

## Braun believes he can win Senate primary

Jasper businessman says he filled a TV ad vacuum, built up name ID, has a lead

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

RICHMOND – Like Luke Messer, Republican U.S. Senate candidate Mike Braun is ending March with a series of small gatherings across the state. On Tuesday, he was tag-teaming across eastern Indiana with 6th CD candidate

Jonathan Lamb, commencing in Messer's hometown of Shelbyville then heading up to Greenfield, Richmond and finally Muncie.

The two characterize themselves as entrepreneurial businessmen and outsiders. But Braun's prospects seem vastly better than Lamb, who is facing Greg Pence, the brother of the vice president. Braun released internal polling to Howey Politics Indiana, showing him with 30%, compared to 21% for Todd Rokita and 16% for Messer, with 33% undecided.



In an HPI Interview on eastbound I-70 between Greenfield and Richmond, Braun can hardly conceal his

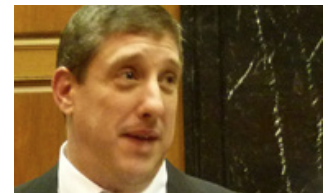
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## Mayor Pete channels JFK

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

GREENFIELD, Ind. – I suspect that deep in the mind of South Bend Mayor Peter Buttigieg rings the sounds of Jan. 20, 1961, and the voice the President John F. Kennedy on a cold and snowy day:

"We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans – born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage – and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which



**“Because of the legislation that Ben Smaltz has supported over the years, the number of children killed by abortion in Indiana has dropped for eight straight years.”**

*- Right to Life President Mike Fichter, endorsing State Rep. Ben Smaltz*



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this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.”

The torch, in Buttigieg’s mind, is ready for passage once again.

**For the past** 15 months, Buttigieg has aspired to the national stage. He’s run statewide in Indiana, losing a 2010 race for treasurer against incumbent Republican Richard Mourdock. He has since won races in South Bend, the last two general elections by landslides. He looks to Indianapolis and, while not ruling out a run for governor, sees a very popular Gov. Eric Holcomb, with no other Democrat taking steps for such a challenge. A second statewide defeat would bruise a stellar resume that includes a Harvard degree, a Rhodes Scholarship and a tour of duty in Afghanistan as an intelligence officer.

In 2017, he waged a campaign for the Democratic National Committee chair about nine months after coming out as the most prominent gay Hoosier politician in history, just three years after Republicans tried to pass a constitutional marriage amendment barring gay nuptials. While he pulled out of the race on the morning of the vote, he attracted the attention of former governor, DNC chair and presidential candidate Howard Dean, former governor and chair Ed Rendell, and David Axelrod, a key architect in the rise and sustenance of President Barack Obama.

Buttigieg has been turning up in Iowa, Kansas and now Politico reports that his PAC is active in Georgia, Arizona, Michigan and Colorado, all states that will matter greatly in 2020. He is preparing for a presidential run.

**“Go ahead,** dismiss this generation. I dare you,” Buttigieg tweeted Saturday in the South Bend version of the March for Our Lives. “But I do think that people are looking for something new. They’re looking for something fresh and different. And I think that, as a party, we can’t just — first of all, we can’t only trot out people who go to work in Washington

every day, as representatives of the party.”

The potential 2020 Democratic field potentially includes old warhorses like former vice president Joe Biden, Sen. Bernie Sanders and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (though she denies current interest). There are some new faces like Sens. Cory Booker and Kamala Harris of California. There is talk of New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo running as well as former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick. There is no slam dunk.

Buttigieg is just 36. He is the newest generation. The first Afghan



campaign veteran to run, if he gets in. The first gay, as predicted by New York Times columnist Frank Bruni last year.

**He told Politico,** “I think it’s maybe a sign of the times. I think it’s telling you that things are kind of wide open in a way that hasn’t been true in a long time. I think it shows that there is an interest in the middle of the country. I think it shows that there’s at least curiosity, if not appetite, for what a newer generation of leaders is going to look like. And I think it reflects the fact that we’re really living in a season for cities and for mayors.”

In Politico’s Off Message podcast, he added, “There’s no going back. There’s no ‘again’ to be had. Things are going to be different. There was a liberal era in American politics that lasted 30 or 40 years, followed by a conservative era that



lasted 30 or 40 years. And now, we're on the doorstep of a new era."

**In the television** age of politics, Hoosiers who have looked in the mirror and seen a president include Sens. Birch Bayh and Richard Lugar, who actually got to New Hampshire; Sen. Evan Bayh and former veep Dan Quayle, who announced but were quickly clipped by Barack Obama and George W. Bush; and others that included Sen. Vance Hartke (briefly), and Govs. Mitch Daniels and Mike Pence, who either couldn't get the family imprimatur or were eclipsed by volatile politics and policy.

They were either veeps, senators or governors. A mayor of a 100,000-person city faces a daunting leap into national politics. Some may see it as a strategy to make the 2020 ticket. Beyond Donald Trump, Obama, W. and Jimmy Carter, our modern presidents have had to run multiple times to get nominated. Then again, these are not normal times. Trump, with no political or military experience, won the highest office in the land. Senators, governors, secretaries of state, veeps and generals have moved to 1600 Pennsylvania, by nary a mayor, though Presidents Andrew Johnson, Grover Cleveland and Calvin Coolidge had previously been mayors.

**President Trump says** he will seek a second term, though there is ample speculation he may either quit or face impeachment.

Some believe that Buttigieg is really positioning for



the ticket. Running as a veep nominee, he could find himself going toe to toe with Vice President Mike Pence, whose anti-gay record belies a relationship forged with Buttigieg when the two were governor and mayor, respectively, especially when it came to economic development.

Ring in the mayor's mind is JFK's inaugural oratory, still recited in classrooms today:

"In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe.

**"Now the trumpet** summons us again – not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need – not as a call to battle, though embattled we are – but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation" – a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself."

Perhaps Buttigieg heard the cascading trumpets that defined the movie "Patton" as he surveyed the vast Afghan steppes while serving his country. Perhaps he hears them today as America watches a White House in chaos.

He obviously sees a torch and is readying for a handoff. ❖

## Braun, from page 1

amazement at how this race is developing. "We had the airspace four months by ourselves," Braun said. He believes he is taking advantage of early acrimony between the two congressmen, and has poured 3,000 gross rating points into statewide TV that began in November.

Messer enjoined the TV ad wars in mid-March; Rokita began airing broadcast ads on Wednesday.

Braun's internals in February showed the Jasper businessman at 24%, Rokita at 20% and Messer at 14%. Both the Rokita and Messer campaigns have told HPI that the trio have been clustered together within the margin of error. Messer told HPI last week that his polling showed him with a small lead.

"Obviously Todd's negative work against Luke has taken its toll," Braun said. "I think the early acrimony between the two of them set the stage. That has kind of set the early dynamic of the race."

But the key development came after Braun made

a decision in October to go up statewide in November. When the fourth quarter FEC reports were published, Rokita and Messer posted under \$500,000, giving the mostly self-funding Braun almost four months to build his name ID and begin to burnish his "outsider" brand.

Messer campaign manager Chasen Bullock doesn't believe the Braun polling, believing his candidate is in the lead. "I could release a poll that has Luke Messer up 18 points," Bullock told HPI. "Mike Braun's baked poll isn't even slightly believable, everyone knows Braun's vanity campaign has been one stumble after another from hiring a white supremacist, to being exposed as a Democrat, to forging signatures to get on the ballot, to 'Meet & Greets' with zero attendees...nice try Mike, you're not fooling anyone."

While all three candidates are attempting to appeal to President Trump's supporters, Braun believes he has the advantage, telling about 30 supporters at Chicago's Pizza in Greenfield, "I saw Donald Trump as a disrupt-

tor." Braun views himself in the same vein, but a disruptor "with Hoosier humility. It's worked out better than I thought. People want him to be successful because they don't want to go back to where we were."

Braun casts Rokita and Messer to this group like he did in the Americans For Prosperity debate at WIBC in February; they're similar to Sen. Joe Donnelly in ways other than philosophy: All went to law school, didn't practice, and became career politicians.

It resonates here in conservative Hancock and Wayne counties. But that's not to say Braun doesn't face some hard questions. A woman in Greenfield asked about Rokita's attack that until 2012, he regularly voted in Democratic primaries.

Braun explained of his home DuBois County: "We were a blue county. We were the bluest county. We never had a competitive race until 2011."

Braun said he voted in Democratic primaries to weigh in on local races. But after the new maps, and U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh's bolt in 2010, DuBois followed other previously Democratic river counties into the GOP column. Republicans now control two of the three county commissioners and have council majorities in Jasper and Huntingburg.

Braun differentiates himself in other ways. He backs term limits, saying he will serve one term. He portrays himself as a problem-solver, backing a 2015 bill in the Indiana General Assembly that creates regional options for road funding. "When I went to the Statehouse, people asked me to do something about the bad roads," Braun said.

And as he did when HPI interviewed him at the Congress of Counties in January, he spent about 15 minutes talking about how he moved his company away from the health insurance racket, prompted his employees to put "skin in the game" (a frequent phrase) that encourages them to shop around for health services.

Noting that billionaire Warren Buffett calls health care the "tapeworm" on the U.S. economy, taking up 18% of GDP compared to 12% in other industrialized countries. "If you did what we did," he said of his own company, "it would be 9% of GDP. It's probably a pipe dream, but it's what I'll be talking about when I'm your U.S. senator."

Last summer, many believed a "U.S. Sen. Mike Braun" was a pipe dream. The emerging reality is that most observers believe this truly is a three-way primary race. Braun is winning the air war. What remains to be seen is if he can match it with a ground game leading

into May 8.

Here is our HPI interview with Braun:

**HPI:** You've got some new internal polling. What does it tell you?

**Braun:** Early on ... back in July it was rumored that I might run and Curtis Hill, and there was a poll that showed me at 1 to 2%, Curtis at 2 to 3%. All the polls showed Todd Rokita, due to being secretary of state, at about 27%, and Luke Messer at 20 to 21%. It was mostly name recognition. After I declared in early August, we did

our first baseline poll in September. All that had changed had been the acrimony that was out there. That had started to gin up. It was mostly about Todd Rokita talking about Luke Messer not having a home in the state and his wife's being on the payroll in Fishers. We found out because of that we had risen into the high single digits and they had basically stayed

the same. We didn't do anything else until early February. The biggest decision I've had to make in the whole campaign was with resources always being the driver.

**HPI:** And what Rokita and Messer's resources were.

**Braun:** They were each at \$2.5 million from their declared congressional accounts. That is an intimidating amount of money. In early February, we had been on the air in November, December and January and I had done well in fundraising early. I put some of my own skin in the game. In early February, we were at 24%, Todd Rokita was at 20% and Luke Messer at 14%. Obviously, Todd's negative work against Luke had taken a toll. Our rising from 7% to 24% was taken out of each of their pots, and the undecideds started to commit. There were 42% undecided. The most recent poll taken, about a week ago, had me rising to 30%, Todd Rokita was at 21% and Luke Messer at 16%. And they both had been on the air a little bit, and his PAC was kicking in, but it showed unbelievable movement in my direction. It was better than what we thought we'd be. Our message is resonating. That early acrimony between the two of them set the stage for people not certain how to take it, disappointed it wasn't more about what you're going to do, what are your accomplishments, what are your ideas and that has kind of set the early dynamic. We came in, got the message out early, basically had the airspace to ourselves for four months.

**HPI:** I am shocked they let you fill that vacuum. How many gross rating points did you have?

**Joshua Kelley** (Braun campaign aide): About





3,000, depending when exactly they got up. We were on our fourth flight statewide by the time they went up.

**HPI:** They let you in the game.

**Braun:** You know why I think they did? Because their fourth quarter fundraising numbers were so weak, about 40% off. I think they each ended up with about \$450,000 and were hoping to be \$700,000 or \$750,000. That was a bad omen for the rest of the campaign. Because here's what happened: It was known I was going to make a serious effort. It wasn't going to be a whim. I was going to back it up with points where you can see this was going forward. Their contributions, even though they weren't coming my way, weren't coming their way.

**HPI:** Donors were hedging their bets.

**Braun:** Hedging their bets. They were zipping their pocketbooks. While they have that mountain of advantage, their overhead was killing them. They were burning through their cash. I don't have an entourage. I just have essential staff. They've gotten a reality check of what a competitive race is and it's a different dynamic.

**HPI:** How many people are on your campaign?

**Braun:** Well, it's just a handful. It would be like Trump ran his. They are trying to latch onto some kind of Trump component and when they're trying to put their persona out there and it looks phony – and people see me and my style is understated with a dose of Hoosier humility. They can see I'm a self-made Hoosier business guy who's running his campaign in a similar way that Trump did.

**HPI:** Congress is not very popular. But there is the tax reform package. I was asking Luke Messer last week, "Are people seeing that bump in their paychecks?" and he said yes. So, Congress may be somewhat less unpopular.

**Braun:** For businesses, they don't see any of that until April 15 with their first estimated payment. Anything right now would be with companies that manage their cash flow in a more sophisticated manner. We did it in our own company. With all the savings from our health care plan, we've been salting that away. We cut our family plan by \$1,400 in anticipation of that. Once businesses feel more money in their pocket, that's when you're going to see more benefits enhanced and wages going up. If you're on a W-2, or on your wages or salaries, you're already seeing the benefits because they lowered the withholding. So, when you're hearing people seeing it in their paychecks, that was instituted in advance.

**HPI:** My accountant says I'll get a tax break, but I am getting hammered on Obamacare. My monthly premiums have doubled since 2013.

**Braun:** That's built on a shaky foundation of big government and big health care. It carries very, very high margins. When people started pulling out of the mandate, they (health insurers) kept their profit margins. That's why it's going up so much because their pool has been reduced significantly. They're trying to get more out of fewer

people using it.

**HPI:** Rokita is going to go at you with the so-called "Mexico Joe" angle and your business. How are you going to respond?

**Braun:** You mean the products made overseas?

**HPI:** Yes.

**Braun:** He's going to speak first and then do his research. Some 95% of my products are made in the U.S. Just because there are a few products that are made in



China that used to be made here, he took a general statement and we stand toe to toe, I bust him back. It's not Luke Messer standing next to me talking about basketball or something. I love it when we go one on one because I will win that battle. Anything he says isn't based on a full explanation.

**HPI:** What's your take on the tariffs? Rep. Walorski is sounding the alarm, along with Hoosier agriculture leaders. But we saw in Chesterfield on Saturday Rep. Susan Brooks along with Rokita and Messer say the impacts won't be bad.

**Braun:** Messer won't normally say that, but now he's saying, "I'll do what the commander-in-chief wants." He was an anti-Trump guy early. He's had an epiphany. He had to change, otherwise he would have had zero chance of moving forward. Tariffs are being used the way Trump does everything: He throws it on the wall, gets a reaction, then modifies along the way. Remember, it was going to be all steel and aluminum? And now it's just steel for China. Mexico and Canada were exempted. I believe we're in an economy where it's going to be a world economy. Trade is going to be important. As long as you're trading with partners that aren't subsidizing companies, that aren't manipulating currency, aren't stealing trade secrets, you're going to have to withstand the consequences of a trading partner doing something better than you are. China is the only trading partner wanting it both ways. I think the tariff was initially, even though the media was saying there will be trade wars, but it has hardly created a ripple. The stock



market has even gained a lot of it back. It's like a lot that Trump does, he is a disruptor. He shakes the issue and comes up with something that is not necessarily what the first version was. At least you're addressing something we were either too politically correct to do something, or we were afraid to do it. Mostly because there was so much establishment underpinning the status quo to keep it exactly the way it was.

**HPI:** Obviously, President Trump is a disruptor. Everyone in the GOP Senate field is embracing that and him. Are the Trump voters going to turn out?

**Braun:** I think the ones who will turn out will vote for me because the voters are too shrewd and see the other guys who have never had a job outside of politics, never had a business. All I have to do is cite the figures of the business for over 37 years that has grown over 20% a year. People start putting two and two together and they'll see a businessman, an outsider who's actually done something. Even when I cite the fact that with Joe Donnelly, with their background and not their philosophy, their background is law school, never practiced, career politicians. That's what got Todd in the debate. About the third time I cited that, he said to me the most revealing thing about the discourse of this race. He said, "Mike, we do not need more businessmen in the Senate. We need more policymakers like me." Did you catch that? He said that. To me, that was a Freudian slip at best or maybe it was his honest opinion at worst.

**HPI:** Is that why he is afraid to debate?

**Braun:** Sure, it is.

**HPI:** I still think he's left a little wiggle room.

**Braun:** He could, but even at Chesterfield at the Madison Lincoln Day Dinner ... I had 10 minutes to speak. I went into the health care thing. I always throw in something I've done in the real world, or infrastructure, just like California and all the red tape we got into, and he knows then where I'm going. It's talking about real world stuff and I will moderate it a little bit. When we found out how the debate went and blurted out that statement, he knew it was not like debating Luke Messer. Luke talks about his two or three stories. I can't believe he doesn't put more meat into it. When we talk about what we've done with health care or that regional infrastructure bill that was

done in the Statehouse, they don't have anything to go to. I will drill into that. When they go negative, like Todd did early, I bring up the career politician. Luke doesn't have the personality to hit hard. I thought it was a little disingenuous when he said he voted for the bill because the commander-in-chief asked him to. Maybe Trump did call him, though I doubt it. He knew he had to be more in-line with the president if he was going to have a chance to make this a three-way race.

**HPI:** So, there is a gravitational pull toward Trump in the primary. What about the general election against Sen. Donnelly? There's some real crazy stuff out there with Stormy Daniels and Mueller and the fact that Trump can't even find criminal defense lawyers to defend him.

**Braun:** Yes. There is a treasure trove of stuff there.

**HPI:** Donnelly has to be looking at this and saying, "Boy, this will be a smorgasbord of options."

**Braun:** Yes. I said if you just blindly follow Trump, you'll have a problem. That's when I segue into how I went back to my hometown, I've been a mover and shaker my whole life. I have been competing against big companies and out-maneuvering them. I've had to go up against politicians and bureaucrats. And then doing it in a way where my style has been different. I've lived on Main Street. I like Trump because he shook the system up, but he's a brash New Yorker with a different style. I've got the same dynamic, but I come from a humble, wholesome place like Indiana, which really likes Trump because they were so tired of business as usual. I've always had to get comfortable with his style.

**HPI:** On the omnibus, we saw Rokita and Messer spar in the February debate on that issue, they split on that vote. How would you have voted?

**Braun:** I would have voted against it, because, just like I said during the debate, I know defense needed a little bolstering, but in my world, if I want to put emphasis on this campaign, I'm dealing with limited resources and you find ways to make those trade-offs. I think here, one of Trump's main agenda items was to fix parts of the military that had been depleted. I would have taken an approach that a guy like me – who has had to do that his

whole life, trade off this for that, grow a company 20% a year which eats cash when you do it – you find a way to pay for things without reaching down and borrowing money. I’ve done that without borrowing money, other than real estate. When I heard of all the pork the Democrats wanted, like a \$1,000 car lease allowance, I almost veered off the road when I heard about some of the things that were in there. Todd Rokita and Luke Messer and Joe Donnelly have voted for that kind of bill since they’ve been in Congress. Until Todd Rokita, just because I’m in it, he voted no. If it had been between him and Luke, don’t you think he would have voted with the establishment on that?

**HPI:** I asked Luke Messer what has changed in politics over the past 20 years he’s been in it. I’ll ask you what you’ve learned about politics after being on a school board for a decade and then running two General Assembly races?

**Braun:** Rokita tried to say I was an “insider.”

**HPI:** For being on the school board?

**Braun:** Yes. I laughed on the stage when I heard that.

**HPI:** Give me some impressions on what running statewide has been like.

**Braun:** The dynamic is so similar to out-maneuvering your competitors in the business world. It is so similar, yet the biggest difference is the time horizon. So, I am up against a new thing we’re doing in business. We were always the smallest. Now we’re the biggest. Now we’re the second largest in our industry, but I still carry all the characteristics of being scrappy. Live your life like you’re going to go broke tomorrow. Here the difference is, it’s a start and a finish. You don’t have time if you miscue. For instance, by far the biggest difference, strategically, just like a CEO, was how quickly do I try to fill the vacuum in 2008 when Wall Street ... took out every one of my competitors. Market share is the hardest thing to build in business. In January ‘09, my phone started ringing off the hook. My industry shrank by 50% and we’re going to have to hunker down. We were in strong shape. The supply chain actually shrank more than the industry. The phone rings off the hook. I could have gone slowly and made a lot of cash, but I could gain a lot of market share west of the Mississippi. Now we’ve built a national company. We always had good fundamentals. The parallel to this campaign would be, when do we start going up on air? To me that was very similar to when we bought up all that market share, when the competition was hobbled. Here, we knew they were probably running into the conventional wisdom, which was don’t do anything until January. Save your resources and pour it on from there. What I didn’t realize fully at the time when I made the decision in October to start in November, I didn’t

know what their fourth quarter report was and that they would be hurting on resources. I did it because there was a vacuum here. So, we were just leaps and bounds making up that name ID deficit. Then when I saw their finance report I knew they were in resource conservation. But this time, this happened in the spectrum of nine months instead of three to five years.

**HPI:** You probably have access to more financial resources than they do.

**Braun:** I do. We knew that even if I set the world on fire with my fundraising, I would still have to put 85% in. That’s pretty well played out, but what’s played in my favor is their financing is cramped.

**HPI:** Are the national PACs calling you?

**Braun:** No.

**HPI:** I figured they would come in if someone began to separate from the field.

**Braun:** When the first public polling comes in that verifies what we’ve got, then they may start coming in to set the stage in a healthy way when I take on Joe Donnelly. I’ve put my own skin in the game.

**HPI:** Having your own skin in the game is critical in business. When you don’t, people behave differently.

**Braun:** It’s intuitively that way in business and politics. The most pleasing part about this is the grassroots support, getting the fundraising and volunteers with the people who really see this as an opportunity to leverage what happened with Trump and grasp something that is different than business as usual.

**HPI:** Do you get the sense that Rokita and Messer’s first quarter report this year will be similar to the fourth quarter of 2017?

**Braun:** Yes. Because they’ve been holding off. They, ideally, would have been up on the air sometime in February.

**Kelley:** Rokita is making his first broadcast buy tomorrow (Wednesday).

**Braun:** When they dust themselves off on May 9, they will see the error in the thought that we would languish. We didn’t languish. We were just surprised they gave us the opening.

**Primary Horse Race Status:** Tossup. ❖



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# Hiding from those embarrassing questions

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO – Heavyweight champion of the world Joe Louis said it best when a reporter asked him about an upcoming bout with Billy Conn and Conn’s propensity to move around the ring avoiding punches, “He can run, but he can’t hide!” That pretty much sums up the current status of the Republican contest for U.S. Senate following the surprising news that Todd Rokita refuses to participate in a debate with his opponents unless it is completely on his own terms.



It has been my experience over my 40-plus years of political involvement that when someone is trying to duck a debate there is usually a good reason. That is, there is something that they want to hide.

Only a few sadomasochistic people actually enjoy debating. There is so much pressure on the candidates to both try and score points with some punches and yet not get knocked out. Who doesn’t remember Nixon’s dismal debate performance in 1960, or Reagan’s triumph over Walter Mondale in 1984?

Debates rarely make you as a candidate, but they most assuredly can break you. I watched a wonderful debate performance by U.S. Senate candidate Richard Mourdock go south in the final three minutes with his answer to a question on abortion. A short, simple answer to a complex question and Richard Mourdock was political toast. That was unfortunate in my book, but a significant political reality to make your knees get weak.

**For the life of me,** I can’t understand the political faux pas of refusing to debate. One, refusing to debate makes you look like a colossal political sissy. Two, refusing to debate gives the media ample fodder to take pot shots at your candidacy. Three, refusing to debate surrenders the moral high ground to your opponents. Or, as one of my candidates once told me, “My opponent has elevated me to the top of a tall tractor and when you’re sitting on a tall tractor, you can spit in any direction you want.” Fourth, and most importantly, it leaves the voters wondering what you have to hide.

Is it possible that Mark Twain may have summed up Todd Rokita’s thinking when it comes to his refusal to debate? Twain is reported to have said, “It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt.”

I’m not exactly sure why Rokita was afraid of the debate moderation of Abdul-Hakim Shabazz. Mr. Shabazz ably moderated a 5th CD debate with multiple candidates

in 2012. In addition, he did a bang-up job moderating the U. S. Senate primary debate between Eric Holcomb, Todd Young and Marlin Stutzman in Howard County in January 2016. Ask any of those three about Mr. Shabazz and I believe they would tell you that they were treated fairly.

It looks to me like Todd Rokita was afraid of several potentially embarrassing questions. As I’ve told my candidates over the years, “It’s not the embarrassing questions that get you, it’s your embarrassing answers.”

With that in mind, I’ve come up with five debate questions that I don’t think Todd Rokita wanted to answer.

■ **Question 1:** Mr. Rokita, you’ve said you are an outsider and you want to drain the swamp. But, you accepted \$160,000 from a tribal casino group as a contribution at the same time you were supporting legislation that would benefit the group. Your opponents might say you are the ultimate swamp creature. Since you have no Indian tribes in the 4th Congressional District, what exactly about this situation even remotely looks like it’s not a quid pro quo deal? Can you say Jack Abramoff?

■ **Question 2:** Mr. Rokita, you’ve described government spending as “choking our economy and stealing freedom.” Over the past 12 years, you have spent nearly \$3 million of taxpayer money on questionable mailers, expenses which appear to have ramped up at election time. Your expenditures on government-paid mailers is three times the average amount spent by your House colleagues. Is your profligate spending choking our economy and stealing freedom?

■ **Question 3:** Mr. Rokita, as a congressman you provided your staff with an eight-page memo on how you want to be chauffeured, going so far as pointing out your daily need for black coffee, hand sanitizer, chewing gum and a toothbrush and toothpaste. In addition, several of your former staff members have described working for you as a toxic work environment, which included menial punishments, screaming at them and docking them pay for slight performance infractions. If elected to the Senate, could we expect this toxic work environment to continue and will you confine yourself to just eight pages of instructions on how to be treated like royalty?

■ **Question 4:** Mr. Rokita, while people were coping with the shock of the school shooting in Parkland, Fla., you launched a television advertisement showing you blazing away with an AR-15 assault rifle. Do you consider this advertisement even the least bit insensitive to the parents of school children in Indiana?

■ **Question 5:** Mr. Rokita, on the subject of abortion, you advocate for no exceptions to your anti-abortion stance. Do you believe that government should force a woman who has been raped and becomes pregnant to carry the baby to full term? Do you see any circumstances where a woman should be allowed to choose whether or not to terminate a pregnancy or should government dictate all decisions regarding a woman’s healthcare?

Undoubtedly these questions or some version of these questions will come up during the campaign should



Todd Rokita become the candidate to face Joe Donnelly. The key question for Republicans to ask is do we want to hear the answers to these tough questions in the fall or do we want to hear the answers now, when it is important to make the right decision as to who will be our party's candidate for U. S. senator?

October is no time to learn who your candidate re-

ally is. In politics, as in boxing, you can run, but you most assuredly cannot hide! ❖

**Dunn is the former Howard County and 4th CD Republican chairman.**

# Primary challenge could clip Zakas Senate tenure record

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – State Sen. Joe Zakas's potentially history-making reelection bid may be in danger as he attempts to fend off Linda Rogers in the SD11 Republican primary. Informed and reliable sources tell Howey Politics Indiana that Rogers is on the precipice of picking up several influential endorsements, coming as early as next week.



Rogers is a former educator and restaurateur who owns and operates Juday Creek Golf Course. The Granger resident is president of Nugent Builders, a home-building company, and she was the first female president of both the National Golf Course Owners Association and the Indiana Home Builders Association.

According to the CapitolandWashington.com blog, Zakas and Democratic State Sen. Frank Mrvan are each just one term away from being the longest serving state senators in history. Mrvan is facing a Democratic primary challenge from Mark T. Kuroski but is favored in that race.

Zakas has held SD11 since 1982. The primary defeats of Sen. Larry Borst in 2004 and Senate President Pro Tem Robert Garton in 2006 prevented them from claiming the distinction of longest Senate tenure. Former Sen. Johnny Nugent retired before eclipsing the 10-term record held by former Sen. Joe Harrison.

When she filed, Rogers told the Elkhart Truth that she will bring a "fresh voice and face, that will bring fresh

perspectives."

"This is the people's seat," Rogers said. "It does not belong to any one man or woman but to all of us. As a political outsider with decades of experience in the private sector, I will bring a unique perspective to the legislative process and a true representation of the values of the district."

Rogers' daughter, Michelle Wittig, told the Truth, "With her work at the Indiana Home Builders Association, she has also garnered a lot support downstate." **Primary Horse Race Status:** Leans Zakas.

## HD52: Right to Life endorses Smaltz

Rep. Ben Smaltz is facing a challenger from the right who doesn't believe his is pro-life enough. On Wednesday, Smaltz received a robust endorsement from the Indiana Right to Life Political Action Committee.

Smaltz is facing a primary challenge from William Carlin of Garrett, who has been supported by the Hoosiers For Life website. In February, the website editor Amy Schlichter posted, "For the second year in a row, Rep. Ben Smaltz of Auburn killed a bill that would have ended abortion in Indiana, costing nearly 8,000 pre-born Hoosier babies their lives this year alone."

But RTL President Mike Fichter countered, saying, "During his time as state representative, Ben Smaltz has compiled a 100% pro-life voting record, supporting some of most leading edge pro-life legislation in the nation. This record includes

support for the historic Dignity for the Unborn Act, passed in 2016, that includes civil rights protections for unborn children based on race, gender, national origin, disability or Down syndrome. In the 2018 session, Ben played a critical role in the passage of SEA 340, just signed by Governor



**State Sen. Joe Zakas greets President Reagan in 1988 to South Bend. He faces primary challenger Linda Rogers, who is expected to pick up key endorsements soon.**



Holcomb, that requires the reporting of abortion complications that injure women, and requires the reporting of women who are being trafficked or coerced into abortions. SEA340 also tightens the process for abortion businesses trying to come to Indiana by requiring that they disclose if any principals have been convicted of a felony, or whether any related businesses have been closed due to health violations. Finally, SEA340 allows for the expansion of Safe Haven baby boxes at fire stations across Indiana to help save the lives of babies who might otherwise be at risk of abandonment.”

Fichter added, “Most importantly, because of the legislation Ben Smaltz has supported over the years, the number of children killed by abortion in Indiana has dropped for eight straight years. In 2016 alone, there were 3,642 fewer babies killed by abortion compared to 2008. Indiana Right to Life is committed to seeing that number drop to zero, and we know Ben Smaltz shares that commitment.” **Primary Horse Race Status:** Safe Smaltz.

**HD59: Chastain drops out**

Dr. Ben Chastain, a Republican candidate for HD59, has dropped out of a large Republican field of candidates seeking to become the nominee to replace retiring Rep. Milo Smith, R-Columbus, the county confirmed (Columbus Republic). Chastain is dropping out of a crowded field, which features six Republicans including John D. Counciller, JoAnn Flohr, Ryan Lauer, Allen K. Smith II and Lew Wilson. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Leans Lauer.

**Congress**

**U.S. Senate: Fishers renews Jennifer Messer contract**

Fishers has renewed a \$240,000-per-year legal services contract with Jennifer Messer, who will again work from Washington, D.C. (Tuohy, IndyStar). Messer serves as the city’s general legal counsel with a focus on development. It is the eighth year she has been hired by Fishers. Her hiring caused controversy last year when it was revealed she no longer lived in Indiana and was performing her job from the D.C. area, where she resides with her husband, U.S. Rep. Luke Messer, R-Shelbyville, a Republican candidate for U.S. Senate. Mayor Scott Fadness and Messer defended the hiring, asserting last year she charges less for legal services than comparable lawyers in Indianapolis and working remotely poses no obstacles.



This year’s contract highlights the cost savings that Fadness claimed.

“For each of the last three (3) years, Messer Law has delivered legal services well below the Indianapolis metro market rate,” the contract reads. “That rate is more than One Hundred and no/100 Dollars (\$100.00) less than the average hourly rate for economic development legal services in central Indiana and represents a Forty and no/100 Dollars (\$40.00) discount from Messer Law’s rates charged to private developers.”



**Rokita begins second ad**

Hoosiers for Rokita released its second TV ad, “Not Conservatives.” The new ad features Mike Braun’s history of voting for Democrats and raising taxes, and Luke Messer’s support for amnesty for illegal immigrants and his record of hiking taxes. The ad goes on to highlight how Todd Rokita is the pro-Trump conservative choice for U.S. Senate. In addition to the new TV ad, Hoosiers for Rokita is releasing a new 60-second radio spot, “Adios.” The transcript: NARRATOR: Mike Braun and Luke Messer? Not Conservatives. Lifelong Democrat Braun voted for Obama or Hillary then hiked our taxes 45 times. And Never-Trump lobbyist Luke Messer? Messer supported amnesty for illegals and raised our taxes by a billion dollars. Pro-life and pro-gun, Todd Rokita supports cutting taxes, building the wall, and making English our official language. Todd Rokita: Pro-Trump conservative for U.S. Senate.

**Messer fact-checks Rokita ad**

The U.S. Senate campaign of Luke Messer issued this “fact check” of Todd Rokita’s second TV ad. False Claim 1: Never Trumper? Luke Messer voted for Donald Trump in the Indiana primary and in the general election. In Congress, Messer has a 92.8% Trump rating compared to Rokita’s 90.0% Trump rating. Trump’s spending bill: Trump tweeted “Got \$1.6 Billion to start Wall on Southern Border, rest will be forthcoming. Most importantly, got \$700 Billion to rebuild our military, \$716 Billion next year... most ever. Had to waste money on Dem giveaways in

order to take care of military pay increase and new equipment." Rokita called it "This Omnibus is the Washington swamp at its worst." Trump's budget bill: Trump tweeted "The Budget Agreement today is so important for our great Military. It ends the dangerous sequester and gives Secretary Mattis what he needs to keep America Great. Republicans and Democrats must support our troops and support this Bill!" Rokita called it "a false choice and that's what establishment Republicans do all the time." False Claim 2: Raised taxes? Luke Messer has never voted or supported a tax increase. Amnesty? Luke Messer opposes amnesty.

### Braun launches 6th ad

Republican U.S. Senate candidate Mike Braun released an ad titled "The Difference," which is a humorous look at the two-dimensional nature of his GOP primary opponents. In the ad, Braun is showing cardboard cutouts of Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita, asking voters if they know who they are. "Career politicians all walk, talk and most importantly, act the same. Congressmen Luke Messer and Todd Rokita have spent almost 25 years in politics – more than half their lives," said Braun. "We need a senator in Washington that can be a reinforcement for Donald Trump and pass his agenda, not two guys that have made their careers in the swamp."

### Rokita, Messer split on Omnibus bill

Rokita and Messer have split on the latest government funding bill unveiled Thursday. As they did in February, Rep. Messer voted for the omnibus funding bill and Rep. Rokita opposed. The issue became a flashpoint in their debate in February along with Mike Braun and will continue to be an issue heading into the May 8 primary. "This is the Washington swamp at its worst," Rokita said. "Once again, leadership in Congress has failed President Trump and the American people by forcing us to vote on a \$1.3 trillion bill that no one could have read, that doesn't defund sanctuary cities, that doesn't defund abortion provider Planned Parenthood, and fails to fund an effective wall. Our troops absolutely deserve pay raises and there are good provisions in this bill but tying those priorities to a \$1.3 trillion spending bill littered with concessions to liberal Democrats like Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi is not what Hoosiers elected us to do and is what the American people despise about Congress." Messer said, "I voted to stand with President Trump and provide the men and women who serve our country the largest pay raise in a decade and ensure they have the resources they need to keep our country safe. This bill also provides a down payment on President Trump's border wall, funds school security efforts, and makes record investments to fight the opioid epidemic. The president is right that the Senate's broken rules give the Democrats too much leverage, which

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### **Rokita tops Madison County straw poll**

The three candidates seeking the Republican Party nomination to oppose incumbent Democrat Joe Donnelly for a seat in the U.S. Senate didn't stray from familiar campaign themes during a joint appearance in Madison County (de la Bastide, Anderson Herald-Bulletin). Braun, Messer and Rokita were the featured speakers during the annual Madison County Lincoln Day Dinner, held Saturday at the Millcreek Civic Center. In a straw poll conducted by The Herald Bulletin, Rokita received 54% of the ballots, Messer 25% and Braun 21%. Rokita has been endorsed by Russ Willis, chairman of the Madison County Republican Party. All three candidates focused on their support of President Donald Trump's agenda and how they are the best candidate to advance those objectives and defeat Donnelly, a first-term incumbent.

### **Donnelly cites AARP on ACA 'sabotage'**

A new analysis from AARP provides further evidence that the Administration's efforts to sabotage the health care markets by undermining and destabilizing the Affordable Care Act will lead to higher premiums for older Hoosiers. The analysis showed that, due to recently-proposed short term plans and policy changes from the tax law, premiums for a 60-year-old Hoosier are projected to rise by nearly 20% in 2019, an increase of more than \$1,600. Donnelly said, "This is just the latest evidence showing that the administration's efforts are leading to higher premiums for families, including older Hoosiers. This is unnecessary and could be prevented if the administration was willing to work in a bipartisan way to stabilize markets and make coverage more affordable."

## **Congress**

### **2nd CD: Democrats debate**

The three Democrats competing to take on Republican incumbent Jackie Walorski this fall didn't differ much on major issues Tuesday night in their first debate (Parrott, [South Bend Tribune](#)). Pat Hackett, Mel Hall and Yatish Joshi each took aim at Walorski, Republican President Donald Trump and the National Rifle Association. All three said they were pro-choice on abortion, support "Medicare for all," and want tougher gun laws to prevent mass school shootings. But Hackett went negative against Hall several times, while Joshi provided comic relief, often drawing laughs from the 450 people gathered at Indiana University South Bend's auditorium. Responding to an audience-submitted question on their views about accepting campaign contributions from special interests and super political action committees, Hall declared, "I will not take one damned dime from the NRA." Joshi, a South Bend business owner, noted that he is funding his entire campaign with his own money. Hackett, an attorney, said that Hall and

Joshi pose the most "risk" of accepting campaign money from Super PACs and interest groups, partly because they are businessmen.

### **Steelworkers endorse Hall**

The United Steelworkers endorsed 2nd CD candidate Mel Hall last Thursday. "Mel Hall will be a fighter for all working families of Indiana's 2nd Congressional District. Jackie Walorski, Mel's opponent, votes with Speaker Paul Ryan 98% of the time," said Mike Millsap, USW District 7 director. "She is a puppet to the powerbrokers of Washington, D.C. Jackie has deserted the working people of Indiana's 2nd Congressional District. With Mel Hall in Congress, we will finally have a strong voice of reason that represents the whole Congressional District 100% of the time. That is why the United Steelworkers are proud to endorse Mel Hall for Congress." Hall said, "I am honored to receive the endorsement of the Steelworkers. "Hoosiers deserve better than Jackie Walorski, a politician who has forgotten where she comes from and who she represents. I'm proud to stand with the thousands of hardworking men and women of the United Steelworkers in the 2nd District." **Primary Horse Race Status:** Likely Hall.

### **3rd CD: Banks kicks off campaign**

First-term U.S. Rep. Jim Banks formally launched his reelection campaign Monday – and Democratic congressional candidate Courtney Tritch immediately accused him of "fear-mongering" (Francisco, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Banks, R-3rd, did not mention Tritch by name while speaking to about 50 people at Allen County Republican Headquarters in downtown Fort Wayne, referring to her as "the left-wing opponent that the establishment Democrat Party has chosen as their candidate that they're trying to get nominated." Banks said Democrats "are intent on doing everything that they can to disrupt this progress" by the Republican Congress and White House "and roll back the achievements of the last year," which he said included income tax cuts and increased military spending. Banks' campaign later confirmed the authenticity of the email and said, "a vote for a Democrat in November is a vote for Nancy Pelosi as speaker of the House" and her liberal agenda.

### **3rd CD: Tritch lashes back**

Third CD Democrat Courtney Tritch responded to what she called "libelous statements" made by U.S. Rep. Jim Banks. "The residents of the 3rd District are tired of the political lies and fear-mongering of typical campaigns and neither I, nor the people in this community, are going to put up with it," said Tritch. Tritch addressed emails that her opponent's campaign sent to potentially thousands of residents in northeast Indiana containing multiple lies about her. Lie #1: "[She is] working to bring Chicago values to northeast Indiana." TRUTH: Tritch was born and raised in Fort Wayne and currently lives just a

few blocks from where she grew up. She did spend seven years working in Chicago at a chamber of commerce helping small businesses prior to returning to her roots to work in economic development in northeast Indiana, but she is a born and bred Hoosier. Lie #2 “[She is] from the furthest fringes of the Far Left.” TRUTH: Tritch is very open about having been a lifelong Independent, having chosen a party officially for the first time last year with the launch of her campaign. She spent 10 years working in economic development with Republicans and Democrats in northeast Indiana and has proudly voted for both Republicans and Democrats. She believes in fiscal efficiency and social equality. Lie #3: “[H]er first vote will be for Nancy Pelosi for speaker of the house.” TRUTH: Tritch has never stated her opinion on this issue and it is “completely libelous” to claim to know her position and spread that lie to northeast Indiana constituents. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Safe Tritch.

**4th CD: Republicans debate**

Seven Republican candidates for the 4th CD seat tried to answer one question: Who can best support President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence’s agenda? “It’s going to take people who’s going to truly support the America First agenda,” said former State Rep. Steve Braun (Park, [Lafayette Journal & Courier](#)). Saturday’s debate at Faith Church’s east side community center comes six weeks before the May 8 primary to replace Rep. Todd Rokita (R-Brownsburg), who is running for Democrat Joe Donnelly’s Senate seat. The 4th District covers all of Tippecanoe County and much of the surrounding counties, and many candidates stressed their connections to the county, Greater Lafayette and Purdue University. The candidates see relationships with the Trump administration as an asset in a district Trump won by more than 30 percentage points. Kevin J. Grant held up “Trump: The Art of the Deal” book, signed by Trump. Braun touted working for then-Gov. Pence as the commissioner of Indiana’s Department of Workforce Development. “I am very satisfied that Trump and Pence have made significant shift in turning the ship of ours,” said State Rep. Jim Baird. Diego Morales, on more than three occasions, mentioned his work as a “senior advisor” to then-Gov. Pence, although Morales’s campaign had acknowledged to the Associated Press that Morales’ work didn’t quite

rise to the level of others who had worked for Pence. “I am the only candidate who can call the White House and get an answer,” Morales said. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

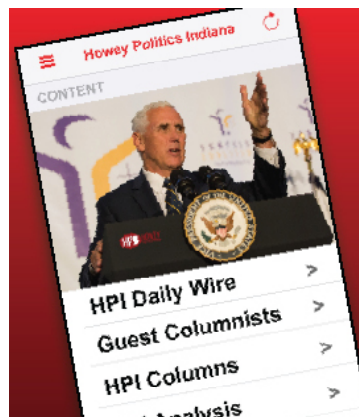
**8th CD: Horning endorses Moss**

Andrew Horning, who twice ran as a Libertarian candidate for the 8th CD seat has endorsed the candidacy of Republican challenger Dr. Richard Moss in the May primary. Moss is making his second attempt at the Republican nomination for the Congressional seat and is looking to defeat incumbent Dr. Larry Bucshon (Grant, Washington Times-Herald). The Moss campaign announced the backing by Horning in a press release. “In the 2018 GOP primary race for Indiana’s 8th District U.S. House race, I’ll vote for Dr. Richard Moss,” Horning said. “While I personally like him and think he’s the most likely to at least try to cut the size, cost and intrusiveness of our government, I also believe it’s crucial to vote against politicians when warranted.” **Primary Horse Race Status:** Safe Bucshon.

**Generic tightens for Dems in CNN Poll**

The Democratic advantage on the generic congressional ballot has tightened to 6 percentage points, a new CNN poll conducted by SSRS finds ([CNN](#)). The poll finds that 50% of registered voters say they prefer a Democrat in their congressional district, while 44% say they want a Republican. That’s a major shift in favor of the GOP since February, when Democrats held a 16-point edge. It’s much closer to January, when their lead was just 5 points. But Democratic voters are much more enthusiastic about casting ballots in November’s midterm elections. About half – 51% – of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents say they are extremely or very enthusiastic about voting for Congress in November, compared with just 36% among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents.

Year	Final RCP generic ballot	Actual House popular vote differential	Net change in seats
2002	R +1.7	R +4.6	R +8
2004	Tie	R +2.6	R +3
2006	D +11.5	D +6.4	D +30
2008	D +9.0	D +10.6	D +23
2010	R +9.4	R +6.6	R +63
2012	R +0.2	D +1.4	D +8
2014	R +2.4	R +5.1	R +13
2016	D +0.6	R +1.1	D +6



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# Zakas, Mrvan could break tenure record

By **TREVOR FOUGHTY**  
**CapitolandWashington.com**

INDIANAPOLIS – Only one state senator in Indiana’s history has been elected to serve 10 terms. Unofficially, and depending on which state government entity you believe, there may actually be two, but that’s a messy story that may soon be moot anyway, so let’s start with the straightforward data.



When Wells County Democrat Von Eichhorn retired from the Indiana Senate in 1966 after serving a then-record seven terms, a freshman legislator named Joe Harrison, R-Attica, entered the chamber. Nobody would touch Eichhorn’s record until 1994, when Harrison was elected to an eighth term, followed by a ninth term in 1998, and – by default after no one filed to run

against him in either the primary or the general – a 10th, and final, term from 2002-2006.

It wouldn’t take as long for Harrison’s sole ownership of the record to be challenged; Larry Borst, R-Greenwood, ran for his 10th term in 2004, and Bob Garton, R-Columbus, did so in 2006; both, however, would lose their primaries. No one else had the opportunity to attempt a 10th term until 2014, but that year Johnny Nugent, R-Dearborn, opted to retire after nine terms rather than run for reelection.

**And here is** where things get a bit messy: State Sen. Frank Mrvan, D-Hammond, was also on the ballot in 2014. Officially, he won election to his ninth term that fall, but that November marked the 10th time he was sworn in to start a term. First elected in 1978, Mrvan faced a tough reelection battle after his fourth term in 1994. After the voting machines were tabulated on Election Day, his Republican challenger Sandy Dempsey had a 110-vote lead. After the absentee ballots were counted, Mrvan was ahead by 54. Dempsey asked for a recount, and the State Board of Accounts invalidated a number of absentee ballots for various reasons, putting Dempsey back ahead by nine votes.

The State Recount Commission, which had to certify the election results, decided some of those ballots shouldn’t have been invalidated, and ultimately certified a 50-vote victory for Mrvan. So Mrvan began the session

as the SD1 senator, but the issue wasn’t dead; since the Senate has the power to seat its own members, a subcommittee was assembled to review the recount. They ultimately declared that Dempsey won by only three votes, and on Jan. 19 the full Senate (by a voice vote, and with no Democrats present on the floor) unseated Mrvan and seated Dempsey. Mrvan would win the seat back in 1998 by about 500 votes (which, coincidentally, makes him the only Democrat since 1988 to win a Republican-controlled seat in the Senate), thus getting a second shot at a fifth term.

**So, whether or not** Mrvan won his ninth or 10th election in 2014, Harrison at least remains the only senator to serve for 40 years. But since Mrvan has filed for reelection again this year, if he were to win and finish out his 10th full term, he would edge out Harrison’s record because he served at least a few months in 1994-95.

But, he isn’t the only one looking to break Harrison’s record: Joe Zakas, R-Granger, first elected in 1982, also filed for reelection. Because of a quirk of the calendar, Zakas would have a few extra days of service over Harrison at the end of his potential 10th term (though if both win in 2018, Mrvan’s extra bit of service keeps him in front of Zakas). Both have primary challengers this year, but sit in safe general election districts; if either is to be denied this record, the May election is likely going to be the harder hurdle to clear.

There’s no such legacy at stake in House races this year, nor is there any Mrvan/Dempsey-level drama clouding the picture. That’s mainly because Pat Bauer, D-South



**State Sen. Frank Mrvan could set tenure record if he wins in November.**

Bend, is already the longest serving member of that chamber (and possibly of any elected office in Indiana), and it isn’t even close. Bauer faces no primary election challenger and sits in a safe general election district, meaning the odds are good for him to extend his record to a 25th term. Should he serve out that full term, he’d be the first legislator in either chamber to serve for 50 years, 10 years after becoming the first House member ever to serve 40 years.

Former Rep. Chet Dobis was elected in 1970 with Bauer and also hit 40 years in 2010, but retired after 21 terms in 2012. Bill Crawford, D-Indianapolis, and Jeff

Espich, R-Unionville, who came into office just two years after Bauer and Dobis, each retired in 2012 after 20 terms. Nobody else currently has more than 18 terms in the House, though Charlie Brown, D-Gary, is retiring at the end of his current 18th term, and Sheila Klinker, D-Lafayette, is running for her 19th.

It’s not a coincidence that most of the names mentioned up to this point have served in the very recent



past. While it's easy to take for granted today, the idea of the General Assembly meeting every year is a relatively recent development. When Indiana ratified a new constitution in 1851, the legislature only met in odd-numbered years for about two months, unless there was reason for the governor to call a special session. This led many to see the job not as a two- or four-year commitment, but as a two- or four-month commitment; as such, it wasn't uncommon for most members to only serve a term or two, and then fade from public view.

**That changed in 1970**, when voters approved a constitutional amendment that set up our current long-session/short-session schedule. Meeting every year, combined with the advent of Organization Day each November, summer study committees, and a rash of special sessions in the 1980's and 1990's (from 1987 through 1997, five of the six long sessions required special sessions to enact a budget; in 1991, it took two special sessions) led to the job of a state legislator being viewed as a constant, year-round commitment.

That change in perception ultimately led to a change in how (and how long) legislators served. Before 1970, the average length of service was just over two years (one term) in the House, and just shy of four years (one term) in the Senate (note: from 1816 to 1851, House terms were one year and Senate terms were three years, dragging down the averages). For those elected for the first time in 1970 or later, though, the average has almost tripled to nearly six years (three terms) in the House, and almost doubled to seven years (just shy of two terms) in the Senate. For those currently in office, the average jumps to

over 10.5 years in the House, and just over nine years in the Senate – though it should be noted that the average dropped by almost a full year with the resignations of Luke Kenley and Brandt Hershman.

**Given that the average** length of service has seen such a stark increase over the past few decades, it shouldn't be surprising to see so many recent names at the top of the tenure lists. In fact, in the House, 17 of the 21 longest serving members were elected in 1970 or later; of the four remaining, three served the bulk of their service in the post-1970 era (only Glenn Slenker never served in the modern era). In the Senate, we see similar numbers: 16 of the top 20 were elected in 1970 or later; two more were elected in 1968, and were still in their first term when the 1970 reforms came into effect; and one more served the bulk of his service post-1970. Only Eichhorn never served in the modern era. The numbers are more striking if we limit it to only the top 10; nine of 10 in the House served in the post-1970 era, and all 10 in the Senate did so.

For those of us who love seeing historical records being set, seeing both Mrvan and Zakas on the verge of overtaking Harrison's record, or Bauer set to become the first member of the 50-Year Club, adds another layer of intrigue to an already fascinating election year. But as long as the average length of tenure continues to trend upward, expect more and more legislators to compete for their slots on the all-time lists. ❖



**Foughty works for Indiana University and publishes at capitolandwashington.com**

# Will Trump hurt or harm Indiana GOP?

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Will President Donald Trump bring his rally show to Indiana to insult Sen. Joe Donnelly, coining a belittling nickname and worse, while also ridiculing other Democrats running for House seats? Could he stay away? Would he be wanted by all the Republican nominees? Would he help them? Hurt them? Perhaps do neither?



These are questions to ponder as Indiana braces for one of the most expensive Senate races in the nation, with money flowing to TV stations for political ads as fast as those St. Joseph River waters flowed at flood stage. Also, there will be some contested House races

potentially important for control of that chamber.

Even if the president's approval ratings remain low nationally during the fall campaign, thus raising the question of whether he would help or hurt candidates for whom he campaigns, it seems unlikely that Trump could stay away from Indiana. Huge race. Huge national media focus. Huge domination of news cycles. Would Trump suddenly shy away from the spotlight?

And even if Trump is slipping badly elsewhere, his approval rating in Indiana, a state he carried by nearly 20 percentage points, remains higher here than in most other states. That's why contenders for the Republican nomination for the Senate give full-throated support for Trump. It's also why Donnelly isn't out destroying his own moderate image by blasting away at Trump.

The winner of the Republican nomination for the Senate in the May 8 primary likely will welcome a visit by Trump. Well, that will be true unless a combination of special counsel charges, Stormy waters in a sex scandal and some disaster at home or abroad drags the president's approval ratings down significantly more, even here. Actually, Trump's approval rating has been ticking up in the polls.

**In some House races,** Republican incumbents with solid leads probably would just as soon see Trump campaign elsewhere. His record in campaigning for Republican candidates since he became president is unimpressive, especially in those special elections for the Senate in Alabama and for Congress in Pennsylvania's 18th District. He has been more popular in Alabama than in any other state, but he couldn't pull the Republican nominee to victory. He had carried that Pennsylvania district by 20 points for president, but he couldn't transfer popularity to the Republican candidate who lost there.

It's hard to transfer popularity, difficult even for

highly popular presidents. Maybe it's impossible for a president with relatively low approval ratings, especially if a wave against his party is growing. He might not help. Could he hurt?

If Trump came to South Bend for a rally rant, with Bob Knight back to introduce him, would he help or hurt the Republican Senate nominee and Congresswoman Jackie Walorski, the Republican incumbent seeking re-election in the 2nd District?

**Probably, as things now stand,** Trump would neither help nor hurt either GOP nominee very much. He would stir up excitement with his base and potentially spur Democratic voters to actually get to the polls, balancing things out.

Individual candidates – with the issues they pick, how they articulate them and whether they come across as someone voters would be proud to have represent them – likely will have more to do with the Election Day results than an endorsement or denunciation from the president.

The Republican nominees who lost those special elections in Alabama and Pennsylvania were lousy candidates for various reasons. The Democrats who won were good candidates, avoiding harsh partisan rhetoric, stressing issues appealing to the constituents and seeming unlikely to become an embarrassment. In an earlier House contest in Georgia, a Democratic nominee was a poor candidate and a loser, even with a wave that brought him closer.

No matter the candidates or shifts in polls, it seems certain that President Trump will bring his rally show to Indiana, for better or for worse for anybody else.



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

# President Trump is Lord of the Lies

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – It's about time that someone called out President Donald Trump and other politicians for what they truly are. I'll give Trump a break and not call him the Lord of Lies.



But he is the Master of Deception. And too many people are accepting deception as a way of life. It's hardly what our founding fathers envisioned.

We've been deceived in Northwest Indiana as well over the years.



Remember when all East Chicago residents were promised new sidewalks by Mayor Robert Pastrick during a mayoral campaign? And lo and behold, those who had one of challenger Stephen R. Stiglich's signs in their yard didn't get a new sidewalk.

**And how about the** way former Gov. Mitch Daniels promised nine years ago to rebuild the Cline Avenue Bridge. Not only will it not be rebuilt to its former self, construction has yet to begin.

And then there's the Lake County Solid Waste Management District. After its plan to construct the Hickory Hills landfill in south Lake County failed, it vowed to opt for a high-tech form of waste disposal. Now, many years later, Lake County's garbage is still being trucked far and wide for burial.

But it's Trump who has written the book on deception and it gets worse on a weekly basis. And, unfortunately, Vice President Mike Pence plays along with The Donald.

Just this week, Trump hinted that he will now use funds budgeted for the military to pay for the border wall between the United States and Mexico. That's deception in its finest form. Despite his prognostications, Trump knew Mexico never would pay for the wall, but Trump backers bought into his charade and continue to do so.

Perhaps his greatest act of deception occurred just a month ago in the wake of the school massacre in Florida that took the lives of 17 people.

Shortly thereafter, Trump called a meeting with legislators and another with friends and family members of those who died and vowed to take a number of steps to prevent future tragedies. After meeting with the National Rifle Association a day or so later, Trump backed away from his stance on gun reform, leaving one to wonder if the Florida massacre had ever happened.

**Just this week,** Trump backed a move to ask people about their citizenship on the 2020 Census forms. Democrats didn't buy it, as they said the question would lead many immigrants not to fill out the form and thus dilute political representation for states that tend to vote Democratic and rob communities of federal money.

And, just last weekend, Trump was golfing in Florida while almost a million students marched in Washington seeking gun reform. Trump ignored the march, which may be the lowest form of deception.

Some would call all of the above politics. No, it's deception. Some would even call it the worst form of vote-buying. ❖

**Rich James has been writing about politics and government for almost 40 years. He is retired from the Post-Tribune, a newspaper born in Gary.**

## Indiana's gender wage gap continues to widen

By ERIN MACEY

INDIANAPOLIS – On Sept. 14 last year, I eagerly awaited the release of the Census Bureau's American Community Survey data. All summer, I had been re-searching the gender wage gap and looked forward to putting the finishing touches on the Institute's report, "Wages, Wealth, & Poverty: Where Hoosier Women Stand and Ways our State Can Close the Gaps."



My initial calculations that day came as a shock. Even as the nation saw a small narrowing of the gender wage gap, Indiana's gap widened two percentage points from 24 to 26%, an annual

difference of \$12,717 between the median full-time male and female workers.

Attention to Indiana's pay gap and the many high-profile "me too" announcements occurring around the same time led me to think that the 2018 legislative session might bring some positive policy changes for working women. And sadly, it didn't – but not for lack of good bills.

A substantial portion of the gender wage gap cannot be explained away by occupation, experience, or education. Researchers suggest this reflects pay discrimination, and other states have taken steps to provide women with the tools to challenge these disparities. Retiring Rep. Linda Lawson, D-Hammond, once again filed a bill to help remedy pay discrimination by strengthening Indiana's weak equal pay law. The bill had a Republican coauthor and a bipartisan Senate version. It got coverage in a press conference, but no hearing.

**Wage gaps increase** among parents, in part because more women than men are pushed out or opt out the workforce during or after pregnancy. Rep. Robin Shackelford, D-Indianapolis, was joined by Rep. Karen Engleman, R-Georgetown, on a bill to ensure that pregnant woman who wanted to continue working would be guaranteed access to reasonable accommodations at work, like bathroom breaks, water bottles, or lifting modifications. Because many women in Indiana lack access to paid leave or even to unpaid leave through FMLA, these accommodations can be essential to safely working throughout pregnancy. Again, no hearing.

Paid family leave, an evidence-based way to keep women in the workforce and close experience gaps, did get a tiny nod from the Senate. Sen. Karen Tallian (D-Portage) put forward what ultimately became a bipartisan resolution to study paid family leave and it was adopted by a voice vote. Last year, a similar study proposal



passed, but was not assigned to a summer study committee. Whether the Legislative Council will take the issue up this year remains to be seen.

**The legislature did** commit to a maternal mortality review committee. The percentage of Hoosier women dying while pregnant or during or after childbirth has been rising, and we currently rank 44th in the country for maternal deaths. The bill establishes a statewide committee to review maternal mortality cases, determine factors contributing to these deaths, and develop strategies for reducing mortality and morbidity in the future.

Ironically, the strategies the Indiana General Assembly failed to even consider – closing wage gaps, making accommodations for pregnant women, and offering paid leave – might improve our maternal (and infant) mortality rates. It's good that we will study maternal mortality. But if we want to get serious about improving outcomes for women, the legislature will have to actually focus on advancing bills that benefit them. ❖

**Macey, PhD, is a policy analyst for the Indiana Institute for Working Families.**

## County population estimates released

By MORTON MARCUS

INDIANAPOLIS – Alzo Incognito visited me in early January when the 2017 state population estimates were released. Therefore, it was no surprise to see him again last week when the county figures became available from the Census Bureau.



"How'd we do?" he asked. Before I could answer, he told me he got a job with Uplift Indiana, the "Happy News Bureau." "Don't bother with any downer stuff," he said.

I inhaled deeply and said, "57% of the counties in the United States gained population between 2016 and 2017. Indiana saw 60% of its 92 counties gaining population in that period."

"Out-performing the nation," he jotted in his notebook. "And those losing counties, they're all rural places as folks head for the cities continuing the migration, the urbanization, of America which has been going on for 200 years," he proclaimed.

I bit my lip. "No," I whispered. "If you look at the six counties losing the most people – Lake, Grant, Wayne, Delaware, Madison, and LaPorte – they're all basically urban areas."

"Let's get back to what counts as 'Happy News,'" he urged. "That was a great number you just gave me. Sixty percent of Indiana's counties gained population in 2016-17."

"Yes," I confirmed. "But that was after six years, 2010 to 2016, where 58 counties lost population (that's also 60% of

all Hoosier counties). And of those 58 counties, only three (Putnam, Jasper and Noble) grew enough in 2016-17 to emerge with a positive change for the entire seven years."

"You're telling me," Alzo said, "55 Indiana counties grew in 2016-17, but not enough to overcome the losses they had in 2010 to 2016? That's not 'Happy News!'"

"Listen," I told him bluntly, "if you can't make that a 'Happy Story' you'll fail in modern journalism. It's not very difficult. Just say, '55 Hoosier counties reversed course in 2016-17, overcoming a declining population trend.' Now you'll be able to be a speechwriter, a press secretary, a media giant!"

"I see," he said. "Good. Give me one more up-beat story."

"OK," I said. "The Sizzling Seven counties (Hamilton, Marion, Hendricks, Allen, Tippecanoe, Johnson and Boone) ..."

"Wait a second," he burst in. "Why are they the Sizzling Seven?"

"Because each of them accounted for more than five percent of the change in the state's population over the past seven years," I said. Together their populations equaled just 32% of the state in 2010, but they chalked up a total of 92% of the state's growth."

"Wow!" he exclaimed. "Just seven counties driving the state's entire growth! And that's the bottom line?" Alzo asked.

"Right," I said. "Indiana's population is getting

more concentrated in a few counties, while simultaneously most of our counties are losing population. Hoosiers must rethink and make tough choices about many of our economic policies. That's not 'Happy News' for our political leaders." ❖

**Mr. Marcus is an economist. His views can be followed on a [podcast](#). Reach him at [Whogetswhat4@gmail.com](mailto:Whogetswhat4@gmail.com)**

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

**George Will, Washington Post:** Because John Bolton is five things President Trump is not — intelligent, educated, principled, articulate and experienced — and because of Bolton’s West Wing proximity to a president responsive to the most recent thought he has heard emanating from cable television or an employee, Bolton will soon be the second-most dangerous American. On April 9, he will be the first national security adviser who, upon taking up residence down the hall from the Oval Office, will be suggesting that the United States should seriously consider embarking on war crimes. The first two charges against the major Nazi war criminals in the 1945-1946 Nuremberg trials concerned waging aggressive war. Emboldened by the success, as he still sees it, of America’s Iraq adventure that began 15 years ago this month, Bolton, for whom a trade war with many friends and foes is insufficiently stimulating, favors real wars against North Korea and Iran. Both have odious regimes, but neither can credibly be said to be threatening an imminent attack against the United States. Nevertheless, Bolton thinks bombing both might make the world safer. What could go wrong? Much is made of the fact that Bolton is implacably hostile to strongman Vladimir Putin, whom the U.S. president, a weak person’s idea of a strong person, admires. And of the fact that the president has repeatedly execrated the invasion of Iraq that Bolton advocated. So, today among the uneducable, furrowed brows express puzzlement: How can the president square his convictions with Bolton’s? Let’s say this one more time: Trump. Has. No. Convictions. ❖



**Ken de la Bastide, Anderson Herald-Bulletin:**

In reality there is no way of knowing how important endorsements of political candidates are, whether they are made by other office holders or by people in the public spotlight. It’s not unusual for a candidate who loses a nomination in a primary election to voice support for the winning candidate. It’s more of a story if the losing candidate doesn’t express support for the winning candidate. This past week outgoing Republican State Sen. Doug Eckerty announced that he was supportive of Madison County Councilman Mike Gaskill in the primary battle with Commissioner Steffanie Owens for the party’s District 26 nomination. Eckerty said he was endorsing Gaskill because the two men have known each other for close to three decades. That loyalty is commendable, but will it translate into votes? The question becomes, how much will the Eckerty endorsement impact the race for the nomination between Gaskill and Owens? Not as much as can be expected, because both Gaskill and Owens are well known to the Republican Party faithful in Madison County. Eckerty’s name probably doesn’t carry a lot of political clout in this county. Local Republicans have fixed opinions, good or bad, about both candidates. District 26 is oddly shaped, with most of Madison County included in the district and portions of Delaware and Henry counties included. Eckerty

defeated incumbent Democrat Sue Errington in 2010 and was unopposed in 2014. The outcome of the primary could hinge on the voting in Delaware County, where neither Gaskill nor Owens is well known. Gaskill said he is campaigning regularly in Delaware County in an effort to secure votes, a place where the Eckerty endorsement could have an impact. ❖

**Jason Sattler, USA Today:**

Since Donald Trump gave America’s kids the chance to learn about “Stormy Daniels,” his approval with self-identified white evangelical Protestants has risen 6%. Yes, amid a controversy about hush money to hide an affair involving a woman best known for performing in adult films, an alleged affair that took place just months after Trump’s third wife gave birth to their son, the president’s standing has actually improved with a group of voters who spent most of this century fretting about the sanctity of marriage. The hypocrisy here is as obvious as Trump’s hundreds of conflicts of interests. American evangelicals, by and large, have decided that they can ignore Trump’s personal morality because they are getting something far more important in return — the chance to impose their personal morality on others. And their role model for this devil’s deal is the evangelical who made the Trump presidency possible: Mike Pence. “Trump’s got the populist nationalists,” said Steve Bannon, CEO of the Trump-Pence campaign in 2016. “But Pence is the base. Without Pence, you don’t win.” There is no human being who better personifies the unholy matrimony between the people who think America is a Christian nation and the people who think America is a corporate nation. Pence has been a walking, squinting, nodding commitment to the GOP’s base ever since then-campaign chairman Paul Manafort engineered a “mechanical problem” with Trump’s Boeing 757. That led to an extra night in Indiana and apparently Trump’s decision to ask Pence — then the governor — to be his running mate. Having at his side a man who calls himself “a Christian, a conservative, and a Republican, in that order” was taken as a sign from above that the thrice-married failed casino owner would keep his promises to the religious right — especially the one about appointing a younger Antonin Scalia to fill the Supreme Court seat that should have gone to Merrick Garland. And Trump appears to be better at keeping his vows to the religious right than to his wife. While Pence and evangelicals have refrained from judging Trump’s personal immorality, they’ve backed the administration’s efforts to put average Americans at the mercy of the whims of people in positions of power based on claims of religious belief. Meanwhile, Donald Trump is allowed to get away with what appears to be serial adultery (as well as his many other alleged offenses against women), smoothed over with money, lies and lawsuits, instead of humility and repentance. Mike Pence made this all possible, and he should be ashamed of himself. ❖

## Trump fires VA Sec. Shulkin

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump fired Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin by tweet Wednesday in the wake of a bruising ethics scandal and a mounting rebellion within the agency, and nominated White House doctor Ronny Jackson to lead the agency (Yen & Miller, [Associated Press](#)). A Navy rear admiral, Jackson is a surprise choice to lead to succeed Shulkin, a former Obama administration official and the first non-veteran ever to head the VA. Trump had been considering replacements for Shulkin for weeks, but had not been known to be considering Jackson for the role. In a statement, Trump praised Jackson as “highly trained and qualified.” Jackson has served since 2013 as the Physician to the President, and gained a national profile earlier this year for holding a sweeping news conference on the president’s health. Shulkin is the second Cabinet secretary to depart over controversies involving expensive travel, following former Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price’s resignation last September. Trump said in a statement he is “grateful” for Shulkin’s service. Trump has selected Robert Wilkie, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, to serve as the acting head of the VA. It is the government’s second-largest department, responsible for 9 million military veterans in more than 1,700 government-run health facilities.

## Walorski reacts to VA firing

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski reacted, saying “Hoosier Veterans deserve a VA that works for them and that fulfills our nation’s promise to care for our heroes. My top priority continues to be fully addressing ongoing concerns with patient care at facilities in Indiana. I’m grateful to Dr. Shulkin for his service, and I look forward to working with Dr. Jackson to build a culture of accountability at the VA and ensure our

veterans get the services and care they earned.”

## Holcomb wraps up Canadian mission



MONTREAL – Gov. Eric Holcomb’s fourth international trade mission is complete (Brown, [Inside Indiana Business](#)). The Indiana delegation wrapped up the three-day trip to Canada by meeting with officials from the province of Quebec in an effort to advance international partnerships in logistics and business. Holcomb and Indiana Secretary of Commerce Jim Schellinger met with Quebec Minister for Maritime Affairs Jean D’Amour in an effort to, according to governor’s office, reinforce each region’s commitment to economic development, research and innovation, specifically through their maritime connections. The stop in Quebec ended the trade mission, which included meetings with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and U.S. Ambassador to Canada Kelly Craft on Monday. The second day of the trip featured the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne to strengthen the economic relationship between Indiana and the province.

## Stehr retiring from WTHR-TV

INDIANAPOLIS – longtime WTHR-13 anchor John Stehr announced his retirement Tuesday, after more than four decades in journalism. His last day at the station is June 20, according to an announcement on the station’s website.

## Carmel questions AirBNB law

CARMEL – Gov. Eric Holcomb signed a bill into law that basically says, as an owner, you can rent your primary home on a short-term rental

platform (Williams, WISH-TV). Carmel city leaders disagree with the new state law. Carmel City Council member Jeff Worrell said, “One law by the state of Indiana for all municipalities in the state seems to me to be an overreach and definitely we view that as a trampling on home rule.” The council member added, “In this case, this law, I think is bad law because it takes away local ability to manage that and to understand the needs of residents.” So what happens to Carmel’s ordinance? Worrell said the city’s legal team advised them the city should be grandfathered into the new state law because of when and how the ordinance was passed. The city is operating under the assumption that it will be grandfathered in.

## Budget axes satellite project

FORT WAYNE – A \$208 million satellite instrument under development in Fort Wayne has been shelved (Francisco, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). The federal spending plan approved last week by Congress contained no money for the Radiation Budget Instrument, which was being built at the Harris Corp. plant at Lima and Cook roads. Scheduled to launch on the Joint Polar Satellite System 2 in 2021, the instrument would have measured sunlight reflected by the Earth.

## U.S. economy grows 2.9%

WASHINGTON — The U.S. economy grew at a solid 2.9 percent annual rate in the final three months of last year, a sharp upward revision that shows a third straight quarter of healthy growth (Associated Press). The Trump administration is hoping the economy will accelerate further this year, aided by sizable tax cuts.