure they feel connected to their state government, it's showing up in the fundraising and the polling. For him to be 61/20% approval after only a 106-day campaign, and we're still not at one year in office, is quite impressive. When you see our right/wrong track in Indiana and compare that to the national, that's reflected in the polling.

HPI: If there's an anti-Trump wave in 2018, maybe two or three congressional districts come in play, the 2nd, 8th and 9th perhaps. How do you see things playing out at that level a year out?

Hupfer: I think all of our incumbents are in a strong position. I would be really surprised if any came into play. Obviously we're not taking anything for granted. They are all campaigning hard, raising money and spending time with their constituents. I think their numbers are strong. What's going to help is this race at the top of the ticket (for the Senate seat) is going to bring in a lot of money. There are more folks on the ground now than at any time in history, both our own and the RNC as well. When you see what I perceive, not just in polling we've done, the incumbent U.S. senator, Democrat Joe Donnelly, is not well-positioned for reelection. We had him dead

even against a generic candidate at 40-40%, well below 50%.

HPI: When was that poll taken?

Hupfer: Three months ago. Donnelly is not in strong position. The work we've done over the past year about what he says in Indiana and what he does in Washington is talking hold. It's a message that's getting burned in. We're going to have a real strong candidate in that race, whoever comes out in the primary. He'll be able to pull out Trump supporters because Joe Donnelly has voted against tax reform. That's not going to play real well here in Indiana. He's not helped in any way to repeal and replace Obamacare, which continues to be very unpopular

here in Indiana. We're going to be well-positioned in the Senate race. Then you get to our three state-wides, and I'm not sure they're even going to have any opposition. We're getting pretty late in the process here. I assume they're going to have a secretary of state candidate because they need to get to 3% for ballot so they can stay a major party. At this point they're going to have to draft someone or just put a name out there. We're spending a lot of time with those folks. Our statewides are as coordinated as they've ever been. We're going to hire a statewide coordinator in our office.

HPI: Has the intensity of the Rokita/Messer race posed problems for you? Would you rather they follow President Reagan's 11th Commandment more?

Hupfer: I haven't been too worried about it. I don't think you can have any conversation at this point and not include Mike Braun. He's a real player now with the self-funding and TV ads. I think they will differentiate themselves. I hope they spend the vast majority of their time contrasting themselves to the Democrat in the race and how they'll approach key policy issues confronting the country. In all honesty, I think that vetting is good. There is going to be no secrets by the time we get to November 2018. There is going to be so much outside money pouring into this. As party chair and my focus being that we win in November, what we don't want is an October surprise. I would prefer these candidates do their work and vetting, and those issues will come out in the primary if there are any. Little things that they're differentiating themselves by, which I think are pretty innocuous, are going to be talked about during the general election and so we ought to talk about them now.

HPI: I've covered seven governors on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis, and Gov. Holcomb is off to one of the strongest starts I've seen. Go beyond what you just



said. He sought state highway funding that infrastructure plan that included a tax increase.

Hupfer: He clearly is going to make in every instance the best decision for Indiana. Obviously a tax increase is something you don't take lightly, but Hoosiers believe it's prudent and the right thing to do. They are seeing it is the conservative approach to road funding. The alternatives were taking on tremendous amounts of debt that would have been a burden on future generations. Instead we're paying as we go. We are the crossroads of America and infrastructure is very important to us. He's proving that if you go out and sell an idea – and it's not just the governor, it's Republican leadership in the House and Senate who worked on this for years; they went to Hoosiers, they told them the story, why it was needed and everyone agreed – you're looking at an infrastructure plan that is unique across the country and fully funded for the next two decades. We're looking at things like double tracking in Northern Indiana and a new port in Southern Indiana. These are things no other state can even contemplate because of their financial position. Some of the unique polling is the low level of disapproval and you're seeing this from people who self identify as Democrats. He's showing a unique touch with that caucus. There have been public comments from people like Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson about his visionary leadership. He's willing to go anywhere and everywhere. He took the Democratic leaders of the legislature to Paris on a trade mission. That's paid dividends.

HPI: Gov. Mitch Daniels spent a lot of time in the Region and was not very popular there. I've never seen the type of support this governor has in that part of the state, perhaps due to his East Chicago reaction which changed the perception. Do you agree with that?

Hupfer: I think so. It's also reflective of his willingness to bring leadership in Washington to the table to solve big problems. He's been a staunch supporter of the double tracking that has been supported up there as well. This past week, he was with Mayor Freeman-Wilson and told them how well their proposal for the Amazon bid was done. That's a document and a regional approach that as he travels the world he can sell. When you look at the stability and our tax climate in Indiana, businesses want to come here. That along with his Next Level jobs program is going to be a pillar going forward. We're going to have companies from around the world want to locate here.

HPI: Are we in the game for the Amazon HQ2?

Hupfer: You know as much as I do. I don't think anybody really knows.

HPI: I thought the most intriguing comments came from Purdue President Daniels, who believes Indiana is well positioned for HQ2. He's had contact with Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos recently with the Kaplan/Purdue project, so I found that interesting. Anecdotally, what have you seen

or heard from Gov. Holcomb that jumps out?

Hupfer: He has clearly engaged the opposition to bring their ideas forward, whether it's taking Democrat leadership to Paris or inviting Democrat legislators to travel with him to the Region. I think he is inviting them to meet with him in his office. He's had a different approach; what is unique is his contact with average Hoosiers. When we're on the road, at McDonald's in Seymour or a Cone Palace in Kokomo, a line forms of people wanting to tell him their story. He has an eagerness to spend time with people who cross his path, maybe somebody's only chance to talk to a governor of Indiana. He thinks it's important and that is



reflected in policy, especially around opioids.

HPI: The Obamacare numbers nationally have been up. Do you have the Indiana numbers?

Pete Seat: It's 60% opposed.

HPI: President Trump's approval numbers are down in just about every poll I've seen, from the House Republicans, to Ball State and now the Realtors/POS. That's not surprising given a mid-term election. With the governor's approval in the 60th percentile, are we going to see him on the campaign trail in 2018?

Hupfer: He already is. I expect you'll see the president and vice president here as well. That 19% election victory was in contrast to an opposing candidate. I'm convinced that election victory would not be much different if we reran that race today. If you put another Democrat candidate in there, Elizabeth Warren or Bernie Sanders, the same would be true. There is a similar disparity in polling if you put President Trump up against somebody. Any polling on Trump is light because they have not been traditional voters. They are a unique subset of people and I just don't think they get polled accurately. The president has made a promise that if Sen. Donnelly voted against the tax bill, you would see him here. I fully expect him to live up to his word.

HPI: The Roy Moore situation in Alabama, does that bother you? Does that give you indigestion at all?



Chairman Hupfer with Vice President Pence and announcing Gov. Holcomb and Lt. Gov. Crouch's transition team.

Hupfer: We'll let Alabama figure that one out. We'll let Alabama voters figure that one out.

HPI: The RNC is backing Moore again. Does that cause you concern?

Hupfer: Again, the RNC and Alabama are going to do what they are going to do. We're focused on the Indiana party.

HPI: We're seeing EMILY's List saying they've been approached by a thousand potential female candidates. We watched the tide take over the House of Delegates in Virginia. We're watching the Roy Moore campaign and what I call the "pervnado" sweep the nation culturally. You've got a ticket with three females, you have Lt. Gov. Crouch, Supt. McCormick. Talk to Hoosier women about everything that's coming out. What do you want to say?

Hupfer: I think it started way before Alabama. It started with Harvey Weinstein and maybe all the way back to Bill Cosby. Hopefully we're immune from it here in Indiana. We haven't seen much. The Democratic Party in Indiana has tried to create this false narrative of which party is the party of women. We support them. Indiana has long led in supporting women. The Lugar Series is one of the longest-dated female leadership programs in the country. The RNC was looking at it as a model recently to replicate. Our women in Indiana lead in the Republican Party and I expect them to continue. Two great ones who help me are Holli Sullivan and Leah McGrath. I think you'll continue to see that here in Indiana, in the legislature and the recruitment of female candidates. You'll see much more of that than our counterparts as far as leadership.

HPI: What does Vice President Pence mean to the Indiana Republican Party now?

Hupfer: For Hoosiers a lot of it is unseen, but it is a tremendous impact having the vice president from your

state, the ability that gives the governor and others to have more direct contact. It might not be a lot, but the relationship described as unique between the vice president and our governor is very close. Especially when it comes to things like East Chicago, where the EPA is involved, or double tracking where the Department of Transportation will be involved. The cabinet agency heads are here, engaged and involved. That has not always been the case. I'm not sure how many cabinet or agency heads have been here as we had the prior eight years, but you could probably count them on one hand. For the party, obviously he and the president are head of the Republican Party. The vice president cares immensely about the success of this party and the state. He's been back a lot.

HPI: And then there's the cabinet and under-secretary posts with Jerome Adams, Dan Coats, Seema Verma, Ted McKinney.

Hupfer: It's chock full of Hoosiers out there.

HPI: Do you enjoy being chairman?

Hupfer: I do. I've enjoyed the time with the governor.

HPI: How long do you see yourself doing this?

Hupfer: I don't know. I haven't really thought about it. But it's fun. We've got a great staff. I've been on the state committee for a long time but the party from top to bottom is as aligned as I've ever seen it. That's relationship driven. The governor, Speaker Bosma and President Long are very close. There is no daylight between them. They don't always agree with every detail on an initiative, but there are no surprises, there's great transparency and those groups have been critical partners for me. So is the congressional wing. They are all pulling in the same direction. ❖

Donnelly vote v. tax reform sets an issue

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Sen. Joe Donnelly took flight with President Trump on Air Force One, attended a presidential tax reform rally, insisted he had an open mind, and then last Friday voted against the Senate plan.

"From the beginning I've been willing to partner with Republicans, with Democrats, with the president, with this administration," Donnelly said in a video. "I agreed with President Trump's stated goals of supporting the middle class and keeping jobs here in America. I strongly believe tax reform can be done in a way that's good for



working Hoosier families. Unfortunately, this tax hike bill from Sen. McConnell does not reflect the priorities the president and I discussed on numerous occasions, including when I traveled with him on Air Force One to Indiana

recently – and that is why I couldn't support this bill. It results in a tax hike for nearly a million middle class Hoosier families in the coming years and it fails to address the outsourcing of jobs to foreign countries."

Donnelly added, "In addition, this bill takes away health care and raises costs for millions of families. Here's the bottom line: I opposed Mitch McConnell's bill because it is not tax reform, it's a partisan tax hike on Indiana's middle class, it does nothing to prevent outsourcing of U.S. jobs to foreign countries, and it's a giveaway to Wall Street and other big money interests."

After that Air Force One flight, President Trump vowed to punish Donnelly if he voted against the bill. "We will come here, we will campaign against him like you wouldn't believe," Trump said in Indianapolis.

In a national context, Donnelly may have made the right political call, as a Quinnipiac Poll showed support for the plan was at an anemic 29%, while 64% said the legislation would mostly benefit the wealthy. The question hasn't been polled in Indiana. A Public Opinion Strategies Poll for Indiana Realtors showed Trump's approval/disapproval stood at 47/51%, consistent with other recent polling in the state, so there is statistical evidence that Trump is in decline in the state. But Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer believes that if the presidential race were rerun today, Trump would still have about a 20% plurality.

Donnelly's vote drew the predictable ire of his three main Republican opponents. "Joe Donnelly failed Hoosiers today by voting against tax cuts," said U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita. "Donnelly chose to side with the liberal elites in D.C. when it mattered most and rejected a tax reform plan that would put more money in the pockets of Hoosiers. Despite Donnelly's 'no' vote, we are now one step closer to delivering on President Donald Trump's promise of tax cuts for Hoosiers."

U.S. Rep. Luke Messer added, "Typical Joe Donnelly... he says he is bipartisan but votes with his party's liberal leadership to block the president's agenda. Hoosiers know that actions matter more than words. Once again, Sen. Donnelly has made his choice, siding with Chuck Schumer over Hoosiers." And Republican Mark Hurt added, "Hoosiers were hoodwinked once again by the affable Sen. Joe Donnelly. The DNC ran ads this fall saying he went to Washington to work for you. It's disingenuous at best."

Mike Braun offered a more nuanced review, questioning at a Madison County Tea Party meeting, the reduction of the corporate tax rate from 35 to 20%. "Small businesses are concerned about the pass-through rates," Braun said. "It's the small businesses that create job growth."

But the tax reform saga is not only unpopular, it's not yet a done deal and it will play out vividly over the next two election cycles. The most immediate impact is that Rokita and Messer will no longer be able to lecture about deficits as the Senate plan is forecast to add anywhere from \$1 trillion to \$1.4 trillion to federal deficits. If one of them wins the nomination, Donnelly will hit hard there.

On Sunday, U.S. Sen. Angus King, an independent who caucuses with Democrats, predicted the emergence of "stinky things" in the legislation. Politico reported on Wednesday that the tax legislation is "riddled with bugs, loopholes and other potential problems that could plague lawmakers long after their legislation is signed into law."

"The more you read, the more you go, 'Holy crap, what's this?'" Greg Jenner, a former top tax official in

George W. Bush's Treasury Department, told Politico. "We will be dealing with unintended consequences for months to come because the bill is moving too fast."

The legislation is supposed to take effect on Jan. 1, meaning that on April 15, Hoosiers will get their first real concrete evidence on what the bill does or doesn't do. If it's an emerging fiasco, that gives Braun about three weeks to paste Messer and Rokita for backing Son of Voodoo Economics before the primary. It's unclear how Hoosier voters will react to the loss of tax write-offs on medi-



cal expenses, student loans, mortgage deductions and other closed loopholes. Rokita and Messer can probably count on the support of top 5% earners who are expected to receive about 50% of the tax reductions. But there are only a handful of Jim Irsays and Carl Cooks in the state.

Democrat spokesman Will Baskin-Gerwitz said of Messer, "If Congressman Messer wants to add trillions of dollars to the debt and raise taxes on middle class Americans by supporting this tax bill, he should make sure the benefits go to the people he represents, not the people he sees every day. This tax plan won't put more money in the pockets of middle class Hoosiers, but it's a great way to drive up housing prices in Congressman Messer's [Virginia] neighborhood."

The Democrats referred to "non-partisan" analysis with Baskin-Gerwitz, noting that by 2027, individuals earning between \$40,000 and \$50,000 would pay a combined \$5.3 billion more every year, while Americans who make more than \$1 million annually would receive \$5.8 billion in tax cuts. "Congressman Rokita likes to pretend he's fighting off swamp creatures, but when he votes for rigged policies like the McConnell tax plan, he's simply feeding them," the Democrat said.

On paper, tax cuts appear to be positive for those who pass them. But Gov. Mike Pence's income tax cut in 2013 while heralded as a "record," gave most Hoosiers less than \$100 in savings, and turned into a real nothingburger.

It did almost nothing to enhance Pence's reelection prospects in 2016.

Braun is up with his second TV ad and appears willing to spend millions of his estimated \$60 million in wealth on this race. Chairman Hupfer told HPI of the GOP Senate race, "I don't think you can have any conversation at this point and not include Mike Braun in it. He's a real player now with the self-funding and TV ads."

And Braun is beginning to draw the attention of his primary rivals. Rokita began referring to Braun as "Tax Hike Mike" for his Indiana House vote on Gov. Eric Holcomb's highway and infrastructure funding plan. The POS/Realtors Poll puts support for that law at 67% support and 30% opposing. Those are a lot better numbers than for the congressional GOP tax reforms. And the Associated Press reported: "There's just one problem: It wasn't long ago that Rokita called for the same kind of tax increase. That opens Rokita up to charges of hypocrisy as he campaigns against Braun, fellow Republican Rep. Luke Messer and several others. Already he's been accused of a willingness to do – or say – anything to win the race that will decide who faces Democratic Sen. Joe Donnelly next year."

"Todd Rokita attacked Mike Braun for supporting a permanent solution to fix Indiana's roads and bridges," said Braun spokesman Josh Kelley. "It is typical of career politicians like Todd Rokita to say one thing and do another."

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Two Senate forums, straw poll set

Chairman Hupfer told Howey Politics Indiana that the party will conduct a U.S. Senate race straw poll during its annual Congress of Counties event on Jan. 13 at the Crown Plaza in Indianapolis. The party also invited the candidates that include U.S. Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita, along with Mike Braun, Andrew Takami and Mark Hurt, to take part in a joint appearance. A debate will take place in Fort Wayne on April 23 at the annual Allen County Lincoln Dinner at the Ramada Plaza Hotel. "The excitement and energy level of the electorate will be at a pinnacle when the Lincoln Day Dinner is scheduled to occur," Allen County Republican Party Chairman Steve Shine said in a telephone interview.

Messer endorsed by 30 in Hamilton County

Messer's campaign announced the support of 30 elected officials from Hamilton County - the highest plurality Republican-voting county in the state. Messer's endorsements include U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks, State Rep. Todd Huston, all three County Commissioners, the mayors of Carmel, Fishers, Noblesville and Westfield, as well as 21 other county, city and township elected officials. "I'm honored to receive support from so many outstanding leaders in Hamilton County who are working hard every day to improve our communities and deliver positive results for Hoosiers," Messer said.

Braun tended to vote Democratic

Records from the Dubois County Clerk's office, where Republican U.S. Senate candidate Mike Braun is registered to vote, show the 63-year-old consistently cast Democratic ballots in partisan primary elections until 2012, according to the Associated Press. He began voting in Democratic primaries in at least 1996, according to county records that date back only 25 years. That includes the 2008 primary when Hillary Clinton narrowly defeated Barack Obama following a heated campaign. Braun, who served nearly three years in the Legislature, was able to qualify for the ballot in 2014 without special permission because he had pulled a Republican ballot during the 2012 primary. "As is often the case in solidly blue counties, like DuBois was at the time, Mike cast his vote in competitive local primaries where it would have the greatest impact, while voting solidly Republican in general elections," Josh Kelley of the Braun campaign said.

Braun up with second ad

Braun released his second television and radio advertising flight of the campaign, titled "Outsider." The ads will run statewide on broadcast television and radio. "Outsider" focuses on Braun's accomplishment as a businessman, in contrast to the career politicians in Washington who spend all their time talking, rather than doing. Braun emphasizes that unlike career politicians, he won't be beholden to special interests and will put Hoosiers first.

"President Trump was right, for too long career politicians who are beholden to special interests have run our country into the ground. It's time for a change," said Braun. "I'll fight for the conservative Hoosier values we share, and I'll take my experience gained from building a successful company to help rebuild our country."

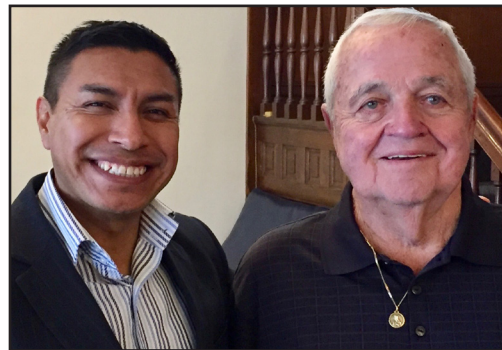
Donnelly described as 'loneliest Democrat'

An incumbent Democrat in a state Donald Trump won by 19 points, U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly is constantly dogged by Republicans aiming to unseat him when he runs for reelection next November, including House Republicans Todd Rokita and Luke Messer (Wren, Politico). On the other side, Donnelly faces disgruntled Democrats who think he's far too conservative. A fiscal and military hawk who shares the president's views on trade, Donnelly is the nation's second most moderate senator, according to an April study released by the Lugar Center and the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University. That means he's a more finely tuned weathervane than any poll or political pundit, a one-man focus group. So if you want to know which way the political winds are blowing - who's going to triumph in the upcoming midterms, and perhaps beyond - you need to watch Joe Donnelly.

Congress

4th CD: Early endorses Morales

Former Indiana Republican Chairman Rex Early has formally endorsed Diego Morales for Congress. Early, a long-time Republican Party leader, was President Trump's campaign chairman in Indiana in 2016. According to Early, Morales is a patriotic military veteran and a businessman. He was also one of Vice President Mike Pence's senior advisors when Pence was governor. "Diego is my kind of conservative," Early said. The former Senate majority campaign committee statewide field director, Michael Sorenson, has joined Morales as campaign manager.



6th CD

MacKenzie cites Pence interference

A sense of loyalty to Vice President Mike Pence among establishment Republicans is proving a difficult obstacle for one challenger to his brother Greg Pence in the upcoming Republican primary for Indiana's 6th CD

(Daily Caller). Conservative grassroots candidate Stephen MacKenzie discovered the influence wielded by the Pence family after losing the support of a prominent Indiana businessman and a former conservative Indiana Congressman, both of whom promised to back his campaign, until the "powers that be" warned them against aiding one of Pence's challengers.

General Assembly

Legislative exodus taking shape

A retirement exodus is taking shape at the Indiana General Assembly. On Wednesday, it was Rep. Kathy Kregage Richardson. Last week, it was Rep. Greg Beumer who announced he's not running in 2018. On Tuesday, State Reps. Charlie Brown and Wes Culver joined State Reps. Scott Pelath, Steve Stemler, Thomas Washburne and State Reps. Doug Eckerty and Jim Smith announcing they won't seek reelection in 2018, all for personal and professional reasons. They join former Reps. Mike Braun and Lloyd Arnold, who quit to run for the U.S. Senate and take a job at DNR, and Sen. Luke Kenley, who retired in September. Our sources say that State Rep. Linda Lawson is likely to join Club Retirement while Rep. Jim Baird is seeking the 4th CD nomination and State Sen. Mike Crider is seeking the 6th CD, but is not up for reelection. Baird has time to file for reelection if his campaign doesn't have traction come mid-February. On the watch list are State Sens. Joe Zakas and Mike Delph, though majority caucus sources say both are preparing reelection bids. The Senate Majority Caucus polled Delph's race against GOP primary foe Corrie Meyer, who has 9% name ID; Delph had a 56-9% lead in the district and 56-13% in Hamilton County. Delph's job approval stood at 61%.

HD29: Richardson won't seek reelection

State Rep. Kathy Richardson, R-Noblesville, will not seek re-election to the Indiana General Assembly (The

Times). She instead plans to run for Hamilton County Clerk in 2018. Richardson is first woman to serve in an elected Caucus Leadership role in Indiana history.

HD49: Christy Stutzman eyes run

Christy Stutzman, wife of former U.S. Rep. Marlin Stutzman, is exploring a run for the House. She posted on Facebook Wednesday, "Sometime life surprises you and opportunities come that you don't seek or expect. I would like to ask for your prayers and support as I consider running for District 49. Marlin and I are making it a matter of prayer and would appreciate your thoughts as we prepare for the road ahead."

HD33: Rep. Beumer to retire

State Rep. Greg Beumer (R-Modoc) said Monday he will not seek reelection to the House of Representatives after his term expires next year (Radford, Winchester News-Gazette). Beumer said his decision was based on "nothing specific." "Once you serve, you know when it's your time to move on," Beumer said. "It just feels right to me to allow someone else to serve."

HD3: Rep. Brown endorses Hatcher

Gary Councilwoman Ragen Hatcher, 39, announced last week she is preparing her campaign for HD3 after State Rep. Charlie Brown announced he was retiring. Jessica Renslow announced a month ago. "I have actively fought for the citizens of Gary for the last 10 years and look forward to serving District 3 ... with the same passion and commitment," Hatcher said. Hatcher has the support of Brown. "I will be supporting Ragen Hatcher because of my love and devotion to the Hatcher family, because there are only a limited number of females in the Democratic caucus and there aren't that many attorneys either," Brown said. Sunday. Renslow is involved in the Neighborhood Spotlight Program. ❖



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Playing as a team is a loser for GOP on taxes

By **MARK SCHOEFF JR.**

WASHINGTON – Congressional Republicans are on the verge of securing a sweeping tax-cut package, their signature political win of the first year of the Trump administration. In the process, governance in Washington has sunk to new depths.



The GOP achieved victory by doing to Democrats exactly what Republicans accused Democrats of doing to them on health-care reform. They're ramming through massive legislation with no substantive input from the other side.

The House and Senate bills were introduced, voted on in their respective committees and on the floors of each chamber over the course of about a

month.

Republicans lamented what they called a legislative process in health-care reform that ignored regular order. But the GOP's committee markups of tax reform were just as devoid of any real legislating as the Democrats' mark ups of the health care bill.

In each case, the opposition could raise objections, but there was no way the majority was going to allow them to make meaningful changes to the bills. In addition, Democrats will not be able to apply the leverage of a filibuster in the Senate because the tax bill in that chamber will be advanced under special rules requiring only a majority vote.

Republicans are putting the best face on it.

Molly Gillaspie, spokeswoman for Senate primary candidate Rep. Luke Messer, R-6th CD, wrote in an email that the House, Senate and President Donald J. Trump "have been working on this tax cut plan for months. The legislation went through regular order, exactly as it's supposed to."

House and Senate Republicans and Trump worked with each other, not Democrats. It was the letter but not the spirit of regular order, where there's at least a chance that both parties can contribute to the outcome.

This kind of one-sided legislating will ensure that the GOP team gets what it thinks is a crucial win in advance of next year's mid-term elections. In sports, making sacrifices for the team is a necessity. In politics, it can be disastrous.

One of the sacrifices that GOP has made is abandoning the high ground on deficit reduction. The non-partisan Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that the Senate tax bill will increase the deficit by \$1 trillion over

10 years – and that takes into account so-called dynamic scoring that assumes the tax cuts will generate economic growth.

When the GOP huffs and puffs in the future about the deficit spiraling out of control, Democrats will remind Republicans that they championed a tax plan that blew the deficit house down.

Republicans have convinced themselves that tax cuts will pay for themselves, a daring political gamble.

Amy Graham, a spokeswoman for Republican Sen. Todd Young, wrote in an email that her boss "consulted with eminent economists" before deciding to back the Senate tax bill.

"In the end, he determined that the economic activity that will be spurred by tax reform, regulatory reform and other job-boosting policies will lead to greater economic growth, more jobs and higher wages for the next 10 years and beyond," Graham said.

Republicans better hope that that's the formula. History suggests that it's not.

U.S. companies already are sitting on piles of cash generated by quarter after quarter of strong profits. They haven't plowed that money into significantly higher wages, and that's what's given the topic such political momentum. What is going to make companies put the extra cash they have in their pocket from tax reform toward wage growth?

The other risk that Republicans are taking is that the benefits of tax cuts won't be obvious to the Americans who receive them.

Even if you take GOP rhetoric at face value and assume that a family of four with income of about \$73,000 will receive a tax cut of \$2,200, that doesn't mean that they'll perceive that \$2,200 magically appears in their pockets. They're not necessarily receiving a \$2,200 return. They're paying \$2,200 less in taxes – but are still paying taxes.

Even though the Affordable Care Act caused many on the right to go into political convulsions, it did produce something tangible for its recipients: health care coverage that they didn't have before. They're getting used to it, and Obamacare is becoming more popular.

With so much of the benefits of tax cuts going to corporations, it's not clear that they will provide a big political boost for the GOP. Taxes are complicated and will remain so after the tax bill becomes law, making it easy for Democratic Sen. Joe Donnelly to vote against the measure.

"It's not tax reform," he said in a recent video. "It's a partisan tax-hike on Indiana's middle class."

Whether it's a tax cut or a tax increase can be debated. The fact that it's partisan is clear. ❖

Schoeff is HPI's Washington correspondent

The Colwell quiz

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – With the fall semester ending, it's time for a quiz. It'll test your knowledge and sense of humor.

1. Mark Zuckerberg came to South Bend to see:



- a. A Notre Dame football game.
- b. The city's nationally noted progress.
- c. Homeless under a viaduct.
- d. How Mayor Buttigieg's name is pronounced.

2. "I always asked their mother's permission." This was claimed by:

- a. Harvey Weinstein.
- b. Charlie Rose.
- c. Donald Trump.
- d. Roy Moore.

3. What's the name of the Grinch's dog?

- a. Fido.
- b. Who.
- c. Max.

4. In a video that went viral, WNDU's Joshua Short reported that shoppers lined up for Black Friday opening at the mall were:

- a. Nonexistent in the cold.
- b. impatient and angry at the wait.
- c. Euphoric over expected bargains.



5. UCLA basketball players were arrested in China for:

- a. Refusing to use chopsticks.
- b. Shoplifting.
- c. Sitting during China's national anthem.

6. The 25th Amendment is now in the news because it provides a way to:

- a. Replace a Supreme Court justice who is "unable to deliberate on matters before the court."
- b. Replace a president who is "unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office."
- c. Replace a senator who is "unable to keep his hands to himself."

7. In the preseason AP and Coaches football polls, expectations for Notre Dame were shown in:

- a. No. 3 ranking in one, No. 5 in the other.
- b. Top 10 rankings in both polls.
- c. Not being ranked in the top 25 in either.

8. Mayor Pete Buttigieg became a more prominent national figure after he ran for Democratic national chairman and:

- a. Came in a close second.
- b. Withdrew before the vote.
- c. Stayed a contender through three ballots.

9. In his Notre Dame commencement speech, Vice President Pence called for:

- a. Freedom of speech.
- b. Freedom of students to throw marshmallows.
- c. Freedom to discriminate if following religious views.

10. Which late-night host moved way into the lead in the TV ratings:

- a. Jimmy Fallon.
- b. Stephen Colbert.
- c. Jimmy Kimmel.

11. In a poll in the 50 states, which governor had the lowest approval of all?

- a. Eric Holcomb of Indiana.
- b. Rick Snyder of Michigan.
- c. Chris Christie of New Jersey.

12. Of the top 10 governors in approval, how many are Republicans?

- a. All.
- b. None.
- c. Five.

13. Who provided a self-description of being "mildly nauseous" with the thought of James Comey having influenced the presidential election?

- a. Anthony Weiner.
- b. Hillary Clinton.
- c. James Comey.
- d. Huma Abedin.

14. Who never has been Indiana secretary of state?

- a. Connie Lawson.
- b. Evan Bayh.
- c. Todd Rokita.
- d. Todd Young.

15. What's the Economist poll job approval percentage for Congress?

- a. 68.

- b. 50.
- c. 32.
- d. 10.

16. Republican ads attack Sen. Joe Donnelly as "Mexico Joe" because:

- a. He sings "Feliz Navidad" to sway Latino voters at holiday events.
- b. He won't vote to fund the wall.
- c. A family firm in which he had stock began making

ink pad materials in Mexico.

d. He defended that Hoosier judge of Mexican descent who was denounced by President Trump.

ANSWERS: 1-b; 2-d; 3-c; 4-a; 5-b; 6-b; 7-c; 8-b; 9-a; 10-b; 11-c; 12-a; 13-c; 14-d; 15-d; 16-c. ❖

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

Ragen Hatcher seeks Rep. Brown's HD seat

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE – State Rep. Charlie Brown was one of the early supporters of Richard G. Hatcher's bid for Gary mayor in the 1960s. Hatcher won in 1967 and the two men have remained close over the last 50 years.



Brown announced a couple of weeks ago that he wouldn't seek reelection to the Legislature next year. Brown has represented the 3rd District since 1982. The district's make-up has changed over the years as Gary's population has plummeted from a high of almost 180,000 to less than 80,000 today. The district has changed

to now include parts of Hobart, Lake Station and New Chicago, as well as part of Gary.

The Hatcher-Brown political presence may not be ending. Ragen Hatcher, the mayor's daughter, has said she will run for the seat Brown has held for 35 years. And will Brown be supporting another Hatcher? Brown said, "I will be supporting Ragen Hatcher because of my love and devotion to the Hatcher family, because there are only a limited number of females in the Democratic caucus and there aren't that many attorneys either."

Like her father, Ragen is a lawyer. Ragen will give up her seat on the Gary City Council if she is elected to the House. She served on the city council from 2007 to 2011 when she ran unsuccessfully for mayor, losing to Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson, who seems poised to be mayor for life if she so chooses. Hatcher was reelected to the city council in 2015.



While Brown's endorsement is meaningful, it doesn't guarantee election. That likely is the thinking of Jessica Renslow, who announced her candidacy for Brown's seat before he said he wouldn't seek reelection.

Renslow has roots in the city, in that she is involved in the Neighborhood Spotlight Program, which is a community develop-

ment project. ❖

Rich James has been writing about state and local government and politics for more than 30 years. He is retired from the Post-Tribune.

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

Poverty and affluence

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – “Tis the season to be jolly!” Sol Sunshine tells me. “Too often your weekly homily paints a dark picture of Indiana. Lighten up. Tell us the truth, but spin it on the positive side.”



“OK,” I say. “I’ll do it, but I have to trust you to see the grim shadows that are an important part of the truth.”

Thus, this column is for Sol and all the readers who share his particular Seasonal Affective Disorder. To simplify matters, think of society divided into two groups, those in poverty and those not in poverty, whom we shall call affluent.

Indiana is right at the national average with 86% of all persons not living in poverty. Roughly, that’s 5.5 million affluent Hoosiers frolicking through IKEA and Costco, attending Pacer and Colts games, living what we once called the Life of Riley. We’re in 29th place among the 50 states for the highest percent of the affluent, just above Missouri and just below Idaho.

As for the children, those under age 18, 81% live in affluence; that’s four out of five Hoosier youngsters taking trips to Disneyworld, scuba diving in the Caribbean, and enjoying their birthrights as Americans.

How good is life for Hoosier children? In eight of our 92 counties, more than 90% of those under 17 years old live affluent lives. Naturally, the best place for a child

in Indiana is Hamilton County where more than 95% of children enjoy the blessed life.

Other high performing Indiana counties are Hendricks, Boone, Dubois, Hancock, Warrick, Johnson and Porter, mainly suburban counties (except Dubois). This leads us to wonder: Should we move families (or at least children) from Grant County, with only 71% of those under 18 counted as affluent, to a wealthier environment such as Marshall County, suburban South Bend-Elkhart-Goshen-Warsaw. Could it be true that simply living in the right place can lift whole families to economic glory?

Of course, socially responsible Hoosiers are focused on the future and the education of youngsters ages 5 to 17. Our schools, public and private, work with 82% affluent children. More than four out of five young Hoosier scholars are not in poverty, a figure slightly better than the national average. This fact may justify lower school spending by the state and quiet the Cassandras whose dire warnings prophesize future labor market failures for Hoosiers.

Finally, these 2016 data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census show that Indiana rests comfortably next to California in terms of very young children. In the Golden State, 79.3% of children under age 5 are not in poverty. In Indiana, we can claim 79% affluent kiddies, compared to 78.7% nationally.

Sol Sunshine is right. Flip the numbers upside down, use positive wording, and, presto, Willie Nelson is singing, “Blue skies smiling at me, nothing but blue skies do I see.” ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist and speaker who may be reached at mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com.

Photography With Punch
Mark Curry On Indiana Politics
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Jones tries to overcome Alabama's inelasticity

By GEOFFREY SKELLEY
Sabato's Crystal Ball

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – This coming Tuesday, Alabamians will go to the polls to decide their next U.S. senator in a rare December special election. While the Yellowhammer State is heavily Republican – President Donald Trump carried it by 28% in 2016 – the Senate contest is a Toss-up. The candidacy of the Republican nominee, former Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore, became toxic in early November following reports that he had previously sexually harassed and romantically pursued underage girls. These credible allegations, supplemented by further evidence this past Monday from a woman who was in a relationship with Moore when she was 17 years old, have given former U.S. Attorney Doug Jones (D) a real chance to win in conservative Alabama.

The polls indicate that Moore holds a slight lead, one within a reasonable survey error range. The RealClearPolitics average finds the Republican ahead by 2.3 points, while an average of the last eight polls (some of which RCP did not include) shows Moore up 2.5. The point is, it seems close. Moreover, pollsters' collective lack of experience in surveying typically-uncompetitive Alabama and the odd timing for the election – just two weeks before Christmas – may be making it quite hard to accurately model the electorate.

As the race enters its final days, there are reasons for optimism on both sides, though because of Alabama's conservatism, we suspect the Moore team may have more reason for it.

For Moore, many institutional elements of the GOP have seemingly fallen back in line with their party's nominee. On Monday, the president endorsed Moore, and news broke shortly thereafter that the Republican National Committee would once again support the GOP nominee, having previously backed away from Moore after the allegation about underage girls came out (though it should be noted that a subsequent report suggested the RNC's renewed support is mostly symbolic).

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R), who had earlier called on Moore to drop out of the race, was asked in a Sunday interview if Moore should be allowed to serve in the Senate – the idea of expelling Moore should he win has been floated – and McConnell replied that he

would "let the people of Alabama make the call" (he later walked back those comments on Tuesday). These developments, most especially the support of the president – who will campaign on Friday in Pensacola, FL, which lies right next to the southeastern corner of Alabama – may help Moore sufficiently bring home wayward parts of the GOP base to win next Tuesday.

Remember, Alabama's electorate is quite "inelastic"; that is, its principal voting blocs are usually solidly in one party's camp or the other. Roughly half of the state's electorate tends to be white evangelical, probably the most Republican demographic group in the country, while around a quarter of the electorate tends to be black, easily the most Democratic-leaning group. Support from the president may help Moore shift the election back toward Alabama's more-typical inelasticity among white Republican-leaning voters. Following the president's endorsement, the super PAC America First Action (a wing of the Trump-backing America First Policies organization) announced that it would spend \$1.1 million on advertising to support Moore. Given Moore's fundraising woes, this late assistance could be enough to get him over the top.

For Jones, he has been able to raise and spend a lot more money than Moore. The most recent campaign finance report for Oct. 1 through Nov. 22 showed the Democrat had outraised the Republican \$10.1 million to \$1.8 million and had outspent him by \$8.4 million to \$1.7



Polling Data						
Poll	Date	Sample	MoE	Moore (R)	Jones (D)	Spread
RCP Average	11/27 - 12/4	--	--	48.0	45.7	Moore +2.3
WBRC-TV/Strategy Research	12/4 - 12/4	3200 LV	2.0	50	43	Moore +7
Gravis	12/1 - 12/3	1276 LV	2.7	44	48	Jones +4
Emerson*	11/30 - 12/2	500 LV	4.3	49	46	Moore +3
CBS News/YouGov	11/28 - 12/1	766 LV	4.8	49	43	Moore +6
Washington Post	11/27 - 11/30	739 LV	4.5	47	50	Jones +3
JMC Analytics	11/27 - 11/28	650 LV	3.8	49	44	Moore +5

All Alabama Senate Special Election - Moore vs. Jones Polling Data

million. According to Advertising Analytics, Jones has a 10-to-one media spending edge over Moore. While money is not a sure-fire way for Jones to overcome Alabama's strong Republican lean, having a large and sustained spending advantage can help a candidate gain a lasting effect from advertising. Additionally, the overall political environment could aid Jones, namely the fact that Democrats appear to be more energized based on this year's special election results for various legislative offices around the country and recent statewide elections in New Jersey and Virginia. In an unusually-timed special election where one side may have an enthusiasm advantage, Jones might be able to win.

Still, this may end up being a result similar to the special election in Georgia's Sixth Congressional District earlier this year, where Democrats got their hopes up for a victory but the Republicans held on for a close win. ❖

Jeff Rea, South Bend Tribune: The Indiana General Assembly reacted to protests from voters over rising property tax bills and in 2008 placed property tax caps into law. The caps limit tax bills to 1 percent of the assessed value of homes, 2 percent for farms and rental properties and 3 percent for businesses. In 2010, voters affirmed that action of the General Assembly by statewide referendum as 72 percent voted in favor of placing the caps into the Indiana Constitution. The predicted result was homeowners, landlords and businesses would save significant money. Several years later, that has held true and Indiana has vaulted to the front of most business rankings, boasting the best business climate in the Midwest and one of the tops in the country. This is in large part because of the “certainty” that exists in the Indiana tax system. At the same time, the action has left many state and local government units scrambling. Initial predictions were that there would be more than \$500 million in annual savings to the taxpayers statewide, meaning fewer dollars available to governments for the delivery of essential services. Many lawmakers felt local governments would consider consolidation options, including reducing the number of school or library districts and consolidating emergency dispatch services.



Across Indiana, communities have been slow to follow that thinking with just few consolidations occurring. In St. Joseph and Lake counties, an additional 10 years were granted for full property tax cap implementation to help the counties better deal with outstanding debt obligations. Still, 2017 estimates by the Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF) had \$78 million in total savings to the taxpayers. The City of South Bend, St. Joseph County, the City of Mishawaka, and the South Bend Community School Corporation were hit hardest. Other school corporations, libraries and public transportation agencies also saw major cuts in revenue. Those units are also bracing for more losses when full implementation comes in 2020. I’m one who has benefited. My property taxes are now lower. But am I better off? The jury is still out on that one.

In St. Joseph County, no consolidations have occurred, and there doesn’t seem to be much appetite for that. Instead the level of services has or will be affected. It seems daily in the news that taxpayers are wondering about police protection, leaf collection, street paving, soon snow plowing, park services, public transportation, 911 services, the number of students in a classroom, the number of schools in a system or school transportation. I could go on. The cap of property taxes has a direct correlation to the delivery of each of those services. The same public, of which an overwhelming majority voted for tax caps, has been slow to embrace changes in service levels. It will only get more difficult in the coming years. While our elected leaders are reducing service levels to meet current budget demands, they must also carefully balance the need to make our communities attractive for new people and busi-

nesses. Something must give. We can’t tax or cut our way to prosperity. We have to find the right balance and must be quicker to embrace change. ❖

Chris Cillizza, CNN: One of the best ways to gauge the relative health of a political party’s brand is to see how willing people are to say they identify with the party. Which is why new Gallup poll numbers on party identification should worry Republicans heading into an election year. Just 37% of people identify as Republicans or leaning toward the Republican Party, compared with 44% who identify as either leaning toward the Democratic Party or as solid Democrats. Another 14% say they are independents and don’t lean to either party. What’s particularly worrisome for Republicans is the trend line on the party ID question since President Donald Trump was elected in November 2016. At that point, 44% called themselves Democrats while 42% said they were Republicans. It’s been all downhill for Republicans since then. How do these numbers compare to the composition of past electorates, according to exit polls? In 2016, Democrats composed 36% of the electorate, as compared to 33% for Republicans and 31% for independents. In 2014, it was 36% Republican, 35% Democratic and 28% independent. The connection is relatively clear. If Republicans are even with, or close to even with, Democrats in terms of party ID, they win elections -- like in 2016, 2014 and 2010. If the Democratic edge is mid-single digits or higher, Republicans usually lose. Which is what makes a 7% Democratic edge concerning for Republicans. ❖

Ross Douthat, New York Times: First, let me vent. The Republican tax reform, now extremely likely to become law pending certain events next week in Alabama, represents a remarkable missed opportunity for a party struggling through an identity crisis and a country reckoning with a social crisis. After watching Trumpian populism overwhelm the dikes of ideology during the last primary campaign, Republican lawmakers could have learned something from the experience, and made the discontented working class voters who put Donald Trump in the White House the major beneficiaries of their tax reform. Instead, with Trump’s enthusiastic blessing, they devised a bill that was more solicitous of their donors than their voters, and that only modestly addressed the central socio-economic challenge of our time — the nexus of wage stagnation, family breakdown and falling birthrates, which will eventually undo conservatism if conservatives cannot take it as seriously as they do the animal spirits of the investor class. What’s particularly frustrating is that it didn’t have to be this way. The bill’s basic architecture is compatible with better policy, and there is no great mystery about how it could have been improved: All it needed was to shrink the business tax cuts somewhat and push the extra money directly into the paychecks of the working class. ❖

Prosecutors warn about marijuana

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council Wednesday delivered a firm warning to state lawmakers about marijuana legalization (Daudelin, WFYI). Leaders of the council say they'll fight any legislation to legalize marijuana in the state, whether it's for recreational or medical use. They levied a slew of arguments against legalization — that it functions as a gateway drug for young people, that it leads to increased traffic fatalities, and that a lack of regulation around the industry has created dangerous, unstable markets in states like Colorado. And Executive Director David Powell says there isn't enough evidence marijuana has a positive impact on any medical needs. "So if there's research out there that says it's OK to smoke pot and it's healthy, and it's good for you, I'd like to see it. That's real research, and not anecdotal, or an opinion, or a survey of marijuana smokers," Powell says. Attorneys were joined at the event by supporters including Mike Ripley of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, Sheriff Mike Nielsen of Boone County and, by video, Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill.



Doriot working on CBD oil bill

INDIANAPOLIS — State Sen. Blake Doriot, R-Syracuse, is approaching the January 2018 legislative session with a plan for initiating industrial hemp production and restructuring laws surrounding cannabis-derived oils (Lesar, Goshen News). In a Tuesday interview with The Goshen News, Doriot said he, state Sen. Jim Tomes (R-Wadesville), Rep. Bill Friend (R-Macy) and others are assembling legislation to address the production, sale and use of cannabidiol (CBD). As state law stands, CBD products

are illegal to possess, make or sell in Indiana. The sole exemption applies to people with epilepsy on a new state registry. "We're going to clear that up and we're going to try to open it up to other neurological disorders — Lou Gehrig's (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or ALS), MS (multiple sclerosis)," Doriot said. The distinction between his plan and the medical marijuana movement was made explicit. "This is no way, shape or form a medical marijuana thing," he asserted.

Donnelly calls on Franken to resign

WASHINGTON — Indiana Sen. Joe Donnelly has joined a growing chorus of Democrats calling on Minnesota Sen. Al Franken to resign (Associated Press). Donnelly said in a statement Wednesday that his fellow Democrat's "conduct and behavior are unacceptable and he should resign."

Haley questions U.S. in Olympics

WASHINGTON — The Opening Ceremonies for the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang are nearing, but at the same time, tensions between the U.S. and North Korea are rising (Washington Post). With the 2018 Games set to be held approximately 50 miles from the demilitarized zone between the two Korean states, U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley said Wednesday that it was an "open question" whether Team USA would participate. Speaking with Fox News's Martha MacCallum, Haley said that the U.S. would take "every precaution" to ensure the safety of its athletes. Asked if she would "feel comfortable" sending a family member who was on Team USA to PyeongChang, Haley replied, "I think it depends on what's going on at the time in the country." "We have to watch this closely, and it's changing by the day," she added.

Young lauds Trump on Yemen crisis

WASHINGTON — President Trump issued a statement today calling on Saudi Arabia to "completely allow food, fuel, water, and medicine to reach the Yemeni people who desperately need it." The President continued, "This must be done for humanitarian reasons immediately." Senator Todd Young (R-Ind.) has led efforts in the Senate to end Saudi Arabia's starvation blockade of Yemen. Saudi Arabia's blockade has helped create the world's largest food insecurity crisis in Yemen and pushed millions to the verge of starvation. "I applaud President Trump for calling on the Saudis to end their starvation blockade of Yemen, and I stand with the President and my bipartisan colleagues in Congress in renewing my demand that the Saudis immediately end all impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Yemen," said Young.

SBOE makes graduation changes

INDIANAPOLIS — The State Board of Education approved a major overhaul of Indiana's high school graduation requirements Wednesday, despite significant concerns from Hoosier educators about how the changes will be implemented (Carden, NWI Times). The new graduation pathways mandates all Indiana high school students, beginning with the 2023 graduating class, explicitly demonstrate both work-ready skills and post-secondary education preparedness — in addition to completing a traditional academic program — to earn their diplomas. The graduation requirements were ordered in April by the Republican-controlled General Assembly, and follow Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb's announced intention to convert Indiana's education system into an employment skills training.