

# Hupfer: Nexus of pandemic politics

GOP convention to be virtual; says gov faces no easy decisions

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Kyle Hupfer continues find himself in the thick of pandemic era politics. The day before this Howey Politics Indiana

Interview, the state Republican chairman announced the Indiana Republican Convention

would move to a virtual format on June 18.

As Gov. Eric Holcomb's campaign manager, he described the nexus of a sitting governor seeking reelection in the midst of a pandemic. And he observed the controversy surrounding the Indiana Supreme Court suspension of Attorney General Curtis Hill and the decision facing GOP delegates next month.



"The delegates are going to be met with a tough choice," Hupfer noted. "He has been an attorney general who has built relationships. They like that aspect. But they are also being faced with the reality that this is a now extremely flawed candidate who will have difficulty winning an election in November."

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## Hill & GOP delegates

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — In the hours after the Indiana Supreme Court Disciplinary Commission suspended Attorney General Curtis Hill for groping four women at a sine die party, the biggest parlor game was how Gov. Eric Holcomb would respond.

Hill said he accepted the sanctions with "humility and respect." Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer released a statement, saying, "The Indiana Supreme Court unanimously confirmed that Curtis Hill committed battery against four female victims. Hoosiers would be best served by having a new Attorney General. I have faith in our delegates."

Some saw it as the gover-



**"This is not about transparency. The White House is always going to be in favor of transparency. This is about the minority leader trying to use the bureaucracy at the CDC to bog down the economy."** - U.S. Sen. Mike Braun, after he blocked release of a CDC reopening plan.





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**Jack E. Howey**  
 editor emeritus  
 1926-2019



nor, his hands full with the coronavirus pandemic, throwing the decision to Republican convention delegates.

But that was dispelled by a Supreme Court filing by the governor's legal counsel on Tuesday seeking "clarification whether the Court's May 11, 2020 Order suspending Attorney General Hill from the practice of law for a period of 30 days means that he is not 'duly licensed to practice law in Indiana' as set forth in statute.

**"If Attorney General Hill** does not have the requisite qualifications for the office, an issue arises as to whether a 'vacancy' exists under Article 5, Section 18 of the Indiana Constitution and/or Indiana Code § 3-13-4-3(d) such that the Governor must name a successor for the remainder of Attorney General Hill's current term. The Office of the Attorney General is of great importance to the State of Indiana and its citizens, with the Attorney General being the chief law enforcement officer for Indiana, and, therefore, the clarifications being asked of this Court are necessary for the Governor to fulfill his constitutional and statutory obligations."



Thus, it became clear: Gov. Holcomb was going to play hardball. For GOP delegates who chose Hill and Supt. Jennifer McCormick in two contested convention races in 2016, it's either an opportunity for a "do over" with two constitutional officers who went astray, or backing a popular governor in crisis.

**Hill flamed out** at a March 2018 sine die party when he got drunk and accosted a Democratic legislator and Republican Senate staffers. McCormick bolted reelection, saying she was tired of "politics" after straying from the party line on such GOP pillars on school choice issues. She even flirted with joining a Democratic gubernatorial ticket with State Sen. Eddie Melton last summer.

Holcomb is already poised

to pick McCormick's successor after General Assembly Republicans shifted that office to gubernatorial appointee. If the Supreme Court rules that the AG's office is, indeed, vacant for 30 days until June 17, just a day before the GOP's virtual convention, it stands to place unprecedented power in this governor's hands.

Hill sent a letter to delegates this week saying that while he will abide by the suspension "to reflect on lessons learned," he would be "Standing Strong."

"And on June 17th, I will come back stronger than ever, committed to my service to Hoosiers," Hill wrote. "I will NEVER stop Standing Strong for the values you and I hold dear."

He told delegates that those values include defending the right to life on abortion, as well as the 2nd Amendment, while standing "shoulder to shoulder with President Trump" as a "duly elected attorney general."

His delegate letter takes aim at the Republican "establishment" and "moderates."

"And I don't need rhetoric," Hill wrote. "I've got a Record!" He continued: "The people that had my back were you, the delegates. You have that power. You're in control."

**Worth noting** is that the Indiana Supreme Court is hardly a bastion of moderates. All five justices were chosen by conservative Republican governors.

That GOP "establishment" includes Gov. Holcomb, Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, U.S. Sen. Mike Braun and then-House Speaker Brian Bosma and then-Senate President David Long, all who called for Hill to resign in July 2018. Holcomb cited "zero tolerance" for sexual harassment and assault in state government.

Gov. Holcomb has kept to that vow, dismissing Department of Child Services Deputy Director Todd Meyer for sending "creepy texts" to an intern, and Indiana National Guard Adj. Gen. Courtney Carr after

a defamation lawsuit was filed by a female contractor he had had an affair with.

Hill has until noon Friday to respond to the governor's motion. Holcomb's counsel has asked for a swift clarification before Hill's suspension begins next Monday.

**Between Hill's drunken antics** at the sine die party and the surfacing of a General Assembly investigation in June 2018, the attorney general reportedly had been urged by some social conservatives at the Republican Convention in Evansville to challenge Gov. Holcomb in this year's primary, due to his support of a broader marriage plank in that cycle's platform.

That would have been a fool's errand, but it revealed Hill's thirst for power.

This year's virtual convention will, courtesy of the pandemic, take the biennial confab from convention hall alcoves and nearby restaurants and bars into the realm of phone calls, Zoom conferences, texts and emails.

What Republican delegates should keep in mind is that their duty is to nominate electable candidates. There can be little doubt that Hill is deeply flawed.

The two Democratic candidates see an opening. "He has embarrassed himself and the office which he holds," said former Evansville mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel. "It is now up to the voters to hold him accountable and I will work every day through November to make sure that

happens." State Sen. Karen Tallian added, "Now it is even more imperative that Indiana women, and Indiana men who support them, must say no. Now, more than ever, we need a strong woman to be the nominee for attorney general."

And Decatur County Prosecutor Nate Harter, who had been a friend of Hill's and is now challenging him for the GOP nomination, said, "The Supreme Court ruled that he committed a crime and violated our basic rules of ethics. Today's announcement reflects the unavoidable fact that my friend Curtis Hill has lost the trust of Hoosiers and has compromised his ability to do the important work we deserve. There is simply too much at stake to risk losing the position to a liberal Democrat who will undermine our limited government, pro-life, pro-2nd Amendment values."

**Republicans will be facing** freakish headwinds this fall, with a sudden double digit unemployment rate and the dicey decision on when to reopen the economy, as well as fallout from the Trump administration's pandemic response. President Trump's approval is falling. He won't have Hillary Clinton as a foil, and Trump cleaned up on voters who just couldn't vote for her in 2016.

It will be fascinating to see how Hill's appeal for political longevity will fall with Republican delegates in the next month, if he survives the Supreme Court clarification this weekend. ❖

## Hupfer, from page 1

And he said that the 15-person 5th CD primary has become a tossup race, where the eventual nominee could win with "15 or 16% of the vote," adding, "I was the 5th District chairman and I don't have a good sense where that race is."

As for Gov. Holcomb's stewardship of the coronavirus that has killed 1,600 Hoosiers and thrust double digit unemployment on a state that had been operating on all cylinders in February, Hupfer said that incumbent governors of both parties will probably benefit politically. "The average citizen doesn't often get to see their governor lead. They know they're leading, but they don't often get to see it," Hupfer explained.

He recalled flooding that prompted Gov. Mitch Daniels to cancel a trade mission to tend to that crisis. "He got a big boost," said Hupfer, who served as Daniels Department of Natural Resources Commissioner. In Holcomb's case, "People don't normally get to see their elected officials on a daily basis lead, and people like leadership."

As for what's ahead for the 2020 election, for Gov. Holcomb it will mean a campaign that is not normal in any sense, following his 2016 effort that he likened to "building an airplane while it's flying." Holcomb had been Gov. Mike Pence's lieutenant governor. Pence subsequently resigned his nomination to run and win the vice presidency on Don-

ald Trump's ticket. Holcomb won a three-ballot Republican Central Committee caucus just three months before the election, then crested the Trump wave to upset Democrat John Gregg.

"A couple of weeks after this pandemic started, I was getting bombarded with calls," Hupfer told HPI. "I used the line 'The easy decisions were made about three days ago. They are all hard now. There are no easy decisions. So now every decision is between two bad things. There just aren't good options left.' It's been that way through the whole thing."

Here is the HPI Interview with Chairman Hupfer:  
**HPI:** Describe how the virtual convention will work.

**Hupfer:** The state committee worked over the last eight weeks plus and came up with an alternative once everything started to cancel, when a basketball team was pulled off the floor at the Big East tournament in March. We thought the convention is a long way out, but let's start thinking about what we would have to do if we can't hold it in person. With the governor's Back on Track Plan, we're just not going to be in a place where we can put 2,000 folks in one location. We've got a lot of delegates in the age brackets that need extra protection. There are other folks that won't be comfortable coming into that big of a crowd so soon. We'll still have a credentials committee which will verify who the elected delegates are, as well as vacancies the county chairs make. We are contracting with



a third party that will directly mail ballots to all delegates, and we've contracted with an accounting firm to receive ballots over the course of a couple week period. They will all be back by July 9. The accounting firm will bring them into a designated counting location on July 10. Candidates will be able to have watchers in the room as we count the ballots. We'll count those mailed in by the delegates that day.

**HPI:** Will the convention be online?

**Hupfer:** No. We went out about four weeks ago with WISH-TV and struck a deal with them where we actually do a set of in-studio speeches by the governor, the lieutenant governor and candidates. That will happen in studio on June 18 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. That will be broadcast live on their statewide news network, and it will also be livestreamed on the WISH-TV website, and then we'll be able to utilize that footage elsewhere. We'll blast it out via email to our entire list and make sure if delegates want to watch it, put it up on social media. It will be the first time our convention has ever been televised. Our delegates will be able to hear those messages, as well as anyone who wants to tune into the broadcast.

**HPI:** I don't think anyone ever considered a virtual convention until this pandemic. What were the pros and cons about going that route that the central committee had to weigh? Obviously the safety of delegates was one thing. What else was under consideration?

**Hupfer:** At one point we figured we were just going to be prohibited from doing it. If we could do it legally, if the time was such that we could put 2,000 people into the convention center, we would certainly do it. More of the waiting surrounded how do we find a way for our delegates to make these selections? If we can't do it in person, what is the most robust and trustworthy way to do that? We looked at a lot of different options, like smartphones,

digital and the one we kept coming back to in the time frame we were dealing with was mailed ballots. We felt pretty confident how that mechanism works. We can feel it, touch it. You know the Iowa Caucuses on the Democratic side made everyone think that doing this the first time on the digital side made everyone a little nervous. Our

delegates will be most comfortable with a paper ballot in hand. So a lot of discussions were about all the alternative ways we could do this. There were a lot of great ideas, and then we had to overlay the virus and what limitations put in place, not just with gatherings, but also ... as we were trying to put this thing together, there were a lot of places that were just closed down.

**HPI:** Like hotels and restaurants.

**Hupfer:** And getting any sort of response. We had to think with that lens as well.

**HPI:** What about the Republican National Convention? President Trump appears to be full steam ahead.

**Hupfer:** It's the week of Aug. 24. That's a long way away. We'll have to see where the state of North Carolina is in their approach to opening their economy and their activities. Everything we're hearing from the RNC is they are full steam ahead for an in-person convention. There is an active team in North Carolina working on that every day.

**HPI:** There's a Democratic governor of North Carolina and a Democratic mayor of Charlotte who may not sanction that kind of mega-gathering from a public health standpoint.

**Hupfer:** I can't believe a decision would be made other than these things will either be conducted or they won't. I really don't think they wouldn't open up because of the convention. Maybe I'm an optimist or look at other people's better nature. I just don't think that's going to play into it. Every governor wants to get their area back open if it's safe and healthy to do so.

**HPI:** I want to pivot to what kind of permanent changes there might be due to the pandemic. What do you think are the lasting changes that may reshape politics in the future?

**Hupfer:** I think it's too early to tell on politics.

As we sit here today, we've really minimized our activity over the past two months. I haven't had staff in the office, haven't been able to go door-to-door, haven't been able to have any fundraisers. We've kept all our staff on. We've had a lot of success making phone calls to people. They've been very receptive. A lot of people are just happy to hear from someone and happy to have the conversation. We've encouraged our staff to call voters across the state and have conversations with them. As we sit here today, we're going to be in a period where this month and maybe in June, things are going to be different. In the long-term, in August, September and October we're looking for things



to return to normal. Labor Day, hopefully there are going to be some parades. We can have our staff go back to door-to-door. They're going to look different. They're going to have their masks on and step away from the door to make sure they're talking to folks from a safe distance. I think the campaigns

will look like they have historically by the time we get to September and October, if things continue to go well. It's dependent on that. I think you'll see a lot more contingency planning. Folks weren't sitting in state committee six months ago thinking, "What if we can't have a convention in person?" That was just taken for granted. My guess is there will be some contingency planning, particularly with gatherings of large groups of people.

**HPI:** What about fundraising?

**Hupfer:** We haven't really done any. We've received some checks from people wanting to be supportive. We haven't been making asks. We'll start doing that again

sometime this month. I'm not sure when the governor will start actively fundraising, but it won't be during the month of May. It will be June at the earliest. We'll start to reach out as a staff looking for donors. We've missed three months of fundraising at a minimum. I feel good about the work we have done leading up to this year. There's no way to predict this. We've worked hard over the four years to raise money consistently to put ourselves into this campaign. We're pretty confident that once we get back to fundraising, we'll have success at it. You may not at all this year see a reception or just wading through, talking with each other and mingling. There will be social distancing and having masks for the foreseeable future.

**HPI:** What kind of contingencies is the Holcomb campaign making for the fall?

**Hupfer:** I haven't got that far yet. Things have been changing so rapidly it's hard to project out to October. We think things will be different as far as safety, distancing and precaution. We'll see what those events are when we get to them. As things continue to progress in this positive manner we'll have bigger events, still doing them in a safe manner.

**HPI:** Are Zoom and Go to Meeting going to outlast this pandemic?

**Hupfer:** Oh yeah. Outside of day-to-day campaigning, you just look out into the world and I think we won't know for several years how the ripple effect from the pandemic will change the world. People are realizing that "I can conduct a business and live my life virtually, so I don't need to be in an office every day. I don't need to do all these things in person. Zoom gives me in a meeting a lot of the personal interaction needed to get things done." Outside of politics there will be a lot of long-term advantages in all of this.

**HPI:** What has been your advice to 5th CD candidates who found the campaign ground literally shifting beneath them these past two months? Have any of them reached out to you for advice?

**Hupfer:** We've had some folks reach out and ask, "What are you guys doing in these various categories, like fundraising, or campaigning door-to-door?" We haven't really put out any guidance. We're just following what we observe as the rules from the governor or the CDC. They have been running much different campaigns. I know there was a 5th District forum that was all digital. It's just a lot harder for all these candidates to interact with voters, especially new candidates ... especially in something as big as a congressional district. That's been a real hindrance to those who need to increase their name ID. It's a lot harder to create a personal connection if you can't meet one-on-one or in small groups. I think they're all out working hard. We are fully prepared for a district like the 5th once we have a winner, to engage in a heavy way with them to

ensure we get them across the finish line in November. It makes it a tossup as to what's going to happen.

**HPI:** I'm going to leave that race in tossup. As for the Curtis Hill suspension by the Supreme Court yesterday, what are your thoughts this morning?

**Hupfer:** Curtis, in doing the job of attorney general, has had some good results. He's been a conservative, he's fought for lives and to protect the 2nd Amendment. He has gone around the state and built a lot of personal relationships. There are many delegates who have personal relationships with him who are going to have to make a decision when they get to the convention. They now understand that the Supreme Court has held a hearing, made a determination that his actions on the four victims constituted battery which has been alleged from the beginning. The delegates are going to be met with a tough choice. He has been an attorney general who has built relationships. They like that aspect. But they are also being faced with the reality that he is a now an extremely flawed candidate who will have difficulty winning an election in November. The mail pieces will write themselves. I

have faith. That's why we have this system of delegates. They are charged with picking the candidate giving us the best chance to win in November, to hold on to that office, and to ensure the protections that office offers remains in conservative hands. I think they will come to the conclusion that the office is bigger than any one person.

**HPI:** What do you think turnout is going to be like in the June 2 primary?

**Hupfer:** The new absentee ballots will have some impact. A bigger impact will be the length of time extended. That's been running a month and a half already. We'll go another few weeks. When you look at other Election Day turnout in other primaries around the virus, it's fairly robust. I think you will see normal-plus turnout in the primary. Maybe a little bit higher.

**HPI:** What can you say about extending the no ask absentee ballot to the November election? Are those discussions happening with Secretary of State Lawson and the Election Commission?

**Hupfer:** No discussions about this fall have happened. All the focus has been on the primary. The secretary's office has done a great job of purchasing and collecting PPE and the National Guard has been getting that out to the counties for the primary. It was just left as we'll see what the circumstances are as we get closer to the general election as to what modifications need to be made. It's too early to be looking at that today.

**HPI:** What kind of time frame will be needed to make that call before the November election? Two months out?

**Hupfer:** It will be difficult to say. You want to be looking at it around that time we did for the primary. ❖



# Myers-Lawson ticket emerges in pandemic

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — With Democratic ranks in the General Assembly at super minority lows, the coronavirus pandemic crimping politics and fundraising, presumptive Democratic gubernatorial nominee Woody Myers reached out to a retired State Rep. Linda Lawson to fill out his ticket.

The pandemic has created a steep climb for challengers. A Washington Post/Ipsos poll revealed that collectively, governors have a 71% approval rating, while only 27% disapprove. Gov. Eric Holcomb enters the summer sequence with about a \$7 million cash advantage, while



his approval in Indiana polls has been consistently north of 60%.

The General Assembly has been an LG breeding ground this decade, with State Sen. Vi Simpson joining Democrat John Gregg's 2012 ticket, State Rep. Christina Hale on Gregg's 2016 ticket, State Rep. Sue Ellspermann joining Mike Pence's 2012 campaign, and former state representative and Auditor Suzanne Crouch tabbed by Eric Holcomb in 2016. With Democratic General Assembly ranks near modern lows, there was reluctance by some to give up their seats to run on a ticket facing such an uphill battle.

Myers told Howey Politics Indiana on Tuesday that he talked with about a dozen potential LG nominees before settling on Lawson, who lives in Nashville but has served on the Hammond Police Department and school board before retiring in 2018 after two decades in the Indiana House. "Linda brings not only legislative experience and leadership, but also she has broken the glass ceiling numerous times," Myers said, noting she was the first female officer on the Hammond PD and first to lead a House party caucus.

"She's terrific," Myers said. "I did not know Rep. Lawson. I'd heard of her by reputation. I had never met with her before this process started. When we began our due diligence, it became clear to me that she was someone we should talk with."

Myers added, "She balances the ticket in a number of fascinating ways. I've got a lot of private sector experience. Her experiences have been mostly public sector. I've been on a number of corporate boards and she has school board experience. She is extremely well respected and liked when I talked to a number of district chairs and

members of the legislature. They reported how much they enjoyed working with her, how tenacious she was, and thoughtful. All of those things added up. It was clear to me she was the right one."

Lawson told HPI that she was initially taken aback by the prospect of joining the ticket as she was enjoying her Brown County retirement. "Then I started thinking about all the things I left hanging out there that I'd like to work on," she said. "I'm a fast learner, a kinetic learner."

Lawson chaired the House Judiciary Committee and worked on sex crime legislation, including the "Romeo/Juliet" law. "When I chaired judiciary, we came together on both sides of the aisle and established a good working relationship and lots of good legislation," she explained.

This is not Lawson's first brush with leadership. She did break the Indiana House glass ceiling in late July 2012, helping depose Minority Leader B. Patrick Bauer on a third coup attempt that year. But she never served a day of a regular legislative session in that role.

Between that July insurgency that brought her to brief power, and the ensuing election, House Republicans forged a 69-seat super majority that it has yet to relinquish. Less than 24 hours after that November election, Lawson let go her tenuous hold on power, supporting Michigan City Democrat Scott Pelath for the top post in the dwindling caucus, saying she preferred her back bench seat in the chamber even after ascending to leadership. "I loved it," she told the NWI Times. "I could see what everybody was doing, all those little side conversations. I gleaned more being in the back row than you ever glean from the front."

After Lawson helped depose Bauer, former House minority leader Russ Stilwell, writing in his Howey Politics Indiana column, observed: "With Linda Lawson, you have someone whom most of the caucus respects. Respect is earned and Leader Lawson earned hers the old fashioned way, with hard work, open-mindedness, good listening skills and not being afraid to call on others to help with the load. She is a no-nonsense legislator not afraid to stand up to anyone."

"She broke the glass ceiling for females in the Hammond police department as the first female officer and ended her career with a captain logo on her uniform," Stilwell wrote. "When the caucus looked for an 'interim' leader, whatever that means, they picked the right person for the right time."

Columnist Rich James added, "Besides her support for traditional Democratic Party issues, Lawson has been the House leader in carrying legislation against dog fighting and for animal rights in general. Nothing makes a person better."





In 2015, former governor and senator Evan Bayh passed on a third gubernatorial run, citing the Democratic super minority status. Myers and Lawson say there are undeterred by that lopsided margin.

"We're going to need collaboration regardless of the numbers. The opportunity for across the aisle collaboration I'm actually looking forward to," Myers said. "That's what I had to do when I was state health commissioner. I was a Democrat who had to report to a Republican governor, Bob Orr, while working with a Democrat-led House and a Republican-led Senate. I had to figure out how to navigate those kinds of party lines."

"I like the idea after the next election of Republicans putting their R in their right pocket and Democrats putting their D in their left pocket and doing what's right for the state," Myers continued. "We're going to really need it. Who would have thought we'd be going into the next session with 20% unemployment? It's going to really require us to think differently, act differently. That's a challenge I accept and will embrace."

Lawson added, "I've heard from legislators from both sides of the aisle. Leadership needs to meet regularly with the governor's office. I'm going to work toward that. We're going to have to work ... to make sure that happens

and keep Hoosiers safe. We're going to do it, we're going to make it happen."

**Congress**

**1st CD: Chamber endorses McDermott**

The Congressional Action Committee of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce said it's backing Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). "(Our mission is to aid in the election of Indiana candidates to the United States Congress whose legislative voting records and/or positions on business-related legislation will enhance our nation's commitment to a favorable business climate," said Kevin Brinegar, Indiana Chamber CEO. McDermott said Friday he knew he did well during his endorsement interview with leaders of the business organization. "The Indiana Chamber of Commerce doesn't endorse Democrats very often, and if you are a Democrat to get endorsed by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce you got to be a business-oriented Democrat — which I am," McDermott said.

Colorado-based Democratic Progress this week began airing television ads on Region cable channels encouraging Democratic voters to support Hammond Mayor

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Thomas McDermott Jr. in the June 2 election (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Records show the organization — which is not affiliated with the McDermott campaign — is spending \$103,440 through June 1 to run a total of 2,328 30-second television ads on Comcast's Xfinity and AT&T's U-Verse cable systems, primarily in Lake County. It's believed to be the first super PAC-funded television ad in a North-west Indiana congressional contest.

## AFT endorses Mrvan

The American Federation of Teachers Indiana and the Gary Democratic Precinct Organization both announced their support for North Township Trustee Frank Mrvan in the Democratic primary race. GlenEva Dunham, president of the Indiana AFT and president of the Gary Teachers Union, stated, "Frank Mrvan is the clear choice in this election of someone who has a proven track record of supporting teachers and public education. At a time of so much change for our schools, teachers, and online classrooms, we need someone in Congress who we know will continue to prioritize our teachers and students." Locals of AFT Indiana in the First Congressional District include the: Gary Teachers Union #4, Hammond Teacher Federation #394, East Chicago Federation of Teachers #511, Lake Ridge Federation of Teachers #662, Griffith Federation of Teachers #761, Whiting Teacher Association #1040, Lake Station Federation of Teachers #1395, Northwest Special Ed Co-op #3169, East Porter Federation of Teachers #4634, and PEPC (Hebron) Federation of Teachers #4852  
**HPI Primary Horse Race Status:** Likely McDermott

## 5th CD: A GOP tossup race

Less than three weeks before the delayed June 2 primary, almost everyone we've talked with in the 5th CD describes this 15-person race as a tossup. Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer, a former 5th CD chair, told HPI he has no idea who will prevail, saying that a candidate taking "15 or 16%" of the vote could win.

Much speculation focuses to the self-funders — Beth Henderson, State Sen. Victoria Spartz, and Dr. Chuck Dietzen — as well as former Marion County Prosecutor Carl Brizzi. Henderson, Spartz and Brizzi have been running TV ads.

In another sign of potential top tier status, Spartz was the subject of an Importantville hit piece: "Spartz lives in — and owns — a Noblesville trailer park. Where did all that money come from? She doesn't want to talk about it." Spartz's Senate district is a big chunk of the 5th, but she opted for this race after a considerable part of the GOP power structure endorsed her opponent in her Senate reelection. Rival campaigns also were eager for Monday's townhall.org forum, where they believed her Ukrainian accent would work against her.

Brizzi is expected to run strong in the Indianapolis portion of the district, though state Treasurer Kelly Mitchell picked up the endorsement of former Indianapolis mayor Greg Ballard last week and had a virtual fundraiser with

him.

Our sources say that Henderson appears to be doing well in the farm communities in the northern part of the district surrounding her Atlanta home and business. She has been endorsed by U.S. Sen. Mike Braun, former congressman Dan Burton and former state senator Luke Kenley. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

## Statewides

### Attorney General: Harter reacts to Hill suspension

Decatur County Prosecutor Nathan Harter posted this Facebook statement on Attorney General Curtis Hill's suspension: "I respect the proceedings and the Indiana Supreme Court. Curtis Hill deserved due process and he received it. The Supreme Court ruled that he committed a crime and violated our basic rules of ethics. Today's announcement reflects the unavoidable fact that my friend Curtis Hill has lost the trust of Hoosiers and has compromised his ability to do the important work we deserve. There is simply too much at stake to risk losing the position to a liberal Democrat who will undermine our limited government, pro-life, pro-second amendment values. We cannot let that happen. I welcome all to join my campaign." Harter has been endorsed by State Sens. Mark Messmer and Mike Crider, as well as Clark County Republican Chairman and Sheriff Jamie Noel, who also chairs Gov. Eric Holcomb's reelection campaign.

### Rokita continues to mull candidacy

Former U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita issued a statement Monday declaring his interest in the office and promising to decide before next week's filing deadline whether to compete for the attorney general nomination at the June 20 Republican state convention (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Rokita acknowledged in his statement he's been considering running for attorney general "for some time." But he said the Supreme Court's conclusion that Hill committed criminal battery means the incumbent is "badly wounded" and should be replaced. "We are in great danger of losing the seat and giving it to a liberal Democrat with Curtis Hill on the ballot," Rokita said. "There is too much at stake for us to not consider other alternatives for our state's top lawyer." Harter and Zionsville attorney John Westerkamp are challenging Hill for the nomination. **Convention Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

### Weinzapfel, Tallian react to Hill suspension

Jonathan Weinzapfel reacted to the Indiana Supreme Court Disciplinary Commission's decision to suspend Curtis Hill's law license for 30 days following allegations he groped women at a March 2018 legislative party. "Curtis Hill's conduct towards the women involved in this complaint is as undeniable as it is inexcusable. He has embarrassed himself and the office which he holds. It is now



up to the voters to hold him accountable and I will work every day through November to make sure that happens." State Sen. Karen Tallian reacted, saying, "The bottom line is that Mr. Hill will be suspended for 30 days, with an automatic reinstatement. This means that, like other officers who have been similarly disciplined, Attorney General Hill will sit out for 30 days, and then resume his duties. It also means that he will be able to seek the Republican Party's

nomination to be the Attorney General candidate on the November ballot. This needs to end - and I can make that happen. Now it is even more imperative that Indiana women, and Indiana men who support them, must say No. Now, more than ever, we need a strong woman to be the nominee for Attorney General. Hill's infamous behavior was unacceptable, and we need to send a clear message that sexual harassment and battery are never OK." ❖

## Gov. Whitmer emerges in Biden veepstakes

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer is emerging as one of the top prospects for the Democratic nomination for vice president, thanks to unintended help from President Trump and gun-toting protesters who stormed the Michigan Capitol building.



Trump's belittling of the governor as "the woman in Michigan" and "Half Whitmer" brought greater national attention and focus on how her handling of the coronavirus gets higher poll approval than the president's efforts.

In his anger toward her as a possible opponent on the Democratic ticket, Trump once ordered the coronavirus task force to decline to talk with her, the governor of a state with the third highest death toll from the virus.

Then protesters, including militia types armed with assault rifles and displaying symbols of racism, pushed their way into the Capitol building, intent on intimidation of legislators. Some tried to get on the House floor. Others displaying assault rifles stood in the Senate gallery.

It was the protesters, not Gov. Whitmer, who drew widespread ridicule.

The GOP leader of the Senate, who opposes Whitmer's extension of stay-at-home orders to combat the pandemic, called the protesters "a bunch of jackasses." Even Sean Hannity – Sean Hannity! – criticized "the militia look here and these long guns" as a "dangerous" show of force. He said it "puts our police at risk and, by the way, your message will never be heard, whoever you people are."

**The president was the exception.** "These are very good people, but they're angry," he said. He urged Whitmer to "give a little" and "make a deal."

Again, Trump enhanced Whitmer's profile among Democrats as a good choice to be Joe Biden's running mate and to take on the president's record and style.

Who knows what choice Biden will make? Biden himself most likely doesn't know yet. Why would he decide before he needs to? He has just appointed a committee to vet prospects. He has said Whitmer is one of the prospects.

And he will pick a woman. Biden has made that clear.

Could it be Whitmer? Could there be a vice presidential debate between Michigan's governor and Indiana's former governor, Vice President Mike Pence? A battle at the state line?

Possible. But Whitmer is only one of the top prospects.

Top prospects to run with Biden also include Sens. Amy Klobuchar, Kamala Harris and Elizabeth Warren and former Georgia governor candidate Stacey Abrams. Other possibilities would be more of a surprise.

**There are many factors** for Biden to consider. Presumably he wants someone he would regard as ready to step in if necessary to replace him and also someone he could work well with in the campaign and in the administration if the Democratic ticket wins.

He has to think politically, too, as he faces a tough race with Trump.

Would a senator with Washington experience be better than someone without a Washington connection?

Does he need an African American or does he already have the black vote solidly committed?

Could someone from a battleground state help him win the final Electoral College votes to prevail?

Should he go with someone more progressive in hopes of getting Bernie Sanders diehards to go along or would that hurt him in key Midwestern states that are more conservative?

**In the vice-presidential** debate, which prospect would look the best in a matchup with Pence?

Also, since the election will be a referendum on Trump, on whether he should have four more years as president, is there a Democratic running mate who would be most likely to send the president off his message, off his game, off on a destructive tweet storm? That's one area where Whitmer seems now to have an edge. The president's attacks on her, though he wants to knock her down, are one of the reasons her stock is going up. ❖

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

# Sen. Young thinking about the big picture

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO — Flip on any television channel and they will be staring you in the face, United States Senators, Republican and Democrat alike, who apparently have nothing better to do with their time than pontificate on the



absurd and engage in political bickering. It is enough to make you sick, but with Covid-19, we're sick enough already.

Not all Senators have crawled into the mud for the daily wallowing about in front of the cameras. One in particular, Indiana Sen. Todd Young, has been devoting his entire time in public service to thinking about the big picture.

Perhaps it is because of his former work as an intelligence officer in the United States Marines Corps that Sen. Young has taken a thoughtful and forward thinking approach to the nearly out-of-control menace of China. Analyzing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is the hallmark of intelligence work and Young has excelled at bringing those skills to his career in government. While some of his Senate colleagues spend endless hours trying to reverse the 2016 Presidential Election, Young is squarely focused on the future. To Todd Young, China should dominate our national groupthink.

**Since his first days** in the United States Senate, Young has not been bashful about calling out China for their long-term strategy to dominate the world, both militarily and economically. Young understands that China is immensely patient and always plays the long game in regard to what is best for its national interests. While our government and corporate leaders were thinking about quarterly profitability and stock options, China's leaders were clearly concentrated on making the United States economically dependent on their country. We are now living with the results of this strategy.

Young rightfully knows that you cannot make the realities of the last 30 years disappear, but you can plan for the future so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. Let others worry about petty partisan political squabbling, Young is laser focused on making sure that the United States reinvents itself to deal with the revealed reality of a truly sinister China.

Recently Sen. Young published an Op/Ed piece in

the Washington Examiner discussing what America needs to do now as we move forward from the Covid-19 crisis. Young utilized his experience of serving on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and the Finance Committee to craft an idea for the future direction of our country called the National Innovation Strategy. Just as the United States has a cohesive National Defense Strategy that brings all of the disciplines of government together with a common focus on defense, Young envisions a similar strategy tying all of our governmental institutions to a cogent and comprehensive strategy revolving around the economy. It is a complex concept to design, wrapped around a time-tested philosophy of having all your horses pulling together in the same direction.

**Young's plan would** assure that strategies regarding trade, critical investments, intellectual property, frontier technologies, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, advanced energy technologies, battery storage, bio pharma and supply chain issues would receive a comprehensive review and then form a bipartisan consensus on cohesive strategy moving forward. Young believes that our strategy could be shared with our economic allies and make the National Innovation Strategy a global one.

Young acknowledges that the United States has made great strides recently by optimizing our tax code and streamlining regulatory code. He applauds the diligent work of the Administration with forging effective free trade agreements while at the same time implementing defen-



sive economic countermeasures regarding Huawei, tightening export controls and improving foreign investment rules.

Young's National Innovation Strategy calls for investment in 10 key technology areas over a five-year

period. Young asks that \$100 billion of Federal government funds be partnered with an additional \$100 billion in private funding be married together for a substantial and effective investment in the technology of the future. Young's plan would also invite investment by allied foreign governments and sovereign wealth funds to leverage funding to perhaps \$800 billion to \$1 trillion over the next ten years.

**In an online interview with** the Hudson Institute, Young answered a question regarding two possible objections to his plan regarding the fact that the United States is already a leader in innovation and that there are some economic purists who believe government should keep its nose and money out of innovation planning. Young answered, "It is a fair point that we are indeed the most innovative, creative, dynamic large economy in human history and I think that is something to celebrate and to harness. I don't believe we are harnessing it to the extent we can."

Free markets only work because of the parameters that our legal system and our other institutions put around them. You need to have enforceable contracts and property law, you need to have a society in which people trust one another. There are a host of things you can put in place that help catalyze the level of growth and the level of innovation; patent protection, for example.

So much of the innovation that occurs among our creative class, among our doers and dreamers and entrepreneurs and innovators is innovation that meets near-term consumer demand and provides a return to investors quarterly. And so I think that is, if not a market failure, it's a market shortcoming because there are unrealized opportunities in the longer term. If we make collective investments, we won't enjoy individually the near-term dividends from these investments, but we'll all benefit in the longer term."

**In regard to government** involvement in forging the direction of innovation, Young stated, "For those that worry about the slippery slope from a free market system to a state capitalist system to collectivism, I want to acknowledge that. We must study history including economic history. We know that our country has made a number of strategic bets that have paid back in spades historically and that in order to be responsible public servants, we operate on a slope that some would characterize as slippery. Let's be honest with our constituents, indicate that it's essential we make some of these bets as other countries make them, point to historical

examples that teach us that things have worked in practice and that we can infer that they work in theory."

Young went on address our biggest rival going forward. He began by referencing a book by Paul Kennedy, "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers," which he had read in high school. Kennedy predicted that China would delay making huge investments in its military and instead devote its resources to technological innovation. By focusing their essential resources on R&D and the development of their backward economy, China was able to rise from the ashes of Mao's Cultural Revolution. Only recently has China geared substantial investments toward bringing their military up to a level approaching our standards.

Young believes we need to make sure we are making the requisite public investments to maintain our level of economic growth, knowing our population won't approach the Chinese population and to harness our innovative spirit most effectively. Whereas China relies on a handful of Chinese Communist Party leaders to identify strategic technologies, the United States has the benefit of the countless innovators and entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley and Boston. He noted that some of those innovation leaders live and work in Indiana and beyond.

**The senator also noted** that we have the best research scientists and institutions in the world and that by scaling up our existing talent, our core competencies and by making investments with a longer term objective in mind, we can maintain our competitive advantages.

Much as the United States dramatically prospered from our goal of landing a man on the moon and investing both our financial and human resources to get there, Young expects the same sorts of return from a myriad of known and unknown technologies. While he talks in terms of investment and returns, Young knows that the ultimate goal of his National Innovation Strategy is continued economic strength and national security. These should be objectives that rise above partisan warfare.


Todd Young has proven himself to be a thoughtful, creative and dedicated senator. He knows that you don't get to where you want to go by focusing on the white lines in the road ahead of you but by concentrating on the horizon. Instead of injecting himself into every combative partisan battle, Young has risen to the level of statesman.

Instead of forcing himself into the public limelight, I see him called into the national public eye by his dedicated and effective work on behalf of all Americans. ❖

**Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman.**

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# Indiana, Great Lakes states are laggardly

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — Between 2008 and 2019, from the Great Recession to the most recent year in which “The Best of Times” was proclaimed, the nation’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) averaged 3.5% growth annually.



The West Region (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA), as defined by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, was the fastest growing regional economy in the nation at 4.1%.

The Great Lakes (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI) managed to be seventh of the eight regions by averaging 3.10%, thereby beating out the bottom dwelling New England Region by a robust 0.02%.

If you didn’t get lost in those postal abbreviations of state names, you noticed a spread among the regions of just one percent per year in GDP growth. Put that way the difference is small. But over the course of 11 years, that’s a 56% increase for the West Region and a 40% increase for the Great Lakes and New England.

How much do these percentage differences mean in actual dollars? If we start with the idea of each region growing at the same rate as the nation (3.5% annually), we’d say they were maintaining their shares of the nation’s economic output.

But that’s not the way of the world. Even if all places are growing, different rates of growth may be described as shifts in economic activity. For several generations, economists have used “shift-share analysis” to highlight these differences. You can even get calculations of that nature from various federal websites.

**However, the concept** is misleading if you picture economic activity, workers, income or whatever is physically shifting, moving from one place to another. The “shift” from the Great Lakes between 2008 and 2019 was \$120 billion. The “shift” to the West was \$293 billion. The West did not necessarily take anything from the Great Lakes, but some people and firms may have moved to the West to take advantage of the faster growth occurring there.

Indiana, the slowest growing state in the Great Lakes Region at 3.0% annually, had a negative shift of \$20 billion. Our western neighbor, Illinois, being much larger, but only growing 0.04% faster annually than the Hoosier state, had a negative shift of \$45 billion.

None of the Great Lake states had a positive shift relative to the nation, which is the same as saying each grew less rapidly than the nation as a whole.

This discussion no doubt has some Hoosiers moaning, “Indiana has the worst economy in the Great Lakes Region.” Others, with a smirk, are saying, “And that isn’t all bad.”

**This division among us** leaves our state growing slowly, unevenly, and poorly. If we wish to grow slowly, we’d best develop the means to avoid decay. We can take no solace knowing our co-regionalists of the Great Lakes are in the same leaky boat. ❖

**Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at [mortonj-marcus@yahoo.com](mailto:mortonj-marcus@yahoo.com). Follow his views and those of John Guy on “Who gets what?” wherever podcasts are available or at [mortonjohn.libsyn.com](http://mortonjohn.libsyn.com)**



# Everyone wants to return to normal . . .

By **KELLY HAWES**

ANDERSON — No one is happy about this. Least of all newspapers. With businesses closed, advertising revenues have plummeted, and many newspapers have been forced to make some difficult choices. Some have closed. So, no, newspapers are not peddling stories of gloom and doom just to make a buck.



No one really wants to read stories of misery and death. No one wants to write them. Not a single person delights in the news that millions of Americans have lost their jobs. No one cheers when another business files for bankruptcy protection or shuts its doors. No one celebrates as fellow citizens struggle to put food on the table or keep a roof over their heads.

COVID-19 has slashed a wound in our economy that might take years to heal. Some of the jobs the virus has taken will never come back. Lots of us are getting grumpy about being stuck at home. Working in your pajamas might have some appeal for a little while, but the attraction begins to fade after weeks on end.

And those Zoom meetings have helped businesses and families stay connected, but will anyone really be disappointed when we can go back to meeting face to face?

**How about a handshake** or a high five or even a hug? Will we ever again have a chance to go back to that?

We all want to return to some version of normal. We want to get a much-delayed haircut and grab breakfast at our favorite diner. We want to catch a ballgame and have a hot dog. We want to stand shoulder to shoulder

with our fellow fans and cheer on our favorite team.

We'd love to put social distancing behind us. We want to take off our masks and shout from the rooftops that the novel coronavirus is gone.

Except it's not. And that's the problem. Lots of us cheered when Gov. Eric Holcomb announced a plan to begin lifting social-distancing restrictions. Hospitals were not overwhelmed, and cases were beginning to plateau.

Businesses across the state were suffering, and with every passing day, more of them failed. It was time, many thought, to begin the process of ending the shutdown. It was time to begin putting Hoosiers back to work.

But not everyone was convinced.

**Public health experts** say the governor's action might be premature. They know most of the deaths from the 1918 pandemic came in the second wave. They worry that all the progress we've made in slowing the spread of this virus might be lost if we move too quickly toward the way things used to be.

The state had just topped 1,000 deaths when the governor made his announcement. A model by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of

Washington now projects that number might exceed 6,000 by early August.

State officials acknowledge that as Hoosiers venture out more, more of them are likely to become infected. Some will die.

**The governor's team** of experts pledges to monitor the situation closely and to reverse course if necessary to prevent that second wave. Those same experts say there's a reason Indiana has a higher death count than other states that have begun reopening. We have higher rates of smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, they say, and those are the same risk factors that lead to bad outcomes for patients infected by COVID-19.

With that in mind, wouldn't it make sense to be cautious?

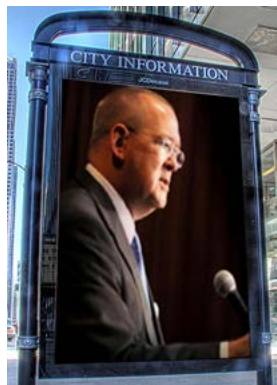
We all hope this experiment works out. Some of us are just a little bit worried it won't. ❖

**Kelly Hawes is a columnist for CNHI News Indiana. He can be reached at [kelly.hawes@indianamedia-group.com](mailto:kelly.hawes@indianamedia-group.com). Find him on Twitter @Kelly\_Hawes.**

# It's the disease, not the government

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

**MUNCIE** — Along with many states, Indiana is moving slowly away from some restrictions in the stay-at-home or shelter-in-place orders implemented in late March. Over that six-week period, more Hoosiers died of COVID-19 than died in the Vietnam War.



The state's economy experienced unprecedented damage. The next jobs report will be the worst since the Great Depression, even though it will understate the actual share of unemployed by 5% or more. State tax revenues were more than \$1 billion beneath the

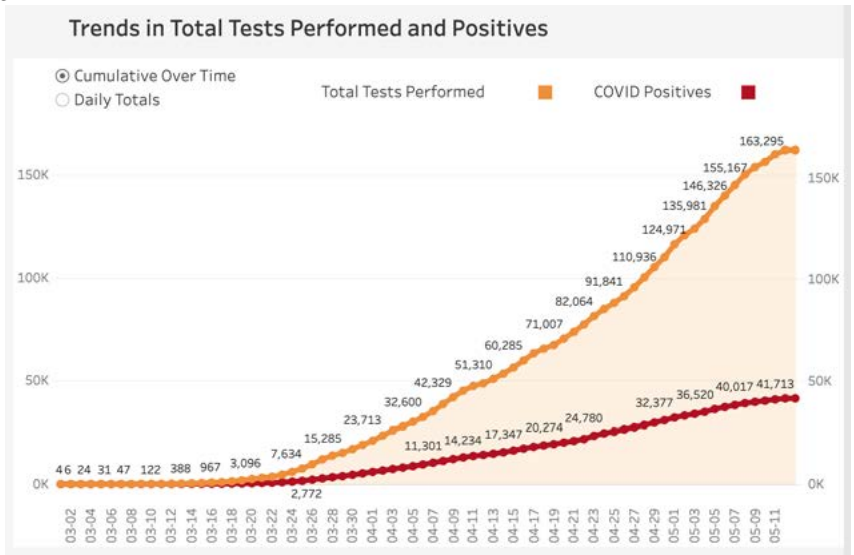
expected level in April. While part of this reflects payment delays, we clearly face the bleakest government budgets in a lifetime.

**In previous columns**, I argued that Indiana's response to COVID-19 saved lives and was clearly justifiable on economic grounds. As evidence continues to mount, my analysis looks even more right than it did three weeks ago. But, as we move away from the most restrictive

shelter in place rules, evaluating the efficacy of those reductions proves more difficult. Both the economics and the epidemiology of the disease are now more complex. With this comes greater uncertainty.

**It is clear Indiana flattened** the curve, and so the challenge now is determining what restrictions to loosen or tighten over time. I don't know enough about the disease to comment on that intelligently. What is clear is that the early restrictions likely provided the medical community time to learn and share a broader set of treatment options. That is very valuable. We also know more about the economics of the shelter-in-place.

A group of economists at Harvard published data on consumer expenditures drawn from near real-time information collected from banks, large retailers and other



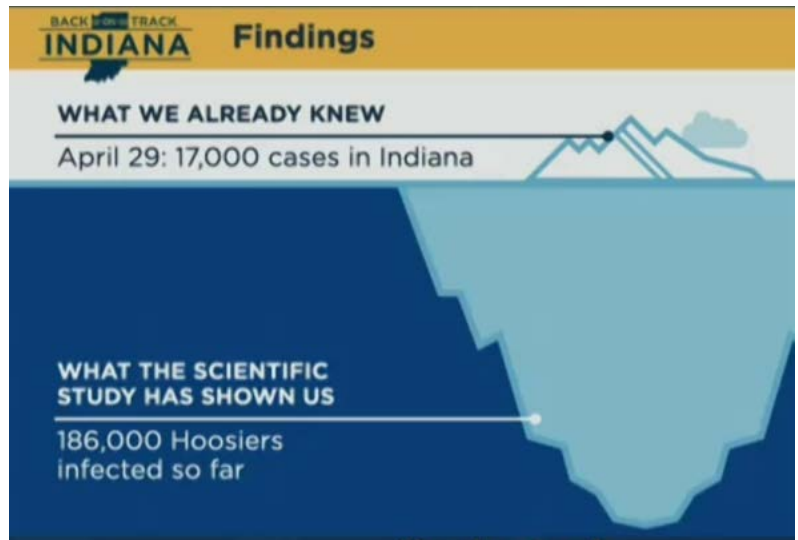
businesses. The data provide several interesting insights about the economy since January, as well as the role government action played in our economic conditions.

Beginning in January, household spending in Indiana started to slip beneath that of the nation as a whole. This was true for other Midwestern manufacturing states, but the effect was most pronounced in Indiana. This is consistent with my observation that Indiana's economy was slowing before COVID-19 reached our state. However, from mid-February until the shelter-in-place order was given, household spending declined by a whopping 32%. Spending on entertainment and recreational services dropped by more than 75% over the same period.

**The collapse of consumer** spending in late February and early March implies that Indiana was already at recession levels of economic activity on March 1, a full three weeks before the stay-at-home order. Indeed, nearly every category of discretionary household spending collapsed from mid-February through mid-March. Transportation spending dropped by 60%, apparel and general merchandise spending by 50%, healthcare spending by 45%, restaurants and hotels by 65%.

The only consumer spending category that rose over that time period was grocery sales. There was a brief spike around March 13, when Hoosier families were spending 47% more than average. This is akin to roughly 3.25 million extra people descending into our state to shop for groceries. I can think of few better examples of the miracle of modern free markets than food delivery at the outset of the COVID-19 crisis. We'd have been a lot better off permitting any random large grocery store to supply coronavirus tests instead of the federal government. And yes, that would have been true even if we'd had a minimally competent federal response, which we did not.

Aside from the stunning performance of grocers and their supply chains, consumer spending habits across the board were sufficient to plunge us into a deep recession. This happened prior to any formal government



action. What is important about that fact is that it surely implies that the disease itself, rather than government orders, is the cause of this downturn. At this point, that fact is abundantly clear. So, it seems probable that economic activity will not return to normal, even as we move to fully re-open the economy.

**In the end, this means** that I have very little to offer about the pace of relaxing our stay-at-home orders. If consumers are unwilling to visit restaurants and casinos, as they surely will not, placing extra restrictions on these operations has few direct economic costs or benefits.

The issue that matters is whether or not any particular action causes additional morbidity or mortality. This may change of course, but for now, our deep economic woes are a result of COVID-19, not state or local government. ❖

**Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University.**



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# Why third parties will see vote decline in 2020

By **KYLE KONDIK**  
and **J. MILES COLEMAN**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – When sizing up the 2020 election, it is natural for campaign pros and analysts to consider the kinds of voters who might defect from their 2016 selection. Can Joe Biden claw back some small but important share of the Barack Obama voters who defected to Donald Trump? Can Trump stop his party's slide in the suburbs?

These are important questions, but there's a significant bloc of 2016 voters who did not express support for either Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump, and who hypothetically may be gettable for both sides: the third party voters.

About 6% of all the ballots cast in 2016 for president were for candidates other than Trump and Clinton.

It's our belief that this third party share will be smaller in 2020 – meaning that we think there's a decent chance that at least some voters who opted out of the major party contest in 2016 will opt-in this time.

Libertarian Party nominee Gary Johnson won about 3.3% of the vote in 2016, and Green Party nominee Jill Stein won about 1.1% of the vote. Another half a percentage point went to Evan McMullin, a conservative alternative to Trump who got a third of his votes from a single state: Utah, where a significant slice of the electorate (21%) opted for McMullin. Utah is the most Mormon state in the country, and some voters there who were skeptical of Trump rallied to their Trump-critical co-religionist, McMullin.

Write-ins accounted for almost another full percent of the third-party vote; probably the most notable write-in effort came in Vermont, where home-state Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) received nearly 6% of the vote as a write-in.

Votes for minor candidates amounted to the remainder of the third party mix.

In some ways, one could argue that the performance of third party candidates in 2016 was impressive. Johnson and Stein, who also were on the ballot in 2012 as their respective party standard bearers, both roughly tripled their share of the vote from their previous election. Johnson, at a little over 3%, performed way better than any Libertarian ever had before – Ed Clark, at about 1.1% of the vote in 1980, was previously the best-performing Libertarian (Johnson himself won about 1% in 2012).

On the other hand, that third party candidates only received 6% of the vote despite the fact that Clinton and Trump both had horrible personal favorability numbers

shows the enduring strength of the two major parties -- and the challenges for third party candidates in general.

Since the end of the Civil War, there have been 38 presidential elections. The 2016 third party share ranks as the eighth-highest in that timeframe.

This history provides a good jumping off point to our five arguments as to why we think the third party vote will be smaller in 2020 than 2016.

## 1. The parties are largely unified

One thing that is somewhat surprising about the history of third party presidential voting in the post-Civil War era is that some of the best years for non-major parties came in years when there was an incumbent on the ballot. This throws some cold water on what we thought might be the case before we took a look at the numbers,

which was that we thought it was possible that the third party vote might go up in years when the presidential race does not feature an incumbent. The reasoning would be that races featuring incumbents might represent more of a referendum on the incumbent, and therefore would sort the electorate into two distinct camps: Those who support the incumbent and want to see him reelected, and those who do not and want to see him defeated.

Yet of the seven elections with higher third party shares than 2016, six were in years where there was an incumbent on the ballot. The one exception was the explosive 1968 election, when Lyndon Johnson could have run for a second elected term but opted not to.

A better way, perhaps, to look at the third party votes in some of these elections is to see them as representing divides within the major parties.

Certainly, the top election on this list – 1912 – is the cleanest example of a divided party leading to the rise of a big third party vote. Theodore Roosevelt, upset with the performance of his Republican successor, William Howard Taft, tried to win the GOP nomination. He was rebuffed, so he created his own party and ran for president. The Republican vote splintered, and Democrat Woodrow Wilson won the presidency easily despite getting only 42% of the vote.

But we can also see this phenomenon in some of these other elections. George Wallace, the conservative, segregationist Democrat who ran third party in 1968, ran strongest in the South, the conservative region that had once formed the backbone of the Democratic Party but was in the midst of breaking away from its ancestral party over the party's leftward evolution on civil rights and other issues. This process did not happen overnight: The presidential candidacy of Strom Thurmond two decades prior, in 1948, also represented a backlash spasm by southern conservatives against the growing liberalism of the Democrats.

While Ross Perot took some of his many votes in 1992 (and fewer votes in 1996) from both major parties,



he in some ways represented a continuation of Patrick Buchanan's 1992 primary campaign against incumbent George H.W. Bush: Both ran as critics of big institutions and were skeptical of free trade (one can see shades of Perot and Buchanan in Donald Trump, all of whom appeal to a group of voters that the late sociologist Donald Warren dubbed "Middle American Radicals").

In 1980, moderate Republican Rep. John Anderson of Illinois ran as something of a liberal alternative to both major party candidates. This came after Ronald Reagan won the GOP nomination, representing a triumph for conservatives in the party over moderates, while Jimmy Carter fended off a challenge from the left via Sen. Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts. The exit poll in 1980 suggested that Anderson took slightly more votes from Democrats than Republicans, and he also turned in some of his better performances in counties with major college campuses.

While there are of course divides in both parties, these sorts of major fissures do not seem present in 2020. Donald Trump had only nominal opposition in the Republican primary, and he dispatched that opposition with impressive ease. After early stumbles, Joe Biden effectively knocked out his rivals over the course of a few weeks in March. This naturally removes some of the oxygen for third party candidates.

**2. Opinions of major party candidates are better**

This second argument goes hand in hand with the first. The parties, and the public at large, seem to like their major party choices better this time than four years ago.

One of the key exit poll findings from 2016 was that almost 20% of voters held an unfavorable view of both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, an unusually high number. The president won this group 47%-30%, according to the exit poll, which was a crucial factor in his victory. The remaining voters who held unfavorable views of both candidates (23%) reported that they voted third party, according to the exit poll. Given that only 1% of voters with favorable views of just Clinton or Trump voted third party, it's reasonable to assume that the vast, vast majority of third party voters in 2016 disliked Clinton and Trump. That certainly seems to make sense.

In the exit poll, Trump's favorable/unfavorable split was 38%/60%, while Clinton's was 43%/55% (the RealClearPolitics average of their favorability on Election Day was very similar to the exit poll).

It seems possible, if not likely, that there will be fewer voters who have unfavorable views of both Biden and Trump this time.

Trump's favorability/unfavorability split in the RealClearPolitics average right now is 42%/53%. That's not good, but it's significantly better than when he was a candidate (his approval rating is 45% approve, 51% disapprove). Meanwhile, Biden's favorability split is 42%/48%. Again, that is not good, but it's also better than Clinton.

**3. Third party candidates may be weaker**

Many of the most successful third party candidates historically had some sort of previous political success or platform. Theodore Roosevelt, a former, well-regarded former president, is obviously a great example. Sen. Robert La Follette Sr. of Wisconsin and former Gov. George Wallace of Alabama were already nationally prominent politicians when they mounted their historically noteworthy third party bids.

Ross Perot had not been a candidate before, but he was a wealthy, prominent business leader and advocate for Vietnam war POWs and their families.

Although he did not achieve the electoral success of the aforementioned candidates, Ralph Nader was a nationally-known consumer advocate and public figure before his electorally consequential Green Party presidential run in 2000. The current roster of possible third party candidates lacks such a big name.

The most notable candidate so far appears to be Rep. Justin Amash of Michigan's Third District, who left the Republican Party over his opposition to Donald Trump on July 4 of last year. Amash recently announced that he was running for the Libertarian nomination. At this point, we would not consider Amash a huge name in American politics: It's debatable whether he has more notoriety than Gary Johnson, the aforementioned 2012 and 2016 Libertarian nominee. ❖



**John Krull, Statehouse File:** Maybe the people of the United States should hire their own lawyer. Because it's clear that U.S. Attorney General William Barr no longer works for us. He is President Donald Trump's lawyer, one willing to serve as both errand boy and bag man for a commander-in-chief who views the rule of the law, the Constitution and, for that matter, the oath of office he took with his hand on the Bible the same way a dog does a fire hydrant. That's what the decision by Barr's Justice Department to drop the criminal case against Michael Flynn demonstrates. Flynn was Trump's national security adviser for about a minute and a half. The president fired Flynn for, Trump said at the time, lying to Vice President Mike Pence about conversations the short-time national security adviser had with Russian officials and envoys. Flynn also lied to the Federal Bureau of Investigation about those contacts. He pled guilty, not once, but twice, to telling those lies. Now, Trump says that Flynn did nothing wrong, that he is an "innocent man" who has been unjustly hounded. (If that's true, one wonders why the president fired him in the first place.) None of this is likely to make much difference to the president's base. It's become clear in the past three and a half years that about 40 percent of the people in this country will swallow any contradiction, about-face, obfuscation or outright lie this president feeds them. There apparently are many Americans who are so gullible that, if Donald Trump told them gravity is a hoax, they'd jump out high windows. ❖



**Anne Hathaway, IBJ:** Encouraging more citizens to participate in the process by casting their ballot in each election should always be our ultimate goal. There is something very powerful about having one day set aside as Election Day where our nation comes together as individuals to act based on beliefs and values about our direction as a country. The current pandemic has created a renewed debate about the practicality and efficacy of in-person voting and making the switch to a vote-by-mail system. Make no mistake, this discussion has been going on for years. For decades, the very notion of what constitutes "Election Day" in the romantic sense has been drastically changing, as we have seen our state and country systematically increase availability and convenience of voting options. According to statistics from the secretary of state, a full 32% of votes cast in the 2018 general election were considered absentee. In some circles, a full vote-by-mail system is the next natural step. For a moment, let's put aside the political ramifications, which will be debated for years, and take a look at the practical roadblocks. There is nothing more important than state and local governments' executing a free and fair election for all voters. With this in mind, we need to dig down and explore what we are really talking about when we say vote by mail. My experience tells me we are likely talking past each other in many of these conversations. In the case of vote by mail, the devil is in the details. For example, are we talking

about mailing ballots to every registered voter or are we mailing applications to request a ballot to every registered voter? Providing applications would then require a two-step process—requesting the ballot via an application, then receiving the ballot via mail and returning it. If a state moves to a 100% mail-in election, the state must make a commitment to maintaining completely up-to-date voter rolls, which would require uniform internet and software access for every county and community. ❖

**Eddie Scarry, Washington Examiner:** There's been no surer way to end up on the national media's blacklist amid the coronavirus pandemic than to say the words "reopen" and "economy." Naturally, that's where Govs. Brian Kemp of Georgia and Ron DeSantis, both Republicans, found themselves the second either of them began loosening up statewide restrictions on normal business operations in recent weeks. For that, the entire media began casting them as reckless science-doubters who were effectively inviting new outbreaks and mass deaths within their states. But neither state has experienced an outbreak. In fact, both Florida and Georgia are doing well, with COVID death rates well below the national average of 25 per 100,000 people. In Georgia, it's 13. In Florida, just 8. So how are the media's COVID-19 governor heroes doing? Daily press briefings by New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, are run top to bottom live on cable news outlets, and his performances are cherished by the press. The New York Times last month called Cuomo's delivery "articulate, consistent and often tinged with empathy." ❖

**Nick Johnston, Axios:** Eight weeks into this nation's greatest crisis since World War II, we seem no closer to a national strategy to reopen the nation, rebuild the economy and defeat the coronavirus. America's ongoing cultural wars over everything have weakened our ability to respond to this pandemic. We may be our worst enemy. The response is being hobbled by the same trends that have impacted so much of our lives: growing income inequality, the rise of misinformation, lack of trust in institutions, the rural/urban divide and hyper-partisanship. Without even a basic agreement on the danger of the pandemic and its toll, here's how we see the national response unfold: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the crown jewel of the globe's public health infrastructure, has been sidelined, its recommendations dismissed by the White House. President Trump declares the U.S. has "prevailed on testing" at a time when health experts say we still need far more daily tests before the country can reopen safely. The virus is literally inside the White House. Aides have tested positive for coronavirus, leading to quarantines for some of the nation's top public health officials. The No. 1 book on Amazon for a time was a book by an anti-vaxxer whose conspiracy-minded video about the pandemic spread widely across social media, leading to takedowns by platforms like YouTube and Facebook. ❖



## 186K Hoosiers infected with virus

INDIANAPOLIS — About 186,000 people in Indiana were estimated to be infected or previously infected with COVID-19 at the end of April, according to preliminary study results released Wednesday by the Fairbanks School of Public Health at IUPUI (Erdody, [IBJ](#)). The school, in partnership with the Indiana State Department of Health, based the estimate on testing for COVID-19 and its antibodies it conducted from April 25 to May 1. The tests involved 4,611 randomly selected Hoosiers representing all demographics and regions in the state. Those tested were both showing symptoms of the virus and the asymptomatic. "Ideally, you know, we really would like to test every single Hoosier, but the next best thing to doing that is random sample testing—a scientific approach that allows us to confidently assess how COVID-19 has spread in Indiana, without really having to test everyone, which is just not feasible," said Paul Halverson, founding dean of the Fairbanks School of Public Health. The testing found 1.7% of those tested had the virus and another 1.1% had antibodies for the virus, indicating a previous infection. Adding those together, researchers came up with a 2.8% infection rate. That rate indicates 186,000 people in the state had been infected as of May 1. Actual testing at the time, mostly conducted on symptomatic people, showed about 17,000 cases in the state.



## Braun blocks CDC document release

WASHINGTON — GOP Sen. Mike Braun (Ind.) on Wednesday blocked a resolution calling for the release of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) guidance on reopening businesses ([The Hill](#)). Senate Minority Leader Charles

Schumer (D-N.Y.) tried to pass the resolution amid reports that Trump administration officials had sidelined the document. Braun maintained Wednesday that Schumer was making a "faux argument" and characterized the CDC recommendations as "overly prescriptive." "This is not about transparency. The White House is always going to be in favor of transparency. ... This is about the minority leader trying to use the bureaucracy at the CDC to bog down the economy," Braun added.

## Indy to move to Stage 2 on Friday

INDIANAPOLIS — Mayor Joe Hogsett on Wednesday said he will begin easing Marion County's pandemic stay-at-home orders on Friday but with several major exclusions not found in the state's reopening plan. Nonessential retailers and shopping malls will be allowed to open at 50% capacity, he said, and social gatherings and worship services will now allow up to 25 people instead of 10. However, in-person dining will not be allowed until May 22, and only at restaurants with outdoor seating. Indoor dining at 50% capacity won't be allowed until June 1 under the plan. But personal services such as barbers, hair and nail salons, and tattoo parlors will remain closed until further notice, he said. "We are phasing in Stage 2, and I think we're doing so responsibly," Hogsett said. "If the data starts to show there will be an uptick, we'll have to make adjustments accordingly."

## Supt tells schools to ignore feds

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana education officials have instructed school districts to ignore U.S. Department of Education guidance that would have tripled federal pandemic aid to private schools at the expense of children in public schools (Kelly, [Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). Superin-

tendent of Public Instruction Jennifer McCormick said Tuesday the state "will distribute funds according to Congressional intent and a plain reading of the law. I will not play political agenda games with COVID relief funds. Our most at-risk students depend on this commitment." The federal CARES Act provided billions for schools in an education stabilization fund that was to be distributed using the Title I formula — based on the number of low-income students a school has. Both public and private schools are eligible.

## Trump urges govts to reopen schools

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump called on governors across the nation to work to reopen schools that were closed because of the coronavirus, pointedly taking issue with Dr. Anthony Fauci's caution against moving too quickly in sending students back to class (AP). The president accused Fauci of wanting "to play all sides of the equation," a comment that suggested he is tiring of the nation's top infectious disease expert. "I think they should open the schools, absolutely. I think they should," Trump told reporters at the White House, echoing comments he had made in a television interview. "Our country's got to get back and it's got to get back as soon as possible. And I don't consider our country coming back if the schools are closed."

## HS grads going to college declines

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana continues to see a decline in the percentage of high school graduates going to college. According to the Commission for ([Indiana Public Media](#)). Higher Education's annual College Readiness Report, only 61 percent of Hoosier high school graduates enrolled in college in 2018, compared to 65 percent in 2015. Only 9 percent of incoming college freshmen needed remedial coursework in 2018, compared to 12 percent the year before.