



# The 'pink wave' forms in Indiana



## Female candidates for Congress, General Assembly surpass 2016

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Day by day on the Indiana Elections Division website, you see the names: Tobie Beck, Dee Thornton, Courtney Tritch (pictured above) and Liz Watson at the congressional level, with more on the way. And at the General Assembly level, unknown

names like Amie Neiling, MeChelle Callen, Evelyn Brown, Tonya Pfaff, Penny Githens, Anna Murray, Linda Rogers, Jessica Renslow and Dee Moore are filed. They come from both major political parties, but more from the Democrats. It's being called the "pink wave," a flood of female candidates emboldened by President Trump, who view everything from his infamous "Access Hollywood" tape to the crippling of



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## Democrats' bad weekend

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – Wow! The Senate Democrats really miscalculated their decision to shut down the federal government. It takes quite a bit of incompetence to take a political shellacking when battling an unpopular Congress and a president who confuses his own allies.



They also strain credibility when they try to blame the Republicans and the president for the shutdown. Anybody interested in politics could watch the voting and listen to the endless droning about needing 60 votes in the Senate to move a bill. They know that it is a myth that the Republicans can pass whatever they want.

Senate Minority Leader



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Chuck Schumer compounded his problem and further walked on his own message by repeatedly stating that the Republicans needed Democrat votes to pass the bill. If the Republicans control everything, why are they forced to deal with you? Well, which is it, Chuck?

**After years** of demanding clean CRs, and months of stressing the needs of the CHIP program, Schumer kept threatening to block funding to keep the government open unless something was done to allow minors brought to America illegally to remain here. While most Americans are sympathetic to the plight of the Dreamers, they did not believe that a solution should come at the direct cost to vulnerable children and those helping defend America. No wonder panic set in. Democrats' pre-election dominance margin was cratering.

When Vice President Pence got onto that airplane heading to the Middle East, Sen. Schumer was obviously aware that the Republicans were done negotiating. The Republicans believed they had the upper hand with the general public. President Trump's silence over the weekend was another clue; no bluster, he had made his points, and his side had the public edge. It bought only three weeks, but in politics under this president three weeks needs to be calculated more like dog years.

**Sen. Joe Donnelly** understands what Sen. Schumer did not. Republicans alone cannot keep the government open. However, Republicans alone can determine whether the protection for the Dreamers remains in place. It is one thing for the minority to block something, but a minority cannot pass something.

The Republican congressional majority cannot pass a long-term

budget without getting some order in the House, plus either getting 60 votes or switching to straight majority rule in the Senate. While they have become excellent "can-kickers," battling over a new CR every few weeks is also taking a significant toll on what was already dwindling respect for the institution of Congress. While, in fact, it is the voters who resist compromise, the appearance nonetheless is that the institution is governed by spoiled children. Sometimes one must lead. The Founders created a democratic republic, not a pure democracy, for logical reasons.

**Thus, one would** think, a compromise is possible. But the balance of power lies clearly with the



Republicans. Like it or not, the American people put the Republicans in charge of the House and the Senate, and elected a Republican president. They deliberately rejected leadership by Nancy Pelosi, Schumer and Hillary Clinton. The law protecting the illegal immigrants brought here as children is expiring. To protect them, Congress must pass a law.

Americans are open to a new law, but not without much greater border security. Multiple times now America has generously granted people who entered illegally a path to citizenship. Every time it encouraged more to come illegally. Some sort of a wall, plus more border patrol and ICE agents and enforcement support systems – as President Trump has stated from the beginning – will be a fundamental part of any agreement. That is a given, known to both sides

(though what type of wall and how many agents is up for negotiation).

Chain migration also needs to be linked to the Dreamers. While the media keeps quoting polls that favor resolving the Dreamer issue, I am 100% certain that the majority does not favor granting legal mercy to the children brought here illegally in the past, only to be stunned when they learn that this version also allowed them to bring in potentially millions of others who previously did not have the right to enter the U.S. In other words, the Republicans need to focus on this now or recognize that this issue may be completely lost.

**During these few weeks**, all the major Indiana Senate candidates had some successes. Sen. Donnelly solidified his image as someone open to compromise. It is not just an image. Compared to most in Washington, it also happens to be true.

Congressman Messer scored some points among Republicans by publicly supporting the "nuclear" option on budgets that need to be passed. His floor speech was almost fiery. His office supplied the floor footage to local television, plus some explanatory information generated in the House television studio. It was a well-timed and targeted hit on a hot button issue. Coming off a solid if unspectacular win in the straw vote beauty contest, it was a good stretch for Messer.

The straw vote also clarified that it is Messer ver-

sus the field, who divide the anti-establishment vote. All the winner needs is a plurality, not a majority. Congressman Rokita has to overcome a Braun drain.

**Rokita scored some** valuable points as well. His straw vote win in Harrison County was interesting, especially given that it is at the geographical opposite corner from his base. It shows that his statewide victories as secretary of state may matter. Rokita's video ad coordinated with the most important pro-life week of this cycle, plus gave very personal reasons for his position. It played beneath the radar of the larger public, but to a key core of Republican voters.

And even Mike Braun, in spite of appearing more as an also-ran in the straw vote, recovered with some high profile endorsements in Cass County and a flood of ads featuring substantive issues. His actions were a warning that Messer and Rokita are not going to be able to just focus on themselves. If Congress dawdles on, the congressmen brawl with each other, and Braun continues to pour huge sums of money into this race, it would still be unlikely but not impossible for Braun to emerge victorious.

The Democrats had a bad weekend. But actually all the major Indiana Senate candidates did a decent job of advancing their individual strategies amid the chaos. ❖

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

**Pink wave**, from page 1

Obamacare, and issues like Dreamers, CHIP or tax reform, as an anathema to the way they believe things should be.

According to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, 389 women are running for the U.S. House of Representatives, 49 women are running for U.S. Senate and 79 women are running for governor in 2018. In 2016, five women ran for Congress in Indiana, compared to nine who have filed thus far and U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski will be the 10th since she is expected to seek reelection but has yet to file. In the General Assembly, there were 43 women who were nominated for the House and Senate in 2016, compared to 48 who have filed thus far this year, with the filing deadline still



Several thousand women protest in downtown Indianapolis on Saturday. Other marches took place in Bloomington and Fort Wayne. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

22 days away.

In Indiana, the ceiling has been shattered by both parties at the congressional level, with Democrat Rep. Virginia Jenckes becoming the first to win a seat in 1933, followed by Republican Cecil Harden in 1949. They've been followed by Democrat Reps. Katie Hall, Jill Long and Julia Carson. In 2012, Republican Reps. Jackie Walorski and Susan Brooks ushered in a new era for Hoosier Republicans.

But on the gender front, there is a long way to go for the demographic that represents 51% of the population. While Vi Simpson headed the Senate Democrats for several cycles, there have been virtually no caucus leaders in the General Assembly, no speaker or Senate president pro tempore, no female Ways and Means or Senate Appropriations chair. And in 202 years, there has not been a female governor (Jill Long Thompson was nominated by

Democrats in 2008), though four of the last five lieutenant governors were and are female. Indiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Loretta Rush broke the gender barrier there.

"Many women are asked to run for office, rather than just raising their hands and saying I'm going to run," Brooks told the NWI Times' Doug Ross. "I think we need to do a better job of encouraging more women to run, and I spend a lot of time doing that." Brooks mounted a brief campaign in 2016 for governor, losing in a Republican caucus to Gov. Eric Holcomb, joining Simpson and Virginia Dill McCarty as other major party gubernatorial candidates.

"Women are ready to become primary actors in the political game," said former Democratic legislator and 2016 lieutenant governor nominee Christina Hale. "We are multi-taskers who get things done, but it hasn't been a priority to seek policy change and civic change. Now it is. What's happened is, the impossible came to be. Nobody thought the grabber-in-chief was going to be elected president and we look out for our own, we look out for our girls. It's time to step up."

One of the latest legislative candidate to announce is Carmel Democrat Naomi Bechtold, running in HD24. "I have spent the last six months talking with residents, city and county leaders and other elected officials from all parties," Bechtold said. "The issues I have heard about that we need to fix will take someone who is willing to roll up their sleeves and work across the aisle to resolve. It's time for a change, and I have the passion and plan to make a difference for the people in our state." Bechtold's message is simple, "I am running to provide a new voice and a new vision for the residents of District 24 and the state of Indiana."



**Tritch: Asking me to run**

It's a notion that crossed the mind of Courtney Tritch, a Democrat seeking the 3rd CD seat and a challenge to freshman Rep. Jim Banks. The 3rd CD on the Cook Partisan Index rates +18 Republican. "People had been asking me to run for office for years and I politely declined," said Tritch, who was vice president of marketing at the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership. "But then November happened. They approached me. Many of us run because we are asked, and that is true of me as well. That was last spring. We officially launched on July 6."

At the Women's March last weekend in Fort Wayne, Tritch explained that it was her late sister, Pam, and mother who passed away unexpectedly that prompted introspection. "I felt lost and alone," she told several hundred marchers. "It took me a long time to find my voice again. What should I be doing to honor the legacy of the brave women who came before me? I needed my voice to be louder. Someone asked, 'Will you run for U.S. Congress?' I said, 'Yes. Let's take our power to the polls.'"

There was a scene that burnished the notion during the Obamacare repeal/replace efforts last summer. "When I saw 13 men sitting in a room developing the health care bill at the beginning of last year, not talking to other members of the party or the other party, let alone a woman, I just don't know how we can discuss something as important as health care that affects every person in the country and one fifth of the economy without having a woman at the table," Tritch said. "More and more often women are getting increasingly frustrated and finding our critical mass in standing up together to fight some of these things."

**Watson: 'Decisions about us without us'**

Liz Watson is a former U.S. House staffer and Bloomington attorney, running against Dan Canan in the 9th CD Democratic primary for the right to challenge freshman Rep. Trey Hollingsworth. The Cook Partisan Index rates the 9th a +13 Republican district. "What we're hearing is people don't think they have a say in the decisions being made right now," Watson told HPI on Monday. "Washington is making a decision about us without us."

Watson spoke just hours before Congress decided to end the government shutdown, partly on a vague promise by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell that the Dreamer issue will be debated in February. "Right now the folks in Congress are fighting against us," Watson said.

"They are voting against Hoosiers. They are voting against working families and we are tired of it. I have been someone who has been standing up for working families for a very long time for Hoosiers.

"We need to change Congress, we need to change the composition of Congress," Watson said. "We need to vote out people who are in the pockets of their corporate donors. We need to vote out the people who think it's OK for K Street lob-

bysts to write the tax law. They did it just for their corporate donors."

Tobi Beck is running in the open 4th CD, which the Cook Partisan Index rates at +17 Republican. The Avon



HD24 Democrat candidate Naomi Bechtold (top) and protesters in the Fort Wayne Women's March last Saturday.

mother of three is a member of the historical education organization, the SCA, Inc., and volunteers for the Red Cross.

"There is an unprecedented activity," Beck said. "People who have never been politically active before have jumped up and said, 'Wow, I have to do something.' They need some guidance, so we say 'Here's how you talk to your neighbors.' There is an amazing amount of energy with people recognizing that this isn't the way it's supposed to be."

Beck cited her U.S. Army career when she served as a military police officer as an "extension" to her desire to run. "My family has a long history that if you appreciate something, you pay it back. You pay for it. In this case it's the same thing. I've always appreciated living in this country. So I joined the Army. I swore to uphold the Constitution. And now I say, 'My country needs some help.'"

She was assigned to the 571st Military Police Unit and deployed to Cuba for Operation Safe Harbor, helping Haitian refugees, and in Somalia, just a few months prior to the famous incident depicted in the film, "Black Hawk Down."

She decided to run in October 2016, just as Donald Trump's "Access Hollywood" tape came to light, where he claimed that the rich and famous can "grab" women "anywhere."

"I knew I was supposed to be doing something more," Beck said. "It took several months to decide what that 'more' actually was." A few months later, there was speculation that U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita might opt for the U.S. Senate race this year. "I took my time to figure it out," she said. "I explored, I investigated to determine this was the right path. It took me about six months."

Beyond the dysfunction on Capitol Hill and the Trump White House, Beck saw other warning signs. She's a foster parent and experienced the Department of Child Services first hand. She believes that despite the current funding increases from the Holcomb administration, the doubling of children under its care during the opioid crisis has placed the agency under duress. And having had foster children, she is extremely familiar with the CHIP program, which was paralyzed until Congress voted and



Tobi Beck (left in left photo) running in the 4th CD Democratic primary with Dee Thornton running in the 5th CD Democrat primary. At right is Bloomington attorney Liz Watson running in the 9th CD.



President Trump signed a continuing resolution on Tuesday. "All foster kids are in CHIP funding," Beck said. So she describes her candidacy as a "culmination of things I was seeing last year. We need to all step up and do something before it becomes a complete disaster."

### Facing long odds in November

Watson, Tritch and Beck all are facing long, long odds in November should they win their contested primaries. Their districts are overwhelmingly Republican.

Beck sees the emerging "pink wave" that wasn't there when she made her decision to run as a "serendipity." She explains, "Some of it is, 'Wow! I should have seen this coming.'" As for the adjacent #Metoo movement, she said, "I've worked all my life in male-dominated environments, the military, security, technology. We're finally seeing women as a group finding a voice. And they are grabbing men with quality to join them."

Since the 4th CD is so Republican, Beck isn't expecting early involvement from the DCCC or Emily's List, though they are keeping tabs. The progressive Project 100 group has endorsed her. Its goal is to elect 100 female candidates. A "blue wave," if it materializes, would be the mechanism to pull in candidates like Tritch and Beck.

What are the chances of the "blue wave?" It's far too early to tell. According to the latest Washington Post/ABC Poll, Democrats have a 57-31% lead among female voters, or double the support for Hillary Clinton in 2016. White women, particularly in the suburbs, are moving toward Democrats, favoring them by 12%, after supporting Donald Trump by 9% in 2016.

CNN analyst Chris Cillizza looked ahead to 2020. "While 2020 polling in 2018 is of relatively limited value, a deeper dive into Trump's head-to-head matchups with Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, former Vice President Joe Biden and talk show host Oprah Winfrey reveals a major problem for Trump as he seeks to build a winning coalition in 2020: Women – across virtually every age, education and racial range – have moved against him in major numbers," Cillizza wrote on Tuesday. "Biden holds an eye-popping 36-point edge over Trump among women, while Sanders leads Trump by 30 and Oprah bests him by 29. That's a very different result than in the 2016 election, when Hillary Clinton beat Trump by 13 points among women, according to exit polling; orders of magnitude different."

"Among white women – a group Trump carried over Clinton by 9 points in 2016 – Biden crushes Trump by 23 points. Sanders beats the incumbent by 17 among



Demonstrators last Saturday in Indianapolis. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

white women, while Oprah's margin is 14," Cillizza reported. "Among women who identify as political independents, Biden leads Trump by 44 – yes 44! – points. Sanders has a 28 point lead while Oprah's edge is 26 points. Among women 50 years old and younger, Sanders leads Trump by a startlingly large 49 points, as compared to a 47% bulge for Biden and a 41% advantage for Oprah."

### Feeling the groundswell

Beck, Tritch and Watson say they feel a movement on the ground. "I would say it's growing," Beck said. "I

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thought we'd be struggling to sustain it, but we're not. Every time the president tweets, there are new voters reaching out to us. The activism of the summer isn't waning."

Tritch said, "I think there's a perfect storm happening right now. I wouldn't be in it if I didn't think it would be winnable. It's not my lifelong dream to be in Congress. I wouldn't do it if I didn't think it would be possible. But yeah, I saw some recent polls by CNN and FiveThirtyEight talking about the generic congressional ballot. They haven't seen this big a lead by a party since 1938. One of the polls showed a 15-point lead and another an 18-point spread. That makes this absolutely winnable."

But a CNN poll this week had the generic narrowed to just 49-44% in favor of Democrats and Reuters/Ipsos had it 38-30% Democratic, so there has been recent volatility on that front.

Watson feels the Trump bump, but explained, "I'm not running against Trump, I'm running against Trey Hollingsworth. People will tell me, 'I voted for Trump, but I'm voting for you.' They want somebody who has the



4th CD Democrat Courtney Tritch.

backs of working class voters. I talk to my friends in labor who were a 50% Trump vote, and 23 labor unions have endorsed my campaign. It's very clear that they are really excited about a candidate who will stand up for them and knows how."

### Waves can be fickle

Waves can be fickle. In the summer of 2016, there was talk of a Democratic wave after candidate Trump insulted John McCain, Gold Star mothers and an array of demographic groups. As we all know, the wave broke his way instead. His talk of a "rigged" system and a plodding Main Street won him support of middle class and blue collar voters concerned about their economic and social futures. There are a number of scenarios where Trump could make a comeback, such as if his tax cuts resonate with working class voters, he resolves the North Korean crisis, launches a popular infrastructure plan, avoids scandalous charges from Robert Mueller or stops tweeting.

But there is also the potential for an epic tide, as we saw with the LBJ landslide in 1964 that propelled Democrats into huge majorities in Congress and the Indiana General Assembly, or the 1974 post-Watergate election that saw Indiana Democrats take the Indiana Senate for the first and only time in almost a half century.

These Hoosier women are anteing up for that potential. ❖



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# Hoosier Women Forward

By **CHRISTINA HALE**

INDIANAPOLIS – Government will be healthier and more effective when it better reflects our population. Today we have a paltry number of women serving in Indiana government, but the issues facing them in their daily lives cut deeply.

I have noted many times that far too many Indiana families today struggle for economic stability, yet as our families have been working so hard over the past 30 years for less: Indiana has become more obese and less healthy; Indiana has become a net exporter of degreed talent; Indiana’s educational achievements relative to other states (like SAT performance) has declined; Indiana has more people incarcerated than ever before; Indiana has more people addicted to drugs than ever before; more



of Indiana’s women and children are victims of sexual and domestic violence; women have increasingly less access to ob/gyn doctors and medical care, yet more and more people suffer from STDs and suffer through pregnancies without adequate medical care; women make only 74 cents to every dollar earned by a man for the same job.

**Women just get it.** The rush to daycare, the struggle to be respected on the job, the fight for opportunity. These are just some of the reasons why the founders of “Hoosier Women Forward” (HWF) decided to get more active this year. Protesting and pink hats make a statement, but they only move the cause forward so far. Women in Indiana are primed and ready to set up our game.

With a team of strong women, Liane Groth Hulka, new 5th Congressional Democrat chair and HWF founding chair, began the hard work of organizing and launching a new nonprofit aimed at preparing and propelling Demo-

cratic women into leadership roles across the state, now and in the future.

“We want to harness the energy and talent that’s out there, all across Indiana, and create a powerful, diverse network of engaged Democratic women,” Hulka said. “Our mission is to increase the number and influence of Democratic women in elected and appointed governmental positions at the local, state and federal levels, and in positions of influence in their communities and the private sector.”

**“Too often, women** feel like their voices aren’t valued, whether it’s in the workplace or when the male-dominated Indiana General Assembly is deliberating women’s issues,” she added. “You can look no further than the #metoo movement to see how powerful our voices can be for change. We want to take that energy and those voices and equip women with the tools they need to excel in leadership positions.”

HWF will select a group of 20 to 25 outstanding Democratic women each year through a competitive application process to participate in a nine-month leadership training program.

Although women represent more than 50% of the voting public in Indiana, only two of the state’s 11-member congressional delegation are women, and neither is a Democrat. Women make up just 20% of the 150 seats in the Indiana General Assembly.

Women selected for the HWF training program must demonstrate an interest in public policy, political advocacy and advancing Indiana forward with progressive policies and ideas. The nonprofit will strive to ensure that each class has a diverse background of personal and professional life experiences reflecting the economic, geographical, ethnic and cultural diversity in Indiana.

**In August the** inaugural class of Democratic women leaders will be named. Get ready, Indiana. The pink wave of women leaders is coming, and it will be a very, very good thing. ❖

**Hale is the 2016 Democratic lieutenant governor nominee and a former state representative.**



# Internal Rokita poll shows pure tossup

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**  
and **MARK SCHOEFF JR.**

INDIANAPOLIS – Usually campaigns release internal polling to create the aura of victory. Todd Rokita’s U.S. Senate campaign released a poll on Wednesday that reveals a pure tossup, though the congressman and former secretary of state has a lead with a huge undecided bloc.

In a GS Strategy Group poll taken earlier this month, Rep. Rokita had 24%, followed by Mike Braun at 9.2%, Rep. Luke Messer at 8.8%, while the other three candidates had 9.2%. A whopping 58% are undecided, which means this race is a pure tossup.



The Rokita camp’s spin is that Braun is siphoning votes away from Messer. In a GS Strategy Poll last July, Rokita led Messer 20.6% to 13.6% while Braun had

less than 1%. “One thing remains clear: Todd Rokita is the choice of conservatives and Trump Republicans in the race for US Senate in Indiana,” said Nathan Brand, Hoosiers for Rokita spokesperson. “While tax-hiking, Democrat-voting Mike Braun has burned more than \$1.5 million to garner less than 10% of the vote, he has only managed to cut into Luke Messer’s support amongst lobbyists, establishment Republicans, and Never Trumpers.”

Neither Rokita nor Messer has run statewide TV ads, while Braun has run three flights of ads, and told Howey Politics Indiana earlier this month that his name ID was actually better than the two congressmen.

Rokita released a digital ad last week ahead of the March for Life, that featured his son Teddy, who has Angelman Syndrome. “We had just gotten the news that our firstborn, our Teddy, had a very rare and severe neurological disorder called Angelman Syndrome,” Rokita says in the ad. “The idea that you can genetically screen someone out before they are born and judge the worth of their life is an abomination to me. Because he has made me such a better person. He has enlightened me so much. And honestly, we think Teddy is going to change the world. I’m pro-life because it is our fundamental right. We can’t have a free society without the right to life.”

Year-end FEC reports are due on Jan. 31, and Messer, Rokita and Braun have all been mum on where their fundraising stands.

The Messer campaign said on Tuesday that it

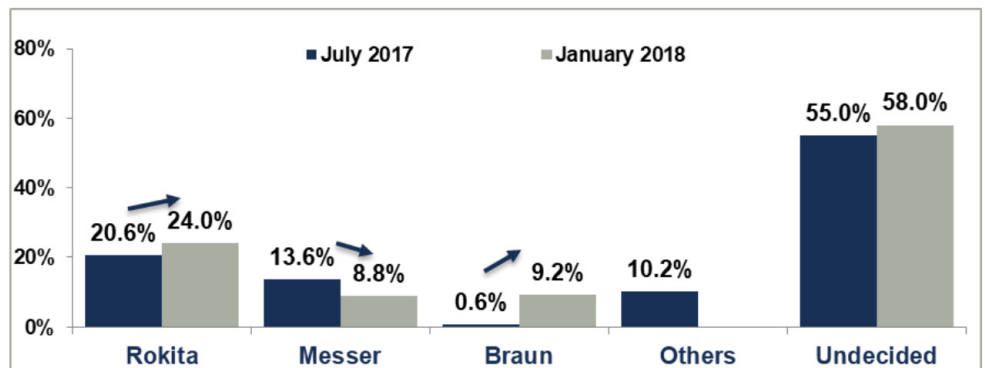
has met the signature requirement to get on the ballot for U.S. Senate. On Friday, county clerks officially verified more than the required 500 petition signatures for Messer in each of the nine congressional districts, nearly three weeks ahead of the deadline on Feb. 9. Messer is the first candidate in the Republican Senate primary to announce that his petition signatures have been verified by county clerks. Rokita turned in more than 9,000 signatures earlier this month.

## Commission plans televised debate

The Indiana Debate Commission will conduct at least one televised debate among candidates for the U.S. Senate during the month leading into the May 8 primary, the commission announced in a news release. The date and location of any debates will be determined in consultation with the candidates and will be based on availability of television broadcast partners and venues. “We are continuing in our mission to provide the widest possible audience for candidate debates in Indiana,” said Gerry Lanosga, who was elected president of the commission during its annual meeting Tuesday. The commission also will conduct televised debates during the general election campaign season this fall.

## Rokita wins Harrison County straw poll

Hoosiers for Rokita released the following statement on Todd Rokita’s decisive victory today in the Har-



risson County GOP’s straw poll: Todd Rokita 25, Mike Braun 11, Andrew Horning 8, Luke Messer 7, Pete Seat 2 (Howey Politics Indiana). “Conservative activists in Harrison County chose Todd Rokita for U.S. Senate in their straw poll,” said Nathan Brand, Hoosiers for Rokita spokesman. “Todd was victorious because he has broad support in Harrison County and across the state and has a record of fighting elites in both parties, championing conservative principles, and always standing with President Trump.”

## Donnelly’s net approval drops

Eleven of the 12 most vulnerable senators up for reelection in 2018 ended last year less popular among their constituents than at the start of the 115th Congress (Easley, Morning Consult). That’s according to the new

Morning Consult Senator Approval Rankings for the fourth quarter of 2017, based on 253,383 surveys with registered voters from Oct. 1 through Dec. 31. The data show declines in net approval ratings for nine of the 10 Democratic incumbents who are running in states President Donald Trump won in 2016. Donnelly's rating dropped by seven points. Democratic Sen. Jon Tester of Montana saw his net approval rating fall by 18 percentage points by the end of the year, the most of any of those Democratic incumbents.

## Congress

### 3rd CD: Banks finds feisty town hall

U.S. Rep. Jim Banks faced a rough reception Tuesday night at his first town hall meeting in Fort Wayne (Francisco, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Shortly after the start of the session, when Banks, R-3rd, insisted that 90 percent of Americans would benefit from the Republican tax cuts approved late last year by Congress, people in the audience at VFW Post 857 challenged his remarks, positions and votes on legislation. About 100 people attended the town hall at the VFW post on West Main Street, with many audience members laughing derisively at some of Banks' comments. There also were occasional shouts of protest and one cry of "bull----." Things settled down when questions turned to military and veterans issues, specifically problems with the delivery of health care by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Banks, an Afghanistan veteran and a member of the House Veterans Affairs' and Armed Services committees, referred individual care complaints to his staff caseworker and said he is encouraged that recent laws and pending legislation will improve VA services and administrative functions. Things heated up again toward the end of the hourlong meeting as Linda Brooks told Banks that President Donald Trump has vowed that Mexico, not the United States, will finance the construction of a wall between the nations.

### 4th CD: Morales to post \$204k

Republican Diego Morales raised more than \$204,000 in campaign funds during the fourth quarter of 2017. This brings his campaign's total raised since he announced his candidacy in August to more than \$410,000. "We are overwhelmed by the support we are receiving from people across the 4th District," said Michael Sorenson, Morales' campaign manager.

### 8th CD: Moss enters race

Call it inertia, fate, or the political equivalent of death and taxes, but 8th District Rep. Larry Bucshon's unbroken string of attracting opposition from within his own party will extend into 2018 (Langhorne, Evansville Courier & Press). Bucshon will mount his fourth reelection campaign next year, having ascended to his first two-year term in Congress in 2010. And, for the fourth consecutive time, he has drawn a challenger for the Republican nomination

in the 19-county 8th District. Barring any other Republicans filing against Bucshon, this time it will be Dr. Richard Moss, the same Jasper-based ear, nose and throat specialist who unsuccessfully tried to wrest the GOP nomination away from him in 2016. Bucshon easily turned back Moss's challenge then, winning by a margin of 65%-35%.

### 7th CD: Pence launches TV ad

The Greg Pence for Congress campaign released



its first TV ad today called "Ready to Serve, Again!" The ad features Greg Pence talking about his service as an officer in the Marine Corps and his core values of faith, sacrifice,

service and love of country that played into his decision to run for Congress.

### 8th CD: Weinzapfel delayed, Drake files

The Evansville Courier & Press reported over the weekend that former Evansville mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel was preparing to jump into the race which at this point featured Terre Haute attorney William Tanoos. The Courier & Press cited two influential Democrats as saying a Weinzapfel run was likely. But informed and reliable Democratic sources are telling HPI that we should "wait until next week" for news on that front. Meanwhile, 2016 Democratic nominee Ron Drake filed on Wednesday.

### 9th CD: Hollingsworth breaks with GOP

It's not easy to pinpoint political blame for the partial government shutdown among Hoosier politicians, no matter how hard they try. On Friday, five Hoosier Republicans in the House – Reps. Jackie Walorski (2nd CD), Jim Banks (3rd CD), Todd Rokita (4th CD), Susan Brooks (5th CD) and Larry Bucshon (8th CD) – issued a statement calling on Senate Democrats to support the short-term funding bill that each of them voted for. Rep. Luke Messer, R-6th CD, also backed it and sent out a similar statement urging Senate Democrats to get on board. When the Senate weighed in on the bill late Friday night, the Democrat who Rokita and Messer want to defeat this fall, Sen. Joe Donnelly, did exactly what the Republicans were calling on all Democrats in the chamber to do. He voted in favor of the bill to keep the government open. Not enough of Donnelly's Democratic colleagues did so to prevent the shutdown. The member of the Hoosier delegation who voted against the so-called continuing resolution to keep the government lights on was a fellow Republican, Rep. Trey Hollingsworth, 9th CD. "Hoosiers demanded change – not more of the same – last November; six short-term spending bills in nine months is an insult to them," Hollingsworth said in a statement explaining his vote against the CR. "Americans work hard for the tax dollars they send

to Washington, and I fight every day against Washington's reckless spending habits."

**9th CD: Canan, Watson on shutdown**

By taking a stand against the short-term spending bill, Hollingsworth is in a position that is supported by one of his Democratic opponents, Dan Canan. In a statement on his campaign website, Canan blasted what he called the #Trumpshutdown and praised Senate Democrats for holding firm to get a deal for renewing a program to protect undocumented immigrants who entered the United States as children. "No one wants a government shutdown, but I am glad to see Senate Democrats stand on principle rather than using the Dreamers as political pawns," Canan said. "Enough is enough." Liz Watson tweeted, "I've been watching the folks who run Congress screwing things up all week, and I have to tell you, I'm outraged. Get your act together and stop playing games with the lives of children and our Dreamers! They are American people, not bargaining chips."

**General Assembly**

**SD7: Candidate field set for caucus**

The Indiana Republican Party issued a news release stating the final roster of candidates vying to fill the remainder of former State Sen. Brandt Hershman's term

has been set. The caucus will be held Thursday, Jan. 25, at 6:30 p.m. ET, at the Best Western Plus Brandywine Inn & Suites, 304 S. Sixth St., Monticello. The candidates are Arthur Anderson, Brian Buchanan, Edward Cripe, Stephen Jordan, Shelli Maxwell and Arvid Olson.

**SD25: Lanane discusses reelect**

Senate Minority Leader Tim Lanane is seeking a fourth term, but he will face a primary opponent. Anderson Councilman Ollie H. Dixon will challenge Lanane. "I'm proud of the Madison County delegation in the Legislature," said Lanane, the senior member of the trio. He said several concerns of constituents led to the passage of legislation to promote concussion awareness among high school coaches and to provide funding to pay for testing and treatment of sexual assault victims. "There is so much more that needs to be done," Lanane said (Anderson Herald-Bulletin). "There are problems within the Indiana Department of Child Services. If we fail to protect our children, we have failed."

**HD9: Parry files for Pelath seat**

Michigan City resident Duane Parry has filed his declaration of candidacy for the 2018 election as Indiana's 9th District state representative, the seat currently held by Scott Pelath, who is not seeking reelection (LaPorte Herald Argus). Parry is a lifelong resident of Northwest Indiana,

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educated at Purdue University, served six years in the U.S. Navy, a 27-year member of Carpenters Local 599, and most recently quality control manager for Superior Construction on BP's Whiting Refinery modernization project.

**HD17: Primary rematch for Rep. Jordan**

Rep. Jack Jordan filed in this Republican primary on Wednesday, setting up a primary rematch with Jesse Bohannon. Jordan defeated Bohannon 6,381 to 5,049 in 2016.

**HD36: Primary challenge from Rep. Austin**

Anderson Councilwoman Rebecca Crumes filed Monday to oppose State Rep. Terri Austin. Austin, who is seeking an eighth term in office, said representing Madison County is not a job she takes lightly (Anderson Herald-Bulletin). "I gave it a lot of thought," she said of seeking reelection. "These are dynamic times and I still have a lot of fight left in me." Austin said she has focused on human trafficking in Indiana and worked with a Republican in the Senate to pass legislation in 2006. "I'm focused on workforce development," she said, "which is the defining issue of our time. We have to help people get the skills to get a job to help them build a stronger life. There are too many decisions being made in Indianapolis. We need more local involvement to get businesses the skilled people they require."

**HD55: Ziemke to seek reelection**

Indiana State Rep. Cindy Ziemke of District 55, which includes portions of Rush, Fayette, Franklin, Decatur and Ripley counties, will seek a fourth term in the May primary (Batesville Herald-Tribune). Ziemke is vice chair of the House Committee on Family, Children and Human Affairs. She also serves on the House Committee on Public Health and House Committee on Courts and Criminal Code. She brings experience as a small business owner to the General Assembly.

**Primary filings this week**

**Congress: Democrat:** Pat Hackett CD2, Eshel Faraggi CD5, Tommy Schrader CD3, Roger Day CD4, Joseph Mackey CD4, Veronikka Zioli CD4, Jim Pruett CD6, Sue Spicer CD7, Liz Watson CD9, Dan Canan CD9, Rep. Andre Carson CD7, Ron Drake CD8. **Republican:** Tim Radice CD4, John Crouch CD7, Mark Leyva CD1, Richard Moss CD8, Kevin Grant CD4, Tomas Ferkinhoff CD6.

**Indiana Senate: Republican:** Sen. Mark Messmer SD48, Linda Rogers SD11, Sen. Liz Brown SD15. **Democrat:** Ollie Dixon SD25, John Perkins SD45, Ross Thomas SD41, Anna Murray SD46.

**Indiana House: Democrat:** Jessica Renslow HD3, Rep. Vernon Smith HD15, Chris Chyung HD15, Rebecca Crumes HD36, Aimee Rivera Cole HD37, Kimberly Anne Fidler HD44, E. Thomasina Marsili HD46, Susan Diagana HD47, Matt Gaustad HD68, Steve Folz HD76, Poonam Gill HD88, Donald Westerhausen Jr., HD5, Mara Candelaria Reardon, HD12, Rebecca Crumes HD 36, Dan Greenhalgh HD37, Ragen Hatcher HD3, Jessica Renslow HD3; **Dee Moore HD18; Tracy Roberts HD29, Mark Hinton, Michael Stephenson HD51; Nancy Tibbett, HD53, Mary Kohen HD59, Sam Charbonneau HD72, Christopher FitzGerald HD72, Christopher Rex HD85, Rep. Ed DeLaney HD86. Republican:** Troy Dillon HD7, Brad Beaver HD29, Ben Fisher HD35, Rep. Tim Brown HD41, Isaac Deal HD43, Lew Wilson HD59, Jesse Bohannon HD17, Rep. Jack Jordan HD17, Rep. Sean Eberhart HD57, Matt Hostettler HD64, Nancy Franke HD69, Karen Engleman HD70, Rep. Matthew Lehman HD69, Rep. Bob Morris HD84, Rep. David Wolkins HD18, Jenae Blasdel HD33, Darrell Felling HD43, Jess Norton HD44, Jeff Embrey HD54, Rep. Holli Sullivan HD78, Rep. Timothy Wesco HD21, Gregory O'Connor HD29, Rep. Dennis Zent HD51, Rep. Steve Davisson HD73, Rep. Wendy McNamara HD76, Rep. Christopher Judy HD83. ❖

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# Donnelly's mod squad swats back a shutdown

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – In a conference call with Indiana reporters Tuesday, U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly affirmed his membership in the “Common Sense Caucus” or the “Mod Squad” of bipartisan senators that emerged during the three-day government shutdown. And he succinctly summed up what he believes to be his marching orders from Indiana voters.



“I was elected to work every day on the behalf of Hoosiers to do my job as a U.S. senator,” Donnelly said. “Keeping the government running is our job. Over the past month I have voted consistently to keep the government open. I approached this job with the common sense we have as Hoosiers and I pledged to bring that to the Senate. That means working with Republicans and with Demo-

crats to get things done and to solve problems.”

So there in a nutshell is Donnelly’s MO, both in office and in the upcoming campaign. He was a charter member in what he called the “potato chip caucus” in Sen. Susan Collins’ office, saying after 10 meetings over the weekend, “It was one of those situations where you know it when you see it. We knew immediately when we saw this that there was a problem we could help fix.”

Donnelly found himself in the national spotlight twice over the past week. Late Friday afternoon, he signaled his willingness to break from Democrats to vote to keep the government open, saying, “Today we face a deadline to fund the government. It’s the most basic duty of Congress to keep our government running.” When that deal imploded, Donnelly spent much of the weekend with the “mod squad” in Collins’s office, sometimes jammed with up to 22 senators that included everyone from Joe Manchin to Lindsey Graham.

“I met non-stop over the past several days with a bipartisan group of senators to craft a deal to end the government shutdown,” Donnelly told reporters. “This deal is the result of our work together. There was a group of bipartisan members before. What makes this work is that we trust each other. When you’re in a room and exchange ideas, you can solve problems.”

On Monday morning, when the log jam cleared after a weekend of coffee, doughnuts, potato chips and oranges, Donnelly said, “Like in 2013, I’m going to work with my colleagues in a bipartisan manner to reopen the government.” Potential Senate challenger Todd Rokita took odd aim at Donnelly, saying Friday, “Typical Joe Donnelly. Joe only votes with Hoosiers when it doesn’t matter. He

knows the votes aren’t there to pass this, so Schumer gave him permission to take a walk.”

Not only did Donnelly take Rokita’s needles, he took heat from the progressive left who portrayed Monday’s deal as a betrayal. “Today’s cave by Senate Democrats, led by weak-kneed, right-of-center Democrats, is why people don’t believe the Democratic Party stands for anything,” said Stephanie Taylor, co-founder of Progressive Change Campaign Committee. U.S. Rep. Luis Gutierrez of Chicago called the Dreamers Republican “hostages” and the GOP “kidnappers.” He said of Senate Democrats, “They caved. They blinked. That’s what they do.”

**Donnelly responded**, saying that Monday’s deal secured six years of funding for the CHIP program, which assists 115,000 Hoosier kids and their mothers.

In striking the deal, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said in a carefully worded speech that it was his “intention” to address DACA and the Dreamers in February. Donnelly was willing to take him at his word. The Indiana Democrat noted that in a 2013 shutdown deal he helped broker, “I voted and the Senate passed with significant Republican support an immigration reform bill. We had 68 votes. The House never took it up. At some point Sen. McConnell and Speaker Ryan and President Trump have to decide they want to take care of this critical issue or not. These are real lives of real kids on the line.”

Donnelly added, “I can’t tell you what Speaker Ryan is going to do. If Speaker Ryan decides not to call this legislation up, he can explain that to the American



people.” On Wednesday, Trump sent more mixed signals, saying, “Whatever they’re doing, if they do a great job, I think it’s a nice thing to have the incentive of, after a period of years, being able to become a citizen.”

In pushing a Dreamer deal, Donnelly said, “I met with a number of groups (who) have come to the office. One of them has a master’s degree in engineering from Purdue, and she works at Eli Lilly. Who wouldn’t want that young lady to stay in our country? I certainly want her to stay and have her dreams come true here. That’s what so many of these kids are like.”

**The risk for Donnelly** is if a Dreamer deal caves in February, a portion of his base is going to perceive him as gullible. The danger for Republicans is that if a deal doesn’t get done, if President Trump continues to follow aide Stephen Miller and ignore overwhelming public support for a Dreamer deal, the optics of forcing tens of thousands of these folks – or “Hoosiers” as Donnelly calls some of them – out of America is going to be a wrenching profound stain on the nation. ❖

# Mixed signals in elections since Trump won the presidency

By **GEOFFREY SKELLEY**  
**Sabato's Crystal Ball**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – In 2013 elections, Democratic candidates ran behind Barack Obama's 2012 two-party vote percentage by an average of 5.9 percentage points. A great Republican cycle in 2014 followed. In elections since December 2016, Republican candidates have run an average of 2.6 points behind Donald Trump's 2016 two-party vote share, a notably smaller figure that could augur poorly for Democrats in 2018. This includes both special and regular elections.

■ However, since Trump's election, in contests with no incumbent, the average Republican candidate has run an average of 5.1 points behind Trump in the two-party vote. Considering the sizable number of Republican retirements in the U.S. House and in state legislative elections, GOP-held open seats will be a pivotal part of 2018 arithmetic.

■ Because of Trump's gains in the Rust Belt, the Midwest will be one major focus of the 2018 election cycle. The Midwest is easily the best region for Democrats in elections during the Trump era. On average, Democrats have performed 10.2 points better than Clinton in the two-party vote in that census region, while only doing slightly better in the Northeast (2.8 points) and South (1.5 points), and worse out West (-1.8 points). However, the Midwest and West have much smaller sample sizes than the Northeast or South.

Examining elections from late 2016 to the present This past Tuesday marked the 75th time a Democrat and a Republican faced off in a special election for a state or federal office since President Donald Trump won the 2016 election. The result in District 35 of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, a solidly Democratic seat in the Pittsburgh area won easily by a Democrat, did not tell us much on its own. Yet taken as a whole, the 75 special elections and the regular elections in New Jersey and Virginia in November 2017 may offer some clues as to how the political environment is developing as we head toward November 2018.

In December 2013, Sean Trende of RealClearPolitics

examined how election results in 2013 had leaned in the Republicans' favor compared to the 2012 presidential vote. He found that Democrats ran, on average, 5.9 percentage points behind Barack Obama's 2012 two-party percentage in 170 contested elections (regular or special races with both a Democrat and a Republican) for state or federal office in 2013. That is, if Obama won 50% of the two-party vote, the average Democratic candidate would have won 44.1%. While the Republican lean in these elections was not conclusive evidence that the 2014 cycle would be good for the GOP, in hindsight it seems that it may have been a reasonably good indicator. Republicans would go on to win nine net seats in the U.S. Senate (partly a function of the Senate seats that were up for election), 13 net U.S. House seats to increase the GOP's seat total from 234 to 247,

two net governorships, and 11 state legislative chambers previously controlled by the Democrats. Clearly, 2014 was an excellent cycle for the Republicans, especially coming on top of the red tsunami in 2010 when the GOP made massive gains at every electoral level.

Fast forward to 2018. While the period considered here is slightly longer (late December 2016 to late January 2018) than Trende's analysis, it is not much different. Trende's sample included 170 contested races for 2013 while the data set we have since Trump's election includes 176 regular and special elections with two-party competition. This includes the aforementioned 75 special elections, 37 New Jersey State Senate races, 60 Virginia House of Delegates contests, and four statewide elections in New Jersey and Virginia (one in the former, three in the latter).

Overall, the data show that Republican candidates have run an average of 2.6 points behind Trump's share of the two-party vote since the president won office, with a median difference of just 0.8 points. That is, if Trump won 50% of the two-party vote, we might expect the GOP candidate to win 47.4% if they followed the average decline. This is obviously well short of the 5.9-point average drop seen from Obama to Democratic candidates in 2013. That should give pause to those who think a major Democratic wave in November 2018 is a sure thing.

Regarding the 2013 average shift, there is one additional factor to consider: That year, then-Gov. Chris Christie (R-NJ) won a landslide reelection that notably influenced GOP performance in the down-ballot races in the Garden State. While now-Govs. Phil Murphy (D-NJ) and Ralph Northam (D-VA) won by relatively large margins in 2017, their 14- and nine-point wins, respectively, fell well short



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of Christie's crushing 22-point win. Still, when removing the 2013 New Jersey races from consideration, Trendle found the average 2013 Democratic decline to be around five percentage points. That was still a large shift that seems -- in hindsight -- to have presaged the Democrats' 2014 drubbing and one that was larger than Republicans' decline compared to Trump.

Still, Democrats certainly have reasons to be hopeful about a wave. In the Trump era, if we look at the races where no incumbents (Democratic or Republican) ran -- 84

of the elections -- the average Republican candidate ran five points behind Trump in the two-party vote. Considering the sizable number of Republican retirements in the U.S. House and the early signs of something similar in state legislative elections, GOP-held open seats will be a pivotal part of the 2018 arithmetic. Special elections made up most of the non-incumbent races (71 of the 84) as almost all special elections featured no incumbent (some elections in New Jersey and Washington state did include appointed incumbents). ❖

## Fake news is real (and ubiquitous)

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Fake news is real. And ubiquitous.

Through the air it travels, in squawk radio spiels, convincing the gullible of fake plots and conspiracies of which they become terrified.

Over Facebook it spreads, prompting the recipients of biased and unfounded accounts to send them on to "inform" a multitude of others.



In the mail it arrives, with an appeal to contribute to fight what is fake, something like our courts enforcing Sharia law.

From the White House it tweets, dispatched by the tweeter-in-chief to claim that the real is fake and the fake is real.

With fake news hither and yon, it becomes difficult to figure where the truth lies and

where lies distort the truth.

Which is exactly what purveyors of fake news want.

For me at the start of a journalism career, a significant event was when a powerful political figure in Illinois came to my editor to complain that a story I wrote was wrong. It wasn't. He knew it wasn't. But he faced looming problems in his handling of state finances – something frequent in Illinois – and he wanted to raise a question of credibility for future coverage.

**The editor told him:** "What we wrote was true. But it wasn't all the truth about you. We're looking for that. And that's what you should be worried about."

The vast majority once wanted a free press to look into things like that. Now apparently, not vast.

There's a pattern when a political official with something to hide attacks the news media, a sort of preemptive strike. Vice President Spiro Agnew, forced to resign when all the truth came out about him, comes to

mind.

Even the most professional segments of the news media aren't perfect. They make mistakes. And any mistake, even if small and clearly unintentional, will be used to attack them as "fake news" operations.

**The news media must** these days guard against efforts to discredit them with the planting of fake news. An example of that was when a woman was sent to the Washington Post to plant a fake story about Roy Moore, the Alabama candidate for the Senate who was facing allegations of misconduct with young girls. She told the Post a fake story that Moore impregnated her when she was 15, leading to an abortion. The plot was to dupe the Post into running the story and then to disclose gleefully that it was fake, damaging the credibility of the paper and discrediting all the real accounts about Moore. The Post, with careful fact checking and questioning of the woman over two weeks, found that her account just wasn't true. She had connections with an organization that seeks to discredit mainstream news outlets.

Meanwhile, fake telephone calls were going to Alabama voters. A caller with (or faking) a New York Jewish accent claimed he was with the Post and would pay for any stories about misconduct by Moore. The plot there was to convince those voters that the Post paid for negative stories about Moore. It did not. Would not. There's a big difference between what a supermarket tabloid would do to get a story and what a real newspaper like the Post would do.

**But then, some people** think those tabloids are the real source of the real. You know, that stuff about Elvis and Jack Kennedy living long after TV networks and mainstream newspapers tried to convince the nation that they were dead. Fake news even is emblazoned on semi-stretch denim jeans offered to stylish women by a British designer. Really. The words "fake news" are repeated up and down the legs in a bright red and white design. Only \$90 a pair.

Now, what are we to believe about the message intended by someone wearing "fake news" jeans? Is it a message of support for President Trump? Or a spoof on his claims? It is hard at times to figure out fake news. ❖

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

# Senate panel approves tough abortion regs

## Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS – Legislation that would add more reporting and tracking requirements to Indiana’s abortion regulations was passed by the Senate Committee on Judiciary Wednesday (Ketterer, NUVO). Among the provisions in the 12 pages of Senate Bill 340 are more inspections of abortion clinics, additions to informed consent forms patients must review and sign, and the reporting of complications to the Indiana Department of Health. Those in opposition to the bill said the regulations are unnecessary while those in support saw them as a contribution to the safety of women. Lynne Bunch, the vice president of patient services at Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky, said the legislation is not about safety and the bill would eliminate the safe access to abortion.



## Constitutional carry stripped from bill

In a surprise move, an Indiana House committee completely stripped a bill of language that would have repealed Indiana’s licensing requirement to carry a handgun (Lange, [IndyStar](#)). Bill author Rep. Timothy Wesco introduced Wednesday an amendment voiding his own bill at the start of the House Public Policy committee meeting, surprising the law enforcement officers who came to testify against the proposal due to safety concerns. The change came a day after two people were killed and 18 were injured at a mass shooting at a high school in Western Kentucky. The tragedy wasn’t mentioned at the committee hearing. Wesco said there had been some general concerns among House Republicans about the original bill. House Speaker Brian Bosma previously said he didn’t see the point of permit-less carry.

## HQ2 spurs light rail rule repeal

With hopes of landing Amazon’s second headquarters, Indiana lawmakers are reconsidering a state ban on light rail in Indianapolis (Cook, [IndyStar](#)). A House panel gave initial approval Wednesday to a measure that would repeal the prohibition on public spending on light rail projects in Marion, Hamilton, Hendricks, Hancock, Johnson, Delaware and Madison counties. Supporters argue that the city needs all mass transit options on the table, especially if it is going to attract major new employers such as Amazon. “Transit is a very major factor for a lot of these major companies that are looking to move here — particularly as we see the Amazon process unfold,” said the bill’s author, Rep. Justin Moed, D-Indianapolis. The online retail giant announced last week that Indianapolis was one of 20 final-

ists for its second North American headquarters. The \$5 billion campus is expected to employ 50,000 workers with average salaries of more than \$100,000 a year.

## Behning proposes school waiver rules

A proposal to allow schools and districts to waive state education rules in the name of innovation is the latest Indiana legislation with ties to one of the nation’s most influential conservative organizations (Cavazos, [Chalkbeat](#)). Rep. Bob Behning, the Republican chairman of the House Education Committee, proposed the bill as a way to give school districts more flexibility to determine what students learn and how they spend their time. Up to eight districts would have a chance to form “coalitions” next year and submit their education plan to the Indiana State Board of Education for approval. “Bringing these like-minded districts together is really like creating a think tank,” Behning said of the proposal, known as House Bill 1398.

## Lake legislators seek Hill opinion

The Indiana Senate Democrats issued a news item stating State Senator Eddie Melton (D-Gary) and the Gary legislative delegation are asking Attorney General Curtis Hill to provide an advisory opinion regarding procedures to fill a vacant seat on the Gary school board (Howey Politics Indiana). When the Distressed Unit Appeals Board (DUAB) first assigned an emergency manager to take over the Gary Community School Corporation (GCSC) last year, how to fill a vacancy on the GCSC School Board was not previously determined. Now, there is a Board vacancy to fill and the DUAB has determined that the emergency manager should fill that position. “We support the emergency manager’s effort to turn the academic and financial status of the district around, however, we want to ensure that the voice and votes of the community are respected.” Melton stated.

## BSU Muncie school bill advances

The Indiana House Ways and Means Committee on Wednesday OK’d a bill allowing Ball State University to appoint members of the Muncie Community School Board, among other provisions (Slabaugh, [Muncie Star Press](#)). The Republican-sponsored school financial-management bill, HB 1315, which passed 16-7, next goes to the House floor, where it will be considered by all members and is subject to amendments. For now, the proposed law calls for Ball State’s board of trustees to appoint five members to the Muncie school board nominated by BSU President Geoffrey S. Mearns. Two other members of the new, seven-member board would be appointed by Mearns from a list of three individuals nominated by Muncie Mayor Dennis Tyler and from a list of three individuals nominated by Muncie City Council. An earlier version of the amendment called for the mayor and city council to each have one direct appointment on the seven-member board. The Muncie school board is currently a five-member elected body.



### Muncie School Board lobbies vs. proposal

After meeting with lawmakers in Indianapolis on Tuesday, Muncie Community School Board members became convinced that a bill affecting governance of the school district will be enacted during this year's legislative session (Slabaugh, [Muncie Star Press](#)) House Bill 1315, a school financial management bill, includes a proposed amendment to replace the five-member elected Muncie school board with a seven-member board appointed mostly by Ball State University. School board members met Tuesday with the author of the bill, Rep. Tim Brown, R-Crawfordsville, who chairs the Ways and Means Committee, and other lawmakers. A committee hearing and vote on the bill starts at 1:30 p.m. today.

### House panel OKs newborn screening bill

The House Committee on Ways and Means has voted in favor of a bill introduced by State Rep. Douglas Gutwein's, R-Francesville, that adds two new tests to Indiana's newborn screening panel ([Madison Courier](#)). Gutwein's legislation would require spinal muscular atrophy, or SMA, and severe combined immunodeficiency, or SCID, to be added to the list of screenings newborns get in Indiana shortly after their births. "Early detection in infants is key for pre-

venting these detrimental diseases from spreading further," Gutwein said. "This legislation will provide pre-symptomatic testing for Hoosier babies, giving their families hope and more treatment options in the future."

### Civil forfeiture bill passes Senate panel

A bill reforming Indiana's civil forfeiture laws has passed out of the Senate Committee on Judiciary by a vote of 7-0, District 37 State Sen. Rodric Bray (R-Martinsville) reported Wednesday ([Greencastle Banner Graphic](#)). Authored by Sen. Bray, who represents all of the southern half of Putnam County as far north as the south side of Washington Street in Greencastle, Senate Bill 99 establishes a probable cause requirement for all forfeiture cases and sets up a process for innocent property owners to get their property back if it was seized while in another person's possession.

### Gary cleanup sites approved

The House Environmental Affairs Committee today unanimously passed a bill authored by State Representative Earl Harris, Jr. (D-East Chicago) that would assist local efforts to clean up uninhabitable sites in Gary, the House Democratic Caucus reported. ❖

**Photography With Punch**  
 Mark Curry On Indiana Politics  
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The collage includes several photographs: a man at a podium with a 'TRUMP' sign, a man in a suit speaking, a woman with red glasses, a woman in a blue jacket, a man with a mustache, a man holding a 'LEGALIZE SUNDAY' sign in a restaurant, a man in a suit, and a man in profile.

# Here's an Indiana investment strategy

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – People who have bought a house and started their pension programs already often ask, "Where should I be investing?" The question arises with a booming stock market as well as during the depths of a recession. My answer remains, "Diversify your investments. Invest in your education, your skills, and your ability to understand our complex world. Then, if applicable, invest in the education of your children and grandchildren. And don't forget to invest in the education of your neighbors' children, in the schools of your community."



This is the starting point of developing an informed citizenry and a capable workforce. Sadly, Hoosiers now recognize their failure over decades to make those investments.

Thus, Gov. Eric Holcomb declares our need to upgrade the skills and employability of 55,000 workers.

Why is this government's responsibility? The Indiana constitution recognizes the need for universal, free education. It does not provide for training workers to meet the specific needs of employers. That task is a private sector responsibility, something that rightfully falls on companies and unions. However, state government might aid individual workers, paying part of the tuition for continuing education and skill development. This is a slippery slope that needs to exclude attendance at programs held in ski resorts. One does not hear of many "professional" meetings in Bedford, Logansport, or Portland, Ind.

But imagine Indiana allowing a percentage of the tuition for post-secondary education or training to be allowed as a deduction on the state income tax. It could result in a negative tax due which could be carried over as a credit against future income tax obligations. Similarly, Indiana could allow interest paid on a student or parent education loan to be a deduction against income.

**Get your head around that.** Indiana becomes a state that learns and earns. We encourage the education and training of our residents. If they go out of state for that education, that's fine. But if they come back, they can reduce the costs of that education.

Think of it this way: A graduate of the high school in Sullivan finds a good vocational course at a school across the Wabash River in Illinois. S/he pays for the course in part with funds from Mom and Dad and through a student loan. When s/he comes back to Indiana and settles in Kendallville, some percent of that tuition can be used to lower his/her taxable income. And the same applies to the interest on the student loan.

If we are willing, as a state, to subsidize invest-

ments of firms in buildings and machinery, why shouldn't we be equally willing to subsidize the education and training investments of our citizens? This tax policy makes Indiana a more attractive state in which to live and work.

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

# State unions in atrophy

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE – That television commercial for Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner needs a bit of rewriting. The ad features the governors of three states bordering Illinois.

The point of the commercial is that Illinois House Speaker Mike Madigan, a Democrat, is blocking Rauner's agenda, which is resulting in businesses and jobs fleeing from Illinois to the three surrounding states. At one point, Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb boasts that his state is growing union jobs faster than Illinois.



Not so fast, governor. The fact of the matter is that Indiana is losing union jobs – lots of them. It has taken a while, but the state now is seeing the impact of the 2012

right-to-work law that was approved by the Republicans controlling the Legislature. Despite Republican denials, the law was intended to eat away at the number of union members in the state. Business and industry backed the law because it allows them to pay lower wages than they were paying union members. Politically, the law was designed to favor Republicans who traditionally have difficulty winning the vote of union members.

**According to the** Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of dues-paying union members totaled 266,000 in 2017. That figure is down 12.5% from the previous year when there were 304,000 union jobs. Not only did union jobs decline in Indiana, the number of union jobs grew in Illinois, despite what Holcomb said in the commercial. There were 827,000 union jobs in Illinois in 2017, up from the 812,000 the previous year. The percentage of workers in unions fell to 9.7% in Indiana in 2017. That was down from 11.4% the previous year.

Nationally, there has been a steady decline in the number of workers represented by unions. In Northwest Indiana, the number of union members has markedly declined, largely because of a reduction in the number hired to work in the steel industry. The steel mills locally once employed about 75,000 men and women. That number has fallen to about 20,000 today. ❖

**Rich James has been writing about state and local government and politics for more than 30 years.**

**Zev Chafets, Bloomberg News:** At the start of Mike Pence's four-day diplomatic mission to the Middle East, a cynical Israeli diplomat called it a Seinfeld visit, "a visit about nothing." The cynic was mistaken. The trip was useful, maybe even important. It revealed a good deal about the standing of the U.S. in the Arab Middle East. It set into motion a significant Palestinian move on the diplomatic chess board. And it presented Mike Pence, a man usually seen in President Donald Trump's shadow, on a stage of his own. Pence began his trip with stops in Cairo and Amman. In both capitals he was greeted with respect. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said that he was in favor of a two-state solution with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. King Abdullah II of Jordan said the same thing. Pence assured both leaders that America is fine with a two-state deal, just as long as both sides agree. This is a slick answer -- Sisi and King Abdullah know that the two sides are too far apart for this to happen in the visible future. But they didn't argue very hard. When Pence blandly dismissed their dissent as a friendly difference of opinion, the two leaders didn't contradict him. The streets of Cairo stayed quiet. In Jordan, where a third of the population is Palestinian, a few dozen protesters went through the motions. In Israel, Pence was greeted like a favorite son. He was a study in loyalty, insisting that his welcome was really a tribute to Trump. Yet it was impossible not to contrast him with his bombastic boss. Pence comported himself with the restraint of an Eisenhower-era Republican. He kept his black business suit buttoned, his gaze steady, his voice even, his expression serious, and his remarks to what had been prepared in advance. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called him "Mike" and couldn't stop talking about their long and close friendship. Pence called Bibi "prime minister," and looked uncomfortable in Netanyahu's camera-ready hugs. It's not that he was being unfriendly. He is simply a Midwesterner. A lot was made of Pence's evangelical Christianity. A spokesman for the Palestinian Authority, which boycotted Pence's trip (a snub he accepted with equanimity), denounced him as a "messianic." Some left-wing Israeli pundits and politicians worried over the vice president's Christian Zionism. A few even warned that he sees Israel as part of an End of Days scenario in which the Jews have a literal come-to-Jesus moment on the plains of Armageddon. But Pence is neither a crusader nor a kook. Like most Christian evangelicals, he undoubtedly believes that Jesus will come in God's good time, and without his help. But he does believe that Israel is promised to the Jews, and who wants to disagree with God? ❖



the special counsel. "Donald Trump is not well," Dr. Ronny Jackson wrote. The doctor's note offered a laundry list of ailments afflicting Trump, including flu-like symptoms, upset stomach, headaches, dizziness, confusion, and what Jackson called a "wartime foot injury that appears to be acting up." Jackson acknowledged in the note that his current assessment of Trump's health was at odds with the robust picture he painted last week, but added, "Every patient is entitled to a second opinion, and this is mine." Minutes after the White House doctor issued his note, the special counsel responded by indicating that if Trump is too ill to come to Mueller's office, then Mueller would be "more than happy" to interrogate Trump at his sickbed. The White House doctor, however, quickly rebuffed this offer. "The strain of being under oath and giving truthful answers could kill him," the doctor said. ❖

**Mike Allen, Axios:** We're getting a vivid preview of how President Trump and his conservative allies will likely fight Robert Mueller if he accuses POTUS of obstructing justice, by firing James Comey/pressuring the FBI. The chief attack: Mueller, the roots of his investigation and the FBI aren't on the level — and haven't been since even before he took office. A longtime Trump political associate told me: "Using the Clinton-Starr playbook, kill the special investigator and obfuscate the charge. ... This is the Government against the People's President. It is an easy narrative." Conservative media is exploding with stories/conspiracies about rampant corruption at the FBI and a "secret society" to undermine Trump given some agents' love for and protection of Hillary Clinton. Conservative columnist Noah Rothman on Twitter yesterday: "I've done two conservative radio shows today playing a generally adversarial role in defense of the FBI. The grassroots is eating up the notion Trump is a victim of systemic corruption in law enforcement." Lots of attention is being paid to Trump's comments yesterday that he's willing to be interviewed under oath, and deservedly so. But Trump's key line from yesterday's imprptu West Wing availability might be this, as the WashPost's Devlin Barrett notes: "Now they're saying, 'Oh well, did he fight back?' ... You fight back, oh, it's obstruction." Fox's Sean Hannity continued to build a narrative of an anti-Trump strain in the FBI when he reported this "game-changing development" last night: "[T]he Department of Justice has started to recover some of the five months' worth of missing text messages between FBI Agent Peter Strzok and ... Lisa Page." The "everyone's dirty" scenario is less a coordinated strategy — with careful planning involved — than it is a reflection of Trump's genuine belief that the intelligence community is out to get him, Axios' Jonathan Swan points out: Trump's right-wing base authentically believes the same, and sees the missing FBI text messages as evidence that there's a Deep State out to get Trump. ❖

**Andy Borowitz, New Yorker:** Amid reports that Donald Trump might soon be summoned to appear before Robert Mueller, the White House doctor wrote a note on Wednesday indicating that Trump was too sick to talk to

## Azar confirmed by U.S. Senate

INDIANAPOLIS — The Senate voted Wednesday to confirm Alex Azar, a former drug industry executive with pristine conservative credentials, as the next secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (Washington Post). The 55 to 43 vote for Azar ushers in his return to the government's largest domestic agency, where he held senior roles during the tenure of the last Republican president. U.S. Sens. Joe Donnelly and Todd Young voted for the confirmation. He will become the Trump administration's second HHS leader in 11 months; his predecessor, Tom Price, resigned in the fall amid an investigation of his use of expensive private planes for official business. Other priorities Azar will oversee include trying to control rampant opioid addiction that is ravaging many U.S. communities. He will be under pressure to find ways to constrain drug prices — a realm in which suspicions of him run high given his years as a top executive of Eli Lilly.



## Jamal Washington to seek reelection

CROWN POINT — Lake County Councilman Jamal Washington has announced he will run for county commissioner (Dolan, NWI Times). Washington ended speculation Wednesday on whether he would put his name on the May 8 Democratic primary ballot in the wake of his recent domestic violence arrest. Washington was in the Lake County Election Board's offices about 3:30 p.m. and filed for the 1st District seat now held by Commissioner Kyle Allen. Allen has served as county commissioner since a caucus of 144 Democratic precinct committee members from Gary, Hobart, Lake Station, Merrillville, New Chicago and a portion of Crown Point named Allen two years ago to replace his cousin,

Roosevelt Allen, who died in office. It comes less than seven weeks after Merrillville police arrested Washington on Dec. 8 and the prosecutor's office filed felony and misdemeanor charges of criminal confinement, intimidation, misdemeanor battery and interference with reporting a crime.

## Pence breaks 8th tie in Senate

HAMMOND — Vice President Mike Pence cast his eighth tiebreaking vote in the U.S. Senate on Wednesday — placing him in a tie for the 10th-most prolific tiebreaking vice president in American history (Fischer, WRTV). Pence was called upon to break a 50-49 stalemate (most items in the Senate require a simple majority of 51 votes) over whether to confirm Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback as ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom. The vote was Pence's second tiebreaker of the day. His seventh tiebreaking vote as vice president came just hours earlier, when he voted to advance Brownback's nomination by President Donald Trump to a final vote.

## Marion County vote centers approved

INDIANAPOLIS — Voters in Marion County will have more options starting with the 2019 elections due to long-debated changes approved Wednesday that expand early voting and create vote centers in the county (Colombo, IBJ). The Marion County Election Board unanimously approved a bipartisan proposal that would convert the county's traditional polling places to vote centers starting with the 2019 primary election. That way, Marion County registered voters can use any of 300 vote centers, rather than only a designated polling place. The proposal also expands the use of early voting in the county, taking effect in 2019. It also creates electronic pollbooks to be used county-wide. Democratic Marion County Clerk Myla

Eldridge said the resolution was "one of the most monumental bipartisan agreements achieved in the history of Marion County" and that it will "revolutionize how we vote."

## 'Dramatic' increase in state broadband

INDIANAPOLIS — The trade organization that represents some 150 broadband service providers and industry suppliers has debuted a report on the availability and speed of high-speed Internet in the state (McGowan, Inside Indiana Business). The Indiana Report on Broadband Progress shows what the Indiana Broadband and Technology Association says is a "dramatic" improvement in recent years in broadband access throughout the state. The subject of more access, especially in rural areas, is the subject of discussion and potential action at all levels of government, including its inclusion in Governor Eric Holcomb's 2018 legislative agenda. The report says in 2008, 14 percent of Hoosiers had access to Internet service with 10 Mbps download speeds. That number, the association says, has jumped to more than 90 percent currently.

## Trump says he will testify under oath

WASHINGTON — President Trump said Wednesday he is "looking forward" to testifying under oath to special counsel Robert S. Mueller III as part of the probe of Russian interference in the 2016 election while also mounting a preemptive defense of potential obstruction accusations (Washington Post). "I would love to do it, and I would like to do it as soon as possible," Trump told reporters at the White House. "I would do it under oath, absolutely." The president suggested he could be investigated for obstruction of justice as part of the Russia investigation because he was "fighting back" and reiterated there was "no collusion" between his campaign and Moscow.