

Uncertainty: Pandemic at 6 months

As Hoosiers await a vaccine, dark days over the horizon

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – As we headed out to Richmond a couple of summers ago, I suggested to Gov. Eric Holcomb that the opioid/heroin epidemic would probably become the “story of our lifetime.”

Little did anyone know that just over the horizon as 2019 rolled into 2020 how wrong that asser-

tion would prove to be. While heroin overdose deaths are still occurring at a brisk clip around the state – the Wall Street Journal listed Indiana as one of a half dozen states still grappling with a significant rise in that addiction – what is clear now is the COVID-19 pandemic has become the monster story, dwarf-



ing all others. It will be a milepost that future governors, journalists (if there are any of us left) and historians will be pointing to a century from now.

We are now at just the six-month marker of when the pandemic came to Indiana.

In the Feb. 20 edition of Howey Politics Indiana, the leading state stories were Mayor Pete Buttigieg’s

Continued on page 3

Losers, suckers & rage

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

MICHIGAN CITY – I was with a veteran Democratic operative on a wintry night in 1998 when the story of President Clinton’s relationship with a White House intern broke on network news, Monica Lewinsky was revealed, and the scandal began mushrooming.

My friend began laughing and then he blurted out, “It’s true!” How could he be so sure? I asked. “Because she’s his type,” came his response.

And as we came to know through the tortuous process that led to Clinton’s impeachment ... it was true.

I tell this tale as the story broke late last week about President Trump’s disparaging remarks in the summer of 2018 when he



“Kids. Jobs. Health care. This is what the American people want us to address right now. What we’ve come up with here on the Republican side is an effort to try and meet those three needs.”

- U.S. Sen. Todd Young, on the Senate Republican stimulus proposal up for vote today.



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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



refused to go to a ceremony honoring the 1,500 fallen U.S. Marines at the World War I Aisne-Marne Cemetery, reportedly saying these dead Americans were "losers." Jeffrey Goldberg's assertion in [The Atlantic](#) continued that Trump considered Vietnam vets "suckers" for fighting in a war he had avoided due to a friendly doctor's diagnosis of bone spurs.

On Wednesday, Bob Woodward's book "Rage" cast further brooding shadows on the Trump psyche, with former Indiana senator Dan Coats and Vice President Pence's conspicuous but divergent roles coming into focus.

Woodward recounts Defense Sec. Jim Mattis quietly going to Washington National Cathedral to pray about his concern for the nation's fate under Trump's command and, according to Woodward, told Director of National Intelligence Coats, "There may come a time when we have to take collective action" since Trump is "dangerous. He's unfit."

In a separate conversation recounted by Woodward, Mattis told Coats, "The president has no moral compass," to which the director of national intelligence replied, "True. To him, a lie is not a lie. It's just what he thinks. He doesn't know the difference between the truth and a lie."

From the beginning of his rise to power beginning in 2015, Trump saying the things that Goldberg reported in *The Atlantic* were believable because his past is prologue. It wasn't a stretch to imagine him saying such things. He's made similar, crass utterances before about U.S. Sen. John McCain and a Gold Star mother.

In 2015, Trump said of McCain: "He's not a war hero. He's a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren't captured."

On Sgt. La David Johnson, who died in Niger during an October 2017 ambush: He "must have known

what he signed up for," according to Rep. Frederica Wilson, who overheard Trump's call to Johnson's widow.

After Mattis resigned in 2018, Trump said, "Probably the only thing Barack Obama and I have in common is that we both had the honor of firing Jim Mattis, the world's most overrated general."

Fox News, Associated Press, the New York Times and the Washington Post have corroborated various parts of *The Atlantic's* reporting. Gens. John Kelly and Mattis have refused comment on the story.

Fox News Pentagon correspondent Jennifer Griffin confirmed key parts of Goldberg's article, citing

two senior White House sources. "According to one former senior Trump administration official, When the president spoke about the Vietnam War, he said, 'It was a stupid war. Anyone who went was a sucker,'" she wrote. "When asked if the president could have driven to the Aisne-Marne Cemetery, this former official said confidently: 'The president drives a lot. The other

world leaders drove to the cemeteries. He just didn't want to go.'"

By midnight Friday, Trump tweeted, "Jennifer Griffin should be fired for this kind of reporting. Never even called us for comment. @FoxNews is gone!"

Griffin told Fox News' Neil Cavuto, "My sources are unimpeachable. I feel very confident with what we have reported at Fox. Not every line of *The Atlantic* article did I confirm, but I would say that most of the descriptions and the quotes in that *Atlantic* article I did find people who were able to confirm and so you know I feel very confident in my reporting."

"What they are saying they feel very strongly is accurate," Griffin continued. "They were there and I'm a reporter and it is my job to report what I heard."



President Trump held a Labor Day presser in which he defended himself from The Atlantic article, saying, "Only an animal would say a thing like that."

He then described U.S. military generals as profiteers. Trump said leaders at the Pentagon probably weren't "in love with me" because "they want to do nothing but fight wars so that all of those wonderful companies that make the bombs and make the planes and make everything else stay happy. Some people don't like to come home, some people like to continue to spend money. One cold-hearted globalist betrayal after another, that's what it was."

The Atlantic article and Woodward book all occurred after the Military Times Poll last week showed Trump trailing Joe Biden by 5%.

Woodward's book documents what the Washington Post described as private grumblings, periods of exasperation and wrestling about whether to quit among the so-called "adults" of the Trump orbit: Mattis, Coats and former secretary of state Rex Tillerson.

Woodward describes Coats's experience as "especially tortured." He was recruited into the administration by Vice President Pence, and his wife is quoted as recalling a dinner at the White House when she interacted with Pence. "I just looked at him, like, how are you stomaching this?" Marsha Coats, a former Indiana Republican National Committeewoman said, according to Woodward. "I just looked at him like, this is horrible. I mean, we made eye contact. I think he understood. And he just whispered in my ear, 'Stay the course.'"

The Washington Post reported that Pence was the "president's one constant booster publicly and privately in Woodward's book." When Coats considered resigning because of Trump's handling of Russia, Pence urged him

to "look on the positive side of things that he's done. More attention on that. You can't go."

Axios reported that Coats could not shake his "deep suspicions" that Russian President Vladimir Putin "had something" on President Trump, seeing "no other explanation."

Whew.

The other Woodward bombshell concerned Trump's downplaying the pandemic. While he minimized the looming danger to the public, in a Feb. 7 call with Woodward, Trump acknowledged, "You just breathe the air and that's how it's passed, and so that's a very tricky one. That's a very delicate one. It's also more deadly than even your strenuous flu. This is deadly stuff."

In one Oval Office meeting recounted by Woodward, after Trump had made false statements in a news briefing, Fauci said in front of him: "We can't let the president be out there being vulnerable, saying something that's going to come back and bite him." Pence, Jared Kushner, Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and senior policy adviser Stephen Miller "tensed up at once," Woodward writes, surprised Fauci would talk to Trump that way.

And Fauci describes Trump as "on a separate channel" and unfocused in meetings, with "rudderless" leadership, according to Woodward. "His attention span is like a minus number. His sole purpose is to get reelected."

From an Indiana context through the White House coronavirus task force prism, Britannica describes the proverbial "Faustian bargain" this way: "A pact whereby a person trades something of supreme moral or spiritual importance, such as personal values or the soul, for some worldly or material benefit, such as knowledge, power, or riches." ❖

Pandemic, from page 1

Democratic presidential campaign, the pending law license suspension of Attorney General Curtis Hill, and the closing of Indiana Beach. Nationally, Roger Stone had just been sentenced and President Trump pardoned former Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich.

A week later is when the pandemic began to permeate the attention of Hoosiers. President Trump turned the federal pandemic response over to Vice President Pence that week. In doing so, Trump pronounced the United States "very, very ready" for whatever the COVID-19 outbreak could bring, and added, "This will end. You don't want to see panic because there's no reason to be panicked." According to Trump's own words in Bob Woodward's book "Rage," this was a lie.



Pandemic metrics

At this writing, 101,485 Hoosiers have been documented as infected by the novel coronavirus, killing at least 3,173 of us.

As HPI reported in its April 23 edition, the COVID-19 virus has infected less than 1% of Hoosiers, and killed just a fraction of those. It has proven deadly with senior citizens with "co-morbidities." While it has shut down schools, induced colleges and K-12 classes into fitful restarts this summer, it hasn't been a killer of youth. But there is so much we don't know. The Big Ten conference shut down football this autumn due to concerns over how it impacts the hearts of young athletes.

It has shut down a state with an annual GDP of more than \$360 billion, and a labor force of more than three million, taking aim at an array of small and large cor-

porations, mom-and-pop businesses, tens of thousands of bars and restaurants that saw April revenues decline by almost \$1 billion. It could cost local governments between \$200 million and \$360 million in revenue. It has emptied college campuses, fieldhouses and NBA stadiums, and has carved a deadly path through more than 150 nursing homes and retirement centers. It has delayed the Indianapolis 500 and Kentucky Derby, sidelined the NCAA's March Madness, the IHSAA's Hoosier Hysteria, and sent more than one million students home for the rest of the spring semester, idling more than 60,000 teachers. It silenced churches, synagogues, temples and mosques. CBS4 reports that there's been a 70% increase in domestic disturbance calls to central Indiana police departments during Gov. Holcomb's stay at home hunkering down sequence.

In addition to how this pandemic has impacted opioid overdose deaths, we had little metrics on how it was affecting the overall economy and suicides. As the Indianapolis 500 ran, with nary a fan in the stands that normally would have brought 300,000 to the track, on Aug. 23, the coming economic hit is, at this writing, unfathomable.

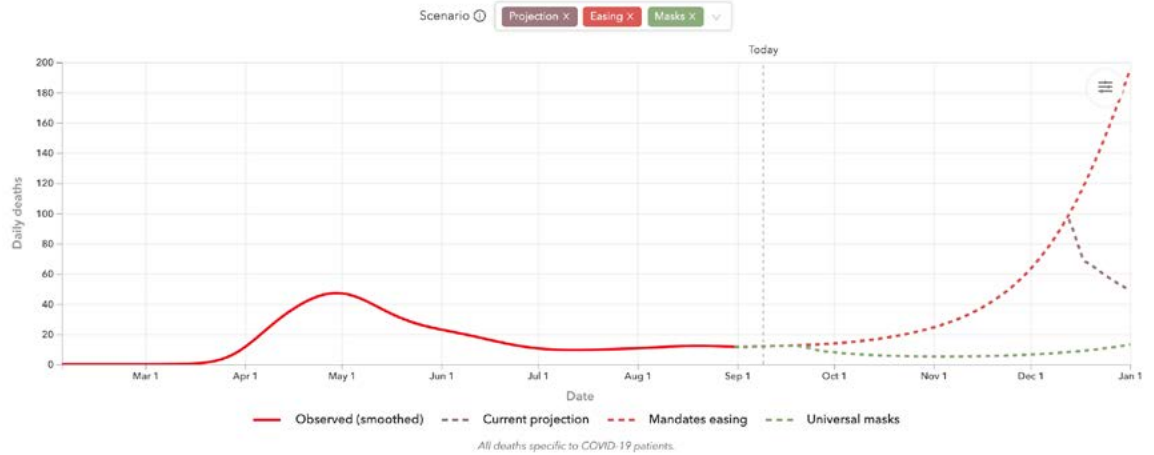
In its April 30 edition, HPI described "the grimmest April" in the state since the 1974 super tornado outbreak. "No modern governor has faced the type of loss of life and economic paralysis and destruction that COVID-19 has dropped at Holcomb's boots," HPI observed.

Nationally, the numbers are sobering. There have been 6,327,499 confirmed cases of coronavirus in the United States, resulting in 190,374 deaths. as of Wednesday. There have been 82.84 million tests administered nationally, according to researchers at the COVID Tracking Project.

And we aren't even at "halftime" in Gov. Holcomb's tendency to use basketball parlance to describe the pandemic. Tens of thousands of college students across the country have gotten infected with the coronavirus,

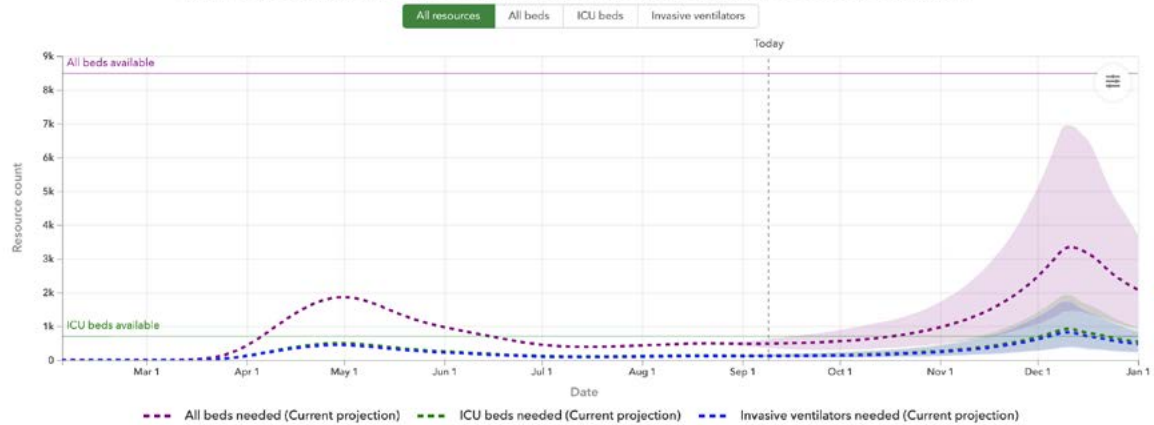
Daily deaths

Daily deaths is the best indicator of the progression of the pandemic, although there is generally a 17-21 day lag between infection ...



Hospital resource use

Hospital resource use indicates how equipped a location is to treat COVID-19 patients. Select All beds, ICU beds, or Invasive ventilat ...



and thousands more are being sent home to potentially spread the virus to their families and communities, Caitlin Owens of Axios writes. Colleges and universities have found at least 51,000 coronavirus cases already, according to a campus tracker the N.Y. Times built. Indiana had 1,543 infections at 17 schools. Each of these schools has reported more than 1,000 cases: Illinois State University, the University of South Carolina, Auburn University, the University of Alabama and UNC Chapel Hill.

And NBC News reports that another 250,000 cases between Aug. 2 and Sept. 2 could be linked to the Sturgis, S.D., motorcycle rally in late July, according to a new estimate by the Center for Health Economics & Policy Studies.

This is where the metrics collide with values, and politics.

In the April 2 edition of HPI, my analysis was this: The statistics are troubling. In a nation of 331 million, 2,000 deaths seem miniscule. Out of 6.85 million Hoosiers, the 65 fatalities reported on Tuesday seem the same. But this is before the wave hits us. The critical question now seems to be whether it will be a microbe tsunami. Dr. Tony Fauci and Dr. Deborah Birx warned that 100,000 to 200,000 Americans will die of coronavirus

even in “perfect” social distancing scenarios. A University of Washington model of Indiana put our death toll at 2,400 by August. IU’s Dr. Aaron Carroll warns that COVID-19 could storm back next fall and winter just like the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918.

On Wednesday, the University of Washington’s Health Metrics site forecast 208,255 U.S. deaths by Nov. 1. Those numbers would drop to 162,808 if at least 95% of people wore masks in public. It projects 7,653 COVID deaths in Indiana by Jan. 1, as well as a potential swamping of the state’s ICU beds and ventilators, particularly if masks are not worn in comprehensive fashion.

“We can now see the projected trajectory of the epidemic into the fall, and many states are expected to experience significant increases in cases and deaths in September and October,” said IHME Director Dr. Christopher Murray. “However, as we all have come to recognize, wearing masks can substantially reduce transmission of the virus. Mask mandates delay the need for re-imposing closures of businesses and have huge economic benefits.

Moreover, those who refuse masks are putting their lives, their families, their friends, and their communities at risk.

“The U.S. didn’t experience a true end to the first wave of the pandemic,” Murray said. “This will not spare us from a second surge in the fall, which will hit particularly hard in states currently seeing high levels of infections.”

In the March 5 edition of HPI, the specter of an end game, a reliable, properly medically tested vaccine, had already taken root. The underpinnings to this pandemic are that President Trump has sliced away key personnel in what should be a continual warfare against the microbes. And the president doesn’t understand or comprehend the science involved. When Trump, Pence, Azar and Fauci met with pharma execs, this became apparent when Trump pressed them for a vaccine timeline. “I don’t think they know what the time will be,” Trump said. “I’ve heard very quick numbers – a matter of months – and I’ve heard pretty much a year would be an outside number.”

Trump/Pence mixed signals

Throughout the early stages of the pandemic, President Trump became a font of mixed signals and misinformation, saying in late February, “It’s going to disappear. One day it’s like a miracle, it will disappear.” On Feb.

7, he told Woodward how deadly the pandemic would be. Then at an early March MAGA rally in Charleston, S.C., Trump claimed the pandemic to be a “hoax.”

In late July, Trump finally accepted to the notion that wearing a face mask was a good thing, tweeting to supporters: “We are United in our effort to defeat the Invisible China Virus, and many people say that it is Patriotic to wear a face mask when you can’t socially distance. There is nobody more Patriotic than me, your favorite President!”

But last weekend, Trump was making fun of Reuters reporter Jeff Mason for wearing a mask, as he did at a May press conference. At a MAGA rally in North Carolina on Tuesday, Trump ignored local mask mandates, despite pleas to do so by one of his supporters, Forsyth County Commissioner David Plyler. “It’s been ordered by the governor,” Plyler told the Winston-Salem Journal. “When in Rome, do as the Romans do. When in North Carolina, do as the governor says.”

“The president of the United States sets the example for everybody else,” Plyler told CNN. “You can hear it; if the president of the United States says I don’t have to wear it, I’m not going to wear it. And I can guarantee you that will be done.”

Columnist John Krull of the Statehouse File observed in April, “If there is a threat, real or perceived, to his base, the president will find a way to exploit it. That is his gift. It is a dark gift, to be sure, but it has elevated him to the highest office in the land. It doesn’t serve him – or the nation – well at this moment. The present crisis calls for him to alleviate rather than

alarm, soothe rather than stoke. And he doesn’t know how to do it. That’s why his press conference dealing with the galloping coronavirus concerns was such a disaster. When he wasn’t incoherent, he was clueless.”

In that March 12 edition of HPI, my analysis: “We’ve watched the coronavirus swarm across the globe and into the American psyche. President Trump’s response has been abysmal, crystalized in his visit late last week to the Center for Disease Control where he asked, ‘Who would have thought? Who would have thought we would even be having the subject?’ Ask Indiana Health Commissioner Kristina Box or Gov. Eric Holcomb if they had ever pondered a microbe-induced pandemic here.

“Sadly, we now face an engulfing pandemic. The Trump administration’s decision not to accept the World Health Organization’s coronavirus test has mystified and infuriated American governors. What has become painfully evident is that President Trump is woefully unprepared



for his first non-self-inflicted crisis. This is not to say that incredible events and fate won't whiplash the body politic once again before this cycle runs its course. But we find ourselves in a vastly different place than we were a month ago."

In the March 19 edition of HPI, Vice President Pence said, "Every American can be confident that we're going to do whatever it takes to keep the American people safe and when we defeat the coronavirus in the United States, the economy will come roaring back. All of our health experts agree, you do not need the results of coronavirus testing to know what you should do. Every American in every community should be following President Trump's guidelines."

Those guidelines include the wearing of face masks and social distancing, a point repeatedly stated in CDC guidelines as well as by Gov. Holcomb and Dr. Box. And, repeatedly, Trump and Pence have flouted those guidelines apparently to construct a political facade of what President Warren G. Harding would have described as "normalcy."

We've watched the Trump/Pence campaign eschew those guidelines from the Tulsa MAGA rally to the president's White House RNC acceptance speech.

Asked whether he thinks President Trump has downplayed the virus, as is reported by journalist Bob Woodward in his book "Rage", Holcomb said, "not with me." He said he would continue to rely on medical experts and "will never downplay it here."

Fending off a system collapse

From the beginning of this pandemic in early March, Gov. Holcomb sought to fend off a collapse of the state's health care system, which nearly occurred in New York City, Houston, Phoenix and New Orleans. If the University of Washington forecasts are to be believed, he and all of us will be facing a similar dilemma later this fall.

"There's a beginning, a middle and an end to this all," Holcomb said in early March. "We understand and are

equally concerned about the pain that is being put upon all of us. What we're trying to do is make sure our health care system doesn't collapse under the weight of all the new cases. And to do that, we've had to change our behavior. We've had to socially distance ourselves. We know that's how it negatively compounds itself on us all, our businesses and our family members. We're trying to push through this keeping in mind there's another phase to this.

"If you look at the numbers locally ... we're going up. We've got to get to that peak and then find our way down, and then not react too quickly. We could have a whiplash, or a double whammy," Holcomb said in March. "I spoke with a number of governors yesterday and we all concurred, 100%, that it may be the fact that it will be harder to de-escalate than escalate. We will keep in mind, of course, the humanitarian effect this is having, the adverse economic impact this is having on 512,000 other small business owners."

Six months into this pandemic, we fret about the lack of Big Ten football. We watch pockets of COVID invade Greek houses at IU and Purdue. Local school districts are skittish, with South Vermillion HS moving to online this week, Gibson Southern HS last week, while Michigan City cancelled Friday's football game due to a staffer testing positive. Purdue released its spring academic schedule, with no spring break and an online option.

As he ordered an unprecedented statewide economic, academic and athletic shutdown last March, Gov. Holcomb said, "For those of you who think we are overreacting, I can assure you we are not. Indiana is under a state of emergency. We will win this war with COVID-19. Make no mistake about it, collectively the actions we are taking today will have a positive impact 30, 60, 90 days later."

On Wednesday, Holcomb said that reaching the 100,000 infection milepost was inevitable. "I never look forward to these updates but I can tell you ... I'm very, very proud of everyone who is pitching in and going the extra distance."❖

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Merritt opens up the 2024 INGov race

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – State Sen. Jim Merritt will leave the Indiana Senate in November, but he’s not retiring. “I don’t like the term ‘retiring,’” he told Howey Politics Indiana Tuesday morning. “I want to take some time, write a book or two and test the waters for ‘24. I still have a lot of juice in the tank.”



Specifically, his reference to 2024 was a potentially open gubernatorial seat, assuming Gov. Eric Holcomb wins in November. Merritt lost the 2019 Indianapolis mayoral race to Democrat Joe Hogsett. “It was difficult running for mayor from the Senate,” he said. “I want to volunteer at food banks and not have it look like it’s a political stunt.”

Merritt’s departure from the Senate could be seen as the final chapter in the change of the guard, that began when Senate Appropriations Chairman Luke Kenley stepped down, followed by Senate Budget Chairman Brandt Hershman and then Senate President Pro Tem David Long.

Merritt ends his Senate career with just over \$3,255 in his campaign account (Long has \$380,813; Kenley still has \$143,591, while Hershman has \$224,537).

As for the 2024 field, those we expect or suspect to consider running include Lt. Gov. Suzann Crouch, Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness, U.S. Reps. Jim Banks and Trey Hollingsworth, and Health & Human Services Sec. Alex Azar are names we’re hearing.



Holcomb campaign pushes absentee

Despite President Trump’s railing against vote by mail, Gov. Eric Holcomb’s reelection campaign is pushing absentee balloting for its supporters. In an email to supporters, the campaign said, “If you are thinking about voting absentee this year, we want to make sure that you have all the resources you need to make that happen. Our crew pulled together all the relevant reasons, deadlines, and resources you’ll need! Voting absentee by-mail is

secure, with longtime protocols in place that protect the sanctity of your vote.” It noted there are 11 requirements for requesting an absentee by-mail ballot, which were established by the Indiana General Assembly. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Holcomb.

Statewides

Attorney General: ISTA backs Weinzapfel

Democrat Jonathan Weinzapfel welcomed the endorsement of more than 40,000 Hoosier educators from across the state. The Indiana State Teachers Association’s Political Action Committee for Education, an affiliate of the National Education Association, officially endorsed Weinzapfel’s candidacy for attorney general. “As a son of an educator, a parent, a former leader in higher education and as someone who cares deeply about the quality of education we are providing our kids, this endorsement means a lot,” said Weinzapfel.. “There is no more important job out there than that of a teacher. And, as attorney general I am going to do everything I can to support them as well as our students and parents.”

Weinzapfel, Rokita differ on marijuana

Weinzapfel responded to his Republican opponent’s attack on social media over his position on marijuana decriminalization. “Today, my opponent attacked me for supporting the decriminalization of marijuana and for saying we shouldn’t lock people up for possessing it in small amounts,” Weinzapfel said. “While former Congressman Todd Rokita may want to lock people up for cannabis, I do not. Given all the challenges Indiana faces, spending our tax dollars and law enforcement resources on throwing people in jail for possessing small amounts of marijuana just doesn’t make sense. As Indiana’s next attorney general, I will focus my attention on going after drug dealers and working with local law enforcement to keep our communities safe. I will support the creation of more drug courts, promote alternative sentencing that focuses on treatment and will continue to support the medical use of marijuana and decriminalizing its possession in small amounts.” **Horse Race**

Status: Leans Rokita.

Congress

5th CD: Hale seeks bipartisanship

The nation has learned lessons this year from the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, according to congressional candidate Christina Hale (de la Bastide, Anderson Herald Bulletin). Lawmakers, she said, should work in the same direction. Hale was in Anderson on Wednesday to meet with business leaders. She spoke to

members of One Nation Indivisible Madison County at Mounds State Park. "The issues are not Republican or Democrat, they are community issues," Hale said. "When I served in the Indiana House I passed 60 bills with bipartisan support." Hale, a Democrat, is running against Republican Victoria Spartz in November for the seat that will be left open by incumbent Republican Susan Brooks. No stranger to tough runs for elective office, Hale believes she's in a position to win the 5th Congressional District race. In 2012, she defeated incumbent Republican Cindy Noe by 51 votes for a seat in the Indiana House. "If elected, I'm determined to look for people on the other side of the aisle," she said. "No one party has all the good ideas."

Hale/Spartz town hall Sept. 22

The Indiana Town Halls debate fearing 5th CD nominees Christina Hale and Victoria Spartz will be broadcast live over WFYI TV at 7 p.m. Sept. 22 and live streamed. Jim Shella will moderate.

PAC running ad against Spartz

The Women Voters PAC has entered the 5th CD race, aiming negative ads against Republican nominee Victoria Spartz, who it describes as a pawn of "big insurance" She's proven to put big insurance before kids," the ad says.

Presidential 2020

Buttigieg on Biden transition team

Former South Bend mayor Pete Buttigieg was named to Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden's transition team. He joins former Obama National Security Adviser Susan Rice; former Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates; Jared Bernstein, a longtime Biden economic adviser; and Dr. Vivek Murthy; former U.S. surgeon general.



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President (U.S. & Indiana)



President Donald Trump (R), Joseph Biden (D), Jo Jorgensen (L)

HPI Horse Race:

National: Leans D; Last week: Leans D
Indiana: Safe R; Last week: Safe R

Indiana Governor



Gov. Eric Holcomb (R), Woody Myers (D), Donald Rainwater (L)

HPI Horse Race:

This week: Safe R
Last week: Safe R

Indiana Attorney General



Todd Rokita (R) Jonathan Weinzapfel (D)

HPI Horse Race

This week: Leans R
Last week: Leans R

Congressional 2nd



U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski (R) Pat Hackett (D)

HPI Horse Race

This week: Likely R
Last week: Likely R

Congressional 5th



Victoria Spartz (R), Christina Hale (D), Kenneth Tucker (L)

HPI Horse Race

This Week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

Congressional 9th



U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth (R) Andy Ruff (D)

HPI Horse Race

This week: Likely R
Last week: Likely R

Biden also named four co-chairs: Anita Dunn, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, Rep. Cedric Richmond, and former Delaware Sen. Ted Kaufman.

Trump up 8% in Indiana

President Trump held an 8% lead in Indiana in a CBS/YouGov Tracking poll. Trump had a 53-45% lead over Democrat Joe Biden. The MOE was 6%. In Michigan, Biden led 53-45%. In Pennsylvania, Biden had a 52-47% lead. In Wisconsin, Biden led 50-44%. In Texas, Trump led 50-48%. It was tied in Ohio at 49%. In North Carolina, Biden led 51-47%. Biden led Trump in Florida 52-47% and led in Georgia 51-47%. In Arizona, Trump trailed Biden 50-48%.

Trump goes on record with Woodward

President Trump, who rails about anonymous sources, is suddenly confronted with an extensive, unsparing, on-the-record account of his thinking about America's virus and race crises — and he's the source. Instead of "Rage," Bob Woodward could have called his book: "Undeniable" ([Axios](#)). We get a torrent of tweeted and spoken words from Trump — far more public musing, riffing and ranting than from any president, ever. But it's not always clear what to believe, what matters, or what will endure. Now, we can read and hear Trump free-associating for history. Woodward tapped Trump's vanity and insecurity to secure an astonishing 18 interviews, totaling nine hours, with the most powerful man in the world. Woodward was allowed to record all the on-the-record sessions. Audio snippets were released yesterday along with extensive excerpts from the book, out Tuesday. We know Trump likes to talk to famous people — he complained publicly after he wasn't interviewed for Woodward's brutal 2018 Trump book, "Fear." So now we have the president — as he fights for reelection 54 days before Election Day — admitting that he deliberately "played down" the coronavirus, at a time when more urgency could have saved lives "Yes, this is the tragedy," Woodward says. "A president of the United States has a duty to warn. The public will understand that. But if they get the feeling that they're not getting the truth, then you're going down the path of deceit and cover-up." ([Video](#))

Trump campaign's fund lead evaporates

Money was supposed to have been one of the great advantages of incumbency for President Trump, much as it was for President Barack Obama in 2012 and George W. Bush in 2004. After getting outspent in 2016, Mr. Trump filed for reelection on the day of his inauguration — earlier than any other modern president — betting that the head start would deliver him a decisive financial advantage this year (New York Times). It seemed to have worked. His rival, Joseph R. Biden Jr., was relatively broke when he emerged as the presumptive Democratic nominee this spring, and Mr. Trump and the Republican National Committee had a nearly \$200 million cash advantage. Five months later, Mr. Trump's financial supremacy has evaporated. Of the \$1.1 billion his campaign and the party raised from the beginning of 2019



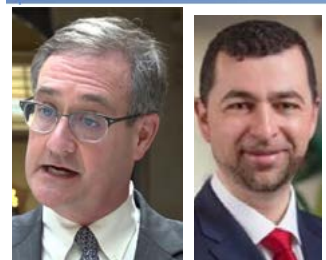
Indiana General Assembly SD8



Sen. Mike Bohacek (R)
Gary Davis (D)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

Indiana General Assembly SD30



Sen. John Ruckelshaus (R)
Fady Qaddoura (D)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

Indiana General Assembly HD5



Rep. Dale Devon (D)
John Westerhausen (R)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

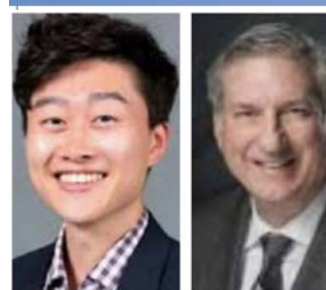
Indiana General Assembly HD7



Rep. Ross Deal (D)
Jake Teshka (R)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

Indiana General Assembly HD15



Rep. Chris Chyung (D)
Hal Slager (R)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

through July, more than \$800 million has already been spent. Now some people inside the campaign are forecasting what was once unthinkable: A cash crunch with less than 60 days until the election, according to Republican officials briefed on the matter.

Biden up by 9% in PA

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden leads President Donald Trump by a 9-point margin among likely voters in Pennsylvania, a key swing state where Biden was born, according to a new NBC News/Marist poll. The survey finds that Biden leads 53-44%.

Trump, Biden tied in Florida

President Donald Trump and Joe Biden are close to tied in Florida, tightening the gap in a critical swing state, according to a poll released on Tuesday (Politico). The NBC News/Marist poll showed support for the Republican and Democratic tickets evenly split, at 48% each, among likely voters in the state. Among registered voters, 47% supported Biden's ticket while 48% supported Trump's.

Biden leads in Ohio Rasmussen poll

Biden holds a four-point lead over President Trump in Ohio, a state that historically has been a must-win for Republicans. The latest Rasmussen Reports telephone and online survey of Likely Voters in the Buckeye State finds Biden leading the president 49% to 45%. Three percent (3%) prefer some other candidate, while another three percent (3%) remain undecided. ❖

RealClearPolitics Election 2020			
President	Senate		House
Election 2020	Biden	Trump	Spread
RCP National Average	50.4	42.9	Biden +7.5 ⬆
Top Battlegrounds	48.5	44.8	Biden +3.7 ⬆
Latest Betting Odds	53.2	46.2	
Electoral College	Biden	Trump	Toss Ups
RCP Electoral Map	212	115	211
No Toss Up States	352	186	
Battlegrounds ● ○	Biden	Trump	Spread
Florida	48.2	47.0	Biden +1.2 ⬆
Pennsylvania	49.0	44.7	Biden +4.3 ⬆
Michigan	47.0	43.8	Biden +3.2
Wisconsin	49.6	43.2	Biden +6.4 ⬆
North Carolina	48.5	47.0	Biden +1.5 ⬆
Arizona	49.0	43.3	Biden +5.7 ⬆
2020 vs. 2016	2020	2016	Spread
Top Battlegrounds	D +3.7	D +2.8	Biden +0.9
RCP National Average	D +7.5	D +2.1	Biden +5.4
Favorability Ratings	D +15.2	D +7.6	Biden +7.6



Indiana General Assembly HD19



Rep. Lisa Beck (D)
Julie Olthoff (R)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

Indiana General Assembly HD35



Rep. Melanie Wright (D)
Elizabeth Rowray (R)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

Indiana General Assembly HD37



Rep. Todd Huston (R)
Aimee Cole Rivera (D)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Likely R
Last week: Likely R

Indiana General Assembly HD88



Rep. Chris Jeter (R)
Pam Dechert (D)
Open: Brian Bosma

HPI Horse Race
This week: Likely R
Last week: Likely R

Indiana General Assembly HD89



Rep. Cindy Kirchhofer (R)
Mitch Gore (D)

HPI Horse Race
This week: Likely R
Last week: Likely R

Post-convention online quiz

By **JACK COLWELL**

SOUTH BEND — Our class will be on line today. Still too many positive tests around here to meet in person for this quiz on the presidential election.

1. Which convention brought a big bounce in the polls?

- a. Democratic Convention for Biden.
- b. Republican Convention for Trump.
- c. No big bounce from either.



2. Which network drew by far the most viewers during the Democratic Convention?

- a. Fox News.
- b. MSNBC.
- c. CBS.

3. Which network drew by far the most viewers during the Republican Convention?

- a. Fox News.
- b. MSNBC.
- c. CBS.

4. What did Nate Silver, the expert on presidential election forecasting, say last week about the status?

- a. Biden "favored," just a tick above "slightly favored."
- b. Trump "is slightly favored" for Electoral College win.
- c. Trump "is toast."
- d. Biden, slipping since June, "heads toward defeat."

5. What percentage did Silver's fivethirtyeight show for Trump's chances of winning Indiana?

- a. 54 percent.
- b. 68 percent.
- c. 95 percent.

6. What percentage was projected for Michigan?

- a. Trump with 51 percent chance to win narrowly again.
- b. Biden with 81 percent chance.
- c. Biden with 51 percent.

7. Biden, according to Trump, is controlled by:

- a. "People who are in the dark shadows."
- b. "Crazy Bernie Sanders."
- c. "People that you've never heard of."
- d. All of the above.

8. Biden fought:

- a. In the Civil War.
- b. In World War II.
- c. Against stuttering.

9. At the Republican Convention, Lou Holtz made a personal attack on Biden as:

- a. A Southern Cal fan.
- b. A Catholic "in name only."
- c. A QAnon nut.

10. Which state matters most in determining the presidential winner?

- a. California.
- b. New Hampshire.
- c. New York.

11. Election results likely won't be clear on election night due to volume of:

- a. Democratic cheating to rig the election.
- b. Republican cheating to void ballots.
- c. Absentee ballots this time.

12. When President Trump told of a plane "loaded with thugs wearing these dark uniforms" and headed for Washington, he was referring to:

- a. A plane carrying "false news" White House reporters.
- b. A conspiracy spread on Facebook.
- c. Air Force One.

13. President Trump defended the cop who shot the man seven times in the back in Kenosha, saying it could have been a "choke" like a tournament golfer choking and:

- a. Missing a three-foot putt.
- b. Swinging seven times in failing to get out of a sand trap.
- c. Cheating on the scorecard.

14. The 17-year-old who came from Illinois to Kenosha with a military-style rifle, killing two people and wounding a third, is now:

- a. Described by the president as a victim.
- b. Of age to exercise 2nd Amendment rights with the rifle in Wisconsin.
- c. Free of charges because he came as a protective vigilante.

15. Who sent the National Guard to Kenosha?

- a. President Trump.
- b. Wisconsin's governor.
- c. Kanye West.

16. Who is least likely to be invited to dinner at the White House?

- a. Mary Trump.
- b. Rudy Giuliani.

c. Kanye West.

17. Who with South Bend connections is least likely to be invited to dine with the Bidens?

- a. Skylar Diggins-Smith.
- b. Mayor Pete.

c. Lou Holtz.

ANSWERS: 1-c; 2-b; 3-a; 4-a; 5-c; 6-b; 7-d; 8-c; 9-b; 10-b; 11-c; 12-b; 13-a; 14-a; 15-b; 16-a; 17-c. ❖

Colwell covers Indiana politics for the South Bend Tribune.

The art of giving political speeches

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – I was talking to a friend not long ago who was pretty down on politics in all its forms. “I actually find real enjoyment in politics,” I told him. He asked if I was nuts.



No, I said, there’s a lot of pleasure, even joy, to be found in participating. Case in point, getting the chance to listen to gifted speakers. For many years, I was fortunate to have a seat on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, which gave me a chance to observe some of the best orators in the nation.

For instance, there was Hale Boggs from Louisiana, the outstanding Democratic leader who tragically disappeared on a plane flight in Alaska in 1972. He

was, in many ways, like an actor; he spoke with complete confidence, enjoyed commanding a crowd, and reveled in the performance; you could listen and relax in the knowledge that you were in the hands of a master.

I also remember Carl Albert, from Oklahoma, who was House speaker in the 1970s. He never referred to notes; he always appeared to be speaking extemporaneously, though I sometimes thought he must have practiced a great deal. One of his great gifts was that he had an impressive grasp of many different pieces of legislation, and so could speak knowledgeably and cogently on any of them.

John Lewis, the Georgia congressman and civil rights icon, had a marvelous, booming voice. People couldn’t help themselves; when he took the floor, they stopped whatever they were doing to listen. He had a gift for elevating any particular issue to a higher plane that called on people to remember the best in their nation and in themselves, which may be why, whenever he came into the House well to speak, young staff members would gather in the back of the chamber to listen to him.

Republican John Anderson of Illinois took a different approach. He wasn’t so much an orator as a debater, a politician of high intelligence who enjoyed the intellectual

challenge of politics. As a result, he was a superb debater, with a great fondness for the verbal give and take as he faced off against an ideological opponent. He mastered every subject he took on and defended his positions with wit and verve.

So did John McCormack from Massachusetts, who was House speaker during the 1960s. Very quick on the draw, he would turn to his adversary in debate and say something like, “I hold the gentleman in minimum high regard,” to the amusement of everyone around. He, too, loved being in the fray; he would readily relinquish the speaker’s chair so he could go down to the floor and throw himself into verbal combat.

Edith Green, from Oregon, had been a school teacher and then a lobbyist for the state education association before coming to Congress, and she carried those skills with her to the House. In a sense, she made the House her classroom, and when she had the mic, she was engaging but firm as she battled to advance women’s issues and social reform.

Mo Udall of Arizona took a different approach. He always spoke with humor and tried to make his listeners see the lighter side of things. He believed you should have a good time while you participated in serious subjects; he had a memorable ability to come up with just the right anecdote to illustrate the points he wanted to make. He made you want to listen because it was so enjoyable to do so.

Despite their different approaches, these people, and other great speakers, were articulate, spoke fluidly and clearly, and showed great confidence and ease. They obviously enjoyed it. They were people who strove to make themselves understood, without showing the effort involved.

So, while oratory may come in different packages, the chance to watch great communicators at work gives you a better sense of who they are, why they have succeeded, and why our multi-faceted political system is so interesting, engaging, and important. ❖

Lee Hamilton is a senior advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a distinguished scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a professor of practice at the IU O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

Fact checks won't sway true believers

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News Indiana

ANDERSON – The message seemed cryptic. Sent in reaction to a column criticizing the Trump administration's response to COVID-19, it was made up entirely of one four-digit number, 9,210.

Wondering what that number might signify, I turned to Google, and my search uncovered a message retweeted by one Donald J. Trump, the president of the United States. It was a message about COVID-19 and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



"This week the CDC quietly updated the COVID number to admit that only 6% of all the 153,504 deaths recorded actually died from COVID," read the message from a guy calling himself Mel Q. "That's 9,210 deaths. The other 94% had two to three other serious illnesses and the overwhelming majority were of very advanced age."

My reader, like Mel Q, is a self-identified QAnon supporter, and he seemed to be suggesting that this pandemic might not be quite as bad as I had suggested.

PolitiFact determined the whole thing started with a Facebook post from a guy named Amiri King. "CDC just backpedaled (quietly) and adjusted the U.S. COVID deaths from 153,504 to 9,210," the post read. "Admitting that their numbers ... were off by a whopping 94%."

Not only were the numbers out of date, it turns out that the message circulated by our president and his fellow conspiracy theorists represented a misunderstanding of the report.

PolitiFact noted that Dr. Mark Halstead, an associate professor of orthopedic surgery and pediatrics at Washington University, had addressed the controversy in a Facebook post of his own. "So, let's say someone was admitted to the hospital because of symptoms of COVID," he wrote. "They test positive, so COVID would be listed. Their case progressed when they developed respiratory failure and now are on a ventilator. Respiratory failure can be listed."

If the patient ended up dying from cardiac arrest, he wrote, that cause could also be included. "So now three things are listed on their death certificate," Halstead wrote. "The COVID infection started the process, but that led to the heart and lungs failing, which killed that person."

And while death certificates are supposed to list all conditions that contributed, they don't always do that. It's possible that even those cases where COVID-19 was listed as the only cause had other contributing factors. In an

interview with The Associated Press, Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious diseases expert at Vanderbilt University, takes us to the bottom line. "If it hadn't been for the COVID virus infection, these people would be living today," he said. "So yes, although they have contributing underlying chronic health factors, it's still the COVID virus that killed them."

None of that, of course, will stand in the way of someone dead set on advancing a confused argument. Take this woman who appeared on a panel of current and former Trump supporters on CNN. Decked out in red, white and blue, the woman sat in front of a sign that said "Donald Trump matters." When a fellow panelist suggested the president had let the country down in the way he dealt with the coronavirus, the woman jumped quickly to his defense. "Let's talk about the death toll," she said. "Has everyone read the CDC report that just came out? My goodness! It is a fraction of what they originally said."

The show's host, Alisyn Camerota, pointed out that the CDC had not, in fact, reduced the death toll, but her panelist was unmoved. "Well, then we'll agree to disagree," the woman said.

Asked if she believed the official death toll, the panelist offered an emphatic no. Devotion, it seems, will conquer anything. Even a few pesky facts. ❖

Kelly Hawes is a columnist for CNHI News Indiana. He can be reached at kelly.hawes@indianamedia-group.com. Find him on Twitter @Kelly_Hawes.

The God of Politics and Speaker Huston

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – If there was a just God of Politics, all that newly elected speaker of the Indiana House of Representatives, Todd Huston, would have to worry about



at this time would be how he and his leadership team will craft a budget for the state after a year of upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

But the God of Politics is a fickle feller and Speaker Huston has been thrown into the fire on his first time at bat. Mixed metaphors aside, Huston will not only be forced to match income and expenses for a biennial budget in a time where incomes are uncertain and expenses are in uncharted waters, but he will also have to deal with the incredibly sticky wicket of reapportionment, the drawing of legislative districts.

Making Huston's job a potentially more difficult one is the current uncertain state of affairs on the election front. Currently, Indiana Republicans control 67 of the 100 seats in the Indiana House. The number of Republicans is critical in order to head off some of the potential legislative games that historically came to be the hallmark of Indiana Democrats under Pat Bauer during the bad old days.

It seems like just a quaint memory now, but close your eyes and you can remember February, 2011, when Democrat Minority Leader Bauer led his wayward band of merry men and women out of the friendly confines of Indiana into their luxury escape at the Comfort Suites Hotel of Urbana, Illinois. Why Illinois do you ask? Because staying in the Hoosier State subjected the hoodlums to arrest by the Indiana State Police and a forced return to the Indiana House chambers.

The cause of the mad escape of the Democrats, in dereliction of their elected duty, was a series of legislative bills that the string-pullers and the bag men of the Democrat Party just couldn't allow to come to a vote. While Right to Work legislation was the primary catalyst, charter schools, school vouchers and unemployment benefits also added to the Democrat motivation to get out of Dodge while the gettin' was good.

In an effort to avoid voting on any of these critical legislative issues, Bauer took his 39-member caucus across state lines. Of course, he would always leave two or three Democrats behind to enable a motion and a second to the motion for quorum calls. In this manner, in February and March, 2011, the Indiana Legislature became paralyzed for five weeks until Speaker Brian Bosma instituted fines against the absent legislators and then, later, took Right to Work off the table and made some modifications to some of the other objectionable legislation.

Life changed significantly for the Democrats in 2012, thanks in large part to the bang-up job done by President Barack Obama, when Indiana Republicans established a supermajority in the Indiana House to match the supermajority in the Indiana Senate. With 67 Republican representatives, Speaker Bosma was able to affectionately tell Democrats, "Don't let the swinging door hit you on your way out of the state."

Other than the incessant melodic whining coming from the leftist side of the House chambers, the Democrats wouldn't be missed if they took their traveling carnival to Urbana again.

In 2018, Republicans received a wake-up call of sorts when they dropped back to 67 representatives, down from a high water mark of 71 Republicans in 2014. This makes the 2020 General Election of immense importance

to Republican legislative dominance. Democrats will tell you that if they win just one more seat from the Republicans, they can once again demand some respect at the State House. Republicans in the know will tell you that the Democrats would have to pick up a net of two seats to completely throw a monkey wrench into the legislative machinery.

What's the reason for the different math? Indiana law does require that 67 members be present for the Indiana House to have a quorum. On that issue, the Democrats' math is correct. However, the only way to know if you have a quorum is to make a motion for a quorum count and that requires not only a motion, but also a second to the motion.

Therefore, Republicans could function to operate with 66 delegates or less, if at least two Democrats don't show up in the chambers. It is a tactic that I'm sure that Speaker Huston would like to avoid during his first trip around the sun. The optics look a little fuzzy and the liberal press would mount their high horses and have a field day on the issue, but it's like that two iron in your golf bag, you don't want to use it, but it's there just in case.

At stake in the 2021 version of the Indiana House will be critical funding issues for education, unemployment and social service agencies starving for cash due to COVID-19.

But make no mistake about it, the big enchilada of the whole legislative session will be the drawing of legislative district lines in a fair and equitable manner. Republicans will desire that their version of fair and equitable triumph and Democrats will try to hold out for some changes that give them a chance of knocking off a seat or two in the next decade. Who wins this power struggle will largely come down to who carries the big stick and in the Indiana House, the big stick is 67 votes or maybe 66.

As of this writing, I'm hearing that three or four Republican representatives have got close elections on their hands and that there are three Democrat House seats that are at risk.

The outcomes of just a handful of contests will decide whether 2021 gets ugly or if the Republicans will be


allowed to sort out significant issues without the uninvited participation of the "party of no." The continued dramatic success of Indiana when viewed against our Midwest peers will depend on the November vote.

Let's hope that Speaker Huston gets a break. ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman.

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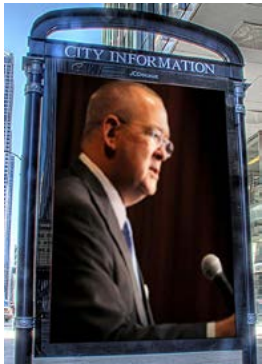
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YOUR FRIENDS ALL HANG OUT HERE... DO YOU?

The pandemic widens inequality

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE — The recession that began formally in February continues to weaken the economy. While the early burst of lay-offs has passed, a more permanent loss of jobs and businesses is settling into a record pace. The call-back of those temporary lay-offs is welcomed, but it masks the fact that continuing job losses remain at a pace not seen since the Great Depression.



Despite the cheerful claims of the Trump Administration and its supporters, just last week we lost jobs at twice the rate of the worst period of the Great Recession. The pandemic continues to exert a historic effect on our economy, and we must confront it with honesty, facts and determination.

The uneven experiences of many families during this downturn may prove a more lasting effect of this downturn. Over the past six months, cumulative job losses tell a stark story of this recession. Cumulative employment for college graduates is down 1.7%. This is horrendous and is more than twice the cumulative loss of jobs for college-educated workers we experienced during the 2007-2009 downturn. Despite this, they are the lucky ones.

Job losses for less well-educated workers are far worse. Among those adults who have been to college but did not earn a bachelor's degree, cumulative job losses nationwide are at 9.0%. Employment among those with only a high school diploma is down 13%, and jobs for high school dropouts are down almost 25%. The past six months have seen the fastest widening of economic conditions across levels of education in U.S. history.

This bears repeating. Over the past six months, cumulative job losses for college graduates are the worst since the Great Depression, but cumulative job losses for workers without a college degree are between five and 15 times worse.

Other factors exaggerate this divergence of economic prospects. A byproduct of monetary policy efforts to stimulate the economy was a soaring stock market. That is not unwelcome. The Fed policies are progressive, in that they boost employment at the risk of inflation, which is generally better for lower-income workers. However, at any period in time, stockholders are older and have more wealth than those without stocks. So, the short-run effect is to erase the deep stock losses from last winter. This aspect benefitted richer and better-educated workers.

Still, the worse and surely longer-term consequence of the COVID-19 downturn is its effect on public

services, especially education. The shift from in-person to online instruction is a direct consequence of our failure to contain the disease. This will be most harmful to poorer students with less family support or technology. A long string of high-quality studies identify educational disruption as a major factor in lower educational achievement.

Studies of events as small as a bad winter with many snow days, to the two-month summer break, find that they contribute to widening educational attainment gaps.

These interruptions fall most heavily on poorer Americans, whose single best hope to better their lives comes through schooling. COVID is, right now, the single most disruptive event on education in U.S. history. The effect is so clear, we need not wait for a study or test results to begin planning to remediate students. My guess is that something like 400,000 Hoosier students will need supplemental instruction to catch up from the COVID mess.

We should not be too surprised that this pandemic has such disparate effects on American families. The consequences of government failure are rarely borne equally by citizens. Our nation's wars are primarily fought by very young men. Inflation hurts those with the foresight and discipline to save money, while tariffs hurt young consumers. This is the way of the world.

We cannot remedy inequality through some change to our COVID response. That is not within the realm of government. But, we must be mindful that in this instance, the failure of government to deal effectively with this pandemic has not resulted in equal treatment in labor markets, in financial markets nor in the provision of public services. In at least one of these areas, government has a direct role. It should be the top consideration for state and federal lawmakers for the next year or longer. ❖

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.



Young adults living with parents

Pew Research

More young adults are living with at least one parent than at any point in documented American history, including the end of the Great Depression, according to a new poll from the Pew Research Center. The share of 18-to-29-year-olds living at home has increased from 47% in February, before the COVID-19 pandemic, to 52% in July, the poll found. In those five months, 2.6 million young Americans have moved back in with mom and dad. The five percentage-point bounce in five months of 2020 is equal to the increase seen in the decade that spanned most of the Great Depression. ❖

A season for reason

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – For many readers data do not matter. Any number can be satisfactory or disturbing according to their beliefs. It's like the protests on the streets. Some hear anguished cries for justice while others see mobs tearing the social fabric.



Nonetheless, let's look at the data. Real GDP measures the value of goods and services produced by business and government in the market economy, independent of inflation. When divided by population, Real GDP becomes Real GDP per capita where that output is produced. It can be interpreted as the capacity to produce for the people what they expect from the

economy, what the people demand of the economy.

Since some portion of Real GDP is exported to other communities, it also reflects what the world chooses to buy from a given place. Exports, however, rise or fall as local businesses decide to seek customers beyond local, state or national borders. Therefore, exports too reflect the local population's world view.

Real GDP per capita for Indiana in 2008 was 9.2% below the national figure, ranking 31st among the 50 states. Ten years later, we were 13.6% below the U.S. and in 33rd place. Over those years, our Real GDP per capita grew by 6.0%, 29th in a nation expanding output per capita by 11.0%.

Do those figures trouble you or provide you with comfort? For some they demonstrate Indiana lags the na-

tion, failing to provide Hoosiers with outputs comparable to other places. For others those are data affirming a commitment to progress without the dash and disruption more rapid growth provides.

On the supply side of the economy, the data provide similar opportunity for conflicting views. Between 2008 and 2018, jobs in Indiana increased by 7.7% compared to a 12.0% national gain. That put us in the middle of the states in 25th position. Our Real GDP per job rose by 2.5% compared to a 6.6% advance nationally, 35th among the states.

Do these figures represent some inadequacy of our labor force? Are we less competent, less skilled, more slothful/relaxed than typical Americans? Or should we complain businesses are not investing in our state? Don't they know about the advantages of our location, facilities, and quality workforce?

Are other states luring away our most successful young enterprises, out-bidding us for expansions? Or is our competition being wasteful, doomed to not reap the benefits they imagine.

Finally, are these matters of government or of the private sector? Should we subsidize business for the sake of jobs? To what extent should politicians step in when the business community seems sluggish? Alternatively, does business and labor need to energize sluggish government to remove impediments to growth? Yet, are those truly impediments to Indiana's growth or just responsible, reasonable speed bumps?

These are questions for us all and, particularly, the candidates running for governor. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at morton-jmarcus@yahoo.com. Follow his views and those of John Guy on Who gets what? wherever podcasts are available or at mortonjohn.libsyn.com.

The Senate picture after Labor Day

By **KYLE KONDIK**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — If things do not break their way in the race for the Senate majority next year, Democrats may find themselves in a situation similar to Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign four years ago: Making inroads in historically unfavorable states – but not actually winning any of those targets – while coming up just short in top-tier races.

Here's what we mean when we write this: The Clinton campaign made some significant gains four years

ago in some states of the Sun Belt. In Arizona and Georgia, the Democrats lost by just 3.5 and 5.1 points, respectively, the smallest deficits for Democrats in the five presidential elections this century in each state. In Texas, Donald Trump's winning margin (nine points) was just a little better than half that of Mitt Romney's four years prior (16). However, these improvements netted Clinton no new electoral votes compared to Barack Obama in 2012, and she ended up losing several states that Obama had won in 2012.

Likewise, Democrats in Senate races this year seem poised to strongly compete in places where they have been dormant in recent years. In Kansas, Democrats may run the most competitive Senate challenge since Bob Dole nearly lost in 1974, although that is less impressive than it sounds, given that every Sunflower State Senate race



since then has been decided by at least 10 points or more. Georgia and South Carolina very well could see their most competitive Senate races this century, with the regular Senate election in Georgia perhaps closing to within (or even being closer than) Sen. Saxby Chambliss' (R-GA) 2.9-point margin in 2008 (that race went to a runoff, which Chambliss won by a much more convincing 15 points). While Democrats often compete for (and win) Montana Senate seats, Gov. Steve Bullock (D-MT) will do significantly better than the party's outmatched 2014 nominee did against Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT) in what turned into an 18-point race.

And yet, we still favor the Republicans in all of these races.

While the Democrats have a clear path to 50 Senate seats, with the hopes that a Democratic vice president will break ties, we do wonder how real their path is to get beyond 50 seats. And even some of the core races that form the foundation of the clearest Democratic path to the majority remain hotly contested.

In other words, the Democrats still could find themselves winning just moral victories in emerging competitive states, with Republicans maintaining a Senate majority.

Let's take a tour through the competitive states. We'll hit on all 18 Senate races – 13 currently held by Republicans, five held by Democrats – that we rate as something other than Safe for the incumbent party. Our observations are based on both publicly available information and chats with sources on both sides of the Senate fight.

In Alabama (Likely Republican), Sen. Doug Jones (D-AL) remains a clear underdog to former Auburn University football coach Tommy Tuberville. The same is true in Colorado (Leans Democratic), where Sen. Cory Gardner (R-CO) trails former Gov. John Hickenlooper (D-CO). There is not much public polling in either race, but our understanding is that the challengers are both leading outside the margin of error in polling.

One commonality between Alabama and Colorado: In both races, one could argue that the trailing incumbents, Jones and Gardner, are running better campaigns than their challengers, Tuberville and Hickenlooper. But the partisan tide in each state is running against the incumbents, which may be the most important thing in this era.

A Fox News poll in Arizona (Leans Democratic) showing former astronaut Mark Kelly (D) leading appointed Sen. Martha McSally (R-AZ) by 17 points does not seem

to reflect reality on the ground there as both sides see it, but Kelly likely leads by somewhere in the mid-single digits and is doing slightly better than Joe Biden statewide. If the Republicans are going to claw back Arizona or Colorado, we think this race is the better bet, if only because it's not hard to imagine Trump winning Arizona and helping McSally over the finish line, whereas it's almost impossible to imagine Trump winning Colorado.

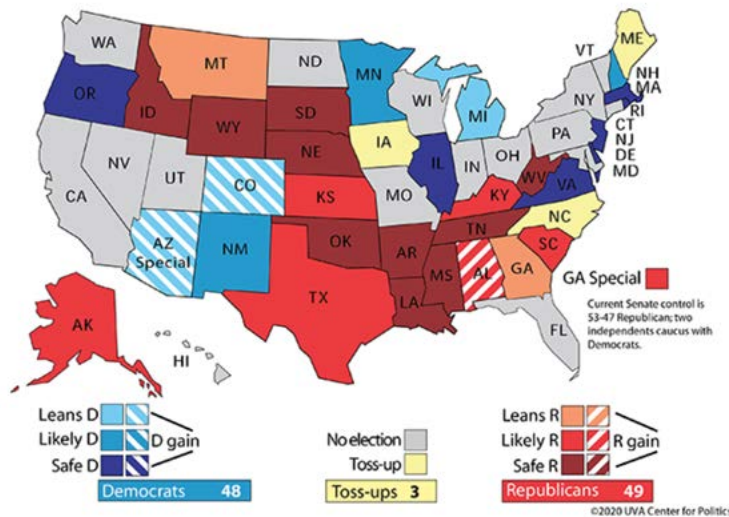
Partisans appear to have different views of Maine (Toss-up), which is something other analysts have observed over the summer (veteran handicapper Stuart Rothenberg was one) and which we believe is still the case in the wake of Labor Day. Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) does appear to retain some crossover appeal and may be leading, although the limited public data show state House Speaker Sara Gideon (D) with an edge. This one reminds us a little of the West Virginia Senate race from 2018, when Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV) held on despite relatively weak favorability numbers. The difference, though, is that Republicans never seemed to think they'd beat Manchin and Democrats were confident in Manchin the whole cycle; this time, some Republicans do seem to think Collins can hang on, while Democrats see the race trending their way even as it remains close.

If we felt better about Joe Biden's chances of winning North Carolina (Toss-up), we'd be comfortable moving the Tar Heel State's Senate race in favor of former state Sen. Cal Cunningham (D), who is leading Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC) by what appears to be the mid-single digits. But Biden's lead in the state is scant, and it may be that the Republican-leaning voters who currently back Trump but not Tillis come home in the end, which could save Tillis if Trump carries the state again. Operatives debate, just like we do, whether Maine or North Carolina is the state more vulnerable to Democratic takeover.

Iowa (Toss-up) remains close, although some Republicans believe that their side may have gotten a little post-Republican National Convention bump in the Midwest. What is interesting is that the presidential race in Iowa also appears to be as close as the Senate race there. Given that Trump won the state by nine points in 2016, Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA) may eventually retain an edge against businesswoman Theresa Greenfield (D).

Just like in Maine, partisans appear to take different views of the Montana (Leans Republican) race, meaning that we are having a hard time getting a true handle on it. At the end of the day, this is a Republican state at

Map 1: Crystal Ball Senate ratings



the presidential level, even though Trump seems likely to significantly underperform his 20-point statewide margin from last time. That may very well be enough for Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT).

In the regular Georgia Senate election (Leans Republican), the best bet seems to be to expect a runoff, which would be held on Tuesday, Jan. 5 – meaning that the winner would be seated a little after the opening of the 117th Congress. If it wasn't for the fact that the winner needed a majority to win in November, we might call this race between Sen. David Perdue (R-GA) and 2017 GA-6 nominee Jon Ossoff (D) a Toss-up. The race is very close in internal polling. Republicans often have an edge in Georgia runoffs, although if there are two Senate runoffs on the same day -- the Georgia Senate special election (Likely Republican) is guaranteed to go to a runoff because all candidates compete together on the same ballot in November – we might expect a bigger turnout than a single race might generate, which might limit whatever turnout advantage Republicans would otherwise expect from recent Georgia history.

The Senate campaign of 2018 nominee John James (R) recently released an internal poll showing James within a point of Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI) in Michigan (Leans Democratic) which, if accurate, is one data point suggesting Republican improvement in the Midwest. However, internal polls that get released often paint a rosy view for their sponsor, and we think Peters is ahead by more based on what we've heard and seen. Ultimately, though, if Trump won Michigan, Peters would be endangered. There may be some ticket-splitting in this race – perhaps Peters can perform a little better upstate than Biden, and maybe James can do a bit better in the suburbs than Trump – but the presidential and the Senate races should track closely. The same probably will be true in Minnesota (Likely Democratic), where there has been a little bit of presidential buzz that could bleed down to the Senate race, although Sen. Tina Smith (D-MN) has a significant resource edge over ex-Rep. Jason Lewis (R, MN-2). Meanwhile, James has outraised Peters for the last several quarters and there isn't much difference between their level of resources. Republicans would love to seriously contest New Hampshire (Likely Democratic) and New Mexico (Likely Democratic), but neither seem like credible GOP targets.

There are several races we continue to rate

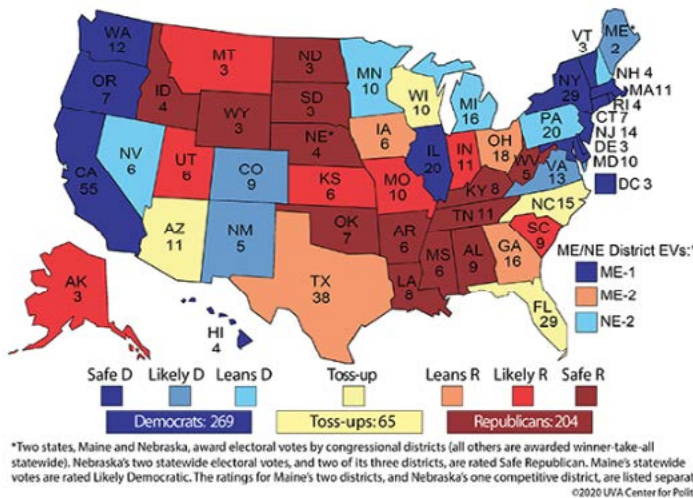
Likely Republican but that are all competitive to at least some degree: South Carolina, Alaska, Texas, Kansas, and Kentucky. The one we have heard the most about recently is South Carolina, where former state Democratic Party chairman Jaime Harrison (D) is raising gobs of money (\$10 million just last month, according to his campaign) and appears to be polling close with Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC).

We continue to struggle with the ability of Harrison to get the last few points of support he'd need to surpass Graham, although if it can be done, Harrison will have the resources to make it happen. Upsets are hard to predict – they wouldn't be upsets if they were easy to foresee – but those looking for a surprise on Election Night might keep an eye on South Carolina, where it may be that Graham loses enough Trump voters to a third-party option so that Harrison can win with 47%-48% of the vote.

Republicans appear to lead the other races here: Of these, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) is probably the closest to being in the Safe Republican column. GOP leads in Alaska and Kansas appear not to be as big as one might think given the usual orientation of those states. Senate Leadership Fund, the outside GOP group connected to McConnell, just launched a \$5 million ad buy in Kansas, which confirms Rep. Roger Marshall's (R, KS-1) shaky position in the usually GOP state. It may be that we're giving the Republicans too much of a benefit of the doubt in some of these Likely Republican races.

Our own take? We still think a 50-50 Senate is the likeliest outcome, with the vice president of the presidential winner breaking ties. ❖

Map 3: Crystal Ball Electoral College ratings



Senate vote on skinny stimulus

New York Times

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans plan to force a vote today on their substantially scaled-back stimulus plan, in a maneuver all but guaranteed to fail amid opposition by Democrats who call the measure inadequate. After months of struggling to overcome deep internal divisions over the scope of another relief measure, Republicans hope to present a near-united front in support of their latest plan. They can then try to blame the continuing impasse on Democrats, who are expected to oppose it en masse, denying it the 60 votes it would need to advance.

❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: Of course, he said it. Of course, President Donald Trump called American soldiers who were captured in war “losers” and those who were killed in combat “suckers.” The hardcore Kool-Aid drinkers that form the Trump base can shout all the denials into the wind that they want. That won’t change the fact that multiple people heard him say it. Or that he’s said or tweeted similar things in the past. This is, after all, the same guy who said of John McCain, the 2008 Republican presidential nominee: “He’s not a war hero. He was a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren’t captured.” John McCain became a prisoner of war while flying a combat mission over Hanoi during the Vietnam War. His jet was hit by a Russian missile that was, he said, the size of a telephone pole. When he ejected from the plane, he was knocked unconscious. He also had broken both arms and a leg. His Vietnamese captors refused him adequate medical treatment. Then they discovered he was the son of an admiral. For propaganda purposes, they offered him early release. McCain refused to go. He said he would leave only after every U.S. serviceman who had been captured before him had been released. His refusal enraged his captors. So, they tortured him — again and again and again. John McCain remained a POW for more than five years. Some loser. This is also the same president who disparaged the sacrifice of U.S. Army Capt. Humayan Khan and the grief of Khan’s family. Capt. Khan died in a suicide bomb attack in Iraq. He waved his subordinates back and went to examine a suspicious vehicle by himself when it exploded. He died saving his troops. Some sucker. About a year after Donald Trump demeaned this fine soldier’s death, I interviewed the captain’s father, Khizr Khan, before a large crowd on the north side of Indianapolis. The elder Khan wore a Gold Star on his lapel that night. Gold Stars go to families who have lost someone in the defense of this nation. “No one wants to be a Gold Star family,” Khan told me, his voice breaking and his eyes tearing. All who wear a Gold Star, he said, would prefer to have their loved ones with them. But he also said that wearing the Gold Star was a “privilege,” because it meant that his family had honored their debt to this country with blood and grief. That gets to the heart of it. Donald Trump thinks only of what is owed him, not what he owes others — or what he owes to this nation. He serves no cause larger than himself. ❖

Dewey Pearman, NWI Times: Construction activity in Northwest Indiana has suffered a dramatic decline as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the months of March through August of this year the nonresidential construction industry has seen a decline of over 30% in hours worked by local construction workers relative to the same period in 2019. These numbers are based on the number of hours worked by craftsmen in seven building trades unions in Northwest Indiana: Carpenters, Laborers, Ironworkers, Operating Engineers, Cement Masons, Teamsters and Technical Engineers. The economic impacts

of this decline are obviously devastating to the affected workers and their employers, but there also are significant short- and long-term economic consequences for those purchasing construction services. It has severe ripple effects across the Northwest Indiana economy. Looking at some rough numbers just to get a sense of the magnitude of the impact of this decline in construction activity, the wage and benefit packages across these seven trades average \$68.21 per hour. Just for these seven trades there have been approximately 1,400,000 fewer hours worked from March through August of the year compared to last year. That translates to over \$95 million in lost wages and benefits. ❖



Karen Tumulty, Washington Post: It is hardly surprising when President Trump says something that turns out not to be true. What has not always been clear, however, is what drives him to lie so constantly. Is it because he’s ignorant? Or because he is deluded? Or simply that he is malevolent? The possibilities are not necessarily exclusive of one another. Now, thanks to The Post’s Bob Woodward, we have learned the answer with regard to what history is likely to rank as perhaps the most consequential of all the falsehoods that Trump has uttered. In his soon-to-be-released book, “Rage,” Woodward reveals that Trump intentionally played down the threat from covid-19, which has killed at least 186,000 Americans since February and dealt a gut punch to the economy. At a time when the president was assuring the country that this virus was no more serious than ordinary flu, and that his administration had the situation under control, he was telling Woodward a far different story. On Feb. 7, the president called Woodward and told him that the coronavirus was “deadly stuff.” In another interview, on March 19, Trump admitted to Woodward that he deliberately lied about the danger to the public. “I think, Bob, really, to be honest with you, I wanted to always play it down. I still like playing it down, because I don’t want to create a panic,” the president said. These are not a leak from anonymous sources. These are the president’s own words. You can hear them on Woodward’s tape. ❖

William A. Galston, Wall Street Journal: There’s nothing traditional about 2020, but Labor Day in years divisible by four is the customary time to assess the status of the presidential race. With 56 days to go, the challenger is on course to defeat the incumbent for the fourth time in the past half-century. But events could disrupt this trajectory. Despite an unexpected surge in Covid-19 cases, the protests that erupted after George Floyd’s death, and both parties’ national conventions, the presidential contest remained remarkably stable throughout the summer. At the beginning of June, surveys gave Joe Biden an average of 49.2% of the popular vote, compared with 42.9% for President Trump. As of Labor Day, Mr. Biden’s share had risen slightly to 50.6%, while Mr. Trump’s remained virtually unchanged at 43%. ❖

Indiana House to move to GCS

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana House is likely to relocate the majority of its legislative activity next year to rooms in a government office building adjacent to the Statehouse to ensure sufficient social distancing and maintain other safety precautions amid the coronavirus pandemic (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). The details of the temporary move still are being hammered out. But members of the bipartisan, bicameral Legislative Continuity Committee endorsed a recommendation Wednesday that the 100 state representatives largely vacate the Statehouse to minimize the potential spread of COVID-19 among lawmakers and the public. Under the tentative plan, the House would convene in single room composed of what usually is three large conference rooms at the Indiana Government Center South building, which is connected to the Statehouse by an underground tunnel. According to Adam Brown, a director at the Legislative Services Agency, there is sufficient space in Conference Rooms A, B and C to seat each representative at an individual desk placed at least 6 feet apart from other members. In contrast, he said only 58 lawmakers could sit at desks, with appropriate spacing, in the traditional House chamber, with the remainder forced to sit on benches without desks in the upstairs gallery where the public usually watches the proceedings, or chamber seats normally reserved for House staff or the press.

Holcomb declines payroll tax deferral

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana won't participate in the payroll tax deferral for state workers offered by President Donald Trump last month (Indiana Public Media). The Trump executive order allows employers to

push back payroll taxes from September through the end of December for employees making less than four thousand dollars every two weeks. But Gov. Eric Holcomb said Indiana state government declined to do so. "It's a delay and you end up having to pick up in January and pay double," Holcomb said. Trump officials have floated the idea of forgiving those deferred taxes entirely — but Congress would need to approve such a move and it's unclear whether it will do so.



State to begin \$300 jobless payments

INDIANAPOLIS — Unemployed Hoosiers can expect to start seeing the additional \$300 in federal supplemental weekly benefits in about two weeks, state officials said Wednesday ([IBJ](#)). Indiana Department of Workforce Development Commissioner Fred Payne said he expects payments from the federal government's Lost Wages Assistance program to be made starting Sept. 21. An individual must be receiving at least \$100 in weekly state or federal unemployment benefits to be eligible for the additional payment. The new payment, which will be retroactive to Aug. 1, replaces the \$600-a-week unemployment supplement that expired in July and was not extended by Congress.

Verma spent \$3.5M on image consultant

WASHINGTON — When Seema Verma, the Trump administration's top Medicaid official, went to a reporter's home in November 2018 for a "Girl's Night" thrown in her honor, taxpayers footed the bill to organize the event: \$2,933 ([Politico](#)). When Verma wrote an op-ed on Fox News' website that fall, touting President Donald Trump's changes to Obamacare, taxpayers got charged for one consultant's price to place it: \$977. And when consultants spent months promoting Verma to win awards like

Washingtonian magazine's "Most Powerful Women in Washington" and appear on high-profile panels, taxpayers got billed for that too: more than \$13,000. They are among the revelations included in a sweeping congressional investigation chronicling how Verma spent more than \$3.5 million on a range of GOP-connected consultants, who polished her public profile, wrote her speeches and Twitter posts, brokered meetings with high-profile individuals — and even billed taxpayers for connecting Verma with fellow Republicans in Congress. A spokesperson for Porter Novelli declined comment until the organization could review the Democrats' report.

Stahura admits to looting campaign

HAMMOND — Former Whiting Mayor Joseph Stahura admitted in open court he looted his campaign donations to gamble and for other personal uses over the last five years (Dolan, [NWI Times](#)). The 64-year-old Whiting native appeared late Wednesday morning before U.S. District Court Magistrate Judge Joshua P. Kolar to formally plead guilty to charges of wire fraud and filing a false tax return. The charges, filed last month, have ended a long, illustrious political career and may land Stahura in prison. He told the court Wednesday he knew it was illegal to convert campaign funds to his personal use, but did it repeatedly between 2014 and 2019.

COVID prompts prison lockdown

INDIANAPOLIS — A northern Indiana prison has been placed on lockdown after weekend testing found nearly 60 inmates and several prison workers were positive for COVID-19, a prison official said Wednesday ([AP](#)). After new coronavirus cases were found last week at the Miami Correctional Facility, a team from the Indiana State Department of Health visited the prison over the weekend to do rapid testing.