



Chairman Shine on party evolution

Dean of GOP county chairs talks of changes to Indiana's parties

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

FORT WAYNE – Since 1961, Allen County Republicans have been led by just two chairmen, Orvas Beers and Steve Shine, who was reelected on March 6.

When Beers took the GOP mantle, the United States was less than a decade into a new technology – television. When Shine took over the party in 1993, conservative talk radio was coming in bloom and the new forum of the day, the World Wide Web, was just a few years away from wide use.

"The job was changing when I took it in 1993," Shine, the dean of Indiana GOP county chairs, told Howey Politics Indiana on Tuesday. "What has happened is it's no longer picking favorites. It's no longer telling people they have permission to run or they can't



run. It's no longer telling a candidate how to run their campaign, unless it is out of bounds."

During the past 60 years, Indiana's political parties have realigned in profound ways. After a license branch scandal in South Bend that involved the purchase of a race horse, Gov. Robert Orr moved to decouple the Bureau of Motor Vehicles from political parties.

The late 1980s and 1990s also saw an end to political patronage, where jobs were part of the so-called "2% Club," with loyalty deductions from the

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Rokita's job ethics

By **DAVE KITCHELL**

LOGANSPORT – It's one thing for a public official to accept donations from the private sector when the transparency is required by law. But it's another thing entirely when a sitting public official is on the payroll for multiple companies as a "part-time employee" with no benefits.



The real benefit is for the private sector companies that leave the appearance the Indiana attorney general is in their pocket because their money is in his.

The sudden revelations of Todd Rokita's questionable ethical practices just over two months into office raise several questions. Not the least of those questions is, "Who is the Indiana attorney general really



"I would recommend the vaccine. And I would recommend it to a lot of people who don't want to get it, and a lot of those people voted for me, frankly."

- Former president Donald Trump, asked by Fox News' Maria Bartiromo on if he is urging supporters to get the COVID vaccine.



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Jack E. Howey
 editor emeritus
 1926-2019



working for, Hoosiers in 92 counties or private companies that aren't required to divulge their connections under state law?"

It would seem that while the Indiana General Assembly has spent much of this session trying to rein in the emergency powers of the governor, they really should focus more on the state's top attorney. Even after Rokita resigned one of his positions, the Indianapolis Star uncovered at least four more. How many more are there exactly, Mr. Rokita?

It's ironic that Republicans back in 2016 battered Evan Bayh for all the corporate connections he had while a U.S. senator, yet we're hearing nothing but crickets from the GOP on Rokita's blatant avoidance of transparency. Clearly, he should make all his compensation and stock options from companies who pay him available to the public. The Indiana Ethics Commission should review the situation and examine how other states have handled the same issue.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, historically a conservative organization that supports Republicans, issued a report on state attorney general ethics in 2007. In it were these words about attorneys general and ethical conduct: "Because of their important function in government and law enforcement, AGs must hold themselves to high ethical standards

commensurate with the obligations and responsibilities of their positions. Further, the standards and policies that guide their conduct should be clearly articulated and transparent in order to ensure consistency and fairness in their exercise of the state's power."

Agreed.

The report goes on to say, "AGs must not engage in outside activities that create or appear to create a conflict of interest with their official duties."

Whether or not Rokita had conflicts of interest, it's the appearance that he could have because he didn't make these clear up front when he was running for the office last year. Moreover, Republicans sought a candidate with more personal integrity than their previous party nominee. While Curtis Hill had one incident that did him in politically, Rokita apparently has several instances of potential conflicts of interest that merit review, if not rebuke.

I can remember the first time I met Todd Rokita following the 2000 election. A fresh-faced secretary of state then wanted to do the right thing and modernize Indiana's voting machines, a move that added integrity to our electoral process.

Now, it's time for Rokita to further the state's integrity and not

wait for the governor of his own party to ask him to resign his lucrative part-time employment and stock options or give up the highest legal office next to the Indiana Supreme Court chief justice. If he doesn't, the public should

demand it, and nothing less. ❖

Kitchell is the former Democratic mayor of Logansport.

Shine, from page 1

paychecks of political appointees as well as wild employment swings whenever the governorship switched parties were the lay of the land.

Shine was an attorney who Beers had befriended shortly after he returned to Fort Wayne from Indiana University in the 1970s. Beers was part of a GOP power consortium, led by Marion County Chairman Keith Bulen, that included Don Cox from Vanderburgh County, Virgil Scheidt from Bartholomew, and Buena Chaney from Vigo who had immense sway over gubernatorial nominees and statewide tickets.

By the late 1970s, the power of the chair had begun to erode. Dan Quayle's first congressional run in 1976 came independent of Beers and the Allen County GOP, with Marilyn Quayle running the campaign out of a downtown Fort Wayne pizza joint.

Beers saw the writing on the wall in the 1992 Republican 4th CD primary when he openly backed a college student named Phil Troyer in the primary as he sought to reclaim Vice President Dan Quayle and U.S. Sen. Dan Coats's old congressional seat from U.S. Rep. Jill Long. Troyer was upset in the primary by "the candidate from hell," Chuck Pierson, a gadfly unknown who worked gun shows to win the nomination, only to lose to Long that November.

Despite their relationship, Beers backed long-time Fort Wayne Republican Chairman Alan McMahan, while Shine spent much of that winter meeting with groups of precinct officials around the county, pulling off a stunning 228-161 upset on March 6, 1993. Shine's campaign manager and long-time law partner Tom Hardin set up 20 ward meetings in living rooms. "They clearly told me they felt they haven't been included in the process," Shine said of precinct officials.

"For those of you who supported my opponent, I can understand the sting of defeat," Shine told caucus at Northrop HS, "but as you leave this hall, remember that our party, our county and our cities are entering crucial times. The future of generations will be affected by the decisions Republican officeholders will be making in the next 10 years. The people need your service."

The change of guard to Chairman Shine signaled the first tangible change in the Indiana Republican Party, which was still smarting over Rep. Long's 1989 upset vic-

tory in the 4th CD, and had been shut out of the governor's office in four straight elections.

By the time Shine took the helm, he was well aware that the role of the party was rapidly changing. "It's more of an administrative job in making sure the precinct organization and whoever the candidates are is well-oiled, is running well, is staffed as fully manned," Shine said. The days of choosing winners in the primary, injecting yourself in running someone else's campaign; that is yesteryear up here."

"Two things have greatly changed the chairmanship," Shine continued. "Prior to me there was license bureau reform. As a result the chairman no longer had any financial interests in the number of license plates sold in a particular county. When the license branches were in the hands of the party of the governor, that was handsome revenue for party chairmen. Party chairmen could also rent to the state license bureau buildings and facilities and make money after that. That stopped.

"The other thing were the patronage jobs," Shine added. "For the most part those have been done away with. And the loyalty to a party or having a job in government is not as dependent upon a loyalty to a party as it was 40 years ago. That comes from a time a loyalty contribution to the party was deducted from their paychecks."

Many cite the license branch and patronage reforms as

crimping the two major political parties.

In the decades that followed, Hoosier Republicans have fared far better than Democrats. Indiana is a conservative state, more naturally aligned with the GOP brand. During the era of Govs. Bayh and Frank O'Bannon, Democrats were driven more by personal loyalty than political philosophy. When Republicans turned to more charismatic leaders like Govs. Mitch Daniels, Mike Pence and now Eric Holcomb, they have dominated.

Shine believes the license branch and patronage reforms have actually strengthened Republicans, while weakening Democrats. "It's based greater commitment to a political philosophy than when it was because your employment was based upon that. You were forced to give to that political party whether you believed in it or not. Now people give because they are committed to the cause, as opposed to 'If I don't do this I won't have a job tomorrow.'"



Two other societal changes have brought about the dominance that has resulted in the Hoosier GOP's holding 80% of county elected officials and 90% of county commissioners. The party holds all of the Statehouse constitutional offices and has General Assembly super majorities, holds nine of 11 congressional seats, and a record 71 mayoral offices.

The first occurred in 1987 after the Federal Communications Commission ended the "Fairness Doctrine." That paved the way for conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh and local broadcasters like Mike Pence, WOWO's Pat Miller and the late Charlie Butcher, as well as WIBC's Greg Garrison and Tony Katz.

"With the advent of Rush Limbaugh in 1989, talk radio was just blooming when I became chairman in 1993 and it was extremely helpful," Shine said. "We had Rush Limbaugh, Charlie Butcher and Sean Hannity on radio. This was very helpful because for the most part it was conservatives who were listening. Limbaugh was the bellwether conservative voice and personality that was most responsible for galvanizing conservative thinkers in the Midwest."

Then came social media as the Internet gathered force in the mid- to late-1990s. "With the advent of Facebook and MySpace at first, the ability for people to get their message out in different ways competed with the party organization at times," Shine said. "So you can have political beliefs espoused on social media. They can go toe to toe with big organizations like a state party or a county party. No longer is their message the only message. There are an abundance of voices who may be in lockstep with state and local parties, or they may have a differing point of view and depending who they have as a website designer or a Facebook page, could sway as much as having it was 30 years ago when there was only one voice of a political party. The competing voices from social media have diluted the strength of the political organizations because they were in competition of each other."

Social media has also allowed political campaigns to side-step local media. It's why Mike Pence announced his 2012 gubernatorial campaign via Facebook, and U.S. Sen. Todd Young did so with his reelection campaign earlier this month via Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

The Internet has also "digitalized" much of the political process since Shine arrived in 1993. While it would be impossible to compare the digital width and breadth of Indiana's two major parties, clearly the results suggest the GOP is in far better shape on that front than Indiana Democrats.

"I cannot underscore enough the digitalization of politics, both on social media and as far as the inner workings of the party in terms of software and keeping the affairs managed well," Shine said. "Whether it's only Election Day, whether it's voter turnout, going door to door to see how people feel about issues, or the ability to collect that data, you can do that digitally now and that has enhanced dramatically how things are handled as compared to 1993. I'm very proud of what we do.

"The state party has the latest software and data bases and the results are obviously quite evident in the number of Republican officeholders statewide," Shine explained.

After winning another term on March 6, Shine told Allen County Republicans, "Only when our friends and neighbors see themselves reflected in the identity of the Allen County Republican Party can we attract the best and brightest that Allen County has to offer. They are drawn to our mission of conservative values and good government by the reflection of what they see in us. When this community looks to us, they want to see a reflection of their better, smarter and forward-thinking selves in the mirror. Do they see it? I believe they do.

"Republicans elected the first women, Hispanic-Americans and African Americans to this county's most impactful public offices, including the Allen County prosecutor and Allen County commissioners," Shine continued. "We nominated the first female candidate for mayor in Fort Wayne's history. In 2019, we nominated our first openly LGBTQ candidate for a major municipal office."

The elusive goal that Shine has yet to attain is returning the first Republican as mayor of Fort Wayne since 1995. "2023 will be the year for the GOP," Shine said in expecting four-term Democratic Mayor Tom Henry to retire. "That's the way I look at it. We will increase our majority on the Fort Wayne City Council, we will finally win the elusive mayor's race. It's the first time it's an open seat in 16 years, which gives us great encouragement." ❖

Whitcomb drops out of INDem race

Mike Schmuhl goes into this weekend's Indiana Democratic chair race as a clear favorite, even more so after Trish Whitcomb dropped out following the death of her son last weekend. Former Morgan County Democratic chairman Tom Wallace is also running.

Whitcomb said on Monday, "It is with deep sorrow that I announce

I am withdrawing my candidacy for State Democratic Party chair. I experienced an unimaginable loss on Sunday when my son died unexpectedly. As any parent can imagine, there is no way I can continue my candidacy



to become the next leader of the State Democratic Party. I will continue to work with the party in the future to ensure we have strong candidates and campaigns in any capacity that I can. I appreciate the opportunity to run and wish the next chair all the best."

Schmuhl is a former campaign manager for Pete Buttigieg and Joe Donnelly, who has endorsed his candidacy. Schmuhl said in a statement from him and his vice chair candidate Myla Eldridge, "Over the last few weeks,

Myla and I have been inspired by Trish Whitcomb's passion for Indiana and the Democratic Party in our state. It is heartbreaking to us to learn of her loss, and we join so many across Indiana in offering our sympathy and support to Trish and her family during this difficult time."

In addition to being Morgan County chair, Wallace has been an unsuccessful candidate for Martinsville mayor and the Indiana Senate.

Republican Congressional District Chairs

CD1: Chair Michael Simpson (Porter County), Vice Chair Rachelle Baker (Lake); **CD2:** Chair Zachery Potts (St. Joseph), Vice Chair Courtney Papa (Elkhart); **CD3:** Chair Patricia Brown, (LaGrange), Vice Chair Richard Ring (DeKalb); **CD4:** Chair Randall Head (Cass), Vice Chair Sharon Negele (Fountain); **CD5:** Chair Judy Buck (Howard), Vice Chair Kyle Walker (Marion); **CD6:** Chair Misty Hollis (Wayne), Vice Chair DeWayne Hines (Bartholomew); **CD7:** Chair Lesa Dietrick (Marion), Vice Chair Jefferson Shreve (Marion); **CD8:** Chair Don Hayes (DuBois), Vice Chair Brenda Goff (Posey); and **CD9:** Chair Jamey Noel (Clark), Vice Chair Beth Boyce (Johnson).

Democrat Congressional District Chairs

CD1: Chair Jerome Prince, Vice Chair Karen Tallian; **CD2:** Chair Michelle Livinghouse, Vice Chair Chad Harris; **CD3:** Chair Christine Bohm, Vice Chair Xeryus Johnson; **CD4:** Chair Kathy Altman, Vice Chair Brendan Betz; **CD5:** Chair Cynthia Johnson, Vice Chair Peter Hanscom; **CD6:** Chair Annette Craycraft, Vice Chair Mike Jones; **CD7:** Chair Andrea Scott, Vice Chair Scott Carr; **CD8:** Chair Thomasina Marsili, Vice Chair Ed Adams; and **CD9:** Chair Adam Dickey, Vice Chair Linda Lawson.

Republican county chairs

Adams	Steve Justus
Allen	Steve Shine
Bartholomew	Luann Welmer
Benton	Bruce Buchanan
Blackford	Jack Douglas Beck-

Boone	ley
Brown	Deborah Ottinger
Carroll	Mark Bowman
Cass	Beth Myers
Clark	David Richey
Clay	Jamey Noel
Clinton	Patti Foxx
Crawford	Jim Moyer
	R. Whitney Timber-
	lake
Daviess	Janet Schuler-Hicks
Dearborn	Mark Dole
Decatur	Nathan Harter
DeKalb	Richard Ring
Delaware	Victor Whitehead
DuBois	Cathy "Kitty" Merk-
	ley
Elkhart	Dan Holtz
Fayette	Michael Wenta
Floyd	Jeff Firkin
Fountain	Litany Pyle
Franklin	Neysa Raible
Fulton	Michael Canada
Gibson	John Perkins
Grant	Darren Reese
Greene	Julia Bartlow
Hamilton	Laura Campbell
Hancock	Steven B. Leonard
Harrison	Scott Fluhr
Hendricks	Anne Engelhardt
Henry	Todd Hiday
Howard	Jennifer Jack
Huntington	Marla Foster
Jackson	Amanda Lowery
Jasper	Jeffrey S. Phillips
Jay	Jenae Horn Blasdel
Jefferson	Pamela Crozier
Jennings	Brian D. Hatfield
Johnson	Beth Boyce
Knox	Linda Painter
Kosciusko	Michael Ragan
LaGrange	Patricia A. Brown
Lake	Dan E. Dernul
LaPorte	Allen Stevens
Lawrence	Heath Hawkins
Madison	Russ Willis
Marion	Joe Elsener
Marshall	David R. Holmes
Martin	Mildred Brown
Miami	Matthew Jelenek
Monroe	William Ellis
Montgomery	Jim Johnson
Morgan	Daniel M. Elliott
Newton	Michael Mark
Noble	Shelly Williams
Ohio	Don Thomason
Orange	Amy Morris

Owen	Tony Voelker
Parke	Bill Webster
Perry	Daniel Dupont
Pike	Mark Flint
Porter	Michael D. Simpson
Posey	Greg Newman
Pulaski	Daniel P. Murphy
Putnam	Jason "Beau" Baird
Randolph	Ben Wells
Ripley	John R. Moton
Rush	Janet D. Kile
Scott	Kenny Hughbanks
Shelby	Robert Nolley
Spencer	Jon M. Winkler
St. Joseph	Zachery R. Potts
Starke	David Kesvornas
Steuben	Rick Michael
Sullivan	Cheryl Waterman
Switzerland	Lisa Fisher
Tippecanoe	Tracy Brown
Tipton	Mark Regnier
Union	Lavinia Herzog
Vanderburgh	Mike Duckworth
Vermillion	Tim Yocum
Vigo	Randall Gentry
Wabash	Matt Dillon
Warren	W. Brian Jordan
Warrick	R. Michael Griffin
Washington	Tara Hunt
Wayne	Gary E. Saunders
Wells	Zachary Rodgers
White	Shannon J. Mattix
Whitley	Jon Myers

Democrat county chairs

Adams	Debra Giessler
Allen	Derek Camp
Bartholomew	Steve Schoettmer
Benton	Martin Kennedy
Blackford	John Bartlett
Boone	Ericka Pickell
Brown	Rick Bond
Carroll	Tom Hedde
Cass	Lita Rouser
Clark	Joe Weber
Clay	Evelyn Brown
Clinton	Mark Newhart
Crawford	Rick Grider
Daviess	Ron Critchlow
Dearborn	Dylan Liddle
Decatur	Mimi Pruett
DeKalb	Suzanne Drerup Da-
	vis
Delaware	Ana Quirk Hunter
DuBois	Michael Kendall
Elkhart	Chad Crabtree
Fayette	Tim Rose

Floyd	Adam Dickey	Madison	Tom Newman, Jr.	St. Joseph	Stan Wruble
Fountain	Jayne White	Marion	Kate Sweeney Bell	Starke	Lonnie Boley
Franklin	Glenn Bailey	Marshall	Shiloh Carothers	Steuben	Judy Rowe
Fulton	James Frost		Milner	Sullivan	Logan Pearson
Gibson	Robert Rowe	Martin	Roger Downey	Switzerland	Mike Jones
Grant	Terry Stodghill	Miami	AJ Rogers	Tippecanoe	Jacqueline Chosnek
Greene	Jeff Sparks	Monroe	Jennifer Crossley	Tipton	Kenny Ziegler
Hamilton	Dayna Colbert	Montgomery	Virginia Servies	Union	Dennis Spaeth
Hancock	Linda Genrich	Morgan	Tiffany Grant	Vanderburgh	Cheryl Schultz
Harrison	Graylin Porter	Newton	Roxanna Hanford	Vermillion	Joanie Kanizer
Hendricks	Cindy Hohman	Noble	Darlene Truman	Vigo	Joseph Etling
Henry	Alan McCraine	Ohio	Tammy Brett	Wabash	Chad Harris
Howard	Steve Daily	Orange	Brandy Terrell	Warren	Randy Wurtsbaugh
Huntington	Christine Bohm	Owen	Anita Morgan	Warrick	Stephanie Gerhardt
Jackson	Jeanette Hackman	Parke	Nancy Smith Swaim	Washington	James Logan Cockerham
Jasper	Mike Wheeler	Perry	Ryan Risse		
Jay	Tina Elliot	Pike	Twyla Flint	Wayne	James Christopher (Chris) Hardie
Jefferson	John Hutchinson	Porter	Drew Wenger		Dylan McIntosh
Jennings	Jane Cocquerille	Posey	Ed Adams	Wells	Kathy Altman
Johnson	Amanda Stevenson-Holmes	Pulaski	Doug Denton	White	Vivian Sade
		Putnam	Kimberly Fidler	Whitley	
Knox	Marsha Fleming	Randolph	Bart Wayne Teeters		
Kosciusko	Vicki Morton	Ripley	Paul Satchwill		
LaGrange	Stephen Liechty	Rush	Michelle McLaughlin		
Lake	Jim Wieser	Scott	Dennis Wilson		
LaPorte	Vidya Kora, MD	Shelby	Bob Williams		
Lawrence	Clarice Guy	Spencer	Steve Rininger		

Holcomb tabs Sullivan for secretary of state; '22 challenge likely

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Gov. Eric Holcomb announced Tuesday that State Rep. Holli Sullivan has been selected to be the new secretary of state replacing Connie Lawson.

“Not only Sec. Sullivan has worked with Connie Lawson, (they’ve) worked on mutual interests,” said Holcomb, who predicted a “seamless transition.”

The Evansville Republican, who has no experience conducting an election, could face a Republican Convention

challenge from Newton County Commissioner Kyle D. Conrad. “With the appointment of an inexperienced Secretary of State now in charge of our elections, I feel it’s time I offer up my 30 years of election administration experience to the people of Indiana, which was overlooked in the recent appointment

process,” Conrad told HPI on Wednesday.

Sullivan, who has held management jobs with General Motors and Toyota, doesn’t have the elections experience of her predecessors, as a county clerk or secretary of state office staffer, according to the Associated Press. Holcomb said that “Sec. Sullivan has been working closely with Sec. Lawson on issues of mutual interest and have gotten deep into the weeds and made a lot of progress together.”

Holcomb said he expects Sullivan to “hit the ground running because of all their work and collabora-



tion to get to this moment. The Lawson legacy leaves big shoes to fill, but you are the absolutely perfect person to lead."

Holcomb said there were a "number of qualified" applicants but, looking toward Sullivan, "You never relinquished that pole position. You did step up in that state-wide leadership role. What really jumped out at me is your commitment to your community."

Holcomb cited Sullivan's work in the Legislature sponsoring a bill to improve election cybersecurity last year and others pertaining to other functions of the office, which include registering businesses and regulating the securities industry.

"I come into this job with eight years' experience in the legislature with many different leadership roles," Sullivan said. She said she partnered with the secretary of state's office to "modernize the Indiana code. I also come in with an engineering background that specializes in project management. That's exactly what I want to do with the secretary of state's office, which is to take on the future of election security and put processes in place for that to happen for the future of election infrastructure and the planning that goes into that for the next two, four, eight years."

She called the cyber security bill "enabling legislation that allowed for election cyber security infrastructure to be in place prior to the 2020 election. So I look forward to continuing that and using my legislative background as well as my engineering background to put together the future of election integrity."

Sullivan serves as Budget Subcommittee chair on the House Ways and Means Committee, where she oversees the creation of the state's biennial budget. She also serves as vice chair of the House Rules and Legislative Procedures Committee, is a member of the House Elections and Apportionment Committee and a member of POWER, the House's bipartisan women's caucus. She also serves as the current vice chair of the Indiana Republican Party.

Asked about the Indiana election process, Sullivan said, "I think Indiana has become a national leader in election integrity and transparency. I, for one, am extremely confident in Indiana elections and I hope Hoosiers are, too."

Of pending election bills SB353 and SB398 that would prevent election date changes similar to the postponed 2020 primary election due to the pandemic, Sullivan said, "I firmly believe that the governor and Sec. Lawson and our party leaders executed a well-run election in 2020 and one of the biggest benefits we had was being able to gain more time to make safe and educated decisions to keep Hoosiers safe during that election cycle."

Asked if she would endorse expanded mail-in

ballots that were used in the 2020 primary but not the general election, Sullivan said, "There is a strong balance between in-person and mail-in voting. I think that balance needs to be there. This matter is before the courts and at this time I don't feel I need to make any further comments."

Asked if she would seek a full term in 2022, Sullivan said, "I am extremely excited to take the oath of office. I plan to make the transition when I walk down there in about a half an hour and I'll announce those future decisions soon."

On Indiana's historic low voter turnout, Sullivan said she was excited about getting to "serve all Hoosiers." She said she planned to use the resources of the office to "encourage turnout, but, more importantly, they will have confidence each of their votes will count."

Asked by reporters if the 2020 election was "legitimate across the United States," Sullivan said, "Today I am hyper focused on Indiana. When I look at Indiana I have the utmost confidence in Indiana's elections. That's where we're going to focus and that's the election we're going to continue to defend."

Conrad ponders running

Sullivan's lack of overseeing actual elections caught the attention of Commissioner Conrad, who said he is putting together an exploratory committee to run for secretary of state at the 2022 Republican Convention.

"I've breathed elections since 1991 and believe I would be one of the most qualified Secretary of State candidates in recent memory," Conrad said. He was appointed Newton County clerk and was elected twice. He then spent 10 years as an account manager for an election vendor. He also spent five years on the Republican State Committee and headed the Indiana County Clerks Association. "I can say I understand elections from every angle," he said.

Conrad said he was one of a handful of county clerks who applied for the job after Lawson announced her resignation.

"I have no doubt that Sec. Sullivan is a dedicated public servant and probably a nice person, but at a time of concerns about election security, transparency and access, I have concerns that the secretary of state has yet to preside over an election," Conrad said. "How many elections does it take to get up to speed?"

Republican Diego Morales, who lost a primary race for the 4th CD in 2018, has already declared his candidacy for the office. ❖



St. Joe Dem chair quarrel a burst from the past

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – The quarrelsome contest for St. Joseph County Democratic chair, with a swirl of contentious statements, involvement by the mayor of South Bend, the return of Butch Morgan and a bitter aftermath, was like something from the past.



Back when county chairs were really important, always in the news, with powerful precinct organizations slating nominees. Back when, if the governor was of the same party, chairs could manage license bureaus as their own private enterprise, operating in shabby low-cost facilities, legally pocketing profits from fees paid by motorists. Back when chairs wielded patronage power, with applicants for fire and police departments and even for summer internships in the parks requiring party blessing.

In citing how things have changed, with less patronage, less power and less public recognition, I'm not seeking to belittle the big win of Stan Wruble as Democratic chair.

Wruble retained the post impressively in the vote of Democratic precinct committee members, the people who select the chair. He had a lot more clout with them than South Bend Mayor James Mueller, who endorsed challenger Dave Nufer. Wruble's victory also dispelled any myth that former chair Morgan still held the power in the party. Morgan also endorsed Nufer, his right after paying the terrible price, prison, for illegal shenanigans with petitions.

It means Wruble emerges with more power, though not like the power of old. And whether he uses it to unite the party or to pursue revenge against Democrats who dared to oppose him is now the question. Peace wasn't restored. After winning, Wruble sent an email to the precinct people citing accusations that the mayor had tried "an unwarranted and naked attempt at a power grab" and engaged in "divisive involvement in the (party) reorganization when you showed little interest in the party after your election in 2019."

Wruble also is suggesting illegal conduct by city council members – Democrats who opposed him. Much has changed from the past, with less significant roles for chairs and for the precinct people who once were themselves involved in election battles for their roles. Now it's hard to find people willing to serve.

But history does repeat. Jason Critchlow, a former chair who backed Wruble, called me two days before the vote to ask if I knew about a past time he had heard of when a former mayor, Pete Nemeth, sought to oust a chair and failed. I did, and I found a file with details. It was in 1976, when Nemeth sought to oust Joe Doran, then the chair. Nemeth backed Thomas J. Brunner, the highly regarded and civic-minded lawyer who recently passed away. Brunner then was city attorney. But the precinct people wouldn't follow the mayor. Doran won, 269 to 122.

Critchlow foresaw a similar result. Well, Wruble beat Nufer 178 to 74.

Maybe Wruble will bring his promised stronger party. Maybe he will do the opposite, splintering it. Either way, he won't have the clout of chairs past. License bureau patronage gave power and personal profits to chairs until 1988, when the state took over operation of the license branches. Gov. Bob Orr convinced the legislature to make the change, for good government and for the sake of the Republican Party. Because Orr was a Republican, the patronage was going to Republican county chairs. And scandals and complaints about inefficient, inconvenient branches were hurting GOP candidates.

Many chairs, pocketing profits from branch fees after expenses, operated their branches in low-rent dumps, with low-paid help often inefficient and not exactly courteous. But motorists had to go there. A lot of Democratic chairs operated branches on the cheap as



Former St. Joseph County Democratic chairman Butch Morgan (left), current Chairman Stan Wruble, and defeated challenger Dave Nufer.

well, under Democratic governors. Some of the patronage, perfectly legal then, now would bring criminal charges.

So, things have changed. Clout for a chair is diminished. But enough remains for a quarrelsome contest like something from the past. ❖

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

Holcomb to address state on Tuesday

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana is losing ground in vaccinating its residents compared with other states, but Gov. Eric Holcomb’s administration said Wednesday that’s because the state isn’t receiving its fair share of doses (Kelly, [Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). The news came during Holcomb’s weekly COVID-19 briefing, where he also announced he will give a statewide address at 5:30 p.m.



Tuesday to lay out the future path for moving out of the pandemic. Holcomb says he wants to belabor the point about dose allocation, and his administration is pushing federal partners for more doses.

According to CDC data, Indiana ranks 42nd in the proportion of the state population that is either partly or fully vaccinated. But the state is above the national average in getting the doses it receives into arms. State Health Commissioner Dr. Kris Box said Indiana is getting thousands fewer doses per 100,000 residents than other states – ranking Indiana 47th.

Rokita defends emergency powers

Indiana’s attorney general’s office vigorously defended Gov. Eric Holcomb’s emergency powers in response to a restaurant’s lawsuit challenging his order that masks must be worn inside restaurants to stem the spread of the coronavirus ([Associated Press](#)). That defense of Holcomb’s action comes even though Republican Attorney General Todd Rokita, who took office in January, previously called for curbing the governor’s authority.

Yergy’s State Road BBQ in Bluffton filed a suit in December against the Wells County Health Department, Holcomb and the state after it was shut down for violating face-covering requirements and capacity limits. The lawsuit contends the county health order closing the restaurant was based on unconstitutional executive orders issued by the governor and that Holcomb didn’t have authority to mandate mask-wearing without backing from the Legislature. The restaurant in the town about 20 miles south of Fort Wayne maintains the order caused “unjust injury to Yergy’s fundamental civil rights, liberty interests and property rights.” The state attorney general’s office, however, argues that based on “broad, clear, and unambiguous language” of the Indiana’s emergency powers law, the General Assembly “intended to grant the executive branch the authority to protect Hoosiers through an emergency declaration.”

“Acting well within the limits of the United States and Indiana constitutions and the Indiana Code, the governor carried out his duties in a reasonable and necessary way to address an unprecedented emergency, af-

fecting not only Indiana and the United States, but also the world,” the state’s attorneys wrote in a motion. The attorney general’s office pointed to a U.S. district judge’s ruling in December denying a request from more than 15 Indianapolis bars that wanted to end coronavirus restrictions put in place by Mayor Joe Hogsett.

Bill sets legal defense for marijuana users

Indiana is one step closer to providing a defense for drivers with marijuana in their system. Lawmakers don’t want to legalize driving while high, but they do hope to protect people under certain conditions (Sullivan, [Fox59](#)). Marijuana is not legal to consume in Indiana, but it is in neighboring states. “Individuals, you know, in other states can consume marijuana legally, but as soon as they would enter into the state of Indiana, they start driving on our roads, they would be per se OWI simply because the presence of marijuana is in their system,” explained the bill’s sponsor in the House, State Rep. John Young. The Indiana Public Defender Council said many clients have been charged with an OWI even though they weren’t impaired at the time of driving. “This provides a defense for those who maybe used marijuana on a different day,” said Indiana Public Defender Council’s Michael Moore. If police document signs of impairment, this defense won’t work for drivers who test positive for the substance. “If there is no proof that the individual is impaired and the only evidence is the marijuana or the metabolite in the system, that’s when I believe it would become a defense,” said Rep. Young.

Lawmakers tinker with tax sale bill

State lawmakers are continuing to tinker with legislation aimed at excluding so-called bad actors from participating in the tax sale process in Lake County and across Indiana (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Senate Bill 28 would explicitly prohibit individuals who owe tax debts from bidding on properties at county tax sales and also bar ineligible bidders from hiding behind a business or corporate entity to acquire tax sale properties. On Wednesday, the House Local Government Committee agreed to enforce that provision by requiring every tax sale bidder acknowledge, under penalty of perjury, they are aware of the bidding eligibility standards and agree to abide by them. In addition, the revised legislation now provides that ineligible bidders who nevertheless make purchases at a tax sale may have their acquisitions forfeited and lose some or all of the money they paid for them. At the same time, if an ineligible bidder is not discovered until after the tax sale process is complete, and the property already has been sold to an unconnected buyer, then the property will not be taken back. Though the ineligible bidder still may be subject to fines and penalties. State Sen. Rick Niemeyer, R-Lowell, said he expects these reforms will help attract buyers who intend to actually redeem tax sale properties and get them back on the regular tax rolls. ❖

Helping Ninjas invade Statehouse on Friday

By ANNE LAKER

CARMEL — This Friday, Hoosier youth will gather on the Statehouse lawn to demand “immediate, concrete, and ambitious action from global leaders to address the climate crisis.” One person likely to be there is 11-year-old Leo Berry of Carmel. Leo is the founder of Helping Ninjas, an association of kids ready to “stand up for the planet” with chapters in 16 states. The group’s logo is the earth, with friendly eyes and a martial arts headband.



Leo is the founder of Helping Ninjas, an association of kids ready to “stand up for the planet” with chapters in 16 states. The group’s logo is the earth, with friendly eyes and a martial arts headband.

If this sounds cute, don’t think that Leo doesn’t mean business. In fact, he and his group are paying close attention to the General Assembly and the anti-wetlands bill. “SB389 is to overwrite the bill that is currently defending wetlands,” blogged Leo. “When I

read this, I felt mad and worried. I sit here and think: Why is it that this world we live in is so driven by outcomes that do not always work in favor of nature?”

Leo started a petition against SB389 on Change.org. It calmly lays out the science of wetlands and the services they provide. By the time you read this, it will have over 25,000 signatures.

Former state senator Beverly Gard, author of the 2003 bill that is currently defending wetlands, shares Leo’s concern. “The bill is driven by a lobbying organization, the Indiana Builders Association, that did not provide legislators the background necessary to fully understand the issue,” she wrote last week in the Indianapolis Business Journal.

SB389 has sparked activism from many quarters, and media coverage in other states. If it gets a vote in the House, it will force lawmakers to declare their values. It’s also forcing the perennial debate about the role of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). Anti-wetlands bill author Sen. Chris Garten (R-Scottsburg) suggested that IDEM’s enforcement of wetlands permitting (as well as their supposed failure to return his phone calls) is the motive for SB389.

While the anti-wetlands bill squirms in the spotlight, a stealthier bill also involving the handcuffing of IDEM is very much in play. SB271, the brainchild of Sens. Mark Messmer (R-Jasper) and Rick Niemeyer (R-Cedar Lake), allows property owners claiming an industrial

waste control facility property tax exemption to avoid going through IDEM. Property owners can simply tell their county assessors they’re controlling their waste at a given facility. Who’s going to check? The bill also tinkers with how the list of impaired Indiana waterways is published, shortens how long it’s available, and eliminates public hearings about waterways declared “impaired” by the EPA.

Imagine working at IDEM. The benefit of the doubt suggests that IDEM staff are knowledgeable and concerned about Indiana’s air and water quality. Imagine being quietly told to back off of enforcing regulations for certain parties. Or having a massive workload that means you can never get to everything. Or watching laws get passed that force you to look the other way from regulations you used to enforce.

For some Republican lawmakers, making “environmental management” an oxymoron is the whole goal (especially as they see tightening regs coming down the pike from the Biden Administration). Since the Mitch Daniels era, state agencies are expected to generate their own revenue. If Big Business lobbies for permit fees to be lower, or certain permit requirements disappear (a la the wetlands bill), no wonder IDEM’s earned income is shriveling up. In the last 12 years, the IDEM staff has been reduced by 150.

Voltaire said: “Men argue. Nature acts.”

When nature is crossed, it eventually returns with a vengeance. As we’re seeing with climate change, and with the origins of pandemic, brought on by the erosion

of what’s wild, crossing nature’s lines comes with a price.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Industry could trade hubris for humility. They could admit that the way developers or farmers move earth affects the greater good. They could acknowledge that with power comes responsibility. Those who practice the Christian faith could acknowledge that nature’s designs deserve respect. And that checks and balances are fair and necessary, as we temper

short-term need with long-term consequences.

Or they could ask 11-year-old Leo Berry: “I think it is important to protect the environment because it helps us live as humans. It is our home.” ❖



A consultant and grant writer, Laker is principal of Laker Verbal LLC.

Two sides to minimum wage

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – With a minimum wage increase once again prominently featuring a policy debate, it seems wise to treat the issue a bit differently. Instead of outlining the positive and negative effects of a particular increase of the minimum wage, I'll offer the best arguments for and against any minimum wage. In so doing I'll attempt an ideological Turing test, making the arguments so clearly that a reader cannot discern my personal position. By explaining the best arguments on both sides, I hope to achieve two goals. The first is to make clear the need for compromise. The second is to maximize angry comments from readers. Wish me luck.



The best argument for a minimum wage involves several labor market failures that affect low-wage workers. It begins with the fact that most low-wage workers are in a poor position to negotiate wages. They may be young, inexperienced, poorly educated or speak little English. Employers have enormous bargaining power over them in ways they do not with better skilled, better educated, more mature workers.

At the same time, labor markets have become increasingly concentrated, thus employers are more able to exert market power over workers. Information technology, such as online help wanted ads, permits employers to engage in tacit collusion in setting salaries for low wage workers. Likewise, human resource professionals in many cities and industries meet frequently to discuss wage and benefits standards. While this is so plainly illegal that the U.S. DOJ issued a recent warning to HR professionals, state-level anti-trust enforcement is sadly almost non-existent.

At the same time, the social safety net provides many health, food and social benefits to low-wage workers. In a perfectly free labor market, workers would require extra pay to support their families and would demand higher wages. In that way, taxpayers subsidize low-wage workers in ways that benefit employers and those who buy their goods or services. For all these reasons, we should have a minimum wage in order to protect workers and taxpayers from the existing labor market's failures.

The best argument in opposition to a minimum wage is that government should not, and cannot, be in the wage- or price-setting business. Government has no role in a great many high-stakes personal decisions. Government cannot tell us what language to speak, what church to attend, who to marry or with whom to form a family.

No government may tell us adults how much alcohol we may consume, whether or not we can smoke tobacco, nor increasingly whether or not we may freely purchase cannabis or other drugs. Government cannot tell us whether or not we may own a gun or what type of house, automobile or boat we may own. Government isn't permitted to do these things because free people won't allow government to do these things.

There is also a simple competence issue. Our federal government spent more than \$100 million each for an F-35A fighter, paid for most of Boston's Big Dig debacle and wholly funded a bridge to nowhere in Alaska. Given these enormous limitations in knowledge, no government can reasonably tell an ice cream shop owner in Loogootee what she should pay a high school student or tell the high school student how little he should be willing to work for. The mere existence of a minimum wage infantilizes Americans, while depriving them of an essential freedom of free exchange.

There are other respectable arguments for and against a minimum wage, as well as many poor ones. Still, I hope I have done a fair job outlining these two viewpoints, which I consider the best for and against a minimum wage. If I have done so, and you, dear reader, are honest with yourself, you must admit that both the argument for and against hold a great deal of truth. I would go so far as to say that both arguments are essentially true.

The policy environment facing functioning democracies is almost always like the minimum wage debate. Both sides offer argument possessed of both supportive facts and truth. Yet, entirely reasonable, educated and well-meaning people still disagree. It is a hallmark of a liberal democracy that our policy debates are dominated by matters in which compromise is not just possible, but necessary. That is largely because we've solved most of those problems where compromise is not possible. So, give thanks for this type of political disagreement; it marks us as an advanced, functioning democracy.

Those nations that lack a well-functioning democracy have fewer debates that lead to compromise. In those unhappy places, simple facts are often in dispute, and the most mundane of policy matters marked with cultural or national consequence. Citizens outside of democracy often view compromise as losing, as a lack of patriotism or as cavorting with the enemy. We must not admire the politics of these sad, insecure and failing places.

Our circumstance is to be envied. Our Constitution, our norms and our culture permit us to debate matters with respect and understanding. So, within a liberal democracy, we do not have enemies over public policy. Our only domestic enemies are those who seek to undermine those bonds, break our Constitutional norms or exclude some of us from deliberation.

As Congress commences a debate on increasing the minimum wage, we should view this as a crucial moment for our Republic. We have just passed through the most significant assault on our Constitution since the

Civil War. Our ability to overcome that and prevent it in the future depends in part on how effectively we compromise over legislation. We should view the minimum wage as a good place to start. ❖

Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Cen-

ter 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.

Indiana basketball is far bigger than IU, but it matters deeply

By **JOSHUA CLAYBOURN**

EVANSVILLE – Indiana University formally announced on Monday that it parted ways with men’s basketball coach Archie Miller. Miller’s tenure ends after four lackluster years with no tournament appearances, a 33-44 conference record, and zero victories against Purdue. IU and Athletic Director Scott Dolson now embark on a critical coach search.



No state population identifies itself more with basketball than Indiana. We take for granted that garages serve as backboards. Here, a home without a basketball goal is not really home. California has wineries; Las Vegas has its casinos; in Texas, there

are Friday night football lights. But in Indiana, we connect through our gyms and basketball goals, some hung religiously at Assembly Hall and others hung simply on the side of a barn. For Hoosiers, the sport carries a deeper, almost spiritual element.

Plenty of other places possess basketball traditions – Kentucky, Kansas, Tobacco Road, to name a few. But in most places the devotion to the sport starts with the state university’s team. In Indiana, by contrast, the love affair starts as a grassroots passion that builds up from there. That is why 11 of the nation’s 12 largest high school gyms reside in the state. That is why pickup games permeate all regions, from suburban driveways to farm haylofts to inner city blacktops. Hoosier culture is wedded to basketball.

In other words, Indiana basketball is far bigger than Indiana University. But IU still matters, not only for alumni like me, but for all of us who recognize IU is an important ambassador of our state’s culture and what it means to be a Hoosier. Those who have never lived here may not understand our basketball obsession, and that is okay, but they do see IU and occasionally view our culture

through that lens.

That is why the next IU basketball coach needs to do more than simply win, though that ought to be a major priority for a club that has languished in mediocrity for nearly two decades. In the words of AD Scott Dolson, the next coach must also, “reestablish the brand and national presence of Indiana Basketball.”

Part of that involves representing the very best of who we are as Hoosiers. We take pride in the little things. We care whether the coach is running man-to-man defense or a zone. We care what type of offense he employs. The coach may certainly employ whatever offense or defense he or she deems necessary to win, but there must be well-grounded thought and strategy behind it that pays dividends.

We like that player jerseys only have the team name and not individual names on them. We take pride in the sacred, sanctuary-like feeling of Assembly Hall. We even care about particular cheers done during timeouts, especially one set to the “William Tell Overture.”

When the Hoosiers suffered the shame and stain of NCAA sanctions over a decade ago, the entire state suffered along with them. We certainly expect more wins,



better tactics with the Xs and Os, and more championships. We want confidence that out-of-timeout plays will be successful. We want someone with an intelligent, purposeful approach to their basketball philosophy. But we also want someone who embraces what it means to be a Hoosier. ❖

Claybourn is an Evansville attorney and author.

Biden shows what foreign policy looks like

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – We often think of foreign and domestic policy as two separate and distinct fields. But for an American president, they are inextricably tied together. And as the Biden administration moves forward on its priorities, this is likely to become clear. The reason is that



what we do in one area has an impact on what we can do in the other. If we are not strong economically and politically at home – stable, prosperous, free – we are weaker in the world. And for those of us at home, our ability to lead globally is not only of great interest but affects our perception of our own country.

There may be concern of U.S. involvement in entangling wars, but Americans also tend to believe that we have much to contribute to the world and

that it can be a better place because of American participation and leadership. Many of our allies – the countries with which we trade and that help us build our economy – believe so, too.

Yet we cannot carry on major aspects of American policy around the world without the support of the American people, which means explaining what we are aiming for, what we are planning to do, and why we plan to do it. In other words, it is important for President Biden to continue to articulate to Americans what he believes the U.S. role in the world should look like and to make the case for their support in pursuing it.

The challenge is plain. Under his predecessor, American prestige, power, and influence all were battered. We are weaker abroad now than we were. To come back from this, we must reinvigorate our alliances, reassert our democratic ideals, and make clear that an erratic, improvisational foreign policy is behind us.

What might this look like specifically?

First, it means committing to continued U.S. global leadership, which Biden has already done. “We are a country that does big things. American diplomacy makes it happen,” he said in a speech at the State Department two weeks after taking office. Yet even if there is no alternative to U.S. global leadership, regaining it is going to take hard work, given how far the U.S.’s global reputation has fallen.

Cooperating with the multilateral community is crucial. Moving away from the previous

administration’s unilateralism and enlisting our friends in facing the big challenges we face, especially our relations with China, a fast-growing superpower, and Russia, a major regional power with nuclear weapons, will require a deft mix of both cooperation and firmness of purpose.

Similarly, how we conduct the two important relationships with our neighbors Canada and Mexico needs to be much more than an after-thought. We have the extraordinary good fortune to be insulated from much of the world by two oceans, but we have also had the good fortune to keep our borders peaceful; we do not face the threat of war or hostilities from either north or south. Sustaining good relations has been a key part of this, and it is something our allies elsewhere note with envy.


Finally, caution in all its forms should be key to the Biden administration’s approach: Restoring deliberation to how we conduct our affairs, avoiding wars and military intervention, making certain that we husband our natural and human resources and do not waste our words, prestige, and other assets on quixotic pursuits.

In a recent interview in “The New Yorker,” Council on Foreign Relations President Richard Haass noted that President Biden takes over his role “at a time when what happens in the world matters enormously to America’s domestic well-being, but also at a time when U.S. influence in the world is much diminished.” The path forward from there is tricky, and we all have a stake in how the Biden administration pursues it. ❖

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

New localism the answer to ‘uncivil war’

By JAY RUCKELSHAUS

OXFORD, England – A central promise of the calls for unity that now saturate our public sphere is that a renewed focus on American identity – not partisan identity – will usher in a more humane politics. If only we could



remember our shared national identity, it is said, we could reduce polarization and end what President Biden has called our “uncivil war.”

Numerous well-funded initiatives with this goal in mind have sprung up, such as the Aspen Institute’s Citizenship and American Identity Program, whose aim is to “promote a shared sense of national identity.”

But here we are, despite widespread emphasis on national identity, more divided than ever. The persistent “national identity” framing might be part of the problem. In reality, settling the content of American identity isn’t a prerequisite for tackling other issues; it is itself our most divisive issue. The defining political battle of our polarized age, as a trio of political scientists recently argued, is an “identity crisis” over what it means to be an American.

How Did America Lose Its Confidence?

In a country transitioning from mono- to multi-ethnic democracy, this reckoning is unavoidable. And recognizing previously excluded contributions to the American story is noble, essential work. But premising unity on national identity is counterproductive. Besides being especially contentious, the culture-war politics of national identity is disorienting. We are asking of national identity something that, in a pluralistic society, it cannot provide, leaving us still more disappointed and angry.

There is another way: Supplement the high-stakes politics of national identity with a revived focus on local identity. After all, national identity is not our only source of commonality. We are also all residents – in effect, members – of states, and most of us of cities or towns; some of us identify the counties we live in as home. This simple fact has been greatly neglected in conversations about both polarization and unity, a victim of the relentless nationalization of American politics. A commitment to localism promises ready-made practices, institutions and narrative resources to lower the partisan temperature and reorient American politics for the better.

Local governance has recently enjoyed a renaissance of ambition and hope that starkly contrasts with national-level polarization. This spirit, which urban scholars Bruce Katz and Jeremy Nowak call “the New Localism,” has

already realized impressive and pragmatic progress in such areas as transit and inclusive-growth economic policy. It’s time to harness localism in service of an ethic of community civic pride.

Cities and states ground us with sources of affection more concrete than inscrutable national identity, something closer to hand and to heart. The coronavirus pandemic has encouraged a great re-centering of attention, reminding us of the irreplaceability of proximate contact – neighborhood block parties, co-ops, mutual aid networks. These are inklings of the broader shift in the sources of common meaning and understanding that localism allows.

Localism isn’t just supporting your professional sports teams. It’s organizing local festivals and civic traditions, frequenting public spaces, supporting small businesses, learning about local history. Localism is a patriotism of place, an ethos of civic pride in the idiosyncrasies and particular values that distinguish your city or town from all others.

My hometown, Indianapolis, celebrated its bicentennial last year with an unprecedentedly inclusive planning process about the principles and values that will guide “the community’s collective vision” on land use, transit, housing, development and much more. “Plan 2020” describes what Indy “can become” with firm roots in the particular of what it means to call this place home, such as punching above our medium size to host world-class sporting and conference events and nurturing our deeply collaborative, friendly spirit.

But localism doesn’t mean provincialism. Plan 2020 reveals how Indy’s identity isn’t grounded in a monolithic understanding of this place, but rather in an ongoing conversation. At its best, localism makes room for experiment and critique, within enough visible commonality to anchor feelings of attachment, belonging and pride.

Making Partisanship Irrelevant

If this sounds sentimental, or merely aesthetic, it’s meant to, at least partly. The point is to mobilize the symbolic resources of more proximate homes that are easier to rally around, combating the social alienation many have identified as a core contributor of zero-sum politics.

And this is key to local identity’s ability to ease polarization. Social scientists increasingly emphasize the importance of “crosscutting identities”: Associations that increase contact between typically siloed groups. The beauty of encouraging civic engagement at the level of cities and (perhaps especially) states is that it provides the diversity required for those forms of contact, and it does so within a community identity whose meaning is typically less controversial than that of national identity.

Moreover, these are modes of interaction in which partisanship and other channels of division are not so much dampened as irrelevant, facilitating the kind of pre-political trust and conversational competencies required to productively discuss national identity. So while localism

won't replace national political cooperation, it suggests, perhaps, a stronger foundation.

Besides invigorating civic spirit and dampening polarization, localism offers overlooked solutions to other major political pathologies. Consider federalism, the relationship among levels of government. Our dismal coronavirus response is only the latest breakdown in inter-governmental coordination, thanks to a system in which, because state elections increasingly turn on national divisions and issues rather than local ones, "state government lacks meaningful accountability or representation," as legal scholar David Schleicher documents. Affirming the importance of local identity is the first step to rebalancing our attention and energies to cities and, building on that, to states. Otherwise, newly fashionable efforts to devolve power out of gridlocked Washington will only transplant national polarization to local soil.

The local lens can help shore up governmental

legitimacy and trust, too. In an age of political alienation and populism, the abstract principles of liberal democracy – separation of powers, respect for rights, the rule of law – need tangible embodiment to sustain citizen allegiance. They need visibility. A place-based focus promises to ground policy discourse in a vocabulary that speaks to everyday concerns. Moreover, local engagement often produces quicker results with a more obvious link to citizen action.

But perhaps the greatest benefit of localism is also the simplest: Politics doesn't have to feel this way. The toxicity of the past decade notwithstanding, we are wrong to equate political life with endless, demoralizing struggle. It needn't be so. To see how, we should look not up, but down. ❖

Ruckelshaus is a Rhodes Scholar, studying at Oxford University.

Acting on behalf of the Indiana people

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – "The Indiana General Assembly acts on behalf of the people of Indiana," State Sen. Hempstead Helpful proclaimed.

"That's just not true," I protested. "Just look at House Bill 1166. It passed the House Ways and Means Committee 22 to 2 and the full House 71 to 22 and hardly anyone in the state knew about it."



"Sonny," Hemp said. "Those wide margins indicate how important HB1166 is for the welfare of the public. What does that bill do? It says that if you appeal the assessed value of your property, and win the appeal, your property assessment can't be raised by the county assessor for the next four

years."

"That's strange," I complained.

"That's justice, Son. Just-ice!" Hemp declared. "It freezes your assessment and protects you from the wrath of an assessor who feels disrespected by having his/her evaluation of your property overturned."

"How often does that happen?" I inquired.

"How many appeals are filed each year in each county? How many by residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural and other property owners? What are the success rates of those appeals? And how many successful appeals are reversed by the subsequent actions of the assessors?"

"Listen, kid," Hemp was getting heated. "You and

your numbers fetish are not relevant to legislation. We, your elected representatives, respond to the people's concerns. And my office heard many a gruesome story of sociopath assessors who disregarded the appeal process."

"It seems like a heavy-handed approach to anecdotal evidence by wealthy property owners," I commented. "Big businesses can afford the attorneys and experts needed to file a successful appeal. The ordinary homeowner is in no position to go through the process and win. And why the secrecy?"

"There was no secrecy," Hemp objected, offended. "All routine legislative processes were followed. The problem, if there is one, starts with the media failing to cover the story. The House committee voted on Feb. 2 and the media that day was covering a Pennsylvania groundhog, not the happenings at the Indiana Statehouse."

"But how can you say this bill helps the people?" I wanted to know. "The Legislative Services Agency has said, 'This bill will result in lower AV [Assessed Value] for some properties for up to four years. The lower AVs will lead to higher tax rates, tax shifts to other taxpayers, and possibly lower local revenues because of higher tax cap losses in some places.'"

"Youngster," Hemp admonished, "When the biggest business interests in this state benefit, we all benefit. As the president of GM told Congress many years ago 'What's good for General Motors, is good for America.' It's the Indiana right there on the State Office Building wall, 'A State that Works.'"

Thus, I added, as I do whenever that motto is mentioned, "for whom?" ❖

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.

Some see freedom, others see chaos

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI Indiana Bureau

ANDERSON – CNN’s Jake Tapper drew quite a reaction with a recent tweet about a British regulatory agency investigating comments made by television personality Piers Morgan. “This is what happens when you live in a country where there is no 1st Amendment,” he wrote. “Insanity.”



Krishnan Guru-Murthy, a journalist on Britain’s Channel 4 News, took exception. “Not insanity,” he wrote. “A democratic choice to have broadcast media regulated with a duty to be fair and duly impartial. It stops TV from taking sides to support or oppose things the way you do in America and upholds a code of standards.”

Morgan’s remarks came in response to Oprah Winfrey’s interview with Meghan Markle and Prince Harry. Morgan said he was skeptical of Markle’s claim that she had been turned down by people in the Royal “institution” when she asked for help in dealing with thoughts of suicide.

“Who did you go to?” Morgan demanded. “What did they say to you? I’m sorry, I don’t believe a word she said, Meghan Markle. I wouldn’t believe it if she read me a weather report.”

Tapper’s tweet included a link to a Variety story reporting that Britain’s Office of Communication, better known as Ofcom, had received more than 40,000 complaints about Morgan’s comments by 2 p.m. the next day. “We have launched an investigation into Monday’s episode of ‘Good Morning Britain’ under our harm and offence rules,” an agency spokesperson told the publication.

Like any good champion of free speech, Tapper was beside himself. “Governments should have no role in policing news broadcasts,” he wrote. “You can tweet Piers what you think of his comments. That’s not what this is about.”

Iesha Mae Thomas, social media producer for a country radio station in London, had a different take. “Jake, honey, do your research,” she tweeted. “We’re perfectly fine without a 1st Amendment. (And Ofcom isn’t the government.)”

Part of the problem, Tapper later acknowledged, could be summed up by the old saw that the United States and Britain are two countries separated by a common language. We use the same words, but those words don’t necessarily have the same meaning.

Take the word “government.” For Tapper, it seemed obvious that a public agency would be considered an arm of the government. For the British, though, a government is more tied to politics. It’s what a prime minister forms after putting together a majority in Parliament. The word is used in a way similar to the way Americans use the word “administration.”

On its website, Ofcom describes itself as an independent agency funded through fees paid by the companies it regulates. The agency has broad responsibility. It oversees all types of communication, including not just radio and television, but also broadband, telephone services and even mail delivery.

British citizens responding to Tapper suggested that the real insanity was in an American system where news operations broadcast lies with near impunity. “OAN wouldn’t last five minutes here,” one said, referring to the Donald Trump cheerleaders at One America News Network. “Neither would MSNBC,” another shot back.

For Guru-Murthy, putting oversight of broadcast news outlets into the hands of a nonpartisan agency only makes sense. “The alternative is TV news that can mislead, manipulate and lie without consequence acting as cheerleaders for politicians, helping grow division and conspiracy theories with the only regulator being the commercial market,” he tweeted. “To many Brits, that’s dangerous and undesirable.”

Hyunsu Yim, business reporter for the Korea Herald, said it’s not just the British who look askance at the



American model. “It’s really hard to emphasize and get it through to Americans sometimes,” he tweeted, “but most countries are NOT envious of America’s no-holds-barred approach to freedom which seems like pure chaos to the rest of the world.”

To be honest, it sometimes seems that way to Americans. ❖

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James Briggs, IndyStar: Gov. Eric Holcomb is launching a rescue operation for the Marion County Republican Party. Joe Elsener, the party's new chairman, won't put it that way. "I'm not going to spend time and energy litigating the past," Elsener tells me. That's fine, I'll do it for him. It won't take long. If you haven't paid much attention to local politics — and you know how dominant the Indiana Republican Party is — you might wonder why Indianapolis Republicans need to be saved. As recently as a decade ago, Republicans held a majority on the City-County Council. As recently as 2015, Republican Greg Ballard was still the mayor of Indianapolis. Two years ago, Republicans held 11 seats on the 25-person council — a minority, to be sure, yet still enough influence to shape policy and decide how money gets spent. The bottom fell out in 2019. That's when former Republican state Sen. Jim Merritt, who also had served as party chairman, ran a disastrous mayoral campaign. Merritt's failures combined with shifting demographics and an anti-Trump backlash to sink every Republican in a competitive race, including a couple who should have won. Meanwhile, Democratic Mayor Joe Hogsett rode his popularity and a well-organized political operation, including dominant fundraising, to win a landslide re-election victory and help carry 20 council candidates with him for a supermajority. Since then, five lonely council Republicans have bobbed along in the water like shipwreck survivors waiting for a rescue. Elsener is that rescue operation. Marion County Republicans elected Elsener as chairman March 6 after a full-throated endorsement from state party leaders. Joe Elsener has worked extensively under Gov. Eric Holcomb. Elsener, 31, is the executive director of Holcomb's campaign arm and works with the Indiana Republican Party. While Holcomb isn't personally taking control of the Marion County Republican Party, he's obviously happy to let a trusted staff member take the reins. "He has a day job and that is his ultimate and complete focus," Elsener said. Nonetheless, Elsener added, "me being encouraged to run for this position and (the governor) allowing me to make it a priority while I'm still receiving a paycheck is a good sign" of Holcomb's interest in strengthening the local party. There are a lot of reasons why Holcomb and other party leaders might be interested in improving their operation in Indianapolis. Republicans and Democrats alike agree that Indianapolis Republicans underperformed in 2019 and that fundraising is all but nonexistent. Elsener's job will be to bring in money and identify and promote candidates who can compete for offices ranging from prosecutor to mayor. ❖



Michael Marot, Associated Press: Tony Hinkle faced a life-changing choice in early 1921. New York Giants manager John McGraw had offered him an opportunity to play professional baseball. Pat Page, Hinkle's former college coach, wanted Hinkle to join his coaching staff at Butler. So when baseball banned the spitball, Hinkle got off the train in Broad Ripple, Indiana, and spent the

next 49 years coaching three sports, serving as athletic director, and teaching classes at Butler. Along the way, he picked up gigs as color commentator on Indiana high school basketball tournament telecasts and prep football referee. It's a story that sounds so mythical even Bobby Plump, the prep player whose game-winning shot inspired "Hoosiers," questioned its validity. "I asked Jim Morris one time if it was true," Plump said, referring to the Bulldogs longtime trainer. "He walked over to a drawer, pulled out (the contract) and John McGraw had already signed it. All he had to do was show up. You have to respect a man that can do that." What Hinkle left behind was a chance to play for the 1921 and 1922 World Series champions and a team that won four consecutive pennants. All he did at Butler was change the sport of basketball — forever. Hinkle played a key role in promoting the 3-second rule and eliminating jump balls after each basket. He worked with Spalding to turn hard-to-see brown basketballs into the more visible orange version that was introduced at the 1958 Final Four. He won more than 1,000 of the 1,902 total games he coached — including 560 basketball games — posted winning records in all three sports. He celebrated declared national titles in 1924 as an assistant and in 1929 as the head coach. He came up with the "Hinkle System," a simplistic style that became the gold standard for offenses everywhere, and he created the five foundational pillars — humility, passion, unity, servitude and thankfulness — that later became known as The Butler Way. Hinkle coached for so long that he won his head coaching debut 27-24 and lost his final game, in 1970, by a score of 121-114 on a day Notre Dame star Austin Carr scored 50 points. He recruited John Wooden and Plump, the star of the 1954 Milan state championship team, and his teams were dubbed giant killers. Hinkle rarely raised his voice, never drew a technical foul and always found a way to make his point. ❖

Mona Charen, The Bulwark: A funny thing happened after the introduction of J.D. Vance, anti-Trump voice of the working class. He began to drift into the Trump camp. I don't know why or how, but Vance became not a voice for the voiceless but an echo of the loudmouth. Scroll through his Twitter feed and you will find retweets of Tucker Carlson, alarmist alerts about immigration, links to Vance's appearances on the podcasts of Seb Gorka, Dinesh D'Souza, and the like. On February 16, he tweeted "I still can't believe the 45th president of the United States has no access to social media, and the left—alleged opponents of corporate power—is just totally fine with it." There's a lot along those lines. But the tweet that really made my heart sink was this one from February 12: "Someone should have asked Jeffrey Epstein, John Weaver, or Leon Black about the CRAZY CONSPIRACY that many powerful people were predators targeting children." So now the brilliant author of *Hillbilly Elegy*, a man of judgment, nuance, and, one assumed, a moral center, is positioning himself as QAnon-adjacent. ❖

IRS delays tax filing deadline to May 17

INDIANAPOLIS — Americans are getting extra time to prepare their taxes. The Internal Revenue Service says it's delaying the traditional federal income tax filing deadline from April 15 until May 17 (AP). The IRS announced the decision Wednesday and said it would provide further guidance in the coming days. The move provides more breathing room for taxpayers and the IRS alike to cope with changes brought on by the pandemic. "The IRS wants to continue to do everything possible to help taxpayers navigate the unusual circumstances related to the pandemic, while also working on important tax administration responsibilities," IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig said in a statement. The decision postpones when individual taxpayers must file their return and when their payment is due. The IRS said taxpayers who owe money would not face any further penalties or interest if they pay by May 17. The new deadline also applies to individuals who pay self-employment tax. Taxpayers do not need to take any action to take advantage of the new deadline. Those who need more time beyond May 17 can request an extension until October 15. The new deadline does not apply to state income taxes or to estimated tax payments that are due on April 15; those remain due by that day.

Mayor Styron sues to test powers

ZIONSVILLE — Mayor Emily Styron filed a lawsuit Tuesday that should determine whether the town's council can keep her from demoting the fire department's chief (Christian, [IBJ](#)). The seven-member, all-Republican Zionsville Town Council met and unanimously voted Monday to deny Styron's request that Zionsville Fire Department Chief James VanGorder

be demoted after she said multiple department members raised concerns about his leadership. She declined to answer questions about those concerns. Styron, a Democrat, said the lawsuit is expected to support her authority to demote department heads and further delineate the roles of the mayor and the council. "I believe the result of this legal action will provide clarity to my administration and to all future mayors of Zionsville about whether or not a mayor has the ability to select their own leadership team to run town departments," Styron said in a written statement. "There must be no ambiguity." Styron said the town's 2014 reorganization documents do not require her to get a majority of the seven-member town council's votes to approve the demotion of an appointed department head, but the council disagrees.



Supply chain issues hit manufacturers

NEW YORK — Supply chain woes mounted world-wide for makers of everything from cars and clothing to home siding and medical needle containers, as the extreme Texas weather and port backlogs compounded problems for manufacturers already beset by pandemic disruptions ([Wall Street Journal](#)). Toyota Motor Corp. , Honda Motor Co. and Samsung Electronics Co. were the latest multinational companies to chime in about setbacks, with the two auto makers saying Wednesday they would halt production at plants in North America. Toyota cited a shortage of petrochemicals, manufacturing of which has been hobbled by last month's Texas freeze. Honda pointed to a combination of port issues, the semiconductor shortage, pandemic-related problems and the crippling U.S. weather.

Schertz named ISU hoops coach

TERRE HAUTE — Indiana State made it official on Wednes-

day - Josh Schertz will be ISU's next men's basketball (CNHI). The Lincoln Memorial coach will be introduced at a Thursday morning press conference at Hulman Center. Schertz's current Lincoln Memorial team is still playing in the Division II Tournament. The Rail-splitters will compete in the Elite Eight in Evansville next week. Schertz has turned Lincoln Memorial into a Division II power. Schertz has amassed a 336-68 record at the school, which is located at the Cumberland Gap, where Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia converge. That record is third-best among any coach at any NCAA level.

Evansville to receive \$67.5M

EVANSVILLE ([WFIE](#)) - The city of Evansville is expecting to receive nearly \$67.5 million. This money is coming from the American Rescue Plan Act signed by the President last week. Mayor Winnecke says the city is waiting for more clarity on how the money can be spent. Discussions are currently ongoing with an outside financial consultant along with state and federal lobbyists. In the meantime, they are working to total up the financial problems caused by the pandemic. City leaders are eyeing infrastructure improvements, such as water and sewer utilities.

Kokomo, county to get \$36M in relief

KOKOMO — Howard County and the city of Kokomo will collectively receive tens of millions of dollars thanks to the recent COVID-19 relief bill, according to estimates provided by the U.S. Senate Democrats ([Kokomo Tribune](#)). Estimates provided by the U.S. Senate Democrats say Kokomo will receive \$20.63 million, while county government is set to receive \$16.03 million.. The state of Indiana as a whole is expected to receive roughly \$5.8 billion — about \$3 billion would go directly to state government, \$2.6 billion to cities and counties and \$200 million for a capital projects.