

## Braun shows momentum with \$2.3M

Businessman posts \$2m, Messer posts \$430k for quarter, Rokita didn't release his numbers

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – If you were to have any doubts about whether the Indiana Republican U.S. Senate primary is a two- or three-way affair, let's use this week as an example.

Howey Politics Indiana was in touch with the three major campaigns

– U.S. Reps. Todd Rokita and Luke Messer, and former legislator Mike Braun. Would they have

their year-end FEC reports available by Wednesday? The response from the campaigns of all three was affirmative.

This particular money report is an important milestone in this race.



Mike Braun is the Senate candidate who appears to be showing momentum. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

The January straw poll at the Congress of Counties was a tiny blip compared to what the campaigns were able to raise in 2017, how they spent their money, and what kind of cash on hand they possess as they head into the home-stretch three months.

Mind you, Rokita and Messer come from Congress, which on Wednesday had a 9% job approval in the latest Economist/YouGov Poll, with 74% disapproving. Braun spent three years in the Indiana General Assembly, which normally polls well north of 50% in approval. In the Public Opinion Strategies Poll for the Indiana Realtors last December, the national right/wrong track stood at 36-57%, while in Indiana it

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## Trump's good fellas optics

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Hoosier Democrats can brood and stew all they want about the demise of the hate crimes bill in the General Assembly or the shelving of an independent redistricting commission. But the 2018 mid-term election is going to be about one main thing: President Donald J. Trump.

There may be some other topical issues that will surface, but this will be a referendum election. On the face of it, the conventional wisdom is that Democrats have been dealt a pretty good hand, further evidenced by U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy becoming the ninth House chair to announce he won't seek re-



**“My wife Kathryn and I were traveling to the annual House Republican retreat when our train collided with a truck. We are OK. We went to the scene and did what we could to help the injured.”**

*- U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon on the train/truck crash*



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election. So much so that there is talk about a blue wave, or a pink wave. Predicting a wave had been a fairly reliable thing in the past. Howey Politics began publishing with the 1994 Republican wave. Since then, we've forecast correctly several others: Democrats in 2006 when they picked up three congressional seats here, and the Republican/Tea Party wave of 2010 that provided their super majority foundation.

And then there was 2016, where we sensed a Democratic wave developing in June, only to have it break the other way for Donald Trump in November. It was akin to Lt. Col. Billy Kilgore in "Apocalypse Now," where we goaded California surfing legend Lance B. Johnson to surf in a Viet Cong-infested coastline because the waves split in two directions. "It's unbelievable, it's just tube city," Lance says, while glancing at the tree line for Viet Cong snipers. Kilgore snaps, "Charlie don't surf!"

But in 2016, "Charlie" – i.e. Donald Trump – was surfing both waves. He could insult ethnic groups, threaten to shoot someone on Fifth Avenue, target Gold Star mothers and POW legends, then surf to the greatest upset in American presidential history.

So on Tuesday night, I borrowed a page from President Reagan's "fellas," in this case the triumverate of James Baker, Edwin Meese and Michael Deaver, the latter who knew that optics could more profoundly impact voters than words. There's the legendary example of a bad news day on CBS news for the Gipper at the lips of chief tormenter Dan Rather. But the volume was turned down, and Deaver delighted in the images.

I watched the first half of President Trump's first State of the Union with the volume mute, and Tom Waits playing on my Pandora. This is a president with a 35% approval rating addressing a Congress with about 9%

popularity. I saw an African-American family seated near First Lady Melania, overcome with emotion as they were honored. There were military chief petty officers praised, a cop and his wife who adopted the son of a heroin addict lauded. And the motherlode, the North Korean defector who survived a dash through a bullet-riddled DMZ to freedom. As the House chamber erupted, he waved his crutches.

"Well I'll be damned," I thought. Deaver would be proud. About 45 minutes in, I turned on the volume of the speech that would last 75 minutes. What I saw was Donald J. Trump, reality TV president, holding court. He was in his zone as Vice President Pence and Speaker Ryan looked on approvingly. This was reality TV. The sphinx-like



Melania was there in a white suit. Rep. Nancy Pelosi looked distraught when the president called for Washington "to set aside our differences, to seek out common ground and to summon the unity we need to deliver for the people."

Sen. Chuck Schumer looked like a card shark sizing up "Doc" across the poker table. These optics were sensational for Trump, and bad for Democrats. Even U.S. Rep. Joe Kennedy, who delivered a decent rebuttal in front of a muscle car, seemed to be weirdly frothing from the mouth. And there were four more rebuttals.

So much for Democratic unity. Jimmy Kimmel would interview porn starlet Stormy Daniels later in the evening, but this was a tiny little subplot that drew scant attention on Wednesday's morning shows.



Stormy had released a statement denying Donald Trump had ever had sex with that woman. A friend tweeted, "Never trust a porn star."

Earlier in the day, Gallup put out new Trump approve/disapprove numbers in all 50 states, and here in "Importantville," Trump stood at 44/51%. Bad numbers here in Indiana. But watching the optics and knowing Hoosiers so well, Trump wouldn't play well in Hammond, Gary and South Bend, and large parts of downtown Indy below the 22nd floor GOP headquarters. But in "outer Indiana," in Connersville, Seymour, Warsaw, Monon and Versailles, the base was lapping up the optics. He's tellin' it like it is. He's draining the swamp and sticking up for the little guy.

**A year and a half** earlier, Trump declared in Cleveland that "I alone" can stop crime. In his inaugural address a year ago, he described "American carnage" in an address widely described as "destopian."

On Tuesday, after 11 school shootings across the U.S. in January, President Trump was cunning enough to realize that the audience was bigger than his 35% base. The Las Vegas and Texas church massacres were far off in the rear



viewmirror. So he discarded the steel wool he had been using to scour every American bruise, nick, cut and laceration for a year, and preached "unity." The reality president still preached divisive immigration policy and issued ominous rhetoric on North Korea, and at one point intoned, "Americans are dreamers, too." That played well across Hoosier Trump country.

**Republican polster**

Frank Luntz, a frequent Trump critic, observed: "This speech represents the presidential performance that Trump observers have been waiting for – brilliant mix of numbers and stories, humility and aggressiveness, traditional conservatism and political populism." New York Times columnist Frank Bruni warned that somewhere between the wolf in Grandma's frock, Pinocchio and the AT&T sales guy, "Our president lives in a world of sand and wind and make-believe, where the merest gust can alter the shape of everything, and Tuesday night's remarks – especially his appeal for 'common ground' and his vision of 'all of us together' as 'one American family' – should be seen in that shifting, swirling, fantastical context."

Yes, the words still lie, but the optics deceive. If you're a Democrat, Tuesday's optics weirdly glistened. There was little unity. There may be a wave, but we don't know which way it will break, and whether Charlie will be surfing or shooting. ❖

**Senate race, from page 1**

was 59-34%.

Things get done in the Indiana General Assembly. Congress is inert. Rokita, Messer and their colleagues talked a big game about repealing Obamacare, but didn't have the mojo to see it through and the health care system is in disarray while many of us are seeing premiums skyrocket. Braun created a health care strategy for his company and gave his employees a \$1,400 premium cut.

So on Wednesday, the Braun campaign said it would post \$2.3 million cash on hand after raising \$2 million in the

fourth quarter. Most of that came from the candidate, said to be worth about \$50 million in personal assets. Braun raised about \$250,000 from individual donors.

"We think that Mike has absolutely made this a three-person tossup and race and has a great amount of momentum coming into 2018 as outsider candidate," said Braun campaign spokesman Josh Kelley. "He is the true businessman who can beat Joe Donnelly. He's put his cash to close any gap that previously



Luke Messer with Sec. of State Lawson after filing on Wednesday.

existed. Not only is the money that Mike has put into advertising and grassroots, we've become competitive on spending side as well. Mike has most momentum."

Messer will report \$430,000 for the fourth quarter and \$2.45 million cash on hand. The campaign said that 67% of its funding came from Indiana in the fourth quarter. It spent \$395,000. Messer has raised \$2.7 million for the cycle. "The amount we raised shows that Hoosier conservatives are lining up behind Luke," said campaign manager Chasen Bullock. "We are humbled by the support from Hoosier conservatives."

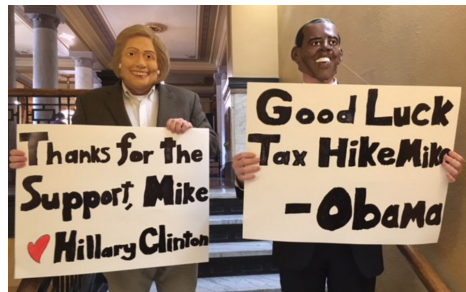
The Rokita campaign did not reveal numbers on Wednesday, as it told HPI it would. But at the Indiana Statehouse on Wednesday, Rokita's campaign had people dressed up as a milk carton (with Messer's picture on it, get it?) trolling Messer, and Hillary and Obama characters (yes, with Obama in black face) following Braun.

Braun has been alone in running three flights of TV and radio ads. Rokita and Messer? Nothing. A number of seasoned Republican observers believe that Braun is taking advantage of the vacuum. At the Congress of Counties, Braun told HPI that he actually had greater name ID statewide than either of the congressmen.

Mark Souder, former Republican congressman and current HPI columnist, observed, "The immediate thing is how much of a fundraising lead Messer opens up over Rokita. If he opens up a sizable lead, some money favorable to Rokita is likely to begin to freeze up and the establishment money will be emboldened. Then Braun would likely begin to eat into Rokita's lead among the decided voters (largely name ID)."

In 2012, Richard Mourdock was able to attract some outside funds and resources from Club For Growth in his primary race against U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar. The national money isn't expected in the Republican primary race unless one candidate forges a significant lead in the next couple of months.

Souder explained, "You might at least note that the financial reports indicate the ability of the candidates to raise funds, which provide signals for independent expenditures. But what that signal is depends. They prefer a winner, but sometimes invest when their chosen candidate is behind. Some of the Trump money (e.g. the Mercers) freed up from Steve Bannon and may be looking for candi-



The Rokita campaign had people dressed as a milk carton following Messer and as Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama following Braun.

dates.

"On the other hand," Souder continued, "Messer would seem to have the possibility to tap into more of Karl Rove's network. Especially if they think Braun could win because the way the establishment thinks, they seem to think that Donnelly can be beat (Indiana is a solid Republican state, look at the Trump vote, what happened to Bayh, Donnelly only one because of Mourdock's screw-up, etc.) so prefer a safer candidate like Messer (and maybe even Rokita) to Braun. These days you can think that you are in a \$2-\$3 million race, and all of a sudden \$5 million comes in."

Contrast all of this with U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, who set a new fundraising record for the best off-year by a U.S. Senate candidate in Indiana history, after raising over \$5.3 million in 2017, including more than \$1.2 million in the fourth quarter. It puts him \$4.5 million ahead of where he stood in his 2012 race.

The Donnelly campaign said that 70% of all donations to Joe in the last three months totaled \$25 or less, and 85% were \$50 or less. Over the course of the year, more than 22,800 people donated to Donnelly's grassroots campaign. Donnelly's \$5.3 million raised over the course of 2017 is the highest one-year, non-election year total in any Indiana U.S. Senate race. The mark had previously been held by U.S. Sen. Todd Young, who raised \$3.5 million in 2015.

"Joe Donnelly once again visited all of Indiana's 92 counties in 2017, and in every one he heard that his message of hard work and Hoosier common sense is paying off," said Donnelly campaign manager Peter Hanscom. "Joe stood by working Hoosiers in 2017, standing up for affordable health care, a sensible tax code, and good-paying jobs, and Hoosiers stood by him with the best off-year in Indiana Senate history. As he continues on that path in 2018, his successes will be even greater."

Nathan Brand of the Rokita campaign contests the notion that Donnelly will have a big money advantage after the primary. He said that some of the traditional Democrat big spenders, like EMILY's List and NARAL, will not spend on his behalf because of his pro-life stance. He also notes that of the other vulnerable Democrat incumbents, Donnelly trails Sens. Sherrod Brown of Ohio who has \$9.8 million cash on hand, Debbie Stabenow of Michigan (\$8 million), Missouri's Claire McCaskill (\$9 million), Pennsylvania's Bob Casey (\$8.6 million), Wisconsin's Tammy Baldwin (\$7 million), and Florida's Bill Nelson (\$8 million).

### Braun and Messer file

On Wednesday, both Braun and Messer filed their candidacies at the secretary of state's office. Braun turned in over 7,100 verified signatures, 2,600 over the amount needed to qualify for U.S. Senate. "We are building a



strong grassroots organization throughout the state and I am very humbled with all the support I've received from Hoosiers across the state," said Braun.

Donnelly is expected to file his candidacy at 8:45 this morning.

In addition, the Braun campaign has also opened their campaign office in Zionsville this week. "We are expanding our campaign operation to meet the needs of the grassroots support we are attracting from South Bend to Jasper," added Braun.

Rokita responded to the two main challengers joining him in filing (he was first), with Brand saying, "We'd like to welcome Mike Braun to the Republican Party and Luke Messer back to the state he claims to still live in. Luke Messer is Evan Bayh, but without the well-known name. His decision to sell his Indiana home and move in with the D.C. elite will continue to haunt his Senate campaign. And with a history of voting for Democrats for two decades, and record of raising 45 taxes and fees, including the largest in state history, Tax Hike Mike Braun will spend the next three months attempting to disguise a record that is more in line with Washington liberals than Hoosier conservatives."

The other question in the GOP field is what happens to the three minor candidates, Mark Hurt, Andrew Takami and Andrew Horning? There was plenty of speculation that they won't have enough signatures to qualify.

Signatures must be turned into county clerks by Feb. 6 and certified by the noon Feb. 9 deadline.

### Indiana GOP targets Donnelly with ad

Coming on the heels of President Donald Trump's first State of the Union, the Indiana Republican Party today debuted "My Tax Cut," a one-minute radio advertisement spotlighting two hard-working Hoosier families and the substantial tax savings they will each receive as a direct result of the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. The radio ad asks why Democrat Joe Donnelly voted against cutting taxes, and why he wrongly told Hoosiers that they would not benefit from President Donald Trump's tax cut. "Democrat Joe Donnelly told us back in December that the average Hoosier wouldn't see a savings from tax reform. But we now know that Donnelly was completely wrong," said Indiana Republican Party Chairman Kyle Hupfer. "Hoosiers will see their paychecks get bigger in the next few weeks, and just like the Hoosiers in this ad, they'll start to wonder why Donnelly lied to us about these historic reforms. Hoosier Republicans in Congress voted to give hardworking Hoosiers a tax cut; why didn't Democrat Joe Donnelly?" Supported by a five-figure media buy, the ad launched today in Central Indiana, airing first during the Tony Katz morning program on WIBC. Starting on Monday, Feb. 5, the ad will run across Indiana, airing in all 92 counties. ❖

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# Here are the keys to Sen. Donnelly winning

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Here are key factors that will determine whether U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, the Indiana Democrat seeking a second term, will win in one of the costliest and most important election contests in the nation.

## Donnelly's Image

Republicans will hammer hard to shatter Donnelly's image as a moderate who reaches across the aisle



for compromises. They will portray him as really a partisan Democrat who votes the party line, opposing the agenda of President Trump and supporting liberal causes, except in a few votes to trick Hoosiers into believing he is less partisan.

Donnelly will continue to burnish his credentials as a moderate as he did in voting to avoid and then end the government shutdown.

That was a wise stance. The New York Times, not exactly pro-Republican, pointed out editorially that the shutdown ended "not a moment too soon." As the paper reported, Democrats found that Republicans were making headway in blaming them for shutting down the government to protect illegal immigrants. Although Democrats disagreed with that claim, they realized the shutdown was, as the Times reported, "a serious miscalculation."

But Republicans still will attack Donnelly for things such as his vote against the Republican tax plan. They never will credit him for any bipartisanship. For example, when he voted against the looming shutdown, the National Republican Senatorial Committee had no praise but lashed out instead that he "failed to speak out against his Democratic colleagues" for not ending "the Schumer Shutdown."

## The Trump factor

How popular President Trump is in Indiana at the time of the November elections could be the most important factor of all in the Senate race. The mid-term

elections will be more than anything a referendum on the president. How many voters will want to give him a vote of confidence with election of Republican senators and representatives who will support him and his agenda? How many will want to speak out against the president and his policies by voting for more opposition Democrats?

Trump won big, really big, by 19 percentage points in Indiana. Almost all polls show that the president is keeping most of his solid base of supporters. They won't vote for Donnelly. But what of the many Hoosier Republicans and independents and Democrats who joined that base to give Trump his overwhelming victory? Some will not vote for Donnelly. Some will. Will enough of them go with Donnelly to enable him to win in such a red state that gave Trump such a huge margin?

## The Republican nominee

Republican primary election voters on May 8 will pick their party's nominee for the Senate, who almost certainly will be one of the three top contenders among those announcing candidacy. They are Congressman Luke Messer of Indiana's 6th District, Congressman Todd Rokita of the 4th District and Mike Braun, wealthy Jasper businessman who has used his own money to buy TV ads that give him name recognition needed to challenge the two better known congressmen.

Messer, favorite of many Republican organization types, is a former executive director of the Indiana Republican Party. He has a "nice guy" image. A plus? Or not the type Republicans want for this tough battle?

Rokita, former Indiana secretary of state, campaigns as an all-out, unwavering Trump supporter. He promises a "smash mouth" campaign. What Republicans need to take down Donnelly? Or would that turn off voters?

Braun, a former state legislator, campaigns as an "outsider." Will voters want a political outsider? Or do they think someone who has been on the inside would know better how to get things done?

Donnelly won in 2012 in part because Republicans nominated a goofus, Richard Mourdock. None of

the top three contenders seems likely to be another Mourdock. But which one would have the best chance to win? Which might prove to be a weak contender? The decision of Republican primary voters will be an important factor. ❖



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

# Weinzapfel bows out; Tritch, Watson post FEC six figure reports

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Former Evansville mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel will not run in the 8th CD. It ends two weeks of speculation that he would join the race that includes 2016 nominee Ron Drake and Terre Haute attorney William Tanoos.

It comes as Democrats in the 3rd and 9th CDs reported they will post six figure fourth quarters in deep red districts.



Former legislator Dave Crooks had told HPI on Wednesday that Weinzapfel had told him last week he was going to run. But after checking with the former mayor, Crooks circled back with

HPI and said Weinzapfel was having second thoughts.

"Considering whether to run for public office is a complex process. One must evaluate implications of the decision from multiple perspectives – the most important being the effect on family – and the timing needs to be just right," Weinzapfel said in a statement. "In the end, after much soul-searching and deep discussions with family and friends, it is clear to me that the time is not right for me to re-enter the political arena."

In the 9th CD, Liz Watson posted \$276,000 cash on hand after raising \$170,000. She has raised \$372,000 in the last half of the year. "The story heading into the first quarter is she is going to have a big money lead," said Brian Peters, communications director for the Watson campaign. Watson, a Bloomington attorney and former U.S. House staffer, is facing New Albany attorney Dan Canan in the Democratic primary. The winner takes on U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth, who filed his candidacy on Tuesday.

In the 3rd CD, Democrat Courtney Tritch posted \$101,000 and has raised \$192,000 from 1,050 donors since she announced her candidacy on July 6.

"This truly is a campaign driven by the people," Tritch said. "When I started last summer, I did so with hope and an amazing group of volunteers. These numbers show a real appetite for change in Congress, and specifically in the 3rd District. Northeast Indiana is ready to replace ideological extremism with economic pragmatism, and I am thankful for the overwhelming support my campaign has received."

Tritch faces Tommy Schrader and John Roberson in the Democratic primary, with the winner facing freshman U.S. Rep. Jim Banks. Tritch has been endorsed by 3rd CD and Indiana Democratic parties and has the backing of Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry.

In the 4th CD, Republican Diego Morales reported raising \$204,000, bringing his total raised since 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. "The combination of a strong grassroots organization and relentless campaigning is resulting in the generous financial support needed to carry us to victory."

Here is a listing of candidates who have filed or are expected to in each of the other congressional districts:

## 1st CD: Visclosky prohibitively favored

**Democrat:** U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky. **Republican:** David Dopp, Mark Leyva, John Meyer. **Analysis:**

Visclosky will easily win a 16th term in this +9 Democrat district on the Cook Partisan index. Leyva is the perennial Republican candidate. It doesn't matter if he's nominated again, or someone else.

## 2nd CD: Walorski yet to file

**Republican:** U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski is expected to file for a fourth term. **Democrat:** Pat Hackett, Mel Hall, Yatish Joshi, Roland E. Leech, Douglas Carpenter. **Analysis:** Hall is the preferred establishment party candidate. Walorski won reelection in 2016 by 62,000 votes over Lynn Coleman.

## 4th CD: 2 open primaries

**Republican:** State Rep. Jim Baird, Steve Braun, Kevin J. Grant, Diego Morales, James Nease, Tim Radice. **Democrat:** Tobi Beck, Roger D. Day, Joseph W. Mackey, Veronikka M. Ziol. **Analysis:** The Republican primary is expected to come down between Braun, the former Indiana Workforce Develop-



9th CD Democrat Liz Watson posted \$170,000 in the 4th quarter.



ment director, and Morales, the former aide to Gov. Mike Pence who has energetically campaigned for the job for most of 2017. Morales has the endorsement of Rex Early, who chaired the 2016 Donald Trump campaign.

**5th CD: Brooks favored**

**Republican:** U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks. **Democrat:** Jennifer Christie, Eshel Faraggi, Dee Thornton. **Analysis:** Unless there's a sizable Democratic wave, Brooks should be in decent shape for reelection. There is no clear Democratic frontrunner. Brooks won this district in 2016 by almost 100,000 votes.

**6th CD: Pence posts \$563K**

**Republican:** Greg Pence, who has yet to file, Thomas G. Ferkinhoff, and Jonathan M. Lamb. **Democrat:** Jasen Lave, Jim Pruet. **Analysis:** Pence will be the



Indiana 1	D+8	Democratic
Indiana 2	R+11	Republican
Indiana 3	R+18	Republican
Indiana 4	R+17	Republican
Indiana 5	R+9	Republican
Indiana 6	R+18	Republican
Indiana 7	D+11	Democratic
Indiana 8	R+15	Republican
Indiana 9	R+13	Republican

overwhelming frontrunner, seeking the nomination in the district that launched the national career of his brother, Vice President Mike Pence. On Tuesday, he announced raising \$563,000. "Greg Pence is a lifelong Hoosier who voters recognize is the best person to represent 6th District constituents in Washington because of his experience as an officer in the Marine Corps, Indiana small business owner and proud conservative," said campaign manager Dan Hennessey. "Greg Pence is focused on creating jobs, growing our economy, protecting our borders and providing for our fighting men and women, both during and after their

service." Pence began his TV campaign this week with a "Ready to Serve Again" ad that features him 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. Lamb has



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been running cable TV ads, touting his background as a Ball State track star, but he has little chance against a Pence.

**7th CD: Carson heavily favored**

**Democrat:** U.S. Rep. Andre Carson, Curtis D. Godfrey, Sue Spicer. **Republican:** John L Couch, J. Jason Davis, Wayne "Gunny" Harmon, Tony "Big Dog" Van Pelt. **Analysis:** Carson will win the Democratic primary and will be a prohibitive favorite in the general.

**8th CD: Drake v. Tanoos now**

**Republican:** U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon, Richard Moss. **Democrat:** Ron Drake and William Tanoos. **Analysis:** Sources say that Weinzapfel backers tried to get Tanoos, a Terre Haute disabilities attorney, to withdraw, but he refused, filing this week. So, too, did 2016 nominee Ron Drake, who won a recounted Democratic primary. The recount lasted months, and Rep. Bucshon defeated him in a landslide, 187,702 to 93,356. Bucshon faces a rematch against Dr. Moss of Jasper, who he defeated by more than 30,000 votes in the 2016 Republican primary.

**General Assembly**

**SD1: Mrvan to seek reelection**

State Sen. Frank Mrvan, D-Hammond, is asking Lake County voters to send him back to the Statehouse next year for a 10th four-year term (Carden, NWI Times). The 84-year-old lawmaker announced Wednesday that he is running for re-election, because he still has more work to do on behalf of his constituents in the 1st Senate District of Hammond, Munster, Highland, Dyer, Schererville and Griffith. Mrvan currently is spearheading an effort in the General Assembly to allow Hoosiers to vote absentee by mail without requiring an excuse, as they already can through in-person early voting.

**Buchanan wins SD7 caucus**

The Indiana Republican Party announced last night that a Republican caucus selected Brian Buchanan to fill the vacant seat in State Senate District 7. The seat was opened after State Sen. Brandt Hershman officially resigned earlier this month to work for a law firm in Washington, D.C. "Former State Sen. Brandt Hershman served this district honorably over his distinguished career in the Indiana Senate, helping Indiana rise to become the fiscal envy of the nation," said Indiana Republican Party Chairman Kyle Hupfer. "I'm confident that State Sen.-elect Buchanan will work with that same passion to serve Hoosiers throughout the district, working alongside his Republi-



can colleagues to deliver great government service for all."

**SD26: 'Berniecrat' running**

Muncie businessman Dave Ring, who describes himself as a "Berniecrat," is seeking the Democratic Party nomination for the District 26 seat in the Indiana Senate (de la Bastide, Anderson Herald Bulletin). Ring announced his candidacy on Thursday, joining Anderson Fire Department Chief Dave Cravens in the race for the nomination. Incumbent Republican Doug Eckerty of Yorktown is not seeking reelection and Madison County Republicans Mike Gaskill and Steffanie Owens are seeking their party's nomination in the May 8 primary.

**HD43: 4th Dem announces**

A fourth Democrat has tossed his name into the race for the District 43 seat in the Indiana House of Representatives. Chad J. Overton, 43, said he seeks to make business development for Terre Haute a top priority (Greninger, Terre Haute Tribune-Star). "It is time that Terre Haute has a leader who is willing to find the jobs and get the income level to where we need to be," Overton said. "For too long, Vigo County has fallen behind in the fight for good-paying jobs. From day one, I will fight for more jobs, more funding for schools so we can reverse the declining high school graduation rate. We must also do more to solve the opioid problem facing our communities." Overton is owner of a ServPro business, with locations in Vigo, Clay, Parke, Sullivan, Vermillion, Brown and Bartholomew counties. Others who have declared as Democrats for the Indiana House 43rd District seat include former Vigo County Councilman Mark Bird, former Terre Haute City Councilman Norm Loudermilk, and school teacher Tonya Pfaff. Two Republicans, Terre Haute city attorney Eddie Felling and ISU student Isaac Deal, have announced they'll seek the seat.

**HD59: Crowded field to replace Rep. Smith**

The race to replace State Rep. Milo Smith is getting crowded (WCSI). Three Republicans have filed to run in the May primary and two Democrats, according to records in the Bartholomew County clerk's office. Recently filing on the Republican side for the House District 59 race are Jo Flohr and Lew Wilson, the current county assessor. They join Ryan Lauer for the Republican primary. On the Democratic side, Mary Kohen and Dale Nowlin are in the running for the seat. Smith, a Columbus Republican, has announced that he will not run for reelection.

**HD82: Ober won't seek reelection**

Albion Republican Dave Ober announced Monday he is not seeking reelection. (Kelly, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Ober is in his sixth year in the Indiana House. He said his recent engagement factored into his decision, because his fiancée lives in Indianapolis and starting a marriage in different cities would have been tough. Then

an opening came up on the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission for which he applied. "It seemed like the right opportunity," Ober said.

## Primary Filings

**Congress: Democrat:** Douglas Carpenter CD2, Yatish Joshi CD2, K. Jasen Lave CD6, Jennifer Christie CD5, William Tanoos CD8. **Republican:** Mike Braun U.S. Senate, Luke Messer U.S. Senate, James Nease CD4, Rep. Jim Banks CD3, Diego Morales CD4, Jonathan Lamb CD6, U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth CD9.

**Indiana Senate: Democrat:** Sen. Frank Mrvan Jr. SD1, Dave Ring SD26, Nicholas Siler SD47, Ryan Farrar SD6, J.D. Ford SD29, Edie Hardcastle SD49. **Republican:** Sen. Ron Alting SD22.

**Indiana House: Democrat:** Darren Washington HD3, Chad Overton HD43, Cynthia Reinert HD58, Rita Fleming HD71, Kevin Leineweber HD91, Rep. Karlee Macer HD97, Rep. John Bartlett HD95, Rep. Dan Forestal HD100, Patricia Boy HD9, Joseph Lehman HD49. **Republican:** John D. Counciller HD59, Christy Stutzman HD49, JoAnne Flohr HD59, Rep. Bruce Borders HD45, Rep. David Frizzell HD93.

## National

### Gowdy won't seek reelection

South Carolina Rep. Trey Gowdy announced Wednesday he will not be running for re-election and intends to leave politics after this term is over (Pathe, [Roll Call](#)). The Republican lawmaker, first elected to the 4th District in 2010, chairs the Oversight and Government Reform Committee. "I will not be filing for re-election to Congress nor seeking any other political or elected office; instead I will be returning to the justice system," Gowdy said in a statement. Gowdy took over the chairmanship of the Oversight panel last June, following the retirement of Utah Rep. Jason Chaffetz.

### Pence predicts GOP majorities

Vice President Mike Pence on Wednesday evening predicted Republicans would maintain their majorities in the House and Senate after the midterm elections, but urged members in the coming weeks to tout the conservative victories achieved in 2017 to constituents (Williams, [Roll Call](#)). Pence, who was speaking at the annual GOP retreat in White Sulphur Springs, W. Va., said the White House would be with the lawmakers "every step of the way in 2018." "We've got an incredible story to tell," Pence said, citing specifically the record amount of appellate judges the Senate confirmed last year. Republicans will discuss the 2018 political landscape during this week's policy retreat. Pence claimed that, despite "conventional wisdom" that the midterms would be a challenge, the GOP would keep

their majorities in both chambers. "Conventional wisdom holds that the upcoming midterms are going to be a challenge, but I think you all know what President Trump thinks about conventional wisdom," he said. "The conventional wisdom said in 2016 that Hillary Clinton was going to be elected."

### Pence's ambitious 2018 strategy

Vice President Pence is launching one of the most aggressive campaign strategies in recent White House history: he will hopscotch the country over the next three months, making nearly three dozen stops that could raise tens of millions of dollars for House and Senate Republicans, all while promoting the party's legislative accomplishments. If done right, Pence said in an exclusive interview with [POLITICO](#) backstage before his speech to the House and Senate GOP here Wednesday night, Republicans could expand their majority in both chambers. "Elections are about choices," he said in the interview in which he discussed his midterm outlook in detail for the first time. "If we frame that choice, I think we're going to re-elect majorities in the House and the Senate and I actually think we're going to, when all the dust settles after 2018, I think we're going to have more Republicans in Congress in Washington, D.C., than where we started." House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy was blunt: this year could be historically bad for Republicans. But, he noted, the GOP had time to turn it around. Pence and President Donald Trump made a decision: it was time for them to activate. Pence's team asked the National Republican Senatorial Committee and National Republican Congressional Committee where the vice president could be helpful. Pence will campaign against his fellow Hoosier, Indiana Sen. Joe Donnelly.

### Pence smiles on GOP memo

Vice President Mike Pence told House and Senate Republicans during his speech last night he was from the "Joseph A. Banks wing of the West Wing" (Politico Playbook). We asked the VP about whether he supports releasing the Devin Nunes Memo: "That's a decision that the president will make and he'll make that public at the appropriate time. I will tell you - I've always believed in the public's right to know, and I stand by that principle. But we'll respect whatever decision the president makes concerning that memo." Asked if he had given Trump any advice, Pence just smiled and didn't answer.

### Corporations give to Pence

Vice President Mike Pence saw fundraising for his political action committee surge to more than \$1.26 million during the second half of the year as corporate interests stepped up to help him protect GOP majorities in Congress ([IndyStar](#)). Roughly 30 percent of the money that went to the Great America Committee since July 1. ❖



# Townships bill advances out of W&Ms

By **SCOTT MILEY**  
CNHI Statehouse Bureau

INDIANAPOLIS – Legislation that would force small townships to merge with larger neighboring townships is moving through the legislature after facing challenges resulting in providing guidance in consolidations and creating a possible summer study committee (Miley, CNHI). “The motivation behind this legislation is to provide the most efficient, fiscally sound local government possible at the township level,” State Rep. Cindy Ziemke, R-Batesville said. Her House Bill 1005 would require townships with a population of less than 1,200 to develop a consolidation plan with one or more townships within the same county by 2023. The bill passed out of the House Ways and Means

Committee and now goes to the House floor. Rep. Steve Davisson, R-Salem, voted against the measure saying, “I represent six rural counties with several small townships. I’ve gotten contact from a lot of my township folks. They are opposed to this bill and I have to represent my district.”

## Change in teacher license bill

Indiana lawmakers introduced a last-minute proposal on Wednesday that would allow public school districts to bypass certain standards and hire up to 10 percent of their teachers without a traditional state teaching licenses (Cavazos, [Chalkbeat](#)). The measure, added to Senate Bill 387 during a Senate Education Committee meeting, would ostensibly allow public schools to be more competitive with charter schools at a time when many districts are having difficulty finding qualified teachers, particularly in areas like special education, science and math. Charter schools tend to have fewer regulations for hiring than traditional districts, and are currently only required to have 90 percent of teachers hold licenses. The bill is the latest attempt by Indiana Republicans to allow looser teacher licensure rules — a philosophy that has put them at odds with teachers unions. Lawmakers have already overhauled the rules to offer permits to those who don’t meet all of the education theory and university course requirements.

## Sex assault kit bill advances

A bill that would allow for the development of a sexual assault kit tracking system passed a Senate committee on Wednesday ([WTTV](#)). State Sen. Michael Crider (R-Greenfield) drafted the bill after an audit on sexual

assault kits in Indiana was conducted last year. Results of the audit showed 5,400 sexual assault kits were in law enforcement custody statewide. Of those, 47 percent were untested, comprising a total of 2,560 kits. Crider’s bill would require a tracking system for all kits. One idea for the tracking system would installing barcodes on every kit. “Anybody that operates within the law enforcement community could run that number and say, ‘whose kit is that? Where is it located? At what step is it in the process?’” Crider explained.

## Guns and church bill advances

Currently, Hoosiers can legally carry guns on church property, so long as that property doesn’t also house a school (Herron, [IndyStar](#)). The Indiana Senate Judiciary Committee took a step toward changing that Wednesday, moving forward a bill that would allow guns on all church property — school or not. “This allows a house of worship to be able to protect their congregation on their property,” said the bill’s sponsor, Indianapolis Republican Jack Sandlin. “It does not put guns in the hands of teachers. It does not prohibit houses of worship from establishing policies to prohibit the bringing of firearms onto their property.” The bill passed along party lines, with five Republicans sending Senate Bill 33 to the floor and two Democrats voting against it.

## House votes to life light rail ban

The Indiana House has approved a bill that would lift a ban on building light rail in the Indianapolis area ([Associated Press](#)). The measure by Rep. Justin Moed, D-Indianapolis, was approved Tuesday on a 90-5 vote and moves to the Senate. Lawmakers are reconsidering the ban with hopes of landing Amazon’s second North American headquarters. Moed touted the measure as an economic development tool that could help lure additional business. Rep. Mike Speedy, R-Indianapolis, was one of the few who voted against Moed’s bill. He said it would lead to boondoggles and billions in debt.



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### Senate passes civil forfeiture

A bill authored by District 37 State Sen. Rodric Bray (R-Martinsville) that would reform Indiana's civil forfeiture laws passed out of the Senate Tuesday by a vote of 49-0 ([Greencastle Banner-Graphic](#)). Senate Bill 99 establishes a probable cause requirement for all forfeiture cases and establishes a process for innocent property owners to get their property back if it was seized while in another person's possession. The bill also establishes new guidelines to speed up the court process, noted Bray. The bill would require a prosecuting attorney to file a probable cause affidavit within seven days after property is seized, and allows for return of the property to the owner if the court does not find probable cause.

### DeLaney comments on DCS probe

Indianapolis Democrat, State Rep. Ed DeLaney, says in the first of four podcasts he is putting together that one of the biggest problems of the opioid epidemic is how the state is protecting children affected by the crisis (Darling, [WIBC](#)). In late 2017, state Department of Child Services Director Mary Beth Bonaventura resigned for that post. DeLaney stops short of concurring with blame placed on the Holcomb Administration by Bonaventura for a lack of effort to protect Hoosier children from the opioid crisis. However, he adds one of the reasons that many children are going unprotected is because DCS case workers have

to work more cases than ever before, while being grossly under paid. DeLaney has proposed legislation fixing this problem while also adding language that would give DCS case workers a raise. He says paying DCS workers more money would solve another problem: a high turnover rate of case workers.

### Chamber disappointed by smoking bill

Indiana Chamber of Commerce President Kevin Brinegar has strong words for the General Assembly following the effective end of a bill that would've raised the state's legal smoking age to 21 (McGowan, [Inside Indiana Business](#)). "There is no valid reason why House Bill 1380 - which passed the House Public Health Committee unanimously Monday - wasn't allowed to make it to the House floor for a vote," he said in a statement. Brinegar cited Indiana University School of Public Health figures that suggest smoking is a more than \$6 billion a year drag on the economy. In a Studio(i) interview prior to Tuesday's full House session, Brinegar told Gerry Dick only tobacco companies win with the status quo. He said smoking leads to "real lost productivity" by workers, causing employers to lose "real money."

### House approves pay day loans

The Indiana House approved legislation Wednesday

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day to create a new type of payday loan – with interest rates of up to 200 percent – that opponents argue amounts to predatory lending (Smith, [WFYI](#)). The legislation creates a loan of between about \$600 and \$1,500, with a term of up to 12 months. Rep. Woody Burton (R-Whiteland) says the loans are aimed at those with poor credit who have nowhere else to turn. The bill also allows an interest rate of up to 200 percent. And it's opposed by dozens of groups, including all of the state's major veterans organizations – as Rep. Carey Hamilton (D-Indianapolis) says, those who work with people who would be affected by the measure.

**Construction waste bill passes House**

The city of Gary's plan to locate a disposal and recycling facility for construction and demolition waste just 600 feet from residences won overwhelming support Wednesday in the Indiana House (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). House Bill 1318, sponsored by state Rep. Earl Harris, Jr., D-East Chicago, was approved 89-3 and now advances to the Senate. The measure exempts Gary from a state law that only applies to Lake County which requires landfills of any kind be located at least a half-mile from the nearest residence.

**Day care shutdown bill passes House**

A Merrillville day care where police allegedly discovered loaded guns, knives and half-emptied liquor bottles within reach of children is prompting state lawmakers to take action they hope will prevent a similar incident from happening again (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). The Indiana House voted 94-0 Tuesday to advance House Bill 1073, sponsored by state Rep. Julie Olthoff, R-Crown Point, to the Senate. It authorizes the state to immediately shut down any licensed day care facility, home or ministry if weapons of any kind are found in a place that is accessible to children. "Between January 2016 and November 2017, there were 463 child care providers cited for violations

concerning children's accessibility to dangerous items," Olthoff said. "We must protect children with no tolerance for unsafe conditions."

**Consultant identifies DCS problems**

An outside consultant evaluating Indiana's child welfare system has already identified two key challenges the state faces, and laid out a plan for the next several months (Kelly, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). The group's first update will be released Thursday but The Journal Gazette received a copy of the report early. The Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group was tapped by Gov. Eric Holcomb in December to conduct an assessment following the resignation of Department of Child Services' Director Mary Beth Bonaventura. She blasted the governor for budget decisions and administrative policy that will "all but ensure children will die." The number of Indiana children in need of protection has exploded in recent years to almost 30,000. Illinois has twice the population but half as many abused and neglected children in its system. The nonprofit out of Alabama found the state needs an "automated data system that more readily produces management reports which allow staff at all levels to continuously monitor their performance on key processes and outcomes" And the group also noted a substantial number of abused and neglected children in out-of-home care. That number has grown from 8,897 in December 2012 to 16,834 in December 2017.

**Industrial hemp bill passes**

The Indiana House voted unanimously Wednesday for a bill that would allow Hoosier farmers to grow industrial hemp — marijuana's low-THC cousin (Lange, IndyStar). Under Rep. Jim Lucas' House Bill 1137, acres of the green leafy plants could be intermingled with rows of corn across family farms in Indiana. Currently only researchers at institutions are allowed to grow the plant, and are unable to do so for commercial purposes. ❖



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# Path for Democrats to retake House majority

By **KYLE KONDIK**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – In sketching out a potential path to a bare Democratic House majority of 218 seats out of 435, we found that in all likelihood the Democrats will need to win similar numbers of Republican-held seats won by Hillary Clinton as well as by Donald Trump in the last presidential election. Clinton-won districts are not enough on their own.

It is hard to construct a Democratic majority without the party netting several seats from California, and Democrats also likely need to win at least multiple seats apiece in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, where a new district map may be in the offing.

The growing number of Republican-held open seats may allow the Democrats to net a third or more of the seats they need to win the House from districts that don't have an incumbent. But as we've previously said, the majority of Democratic gains will have to come from beating incumbents, unless considerably more Republican incumbents retire from vulnerable seats. Since we wrote an overview of open seats two weeks ago, two more swing district Republicans announced their retirements: Reps. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R, NJ-11) and Pat Meehan (R, PA-7).

A caveat: What follows is NOT a projection. We are not making many specific House calls nine months before the election, and our own belief is that, as of this moment, the race for House control is about a coin flip. Democrats should gain seats, but on the face of the seats currently available to flip, we're unsure if they can net the 24 seats they need to win control. A look at the specific targets might help explain our reticence in prematurely declaring the House for the Democrats despite clearly favorable national conditions. A tsunami might well develop in the fall, but that's a judgment that cannot be reached with the information we have today.

## The Drive for 25, Part 2

We've previously described the Democrats' odds of winning a House majority in November as roughly 50-50, and that's where we remain. Democrats benefit from the usual presidential party midterm drag, President Trump's lackluster approval ratings, and a flood of candidates. Republicans benefit from the overall House map and the presence of some strong incumbents in marginal districts, even after some key retirements have weakened the front line of their defenses.

But if one believes the Democrats have a clear if challenging road to 218 (or more) seats in the House, as

we do, one has to also construct a seat-by-seat path to how they might win that majority. That's what we're going to do today.

We're going to call this the Democrats' "Drive for 25." Perceptive readers may recall hearing that phrase before: It was the Democratic slogan in 2012, when the Democrats needed to net 25 seats to win back the House after they lost it in the Republican wave of 2010. (They only netted eight, so Democrats hope the sequel is a lot better than the original.) This path is based on the assumption that Democrats need to win at least 25 current Republican seats to capture the House. Technically, the Democrats only need to net 24, assuming a full strength House featuring a roster of 241 Republicans and 194 Democrats (at present, there are three

Republican vacancies that will be filled in special elections later this year -- it's possible the Democrats can pull an upset in one or more of these seats, but let's assume for

now that they don't; there's also a Democratic vacancy, MI-13, that won't be filled until the regular election).

However, even in bad years for the presidential party, that party usually wins at least something from the other party. So for the purposes of this exercise, we're assuming the Republicans win one, but only one, Democratic-held seat. The best candidate is MN-1, an open seat in southern Minnesota that Trump carried by about 15 points.

Assuming that, the Democrats need to capture at least 25 current Republican seats. What follows is something of a "choose your own adventure" featuring a Democratic path to a bare majority through buckets of different kinds of seats. Obviously, if Democrats were to do a little bit better in one basket, they could make up for a deficit in another grouping (and vice versa).

## Here goes:

**1.** Win all four open seats where Democrats already are favored

Seats: AZ-2 (Open), CA-49 (Open), FL-27 (Open), and NJ-2 (Open). If there are any "must-wins" for Democrats in the House, these four seats qualify.

**2.** At least three more Toss-up open seats  
Seats: CA-39 (Open), MI-11 (Open), NJ-11 (Open), and WA-8 (Open) Here are two more Clinton-won open seats (CA-39, WA-8) as well as two Trump-won seats where the president ran a bit behind Mitt Romney's 2012 showing (MI-11 and NJ-11).

**3.** Net at least three seats from Pennsylvania  
Seats: PA-6 (Ryan Costello), PA-7 (Open), PA-8 (Brian Fitzpatrick), PA-15 (Open), and/or ? The Keystone State sits in limbo as we await a potential remap ordered by the state Supreme Court. It is unclear how much a new district map would benefit Democrats. The map as currently drawn is a fairly obvious Republican gerrymander: The Republicans control 13 of 18 seats in a state that was about 50-50 at the federal level in 2016 (and was more Democratic-lean-





ing before that). Assuming that the remap isn't delayed -- the U.S. Supreme Court could still intervene and allow the old map to remain in effect for 2018 -- Gov. Tom Wolf (D-PA) and the Republican-controlled state legislature will have to agree to a new map, or the courts may draw a map. Speculating on what might happen is largely guesswork, but one of the wrinkles of the court's order is that it wants to limit the splitting of counties.

**4. Beat at least three of five vulnerable California incumbents in Clinton-won districts.** Seats: CA-10 (Jeff Denham), CA-21 (David Valadao), CA-25 (Steve Knight), CA-45 (Mimi Walters), or CA-48 (Dana Rohrabacher) Democrats already hold 39 of 53 districts in California, and yet they likely need to squeeze several more seats out of the Golden State to get to a House majority.

**5. Defeat three of these six Clinton-district incumbents.** Seats: CO-6 (Mike Coffman), FL-26 (Carlos Curbelo), IL-6 (Peter Roskam), MN-3 (Erik Paulsen), TX-23 (Will Hurd), VA-10 (Barbara Comstock) One of the GOP advantages in this election is that they still have a number of proven incumbents running in Clinton-won districts, these half-dozen members included. Most of these members won relatively clear victories in 2016; the only one who didn't was Hurd (TX-23), who won by just a little over a point. Democrats will target all six of these districts, but

it's unrealistic to expect them to win all of these seats: As we've noted previously, even big waves don't wash away all of the other side's most vulnerable incumbents, and a big wave is not guaranteed anyway. Realistically, winning half of these districts would represent a good night for Democrats.

**6. Win one of these three Clinton-won, historically Republican seats.** Seats: NJ-7 (Leonard Lance), TX-7 (John Culberson), or TX-32 (Pete Sessions) It's not entirely clear how vulnerable these three members actually are, although it seems like a safe bet that all three are in for much harder races than they are accustomed to. Lance (NJ-7) first won his seat in the big Democratic year of 2008 by eight points, and he hasn't really had a close general election since. Meanwhile, Culberson (TX-7) and Sessions (TX-32) never would have been considered as even remotely vulnerable until Clinton narrowly carried both of their suburban Dallas (Sessions) and Houston (Culberson) districts in 2016. Republicans seem about Culberson being caught napping, although he upped his fundraising output in 2017's fourth quarter, a sign that he may be coming around to his district's newfound competitiveness. Sessions, a former NRCC chairman, already was sitting on a big war chest and he's been adding to it. ❖

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# In-your-face Lake sheriff primary coming

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – One can always count on a heated, in-your-face primary for Lake County sheriff every four years. As is usually the case, you can bet that the candidates collectively will raise and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars. After all, the sheriff is the most powerful political figure in the county year in and year out. And he is the highest paid elected official in the county.



There have been legendary races including John Buncich and Roy Dominguez. Although Buncich won, Dominguez later became sheriff. Jose Arredondo and Chris An-

ton won heated sheriff races in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Democratic precinct organization picked Rudy Bartolomei to become sheriff after Anton died in office. Bartolomei never got a chance to run for a full term when he was indicted and entered the federal witness protection program. Stephen R. Stiglich was picked by precinct officials in the mid-80s to replace Bartolomei and then won two terms of his own. He passed away several years ago.

The 2018 sheriff's primary is shaping up to be as good as any in the past. A host of candidates in and out of the law enforcement profession have filed and there could be others by the Feb. 9 deadline. But, chances are good the primary winner will come from the ranks of law enforcement. Leslie O. Pruitt was one of the few sheriffs without a background in law enforcement. The cops back then gave him high marks for what he did for the department.

So intense is the 2018 primary that Schererville Police Chief David Dowling plans to retire so he can campaign full-time for sheriff. He finished second in the caucus to replace Buncich. Sheriff Oscar Martinez Jr., who has lost primary bids for sheriff, was picked in a precinct caucus to replace Buncich and is seeking nomination for a full term. Former deputy chief Dan Murchek, who held that position under Buncich, and is an official in the Northwest Indiana AFL-CIO, is running as he did in the precinct caucus.

**Even in racially diverse** Lake County, race likely will play a role. Two black candidates have filed. One is Richard Ligon, who spent his career in law enforcement with the U.S. Postal Service. Ligon twice has done well running for sheriff, largely because of his strength in the black community.

The other black candidate is Mike Brown, who has been a very popular county clerk but can't run again because of term limits. If Ligon and Brown split the black vote, it could well open the door for Dowling or another

candidate. ❖

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

# Social security impact

By MORTON MARCUS

INDIANAPOLIS – Some voters cast their ballots based on philosophical principles. Others are more concerned with the principals in their bank accounts. This week we'll see how Hoosiers measure up in terms of Social Security (SS) payments from the federal government, as reported by the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (2016 vintage).



There's not much difference between the entire United States and Indiana in terms of the percent of households receiving SS payments. For the nation it's 30.2%, with Indiana somewhat higher at 30.9%.

Likewise, the U.S. and Indiana are close on median age of the population, with the U.S. a bit older at 37.7 years and Indiana a spritely 37.4 years. The median age is the number where 50% of the population is older and 50% younger.

The difference between our state and the nation appears when we examine the mean or average annual SS payments. Indiana's average payments from SS were \$18,864 or 3.7% higher than the national average of \$18,193.

**Within Indiana**, data are available for 31 counties with populations in excess of 45,000 persons. Grant and Wayne counties both exceed 40% of households receiving SS payments. The counties least dependent on federal SS payments are Hamilton, Tippecanoe and Monroe (each at 24% of households or less). The latter two are college counties and Hamilton has the highest average earnings per household in the state (\$114,778). Hamilton households also have the highest average SS payments in the state (\$21,503).

This occurs because SS payments for each of us are linked our work-life earnings. Counties with high average earnings tend to be high on the list of counties receiving high average SS payments. The top eight Indiana counties in such payments are all suburban counties.

Households with low earnings (the average for Grant is \$52,086, the lowest of the 31 counties) then tend to have low average SS payments. Grant County, at \$17,630, has the third lowest average SS payments in Indiana in our field of 31 counties. ❖



**Matthew Tully, IndyStar:** Those of us who have begged and pleaded for at least a nod from political leaders toward bipartisanship should be celebrating these days. But we're not, for good reason. Here in Indianapolis, a handful of Democrats and a larger cluster of Republicans united recently to elect a new City-County Council president, who immediately proceeded to grant significantly more power to the GOP minority. Some hailed it as an example of the parties working together. Bipartisanship! It was more like baloney, of course.

The deal struck by current Council President Stephen Clay and council Republicans was politics at its worst and most cynical. This was about power, not bipartisanship, and that explains why Clay's presidency already looks doomed. Some of his Democratic supporters have recoiled, according to news reports, because of the power he gave to Republicans in return for their votes. They wanted power, not bipartisanship. The whole mess gives the elusive and admirable goal of bipartisanship a bad name. And it's a reminder that while the parties can't often come together to address major challenges, some are willing to cut back-room deals with the other party for the sake of power and glory. Ugh. ❖

**David Brooks, New York Times:** America is suffering from a loss of dynamism. New business formation is down. Interstate mobility is down. Americans switch jobs less frequently and more Americans go through the day without ever leaving the house. But these trends are largely within the native population. Immigrants provide the antidote. They start new businesses at twice the rate of nonimmigrants. Roughly 70 percent of immigrants express confidence in the American dream, compared with only 50 percent of the native-born. Immigrants have much more traditional views on family structure than the native-born and much lower rates of out-of-wedlock births. They commit much less crime than the native-born. Roughly 1.6 percent of immigrant males between 18 and 39 wind up incarcerated compared with 3.3 percent of the native-born. What about the rise of social distrust? Restrictionists often cite a 2007 Robert Putnam study finding that more diversity leads to less trust. But Putnam tells me they are distorting his research. He found that diversity's benefits outweigh its disadvantages, that trust declines over the short term as places grow more diverse, but that over the long term Americans find new ways to boost social solidarity. What about assimilation? Restrictionists argue that the melting pot is broken. But the definitive survey of the literature from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine finds this is not true. Most descendants of immigrants stop identifying with their ancestral homelands and simply think of themselves as white. In the 2010 census, 53 percent of Latinos identified as white, as did a similar percentage of Asian-Americans with mixed parentage. In 1945 Germany was divided. One



part went capitalist and the other went communist. After a half-century it was perfectly clear that capitalism was a more successful system than communism. Over the past few decades America has, willy-nilly, conducted a similar experiment. About 500 counties, mostly in metro areas, have embraced diversity — attracting immigrants and supporting candidates who favor immigration. About 2,600 counties, mostly in rural areas, have not attracted immigrants, and they tend to elect candidates who oppose immigration and diversity. The results are just as clear as in the German case. Between 2014 and 2016 the counties that embrace diversity accounted for 72 percent of the nation's increased economic output and two-thirds of the new jobs. The approximately 85 percent of counties that support restrictionists like Donald Trump accounted for a measly 28 percent of the growth. Republicans' problem is that since George W. Bush left town they've become the East Germans of the 21st century. ❖

**Jon Webb, Evansville Courier & Press:** Indiana House Speaker Brian Bosma received donations from two tobacco giants in 2016, according to campaign finance records. Philip Morris, the patriots behind Marlboro, ponied up \$500. But the good people at Reynolds American (RAI Services Company), the owners of Pall Mall and Lucky Strike, gave \$2,000. RAI also donated \$1,000 to Bosma in December 2015, while Philip Morris shelled out its usual \$500, both in November of that year and October 2014. I'm sure there are other instances. Bosma has been walking around the statehouse for decades. Every business entity of the last 30 years has probably tossed at least a few bucks his way. Of course it would be presumptuous to suggest such donations played any role in Bosma snuffing out a bill on Tuesday that would have raised the smoking age in Indiana to 21. But Bosma is tough to pin down. A few years ago, he suggested a \$1-per-pack cigarette tax increase. And now here he is, striking down legislation that sailed through the House Public Health Committee and sought to curb the smoking rate in Indiana — a state that lights up with the frequency of an anxiety-ridden Fidel Castro. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found in 2016 that about 21 percent of adult Hoosiers smoke cigarettes. In 2013, Gallup had that figure near 25 percent. State legislators essentially ignored the problem for a long time, but this year they suddenly decided to try one of the most audacious pieces of legislation in years. Indiana would have been only the sixth state to hike the smoking age to 21 — and the only one not tucked into the east or west coasts. It was bound to fail. But it's the way that it failed that's so distressing. We're awfully selective on what is and what isn't "government intrusion." Why is Bosma giving tobacco a pass after he's spent years denying any advancement of medical marijuana? Why does the government get to decide where -- and when -- Hoosiers can grab a six-pack of cold beer? ❖

## FBI clashes with Trump over memo

WASHINGTON — The F.B.I. clashed publicly with President Trump for the first time on Wednesday, condemning a push by House Republicans to release a secret memo that purports to show how the bureau and the Justice Department abused their authority to obtain a warrant to spy on a former Trump campaign adviser (New York Times). "The F.B.I. was provided a limited opportunity to review this memo the day before the committee voted to release it," the bureau said in a statement, referring to the House Intelligence Committee. "As expressed during our initial review, we have grave concerns about material omissions of fact that fundamentally impact the memo's accuracy." The high-profile comment by the F.B.I. thrust Christopher A. Wray, the bureau's director, into a confrontation with the president, who had abruptly fired Mr. Wray's predecessor, James B. Comey. Mr. Wray had pleaded in recent days at the White House to keep the document private.

## Bucshon, wife aided train crash victims

INDIANAPOLIS — One person died and others were injured Wednesday when a train carrying GOP lawmakers, including some from Indiana, crashed into a trash truck (Houser, [WTTV](#)). U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon (R-IN) MD and his wife, Katherine, are both doctors. He said they ran out of the train to try to help the victims in the truck. "On the person who was badly injured, my wife, who's an anesthesiologist, attempted to do an intubation and get an airway," he said. "There's these gentlemen who get up for their regular day at work and something tragic like this happens and I think all of us on the train are pretty substantially affected by this incident." Rep. Bucshon and his

wife, along with other doctors who are members of congress worked to keep the patient stable and breathing until EMS arrived. Hoosier lawmakers on board also included Republicans U.S. Sen. Todd Young and Reps. Susan Brooks and Jim Banks.

## Clay fires Indy Council staffers

INDIANAPOLIS — The turmoil between Democrats on the Indianapolis City-County Council continued Wednesday as embattled president Stephen Clay moved to fire the council's lawyer—an act which critics said they believed was in retaliation for the lawyer's moves two days earlier that helped put Clay's presidency in jeopardy (Colombo, [IBJ](#)). Fred Biesecker, the council's lawyer, told [IBJ](#) in a text message he was fired Wednesday by Clay but that he didn't know why—and didn't necessarily believe Clay had the authority to fire him. He was seen walking out of the City-County building with his belongings, in an image captured by a WTHR reporter. The council's clerk, NaTrina DeBow, was also apparently fired.

## Could firings save President Clay?

INDIANAPOLIS — Indianapolis City-County Council President Stephen Clay has fired several council staff members, a move that some say is of questionable legality and could complicate or even block Democrats' efforts to remove him from his leadership position (Briggs, [IndyStar](#)). Clay's firings on Wednesday included council clerk NaTrina DeBow and council attorney Fred Biesecker. They were escorted out of the City-County Building by the Marion County Sheriff's Office. The purge of key council staff members, which also includes an assistant clerk, comes two days after Clay's fellow Indianapolis Democrats united to schedule a vote for the Feb. 19 council meeting to unseat Clay from the presidency. The firings — particularly the

removal of Biesecker — could make it harder for the council to demote Clay. They also reveal a new layer to the savvy political strategy that fueled Clay's rise to power.

## Crouch changes Stellar cities

INDIANAPOLIS — A well-known state program designed to boost the quality-of-life in smaller communities of the state is being restructured to take a regional approach (McGowan, [Inside Indiana Business](#)). The Stellar Communities Designation Program, which is run by Lieutenant Governor Suzanne Crouch and the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Development, will now focus on collaboration among adjoining towns, cities and counties. In order to support talent attraction, retention and development efforts, Crouch says, communities have to work together. "We are all a part of this great state, and through the regional Stellar Community program, we must continue to improve our neighborhoods and encourage a partnership between communities," she added. From 2011-2016, nearly \$90 million has been set aside for the program by the state. OCRA says community partners during that time have contributed a combined \$109 million.

## McGuinness glad Trump eyes roads

INDIANAPOLIS — As President Trump called on Congress to approve \$1.5 trillion to improve the country's roads, bridges and waterways in his State of the Union address Tuesday, [INDOT](#) Commissioner Joe McGuinness says he was excited to hear the push coming directly from the President (Miller, [WIBC](#)). "We on average now receive approximately \$900 million from the federal government into our roads and bridges across the state. We'll just be able to further stabilize our infrastructure so we can continue to grow the economy," says McGuinness.

