

Coats & Pence in Trump's reality

Woodward's book 'Rage' details the White House chaos with these 2 Hoosiers

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Up until the May 2016 presidential primary, Gov. Mike Pence and U.S. Sen. Dan



Coats had been backing U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz for the Republican nomination. Donald Trump not only won that primary with 53% of the vote, as he exited the state, he alleged that Cruz's

father had been involved in the conspiracy to assassinate President John F. Kennedy.



By early summer, Pence and Coats had come around to Trump, with Pence looking for a political lifeline on Trump's ticket.

The two were not only close personally, but politically. In April 2010, Pence endorsed Coats's GOP primary bid to return to the Senate, saying, "Dan Coats' integrity and conservative record make him the best candidate for the job. Dan is a proven conservative leader who is trusted by Hoosiers. I know Dan Coats well and

Continued on page 3

SCOTUS and calm

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – Most people would consider this to have already been a rather contentious election cycle. The death of America's favorite liberal Supreme Court justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, as the absentee ballot process has begun, should calm things down.



Yeah, right.

While in historical terms this one lacks wars and assassinations, or even an economic collapse, the personal anger and tribal divisions are high. In the past, the basic stability of the system has enabled us to withstand chaos. But to this writer, some worrisome trends that attack our systems' core are



“Well, we’re going to have to see what happens. I’ve been complaining very strongly about the ballots and the ballots are a disaster. Get rid of the ballots and we’ll have a very peaceful - there won’t be a transfer frankly. There will be a continuation.”

- President Trump on Wednesday



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Jack E. Howey
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greater risks than most issues we are debating. Here are several examples:

- A declining trust in the legal system. This has been an anchor of maintenance of order. Without order, there is no freedom. Defunding the police, or reducing funding in high crime areas in particular, is a corollary to this problem.
- Direct attacks on capitalism, with growing support for socialism. Our capitalist system has been critical to the material condition of modern man worldwide.
- The collapse of the goals of traditional morality. This is across the board, not just the sins we commonly think of, but also flagrant lying and refusal to acknowledge it when caught, coarseness in public debate, casual opportunistic thieving as legitimate protests evolve into uncontrolled opportunities to steal, an unwillingness of local governments to enforce or even cooperate with enforcing federal laws they don't like, and many more manifestations.
- A failure to acknowledge, in a bi-partisan way, the direct threat of foreign enemies to manipulate freedom against us, both Russia and China.
- The combination of variables, but in particular COVID-19, as a potential undermining of the electoral process itself.
- The always present but growing denigration of public service that has gone beyond politicians to challenging all government entities and has rapidly spread to private institutions as well. All of them are distrusted, including churches, media, businesses, sports, and about everything else.

Older people have always complained that America was declining, not like the good old days, and on the brink of collapse. However, today these feelings run from left to right, and are most severe among young people, not older curmudgeons.

Hopefully we can step back again to "reforms," rather than radical talk of tearing up the institutions that provide the framework for the best country in the world, to which people

still are willing to risk everything to enter.

Into this chaos we now have a Supreme Court nomination to a closely divided court, the balance currently dependent upon what side of the bed Chief Justice John G. Roberts wakes up. Here are a few points on the court nomination process.

1.) There should be a vote, before the election. If you don't like that, in this environment you are declaring your partisan position as a Democrat. When a Democrat president proposes a nomination before an election, all Republicans oppose it as a near form of treason. Being for or against a vote is merely a statement of your partisanship, not an ideological one. Both sides have done it, both sides would do it now, and both sides will continue to do it. The only question is whether the president has the votes. President Obama didn't and perhaps President Trump will not. The whining and hand-wringing merely show a lack of understanding of history and cer-



tainly of contemporary politics.

2.) We don't want eight justices on the court as we head into a highly turbulent election. The nominees being considered by Trump are sound and qualified, whether or not you agree with them on fundamental

issues. Liberals oppose them because they don't like the results of the 2016 and 2018 elections for president and the Senate. That is not grounds to delay a vote.

3.) I favor Amy Coney Barrett because she is the best candidate. The nominee should be selected for their ability to best serve on the court, not immediate electoral considerations. We need a candidate who has a clear, principled understanding of the law.

4.) It is unclear whether the timing of the Senate vote hurts President Trump. What likely would politically be most helpful to Trump would be to nominate a candidate and have that candidate fail to reach 50 votes. Conservative furor would probably increase turnout and commitment from wavering Republicans. Putting the vote off until after the election smacks of cowardice. Many Republicans also realize that a lame duck vote would definitely look less legitimate were Republicans to lose. The Republicans control the presidency and the Senate, now, because they were elected by the people. Long-term damage could potentially be severe if they vote after being rejected, though it would still be legal.

5.) It is unclear which potential nominee would actually help President Trump the most. There is an assumption that a Cuban-American nominee would attract

Latino voters. But as is known among by those who pay closer attention, there is some tension among Mexican-Americans (and other sub-groups) and Cuban-Americans. Latinos of Mexican and Central American origin, not Cubans, will be important, even in the tossup Orlando area in Florida. If the GOP doesn't already have a heavily motivated Cuban-American community in Miami, Biden has already wrapped up this election. Barrett might actually help more within swing states.

6.) The Democrats will smear any nominee, there will NOT be a free pass. Republicans would do the reverse. It won't be easier for one nominee over another.

Obviously, having the Supreme Court vacancy vote will not calm the waters. It merely shifts anger from one thing to another. But, if we focus on preservation of the institutions of America while fighting over issues within that structure, we will survive this contentious election as we have survived even more contentious ones in the past. But both sides, when they don't like the results, need to refrain from an increasing willingness to ignore or destroy the basics of what has enabled a nation with deep differences to survive. ❖

Souder is a former Republican congressman.

Coats, Pence, from page 1

I have long admired his personal faith, his devotion to family and his service to the people of Indiana. I know we will work together to support our troops, create jobs, and restore moral values."

According to Bob Woodward's new book "Rage," they even made career plans together.

Gathering for dinner in 2015 at the governor's retreat, Brown County SP's Aynes House, the two had decided in tandem not to run for president in 2016 (Pence), while Coats opted not to seek reelection; he would retire from politics and return to practice law.

"We talked about the future and where God might led each of us," Coats explained to Woodward. "We prayed that God would be clear and I think I raised the question that we should pray for clarity, not for what we want, but clarity for what God would want." Coats added that he didn't believe any of them had a special line to God. "It is just simply built into our faith that ultimately we are his children and he has a plan for us. Our job is to be obedient to ask for clarity, and then fulfill it."



Trump's stunning 2016 upset of Hillary Clinton not only changed the course of history, it altered the life stories of Pence and Coats. Woodward notes that "Pence's unexpected selection as Trump's running mate had taken them all by surprise. In post-election phone call, Pence proposed that Coats speak to Trump, ostensibly to describe how the Senate works.

Just days after the election, Pence was looking to stock the Trump cabinet with allies. "You want a job?" Pence asked Coats in another phone call. "No, no, I don't want a job."

Coats had been uneasy since the "Access Hollywood" tape was revealed just before the election. Coats had tweeted: "Donald Trump's vulgar comments are totally inappropriate and disgusting."

When he came face to face with Trump, the future president asked, "So you want a job."

"No, no, I don't want a job," Coats responded.

A month after that meeting, Pence called Coats: "The president would like you to be director of national intelligence."

The senator was reluctant. Marsha Coats, then an Indiana Republican national committeewoman, urged him accept, despite the fact that several members of her family

had told her they couldn't vote for Trump, with one telling her, "He's not a Christian. He's not a nice person. He's not a moral man."

The previous summer at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Coats told Howey Politics Indiana how he had met with Trump, and he hand-delivered a message from his wife. Later, when Dan and Marsha Coats met with Trump in Fort Wayne, Trump sought her out. "He said, 'Marsha, I will not let you down.'"

Marsha Coats came to this conclusion: "God is so big he can even humble Donald Trump." But Woodward reports that Mrs. Coats had said to an associate, "Trump is so controversial, he's the kind of person that would inspire crazy people."

Coats decided to accept the DNI job, concluding that Pence was trying to seed the Trump cabinet with allies, people who shared his religious values. And Pence had considerable success, bringing in Health & Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, Surgeon General Jerome Adams, and Center for Medicaid/Medicare Commissioner Seema Verma. Hoosiers were now in charge of the nation's sprawling health and intelligence components and more than 50% of the federal budget.

Woodward reports: "Real life set in immediately. Security personnel tore up Coats's Northern Virginian home to set up a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility in their basement. Security teams sat in cars for 12-hour shifts outside the home."

Coats asked for time alone with Trump. "Mr. President, there will be times when I will be walking in here to brief you on intelligence and you're not going to be happy with what I have to say," he said.

Woodward related what Coats had told the Indianapolis Economic Club last year and NWI Times columnist Doug Ross in 2018. "I wake up every morning and the first question I ask is, 'What did he say last night?'" Ross reported. Woodward noted that Coats would awake in the middle of the night thinking, "Oh, God, what has he tweeted?"

Once in the job, Coats felt "utterly overwhelmed." He would give Trump the President's Daily Brief three times a week. He never knew which Trump he would find. Some days Trump would be in a fine mood. Other days he would lash out abusively, saying, "I don't trust the intelligence." The bad days were more frequent and, Woodward writes, "Coats began to think Trump was impervious to



facts. Trump had his own facts. Nearly everyone was an idiot, and almost every country was ripping off the United States."

Coats was shocked: "Trump was on a different page than just about anything I believed in."

Marsha Coats worried about her husband. He was dragging, losing weight, his shirts were hanging loosely on his body. "Dan, you're going to be a failure at this job if you don't start eating and sleeping and believing in yourself. You are disrespecting God. God put you here. You wouldn't be in this position if the Lord didn't believe you were the right man for the job."

Eventually, Coats struck up a friendship with Defense Secretary James Mattis. The general found himself trying to prevent President Trump from abruptly wanting to pull out U.S. troops from Afghanistan and South Korea, saying, "Get them out!"

Woodward: "Coats was troubled by the absence of a plan for a consideration of the human dimension. 'The president has no moral compass,' Mattis told Coats. 'True,' Coats responded. 'To him, a lie is not a lie. It's what he thinks. He doesn't know the difference between the truth and a lie.'"

As Coats and Mattis grew closer, his friendship with Pence grew more distant. Coats told Woodward, "Once he became vice president he built that kind of cocoon around him that basically said 'this is the role of a vice president.' In Coats's eyes, Pence had become passive, subservient and obedient."

Marsha Coats told others, "Mike Pence no doubt believes God put him where he is and his job is to be a good VP, loyal and supportive – even though he doesn't agree with so much of it."

There was the White House dinner, where Marsha Coats explained of the vice president, "I just looked at him, like, how are you stomaching this? 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.'"

Pence said the same thing that night to DNI Coats ... "Stay the course."

Reason over impulse

Secretary Mattis was having concerns about maintaining the course. "I was often trying to impose reason over impulse. And you see where I wasn't able to, because the tweets would get out there. This degradation of the American experiment is real. This is tangible. Truth is no longer governing the White House statements. Nobody believes – even the people who believe in him somehow believe in him without believing what he says."



On July 16, 2018, President Trump met with Russian President Putin alone for two hours in Helsinki. Coats never received a read-out. Five months before, Coats warned the Senate Intelligence Committee that Russia was assaulting the U.S. electoral process. In Helsinki, Trump threw United States intelligence services under the bus. "They said they think it's Russia," Trump said as Putin stood by, smiling. "I have President Putin. He just said it's not Russia. I don't see any reason why it should be. President Putin was extremely strong in his denial."

Coats issued a rebuke: "We have been clear in our assessments of Russian meddling in the 2016 election and their ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy, and we will continue to provide unvarnished and objective intelligence in support of our national security."

Woodward: "As DNI, Coats had access to the most sensitive intelligence – intercepts, and the best deep-cover human CIA sources in Russia. He suspected the worst but found nothing that would show Trump was indeed in Putin's pocket. He and key staff members examined the intelligence as carefully as possible. There was no proof. Period. But Coats's doubts continued, never dissipating."

Three days after Helsinki, Coats was at the annual Aspen Conference with NBC's Andrea Mitchell when she reported breaking news that Putin would be visiting the White House in autumn. "Okaaaay," a surprised Coats said. "That's going to be special."

Trump was furious. Coats apologized and met with the president. "The last thing I wanted to do, Mr. President, was embarrass you. That was not my intent. I was so taken by surprise. I just didn't handle it the way I should have and I want to apologize to you for that."

Trump said absolutely nothing, Woodward reports, but a week later at the opening of a White House meeting, the presi-

dent said scathingly, "Dan has become a celebrity." Which is the most profound sin in TrumpWorld.

Coats never cracked the Trump code. "I can't believe what he said," Coats often exclaimed to his staff, Marsha or Mattis, reacting to some Trump declaration. And the next day, Trump would say the opposite. Coats's head was often spinning.

In late July 2018, Coats and other intel chiefs met with Trump in the White House Situation Room. The assessment was that the Kremlin was preparing to interfere in the 2018 elections. Woodward reports that Trump wanted the intel chiefs to warn the public. "You should do this," Trump said to Coats. "Go public, Dan."

On Aug. 2, 2018, Coats told the press, "The president has specifically directed us to make the matter of election meddling and securing our election process a top priority. It does beyond the elections, it goes to Russia's intent to undermine our democratic values, drive a wedge between our allies, and do a number of nefarious things."

At the next intel briefing, Trump raged. "Why'd you do that?"

"Because we were told to do that by you," Coats responded.

In a later meeting, Trump handed Coats an article about Mrs. Coats, her evangelical background and what it was like to be the wife of a top spy. "Show that to your wife," Trump said to Coats, almost throwing it in his face.

"Give that to your wife."

Coats knew that President Eisenhower had called the White House "the loneliest house I've ever been in." Coats knew that Trump spent many weekends alone, and believed it was increasing the president's isolation; the president had become more paranoid and lonely.

Trump had fired Secretary of State Rex Tillerson by tweet.

Sec. Mattis told Woodward, "It is very difficult to have a discussion with the president. If an intel briefer was



going to start a discussion with the president, they were only a couple of sentences in and it could go off on what I kind of irreverently call those Seattle freeway off-ramps to nowhere."

On Dec. 6, 2018, Mattis met in Ottawa with 13 defense ministers with troops in Syria. "They need to stay in the fight; every country needs to stay," Mattis said. He was jubilant the coalition was staying intact. ISIS was defeated militarily, but the fear was it could reconstitute.

On Dec. 19, Mattis saw a Trump tweet pop up: "We have defeated ISIS in Syria, my only reason for being there during the Trump presidency." Then another: "After historic victories against ISIS, it's time to bring our great young people home." Mattis, shocked at this betrayal of America's Kurdish allies who absorbed most of the casualties in the military defeat of ISIS. He quickly met with President Trump and handed him his letter of resignation.

Trump would later call Mattis "the world's most over-rated general."

Mattis summarized, "When I was basically directed to do something that I thought went beyond stupid to felony stupid, strategically jeopardizing our place in the world and everything else, that's when I quit."

Coats was the next "adult" to exit. After he gave his Worldwide Threat Assessment on Jan. 29, Trump "friends" began to suggest Coats was on thin ice. On Feb. 20, 2019, the Washington Post reported the president was "frustrated," "enraged" and "increasingly disenchanted" with Coats.

A few days later, Director Coats told Marsha, "I'm going to write my resignation letter and take it to Trump and say 'I quit.'"

When they met, Trump called the Post's sources "fake" and insisted, "I didn't say that."

Woodward reported: "Coats did not believe the president's denials for a minute. Trump read Coats's resignation and asked, 'Would you be willing to stay on?' The Mueller Report was looming and if Coats resigned, it would be misinterpreted."

Coats: "I can't do my job effectively if I have all these leaks and all of these things coming about what you think of me and the intelligence community."

Woodward: "Coats continued to harbor the secret

belief, one that had grown rather than lessened, although unsupported by intelligence proof, that Putin had something on Trump. How else to explain the president's behavior? Coats could see no other explanation."

Vice President Pence did not want to hear talk of Coats resigning. "Look, we need to support the president," Pence told Coats. "Let's look at the positive side of things that he's done. More attention on that. You can't go."

Feeling Trump's contempt, Coats felt depleted. On Memorial Day weekend 2019, Coats dialed up Mattis. "I'm really having a hard time here," Coats said. "I just need to talk to somebody who kind of knows what I'm going through. You do."

"This is not good," Mattis said. "Maybe at some point we're going to have to stand up and speak out. There may be a time when we have to take collective action."

Coats responded, "Well, possibly. Yeah, there may."

"He's dangerous," said Mattis, "He's unfit. We can't let the country keep going on this course. He's dangerous."

"Look, others have tried and it's had no impact whatsoever," Coats said. "They get tarred and feathered."

"What would make the difference?" Mattis asked.

"If the Senate stood up," Coats responded. He kept in touch with half a

dozen Republican senators, presumably including U.S. Sen. Todd Young. None was bailing on Trump, not out of conviction, but for political survival. "The Senate's not going to stand up," Coats said.

Woodward: "If he was still in the Senate, Coats believed the worst course of action would not to speak up, lose the Senate majority and lose your reputation. He believed the Senate had not fulfilled its obligation under the Constitution to be a check and balance. There should be a moment to demand accountability from Trump. Should Trump be reelected, Coats hoped one Republican senator would lead the charge and insist on a change in the way decisions were made in the interactions with the president."

Coats fired by tweet

On July 25, 2019, President Trump had his ill-fated phone call with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a day after Special Counsel Robert Mueller testified on the Russian probe.

Three days later at the Trump National Club, Presi-



dent Trump ran into Dan and Marsha Coats. Mrs. Coats, a trained psychologist, had a feeling something was up. The look on Trump's face was one of guilt and dismay, Woodward reported.

An hour later on the fourth hole, a member of Coats's security detail ran up: "Call your chief of staff." The New York Times just reported that he had been replaced.

On the sixth hole, Coats read Trump's tweet: "I am pleased to announce the highly respected Congressman John Ratcliffe of Texas will be nominated by me to be the Director of National Intelligence. Dan Coats, the current director, will be leaving office on Aug. 15. I would like to thank Dan for his great service to our country."

Woodward reported that Marsha Coats concluded that Trump or someone around him didn't want her husband to be the one to receive the report from the whistleblower, Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman. She believed that Trump wanted Coats out because he would have turned the whistleblower report over to Congress rather than protect the president.

It was reported that Coats interrupted a meeting with his deputy director, Susan Gordon, on Aug. 8, urging her to resign, which she did. Coats had turned the day-to-day nuts and bolts operations over to the Gordon shortly after taking the job.

Epilogue

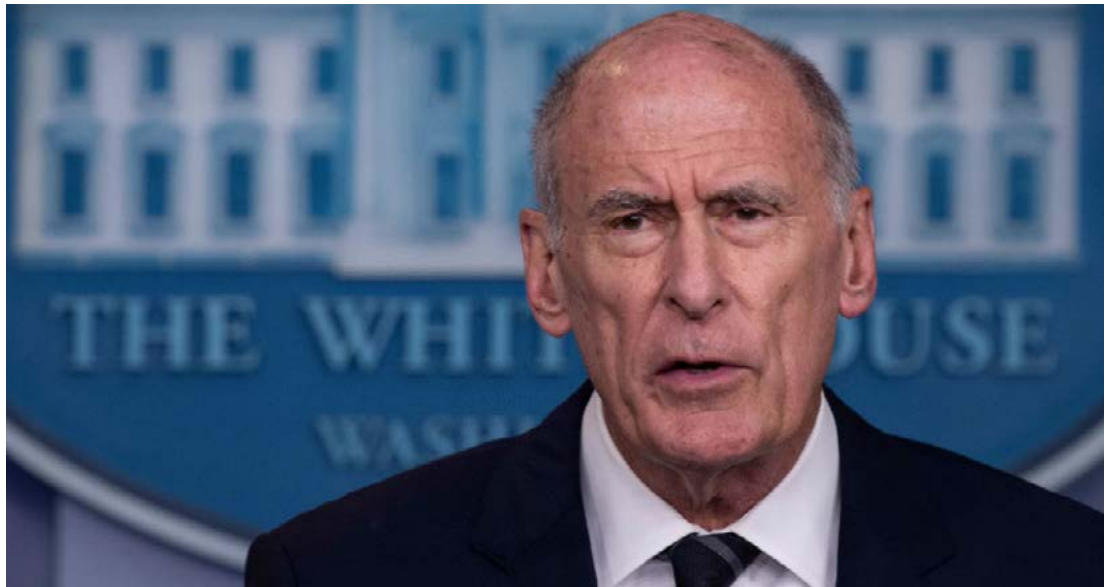
Speaking at the Indianapolis Economic Club in September 2019, Coats made a subtle appeal for "the truth, a commodity in short supply in Washington these days."

"If you walk into the lobby of the CIA, the Gospel of John 8:32 reads 'And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free,'" Coats said. "I took that phrase and the need to seek the truth and speak the truth and I was grateful to do that."

It was in that same CIA lobby the day after he was sworn into office in January 2017 that Trump commenced more than 20,000 lies, half-truths, distortions and misleading statements that has marked his troubled presidency. Trump complained about the crowd size at his inauguration under the wall containing the names of fallen CIA agents.

A week ago in a New York Times op-ed, Coats called for a bipartisan commission to oversee U.S. elections. "Our democracy's enemies, foreign and domestic, want us to concede in advance that our voting systems

are faulty or fraudulent; that sinister conspiracies have distorted the political will of the people; that our public discourse has been perverted by the news media and social networks riddled with prejudice, lies and ill will; that judicial institutions, law enforcement and even national security have been twisted, misused and misdirected to create anxiety and conflict, not justice and social peace. If those are the results of this tumultuous election year, we are lost, no matter which candidate wins. No American,



and certainly no American leader, should want such an outcome. Total destruction and sowing salt in the earth of American democracy is a catastrophe well beyond simple defeat and a poison for generations. An electoral victory on these terms would be no victory at all. The judgment of history, reflecting on the death of enlightened democracy, would be harsh."

With President Trump persistently saying the 2020 will be "rigged" and "fraudulent," not willing to say he'll accept the results, and suggesting to his supporters he is up for a constitutionally prohibited "third term," Coats added, "The most urgent task American leaders face is to ensure that the election's results are accepted as legitimate. Electoral legitimacy is the essential linchpin of our entire political culture. We should see the challenge clearly in advance and take immediate action to respond.

"The most important part of an effective response is to finally, at long last, forge a genuinely bipartisan effort to save our democracy, rejecting the vicious partisanship that has disabled and destabilized government for too long," Coats wrote.

"If we cannot find common ground now, on this core issue at the very heart of our endangered system, we never will. Our key goal should be reassurance. We must firmly, unambiguously reassure all Americans that their vote will be counted, that it will matter, that the people's will expressed through their votes will not be questioned and will be respected and accepted." ❖

Barton Gellman, *The Atlantic*: There is a cohort of close observers of our presidential elections, scholars and lawyers and political strategists, who find themselves in the uneasy position of intelligence analysts in the months before 9/11. As November 3 approaches, their screens are blinking red, alight with warnings that the political system does not know how to absorb. They see the obvious signs that we all see, but they also know subtle things that most of us do not. Something dangerous has hove into view, and the nation is lurching into its path. The danger is not merely that the 2020 election will bring discord. Those who fear something worse take turbulence and controversy for granted. The coronavirus pandemic, a reckless incumbent, a deluge of mail-in ballots, a vandalized Postal Service, a resurgent effort to suppress votes, and a trainload of lawsuits are bearing down on the nation's creaky electoral machinery. Something has to give, and many things will, when the time comes for casting, canvassing, and certifying the ballots. Anything is possible, including a landslide that leaves no doubt on Election Night. But even if one side takes a commanding early lead, tabulation and litigation of the "overtime count" — millions of mail-in and provisional ballots — could keep the outcome unsettled for days or weeks.

If we are lucky, this fraught and dysfunctional election cycle will reach a conventional stopping point in time to meet crucial deadlines in December and January. The contest will be decided with sufficient authority that the losing candidate will be forced to yield. Collectively we will have made our choice — a messy one, no doubt, but clear enough to arm the president-elect with a mandate to govern.

As a nation, we have never failed to clear that bar. But in this election year of plague and recession and catastrophized politics, the mechanisms of decision are at meaningful risk of breaking down. Close students of election law and procedure are warning that conditions are ripe for a constitutional crisis that would leave the nation without an authoritative result. We have no fail-safe against that calamity. Thus the blinking red lights. "We could well see a protracted postelection struggle in the courts and the streets if the results are close," says Richard L. Hasen, a professor at the UC Irvine School of Law and the author of a recent book called *Election Meltdown*.

"The kind of election meltdown we could see would be much worse than 2000's Bush v. Gore case." A lot of people, including Joe Biden, the Democratic Party nominee, have misconceived the nature of the threat. They frame it as a concern, unthinkable for presidents past, that Trump might refuse to vacate the Oval Office if he loses. They generally conclude, as Biden has, that in that event the proper authorities "will escort him from the White House with great dispatch." The worst case, however, is not that Trump rejects the election outcome. The worst case is that he uses his power to prevent a decisive outcome against him. If Trump sheds all restraint, and if his Republican allies play the parts he assigns them, he could obstruct the emergence of a legally unambiguous victory for Biden in the Electoral College and then in Congress. He could prevent

the formation of consensus about whether there is any outcome at all. He could seize on that uncertainty to hold on to power. Trump's state and national legal teams are already laying the groundwork for postelection maneuvers that would circumvent the results of the vote count in battleground states. Ambiguities in the Constitution and logic bombs in the Electoral Count Act make it possible to extend the dispute all the way to Inauguration Day, which would bring the nation to a precipice. The Twentieth Amendment is crystal clear that the president's term in office "shall end" at noon on January 20, but two

men could show up to be sworn in. One of them would arrive with all the tools and power of the presidency already in hand. "We are not prepared for this at all," Julian Zelizer, a Princeton professor of history and public affairs, told me. "We talk about it, some worry about it, and we imagine what it would be. But few people have actual answers to what happens if the machinery of democracy is used to prevent a legitimate resolution to the election."

Trump has been asked directly, during both this campaign and the last, whether he will respect the election results. He left his options brazenly open. "What I'm saying is that I will tell you at the time. I'll keep you in suspense. Okay?" he told moderator Chris Wallace in the third presidential debate of 2016. Wallace took another crack at him in an interview for Fox News this past July. "I have to see," Trump said. "Look, you—I have to see. No, I'm not going to just say yes. I'm not going to say no." ❖



ILLUSTRATIONS BY GUILLEM CASASUS / RENDERINGS BY BORJA ALEGRE

COVER STORY

The Election That Could Break America

If the vote is close, Donald Trump could easily throw the election into chaos and subvert the result. Who will stop him?

SCOTUS opening could influence 5th CD race

By MARK SCHOEFF JR.

WASHINGTON — Filling a Supreme Court vacancy is the Senate's job, but the political battle over replacing the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg could influence Indiana's only competitive House race by igniting party bases and elevating the contest's top issue — health care.



In 2018, federal judge Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court became a flash point late in the campaign for then-incumbent Democratic Sen. Joe Donnelly. Donnelly voted against Kavanaugh, who was confirmed about a month before the election, and went on to lose to Republican Mike Braun.

Republicans hope an opening on the high court also boosts 5th CD GOP candidate Victoria Spartz, who is taking on Democratic candidate Christina Hale for the seat being vacated by Republican Rep. Susan Brooks.

"It will affect this race the same way it affected Joe Donnelly's race when he opposed Kavanaugh — more Republicans will vote," Camille Gallo, a spokeswoman for the National Republican Congressional Committee, wrote in an email.

In an HPI interview, Donnelly disputed that prognostication. The Kavanaugh controversy — and six visits by President Donald Trump to Indiana in 2018 — made the red areas of the state even redder but didn't affect the outcome in the 5th CD.

"Even after Kavanaugh and the president coming so many times, I still won in the 5th District," said Donnelly, who now teaches at Notre Dame. "I won that district, and from everything I've seen, Christina is going to win that race as well. I think Democratic voters are also fired up."

Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer told HPI on Wednesday that the 5th is a tight race, adding, "It will come down to who can get their vote out."

Trump is scheduled to announce his Supreme Court nominee on Saturday. The Republican-controlled Senate appears poised to confirm the choice before the election, a move that has incensed Senate Democrats. One of the leading contenders is Amy Coney Barrett, a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit who lives in South Bend.

Spartz expects tension over the Supreme Court machinations to increase turnout for her and Hale in a po-

litical atmosphere already riven with tension.

"Decisions like that energize the base of both parties," Spartz said in an HPI interview. "Both bases are pretty energized already."

In the 5th CD virtual town hall debate earlier this week, Spartz said senators "have to do their jobs" and confirm Trump's court nominee.

If the Senate fills the high court's open seat before the election, the new justice will hear a challenge to the Affordable Care Act later in November that could overturn the law. That puts the Supreme Court nomination right in the wheelhouse of the 5th CD, where Hale and Spartz have made health care their priority.

"The issues that the Supreme Court could take up in the near future, such as the Affordable Care Act, could affect the lives of countless Hoosiers in our district, including the 329,000 living with a pre-existing condition," Hale wrote in an email. "And I believe now, more than ever, voters in the 5th District want a representative who is going to fight for affordable health care and protect those living with a pre-existing condition from being kicked off their plans. My opponent has already pledged to repeal the ACA and, if the Supreme Court were to overturn this bill, Victoria Spartz would likely welcome the decision."

Hale's campaign staff did not make her available for a phone interview and instead insisted on an email interview.

Spartz said the court's history of rulings on the ACA have left many parts of it intact.

"They're not inclined to overturn the whole bill," Spartz said. "No matter what the Supreme Court decides, we have to fix health care. It might bring this issue more urgency to deal with it. It's not a bad thing."

The possibility of the Supreme Court striking down the ACA is a political threat to Spartz, Donnelly said.

"Will Victoria Spartz be supporting a nominee who will take away the health care of people in Indianapolis, Hamilton County, Anderson and in all areas of the

5th District?" Donnelly said. "Supporting this nominee is supporting the end of the Affordable Care Act and the end of health care for thousands of 5th District residents and hundreds of thousands of Hoosiers."

In the 5th CD virtual town hall, Spartz said she backed state-level health care policies that would provide "more transparency" and "more affordability" than the ACA.

"Indiana can be a leader working with the federal government," Spartz said in the HPI interview.

She added that the Supreme Court nomination is central to politically inclined voters but is not top of mind for most 5th CD denizens. Recovering from the pandemic is a bigger concern.



"For ordinary people, they worry more about how can we get our economy and country back on track," she said.

Young, Braun back October confirmation

The two members of the Indiana congressional delegation who will vote on the Supreme Court nomination – Republican Sens. Todd Young and Mike Braun – fell

in line with their GOP Senate colleagues in pushing for confirmation before the election.

Braun, who owes his Senate seat to Trump's intervention in his race against Donnelly, and Young used similar language to explain their positions. In an interview with the Indianapolis Star, Braun said his supporters would "call it a dereliction of duty if we didn't do it." ❖

Why 'Gov. Rainwater' is an election fantasy

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Sooooo, should we be preparing for "Gov. Donald Rainwater"?

Social media was in high drama spin about the social conservative revolt against Gov. Eric Holcomb's mask mandate. It's come after the Indy-Politics poll (conducted online) that had Libertarian nominee Rainwater with 24% of the vote.

If you believe that Holcomb is on thin ice, I'll give you a free ticket to the P.T. Barnum Museum where you can choose a kindred spirit by purchasing a chunk of hard candy on a stick.

There is unrest on the right. State Rep. Jim Lucas endorsed Rainwater and State Sen. Jim Tomes attended his rally. The Republicans for Rainwater Facebook page had over 8,200 members.

According to the wizards on social media, Holcomb is vulnerable because:

1. He's never won a contested Republican primary.
2. He became the "accidental governor" after Mike Pence resigned the ticket to run with Donald Trump.
3. Attorney General Curtis Hill and Indianapolis Council Republicans have called his mask mandate unconstitutional and a power overreach.
4. Conservative activist Monica Boyer, who backed Richard Mourdock's 2012 primary defeat of U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar, is supporting the Libertarian. "He is ignoring his base, Mike Pence's base, (of) social conservatives," Boyer told AP. "And actually, he's doing more than ignoring us. He's rolling over us with the bus and re-rolling over us."

Rainwater did pick up a \$10,000 large contribution from the Indiana Libertarian Party on Sept. 21, which he is converting to yard signs and an extremely modest cable TV buy. Should the Libertarian nominee go up on TV in

the next few days, it would be the first time this pretend political party has done so earlier than one of the major parties, the Democrats, which is slipping into the Libertarian zone.

The notion that an incumbent Republican governor faces a serious threat from a Libertarian nominee is the stuff of fantasy. The Holcomb campaign has maintained an \$8 million money edge over Democrat nominee Woody Myers and Rainwater. It has a fully funded TV ad program through Election Day. In the intense 5th CD race, Republican Victoria Spartz's current TV ad says she is working with Gov. Holcomb on health care issues. If Holcomb was radioactive in any way, that wouldn't happen.

The Holcomb campaign has made more than two million voter contacts. According to Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer, internal polling had the race at 57% for Holcomb, 32% for Myers and 8% undecided in late July. On Aug. 10, Holcomb led Myers 60-20% with Rainwater at 4.7%. In September, Holcomb was at 57%, Myers 26%, Rainwater at 9% and 8% undecided. In the 5th CD, Hupfer said Holcomb had a 31% lead over Myers.

"We are seeing Rainwater in the 7% to 9% range in legislative race polling, but it's coming at the expense of Woody Myers," Hupfer said. "If Abdul paid anything for that poll, he overpaid. Abdul's poll had the governor's approval at 35%; we've never seen him below 65%."

In 2016, Libertarian Rex Bell had 3.2% in the General Election. In 2012, Rupert Boneham polled 4%.

While Tomes and Lucas are playing fringe footsie with the Libertarian, are they willing to embrace the party's agenda, which would decriminalize all recreational drugs, is pro-choice on abortion, and opposes President Trump's reelection as well as the southern border wall? Most Hoosier Republicans are not going to go down that path.

Hupfer, who doubles as Holcomb's campaign manager, told HPI, "It's not that we don't understand there's some angst out there. We don't have the mask police; no one is getting arrested. I don't want to wear a mask, the governor doesn't want to wear a mask, but we do because they work." Hupfer cited the state's 6.4% jobless rate and the fact that "Indiana is more open" than just about any



other state, as a dynamic that supports his high polling numbers. On Wednesday, Holcomb announced the Stage 5 pandemic reopening.

This morning, Holcomb received the Indiana Right to Life endorsement. "The sanctity of life is a fundamental right – and in practice we've seen it as a fundamental priority of Gov. Holcomb's as he leads our state," said Mike Fichter, president and chief executive officer of Indiana Right to Life. "Every day he works to protect Hoosier lives, including the unborn and the most vulnerable among us. He's the only pro-life candidate in this race, and the right person to lead Indiana for another four years. We're proud to give him our endorsement."

Rainwater will appear with Libertarian presidential nominee Jo Jorgensen at a 6 p.m. Sunday rally at Grand Park in Westfield.

Myers campaign update

Democrat Woody Myers was endorsed by "Republican" Supt. Jennifer McCormick, who is now backing a handful of Democratic legislative candidates. On Holcomb's move to Stage 5, Myers said, "Listening to the governor's press conference today, you'd never know that Hoosiers are still dying from COVID-19, are experiencing economic collapse, calling 211 for help with rent, utilities and food assistance and that Black and Latino families are two times more likely than white households to have fallen behind on housing payments."

The Myers campaign posted no new supplemental large donations over the past week. Myers told the IndyStar his campaign crossed the \$1 million threshold. "I don't know if my computer can do any more Zooms per day than we are doing now," Myers said.

Myers received the endorsements of SEIU Local 1, SEIU Local 73, and SEIU Healthcare. this morning. **Horse Race Status:** Safe Holcomb.



HOWEY
POLITICS INDIANA



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

Congress

5th CD: Hale, Spartz in Town Hall debate

In the first general election debate in Indiana's hotly contested 5th Congressional District, the candidates traded attacks and drew clear distinctions between each other's policy positions (Erdody, IBJ). The debate on Tuesday night between Democratic candidate Christina Hale and Republican candidate Victoria Spartz, was hosted by Indiana Town Halls. The candidates were in a studio together, and the debate aired live, but no audience was present because of pandemic restrictions.

Spartz, a first-term state senator, said the Affordable Care Act isn't working for people, and she believes there needs to be more transparency in health care prices. She also said she thinks health coverage is something that states can handle better than the federal government.

Hale said she supports keeping the ACA and improving it, or at least having some type of public health insurance option available. "And, if you have private health insurance, I'll fight to help you keep it and hopefully make it more affordable," Hale said. She mentioned the need to continue having protections in place for those with preexisting conditions and accused Spartz of wanting to repeal that safeguard.

McIntosh says Madison County key

With the 5th Congressional District race between Spartz and Democrat Christina Hale being watched nationwide, Club For Growth President David McIntosh agrees it's a contested race (de la Bastide, Anderson Herald Bulletin). He said Madison County can be the county that brings Spartz the victory. "Marion County is becoming more Democrat and Hamilton County is seeing more moderate Republicans," McIntosh said. "It's the Madison, Tipton and Grant county conservative Republicans that can decide the election. My prediction is that it will stay Republican because the district still leans Republican and Victoria is running a strong campaign," he said.

Spartz begins 'Sold Out' TV ad

Spartz for Congress campaign began running a new ad on Thursday titled "Sold Out," claiming her opponent has brought "Chicago-style corruption to the Indiana Statehouse. "VS: I'm Victoria Spartz and I approved this message. Newsclips: "Massive cell phone towers across central Indiana. Most cities have no control over where 5g cell phone towers go. State lawmakers paved the way for these towers. VO: ...State lawmakers like Christina Hale took thousands from big telecom companies ... and wrote legislation letting them raise rates and build cell towers where ever they want. Christina Hale brought Chicago-style corruption to the Statehouse." Said campaign manager Catherine Seat, "Christina Hale comes from northwest Indiana, and Hale brought Chicago-style corruption to the Statehouse, taking campaign



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

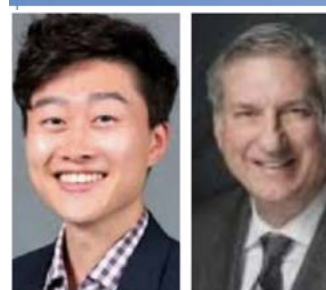
Indiana General Assembly HD7



**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)**

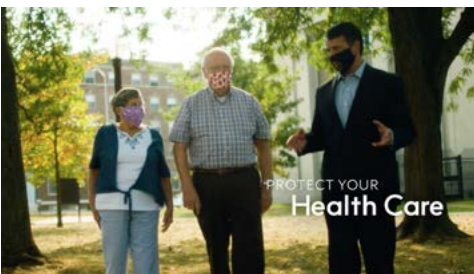
HPI Horse Race
This week: Tossup
Last week: Tossup

contributions from big telecom companies she was responsible for regulating and then writing legislation to benefit her corporate donors, making it easier for them to crush competition, increase.” **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

Statewides

Weinzapfel, Rokita begin TV ads

Both attorney general nominees have begun TV ad campaigns. Democrat Jonathan Weinzapfel announced Tuesday that his campaign will hit the television airwaves with its first ad on Wednesday. “Tornado” focuses on Weinzapfel’s bipartisan leadership role following a devastating tornado that hit Evansville when he was mayor.



“Our first ad demonstrates how, by coming together, Evansville recovered from a crisis that impacted countless families, businesses and organizations,” Weinzapfel said. “I’ll apply those same bipartisan solutions as attorney general in this current crisis to protect our health care, protect our seniors in nursing homes, make our streets safer, and our justice system more fair.” Rokita began airing TV ads on Tuesday. It’s a biography ad featuring that details how Rokita returned 11% of his budget and fought “waste, fraud and corruption” during his two terms as Indiana secretary of state while winning “a U.S. Supreme Court case protecting elections.”

Horse Race Status: Leans Rokita.

General Assembly

SD8: Bohacek authors bill v. PD defunding

Local elected officials and the citizens they represent could lose the authority to decide how a major portion of the tax dollars annually collected by Indiana counties, cities and towns are spent (Carden, NWI Times). State Sen. Mike Bohacek, R-Michiana Shores, last week unveiled a proposal he plans to file at the Statehouse in January prohibiting local units of government from ever reducing their appropriations for public safety agencies, except in the case of a genuine revenue shortfall. Under the plan, local government spending on police, firefighters and other public safety personnel would be required to remain



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

constant at 2021 levels, or increase in subsequent budget years; spending on those services never would be allowed to go down. Bohacek said his legislation is an effort to prevent action in Indiana, similar to calls being made in other states, to “defund the police,” in response to recently released recordings of law enforcement officers killing people in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kentucky and elsewhere. “I have heard from concerned citizens that public safety officers are vital to the security and stability of their communities,” Bohacek said. “Therefore, this legislation serves as a measured approach that will ensure public safety departments continue to receive the support necessary to carry out their important mission.” Bohacek admitted in an interview with The Times that he’s not aware of any Indiana municipalities or counties that are seriously considering reducing funding for law enforcement personnel. Ironically, Bohacek’s hometown of Michiana Shores doesn’t even have a police department. Democratic challenger Gary Davis told The Times that as a former deputy prosecutor he actually used to spend one day a month for five years riding with police officers. “It’s unbelievable some of the things that police officers face, some of the crises and the domestic violence,” Davis said. **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

SD30: TV, mail flying

Not only are Republican State Sen. John Ruckelshaus and Democrat Fady Qaddoura both running TV ads, the battle has moved into direct mail. Qaddoura sent out a mailer with an endorsement from Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett. “Fady Qaddoura will stand up for you. He has a proven record of dedication to his work and compassion for others. I’m proud to endorse Fady for State Senate because I know he will work hard to support all Hoosiers,” Hogsett said. Another mailer says Qaddoura “will bring back common sense to public safety,” adding he supports banning chokeholds, require criminal background checks to any gun purchases, and reform police departments.” Senate Republicans have sent out four mailers saying he skipped “important meetings” as Indianapolis controller, and cut pre-K funds. Qaddoura tweeted on Tuesday, “My opponent and the Indiana GOP are at it again. First they attacked my family for losing our home to Hurricane Katrina. Then they lied when they said I cut pre-K funding in Indianapolis and they lied about my employment. I’m tired of the lies, so here’s the truth: The only thing I plan to CUT as your next state senator is the GOP super majority!” Ruckelshaus sent out a mailer saying he authored a

RealClearPolitics Election 2020			
President	Senate		House
Election 2020	Biden	Trump	Spread
RCP National Average	50.0	42.9	Biden +7.1 ▲
Top Battlegrounds	48.6	44.8	Biden +3.9
Latest Betting Odds	53.3	46.3	
Electoral College	Biden	Trump	Toss Ups
RCP Electoral Map	222	125	191
No Toss Up States	353	185	
Battlegrounds ● ○	Biden	Trump	Spread
Florida	48.7	47.4	Biden +1.3 ▼
Pennsylvania	48.6	44.4	Biden +4.2 ▲
Michigan	48.7	42.2	Biden +6.5 ▲
Wisconsin	50.3	43.4	Biden +6.9 ▲
North Carolina	46.8	46.3	Biden +0.5 ▼
Arizona	48.8	44.8	Biden +4.0 ▼
2020 vs. 2016	2020	2016	Spread
Top Battlegrounds	D +3.9	D +1.7	Biden +2.2
RCP National Average	D +7.1	D +2.3	Biden +4.8
Favorability Ratings	D +16.2	D +8.9	Biden +7.3

bill to strengthen the rights of sexual assault victims, sought hate crime legislation, and supported “common sense gun safety laws.” Another says the Republican “fought and voted for record funding increases for local schools.” **Horse Race Status:** Tossup.

SD31: Coble declares for Merritt seat

Fishers City Council President Cecilia Coble has officially entered the race to replace Sen. Jim Merritt. Coble was elected to serve on the Fishers Council in 2014, as Fishers was transitioning from a town to a city. She was reelected to her at-large position in 2015 and 2019, earning the highest vote

total of any candidate. In January 2020, Coble made history after being unanimously elected to be the first woman to serve as the Fishers City Council president. She currently serves on the Non-Profit and Finance Committees. She is also the president of the Hamilton County Republican Women Club. “As a woman, a mother and a proud Hispanic Republican, I will bring a unique, personal perspective to the Indiana Senate,” Coble said. “As an attorney with both business and municipal government experience, I have a successful, professional background built on finding solutions in the private and public sectors.”

SD36: Indy Chamber endorses Eason

The Indy Chamber’s Business Advocacy Committee (BAC)—the political arm of the region’s largest business organization—today announced its endorsement for Ashley Eason, the Democrat challenging State Sen. Jack Sandlin. Michael Huber, President and CEO of the Indy Chamber said, “With her vast experience of civic leadership in the Indianapolis and global arena and as a neighborhood leader on Indy’s southside, Ashley understands what creates successful communities and thriving economies.” “The Indy Chamber remains committed to ensuring every citizen and business has the opportunity to succeed in an inclusive and robust Indianapolis economy,” Huber added. **Horse Race Status:** Likely Sandlin.

Presidential 2020

Latest battleground polls

NYT/Siena of Georgia: Biden 45%, Trump 45% (in the Senate race, it’s GOPer Perdue 41%, Dem Ossoff at 38%).

NYT/Siena of Iowa: Biden 45%, Trump 42% (in

the Senate race, it's Dem Greenfield 42%, GOPer Ernst at 40%).

NYT/Siena of Texas: Trump 46%, Biden 43% (in the Senate race, it's GOPer Cornyn 43%, Dem Hegar at 37%).

Franklin & Marshall of Pennsylvania: Biden 48%, Trump 42%.

Marquette Law School Poll (national): Among likely voters in the nationwide sample, 50% say that they

will vote for Biden for president, 40% support President Donald Trump, Libertarian Jo Jorgensen receives 3% and Green Party candidate Howie Hawkins 2%.

In a national Quinnipiac Poll, Biden leads Trump 52-42% among likely voters. "Voters think Biden is smarter, more honest, more level headed, and cares more about Americans than the president. And that, in part, translates into a ten-point lead," said Quinnipiac University Polling Analyst Tim Malloy. ❖

Dangerfield gets more respect than IN Dems

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND — Rodney Dangerfield got more respect than Democratic candidates for statewide office in Indiana receive.

Dangerfield, the late comedian who constantly quipped that he got no respect, actually was a winner in the entertainment field. The Indiana Democratic candidates all have been losers in recent elections. Republicans currently hold all six Statehouse executive offices and both U.S. Senate seats, everything elected statewide.



One Democratic candidate for statewide office this time has a chance. Just one. It's a chance only if there's ticket-splitting by enough of the majority of Hoosiers who are expected vote for Republicans at the top of the ticket, President Donald Trump and Gov. Eric Holcomb.

The one Democrat with a chance is former Evansville Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel, the party's nominee for attorney general, an office a Democrat hasn't won since 1996.

Weinzapfel gets respect and support in South Bend, where he attended a major fund-raiser outside in a park for last Sunday, and in Evansville, where he served two terms as mayor. But there's a lot of territory in between, a lot of Republican territory. His chances of winning depend on whether he convinces enough Republicans, and independents who tend to vote Republican in presidential elections, to look down the ballot and vote for a Democrat.

That happens now and then, as recently as 2012, when Democrat Glenda Ritz pulled an upset amid a Republican tide to be elected state school superintendent. The Republican incumbent was unpopular in particular with teachers, and voters looked down the ballot to voice their concerns.

Weinzapfel looked for a similar chance to run against a troubled Republican, incumbent Attorney General Curtis Hill, whose law license was suspended by the Indi-

ana Supreme Court for professional misconduct in connection with allegations of four women that he groped them at a party in a bar after legislative adjournment. Holcomb and other Republican leaders called on Hill to resign. He wouldn't and sought renomination.

Republican State Convention delegates narrowly ousted Hill from the ticket in June. (Hill now looks at running for governor in 2024.) His defeat was a big win for Holcomb, who now has no candidate accused of sexual harassment on his state ticket, no fellow candidate he wouldn't want to appear with.

So, Weinzapfel now faces a different opponent, the winner of the Republican nomination in that state convention battle. That opponent, a stronger opponent, is former U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita, who also was elected statewide twice as Indiana secretary of state.

What does Weinzapfel do now? Well, he seeks to link Rokita to Hill, not with sexual misconduct, but with similar stands on issues, particularly with efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Hill is a part of the suit to dismantle the health care act, and Rokita supports that effort. Weinzapfel also contends that Rokita and Hill both "blindly support Donald Trump's unstable leadership and refuse to stand up to President Trump's corruption and bigotry."

There is no doubt that Rokita is a solid supporter of the president. When he ran unsuccessfully for the Republican nomination for the Senate in 2018, Rokita campaigned as the most loyal Trump supporter in the field. That's not exactly harmful politically in Indiana. It's not something that would get Republicans who vote for Trump to split their tickets to vote against Rokita, for Weinzapfel.

Weinzapfel got a boost when Indiana School Superintendent Jennifer McCormick, a Republican, endorsed him. She is a moderate Republican who ran afoul of more partisan Republican leaders. But her support brings to mind the way educators united to knock off that incumbent Republican school superintendent in 2012. The Indiana State Teachers Association also endorses Weinzapfel.

Howey Politics Indiana rates the race as "leans Republican." Quite likely. But Weinzapfel still seeks to get it leaning just a speck his way by Election Day for a big upset. ❖

Colwell covers Indiana politics for the South Bend Tribune.

The 'Fredo' of Indiana politics

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – One of the characteristics I admire most in a human being is loyalty. There is a comfort when entering a barroom brawl, either literally or figuratively, that no matter what, someone has your back. To me, this is true whether it is in personal, business or political relationships. The way I judge a man is to determine whether



I'd want him next to me in a foxhole.

Unfortunately, the world of politics is filled with the insincere, the selfish, the ungrateful and the disloyal. When the sun is shining the disloyal person will hide in the shadows and protect their secret failing. When times are tough and the call of unity in manning the walls is made, the disloyal will come slithering out of the woodwork.

I've got some experience in living and dealing with the politically disloyal. For nearly 12 years I served as a Republican county chairman. For those of you who don't know the job of the county chairman, it is to serve as the fire hydrant at the Dalmatian convention. You are expected to devote countless hours to the job, raising money for candidates, organizing mail and door-to-door campaigns, recruiting talent and developing strategy. When you are needed, you are the most revered person in the world, but after the votes are counted, you are relegated to the corner of a cold and lonely office until the next election rolls around.

I've seen some doozies in the category of ingratitude while serving as a party chairman. My first experience came during my first term as chairman. When I became party chairman in Howard County, it was no secret that Kokomo was generally viewed by anyone in the halls of political power as merely a speed bump on the long trip from Indianapolis to South Bend. Many representatives, senators, governors and politicians of all stripes visited Kokomo, usually while driving 70 miles per hour. We tried to arrange more prolonged visits by installing traffic lights every 200 yards. In a rare demonstration of bipartisanship, former Speaker Pat Bauer and the Republican establishment agreed to spend millions to bypass our bypass and all of our traffic lights went for naught.

My strategy for making politicians take notice was to work diligently to elect two Republican state representatives and a Republican senator from Howard County, make sure that they were well-funded and were allowed to build seniority in the Indiana Legislature. Since Howard County was served by two United States representatives,

it was also our goal to work our tails off to elect two good people to send to Congress. Finally, we regularly reached out to our state wide candidates in an effort to foster good relationships with our governor, United States senators and the remainder of our state ticket.

This was not a secret strategy. I shared it with my central committee, our Republican Steering Committee, our candidates, office holders and party faithful. I felt it was important to make sure that everyone bought in to our ultimate game plan.

During Gov. Mitch Daniels' first term he advocated for a plan to reduce the size of local government by trying to move Indiana into the current century. Gov. Daniels' plan called for the elimination and consolidation of many local offices from township trustees to other sacred cow county elected positions. Needless to say, this plan made many conservatives very happy. It also made many local elected officials furious.

I didn't discover the nature of some of my loyal Republican friends until one morning when I was sitting down for coffee with one of Gov. Daniels' people. After I had poured out my very impressive strategy for increasing the governor's vote total in the next election and pledging to work tirelessly as a team to reelect Mitch, his staff person then pulled out a letter from his pocket and said, "Then can you explain this?" Here is what the letter said:

"Dear Governor: We Republicans in Howard County don't like you or anything that you do. We will do whatever is necessary to make sure that you lose the next election. Betty Jo Bobbinwatcher, Howard County Elected Poobah."

Needless to say, I was embarrassed and learned a valuable lesson in political loyalty or lack thereof. I also learned as Republican chairman that when you take the job, it is your duty to support your entire team, no matter what your personal political differences may be. Love all of your candidates or not, the job required that you support each and every one. That didn't mean that I never held my nose when I went to vote, it just meant that as far as the public was concerned, we were a team and it was all for one and one for all. That is how I approached our candidates and that is what I asked of our candidates in return.

This is why last week I was shocked and sickened by the lack of fidelity demonstrated by State Rep. Jim Lucas of Seymour. It is no secret in the corridors of the Indiana Statehouse that Rep. Lucas is a loose cannon when it comes to what comes out of his mouth and what gets churned out on his social media. Republicans have had to choke down some of his racist rantings and tolerate his public whining all in the name of a House super majority. Republicans have raised money for his campaigns and worked hard to get him to a place where he can entertain himself with his ridiculous antics. Lucas has not endured the pandemic very well. Not being in a position of direct responsibility, Lucas never had to make a life or death decision when it came to COVID-19. This enabled him to spout a daily dose of venom at Gov. Holcomb and the state's lockdown, quarantine, mask and distancing policies.

Lucas found a few like-minded rejectniks who puffed him into thinking he was a gifted leader of the people and knew better than the health experts and Gov. Holcomb. As the weeks have rolled by, Lucas' vitriol against the governor steadily rose. Finally, last week, Republican Rep. Lucas very publicly endorsed one of Gov. Holcomb's opponents. Not only did he endorse the Libertarian candidate, he has aggressively promoted the Libertarian ever since. A loyal Republican with those feelings would have just gone into the voting booth and voted his conscience. Lucas actively worked against his own governor. For this, in my book, he deserves a special place in political purgatory.

Rep. Lucas, in my opinion, is no longer a Republican in good standing. If he was an upstanding man, he would resign his office. He won't. It will be up

to someone in his district a year and a half from now to challenge his candidacy and status as a Republican. If I was the district chairman, Lucas could permanently caucus with his assault-rifle-toting, dope-smoking Libertarian buddies. He does not belong in the Republican Party. It might be advantageous to draw his legislative lines a little differently and dump a few more thousand Democrats into his district. However it is done, Lucas must go!

Perhaps if they ever do a remake of "The Godfather," Rep. Lucas can be cast as Fredo, the hapless, incompetent and lost member of a proud family. He has the disloyalty part down pat. Who better to take out fishing on the political waters? ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman.

Trump constantly at odds with science

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News Indiana

ANDERSON – Could the president's ignorance of science be his undoing? It will be if Scientific American has anything to say about it. For the first time in its 175-year history, the magazine is taking sides in a presidential election.

"This year, we are compelled to do so," the editors wrote. "We do not do this lightly."



President Donald J. Trump, they argued, has badly damaged the nation and its people through his rejection of science. "The most devastating example is his dishonest and inept response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ..." the editors wrote. "He has also attacked environmental protections, medical care and the researchers and public science agencies that

help this country prepare for its greatest challenges."

The magazine encouraged its readers to vote for Joe Biden, a candidate it said had offered "fact-based plans to protect our health, our economy and the environment." "These and other proposals he has put forth can set the country back on course for a safer, more prosperous and more equitable future," the editors wrote. Examples of the president's wrong-headed approach to science are legion.

Take his insistence that the United States will soon have a vaccine for COVID-19. "That'll be from mid-October on," he said. "It may be a little bit later than that, but we'll be all set."

When Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention, suggested it would actually be months before a vaccine would be readily available, the president said he thought Redfield might have misunderstood the question. Actually Redfield was pretty clear. In testimony before a U.S. Senate subcommittee, he held up a mask and suggested wearing one might be far more effective than waiting for a vaccine.

"**We have clear scientific** evidence they work, and they are our best defense," he said. "I might even go so far as to say that this face mask is more guaranteed to protect me against COVID than when I take a COVID vaccine." Still, when told of the president's objections, the CDC director clarified his remarks, saying he fully believed in the importance of a vaccine. "A COVID-19 vaccine is the thing that will get Americans back to normal everyday life," he said.

Nevertheless, he repeated the guidance public health experts have been offering for months. "The best defense we currently have against this virus," he said, "are the important mitigation efforts of wearing a mask, washing your hands, social distancing and being careful about crowds." That is the same guidance our president just can't bring himself to embrace. He rarely wears a mask himself, and he frequently pokes fun at Biden for doing so.

The president's dim view of science seemed perfectly illustrated in an exchange with Wade Crowfoot, secretary of California's Natural Resources Agency, during a visit to survey damage from the wildfires raging up and down the West Coast. Crowfoot had suggested efforts to head off the fires wouldn't succeed if they failed to acknowledge the role of climate change.

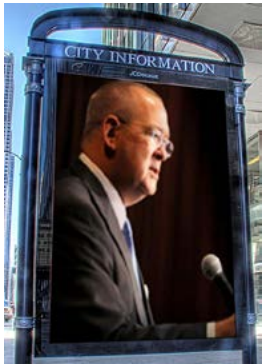
"OK, it'll start getting cooler," the president said. "I wish," Crowfoot responded. "You just watch," the president said. "I wish science agreed with you," Crowfoot responded. "Well, I don't think science knows, actually," the president said.

And there you have it. The president insists he knows more than the scientists, and the death toll keeps rising. ❖

The real problem with our national debt

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE — Most every chat I have about the U.S. economy inevitably turns to the size of the national debt. Of course, this used to be an issue that mattered to those who called themselves conservatives, but that was in an earlier, more innocent time. Before I lament the recent dissolution of reason on this issue, it's important to explain how the debt does and does not matter.



The most dishonest argument about the debt compares government to a business or household. The argument, most famously made by Ross Perot, is both silly and dangerous. It is silly because families and businesses borrow money. Indeed, many financial advisors will say it is wise to borrow money to buy a home

that is worth between 2.5 and 3.0 times your family's annual income. The U.S. has a debt that is about equal to one year of GDP.

The comparison of government debt to family or household debt is dangerous because it fails to recognize the special role of government. Government provides goods and services that should outlast every household and business. Chief among these is national security, but other examples include an interstate highway system and a public health infrastructure. By their very nature, these investments are lumpy but durable. So, as with the purchase of a home or college education, they warrant taking on debt.

The real concern with our national debt should devolve to two issues. The first is that too much debt risks slowing economic growth. The second is that the composition of the debt does little to support economic growth.

A number of macroeconomic studies indict high debt as a factor in slowing economic growth. But, there is little good evidence of a threshold of debt at which growth slows. Japan's public debt is 2.5 times that of the U.S., and their growth is significantly slower than the U.S., but Singapore's debt is 50% higher than the U.S., and their economy has been growing briskly. China, which reports very high growth, has public debt far, far worse than the U.S. did at their level of development. Few issues in economics face as much disagreement as the level at which debt is harmful to economic growth, but there is simply no meaningful evidence that we are at such a threshold today.

The composition of the debt is a more meaningful problem. In earlier times, when the debt was large, much of the spending was concentrated in either wartime

spending or stimulus spending that focused on public investments. Sure, there was wasteful spending. All things equal, few things are more wasteful to spend tax dollars on than say, a bomb or land mine. However, our big periods of debt growth accrued to these types of spending, such as defeating the twin evils of Nazism and Communism or the Works Progress Administration.

This does not mean that military spending or counter-cyclical fiscal policy are beyond criticism. We've probably done too much of both, but that is not always apparent in hindsight, much less when staring into the abyss of war or recession. What I do mean is that the biggest policy challenges we have now are not mostly caused by spending to counter recessions or fight wars. Most of the growing debt today surrounds social programs.

It is not a critique of social programs or anti-poverty measures to note that they don't typically cause long-term economic growth. We should be paying for them mostly out of current tax dollars, not through borrowing, and yet, that is precisely what we now do.

That means the real budget problem the U.S. faces is simple honesty about our budgets during good times. Nothing better exemplifies this than the last years of the Obama Administration, and the entirety of the Trump era. In 2009, in the midst of the Great Recession, Congress passed an \$856 billion stimulus bill. Most Americans should remember this because it helped birth the Tea Party movement and allowed the GOP to label President Obama as a historically expensive president. Memories are short.

A decade later, in what President Trump labeled as the "greatest economy in history" Congress passed a spending bill that added more than \$1.02 trillion to the debt. So, in a fully recovered economy, in a nation led by a GOP president, with a Senate majority, the U.S. passed a routine spending bill that added more debt than the Stimulus plan in the Great Recession. But there is more.

In the two previous budgets, in 2017 and 2018, with the GOP holding the Presidency and both houses of Congress, routine budget bills added more than \$1.5 trillion to the national debt. This at a time when the president declared the economy was experiencing "all-time highs." Irony is dead.

The nation's problem with the debt is not that we occasionally must write a big check to defeat some global despot or help rescue ourselves from an economic downturn or pandemic. The real problem is much simpler. In the best of times, when the party that has long claimed the mantle of fiscal probity has full political power, they wreck the budget.

The future will soon demand we face this problem head-on. In good times, we are going to have to either cut a trillion dollars of annual spending, or add a trillion dollars of taxes. That won't cut the debt; it'll just stop adding to it. We cannot pretend this will be easy, nor do we have to solve all the budget problems right away. We do need a lengthy slew of honesty to arise around the process.

Conceptually, this is neither novel nor hard. The Bible, in Genesis 41, offers a fairly good example of counter-cyclical fiscal policy. In it, Joseph interprets the pharaoh's dream of seven lean and seven fat cows as indicating an agricultural cycle. Given power over stores of grain, Joseph put aside a share of the abundant crops in preparation for the lean years.

Today, the budgetary process is more complex and intertwined than that described in the Old Testament. A robust democracy enjoys a lot more voices and diffuse power than a pharaoh's empire. Still, like Joseph, we could

do better at adjusting our budget for the inevitable fat and lean years. But, when it comes to the basics of fiscal policy, it sure seems like someone has been reading the Bible upside down. ❖

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.

What's coming in to our county?

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – How much money flows across Indiana county lines each year? According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, in 2018, the in-flow of earnings to Indiana counties from places both within and outside the state was \$74 billion or 36% of the earnings received by Hoosier residents. Does that resonate with you? It demonstrates why informed people stress real regionalism.



Real regionalism recognizes the opportunities, the costs and the benefits of workers moving between counties. It means facilitating and, where appropriate, funding commuting.

That is the philosophy behind the massive expenditure on extending the South Shore Line from Hammond to Dyer in Lake County and improving the service between Gary, Michigan City and South Bend. That same motivation is behind the long-term effort of Indianapolis to extend its public transit system into the surrounding counties.

Real regionalism is not getting together for lunch one or twice a year and exchanging hearty elbow bumps. Real regionalism doesn't mean tepid vows of cooperation. It is based on facts about real connectivity, not maps drawn by newly appointed nephews and nieces in Indianapolis.

Of course real regionalism involves transportation. The Indiana Department of Transportation makes the big decisions

about our highways. InDOT does a good job fulfilling its statewide mission. However, many county roads are narrow and poorly paved to the county line where they "connect" with an unpaved deer path from the next county. Often, we have to search for the next paved road going in our direction, without any signage from either county. The opportunity to improve connectivity between counties is neglected.

Similarly, workforce development is a regional issue, but there is no regional school authority. School districts clutch their teaching like a Hoosier protects his wallet in Times Square. The internet is proving the boundaries of yesterday are archaic. The best instruction can be shared, and inferior instruction can be eliminated.

We don't have development agencies, tourism boards, or education councils with authority to meet regional needs. With so much interaction between counties, we need to consider more intercounty cooperation.

In 2018, five small counties (Brown, Spencer, Franklin, Ohio and Union) had more than a 70% dependency on other counties for the earnings of their residents. In all, 43 of our 92 counties depend on other countries for 50% or more of their earned income.

At the other end of the scale are 20 counties exporting more earnings than they import. They often bear most of the costs and derive only some of the benefits of commuting.


Are the other 72 "winners" or "parasites" in this exchange?

Counties that import and those that export earnings often complain about these realities. But these interchanges are growing and require explicit support for the economic health of our state. It means new relationships among counties, including regional tax-supported operations. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com.

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

An uncertain impact after Ginsburg's death

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

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — The passing of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on Friday elevates the Supreme Court to a major electoral issue for the third election in a row, following Senate Republicans' refusal to consider Barack Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland in 2016 and the bitter confirmation battle over Brett Kavanaugh in 2018. The implications for the future of American government are extraordinary. The implications for the election may be as well – or not.

In the aftermath of Ginsburg's passing, many have speculated as to whether one side might be extra motivated by the vacancy over the other. But was this a sleepy election in need of a jolt? Hardly. It is possible that, despite the pandemic, 2020 could set a modern record for turnout. The battle over the court's future turns up the heat of American politics, but the temperature was white hot already.

The procedural arguments from the Garland blockade have flipped, with Democrats arguing for the voters to decide through the presidential election, and Republicans arguing for Donald Trump to make the pick. Those making these arguments have shifted, but the source of power in the Senate remains the same now as it was four years ago: Republicans and their majority leader, Mitch McConnell (R-KY), still rule the roost. The argument that prevails in the Senate is whatever McConnell can get 51 votes behind. The Republicans have 53 Senate seats, so it would take four Republican defections both before and after the election, in the lame duck period, to keep the seat open.

Of the eight Republican-held Senate races the Crystal Ball now rates in the Toss-up or Leans categories, just two of them, Colorado and Maine, are very likely to

vote more Democratic than the nation as a whole in the presidential election. That makes the Ginsburg vacancy an added burden for Sens. Cory Gardner (R-CO) and Susan Collins (R-ME).

But the other six states – Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Montana, North Carolina, and South Carolina – seem very likely to, at the very least, vote more Republican than the nation, and Donald Trump might carry all of them even if he is narrowly losing the election, and almost certainly if he is winning. The Republican senators in all of these states, except perhaps for Sen. David Perdue (R-GA), all have had to worry about possibly running behind Donald Trump in their respective states. If the Court battle further polarizes the electorate and reduces ticket-splitting, that could help Republicans in the Senate.

But it's also premature to make any hard and fast projections about what might happen, and it's not out of the question that Joe Biden could carry half or more of those six states, and bring enough Democratic Senate candidates along with him to get the Democrats over 50 Senate seats.

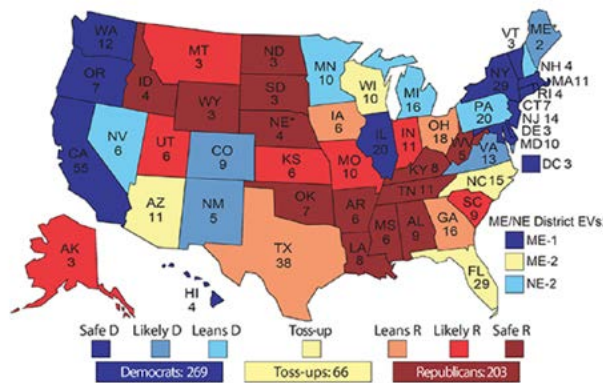
A partisanizing vote might also be helpful to Michigan Democratic Sen. Gary Peters, who in recent surveys has led Republican rival John James but often by less than Biden is leading statewide.

One senator who has said she wants the next president to make the pick is Collins, who once enjoyed immense bipartisan support in Maine but has been partisanized in large part because of her vote to confirm Kavanaugh in 2018. Could Collins cobble together a Republican Gang of Four to keep the seat open? That may be what it would take for her to maintain the level of crossover support she would need to win, but this development also hyper-nationalizes her race at a time when she wants to be localizing it.

On Friday morning, the Crystal Ball team decided to make three rating changes, the ones described above, moving Collins' race to Leans Democratic, shifting the ME-2 electoral vote to Toss-up, and downgrading Graham to Leans Republican. The Ginsburg news obviously gave us pause in going through with these changes, but after following developments over the weekend, we have decided to go ahead with these three changes. ❖

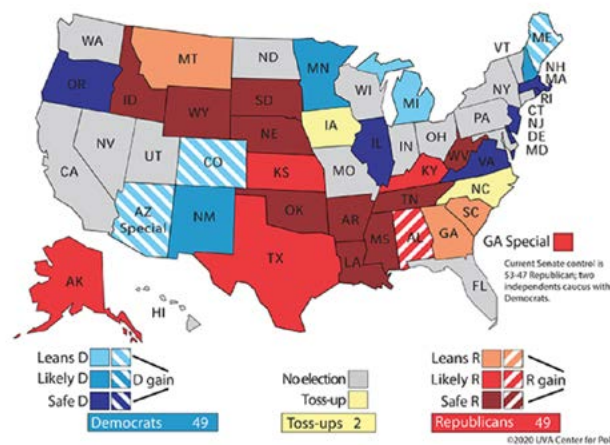


Map 2: Crystal Ball Electoral College ratings



*Two states, Maine and Nebraska, award electoral votes by congressional districts (all others are awarded winner-take-all statewide). Nebraska's two statewide electoral votes, and two of its three districts, are rated Safe Republican. Maine's statewide votes are rated Likely Democratic. The ratings for Maine's two districts, and Nebraska's one competitive district, are listed separately. ©2020 UVA Center for Politics

Map 1: Crystal Ball Senate ratings



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Holcomb moves state to Stage 5

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana's six-month effort to combat the coronavirus by restricting personal liberties and business operations is coming to a close (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Gov. Eric Holcomb announced Wednesday he will sign an executive order moving the state to Stage 5 of his five-stage Back on Track reopening plan for at least a three-week period, beginning at 11:01 p.m. Friday in Northwest Indiana. At Stage 5, all businesses may reopen to full capacity, including restaurants, bars and nightclubs; gyms, entertainment and cultural destinations may operate at 100% capacity; and there no longer are any attendance limits at sporting events, conventions or community gatherings — absent more stringent local or industry requirements. The Republican governor still is directing Hoosiers to wear masks. In fact, Holcomb credited voluntary Hoosier compliance with his July 24 mask order for making it possible for Indiana to fully reopen ahead of its neighboring states. "I know no one wants to wear a face mask. I mean, this is different, especially for Americans and Hoosiers. I get it. It's not my preference either," Holcomb said. "But it's not my preference that the pandemic is on top of us either and follows us around." "And while our numbers are tracking in the right direction, enabling us to further open up, it's because of this," Holcomb said while holding up a cloth face mask during his weekly COVID-19 press conference in his Statehouse office.



Health official questions Stage 5

SOUTH BEND — New coronavirus cases began to increase again in St. Joseph County over the past week, as Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb Wednesday announced he's moving the state

to its final stage of reopening restaurants and bars on Saturday (Parrott, South Bend Tribune). "I am not sure what he is seeing that gives him the confidence to do that," said Dr. Mark Fox, the county's deputy health officer. The state's testing positivity rate over the past seven days was 3.1%, below the U.S. Centers for Disease Control's 5% suggested threshold for states to reopen their economies. But since the state's new cases haven't declined dramatically, Fox said he's concerned the testing positivity rate is declining because Indiana and Purdue universities are testing so many students. "I'm worried that (Holcomb is) falsely reassured by that because I don't think it reflects true improvement," Fox said. "I certainly don't see indicators that give me a lot of confidence to say, yeah, let's get restaurants and bars operating at full capacity because I'm more interested in seeing the schools get opened safely than bars and restaurants. I would have prioritized things differently."

State pension funds fare well in crisis

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana's pension funds for state and local government employees, including teachers, appear to have successfully weathered the financial market volatility associated with the coronavirus pandemic ([NWI Times](#)). Data presented Wednesday to the General Assembly's Pension Management Oversight Committee show the Indiana Public Retirement System increased its pension assets by 2.56% to \$30.6 billion during the 2020 budget year, which ran from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020. Since June 30, the soaring stock market has grown INPRS investment returns by an additional 5%, putting the total current value of the pension funds at \$32.3 billion, according to Steve Russo, INPRS executive director. While those short-term results are less than INPRS' 6.75% annual rate of return target, Russo said the agency's investments over a 10-year period

show a 6.65% return, ahead of the 6.35% benchmark return for the same time frame. "Even with everything that has happened, we remain well funded and we're not anticipating any increase in employer contributions," Russo said.

ND colleagues defend Barrett

NOTRE DAME — With 7th Circuit Judge Amy Coney Barrett, 48, a leading candidate to become a U.S. Supreme Court nominee, her fellow professors will be glued to the news this week, with President Donald Trump set to announce his choice Saturday ([South Bend Tribune](#)). They say they are wary of one-dimensional portraits of Barrett, especially those laser-focused on her religious beliefs and where she stands on abortion rights. "If she's being considered by a Republican administration, that means they think she's going to be more conservative," said Paolo Carozza, a Notre Dame law professor and director of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies. "But people are reducing Amy to an ideological category instead of taking her for who she is: an intelligent, thoughtful, open-minded person."

2 cops shot during Louisville protests

LOUISVILLE — Two Louisville Metro Police officers were shot in downtown Louisville Wednesday night, just eight hours after an indictment was returned in the Breonna Taylor case. Interim LMPD chief Robert Schroeder confirmed two officers were shot and sustained non life-threatening injuries (Louisville Courier-Journal). One officer is in surgery, and the other is alert and in stable condition. Schroeder said a suspect was taken into custody but did not identify that individual or share possible charges. One officer was shot in the abdomen below their bulletproof vest and is in surgery, and a second was shot in the thigh.