

Where will Mike Pence be in 2024?

The oddest White House pairing in history will face a split screen future

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – At noon on Jan. 20, 2021, America appears set for another Donald Trump-era split screen moment: President-elect Joe Biden takes the oath of office in Washington in a pandemic-induced virtual ceremony attended by people in masks; President Trump in South Florida at a super-spreader MAGA rally declaring for a third presidential run and second term in 2024.

Leading up to this moment will be a familiar question: Where is Vice President Mike Pence? And what will his legacy be after four years as the junior member of the oddest POTUS couple since President Adams and Vice President Jefferson?

On the former question, it will take time to determine Pence's legacy. He had his policy moments, with Pence steering three U.S. Supreme Court nominees into power, essentially winning the abortion wars, along with



the creation of the Space Force topping the list. But Trump handed off to Pence the chair of the White House Coronavirus Task Force in what could be a career-ender. It was

Continued on page 4

Most powerful veep

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – Regardless of what happens next in his life, the last four years have been a remarkable experience for Vice President Mike Pence. There have been 48 vice presidents in U.S. history. Former Vice President Joe Biden will become only the third to be elected to the office since Abraham Lincoln (the other two were Richard Nixon and George H.W. Bush). The others first achieved office through the death of a president. In other words, being vice president is not a safe ticket to the presidency.



However, Vice President Pence was unique among vice presidents. Most vice presidents had roles similar to the color-



“Indiana restaurant conditions continued to deteriorate the past three months without any additional federal relief. It is imperative that the hospitality industry be considered in a federal relief package.”

- Patrick Tamm of the Indiana Restaurant & Lodging Association



Howey Politics Indiana
WWHowey Media, LLC
c/o Business Office
PO Box 6553
Kokomo, IN, 46904
www.howeypolitics.com

Brian A. Howey, Publisher
Mark Schoeff Jr., Washington
Mary Lou Howey, Editor
Susan E. Joiner, Editor

Subscriptions

HPI, HPI Daily Wire \$599
 HPI Weekly, \$350
Lisa Houchell, Account Manager
 (765) 452-3936 telephone
 (765) 452-3973 fax
 HPI.Business.Office@howeypolitics.com

Contact HPI

bhowey2@gmail.com
 Howey's cell: 317.506.0883
 Washington: 202.256.5822
 Business Office: 765.452.3936

© 2020, **Howey Politics Indiana**. All rights reserved.
 Photocopying, Internet forwarding, faxing or reproducing in any form, whole or part, is a violation of federal law without permission from the publisher.

Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



ful description given the position by former powerful House Speaker James Garner that it "wasn't worth a bucket of warm spit." In other words, even powerful figures on Capitol Hill like Garner and later Lyndon Baines Johnson, watched that power be sapped away by aggressive presidents with clear agendas and a cadre of individuals who understood government and how to utilize its power as a team.

President Trump had some potential problems from the very beginning. He was clear on a few things he wanted; for example, a wall along the entire southern border, withdrawal from Afghanistan as part of no more foreign wars, limitations on free trade, and an emphasis on nationalism not internationalism.

As the campaign progressed, Trump flip-flopped his social positions in making a "deal" for the votes of social conservatives. Those issues became identified with Trump even though he had actually previously been a liberal on most of them. Very liberal on key ones, in fact. But he was malleable on those issues for votes.

On economic issues, conservatism is more divided. For example, on trade, traditional manufacturing interests have long favored a variety of protectionist positions. Sometimes those issues are aligned with military interests, as we learned that fickle allies or enemies can disrupt our military security. On the other hand, many businesses are dependent upon international trade, including some manufacturing interests. For example, in Indiana we are both the largest producer of American steel and one

of the largest producers of American-made transportation vehicles, yet also the home of worldwide trade leaders Eli Lilly, the orthopedics industry, and in agriculture.

All conservatives believe lower taxes are good, and all believe in less regulation of business than anyone who credibly calls themselves a liberal. However, positions on the relative importance of spending controls widely vary. In the real world, most conservative voters seldom really care about deficits. They do generally want to control government spending on social welfare programs (not including such things as Social Security, Medicare, or student loans which are the largest amounts of social spending and debt obligations).

Beyond that, disagreements dominate issues like defense spending, highway funding, agriculture support, and almost everything else. Trump, beyond an occasional loud verbal protest so he could switch political blame to Congress, used the veto less than almost anyone before him. His battles on spending were not, in most cases, really about money but trying to build a wall or some sort of other special goal of his. He traded debt for his special projects. This was his call, not Mike Pence's, but Pence did influence many economic decisions.

President Trump had a cadre of activist supporters, but they were mostly verbal firebombers, not people with any experience about how to accomplish his goals. His "team" mostly consisted of crowds riled up by simplistic rhetoric that remained as simplistic after four years in office

as it was when Trump ran for office. It was as if he seldom read briefing books or absorbed many facts. There was no nuance.

Ronald Reagan, at times, used simplistic examples and even marginal facts to convey a thematic point. So, for that matter, did Presidents Clinton and Obama. Reagan, however, had a proven track record as a reader and writer. And Reagan developed followers committed to the message principles he delivered over and over. Not to mention that Reagan had twice been elected governor of America's largest state. Reagan understood both the critical importance of rhetoric, and the necessity of trade-offs to advance principles.

Mike Pence knew all of these things about Trump when he sought the vice presidency. He made a deal. Obviously, he did not approve of the president's tone and style. Actually, Donald Trump was the opposite of almost every moral principle that Mike Pence has ever stood for; Mike treated people kindly, he didn't go around abusing them. He disagreed agreeably. People didn't like him for his policies, but he was nice. He was respectful of minorities. He listened reasonably well, though also was very principled.

Mike Pence was, and is, ambitious. People who aren't ambitious don't become a congressman, governor and never vice president. But had Mike's life been pure ambition, standing reasonably firm on questions related to homosexuality was not smart politics. Or abortion. While social conservatism as a whole is a solid minority in the Republican Party, it is not a "moral majority" nor is it anything close to a majority of all Americans when taken as a package. Being pro-life is one thing, which is a near majority. But add that to gay rights, pornography, gambling, the importance of sexual abstinence outside traditional marriage, and other issues and it is not a great political cause to be how you are identified. It is a principled policy: Not a politically driven one. And, furthermore, the political value of these issues ebb and flow, and currently are on the ebbing side.

In other words, Pence had ambitions but not unlimited ambition. So, what did he trade? Basically, silence on criticizing the president. Essentially, he neutered himself to many as a voice on personal conduct in office, not just the president's personal life or flat-out misstatements. But also on Trump's tone on issue after issue. Many policy questions that relate to personal moral accountability (e.g. conflicts of interest, special favors) require transparency. People were regularly personally trashed, including many conservatives who had been friends of VP Pence, but silence meant not publicly contradicting the president when reputations were besmirched.

In return, Mike Pence became the actual president on many issues. My assumption (none of this is based upon any conversation with him or anyone who worked

with him in the White House) is that several important traits of Mike came into play. He doesn't like to criticize others publicly (which tailored quite nicely with not criticizing Trump) and secondly, he knows how to manipulate through praise and identifying what another person desires.

For example, Pence clearly ran educational policy. Mike has a vision on the subject, a long consistent vision. He had allies such as the Education Secretary Betsy DeVos who could implement it with an ideological team. It is easy to understand how he could win Trump's support: "Mr. president, the teacher's unions detest you. They are the core of the Democrat Party. We need to weaken their monopoly support. Plus your base will love it."



For example, Pence clearly ran health care policy. The president said he would get rid of Obamacare. But clearly Trump didn't even know what that meant, other than getting rid of the individual mandate. The President didn't like detail. Mike, and more importantly, his allies liked details. Hoosiers like Alex Azar and Seema Verma staffed key positions in the agency.

For example, Pence was the internal advocate of conservative court appointments. Does anyone seriously think the president knew the Federalist Society well enough to call them up to provide a list of prospective nominees? Pence could show how this could benefit the president politically. There were plenty of allies inside the White House on this subject, including later scorned AG Jeff Sessions, but none were vice president and likely few, other than former Pence pollster Kellyanne Conway, knew how to sell the ideas to the president.

Finally, Pence was clearly influential on most foreign policy issues, especially on Israel. In fact, Trump reversed his position on Israel and the Palestinians. It was probably easy for a skilled persuader like Mike Pence to link the president to Prime Minister Netanyahu. I personally doubt that the vice president was on board with Trump on all foreign policy issues (e.g. Afghanistan, Trump's skepticism about 9/11) but on many, Mike Pence was similar to the president (e.g. China). In foreign policy, far too many people influence it for any one person to control it, but Mike Pence influenced those issues on which he cared about the most.

It has been a bumpy ride for the vice president, but regardless of what happens in the future, effectively, on many of his issues, Mike Pence has already functioned as president of the United States because of the trade-offs he made. One can argue whether the trade-offs were worth it, even without knowing how much his calming influence on the president saved us from who knows what other damage, but the fact is that Mike Pence may have been one of the most powerful vice presidents this nation has ever had.

Souder is a former Republican congressman from Indiana.

Pence, from page 1

Trump calling the shots, or perhaps more appropriately, failing to do so. Pence had to step aside when Trump realized last Spring the 5 p.m. daily task force briefings were a conspicuous stage for his reality show, until the good ratings disappeared with the second wave of the pandemic that Pence insisted in a June Wall Street Journal op-ed was merely a media concoction.

Pence had other policy failures that can be traced to Trump. He headed the "transition" from President Obama to Trump, inheriting a team headed by Chris Christie, until the day after the election when all his preparation ended up in a Trump Tower dumpster and the former New Jersey governor was out on his keister. Pence was later charged with heading the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity to quench Trump's thirst for a culprit after he lost the popular vote by 3 million to Hillary Clinton. That commission found no widespread fraud and disbanded the following year.

In the aftermath of the 2020 election, President Trump has been actively trying to subvert the will of the people, bending the arms and ears of local state election officials in Michigan, Arizona, Georgia and Pennsylvania. Like other controversial times in the White House, Pence has stayed in the shadows rather than actively seeking out a coup d'etat.

"As the votes continue to be counted, we're going to remain vigilant, as the president said," Pence said. "We're going to protect the integrity of the vote." But when former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski attempted to get Pence to attend a confab of Pennsylvania legislators in Gettysburg designed to orchestrate an alternative list of Republican electors, Pence Chief of Staff Marc Short slammed that door. In a statement to the New York Times, Trump campaign spokeswoman Ali Pardo said, "Vice President Pence has been in constant contact with our team and extremely involved in the campaign's legal efforts, doing everything we and the president have asked of him as well as leading efforts to raise money for the legal fund."

There have also been social media flares suggesting that as Trump seeks to pardon himself, his adult children and attorney Giuliani from, apparently, White House era crimes, there has been talk about Trump resigning, and a "President Pence" doling the Get Out of Jail cards.

New York Attorney General Letitia James said on Tuesday, "The vast majority of legal scholars have indicated that he cannot pardon himself. What he could do is

step down and allow ... Vice President Pence, to pardon him. I suspect that he will pardon his family members, his children, his son-in-law, and individuals in his administration as well as some of his close associates. And then I suspect, at some point in time, he will step down and allow the vice president to pardon him."

Legal scholars are divided on whether Trump could pardon himself, with Michigan State University Law Prof. Brian Kalt telling the Associated Press, "You could say, implicit in the definition of a pardon or implicit in the notion of granting a pardon — because the Constitution uses the word 'grant' — is that it's two separate people. You can't grant something to yourself. You can't pardon yourself."

This scenario has never been tested in court.

Don't expect Mike and Karen Pence to trade a few weeks as president for historic ignominy, unless he has decided to foreclose his life-long goal of calling 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. home. All one has to do is look back on President Gerald Ford's Sept. 8, 1974, "full, free, and absolute pardon" of President Nixon following the latter's Watergate-induced resignation to see the dead end political ramifications.



Ford's approval rating dropped from 71% to 50% in the howling days after that move as it was widely described as a "corrupt bargain" as opposed to what Ford described as the "end to our long national nightmare." He ended up losing to Jimmy Carter in 1976. After Ford left the White House in 1977, he justified his pardon by carrying in his wallet a portion of the text of *Burdick v. United States*, a 1915 U.S. Supreme Court decision that stated that a pardon carries an "imputation of guilt and that its acceptance carries a confession of guilt."

The inaugural/MAGA split screen on Jan. 20 will come during one of the darkest public health moments in U.S. history. How the rest of this pandemic unfolds has the potential to determine the political fates of Trump and Pence.

All eyes will be on Vice President Pence as he fulfills his constitutional duty on Jan. 6, certifying before Congress the Dec. 14 Electoral College results that will officially make Joe Biden the winner, President Trump the loser.

Will Pence part ways with Trump and extend the same courtesy to Vice President-elect Kamala Harris that Vice President Biden did with Mike and Karen Pence in 2016, inviting her and her family to the Naval Observatory residence?

And after this peaceful transition of power ends, will Mike and Karen Pence return to Indiana where he reportedly will write a book, and give paid speeches? Or will

he take the helm of Liberty University in Virginia following the Falwell sex scandal?

As for Donald Trump and 2024, there is a wide gulf of time and events that will sort things out. At the onset, Trump looks powerful. A Politico/Morning Consult poll released Wednesday revealed 76% of Republicans and 60% of independents expect Trump to run in 2024. A Newsmax/McLaughlin poll of Republicans and independents who vote in Republican primaries found that 68% would pick Trump in the 2024 primary out of a field of 13 other candidates including Pence and Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas). Among Republican voters alone, 53% told pollsters they'd pick Trump in the primary, with Pence trailing at just 9%. A Politico Poll had Trump leading Pence 53-12%, with Donald Trump Jr., the only other Republican mentioned, at 8%. But these polls are virtually meaningless.

Trump announcing a third campaign on Jan. 20 might actually be the best thing for Pence's own White House aspirations because it could possibly freeze much of what could be an unwieldy GOP field.

If he doesn't opt for a university presidency or take the helm of a think tank, Pence could emulate another former vice president, Richard M. Nixon. President Eisenhower's veep lost a razor-thin race to Democrat John F. Kennedy in 1960 in which there really was substantive vote fraud in Illinois, Texas and Missouri that plausibly denied the Republican victory. Nixon decided it wasn't in the national interest to contest the results during this Cold War era with the Soviet Union. Instead, Nixon returned to California where he lost a gubernatorial race in 1962, ending with that stormy press conference at which he departed, saying, "You won't have Richard Nixon to kick around anymore."

By 1966, Nixon stumped for 86 Republican candidates for governor and Congress. When the dust settled, 59 of them won, for the political equivalent .686 batting average. Veteran GOP operative Ed Rollins observed, "No one remembers who won or lost, only that he was out there."

Nixon collected more than 86 IOUs, which set him on course to defeat Nelson Rockefeller, Ronald Reagan, George Romney and Harold Stassen for the 1968 Republican presidential nomination. Nixon then defeated Democrat Vice President Hubert Humphrey 43.7% to 42.7%, with Alabama Gov. George Wallace winning 13.5% and five southern states. Nixon's vote plurality was just over 500,000.

Last Friday, Trump was asked on Fox & Friends if he would endorse Pence in 2024. "Well ... I love Mike, we are running again, you're talking about a long time, so you can't put me in that position. But I certainly would give it very strong consideration. He's a very, very outstanding person."

While 74 million Americans voted for Trump, which would be a record if Joe Biden hadn't polled 81 mil-

lion votes, it's important to remember that Wendell Willkie also won a record number of votes for a losing nominee (22,347,744) in his 1940 race against President Franklin Roosevelt.

Four years is a long time and Trump will have a plethora of challenges, ranging from his legal tax dilemma surrounding the Trump Organization pressed by the Southern District of New York (Ivanka Trump was deposed for five hours earlier this month), the half a billion dollars in personal notes that will come due over the next four years, and his health (there has been no explanation of an unscheduled November 2019 trip to Walter Reed). Trump would be age 78 (the same age as Biden today), while Biden will be 82.

Will President Trump be able to stave off the next generation of presidential level Republicans?

Personal problems aside, the perceptions of Donald Trump within the Republican Party will likely evolve. Will Republicans want to nominate someone who failed to win the popular vote twice? Whose 2016 upset victory was considered to be everything from a fluke to drawing a royal flush? Who substantially ran behind a number of down-ballot Republicans in 2020?

Former national security advisor John Bolton told The Atlantic's Peter Nicholas, "Once Trump is no longer in the Oval Office, once a Trump Twitter rant doesn't risk exiling a member of Congress to Siberia, the dynamic will change dramatically. He's not going to disappear, but it's very different when you're a former president as opposed to a sitting president."

Larry Sabato of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics said that running and winning as a defeated vice president will be tough for Pence, adding that the vice president would need to reshape perceptions of the 2020 race, perhaps blaming the pandemic. "He could say, 'We ran into some very bad luck, but we're going to work hard to restore the sensible priorities that are being ruined by that leftist socialist Joe Biden,'" Sabato said.

We Hoosiers know that Pence has the wherewithall to do just that, packed neatly and tightly into a disciplined set of talking points that could be used as he crisscrosses the nation in 2022 barnstorming for the party.

Former vice president Dan Quayle could be another dose of reality for Pence. Quayle lost in 1992 with President George H.W. Bush, sat out the 1996 race (Indiana Sen. Richard Lugar ran for president that cycle), then tried a comeback in 1999 for the 2000 cycle. Quayle's problem was that Texas Gov. George W. Bush was able to clear much of the field, with the exception of U.S. Sen. John McCain.

Quayle thinks that his old buddy Pence will run, telling The Atlantic's Peter Nicholas, "He's been an effective and loyal vice president to Donald Trump. I would think he'd get a lot of credit for that. But it's not automatic." ❖



Pence legacy to be determined

By **DAVE KITCHELL**

LOGANSPORT – As one biographer opined in a radio interview in recent years, the moment the fortunes of Mike Pence changed probably involved Indianapolis International Airport.

If not for a problem with Donald Trump’s jet, which forced Trump and his party to spend the night with Pence at the Governor’s Residence in Indianapolis, Pence may have never been vice president, or may be finishing his second term as governor.



What we can say about his legacy is that it is still too early to be determined. What we can say about the relationship he had as a vice president with the president is that this has been an odd couple: One man who paid to cover up an extra-marital affair with Stormy Daniels, and another who went to the mat for Sen. Ted Cruz as a Republican presidential candidate, a staunch conservative.

It would appear to be a gross contradiction of values. And yet, in the end, Pence probably did more to advance Trump’s presidency than Trump did for him. With Trump ushering former GOP strongman Reince Preibus out the door as White House chief of staff along with many other Republicans, Pence found ways to be valuable to the Trump White House. Look at the number of Trump appointees from Indiana, not the least of which is Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett, and you see the influence.

While Pence faced enormous pushback from the RFRA debacle in Indiana that forced him to pay for public relations support, the vice presidency afforded him an opportunity for atonement. Had he been able to chair the Coronavirus Task Force in a way that actually effected more measures initially, that would have prevented the problems the nation is experiencing now, he probably would have been viewed as a likely Republican candidate in 2024. But clearly, he didn’t have the power to create his own plan for fighting a pandemic.

The Pence political career is one of undulation. It started with two failed campaigns against former Rep. Phil Sharp. His hard-hitting anti-abortion ads were refused by one Indiana television station for being too

graphic.

An MSNBC profile of Pence when he was governor found he was originally a Democrat from Columbus, Ind. Yet he became a Republican because he knew it was the only way for him to win public office in Indiana.

Pence enjoyed years as a talk radio host and as head of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation in Fort Wayne. His years in Congress were not particularly distinguishable, but he was able to make connections that served him well during his vice presidency.

If anything, his stronger than bold views on religious freedom and kneeling before the national anthem were his hamartia. Rather than bring the state and/or the country together on these issues, he ensconced himself as a polar extreme who staunchly served Donald Trump, an impeached president.

He’ll be remembered for an innocuous fly on his forehead in the vice-presidential debate. He’ll be remembered as the chickory that mellowed the fierce tweeting of the president. He’ll be memorialized for the staid conservative ways reflected in skits by SNL’s Beck Bennett.

While the political career of Mike Pence is likely over, we likely have not seen the last of him. Expect him to head a conservative think tank, a university or a corporate board. Whether he ever lives in Indiana again is anyone’s guess, but don’t be surprised if that happens.

There are likely many days when Pence has to ask himself if being vice president was really worth it. That’s a question those writing his biographies will be asking as well. ❖

Kitchell is the former mayor of Logansport.



formed him in down ballot races across Indiana and the nation. "One, two percent possibly we lost of suburban families, right?" Parscale said. "I think that goes to one thing, and I think it was the decision on COVID to go for opening the economy versus public empathy. And I think a young family with a young child who were scared to take them back to school wanted to see an empathetic presi-

dent. If he would have been publicly empathetic, he would have won by a landslide."

The good news is that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines should be on the way beginning Dec. 15. Gov. Eric Holcomb is not going to make this vaccine mandatory, leaving open the question as to whether this medical breakthrough will, too, become politicized. ❖



Pandemic lays bare our information problems

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – When the history of this era is written, special attention should be reserved for the prominent U.S. politicians who dismissed or misrepresented the COVID-19 pandemic for political purposes.

The coronavirus has wreaked untold suffering and damage to this country through the deaths it's caused, the illness it's produced, the strain it has placed on the lives and well-being of health care workers, and the incredible damage it's done to the livelihoods and prospects of millions of Americans. It has been able to do this because we had a major failure of government.



To be sure, at the state level many governors have conducted themselves with forthright

attention to the risks to their populations and have done their best to translate scientific and medical advice into policies designed to save lives while trying to undergird their economies. But at the federal level, with the notable exception of the effort to fast-track research and production of a vaccine, we mostly failed to mobilize resources and take the measures necessary to combat the virus, starting early this year when the virus first emerged on the West Coast.

In particular, we failed to provide a comprehensive, federally led nationwide strategy providing clear guidance on mask-wearing, offering resources for contact tracing, and helping states develop their approaches to quarantining for those exposed to the virus, the three legs vital for early containment.

Instead, President Trump repudiated and disregarded the advice of experts and health officials and offered a misleading narrative about the spread of the virus abating in the spring. His misinformation was picked up and amplified by news outlets and by politicians who alleged that concern about the pandemic was just a hoax peddled by President Trump's opponents and would disappear as soon as the election was over.

Or, even worse, he misled Americans about hydroxychloroquine and other drugs. In other words, many Americans were fed bad information at a time when high-quality information was necessary to stem the spread of the virus and limit the number of deaths.

The result has been devastating, and not just to our public health efforts. For many decades, the U.S. has been the leader of the international order, the undisputed power, with vast wealth, economic and military power, and global reach. But our image has been tarnished badly because of the mishandling of this outbreak, made worse over the last four years by our willingness to step away from alliances and international organizations. We are weaker on the world stage than we were a few years ago, and especially since the start of the pandemic.

The problem with reaching this point was summed up cogently back in October by John Halpin of the Center for American Progress, as part of a study looking at the alarming rise in Americans' willingness to believe conspiracy theories, unfounded rumors, and already disproven claims. "American society faces a genuine crisis in public trust in government, corporations, and the media, exacerbated by wide partisan divides about who and what to believe," he said. "If we cannot agree on basic facts about what is going on in our country, there is little hope of generating consensus on what needs to be done to control the pandemic and fix our economy. Rebuilding public trust in major institutions, and the information they provide the public, is now a national priority."

I agree.

In many ways, the world of information has improved from the days when just a handful of news sources provided Americans with what we needed to know, but there was also a benefit to those times. We might have disagreed about how to tackle national problems, but we all understood what those problems were. Today, people stick to the news sources they agree with, creating a muddle of American public opinion and making it extremely difficult for policy makers to find the common ground needed to accomplish difficult and ambitious policy goals.

This is a significant challenge for the United States, and we have got to get on top of it sooner rather than later. ❖

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.

White House says Indiana must stem rampant COVID spread

Howey Politics Indiana

WASHINGTON — The latest report from the White House Coronavirus Task Force said Indiana must increase mitigation efforts to combat the ongoing surge in COVID-19 cases ([WRTV](#)). The report, obtained by ABC News, said Indiana needs to implement key state and local policies with an additional focus on “uniform behavioral change including masking, physical distancing, hand hygiene, no indoor gatherings outside of immediate households, and aggressive testing” to find the asymptomatic individuals responsible for the majority of infectious spread.



“Despite the severity of this surge and the threat to the hospital systems, many state and local governments are not implementing the same mitigation policies that stemmed the tide of the summer surge; that must happen now,” the report said. The report classifies Indiana in the red zone for cases, indicating 101 or more new cases per 100,000 population. Indiana has the fifth-highest rate in the country. Indiana is also in the red zone for test positivity, indicating a rate at or above 10.1% with the 10th highest rate in the country. Three counties alone — Marion, Lake and Allen — accounted for 25.9% of new cases in the state.

The report also notes that daily deaths in Indiana continue to rise rapidly. The 7-day rolling average rose to 76 per day, which is “far above the peak set in spring.” “We share the strong concern of Indiana’s leaders that the current situation is extremely critical with more favorable outcomes dependent on the collective effort of Indiana’s residents,” the report said.

Huston releases standing committees

House Speaker Todd Huston (R-Fishers) released House standing committee appointments, which are made biennially after each election. “We have many new members who bring a wide range of talent and experience from both the public and private sectors to our already strong team,” Huston said. “Despite the challenging budget session ahead, we have a full bench of legislators who are ready to get to work and tackle the top issues that matter most to Hoosiers.”

House lawmakers are scheduled to convene at 1:30 p.m. on Jan. 4 for the first day of the 2021 legislative session. [Click here](#) to download the complete list of House standing committee appointments.

Rokita: Nullify 20.4M votes

Indiana’s former chief elections officer and its next attorney general is urging the U.S. Supreme Court to toss out the votes of 20.4 million Americans in four states to help secure a second term for Republican President Donald Trump (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Republican Attorney General-elect Todd Rokita, a Munster native, announced his support Tuesday for a lawsuit filed by the state of Texas that seeks scuttle all the votes cast for president in Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Georgia, and to have the Republican-controlled legislatures in those states appoint Trump electors, instead of the Joe Biden electors chosen by the people. Rokita said millions of Indiana citizens “have deep concerns” about the presidential election, particularly as “some in the media and the political class simply try to sidestep legitimate issues raised about the election for the sake of expediency.” “Only the U.S. Supreme Court can settle this real controversy among the states,” Rokita said. “Only by taking up this case and allowing a full and fair hearing of the facts will the Supreme Court help restore the confidence of the American people in our elections.”

Pandemic to make budget harder

Legislators expect writing a new state budget to be harder than usual — and not just because there may be less money (Berman, [WIBC](#)). The pandemic is expected to reduce the money the state has to work with in a new two-year budget. But House Speaker Huston says it’ll also make it harder to predict how much money there will be. Not only must forecasters make their best guess at how much the economy will recover, but they also don’t know how much federal help the state can expect. Legislative analysts will present their forecast this month, marking the informal start of the budget process. As always, they’ll update the forecast in April, a couple of weeks before the end of the session in April, as legislators make their final spending decisions.

Holcomb, INDOT releases \$101M to munis

Gov. Eric J. Holcomb and Indiana Department of Transportation Commissioner Joe McGuinness Tuesday [announced](#) 241 Indiana cities, towns, and counties received a combined \$101 million in state matching funds for local road projects through Community Crossings, a component of the Governor’s Next Level Roads program.

“As we navigate through the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, we’re as committed as ever to improving and building our state’s infrastructure,” Holcomb said. “I’m incredibly pleased that we’re able to fund all of the high-priority local road projects submitted in this round. Taking care of our local roads is key to making sure our communities remain attractive places to grow businesses and create careers.” The Community Crossings Initiative has provided more than \$830 million in state matching funds for construction projects. ❖

Some Democrats voted for Holcomb; why is that bad?

By **PETE SEAT**

INDIANAPOLIS – A sizable percentage of Indiana Democrats – approximately 23% based on a SurveyUSA poll conducted two weeks before the election – voted for Governor Eric Holcomb’s reelection.



That, I am told, earns him a lifetime membership in the club of RINO – Republicans in Name Only. It’s a club with no defined membership criteria other than random people screaming “RINO!” at their television when a RINO appears. But those shouts and this polling data, I am also told, is enough to give him a status more rarified than being Twitter verified (which, by the way, I am).

And if Holcomb is a member, his former boss, Mitch Daniels, must be one, too. Remember him? He’s the former governor of Indiana who was known as The Blade for his obsession with fiscal prudence, but he’s obviously a RINO himself since Hoosier voters split their tickets to elect him in the same year Barack Obama got Indiana’s electoral votes.

It’s Politics 101. When a Republican supports a Democrat, the Democrat has crossover appeal. But when a Democrat votes for a Republican, the Republican is a Democrat.

If this makes no sense to you, please trust me when I say it makes all the sense in the world on social media. Let me explain. You see, monolithic partisanship is the game we play nowadays. Republicans vote for Republicans, Democrats vote for Democrats, and Libertarians, I guess, flip a coin when they have no nominee running for an office.

We are not put on this earth to foster relationships and build coalitions to make positive change in our communities, simpleton. We are here to get high on annoying friends, offending neighbors and turning as many people away from our ideology as possible. The smaller the tent, the larger it looks with fewer people. It’s an old event logistics trick. Give it a try.

Therefore, Republicans were rightfully aghast at the survey data exposing Holcomb’s expected strong showing among Democrats. And even more ghastly, another poll released by the governor’s own campaign, showed 67% of self-described liberals – better-described by real Americans as socialists – approved of Holcomb’s

job performance.

Makes you sick, doesn’t it? Those bad, very bad people (are Democrats even considered people?) who watch MSNBC and worship icons of Rachel Maddow in their living rooms think he’s a-OK. At least, that’s what one must assume they do since Republicans and Democrats aren’t allowed to talk to one another. Don’t believe me? It’s right there in the Geneva Conventions. I know it’s true because I saw it in a meme. Getting caught comes with a three-week sentence of binging *The View*. Look it up!

Where were we? Yes, Republicans should never want Democrats to vote for them. Ever. Under any circumstances. Except for Reagan Democrats. Those Democrats were patriots because they helped Reagan win 49 out of the 50 states in a red rout that may never be replicated.

And Trump Democrats. They are cool too.

Without those blue-collar, Rust Belt Midwesterners who clocked out of the factory and got to the polls in time to punch their ballot for Trump in 2016, he wouldn’t have won Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

Four years of Hillary Clinton would have been, to borrow the words of David Foster Wallace in his laudable essay about lobsters, “as you can imagine, unimaginable.” Thank you, patriots, for protecting us all.

But all other Democrats are bad and Republicans not named Reagan or Trump who accept the votes of Democrats are even worse. Like why would these “people” vote for Holcomb if he were a true Republican?

It can’t be that they saw in him a reasonable individual who is moderate in his rhetoric, without even a hint of hostility in his tone, and personable in approach. It can’t be. Conservative Republicans are supposed to grimace at cameras when explaining how policies will grow the economy and add good paying jobs. Grr!

So these “people” must have voted for him because his endorsements from Indiana Right to Life, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, the National Rifle Association and the National Federation of Independent Business were enough to convince them that Holcomb also gets real-time push alerts to make sure he never misses an AOC tweet.

Now that I’ve had the time to do as Stephen Colbert does when he sees Barack Obama and drink it all in, this makes more sense than I realized. I just hope no Democrat reads this. That would really make me sick. ❖

Pete Seat is a former White House spokesman for President George W. Bush and campaign spokesman for former Director of National Intelligence and U.S. Sen. Dan Coats. Currently he is a vice president with Bose Public Affairs Group in Indianapolis, Indiana. He is also an Atlantic Council Millennium Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations term member and author of “The War on Millennials.”

Walorski's job security

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – While it's not like a lifetime appointment to the Supreme Court, Congresswoman Jackie Walorski now has nearly the same job security as Amy Coney Barrett.

Walorski won reelection to a fifth term by 23 percentage points, once again winning in nine of the 10 counties in Indiana's 2nd Congressional District. Only in St. Joseph County, largest in the district, did she trail Pat Hackett, a determined Democratic challenger. And what happened in St. Joseph County tells the story of Walorski's job security.



Democrats, knowing Walorski never can be defeated without a huge Democratic margin in St. Joseph County, once a bastion of Democratic strength, wanted a big turnout in the biggest county to overcome Walorski's margin

in the sprawling Republican territory in the district. They dream of an old-time Democratic plurality of 20,000 votes.

Well, there was a big turnout in St. Joseph County, just as in most of the nation. But Hackett carried the county by just over 3,000 votes. That margin was almost entirely wiped out by Walorski's win by nearly 3,000 votes in Pulaski County, smallest in the district.

Elkhart County was the one with a huge plurality of 24,000 votes for Walorski. Then there was Kosciusko County, where Walorski got 80% of the vote. For the district, Walorski won with 61.5%, her highest percentage ever.

Hackett, who tried hard and successfully got her message extensively on TV, had no chance this year. The big blue wave needed for a chance never came. Indiana remained Trumpiana. As in so many other congressional districts throughout the nation, the heavy turnout involved Republicans as well as Democrats. While President Trump lost in key battleground states and even in Arizona and Georgia, the Democratic brand proved unpopular beneath the presidential level.

Democrats didn't upset a single Republican House member and lost every one of the "tossup" House races.

A big Walorski win in a bad year for Democratic congressional candidates doesn't mean she is certain to keep winning or that Democrats should stop trying. However, the totals of Nov. 3 certainly indicate solid job security.

Democrats complain that she wins because of gerrymandering. That's a factor. It will continue to be a factor for the next decade. The Republican-dominated General

Assembly now will draw the districts for use until after the 2030 Census. Still, even if Democrats controlled redistricting, it would be tough to draw a district with a lot more Democratic voters. There just isn't much Democratic territory near St. Joseph County.

And what happened in St. Joseph County shows even that long-time Democratic territory isn't solid. All three county commissioners now are Republicans. Commissioner Deb Fleming won again, despite all-out Democratic efforts to defeat her.

Amazingly, Republican Derek Dieter, newly switched to the GOP, won the other commissioner seat at stake this year in a district where a Democrat won by 5,000 votes in 2016. Dieter flipped a lot of Democratic votes, combining old politics and new, from large newspaper ads and going door to door to extensive social media. He won by nearly 1,000 votes. The Democratic incumbent even lost in the coroner race.

Joe Biden won comfortably in the presidential race, though not by anything close to an old-time Democratic margin. Gov. Eric Holcomb was the big winner in the county in total votes.

All this means Walorski seems certain of job security if she wants to keep running for Congress. No doubt she does. She wisely avoided the losing gamble of some other House Republicans in recent elections, forsak-



ing safe districts for losing efforts to win a Senate seat. Why would she want to leave the House with the seniority she has and with a seat on the powerful Ways and Means Committee?

And she's never going to get appointed to lifetime job security on the Supreme Court. ❖

Colwell is a South Bend Tribune columnist.

Trump's baseless lies on election integrity

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI Indiana

ANDERSON – President Donald J. Trump described the 46-minute speech as perhaps the most important he had ever delivered. In it, he claimed that the election had been stolen, and he called on the U.S. Supreme Court to intervene. “Hopefully, they will do what’s right for our country because our country can’t live with this kind of an election,” he said.



By Thursday, the Facebook video had drawn roughly 630,000 reactions and more than 180,000 comments. It had been shared tens of thousands of times. And it was absolutely without basis. Facebook said as much in a disclaimer attributed to the Bipartisan Policy Center. “Both voting by mail and voting in person have a long history of trustworthiness in the U.S.,” the

disclaimer read. “Voter fraud is extremely rare across voting methods.”

And yet the president keeps lying. “Millions of ballots were cast illegally in the swing states alone,” he said. The president’s main argument seems to be that a guy who received 74 million votes could not possibly have lost the election. Never mind that President-elect Joe Biden received 7 million more.

“Many people received two, three and four ballots,” the president said. “They were sent to dead people by the thousands.”

If all the fraudulent votes were tossed out, the president insisted, he would win easily. “The media know this, but they don’t want to report it,” he said. “In fact, they outright refuse to even cover it because they know the result if they do.”

He admitted there would be skeptics. “Even what I’m saying now will be demeaned and disparaged,” he said, “but that’s OK. I just keep on going forward because I’m representing 74 million people.”

Some of the skeptics have pointed out that if the dastardly Democrats were going to go to all the trouble to steal an election, they surely would have done a better job of it. I mean, come on. Why have all those dead people filling out absentee ballots if you aren’t going to be sure they elect a few more Democratic senators?

The president sees it differently, of course. With all those Republicans winning elections across the country, he said, “it is statistically impossible” that he, the person leading the charge, could get beat. Clearly the Democrats were cheating, he said. Even in states like Georgia and Arizona where the Republicans were in charge!

We shouldn’t be surprised by any of this. The president made clear months ago that the only result he would accept was a win. The real question is how much damage he’s doing to the democratic process. How many people actually believe his absurd claims?


Surveys taken since the election seem to indicate as many as 80% of the president’s supporters believe what he’s saying, but do they really? Or are they just saying so out of partisan loyalty? For some, it might be the latter. A recent survey by YouGov found 49% of Republicans saying they expected Donald Trump to take the oath of office for a second term. That’s more than 36 million people, but it’s far short of the more than 59 million represented by that 80% who voiced support for the president’s fraud claims.

Part of the problem might be the small number of prominent Republicans who have acknowledged the reality that Donald Trump lost the election. For weeks now, far too many of these folks have ducked the issue or, worse, suggested the president might have a valid claim. The time for such cowardice is behind us. Courts across the country have determined the president has no case. It’s time to admit that. ❖

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.

ANTELOPE CLUB

615 N. DELAWARE ST. - DOWNTOWN INDY
antelopeclub@hotmail.com



>> Lunch & dinner 6 days a week

>> Cigar lounge

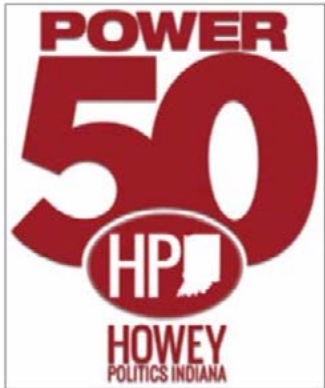
>> Beautiful view of Downtown from our 2nd floor patio

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

2021 HPI Power 50 List will face drastic change

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – When the 2020 HPI Power 50 List was published on Jan. 7, the COVID-19 pandemic was just beginning to create a stir in China. Vice President Pence was at the apex of his power. Health Commissioner



Kristina Box was cited for her coming contributions to the "story of our lifetime" (the opioid crisis). South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg was an out-sized presidential dreamer.

Come January, Indiana will have two new members of Congress, 1st CD Democrat Frank Mrvan and 5th CD Republican Victoria Spartz.

This will be a biennial budget and reapportionment year in the General Assembly, so Dr. Tim Brown and Chairman Timothy Wesco will rise on the 2020 list.

There will be new gubernatorial contenders, at least one new state party chair. Will there be a Libertarian to crack the list for the first time since we began this publishing exercise in 1999, now that gubernatorial nominee Donald Rainwater made it into double digits in the Nov. 3 election.

The HPI Power 50 list is designed to illustrate who stands to make the greatest impacts in the coming year. We invite our readers to make nominations or complete your own full list.

This year's list will be published in the Jan. 7, 2021, edition of Howey Politics Indiana

Here is our 2020 HPI Power 50 list:

1. Vice President Mike Pence
2. Gov. Eric Holcomb
3. Pete Buttigieg
4. U.S. Sen. Todd Young
5. U.S. Sen. Mike Braun
6. Senate President Pro Tem Rod Bray
7. Secretary of State Connie Lawson
8. Speakers Brian Bosma and Todd Huston
9. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch

10. Dr. Woody Myers
11. Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer
12. ISTA President Keith Gambill
13. Mike Schmuhl
14. Marc Short
15. HHS Sec. Alex Azar and CMS Director Seema Verma
16. Attorney General Curtis Hill
17. Commerce Sec. Jim Schellinger
18. U.S. Rep. Jim Banks
19. Indiana Treasurer Kelly Mitchell
20. Christina Hale
21. Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr.
22. FSSA Sec. Jennifer Sullivan and IDOH Commissioner Kris Box
23. INDOT Commissioner Joe McGuinness
24. Chief Justice Loretta Rush
25. Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett
26. Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry
27. Evansville Mayor Lloyd Winnecke
28. Democratic Chairman John Zody
29. Terre Haute Mayor Duke Bennett
30. U.S. Rep. Andre Carson
31. U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski
32. Drug Czar Douglas Huntsinger
33. Purdue President Mitch Daniels
34. IU President IU President Michael McRobbie
35. USDA Under Sec. Ted McKinney
36. Surgeon General Jerome Adams
37. Ways & Means Chairman Tim Brown

38. Bill and Ann Moreau
39. RNC Committeeman John Hammond
40. Chamber President Kevin Brinegar
41. IMA President Brian Burton
42. Marty Obst
43. U.S. Rep. Greg Pence
44. U.S. Rep. Larry Bushon
45. State Sen. Jeff Raatz and State Rep. Robert Behning
46. Kurt and Kristin Luidhardt
47. U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky
48. U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks
49. Earl Goode
50. Joe Donnelly



Pence, Pete & Gov head Power 50

Veep, mayor and governor in position to transform Indiana and American political scene

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY** in Indianapolis and **MARK SCHOEFF JR.**, in Washington

INDIANAPOLIS – As we unveil the 2020 version of the Howey Politics Indiana Power 50 List, Hoosiers appear to be relatively satisfied with their state government, unsure about the federalists and specifically President Trump, and are most concerned about health care and the economy.

These are the latest survey numbers from the We Ask America Poll conducted in early December for the Indiana Manufacturers Association. They accentuate the formulation of our annual Power 50 list headed by Vice President Mike Pence, Gov. Eric Holcomb, former South Bend mayor and Democratic presidential contender Pete Buttigieg, and the state's



two Republican senators who will likely sit in judgment (and acquittal) of President Trump in an impeachment trial

Continued on page 3

Unforgiving Middle East

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – By most Western accounts, Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani was, as President Trump might put it, "scum."

He had the blood of hundreds if not thousands of Americans on his hands. As I surveyed the list of the hundred or so Hoosier soldiers killed by IEDs and other havoc during the ill-fated Iraq War, I'm sure Suleimani played a role in at least some of them.

That President Trump made the decision to assassinate Suleimani by drone, at first consideration, was good. My initial thoughts were that this terrorist general probably died



"All is well. Assessment of casualties & damage taking place now. So far, so good!"

- President Trump, tweeting Tuesday evening after Iran missile attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq. Trump is expected to address the nation this A.M.

Private sector is full of COVID heroes

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE – Over the coming years, the inevitable slew of books on COVID will identify villains and heroes, missteps and moments of prescient action. History will metaphorically adorn some with clown shoes, and others with halos. Like the Great Depression, world wars, or 9/11, COVID will bequeath us a before and after moment. Even



as we return to a new normal, nearly all of us will speak of a life that preceded the pandemic and compare it to the life afterwards.

One important American institution that is sure to get less attention and praise than it deserves are those common and humdrum markets for goods and services. These most ubiquitous of human affairs, the buying and selling of products or labor, turned out to be the most significant and

effective part of our COVID response.

No doubt many a reader will be displeased at the notion that profit-maximizing firms were the fiber that held together the nation in the midst of the pandemic. However, this profit maximization may not be what is depicted in movies. Smart, successful businesses chase consumer interests. They listen to buyers, anticipate their needs and respond not out of charity or goodwill, but to make money. This doesn't make them uncharitable, just wise enough to understand that hiring workers and buying supplies takes more than good will.

In the process of making money, owners and managers seek to employ workers, protect their reputation and satisfy customers. While many folks may complain about shortages of toilet paper or bacon, the real story is how quickly and effectively businesses adapted to each and every stage of COVID.

From Feb. 26 to March 18, U.S. grocery store sales grew by more than 68%. From March 18 to March 30, sales dropped down to 108% of average January sales. Americans bought about three months' worth of groceries last March. Despite plenty of news articles about shortages, I've seen no evidence that corncocks replaced toilet paper, or squirrel stew comprised dinner for any American.

The health care industry entered the pandemic as the most monopolized sector of the U.S. economy since the Gilded Age. From March 13, when the national emergency was declared until April 1, they quickly prepared for the pandemic. They postponed non-emergency procedures, and curtailed their most lucrative services, causing a 56% reduction in consumer spending on medical ser-

vices. As damaging as hospital monopolies have been to many Indiana communities, we must be thankful for the speed with which hospitals responded to the pandemic.

The pandemic dramatically cut household spending on restaurants and hotels. By the end of March, consumer spending was down in this industry by 66%. It slowly recovered about half its lost sales after the CARES Act was passed. While the economic climate for restaurants and hotels has weakened in recent weeks as the disease expands, this sector faced the most daunting long-term effects of COVID. Still, over the past few months, the innovations in services are obvious almost everywhere. The growth of carry-out menus, the integration of food delivery services and the modifications to drive-through restaurants offered decades of restaurant innovation in a matter of weeks.

Surely the most obvious example of private sector success was the development of a vaccine for COVID. Though governments in nearly every nation subsidized R&D, the first effective vaccine did not receive them. Surely, there's a lesson here.

All told, American businesses from the corner restaurant to large pharmaceutical firms have responded to COVID very effectively. Over the long term, that response will limit damage to the lives and livelihoods of Americans. It also offers a living demonstration of why the United States remains economically ascendant.

The success of businesses depended on the coordination of millions of economic agents who often could have no idea of their role. For example, the quick response of the humble local grocery store depended upon the response of thousands of farms, livestock facilities, commodity sellers, fuel bulk shipment operations, refineries, railroad maintenance operations, truck dispatchers, pallet makers, website developers, logistic algorithm writers, lawyers and even accountants.

The actions of all these folks wasn't coordinated by the CDC or some mythical Department of Grocery Store Operations. It came from millions of vendor-managed inventory responses, calls from busy shipping clerks and purchasing managers all acting on the trust that is built in market exchange. Only the private sector can accomplish something like this, but the policy environment does matter. ❖

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.

Why townships?

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – If you missed last week’s column, it was an introduction to Indiana townships. That topic is continued this week and will appear several more times before the year ends.

“Why?” is a very good question. For years, decades in fact, thoughtful people as well as ignorant people, have said, “It’s time to get rid of townships.” I feel it is



reasonable for us to know something more about the subject before we consider any action.

Hence, it’s time you knew the 35,826 square miles of land in our Hoosier state are divided, not only into 92 counties, but also into 1005 townships, four cities and towns which have replaced townships in Boone and Delaware counties, and one small military training facility (Camp Atterbury in Bartholomew County). We will

refer to all 1010 units as townships for our purposes.

LaPorte County in Northwest Indiana hosts 21 townships followed by Allen County with 20 and Jasper County with 17. These three counties are also the state’s three largest counties in land area. It makes sense since each county and its townships were set out according to plan based on the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

However, nature and local preferences disrupted that plan. Rivers and squabbles about land rights got in the way. If the surveyors had the final say, each of our counties would have resembled Marion County, with nine townships of approximately equal size, arranged

like a tic-tac-toe board. (That perfect shape is distorted since Decatur Twp. is squeezed by the White River into 32 square miles, leaving Perry Twp. to enjoy 45 square miles.

Ohio is the smallest Indiana county with 86 square miles and has but four townships. It might be tempting, then, to conclude the number of townships is determined by the physical size of the county. That thought is weakened by finding Blackford County, about double the size of Ohio County, but with the same number of townships, four. Then double the size of the county again to Brown County and the number of townships is still only four.

If geographic size is not the determinant of the number of townships, then it must be population. Marion County, with nearly a million residents, has nine townships. But six other Indiana counties (Crawford, Pike, Spencer, Sullivan, Starke and Fayette), each having fewer than 25,000 residents, also have nine townships.

Not geographic size nor population served seems to dictate the number of townships. There must be other reasons for Indiana supporting over 1,000 separate townships.

Cynics have suggested the continued existence of township offices, personnel, and the necessary accoutrements of functioning agencies (paper clips, staples, telephones, coffee pots, etc.) is a brave effort by our political parties to sustain as wide a network of patronage jobs as possible.

Well! You might believe that, but I would hesitate to put such an idea into circulation. ❖

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



Indiana
at your finger tips
Download it today!
howeypolitics.com

HPI Mobile Offers...

- The Daily Wire - 6 Days a Week*
- Photo & Video Galleries*
- Access to HPI Columnists*
- News Alerts*
- and more for*

\$0.96
per day

Now available for IOS and Android devices

How McConnell, Durbin & Graham won races

By J. MILES COLEMAN

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — In some ways, senatorial elections, especially in presidential years, are becoming increasingly boring. Sure, this past senatorial cycle saw record-shattering amounts of money spent and featured a colorful cast of candidates, but at the end of the day, the elections were defined, mostly, by partisan loyalty.

In 2016, all 34 states that had Senate races voted the exact same way for both their presidential and senatorial contests. With the exception of Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), that was the case in 2020 as well, though Sens. David Perdue (R-GA) and Kelly Loeffler (R-GA) may end up prevailing in their runoffs in a state that Joe Biden narrowly carried.

Still, the 2020 races featured some longtime incumbents who have seen major changes in their electoral coalitions over the years. As we start to sift through the results, South Carolina, Kentucky, and Illinois stand out as states that are especially notable.

While the Crystal Ball didn't see the South Carolina Senate race as competitive early in the cycle, as the campaign got underway, it appeared that former state Democratic Party chairman Jaime Harrison was picking up steam in his effort to deny Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) a fourth term.

After a preponderance of polling earlier this year suggesting that Graham was running behind President Trump, Quinnipiac University showed the Senate race tied at 48% in late September. Tellingly, Trump was taking that same vote share, and leading Biden 48%-47%.

To political observers, there was little doubt that Trump would end up carrying the Palmetto State, though most polling pointed to a single-digit race. Still, it must have been reassuring to the Graham campaign that they were running even with the president, and that's almost exactly how the race ended up.

Trump took 55.1% in South Carolina, and Graham finished only slightly behind, at 54.4%. So for all of the seeming drama in the race, Graham's margin ended up being 10.3%, only a little bit worse than Trump's 11.7% win. Drilling down to the precinct level it's apparent why; very few Trump voters split their tickets (Map 1).

Of the roughly 2,260 precincts in the state, only 46 crossed over between the parties; 37 precincts that voted for Trump went for Harrison in the Senate race, and nine Biden precincts did so for Graham. Another six precincts were tied in either race. So overall, almost 98% of the state's precincts were loyal to one party for both races.

This election marked the first time in Graham's

career where he lost one of the state's most populous counties, Charleston. A relatively large county with a Democratic base (it's roughly 30% Black), it's impressive, in retrospect, that Graham carried it in some recent elections. In 2014, he had the luxury of running in an overwhelmingly Republican midterm, but in 2008, a much more Democratic year, he demonstrated considerable crossover appeal there. As then-candidate Barack Obama carried it by eight percentage points, Graham did so 52%-47%.

Of the nine Biden/Graham precincts, six were in Charleston County, suggesting that, despite tying himself closely to Trump over the last few years, Graham retained a modicum of crossover appeal in the area. Specifically, the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood, a 90% white town that hugs the coast, came in especially well for Graham, as four

Biden precincts in the area split their tickets for him. As we highlighted in an article right after the election, going one state north, Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC) benefitted from a similar dynamic in the southern Charlotte area.

Across the South, Biden seemed relatively weak in the Black Belt, a region arching from east Texas up to Southside Virginia. Though the region derives its name from the soil, counties in this rural stretch tend to have high Black populations.

In the closing weeks of the campaign, the Harrison campaign tried, in a sometimes not-so-covert fashion, to prop up the third candidate in his race, Constitution Party nominee Bill Bledsoe. Though Bledsoe dropped out a month before the election and endorsed Graham, his name was still set to appear on the ballot. The thinking by Democrats was that if they could siphon off some of Graham's support, it would be easier for Harrison to squeak by with a plurality.

But last month, support for Bledsoe hardly materialized. He took just 1.3% of the vote and didn't run especially well Upstate. It was further evidence that Trump voters generally stayed loyal to Graham.

McConnell in Kentucky

Though Graham's high position on Democrats' target list was fairly novel for 2020, another red state senator that Democrats always seem to target – and come up short against – is Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY).

McConnell was easily reelected against Marine veteran Amy McGrath (D). Though he ran a bit worse than Trump in the state, winning by about 20% points instead of the Trump plurality of 26%, the result was one of the widest margins of his career.

Going into the election, McGrath's campaign raised nearly \$90 million, but only ended up carrying three of the commonwealth's 120 counties, Jefferson (Louisville), Fayette (Lexington), and Franklin (Frankfort). That type of geographic strength enabled McConnell to reach something of an electoral milestone; as of 2020, he's carried



every county in a general election at some point in his career.

When he first won in 1984, McConnell was seen as a fresh, if ambitious, face with a reformist image, in part from his time as Jefferson County's top executive. He carried the counties in the darkest shade of blue on Map 2 that year. In fact, when McConnell won in 1984, he was the first Republican to win statewide (excluding presidential races) since 1968; Republicans currently hold everything but the governorship in the state.

In the 1990s, McConnell began to make real inroads into areas that had previously been hostile to Republicans. In Kentucky, both the eastern and western extremes of the state were known for their ancestrally Democratic tendencies; the agrarian west because of its culturally southern orientation, and the mining-heavy east has had a strong history with organized labor since the days of the New Deal, though some western counties are also home to coal mines.

In his two reelection efforts that decade, McConnell faced races that were at least somewhat competitive, and he flipped the counties in lighter shades of blue. In 1996, he beat back future Gov. Steve Beshear (D-KY) by 13%, even as Bill Clinton narrowly claimed Kentucky's electoral votes.

Perhaps because of the 1996 result, Democrats largely punted on the race in 2002. McConnell was reelected 65%-35%, his most robust margin ever. He picked up the counties in yellow, this was the first year that he swept all the counties that make up the Jackson Purchase, and he continued to gain out east.

The 2008 race was arguably the last truly competitive of McConnell's career; in an unfavorable environment, he won 53%-47% but didn't flip any new counties (why Map 2 doesn't have a color to represent that year). In 2014, against a heralded challenger in then-Kentucky Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes (D), McConnell flipped the orange counties on Map 2, and by wide margins. Knott County, near the Virginia border, supported every Democratic presidential candidate from 1884 to 2004. It gave McConnell just 38% in 2008 but voted for him 59%-38% against Grimes, a sign that presidential trends were seeping down the ballot.

Going into 2020, the only holdouts left were Elliott and Wolfe counties; they ended up buckling, and are the two red counties on Map 2. The former is known for its historic loyalty to the Democratic Party. Even in 2016, as Trump's presence atop the ticket generated a GOP riptide that swept through much of the state, voters in Elliott County seemed willing to split their tickets as Trump took 70% there in 2016, breaking the county's longstanding



streak of supporting Democrats for president, Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) lost it by 12%. But this year, Trump carried the small county three to one, and McConnell took two-thirds of its vote.

Durbin in Illinois

One state over, Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) is another senator who has seen lasting changes in his electoral coalitions over the years. While Illinois hasn't certified its votes yet, the pattern is clear.

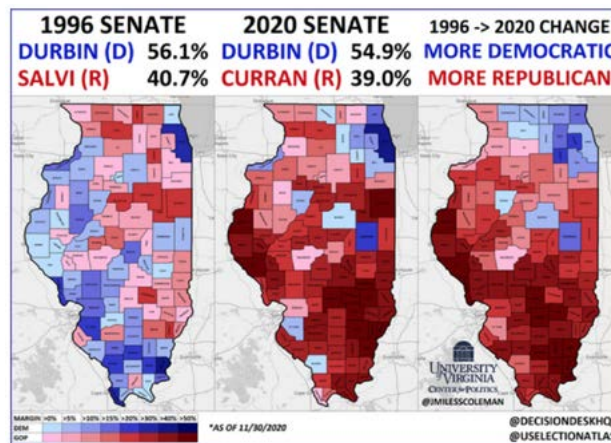
Durbin was first elected to the House in 1982, representing a Downstate district in between the Springfield and St. Louis areas. When another fellow Downstate Democrat, then-Sen. Paul Simon, retired from the Senate in 1996, Durbin ran for the seat, and he carried most counties south of St. Louis. As those demographically whiter and more rural counties have drifted Republican in past decades, Durbin's coalition has increasingly become more urban and suburban.

This year, other than narrowly losing McHenry County, he carried every county that touches Chicago's Cook; these formerly Republican suburban counties are known collectively as the Chicago's Collar Counties. In 1996, he lost the largest collar county, DuPage, by 10 percentage points; last month, Durbin got the same 55% there as he did statewide.

Durbin held a smattering of Downstate counties, but this seems like more a sign of his strength with white collar academ-

ics than blue collar workers. Aside from St. Clair County in the St. Louis metro area, with its large Black population, every county south of Peoria that he won last month is home to a major university: Champaign (University of Illinois), McLean (Illinois State University) and Jackson (Southern Illinois University).

To be fair, Durbin did perform relatively well, compared to Biden, in the counties that made up his old congressional district. In rural counties such as Brown, Calhoun, and Macoupin, he ran double-digits ahead of the national ticket – but often, it was a case of Durbin polling in the 30s, compared to Biden, who was in the 20s. ❖



Jennifer Rubin, Washington Post: Sen. Mike Braun (R-Ind.) represents the worst of the Republican Party these days — willing to lie about an election outcome and undermine democracy, and unwilling to take responsibility for the damage he is doing. Appearing on ABC’s “This Week,” he repeatedly tried to suggest there was still some doubt as to the election results. GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS: I’m glad to have you. As I said, Joe Biden’s victory has now been certified in states totaling 279 electoral votes. So do you now accept that he’s president-elect? BRAUN: Well, we’ve got a process that I think we’ve been going through since the election, and it’s going to play itself out. I think that we’ve got a threshold coming on December 14th that — when the electoral college meets. ... So whether we dismiss it reflexively, whether we would find widespread fraud, there’s a wide gulf in between. And I think that, when you just say that there’s nothing there, you’re going to have half of the country uncertain about what just happened and disgruntled going into the future. STEPHANOPOULOS: But, sir, I think it’s pretty hard to argue that it’s been reflexively dismissed. So the process has played out, hasn’t it? And there’s no evidence of widespread fraud. Why can’t you accept the results? BRAUN: I think it’s easy to say it’s played out because that might be the most convenient thing to say, but let’s look at what the secretary of state did not mention in Georgia, you know, the video where, after a counting place closed, you see boxes of ballots coming out from underneath the table. I know that’s, kind of, a graphic example, but ... STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I have to stop you right there. No, that — it wasn’t mentioned because it didn’t show anything improper. He’s spoken to that this week. They — that was exactly the proper process for counting the ballots. There wasn’t anything wrong shown in that video at all. So you’re just throwing out a claim out there that ... STEPHANOPOULOS: ... that doesn’t prove what you’re saying. BRAUN: I think, unless you scrutinize something like that further — or what about, like, say, Wisconsin, where ... STEPHANOPOULOS: It was scrutinized. Back and forth it went. At some point one wished Stephanopoulos had simply ended the interview altogether, explained to his audience Braun was lying and pointed out that he is among the majority of Republican senators willing to undermine a democratic election. ❖



John Krull, Statehouse File: They use the same words. Every time. Whenever I get an email or note from a Donald Trump supporter arguing that the president couldn’t possibly have lost the 2020 election because, they say, “Joe Biden barely even campaigned.” Their complaint misses the mark on at least two counts. The first is the least important. The contention that Biden beat Trump “without ever leaving his basement” —another favorite phrase — doesn’t exactly reflect well on their candidate. Arguing that their guy got beat by someone who didn’t have to work all that hard to administer the beating is less

than a sterling endorsement of the president’s strengths as a campaigner. But that’s not the Trump supporters’ biggest misunderstanding regarding why their candidate lost this time around. In one important way, it didn’t matter who ran against Donald Trump this year or what sort of campaign that person ran. That’s because, as he does with all things, the president made this race all about him.

He turned the 2020 presidential election into a contest not between competing visions for the country and its future but into something singular and far more personal. A referendum on Donald Trump. He made it into an up-or-down vote not just on whether he was a good president, but whether he was someone with whom Americans wanted to spend another four years. And he lost. Big. Joe Biden was almost irrelevant to that debate. All Biden had to do was be friendly and inoffensive and say, “I’m not Donald Trump.” ❖

Mike Allen, Axios: President Trump’s election loss has upended America’s news landscape, cementing a parallel universe on the right where even Fox News isn’t Trumpy enough for millions of his diehards. The coming diffusion of news across many easily-accessible streaming channels will likely cause Americans to become even further entrenched in their own, partisan filter bubbles. This could lead to the most profound change in news consumption that America has seen in decades. After years of dominance in cable ratings by Rupert Murdoch’s Fox News, CNN in the past few weeks has pulled ahead consistently for the first time since 9/11. In the week ending Sunday, CNN averaged 1.73 million viewers in Nielsen ratings — more than double from a year ago, AP reports. Fox News had 1.56 million. MSNBC had 1.53 million. Fox News is facing unprecedented competition from a pair of insurgent conservative cable challengers that are finding a gold mine in pandering to Trump loyalists who want to believe he still has a chance. On Monday, ratings for Newsmax passed Fox for the first time ever, CNN’s Brian Stelter reports. ❖

Pat Forde, Sports Illustrated: Welcome back for the latest episode of college athletics’ surprise hit series of 2020: “What The Hell Will The Big Ten Do Now?” The latest issue is the COVID-19-induced demise of Ohio State-Michigan, the conference’s centerpiece game, which will not be played for the first time since 1917. Regardless of the lopsided nature of the rivalry, this is a blow for the fans of both teams, the Big Ten, and college football as a whole. The game is a genuine slice of Americana, and losing it is both a shame and completely predictable when trying to play sports amidst a pandemic. But the ramifications of not playing this game reverberate well beyond the loss of a cherished rivalry. This leaves the 5–0 Buckeyes — thus far the best team in the Big Ten, and in the thick of the College Football Playoff race — a game short of eligibility for the league title and a spot in its championship game. ❖

33% of Hoosier restaurants teeter

INDIANAPOLIS — Results from a National Restaurant Association November 2020 Indiana restaurant impact survey have been released. Chief among those results show 33% of Indiana operators say it is unlikely their restaurant will still be in business six months from now, if there are no additional relief packages from the federal government. Indiana has seen nearly 20% of restaurants permanently close since March. Additionally, although many restaurants added back employees after the initial lockdowns, overall staffing levels remain well below normal, with 87% of Indiana operators say their current staffing level is lower than what it would normally be in the absence of COVID-19. This is a 17% decrease in staffing levels since September. "These results prove that Indiana restaurant business conditions continued to deteriorate the past three months without any additional federal relief," Patrick Tamm, CEO of the Indiana Restaurant and Lodging Association said. "It is imperative that the hospitality industry be considered in a federal relief package to keep employees working and restaurants in business." Absent additional government assistance, one option is to close the restaurant until business conditions improve, with 29% of Indiana operators say they are considering temporarily closing their restaurant until the COVID-19 pandemic passes.



Buttigieg could get China post

WILMINGTON, Del. — Biden is considering a high-profile ambassadorship for Pete Buttigieg, possibly sending him to China, people familiar with the matter tell Axios. The 38-year-old former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, whom the president-elect has compared to his late son, Beau, played a key role in Biden's

nomination. Letting him deepen his foreign policy chops could boost his future, since many inside the Democratic Party believe his return as a presidential candidate is a matter of when, not if.

SCOTUS rejects Trump challenge

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected Republicans' last-gasp bid to reverse Pennsylvania's certification of President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the electoral battleground (AP). The court without comment refused to call into question the certification process in Pennsylvania. Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf already has certified Biden's victory over President Donald Trump and the state's 20 electors are to meet on Dec. 14 to cast their votes for Biden. In any case, Biden won 306 electoral votes, so even if Pennsylvania's results had been in doubt, he still would have more than the 270 electoral votes needed to become president.

Biden vows to reopen schools

WASHINGTON — Joe Biden pledged Tuesday to bring the coronavirus pandemic under enough control to open most of the nation's schools during his first 100 days as president — going much further on the issue than he has in the past, even while warning that the U.S. is facing a "dark winter" (AP). The president-elect said that promise is dependent on Congress providing sufficient funding to protect students, teachers and campus staff. He made it during an event in Delaware to introduce a team of health experts set to help the new administration combat a virus that has already killed more than 285,000 Americans. "It should be a national priority to get our kids back into school and keep them in school," Biden said. "If Congress provides the funding, we need to protect students, educators and staff. If states and cit-

ies put strong public health measures in place that we all follow, then my team will work to see that the majority of our schools can be open by the end of my first 100 days."

IU, Purdue game still on; OSU idled

BLOOMINGTON -- The Indiana football team has paused all team-related activities due to an increase in COVID-19 cases within the program (Indiana Public Media). The IU Athletic department said in a statement released Tuesday evening that the team did not practice Tuesday morning. All players, coaches, and staff were tested. "In consultation with our medical experts, we decided this is the appropriate decision at this time. We will continue to assess the situation moving forward," IU Athletic Director Dolson said. Ohio State's game with Michigan has been cancelled, give IU a chance to play in the Big Ten title game. Purdue canceled its football practice Tuesday "to evaluate the results of recent COVID-19 testing," according to a news release. No decision has been made on Saturday's game against Purdue.

AZ/Oxford vaccine under fire with FDA

WASHINGTON — On the afternoon of Sept. 8, AstraZeneca officials had a conference call with the Food and Drug Administration. The discussion covered important (New York Times). A few hours after the conference call, the story broke about the halted trials. That was how key FDA officials heard the news, according to people with knowledge of the discussions. Commissioner Stephen Hahn, was stunned by AstraZeneca's failure to disclose the halt to regulators, one of the people said. The U.S. government had pledged more than \$1 billion to AstraZeneca to finance the development and manufacturing of its vaccine and to supply the United States with 300 million doses.