

Donnelly has 3% lead in NBC/Marist Poll

Democrat has big edge with independents, suburban and white, college-educated voters

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – For months, Hoosier Republicans would lead one to believe that President Trump is as popular in Mike Pence's Indiana as he was when he won the state by 19% in 2016.

In the most consequential poll of the general election cycle to date, NBC News/Marist says Trump's approval stands at 48% with 46% disapproving here in Indiana, which mirrors several polls taken earlier this year. And in an election which Trump has essentially declared to

be a referendum on himself, U.S. Sen Joe Donnelly has a 44-41% lead over Republican Mike Braun with Libertarian Lucy Brenton at 8%. In a head-to-head between Donnelly and Braun, the Democrat has a 49-43% lead.

The poll talked to 955 Indiana adults between Aug. 26-29. The margin of error for likely voters in the poll is +/- 5.0%. The sample included 38% Republican, 32%



U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly has emerged with a small lead over Republican Mike Braun. (HPI Photos by Brian A. Howey)

independent and 29% Democrat.

When it comes to issues, 26% name jobs and the economy as the top concern, 23% cite health care and 14% say immigration.

This comes in a state with a job rate at a historic

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Trump, loathing & fear

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

MICHIGAN CITY – Believe me, Hoosier Trumpers, I hear you. I understand. You voted for Donald J. Trump because you wanted him to shake up Washington. And if there was any place on earth that needed to be shook, stirred, kicked, turned inside out and placed in a Waring blender, it was The District.

I keep waiting for President Trump to grow into the job, like Truman, Kennedy and Clinton did after entering the White House as novices or discovering blind-siding events.

There are worthy aspects of the first two years of the Trump presidency. Some of the onerous EPA regs have been



“I hold Jeff Sessions in the highest regard. I appreciate his service to the nation.”

- Vice President Mike Pence praising Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who is in Indianapolis today. It came after continued criticism from President Trump.



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pared back, much to the relief of my many business friends. After eight years of President Obama, he is adding conservative jurists to the courts, which brings balance. Justice Neil Gorsuch and Judge Brett Kavanaugh are more than credible and deserve to be on the high court, though withholding 100,000 pages of Kavanaugh documents is puzzling. The economy is going gangbusters, even with the tariffs. Trump's willingness to meet with North Korean despot Kim Jong Un was a vastly better approach than the sabre rattling of 2017.

That's the kind of president I want to write about.

And then, there were these past 10 days or so, beginning with the death of U.S. Sen. John McCain. As I traveled across Indiana over Labor Day weekend, it was subtly striking to see American flags lowered to half staff from Peru, to Michigan City, Long Beach, Hesston, The Pines, Porter and Chesterton. The folks who lowered the flags didn't need an edict from the president or governor. They knew a patriot when they saw one, and John McCain fit the bill: A Navy pilot, POW, congressman, senator, contrarian and the 2008 Republican nominee for president.

Underscore Republican.

It would have been so easy for President Trump to put out a laudatory statement, lower the White House flag and issue a call to arms for other aspiring McCains. Instead, we watched a pouting, contemptuous Trump refuse to issue such a statement, arms crossed like a recalcitrant teenager. It took Vice President Mike Pence and the Indianapolis-based American Legion to coax him into do the minimal amount of tribute. "I can assure you, America will always remember and honor the lifetime of service of United States Senator John McCain," Pence told the American Legion in Minneapolis. "By honoring him, we also honor

all of you."

By Sunday, as all of Washington from both parties gathered and millions of Americans watched, McCain received a heroic sendoff. President Trump tweeted and golfed.

McCain spoke from beyond the grave, saying in a farewell letter, "We weaken our greatness when we confuse our patriotism with tribal rivalries that have sown resentment and hatred and violence in all the corners of the globe. We weaken it when we hide behind walls, rather than tear them down, when we doubt the power of our ideals, rather than trust them to be the great force for change they have always been."

That prompted Lafayette Journal & Courier columnist Dave Bangert



to compare that message to Purdue President Mitch Daniels' commencement address last May, where he, too, warned of emerging tribalism.

"I see what you're saying," Daniels told Bangert. "I will say, we're not the only two. It's a growing body of concern. ... But it was very McCain-like, I think, to speak out about it. Because he was always willing to rise above. It used to be just party-driven partisan politics. Now, it's taken on this new, in some ways more troublesome, tribal dimension. When you

think about his values and the life he led, it's not surprising he would be speaking in that way when he surveys the current scene."

With McCain awaiting pomp and burial, we watched President Trump warn evangelical leaders that if Democrats retook Congress in November, there would be "violence." I know many Democrats. No one I know is talking violence. They wouldn't even contemplate it.

On Monday, Trump countered critical news coverage by suggesting, "I have long criticized NBC and their journalistic standards-worse than even CNN. Look at their license?"

He also took another pot shot at Attorney General Sessions, saying, "Two long running, Obama era, investigations of two very popular Republican congressmen were brought to a well publicized charge, just ahead of the mid-terms, by the Jeff Sessions Justice Department. Two easy wins now in doubt because there is not enough time. Good job Jeff...." The problem there is that the investigations of indicted Reps. Duncan Hunter and Chris Collins both occurred under the Trump administration.

On Tuesday, he was suggesting rewriting national libel law, which is actually a function of the 50 states and the District.

On Wednesday, President Trump watched the Brett Kavanaugh confirmation hearing where dissidents were escorted away and wondered why Americans should be allowed to protest. "I think it's embarrassing for the country to allow protesters," Trump tweeted. "You don't even know what side the protesters are on. In the old days, we used to throw them out."

No, Mr. President, American protesters changed civil rights laws and forced an irresponsible government to end the Vietnam War, one that our leaders knew was unwinnable for a decade.

The real elephant in the room was Bob Woodward's book, "Fear," which will go on sale next week. The title comes from a remark candidate Trump made in 2016 to Woodward and Washington Post reporter Robert Costa: "Real power is, I don't even want to use the word, 'Fear.'"

Here, we learn of a "crazytown" White House where senior aides call President Trump an "idiot" or "moron," ignore his orders, and swipe papers off his desk lest he terminate NAFTA or kill trade with South Korea.

Trump disses Attorney General Jeff Sessions, saying, "This guy is mentally retarded. He's this dumb Southerner. He couldn't even be a one-person country lawyer down in Alabama."

Woodward describes "an administrative coup

d'etat" and a "nervous breakdown" of the executive branch, with senior aides conspiring to pluck official papers from the president's desk so he couldn't see or sign them. After Syrian President Bashar al-Assad launched a chemical attack on civilians in April 2017, Trump called Mattis and said he wanted to assassinate the dictator. "Let's fucking kill him! Let's go in. Let's kill the fucking lot of them," Trump said, according to Woodward. Mattis told the president that he would get right on it. But after hanging up the phone, he told a senior aide: "We're not going to do any of that. We're going to be much more measured."

Essentially, we are in a second Schlesinger era.

As the Watergate scandal worsened in 1974, Defense Sec. James Schlesinger issued an order to the Pentagon that would have prevented President Nixon from ordering a military action without the secretary's reconfirming authorization, fearing that his mental state was in a state of deterioration due to paranoia and heavy drinking.

Think about that for a minute. The Pentagon has defied orders from the civilian commander-in-chief. This is an historic rupture of the chain of command. It's happening now.

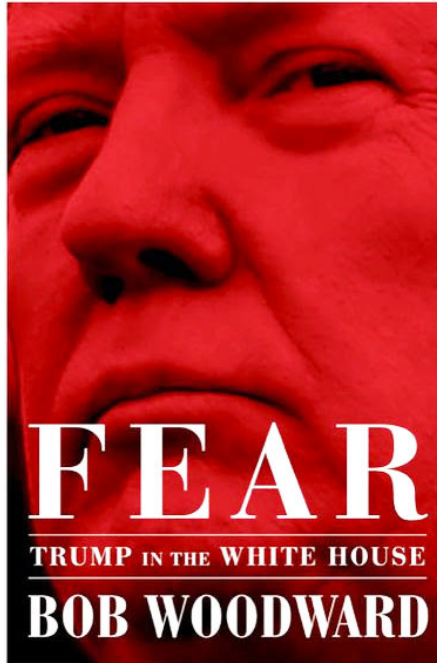
As for Woodward's credibility as a journalist, former White House spokesman Ari Fleischer observed: "I've been on the receiving end of a Bob Woodward book. There were quotes in it I didn't like. But never once - never - did I think Woodward made it up. Anonymous sources have looser lips and may take liberties. But Woodward always plays it straight. Someone told it to him."

And, apparently, he has the tapes to prove.

This is only the tip of the iceberg. The Mueller report awaits and President Trump continues to tweet; perhaps tweeting himself into an obstruction corner. These strange events that hover closer and closer to lunacy are only going to get worse. The paranoia, rage and seething will continue. Some see Jim Mattis, John Kelly, Dan Coats and, perhaps, Vice President Pence as enablers. History might well show them to be patriots, or as one confidante told me, the very people who work every day to "keep a lid on things."

So we watch as if we pass a maudlin car wreck. We hope folks survive, and we are keeping the Republic. Should President Trump falter on an epic scale, the solace for Indiana Republicans is that a third Hoosier is positioned to become the next commander-in-chief. That would be Vice President Pence.

With any new president or governor, I always hope for the best. The more successful these leaders are, the better off we all are. But as we head into the fall of 2018, we watch a worst case scenario emerge. ❖



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low 3.4% in July, suggesting that President Trump's tariffs which have created much anxiety in the agriculture and manufacturing sector, are impacting voters.

Among Democrats, health care is the top issue by double digits, with 37% naming it as their No. 1 priority. This issue comes as congressional Republicans with Braun's support are seeking to end protections of people with pre-existing conditions. Among Republicans, 28% say the economy and 21% cite immigration, with only 10% naming health care as the most important factor.

NBC/Marist pollsters note: "One policy of the president's that is not particularly popular in the state is his move to raise tariffs and trade barriers on imports from abroad. Four in 10 Indiana registered voters believe the tariffs will hurt the economy, while just 28% say they will help the economy. Only half of Republicans, 48%, say definitively that the moves will help the economy, with an additional 18% saying they will hurt and 24% saying they will have little impact."

Donnelly is getting 59% of the independent vote and 65% of the suburban vote, other indicators that the volatile Trump, with both tariffs and temperament, is impacting this race. There is a 16% gender gap favoring Donnelly, bigger than the 2012 Donnelly vs. Mourdock race which was 12% for the Democrat. Donnelly also has an 51-45% edge with white college graduates. Donnelly captures 10% of Republican registered voters, compared with just 2% of Democrats who back Braun.

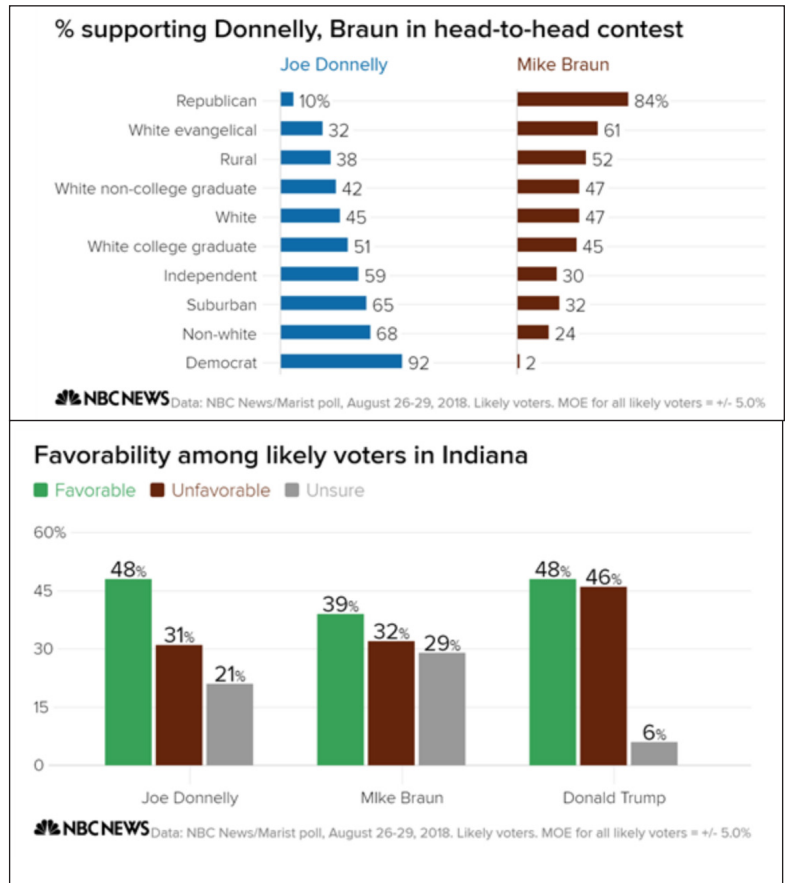
Donnelly has an edge in name recognition and favorability. He has a 48% favorability ranking with a net 17% favorability score, scored to Braun's 39% favorability and a net score of 7%.

NBC/Marist also polled in Missouri, another state Trump won by 19% in 2016. In the Senate race there, Sen. Claire McCaskill had a 44-40% edge of Republican Josh Hawley with the inclusion of the third party candidate. Kyle Kondik of Sabato's Crystal Ball notes, "Indiana may be a slightly easier though still challenging hold for Democrats. For one thing, Donnelly is closer to the political center than McCaskill (he is not pro-choice on abortion)."

New TV ads

Both Braun and Donnelly campaigns launched new TV ads on Wednesday, with Braun stressing his local or Indiana roots while Donnelly talks about supporting or opposing President Trump.

Braun's "Jasper" ad features his wife of 42 years, Maureen. "After business school, Mike had lots of opportunities," Maureen Braun says in the ad, "but we came back to our hometown of Jasper. Mike takes care of his family, friends, and employees," Maureen says, "because that's how we were raised." The candidate then adds, "I



moved back to my hometown to raise a family and build a business, and today I'm proud that I've built my business the right way: by treating employees like family," said Mike Braun. "We didn't need help from career politicians in Washington because, like Maureen says, it's just how we were raised here in Jasper."

Joe for Indiana released its eighth TV ad, "RV," a direct-to-camera appeal from Joe that highlights his efforts partnering with President Trump when good for Indiana and standing up to the Trump Administration when its proposals would harm Hoosiers. "It's simple, when he's for Hoosiers, I'm with him," Donnelly says. But he makes the case for voting against the Obamacare repeal, saying that it would have ended insurance coverage for 400,000 Hoosiers in the HIP 2.0 program. "When something's bad for Hoosiers, like the plan to push 400,000 off of health care, I won't go along with any president. If you want me on board, it's got to be good for Hoosiers."

The campaign describes it as a six-figure statewide ad buy. "Joe goes to Washington to represent Hoosiers, not to play partisan politics or act as a copy machine for the president," said Will Baskin-Gerwitz, communications director for Joe for Indiana. "He'll work with anyone, including President Trump, who has a good idea that will make the lives of Hoosiers better. And he'll stand up to anyone in Washington, regardless of party, if they try to push Hoosiers and our country in the wrong direction."

One Nation, a conservative group aligned with

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), has spent a whopping \$39 million this cycle (Politico Playbook). The group is up with two new ads hitting Sen. Joe Donnelly in Indiana and Sen. Claire McCaskill in Missouri on their support for "illegal amnesty." The McCaskill ad not only dings her for supporting sanctuary cities -- but also features a cameo by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi! One Nation is spending \$1.2 million in Indiana and \$1.5 million in Missouri on the radio, TV and digital buy. The group is also up with ads in Arizona and Nevada this week. Other states they have targeted this cycle include: North Dakota, Tennessee and West Virginia.

Braun pressed Donnelly whether he supports impeaching President Trump. "It's an election year, so of course career politician Joe Donnelly is trying to fool Hoosiers into believing he doesn't stand with his Democrat boss Chuck Schumer who wants to impeach President Trump," said Mike Braun spokesman Josh Kelley. "Unlike Donnelly, who says one thing and does another in Washington, Mike Braun will stand with President Trump and his economic agenda that is putting more money in Hoosiers' pockets every day."

Chamber won't endorse

The Indiana Chamber of Commerce is passing on endorsing in the Senate race after endorsing Dan Coats in 2010, Richard Mourdock in 2012 and Todd Young in 2016. "The committee carefully examined the policy stances of Sen. Joe Donnelly and Mike Braun, concluding that for each candidate there was good alignment with Indiana Chamber efforts but also notable areas of disagreement," said Chamber President Kevin Brinegar. "Therefore, the decision reached was to remain neutral and make no endorsement in this race." Rebecca Patrick, a spokeswoman for the chamber, said broadly speaking there were differences between the chamber's position and where the candidates stood on issues such as trade, tariffs, health care or fiscal policy.

Braun kicks off statewide tour

Braun kicked off his "Solutions Tour" on Tuesday. The campaign explains, that Braun will travel across the state meeting with Hoosiers on the job: talking about the problems they face every day, the failure of career politicians to address those problems, the lessons he's learned in the ups and downs of running his own business, and how he'll take those real world experiences to work for Hoosiers in Washington.

"We don't send the cream of the crop to represent us in D.C., and in nearly four decades of building my business I've jumped over just about every hurdle a career politician can put in your path," said Braun. "That's why I'm touring the state talking to Hoosiers about the solutions I've learned in building my business here in my hometown, and how I'm going to take that experience to work for you in Washington."

Braun will talk about creating American jobs,

health care, and immigration. On immigration, Braun notes, "The single most important obligation our government has is to protect its citizens. But for decades, the Congress has failed to meet this duty by refusing to address the southern border, allowing illegal immigrants and illicit drugs to pour into our communities. The time for inaction is over. President Trump was right. We must act immediately to secure the border by building a wall, crack down on criminal illegal immigrants and the Sanctuary Cities that protect them, end chain migration, and demand that every business verifies the immigration status of its workers to protect American workers."

On trade, Braun explained, "For too long, Hoosiers have felt the pain from career politicians like Joe Donnelly's failure to put America first and renegotiate bad deals like NAFTA. Unlike Senator Donnelly, who said President Trump's trade negotiation 'needs to end now,' I applaud the President's strong leadership on negotiating this deal," said Braun.

Trump stumps for Braun

President Trump brought a packed house to the Ford Center to make his pitch for Braun a week ago in



Evansville. The visit came after Braun called for the resignation of Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill after sexual harassment allegations were leveled at the Republican. Trump has had at least 22 women make similar allegations, but that contrast was not raised by the Donnelly campaign.

Trump called Braun a "special guy" and said he will "be a truly great senator." Braun said he would be a "true ally" to Trump and "not somebody that says something when you're in Indiana and does something differently when you're in D.C." Donnelly reacted, saying "Hoosiers still want a senator who always puts them first before any politician or political party. They know that's what I've been for them, and it's what I'll continue to be as their senator next year."

Prior to the rally, Trump tweeted about Braun, saying, "Will be going to Evansville, Indiana, tonight for a big crowd rally with Mike Braun, a very successful businessman who is campaigning to be Indiana's next U.S. Senator. He is strong on Crime & Borders, the 2nd Amendment, and loves our Military & Vets. Will be a big night!"

While in Evansville, Trump met with coal miners before the rally, saying, "Now these were tough guys, seriously tough cookies. In fact I looked and I said I wouldn't want to fight these guys," he said. "Of the nine, eight of them were crying, crying out of happiness because they're back. I said 'what's wrong with you, why aren't you crying?'" **Horse Race Status:** Tossup. ❖

The NYT ‘resistance’ op-ed article

Editors Note: This is the “anonymous” New York Times op-ed article. On MSNBC’s “Lawrence O’Donnell Show” Wednesday night, both the host and Democrat operative Ron Klain, an Indianapolis native, speculated the author might be National Intelligence Director Dan Coats, though there is no confirmation. The [Washington Post](#) reported this morning that Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo denied writing the article.

New York Times

I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration. I work for the president but like-minded colleagues and I have vowed to thwart parts of his agenda and his worst inclinations.

President Trump is facing a test to his presidency unlike any faced by a modern American leader.

It’s not just that the special counsel looms large. Or that the country is bitterly divided over Mr. Trump’s leadership. Or even that his party might well lose the House to an opposition hellbent on his downfall.

The dilemma — which he does not fully grasp — is that many of the senior officials in his own administration are working diligently from within to frustrate parts of his agenda and his worst inclinations.

I would know. I am one of them.

To be clear, ours is not the popular “resistance” of the left. We want the administration to succeed and think that many of its policies have already made America safer and more prosperous. But we believe our first duty is to this country, and the president continues to act in a manner that is detrimental to the health of our republic.

That is why many Trump appointees have vowed to do what we can to preserve our democratic institutions while thwarting Mr. Trump’s more misguided impulses until he is out of office.

The root of the problem is the president’s amorality. Anyone who works with him knows he is not moored to any discernible first principles that guide his decision making.

Although he was elected as a Republican, the president shows little affinity for ideals long espoused by conservatives: free minds, free markets and free people. At best, he has invoked these ideals in scripted settings. At worst, he has attacked them outright.

In addition to his mass-marketing of the notion that the press is the “enemy of the people,” President Trump’s impulses are generally anti-trade and anti-democratic.

Don’t get me wrong. There are bright spots that the near- ceaseless negative coverage of the administration fails to capture: effective deregulation, historic tax reform, a more robust military and more.

But these successes have come despite — not because of — the president’s leadership style, which is impetuous, adversarial, petty and ineffective.

From the White House to executive branch departments and agencies, senior officials will privately admit their daily disbelief at the commander in chief’s comments and actions. Most are working to insulate their operations from his whims.

Meetings with him veer off topic and off the rails, he engages in repetitive rants, and his impulsiveness results in half-baked, ill-informed and occasionally reckless decisions that have to be walked back.

“There is literally no telling whether he might change his mind from one minute to the next,” a top official complained to me recently, exasperated by an Oval Office meeting at which the president flip-flopped on a major policy decision he’d made only a week earlier.

The erratic behavior would be more concerning if it weren’t for unsung heroes in and around the White House. Some of his aides have been cast as villains by the media. But in private, they have gone to great lengths to keep bad decisions contained to the West Wing, though they are clearly not always successful.

It may be cold comfort in this chaotic era, but Americans should know that there are adults in the room. We fully recognize what is happening. And we are trying to do what’s right even when Donald Trump won’t.

The result is a two-track presidency.

Take foreign policy: In public and in private, President Trump shows a preference for autocrats and dictators, such as President Vladimir Putin of Russia and North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, and displays little genuine appreciation for the ties that bind us to allied, like-minded nations.

Astute observers have noted, though, that the rest of the administration is operating on another track, one where countries like Russia are called out for meddling and punished accordingly, and where allies around the world are engaged as peers rather than ridiculed as rivals.

On Russia, for instance, the president was reluctant to expel so many of Mr. Putin’s spies as punishment for the poisoning of a former Russian spy in Britain. He complained for weeks about senior staff members letting him get boxed into further confrontation with Russia, and he expressed frustration that the United States continued to impose sanctions on the country for its malign behavior. But his national security team knew better — such actions had to be taken, to hold Moscow accountable.

This isn’t the work of the so-called deep state. It’s the work of the steady state.

Given the instability many witnessed, there were early whispers within the cabinet of invoking the 25th Amendment, which would start a complex process for removing the president. But no one wanted to precipitate a constitutional crisis. So we will do what we can to steer the administration in the right direction until — one way or another — it’s over.

The bigger concern is not what Mr. Trump has done to the presidency but rather what we as a nation have allowed him to do to us. We have sunk low with him and allowed our discourse to be stripped of civility.

Senator John McCain put it best in his farewell letter. All Americans should heed his words and break free of the tribalism trap, with the high aim of uniting through our shared values and love of this great nation.

We may no longer have Senator McCain. But we

will always have his example — a lodestar for restoring honor to public life and our national dialogue. Mr. Trump may fear such honorable men, but we should revere them.

There is a quiet resistance within the administration of people choosing to put country first. But the real difference will be made by everyday citizens rising above the politics, reaching across the aisle and resolving to shed the labels in favor of a single one: Americans. ❖

Ford begins his TV ads against Sen. Delph

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – SD29 Democrat J.D. Ford began his TV ad campaign on Wednesday, going up a month earlier than he did during his 2014 challenge to State Sen. Mike Delph. The ad is titled "[Bright Future](#)" and features Ford's bio.



"Growing up, my parents taught me that you can't expect results if you don't work hard

for them," says Ford in the ad, which examines JD Ford's working family background, his focus on the community, and his vision for District 29.

"I'm thrilled to be taking such a strong next step in my campaign. We've been hard at work for more than a year, talking to voters and hearing what their concerns are, so that we can work to improve District 29. This ad reflects just that; it incorporates what voters want and my vision for our community. This is a major milestone for my campaign and I couldn't be more proud of the work we're doing," said Ford.

Mayor Brainard at Delph fundraiser

State Sen. Mike Delph's campaign featured a fundraiser that included Carmel Mayor on Aug. 29. Brainard had endorsed Delph's unsuccessful primary opponent, Corrie Meyer. "Thank you Mayor Brainard and the members of the Carmel City Council for hosting tonight's events," Delph said. "Onward and upward through November. **Horse Race Status:** Leans Ford.

SD38: Gambill begins TV ads

Democratic nominee Chris Gambill began his [TV ad](#) campaign in his challenge to State Sen. Jon Ford. "Around here, people don't care about your politics – they care that you can get things done," says Gambill in the ad. The ad highlights Gambill's work helping his community, his decades of experience as an attorney fighting for working families, and his focus on getting things done for the

Wabash Valley, such as investing in better jobs and higher wages for Hoosiers.

"I'm excited to announce that my first commercial is on the airwaves today. This ad focuses on my work helping our communities here in the Wabash Valley and my belief that we need a representative in the state senate who will be an advocate for the people. Today marks a major milestone in my campaign, and I'm proud of everything we've been able to accomplish," said Gambill.

Horse Race Status: Leans Ford.



HD26: Will Siegrist debate Campbell?

This race took on an edge the night Democrats nominated Campbell, a West Lafayette audiologist, when Siegrist posted – and later deleted – a tweet claiming

Campbell had gone negative by touting some of the things she'd done in the community (Bangert, [Lafayette Journal & Courier](#)). Siegrist, a



first-term Republican in a district centered in West Lafayette, retreated, restricting her social media and blocking media access. She's been taking heat this week over claims that she's trying to duck a debate. "I think people kind of assumed there would

be one," Campbell said. "My response so far has been that it doesn't appear that Sally is agreeing to have one. ... I've pretty much figured that we're not having one." Jones said the League offered a range of dates but couldn't find one Siegrist said fit into her calendar. "She said no to anything in October, so we tried to expand the dates," Jones said. "She just came back and said, 'No.'" On Wednesday, Siegrist said she's prepared to face Campbell. "I am committed to participating in a debate that will provide voters of this district with opportunity to hear where I stand on the issues," Siegrist said via email. "The current format being pushed by my opponent and her allies did not allow for bipartisan input or collaboration from all candidates. I will continue to work to find a format that will allow the issues so important to our community to be the primary focus of the debate." **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

SD32: Alting says he will debate

Sherry Shipley, a dean at Ivy Tech Community College, has been posting on social media since she entered the race last winter, after dropping out of a crowded 4th District congressional field for a shot at Alting, a 20-year veteran of the Indiana Senate (Bangert, [Lafayette Journal & Courier](#)). "Anyone who has tried to set up a debate, I have been ready from Day 1," Shipley said. "I have poked him on this for two months. ... We welcome the opportunity to stand and listen to Sen. Alting defend his policies." Jones said, "Ron told me there would be a debate and that he'd pick one – though it might not be ours." On Wednesday, Alting said that was still true. "I've never not debated in all my years," Alting said. "Absolutely, it's going to happen. ... We're working on that as you speak." **Horse Race Status:** Leans Alting.

Congress

Dems have advantage in Post/ABC Poll

Two months ahead of the midterm elections, Democrats hold a clear advantage over Republicans in congressional vote support, with antipathy toward Presi-

dent Trump fueling Democratic enthusiasm, even among those in the party who stayed home four years ago, a new Washington Post-ABC News poll finds. The survey also points to broad unrest and frustration with the political system generally. More than 6 in 10 Americans say Trump and the Republican Party are out of touch with most people in the country. While Democrats fare better, a narrower 51% majority also judged them out of touch. Registered voters say they favor the Democratic candidate over the Republican candidate in their district by 52% to 38%. That is a marked increase from the four-point edge in an April Post-ABC poll but similar to the 12-point advantage Democrats enjoyed in January.

In gauging Indiana CD races, Politico lists only two seats outside of the safe zone for incumbents, the 2nd and 9th CDs, where it rates U.S. Reps. Jackie Walorski and Trey Hollingsworth as "likely" winners. It notes of the 9th, a race to watch early in on election night. Polls close at 6 p.m. Eastern, and if Hollingsworth, a freshman, is in any trouble, it portends big trouble for Republicans.

3rd CD: Tritch drag event

The campaign of U.S. Rep. Jim Banks has threatened to file an ethics complaint with the Federal Election Commission against Democratic challenger Courtney Tritch for accepting money at a fundraising event that featured female impersonators and crossdressers. But Tritch's campaign said the event violated no FEC rules and accused Banks of demonstrating "clear homophobia." Banks' campaign on Tuesday emailed to [The Journal Gazette](#) a link to a video from the event, billed on Facebook as "The Queen's Court: Campaigning is a DRAG." The fundraiser was Saturday night at After Dark Nightclub in Fort Wayne (Francisco, [Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). "Not only is this video deeply disturbing and offensive but it clearly shows Democrat Courtney Tritch illegally accepting undocumented cash campaign donations while she dances on stage with a drag queen," Steve Justus, campaign manager for Banks, R-3rd, said in a statement. "We are exploring FEC violations and looking at filing a complaint. In the meantime, Ms. Tritch may want to consider apologizing for this charade to the northeastern Indiana families she's campaigning to represent," Justus said. The video link shows several audience members giving what appear to be paper currency to Tritch while she dances on a stage. She also is shown going into the audience to collect more bills. David Myles, Tritch's campaign manager, said in an email that the event was "hosted by voters in the 3rd District" and that it "followed FEC regulations." "What is disturbing though is the clear homophobia demonstrated by Rep. Banks," Myles said ([Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). "In asking for an apology to the families of the 3rd District, he is stating that the LGBTQ community is excluded from his idea of family. If he would like to discuss his views on LGBTQ rights, as well as his positions on affordable health care, strong public schools, and high-wage jobs, he can agree to debate Courtney in person this fall, as we've requested multiple

times.”

6th CD: Pence fundraising scrutinized

Axios reports that Greg Pence has received just 14% of his \$1.3 million raised from the district while 57% comes from outside of Indiana. Axios looked at the amount of money coming from out of state for candidates who have received at least 500 contributions during the 2017-18 election cycle. Only six Indiana candidates met that threshold: Liz Watson, 38.9% of her \$603,000 from inside her district; André Carson, 24.8% of his \$300,800 from inside his district; Courtney Tritch, 84.9% of her \$336,000 from inside her district; Jackie Walorski, 54% of her \$573,000 from inside her district; Mel Hall, 47.3% of his \$476,300 from inside his district (IndyStar).

Right to Life, Chamber endorse Greg Pence

Indiana Right to Life PAC endorsed Pence, who said, “I’m proud to be endorsed by Indiana Right to Life PAC, as a father to four and grandfather to six, I believe every life is precious. I am committed to being the pro-life advocate for Sixth District Hoosiers in Congress.” The National Right to Life also endorsed Pence. The Indiana Chamber of Commerce have endorsed 6th CD candidate Greg Pence in the 2018 general election. “Your strong and consistent support of free enterprise issues and leadership for our state and nation is deeply appreciated,” said Kevin Brinegar, president and CEO of the Indiana Chamber in his endorsement letter to Pence. “Thank you for your support of pro-jobs issues and we look forward to continuing to work with you on these and many other issues confronting our state and nation.” **Horse Race Status:** Safe Pence.

9th CD: Farm Bureau endorses Trey

The Indiana Farm Bureau ELECT PAC recently announced their endorsement of Trey Hollingsworth in the 9th District race for Congress. The Indiana Farm Bureau (IFB) is the state’s largest farm organization, representing members from nearly 73,000 farm families statewide. During his first term, Hollingsworth held multiple farm town-halls, spearheaded efforts to allow farmers to stop predatory black vultures from attacking livestock, fought onerous regulations like the Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule, and voted for the Farm Bill. “I am proud to have the trust of Hoosier farmers and will continue to fight against the regulatory burdens facing the family farms that produce vital food, fuel, and fiber for our country,” Hollingsworth said of the endorsement. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Hollingsworth.

National

Biden feels push to run

Democrat Joe Biden is hearing from plenty of supporters who would like to see the former vice president make another run for the White House (Associated Press). On a recent flight from Washington to New York, a string of passengers stopped at his seat to deliver some version of the same message: “Run, Joe, run. We’re with you.” Biden himself is more conflicted, but he is listening keenly to the supporters pushing him to run for the White House in 2020. Biden is convinced he can beat President Donald Trump, friends and advisers say. People who have spoken to Biden say he has given himself until January to deliberate and size up potential competition for the Democratic nomination. Politico reported that Biden spent much of Labor Day literally running in parades.

Trump mocks Kerry

President Donald Trump mocked a potential re-election challenge from former Secretary of State John Kerry on Monday, writing on Twitter that he “should only be so lucky” to face off against the 2004 Democratic presidential nominee in 2020 (Politico). “I see that John Kerry, the father of the now terminated Iran deal, is thinking of running for President,” Trump wrote. “I should only be so lucky — although the field that is currently assembling looks really good — FOR ME!” On Sunday, Kerry declined to rule out another run for the Oval Office in an interview with CBS. “I’m really not thinking about it,” Kerry said. “Talking about 2020 right now is a total distraction and waste of time. What we need to do is focus on 2018.”

Patrick forms PAC

Former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick launched a new PAC Wednesday, the latest sign that the Democrat’s political ambitions may not be through ahead of 2020 (Politico). The new Reason to Believe PAC is aimed at “promoting Governor Patrick’s positive vision for Democrats to rally around in 2018,” according to its website. The political action committee announced its launch on Wednesday. ❖



CONTENT BY CARTER
strategic content creation and deployment

Tritch disputes 'liberal' label

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – If there ever was an uphill political battle, Democrat Courtney Tritch is seeking to climb that mountain in her 3rd CD challenge to freshman Rep. Jim Banks. It hasn't been represented by a Democrat in nearly quarter a century. It's a +18 Republican on the Cook Partisan Index.



The last time a Democrat even crested 40% came in the 2006 Democratic wave election year when Republican Rep. Mark

Souder defeated Fort Wayne Councilman Thomas Hayhurts 54-45%.

Tritch hasn't attracted the "red to blue" support from the DCCC, but she has out-raised Banks in the last two FEC quarters. From April 19 to June 30, Tritch raised \$168,786.39, with 97% coming from the 3rd CD, while Banks reported \$165,849.00 in contributions. This is the second time that Tritch has out-raised Banks this election cycle. "Since the beginning, our campaign has been focused on engaging with individuals across Indiana's 3rd District," said Tritch. "We are building a movement the likes of which northeast Indiana has never seen, and these numbers prove that our message is not only resonating but that Hoosiers are willing to invest in new leadership for our district."

Tritch comes from the economic development sector and in her race against Rep. Banks he referred to her as a "liberal" in the Aug. 28 HPI Interview. "I do laugh every time he says that," Tritch said in this HPI Interview conducted via phone on Tuesday. "This is the first time I've declared a party. Part of the reason I declared as a Democrat is I feel the Republican Party has left Republicans behind. I hear that all the time from Republicans who are on my team. They're tired of it."

She points to the issue of immigration as a case in point. Writing in a Fort Wayne Journal Gazette op-ed article on Aug. 5, Tritch observed, "In 2016, northeast Indiana economic development leaders unveiled the Road to One Million, a plan to increase our population to 1 million people. And just this month, the Northeast Indiana

Regional Partnership released a study on the impact immigrants have on our community. It shows that between 2011 and 2016, immigrants accounted for almost 25% of the region's population growth – and 7.6% of those immigrants work in manufacturing, a vital industry in our region. The report states, 'We estimate that by 2016, immigrants living in the region helped create or preserve 1,299 local manufacturing jobs that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere.'"

Tritch added, "As for Dreamers, it is our moral imperative to support these more than 800,000 young people who have never truly known any other home than America. It is also an economic imperative. If we removed every Dreamer from the economy, the U.S. would lose an estimated \$460 billion in gross domestic product over the next decade. Indiana alone would lose \$516 million annually."

She cites health care and President Trump's tariffs as top issues for this mid-term election. On health care, she explains, "Does our current Congress even understand this issue? It sure doesn't look like it. They want to, and are working very hard to, present a solution that that doesn't match the problem. Rather than support the marketplaces and keep Medicaid expansions in place, they want to give double-digit tax cuts to the wealthiest among us. In order to do that, they will strip healthcare coverage for more than 20 million Americans – families, individuals, middle class, veterans, women, and the already-infirm."

Here is our HPI Interview with Democratic nominee Courtney Tritch.

HPI: Give us an overview of where you believe your campaign is at heading into the homestretch.

Tritch: I've been pretty clear from the beginning I'm trying to create a movement. We've just been working hard to activate people in all the counties, Democrats, Independents and Republicans to come out and get excited about on this campaign and the issues we're working on. I'm new to this. This is the first time I've run a campaign. People who have been involved in politics a long time keep telling me it's an outreach and momentum. We've been excited about the energy we keep seeing out there.

HPI: Have you done any internal polling or has the state party or the DCCC give you any metrics on where you might be?

Tritch: Yeah. What we're seeing is that people want their candidates to talk about the issues. They have been disappointed they are not doing that. This is a big differentiator between Banks and myself when it comes to being out there and talking about issues that are most





important. I hear over and over again about health care, what are we doing about it. I published an editorial on it and I've got positions on my website. He seems strangely silent on it which is unfortunate. We'd be interested in debating and he doesn't seem inclined to do that.

HPI: So there are no debates scheduled?

Tritch: There are not. Everywhere I go people ask me that same question and it's just sad to me. This election isn't about party. It's about who actually has a vision for this country. It seems to me that instead of engaging on the issues, perhaps he doesn't have ideas on how to move the country forward and doesn't want people knowing that.

HPI: What is your plan for health care? Democrats like Sen. Donnelly are saying that Republicans are sabotaging Obamacare. What is your message to voters?

Tritch: Several steps have been taken to dismantle the system over the past year. We continue to see health care costs going up and no one is presenting ideas on how to solve the problem. My stance is that while we have one side that is interested in repealing the ACA and another side that is interested in Medicare for all and my thought is the next best step is to offer a Medicare option on the exchanges. If people want to buy into it they can. It's a way to stabilize the exchanges, it's a way to bring costs down and I hear from Baby Boomers all the time about not wanting to wait until age 65 to retire. There's this gap where they can't get insurance.

HPI: So under your plan, I could opt for a Medicare plan on the ACA exchange. I would pay for it, though.

Tritch: Yes. People would pay into it just like they would any other plan. This is a way to bring down the age of the risk pool in Medicare as well and would help drive down costs. If people like it, if more and more people bought into that option, then the free market would decide whether we move into the option of Medicare for all. To me this seems to be a pretty low risk option to move things forward.

HPI: Northeast Indiana is heavy on both farming and manufacturing. How are you responding to President Trump's tariffs?

Tritch: I hear from people frustrated with this. It's obviously going to be hurting Hoosier farmers. I don't think anyone can negate that. It's also driving costs up for manufacturers who are using steel or aluminum that they can't get or if they're getting it from Canada or other countries where there are tariffs, it's just kind of seems haphazard approach. Most economists agree there is no winner in a trade war. I'm a believer in fair trade and I don't think this is what is being encouraged.

HPI: Rep. Banks says he doesn't have a lot of the details but believes that President Trump has a long-term plan and that the tariffs are basically a bargaining chip. When you talk to farmers and executives at steel plants, are you hearing that same kind of perspective?

Tritch: I don't think anyone is interested in just holding their breath and hoping there's a long term plan. I'm happy to put my faith in a long-term plan if someone wants to tell me what that is and what the timeline is. To date I have not seen that. What we are seeing is we're creating enemies out of our allies. Yes, China has always been a bad actor and something needs to be done. But we cannot go it alone. We need to continue to utilize our international allies to put pressure on them and instead we upsetting our allies and it's evolved in tariff wars with them. It doesn't make sense. People are confused, frustrated and upset and can't make sense of it. They're frustrated their politicians aren't willing to use their voice and say, "Stop, this isn't working for us."

HPI: Rep. Banks talked about the farm bill. We had a party line vote on SNAP work requirements, which Democrats don't support. What's your take on that?

Tritch: This is another burden I don't understand the purpose of. When you look, historically, work requirements imposed, any small amount of fraud is outweighed by the enormous amount of costs that is put on the states. People who are interested in smaller government, this doesn't make sense. There were some Republicans who voted against the bill as well. It just seems like a way of penalizing poor people. When you look at the requirements, when you've got a kid who's six years old and you have to miss work for a doctor's appointment and don't

file something correctly, you're locked out of the system for 12 months. Honestly, I would rather have that person have access to food than putting a huge administrative burden on our state. The costs of that just don't make any sense. For children under six, there's an exception, but what if you have kids in grade school or high school? Most low-paying jobs don't have sick days or flexible schedules. If your kid has to go to the doctor and then all a sudden you've lost your food access, you're locked out. It doesn't make sense. We need to figure out a way to work with a carrot, not a stick, on lifting people out of poverty and giving them that hand up that they need and not penalizing them for being poor.

HPI: On immigration, we've watched Sen. Donnelly track right of center. He talks of backing bills for President Trump and funding the border wall. What's your message on immigration?

Tritch: I just wrote an op-ed for the Journal Gazette on that. My full stance is on my website. My background is in economic development. The regional economic development group I worked for has sponsored this plan to increase our region's population to one million people. That same group just put out a study on the impact of immigrants in this community. Immigrants grew in population from 2011 to 2016. There were about 1,200 to 1,300 manufacturing jobs which would have moved if we didn't have that immigration population. That manufacturing is a huge part of our economy here. There were two bills going through the House. One was the Goodlatte bill, the hard-right bill that Banks voted for that would have cut 40% of legal immigration. Legal immigration. So my status is we've got all these jobs. Everywhere we go they tell us they can't find the bodies that we need, so why would we go out of our way to cut something that is supplying the workforce that we need in manufacturing in other industries as well? That doesn't make sense to me. That's where my focus is. When you read studies on where illegal immigration is happening, two thirds of those undocumented immigrants aren't those who are crossing the borders illegally. They are people who have overstayed their visas. To me we're putting the wrong emphasis on the wrong thing. We should be focused on fixing and funding legal immigration and streamlining that. I will also be very happy to say adamantly I don't agree in abolishing ICE. I think there is policy governing ICE. No one is advocating open borders. I find that offensive. We can have a strong border and still have a great immigration policy. Those two ideas aren't mutually exclusive. Again, every time I'm talking with folks and



as I watch some of the commercials in the Senate race, there is just so much fear mongering and divisiveness with regards to this issue and people are just sick of it. It's not true. It's unfortunate it's a scare tactic to win votes.

HPI: When President Trump was in Evansville and Elkhart he talked about building the wall. But even Republicans in Congress aren't enthusiastic about funding the border wall. What's your position on the wall?

Tritch: I don't think that a border wall is going to solve the issue. I do think that compromise has to happen in Congress. When there were bills presented over the past couple of months that said, "Hey, we'll give you funding for this wall in exchange for a permanent solution for Dreamers," for example, I think that kind of compromise that helps people feel safe and secure, I'm OK with that. I just don't think that's the answer.

HPI: When I talked to Rep. Banks, he portrayed you and Liz Watson in the 9th CD as classic "liberals."

Tritch: (Laughs).

HPI: Your business portfolio has some folks I know in Fort Wayne say she could have run as a Republican. Are you a liberal? Talk about your own professional portfolio.

Tritch: I do laugh every time he says that. This is the first time I've declared a party. Part of the reason I declared as a Democrat is I feel the Republican Party has left Republicans behind. I hear that all the time from Republicans who are on my team. They're tired of it. I always felt like I was fiscally conservative and socially progressive. I don't know where that puts me. Somewhere in the middle and close to America. You'll see that in my positions. When I said that about health care, there's this side and there's this other side. For me, working in regional economic development as long as I did the philosophy I bring to the table is we did the regional partnership and we consistently brought educators, elected officials and executives all in the room to figure out solutions for our problems in this region. No one ever asked who was a Republican or a Democrat. I just wanted to know who had the best idea. I talk a lot about the work I did to help the Regional Cities Initiative for this region. We won \$42 million in state funding and that was through the Pence administration. There are many things I vehemently disagreed with former Gov. Pence, but I think that was a great way to show the importance of investing in our community and investing in our future. I don't think the whole Democrat/Republican thing matters. In my background, before working in economic development, I worked for a Chamber of Commerce, which is also very Republican. I started two businesses. I guess the point in saying that is we need someone who understands business and economic development and is willing to listen to both sides. I have never had any

interest in being a politician. I just want to hear from all and choose the best thing. That's not how our politics is working right now.

HPI: A lot of us in the pundit class and even President Trump himself has said this election is going to be a referendum on his administration. Or himself. In your district, one of the most Republican in the state and nation, is your race a referendum on Trump?

Tritch: It's a referendum on what our vision is for the future on what we want our country to be. The first person to max out on donations was a registered Republican. I get people telling me, "I'm a registered Republican but I voted for you." To me it's a referendum on politicians who aren't willing to stand up for what they believe in. We need leaders with a spine who are willing to stand up for what they believe. My opponent talks about my "radical agenda," and my agenda is we should have affordable health care and strong schools and a highway to jobs. It's almost silly to me how he's gone about handling this rather than actually talking about issues.

HPI: I asked Rep. Banks about President Trump's Helsinki summit, where he met alone for two hours with Russian President Putin and no one, not even Director Dan Coats, who once represented in the 3rd CD, knows what they talked about. Banks doesn't know and he express concern about that. Does that concern you?

Tritch: It's alarming that he would meet with Putin by himself. I think we should be more than concerned about some of these things and be willing to raise our voice about them. If we have leaders and representatives willing to stand up and say, "This is not right." We have different branches of government for a reason, right? We have to hold each other accountable. Right now what we're seeing is people who aren't willing to stand up and hold people accountable for their actions. It's alarming.

HPI: We've heard the impeachment of President Trump come up. Where are you on that?

Tritch: Honestly, it's not something I hear about very often. I'm running against Rep. Banks. Everything I talk about is where I stand on the issues or where he stands. Or if he hasn't taken a stance. I think that's what people are focused on. I will tell you that many people have gone out of their way to tell me they voted for Trump and they'll be voting for me. The reason for that is a lot of people voted for President Trump because they felt their voices aren't being heard. They still feel that way and our current representative has not made himself accessible to the district and so they still feel their voices aren't being heard and they want someone who will actually listen to them.

HPI: The last Democrat to represent the district was Jill Long Thompson, 23 years ago. Have you been in touch with her? Is she helping you with your campaign?

Tritch: Yes on both counts. I met with her before I even declared. She has been fantastic help. She is a great person and has been a great sounding board. ❖

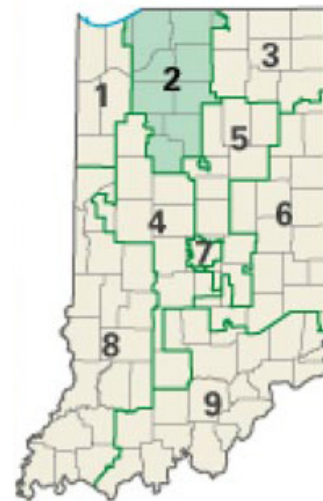
Indiana's maps need to be 'salamandered'

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

NASHVILLE, Ind. – A decade ago Indiana was a battleground for control of Congress. Between 2004 and 2010, there were six U.S. House seats that flipped. We weren't "flyover country" when it came to Capitol Hill. Indiana was often ground zero.

The flipping began in 2004 when Republican trucking executive Mike Sodrel upset Democratic U.S.

Rep. Baron Hill 49.4 to 49%. Two years later, with the Iraq War dissolving into an insurgency that would claim more than 5,000 American lives and more than 100 Hoosier soldiers, Hill returned with a 50-45% victory in a rematch, while Democrats Brad Ellsworth and Joe Donnelly upset U.S. Reps. John Hostettler and Chris Chocola, the latter by a 53-46% margin.



In 2010, two more seats changed parties, with Republican Todd Young upsetting Hill 52-42%. Dr. Larry

Bucshon won the 8th CD by defeating State Rep. Trent Van Haaften 57-37% in a seat Democrat Rep. Ellsworth abandoned to replace Sen. Evan Bayh after he stunned the political world with his retirement.

Compare that to this year's mid-term elections, where the website FiveThirtyEight gives Democrats a 74% chance of retaking the U.S. House, but in Indiana's nine districts, well, there's hardly a race to be found. Reps. Pete Visclosky, Jim Banks, Susan Brooks, Andre Carson and Larry Bucshon all had a 99% chance of winning and so do new nominees Jim Baird and Greg Pence.

The analytical site's data gives Democrat Mel Hall just an 8% chance of upsetting U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski in the 2nd CD, while Liz Watson in the 9th CD has just a 23% chance of upsetting freshman Rep. Trey Hollingsworth.

With all the incumbents, two Democrats and seven Republicans, all virtually a cinch for reelection, it's because we all think they deserve it, right? Not so fast, bucko.

Last week's NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll puts congressional approval at 20 percent with 75 percent disapproving, while on Wednesday an Economist/YouGov Poll put congressional approval at 14 percent with 67 percent disapproving.

How did this disconnect happen?

Look no further than the reapportioned maps of



2011. Heading into that once-a-decade exercise, then-Secretary of State Todd Rokita pushed for basic guidelines: Build districts based on “communities of interest,” county lines and nesting two Indiana House districts in each Indiana Senate district.

It all sounded good, but it was really a Trojan horse. Once the Republican consultants in Washington and their computers emerged with the finished product, what we ended up with were two-hard core Democratic districts (the 1st and 7th) in Lake County and Indianapolis, and seven overwhelmingly Republican districts spread out across the state. The maps were boxy, unlike the maps forged in 2001 that featured the “Kokomo strand” that connected the City of Firsts with the 2nd CD, while Bloomington and Lafayette were in what I described as the “Frankenstein 4th.”

The Cook Partisan Index reveals just how uncompetitive these districts are: Only two, the Democratic 1st and the Republican 5th are in single digits, at +9 for those parties. And the rest? The 2nd is R+11, the 3rd is R+18, the 4th is R+17, the 6th is R+18, the not-so-bloody 8th is R+15, and the 9th is R+13.

In 2016, Gov. Eric Holcomb won with 51% of the vote, Sen. Todd Young with 52% and President Trump won 57%, but the Indiana House went 70% Republican, the Indiana Senate was 82% Republican and the Indiana congressional delegation was 78% Republican.

To further make the point, the last two U.S. Senate races were competitive and this year’s showdown between Sen. Donnelly and Republican Mike Braun is a true 50/50 tossup at this point.

So while most of us agree that Congress really, really sucks, our whole delegation sleeps soundly at night. Rep. Hollingsworth and Greg Pence barely talk to the press and won’t debate their opponents. Only a few, like Reps. Jim Banks, Pete Visclosky and Larry Bucshon, are holding town hall meetings.

Below the congressional level, the Indiana General Assembly maps have yielded Republican super majorities since 2014. As I wrote in the April 7, 2011 edition of *Howey Politics Indiana*, “Canny House Republicans can get maps for the next decade that will be fertile ground for future majorities just by playing the demographics straight and following the Rokita doctrine that has been embraced by the governor.”

While Democrats are calling for a non-partisan redistricting commission that they believe will design more competitive districts, that referenced governor, now Purdue President Mitch Daniels, who signed the 2011 maps into law, understands the threat.

In his 2017 Ian Rolland lecture in Fort Wayne, Daniels observed, “You could draw the fairest, squarest, most geographically compact lines around the so-called common communities of interest, just the way the law contemplates, and you would still get a one-sided outcome, because our population has concentrated in this novel way. You would almost need reverse gerrymandering. You’d almost have to draw salamander-like districts in order to throw, let’s say, Democrats and Republicans together in some even mix.”

Hmmmm, battle gerrymandering with salamandering.

It’s a concept a slithery, low-yielding Congress will resist.

Prepare for your landslides and inertia. ❖

The columnist is publisher of Howey Politics Indiana at www.howeypolitics.com. Find him on Facebook and Twitter @hwypol.

Donnelly calls McCain his 'personal hero'

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – In a recent speech prior to Sen. John McCain's death, Sen. Joe Donnelly described the drama in the chamber as McCain gave his famous thumbs down on the effort of Senate Republican leaders and President Trump to repeal the Affordable Care Act.



Ironically, with ACA provisions now becoming more popular and health care a top issue in upcoming elections, McCain's vote now can be seen as saving Republicans from even higher health costs during the Trump administration.

But most of the Senate Republicans, denouncing the ACA as "Obamacare" and wanting to be rid of it, didn't at that time see anything positive about McCain's negative vote.

Nor did the president. His anger over McCain's vote simmered on, seen in his reluctance even to lower White House flags to half staff after McCain's death.

The thumbs-down vote on repeal came in the early morning hours of July 28, 2017.

Donnelly and the 47 other senators on the Democratic side of the aisle were voting "no" on repeal.

It was seen as a risky vote by Donnelly, facing reelection in Indiana, a state Trump carried by 19 percentage points.

Now, however, Donnelly cites that vote as he campaigns, calling McCain "one of my personal heroes," and contending that the ACA and its provision for insurance for people with pre-existing conditions should be strengthened, not abandoned.

Two Republicans, Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Susan Collins, joined in opposing the so-called "skinny" repeal – not total repeal, but aimed at moving to eliminate all traces of Obamacare.

McCain, if he voted for repeal, would bring about a 50-50 tie that would enable Vice President Mike Pence to cast the tiebreaker. Pence was in the chamber, ready and expecting to cast that decisive vote for repeal.

But McCain, returning to the chamber after diagnosis of the brain cancer that eventually brought his death, wouldn't say how he would vote. He was upset that the repeal bill was being brought to a vote without "regular order," without hearings, without debate on what was actually in the measure and without opportunity to offer amendments.

Still, McCain had been no fan of Obamacare.

Donnelly, in telling of the drama in the Senate chamber, said that Pence was pounding hard on McCain, trying to convince him to go along.

News accounts tell of the vice president working on McCain for 30 minutes and arranging a call to McCain from the president.

Donnelly relayed that some colleagues were saying, as they waited, that they didn't think McCain could withstand all the pressure.

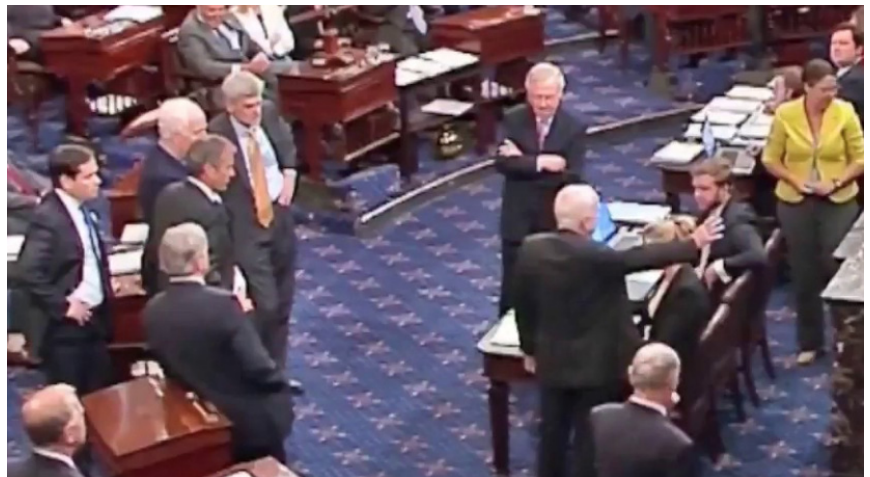
Donnelly disagreed, reminding them: "He was a prisoner of war for five and a half years."

Indeed, pressure from Pence wasn't anything like that applied by the interrogators in North Vietnam, who pounded on McCain in more than just a verbal way.

Finally, McCain stood before the Senate chair and gave that dramatic thumbs down to kill the repeal.

Reports told of gasps as McCain did what so many on both sides thought he would not do. Well, was it really such a surprise vote by a long-proclaimed maverick so often following his own conscience rather than the wishes of his party?

McCain explained his vote this way: "I've stated time and time again that one of the major failures of



Obamacare was that it was rammed through Congress by Democrats on a strict party-line basis without a single Republican vote."

He called for a return "to the correct way of legislating," to go back to committee, "hold hearings, receive input from both sides of the aisle, heed the recommendations of the nation's governors and produce a bill that finally delivers affordable health care for the American people."

John McCain was not blinded by the colors in the red vs. blue political war that threatens the nation's health. ❖

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

Kavanaugh is no friend of working families

By ERIN MACEY

INDIANAPOLIS – I thought the name rang a bell. Judge Kavanaugh wrote the decision in PHH Corp. v. CFPB, declaring the structure of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) unconstitutional, a decision later reversed by the full D.C. Court of Appeals. Congress established the CFPB in the wake of the financial crisis to hold banks and other financial service providers accountable to American consumers, and it serves as both a rule-making body and enforcement agency.



Now that it has returned over \$12 billion to student loan borrowers, homeowners, and credit card holders in its short lifetime, it has a number of enemies. Judge Kavanaugh appears to be among them.

Following his nomination to the Supreme Court, I went back to read his decision. Kavanaugh is certainly no fan of the consumer watchdog agency, and his assertions about the agency should give us pause. Arguing that the CFPB's power was "massive in scope," Kavanaugh went on to argue that the director "possesses more unilateral authority – that is, authority to take action on one's own, subject to no check – than...any other officer in any of the three branches of the U.S. Government, other than the President." This is an ironic – and almost laughable – statement in the context of Kavanaugh's exercise of judicial authority to overturn a CFPB enforcement action.

Further, the director of the CFPB can be removed for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance. And, after watching with gritted teeth as Vice President Mike Pence broke the tie and tipped the scales to overturn the CFPB's arbitration rule – a rule that would have limited financial institutions' ability to slip clauses into your contracts that take away your right to sue them in court – many of us can attest that there are checks on the agency's power.

But what's even more alarming in the PHH decision is the hostility evidenced in Kavanaugh's broad attack on independent agencies writ large. "The independent agencies collectively constitute, in effect, a headless fourth branch of the U.S. Government," Kavanaugh wrote. "Because of their massive power and the absence of Presidential supervision and direction, independent agencies pose a significant threat to individual liberty and to the constitutional

system of separation of powers and checks and balances."

Independent agencies like the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Reserve, and the National Labor Relations Board enjoy some measure of insulation from the White House for good reason. As Judge Pillard wrote in the en banc decision overturning Kavanaugh, "That independence shields the nation's economy from manipulation or self-dealing by political incumbents and enables such agencies to pursue the general public interest in the nation's longer-term economic stability and success, even where doing so might require action that is politically unpopular in the short term."

Kavanaugh's opinion in PHH is a blinking red light warning us that with Kavanaugh on the Supreme Court, there will be broader attacks on regulations, guidance, and the overall authority of independent agencies in the name of individual liberty. In other words, it will be open season on the protections that help level the playing field between working families and the companies that dump toxins in their soil, the employers that put the squeeze on their workers, and the financial institutions that use dizzying math and polished sales pitches to siphon away your hard-earned dollars.

Sometimes, "individual liberty" seems to be code for "You're on your own. Good luck!" It means a David-and-Goliath fight against sophisticated, well-financed corporations – except Goliath already got you to sign away your right to join an army or use a slingshot. If this is the kind of freedom Kavanaugh and his supporters envision, his appointment to the court could sound the death knell for a century's worth of efforts to protect working families.



Macey, PhD, is a policy analyst for the Indiana Institute for Working Families and Indiana Community Action Association.

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

Schools are lynchpin of economies

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – We revel in stories about our cities and counties, but, aside from the sports section, rarely see anything substantive about school districts.

School districts are more numerous than counties (289 to 92), and what newspaper has room for all that information which parents learn from their children anyway?

School is just about the kids and most businesses that advertise don't have kids for customers.

Yet, Indiana's school districts are very different one from the other. The latest comprehensive school district data are for 2016 in the American Community Survey, which is a five-year compilation, and who can tell what that means?

For example, the highest rate of unemployment in that Census Bureau report was 10.8%

within the district of Lake Ridge Schools of Lake County, while the South Knox schools, down in the Vincennes area, had a mere 0.9% unemployment rate.

What's that got to do with education? Everything. Parents who aren't working aren't earning and therefore bring home less money to feed, house and cloth their children. Those tykes may wonder what's different about them from the other 90% of parents and kids. And that could be the start of being set apart from the progress expected in school.

Speculative? Maybe, unless you've lived among the richest in our country. Where unemployment is phenomenally low, youngsters and their parents wonder what's wrong with "those others" who aren't enjoying the good life, the rewards of our personal endowment of good fortune.

Or consider the differences in lifestyle and opportunities for students in Zionsville where only 9.9% of households have income below \$35,000 per year, compared to the 60.6% of households in Cannelton. What's the probability of a 10-year-old from Zionsville visiting Chicago and seeing those museums compared with that kid in Cannelton, on the Ohio River, even getting to Louisville or Evansville?

We talk about our schools being the great equalizers, the institutions demonstrating that "all men are created equal." But whether you are born in a place of poverty or of plenty makes a huge difference in your school experience.

It is that school experience which we now claim is inadequate and therefore responsible for the newly discov-

ered skill deficiencies of our Hoosier work force. Okay; I'll buy some of that. But what can we do about it?

One answer is to change the incentives given for firms to locate or expand businesses where they please rather than where they are needed. Too often this is declared impractical, expensive, against the prejudices of companies, and inconsistent with free choice.

Bunk. All incentives are designed to overcome such obstacles. Our community and state leadership is so convinced of their wisdom, they are not willing to make the efforts to improve the schools in our poorest communities. ❖

Marcus is an economist.



Trump's NAFTA 'deal' is pure baloney

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE – Monday's announcement of a revision of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was met with real skepticism. That's a wholly appropriate response, as is the inevitable political fallout over the growing trade war. Let me explain.



There has long been some skepticism over NAFTA in Canada, Mexico and the United States. This skepticism has never come from a majority of Americans, who even today support free trade by a margin of four to one. Rather, the worries have come from manufacturing unions who feared the competitive pressure of businesses in more southerly countries. Canada

was worried about job losses to the U.S., and the U.S. to Mexico. That isn't what happened.

As it turned out, American factory jobs boomed for more than half a decade after NAFTA. They also grew in Canada and Mexico. This is precisely what economists said would happen, and wholly contrary to the fluff from NAFTA's opponents. These facts ought to be powerful tools to mitigate unease about NAFTA. Evidently, not everyone cares about facts.

What NAFTA did was dramatically reduce tariffs on goods moving among the U.S., Canada and Mexico. Because tariffs are taxes, reducing them expanded the economy. However, by the late 1990s, productivity improvements began to reduce factory jobs at an accelerating rate. By the mid 2000s, the U.S., Canada and Mexico all saw factory production grow but factory employment

stall or decline. The same people who think Elvis was abducted by aliens attributed this to NAFTA, using precisely the same evidence.

Today we are engaged in a great trade war, testing whether a nation conceived in liberty and reason can resist the urge to tax itself into a recession. In this trade war, President Trump declared NAFTA a bad trade deal, and so has now negotiated some changes to it. The proposed changes include an increase on the requirement for North American parts from 62.5% to 75%, an increase in the use of North American metals and the requirement that workers earning \$16 an hour or more make almost half the parts to new cars. These sound like the sort of wonky technical details that voters don't care about. Really, it's not that at all, it's just nonsense.

Companies that do not meet these requirements face a 2.5% border tax (or tariff). A little math illustrates the boloney surrounding this deal. In the U.S. and Canada, labor costs comprise about 15% of car production. They are higher in Mexico, for the simple reason that labor there is less expensive, so businesses shift labor-intensive production to our ally to the south. The \$16 per hour provision for half of workers would roughly double the labor costs for a company paying \$4 an hour. The average wage for manufacturing workers in July was \$2.3 per hour in Mexico. The wage provision alone would be several times more expensive than simply paying the tariffs.

President Trump's big win in the NAFTA negotiation turns out to be nothing better than a tax increase on American car buyers, with an unexpected twist. Because

companies would obviously opt to pay the tariff, they now have zero incentive to meet the current standards. This is likely to usher in a whole new wave of cheap Chinese auto parts. I am reminded of Professor von Hayek, who noted "The curious task of economics is to demonstrate to men how little they really know about what they imagine they can design."

There are some in Congress and on Wall Street who think this deal reflects a turning point in the trade war. I hope they are right, but suspect this is a case of hope over evidence. Fortunately, with the U.S. Constitution still being in force, no changes to NAFTA can occur until the U.S. Senate votes on the treaty. That leads us to the politics of the issue.

Not only is the Mexican part of this negotiation hogwash, this process has been an intentional snub of Canada. You know the Canadians have been our allies in every war over the last century and are Indiana's biggest trading partner. Each year we sell 3.5% of all the goods and services produced in Indiana to Canadians. Businesses and households in Indiana are already suffering from this trade war, but a serious interruption of trade with Canada will surely lead Indiana into a recession. That should prove sobering for candidates vying for the support from business groups and taxpayers. ❖

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Photography With Punch
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Mike Allen, Axios: President Trump is not just seething about Bob Woodward. He's deeply suspicious of much of the government he oversees — from the hordes of folks inside agencies, right up to some of the senior-most political appointees and even some handpicked aides inside his own White House, officials tell Jonathan Swan and me. He should be paranoid. In the hours after the New York Times published the anonymous Op-Ed from "a senior official in the Trump administration" trashing the president ("I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration"), two senior administration officials reached out to Axios to say the author stole the words right out of their mouths. "I find the reaction to the NYT op-ed fascinating — that people seem so shocked that there is a resistance from the inside," one senior official said. "A lot of us [were] wishing we'd been the writer, I suspect ... I hope he [Trump] knows — maybe he does? — that there are dozens and dozens of us." Why it matters: Several senior White House officials have described their roles to us as saving America and the world from this president. A good number of current White House officials have privately admitted to us they consider Trump unstable, and at times dangerously slow. Officials describe an increasingly conspiracy-minded president: "When he was super frustrated about the leaks, he would rail about the 'snakes' in the White House," said a source who has discussed administration leakers with the president. "One day, after one of those meetings, he said, 'Everything that just happened is going to leak. I don't know any of those people in the room.' ... He was very paranoid about this." ❖

Marc Chase, NWI Times: A former Lake County police officer turned convicted felon seems intent on playing the "hero" card as he seeks leniency in his upcoming federal sentencing. Meanwhile, an Indiana lawmaker is using her elected office — and official General Assembly letterhead — to bolster that endeavor. It all arises from the case of former Lake County Deputy Chief Dan Murchek, who was once the third-ranking leader of the sheriff's department under disgraced former Sheriff John Buncich. Murchek became ensnared in the same federal net that scooped up Buncich and sent the former sheriff to a 15-plus-year prison sentence. Buncich was convicted of personally enriching himself through bribes in exchange for towing business awarded by the sheriff's office. Murchek, who pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI after coaching a towing firm owner to falsify a \$500 donation to Murchek's failed campaign for county sheriff, now seeks leniency from the court. Indiana House Rep. Linda Lawson, D-Hammond, is trying to help Murchek along. A sentencing date before U.S. District Court Judge James Moody has yet to be scheduled. In a letter filed in Hammond federal court last week, Lawson, a veteran legislator and former cop, tells the judge, "Dan has been a significant contributor to Northwest Indiana and the state of Indiana. I respectfully



request you to consider this in any sentencing decisions and ask for leniency." Anyone, of course, is free under the law to speak out or write on behalf of anyone else — even convicted felons. We expect such overtures from family and close friends, and Lawson may very well fit the bill of friend to Murchek. But by choosing to write on Murchek's behalf — using a letterhead emblazoned with the Indiana state seal, listing her status as Democratic floor leader and identifying herself in the letter as state representative for Indiana House District 1 — Lawson is doing a lot more than just writing on behalf of a friend. She's throwing the weight of her public office behind a man who disgraced his own. ❖

Ross Douthat, New York Times: Amid the Resistance-y funeral rites of John McCain, the president's latest Twitter rants against his attorney general and the wild White House stories being circulated by Bob Woodward's latest book, it's a good time to revisit a familiar and crucial subject. To what extent is Donald Trump an extraordinarily dangerous president whose authoritarian style is constantly enabled by his advisers and his party? Or, alternatively, to what extent is he an extraordinarily weak president, constrained by his appointees and his notional allies at almost every turn? I've made the case for the second narrative before, arguing that Trump isn't really in charge of his own presidency, and that the Republican Congress — or at least the Republican Senate — has constrained his behavior more than many Resisters acknowledge. A year into his administration, I ran down the list of destabilizing or immoral moves that Trump promised during his campaign and pointed out almost none had actually happened — no return to waterboarding, no exit from NATO or Nafta, a hackishly implemented travel ban that only gestured at the promised Muslim-immigration shutdown, no change to the libel laws to shutter hostile newspapers, no staffing of the cabinet or the judiciary with unqualified cronies, no practical concessions to Vladimir Putin in Russia's near abroad, and more. In general the Trump of early 2018 looked like a Twitter authoritarian but a practical weakling, hounded by a special counsel and unable to even replace his own attorney general because Senate Republicans said he couldn't. But the last six months have tested that argument. He's pursued a version of the trade wars that he touted on the hustings; he's disrupted summit meetings with allies and fallen prostrate before Putin; he's conducted diplomacy with North Korea in a reality-television style; he's attacked the Mueller investigation constantly and hired surrogates to take the attacks all the way to 11; he's pursued a family-separation policy at the border that's exactly the kind of cruelty that his campaign promised and that many Republicans promised to restrain. So is it still fair to describe Trump as a hemmed-in weakling, a Twitter terror but otherwise constrained? My answer is still a qualified yes. ❖

Trump wants NYT to reveal op-ed writer

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump is calling on The New York Times to turn the author of an op-ed piece critical of his administration “over to government at once!” Trump was reacting in the Wednesday evening tweet to the newspaper’s publication of a column by an unnamed senior administration official who writes of an internal “resistance” effort “working diligently from within” to impede Trump’s “worst inclinations” and ill-conceived parts of his agenda ([Associated Press](#)). Trump tweets: “If the GUTLESS anonymous person does indeed exist, the Times must, for National Security purposes, turn him/her over to government at once!” Trump earlier tweeted: “TREASON?” The essay immediately triggered a wild guessing game as to the author’s identity on social media, in newsrooms and inside the West Wing, where officials were blindsided by its publication.



Gary Council passes on legal marijuana

GARY – Gary’s Common Council came up one vote short Tuesday of approving a measure that would have reduced possession of small quantities of marijuana within the city limits to an offense carrying a minimal fine and no lasting criminal record (Tejeda, [Chicago Tribune](#)). The council cast a 4-4 vote on a proposed ordinance by Councilwoman Ragen Hatcher, D-At large, who says her intention was to reduce the number of young black men who start out lives with criminal records due to drug possession charges. Hatcher, the daughter of former Gary Mayor Richard Hatcher and a candidate for the Indiana House of Representatives, admits she had hopes she could start a marijuana-related movement that would spread throughout the state. One council member, Democrat Lavetta Sparks-Wade, abstained from voting and left the council at a deadlocked tie. She expressed concern that “it would take

a change in our culture for things to change on this issue.” Council President Ronald Brewer said that while he might be able to support the concept of decriminalization as a non-binding referendum, the city would not be able to afford the financial burden of defending this resolution in court at this time.

Pence breaks with Trump; praises AG

WASHINGTON – In a rare public break from President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence on Wednesday praised Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has repeatedly and increasingly faced the wrath of the commander-in-chief ([NBC News](#)). Pence, walking into a GOP lunch at the Capitol, had only kind words for Sessions when asked by reporters whether he had confidence in the attorney general. “I hold Jeff Sessions in the highest regard,” Pence said. “I appreciate his service to the nation.” Trump criticized Sessions on Monday, Labor Day, in a pair of tweets that seemed to blame the attorney general for the timing of federal charges last month against Republican Reps. Chris Collins and Duncan Hunter, who were both early supporters of Trump for president. .

Indy priest has been suspended

INDIANAPOLIS – An Indianapolis priest has been suspended over an allegation of sexual misconduct (WTHR-TV). The Archdiocese of Indianapolis received the report about the misconduct by Fr. Patrick Doyle, which allegedly occurred decades ago, on Tuesday. The archdiocese announced Doyle’s suspension on Wednesday afternoon. The archdiocese listed numerous assignments held by Doyle dating back to 1975. He is currently pastor at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ on Southeastern Avenue in Indianapolis. Doyle has been prohibited from public ministry during

the investigation.

Stigdon gives DCS update

INDIANAPOLIS — The head of Indiana’s Department of Child Services told a legislative panel that her agency is making progress to fix some of the problems at the troubled agency. Director Terry Stigdon told lawmakers on the Interim Study Committee on Courts and the Judiciary on Wednesday that the department has added attorneys and supervisors and is in the process of figuring out pay raises for employees (News & Tribune). Those were among the 20 recommendations the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group (CWG) gave DCS in a report that came out in June after a six-month examination of the department. In response to the report done by CWG, the department hired Todd Meyer as associate director to oversee the implementation of some of the recommendations from the report. Since Stigdon took over the department in January, it has hired a net gain of 44 supervisors and 30 attorneys and will continue to hire additional help.

Kim says he still trusts Trump

TOKYO — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un told a team of South Korean envoys that he continues to trust President Trump despite a breakdown in negotiations between the two countries, and he repeated his commitment to work toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the chief envoy said Thursday ([New York Times](#)). But North Korean media also repeated the country’s demand that the United States make the next move by formally declaring an end to the Korean War, which concluded in 1953 with an armistice.