

## Holcomb anything but a ‘lame duck’

Poised as most powerful modern governor, he has billions of dollars, vast political capital to spread

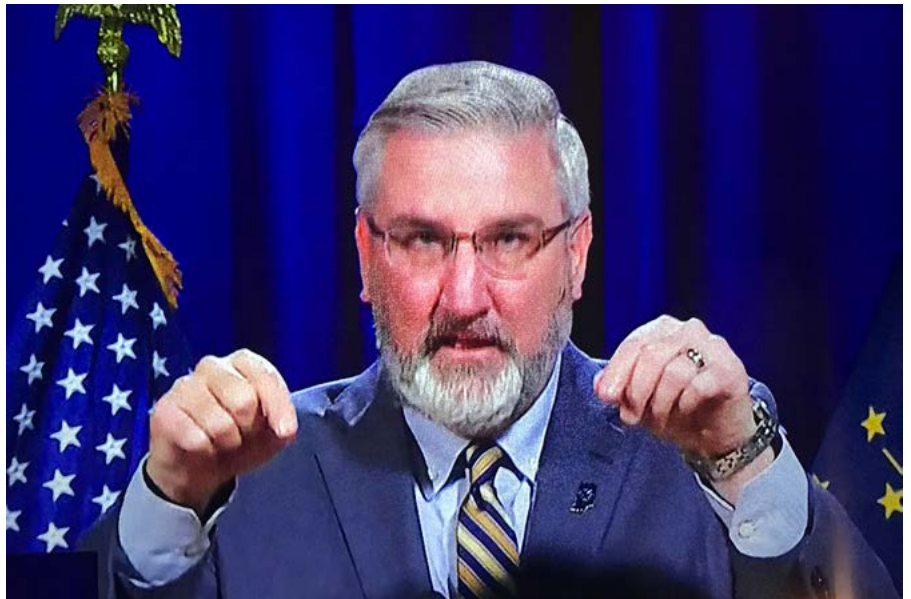
By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – A week ago, the front page of the IndyStar asked this question: “With nearly four years to go, is Gov. Eric Holcomb already a lame duck?”

On the following day, Gov. Holcomb journeyed to Evansville where he announced

the commitment of \$475 million in funding dedicated to “three transformational infrastructure projects across southern Indiana” that will enhance Indiana’s top-rated transportation network as the Crossroads of America.

And six months prior, in the Howey Politics Indiana Power 50 edition published on Jan. 7, our analysis was this: “He is poised to become one of the most powerful



governors in Indiana history. He won a second term in landslide fashion. He has consolidated education policy with his appointment of Katie Jenner as the state’s first education secretary. He has had the support of two super majority legislative chambers through the duration of this

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## Trump’s ‘2nd Inaugural’

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Save the date! Donald Trump’s Second Inaugural is set for Aug. 15, “in front of the U.S. Capitol Steps.”

There is a delicious irony in that, with Trump’s second inaugural scheduled some eight months and nine days after what his new spokeswoman, Liz Harrington described not as an ‘insurrection,’ but as a “peaceful protest.”

“You had January 6,” Harrington said. “They opened the door to the Capitol ... it’s not an easy building to get into ... They opened the door and people walked through. Some people just walked in. And now they are being kept for misdemeanors in some



**“I pointed out to him, we have significant cyber capability. In fact, if they violate basic norms, we will respond. I did what I came to do.”**

- President Biden, during his summit with Russian President Putin, who called Biden ‘an experienced statesman.’



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



political jail. What is happening here? What about the people who burned down St. John's Church?"

Fox News host Tucker Carlson noted that some of the people who simply walked through the door have been branded "unindicted co-conspirators." Carlson: "What does that mean? In potentially every single case they were FBI operatives" who were "organizing the attacks on Jan. 6, according to government documents."

Huh?

**The Bulwark's** Charlie Sykes explains: "Exit take: Even as the GOP insists that it doesn't want to relitigate the whole coup thing, the ret-conning of the insurrection is intensifying. And this is why we need a bipartisan independent commission more than ever."

At Trump's Second Inaugural, there will be "special musical stars" Ted Nugent and Kid Rock. To attend, you'll be expected to write a \$1,200 check to the Save America PAC. Rumor has it that the Hendersons and that pillow guy will all be there, late from Pablo Fanque's Fair. Henry The Horse (not the mini Schnauzer) is expected to dance the waltz.

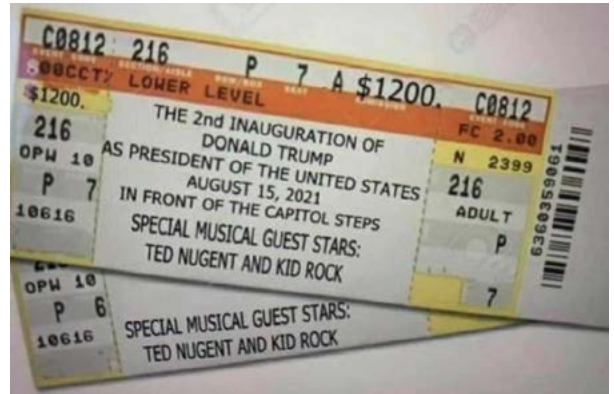
Trump's Second Inaugural will come two months and a day following his 75th birthday, for which U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski obtained 10,000 signatures wishing him well. Those beyond the 10,000 signatures were cast aside, presumably, along with the more than 7 million votes that made Joe Biden the current illegal president, along with the 11,800 votes that Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensberger failed to come up with despite the phoned in Grub Hub order from the sitting president of the United States.

**Or as Trump** told Fox News Maria Bartiromo, "Joe Biden did not get 80 million votes. I got 63 million votes four years ago and won quite handily in the Electoral College, won quite handily. We did very well. I got 63. We had glitches where they

moved thousands of votes from my account to Biden's account. And these are glitches. So, they're not glitches. They're theft. They're fraud, absolute fraud.

"And what happened?" the 45th president of the United States asked. "If you watched the election, I was called by the biggest people, saying, congratulations, political people. Congratulations, sir. You just won the election. It was 10:00. And then they did dumps. They call them dumps, big, massive dumps, in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and all over."

In past elections, "dumps"



weren't considered piles of bullshit; they would be described as returns from urban areas, which in the old days of the late Gary Mayor Rudy Clay, would take longer to count than those from sparsely populated rural areas.

**The Hill** reported Wednesday that prior to Trump's second inauguration on Aug. 15, the reoccurring president has created a litmus test for 2022 and 2024. "This is oppo in 2022," said one Republican strategist involved in several top races this year. "Primaries are all about distinguishing your opponents. Everyone's pro-Trump, pro-life, pro-Second Amendment. Or at least they pretend to be."

"Allegiance to Trump is the litmus test for Republican primary voters today. And a candidate who isn't is no different than a pro-choice, anti-NRA Republican trying to win a GOP primary," said one Republican strategist involved in a 2022 Senate race, who asked for anonymity to be

candid. "Unwavering support for President Trump has become one of the bedrocks of the Republican primary electorate."

This explains why U.S. Sen. Todd Young's quest for a Trump endorsement was waved off after he had declared that QAnon U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene was an "embarrassment" to the GOP. Sen. Young also had the audacity to say just days after Jan. 6, "I think we need to name and shame members of the media who were out there perpetuating mistruths and deceiving individuals. I think the same applies to politicians who are out there perpetuating things that are completely false and deceiving constituents."



**Trump's Second Inaugural Address** is expected to be a forward looking speech, as opposed to the many grievances he has uttered since rampant voter fraud erroneously installed Biden into the White House. Gone, too, is all that "American carnage" stuff from Jan. 20, 2017, and Jan. 6, 2021, which Trump had accurately forecasted, "It will be wild!"

"We spent nearly two hours with the President, with President Trump, who's in great spirits," reported U.S. Rep. Jim Banks, who along with U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz met with the shadow president at Bedminster last week. "We talked for most of the time about the work that the Republican Study Committee is doing to define the agenda

for the future course of the Republican Party, which is fighting for the Trump agenda. We talked about our election integrity bill, the Save Democracy Act, which he was very supportive of, and we talked about what we've done to define immigration moving forward."

**Banks said** that President Trump has vowed to hit the campaign trail for candidates that support the RSC's message ahead of the 2022 midterm elections, just like he did for those two Republican Georgia senators, who somehow lost on Jan. 5. "We believe we take back the majority by focusing on the Trump agenda, and President Trump plays a big role in that," he said.

It is unclear whether Mike Pence will return to the vice president's role he occupied from January 2017 until he attended Joe Biden's unwarranted inauguration on Jan. 20. He's moved out of the Naval Observatory and into new Carmel digs. If he shows up, expect him to be seated near the gallows.

Into this pre-Aug. 15 void has come Antifa. Or as President Trump told Bartiromo, "If I wasn't here, Antifa would be running this country right now. They'd be running the country."

Until Aug. 15. Save the date. ❖

**Howey is publisher of Howey Politics Indiana. Follow him on Twitter @hwypol.**

# Lame Duck, from page 1

administration, with no end in sight. And he has been the lynchpin figure in dealing with the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic."

Ranking Holcomb No. 1 on the Power 50, we concluded that segment: "As the 2024 presidential discussion begins on the GOP side, a no-drama governor who has a record of good government execution may put Holcomb on VP short lists. If he pulls off one or two big, signature wins, you may quickly see him rise up in RGA leadership and/or be eventually added to lists of candidates who should be considered for higher political office."

The gist of the Star's suggestion that just six months into his second term he is a "lame duck" is centered on the notion that Holcomb had three vetoes overridden by the GOP super majorities during an unprecedented pandemic, as well as Republican Attorney General Todd Rokita's

legal battle over the Indiana governor's constitutional authority.

IndyStar reporter Kaitlin Lange explained: "In the first legislative session since Holcomb won reelection, Holcomb had to veto more bills than he had in any other year. It was also the first year that lawmakers voted to override any of Holcomb's vetoes, and they did so three times. Meanwhile, Holcomb once again failed to get the version of the pregnancy accommodation bill he championed in two State of the State addresses across the finish line."

Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer was incredulous that the question was even asked. "I'm not sure I want to justify this attempt at journalism," Hupfer began. "No. 1, he's the best known, most popular politician in the state of Indiana. He has the ability to flex that



## A flush biennial budget like no other



An infusion of Biden relief funds, \$2 billion of new revenue brings a springtime Statehouse Christmas  
By BRIAN A. HOWEY  
INDIANAPOLIS — The late great budget analyst Bill Spring reached to a modestly positive General Assembly revenue forecast sometime in the 1990s by proclaiming, "Christmas presents... for everyone!" That was back in the day when "slings" were said with "let" instead of "it" and there were two viable political parties jousting for power in the Indiana General Assembly. Then there was Gov. Mitch Daniels who presided over the state during the 2008-09 Great Recession that nearly decimated the state's economic auto industry. Congress passed an \$800 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus package, and the state ended  
Continued on page 3

## Vaccine time bomb

By BRIAN A. HOWEY  
INDIANAPOLIS — The headline under LaPorte mayor Tom Comodori's sunny, smiling face in the Herald-Examiner was this: "LaPorte officials urge everyone to get COVID-19 vaccine. We're not trying to be political." It's headlines like this that really make me wonder whether the human race, which has been around in our evolutionary state for only about 10,000 years, is going to last more than the next century or two.  
Here we stand amidst a modern scientific medical miracle: the development, testing and implementation of a COVID-19 vaccine within a year. And what we face as a



"It is my hope now that a proper sentence is given that fits the crime committed and our entire country can use this case to transform the relationship and trust between people of color and the police."  
- State Sen. Eddie Melton, on the conviction of Derek Chauvin.

with the voting public really in any way he would desire. No one else has that in the State of Indiana. It's not even close. That alone prevents him from being some sort of a lame duck.

"Second, we just had a session which is apparently the basis of this article where the governor got every single legislative priority he set forth at the beginning of the session," Hupfer said. "He got even more, every funding goal, moving forward on his teacher pay commission report, several billions of dollars extra to spend on infrastructure, which he'll do over the course of the next three and a half years, a huge pay-down in debt which was his approach, \$500 million in READI grants which were his initiative to jump start regional growth which he's been talking about since he came into office.

"There's millions of dollars for broadband, for which he was the politician in Indiana who championed broadband before broadband was cool," Hupfer continued. "There is funding for workforce development which he has championed. I mean the laundry list is long."

The Star appeared to take the three veto overrides as a sign of weakness, when everyone at the Statehouse knows that the 1851 Constitution purposefully created a weak governorship in order to preserve legislative power.

"There was obviously one issue that was constitutional disagreement on," Hupfer said. "The courts are going to sort that out. I don't think that's a sign of weakness; I think that's a sign of strength, probably on both sides. That's a position they think they need to defend. We'll be getting an answer on that. The governor was in favor of putting that off until the end" of the session.

Despite this showdown, there doesn't appear to be any sustained acrimony among Holcomb, House Speaker Todd Huston and Senate President Pro Tem Rodric Bray.

"If you had that coupled with the governor not getting every legislative priority that he wanted, maybe," Hupfer said of the lame duck premise. "Anybody who is independent on this has to think, especially with the budgetary issue he's going to have."

As for the pregnancy accommodations bill Lange mentioned, it was not part of the governor's priorities announced on Dec. 17 at the Dentons Conference.

This extended era of Republican super majorities may be distorting the true prowess of Gov. Holcomb. "It has, to some degree, but there still was a same page ... how many bills were passed. They were all on the same page on 99 and a half percent of all bills. I don't know if the super majorities have changed things on how people think. There's still a significant number who are all on the same page."

Jake Oakman, communications director for the INGOP added, "It's difficult to maintain super majorities if they're not united at the top of the ticket. It shows confi-

dence in Republican leadership."

Hupfer added that most legislative Republicans used Holcomb in their election materials: "During the 2020 primary and general elections, every one of them were throwing the governor on their (mailing) piece." And, Hupfer observed, Gov. Holcomb spent the fall of 2019 campaigning for Republican mayoral candidates throughout the state, helping to forge a record 71 victories that year.

There have only been five governors (Doc Bowen, Robert Orr, Evan Bayh, Frank O'Bannon and Mitch Daniels) who have served two consecutive terms. Most of their key legislative triumphs came during their first terms, which may fuel the notion that reelected governors are like new



cars, losing significant value immediately after winning that second election.

Bowen shepherded his historic property tax reforms a year after he was elected in 1973, and in 1975 achieved significant medical malpractice reforms. Bayh got a \$1.6 billion tax cut through during his first term despite having to deal with a split 50/50 House for two years. O'Bannon achieved workers compensation increases in exchange for the Pacer stadium deal in 1997, a year after he was first elected. O'Bannon served less than two years of his second term before his death in September 2003.

But Gov. Orr achieved his A+ education reforms during his fourth biennial budget term in 1987. And in 2011, Gov. Daniels forged sprawling education reforms three years after winning a second term and a year after Republicans regained the House majority.

None of these governors had super majorities. Bowen had to deal with a Democratic super majority after the 1974 GOP washout following President Nixon's Watergate scandal. O'Bannon and Daniels had to grapple with deep recessions during their second terms.

Gov. Holcomb will have during his fifth and sixth years at the helm a record amount of funds – measured in

the billions of dollars – to spread across the state. His Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI), described on the Indiana Economic Development Corporation website as “a bold, transformational initiative that will dedicate \$500 million in state appropriations to promote strategic investments that will make Indiana a magnet for talent and economic growth” will give Holcomb numerous opportunities to lavish record amounts of money in every sector of the state. He spent the latter two years of his first term appearing in cities and counties, handing out \$100 million in Next Level road and infrastructure checks.



We don't know what Holcomb's priorities will be during his final biennial budget session in 2023, but he is apt to repeat Gov. Daniels' modus operandi, which is to use his accumulated political capital liberally.

There is speculation that U.S. Sen. Mike Braun might not seek a second term, but run for governor in 2024. Asked about that by Importantville's Adam Wren last March, Braun didn't bury the notion. "I'm going to carefully measure where I can have the most impact, and then stay involved until I'm either fatigued of it or find out that it's

not worth the time to do it," Braun said.

It's worth noting that Gov. Holcomb began his second quest for public office running for the seat of his mentor, U.S. Sen. Dan Coats, in 2016. He was running in third place when Gov. Mike Pence chose him to succeed resigning Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann. Holcomb told HPI that while he was running behind Reps. Todd Young and Marlin Stutzman at the time, he had ample campaign funds that he believed would have tightened the race before the May primary.

While 2024 is a long way off, this calculating governor is likely to, as he likes to put it, "keep the pedal to the metal" while running through the tape of his second term.

Treating Eric Holcomb like a "lame duck" over the next three years should come at one's peril. ❖

## Young attempts to build an aspirational GOP

By MARK SCHOEFF JR.

WASHINGTON – At a time when so much of politics is defined by what people oppose and what makes them angry, Sen. Todd Young wants to build an aspirational Republican Party.



An example of that effort is his signature piece of legislation, the Endless Frontier Act. It's a \$250 billion package designed to bolster U.S. technology, advanced manufacturing, research and development and workforce skills in those areas so that the country can better compete with China.

The measure, which Young wrote with Senate Majority

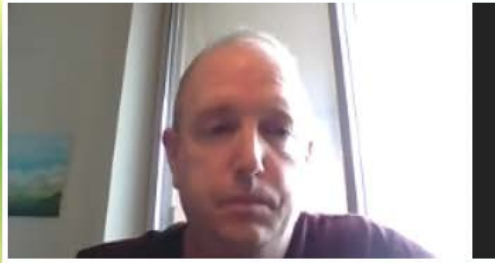
Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., was incorporated into the United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021 that passed the Senate, 68-32, on June 8. Earlier this week, the House Science, Space and Technology Committee passed that chamber's version of the bill on a voice vote, sending it to the House floor.

Plenty of Americans have suffered job losses and social and psychological setbacks due to globalization, and automation. Another culprit is the intense economic rivalry with China.

Young describes the victims of these trends as having "lost agency" in their lives.

"All of this has led to disruption and the hollowing out of certain communities that people know as home," Young said in a June 9 media conference call. "It's also caused economic dislocation as people try to acquire the skills and try to get an on-ramp into this 21st Century economy...and live lives of meaning. This legislation is a key component of that vision."

The bill also is a way for Young to try to shape the Republican Party, which has often been defined by voters who have grievances about China, liberals and perceived



cultural slights.

The avatar of that attitude is former President Donald Trump, although Young would never say that given that he is up for reelection and either needs Trump to support him or stay on the sidelines.

The Endless Frontier Act seems to be saying: Don't get mad about China, get even or, better yet, get ahead of it. Unlike GOP colleagues who tend to label much government spending as misguided, Young argues in favor of targeted government expenditures.

For instance, his bill would allocate \$10 billion to establish regional technology hubs to "seed the next Silicon Valleys across the heartland," Young said.

"We ought to be the party of smart investment as opposed to profligate investment and ensuring that we bring everyone along into the 21st Century," he said.

That approach "will not breed resentment. Instead, it will breed the exact opposite," Young said. "It will reinvigorate our institutions...and breathe new life into our nation and our national unity at a time when we're experiencing on seemingly every front a period of disunity."

My question on the media conference call regarding the Endless Frontier Act and the future of the Republican Party launched a seven-minute Young soliloquy that he acknowledged started to sound like a Senate floor speech.

"I intend to play a leading role as a Republican senator from the state of Indiana [in] ensuring the Republican Party takes this road as opposed to what might be an easier road of populism and harboring envy and resentment at a time when we see demagogues on the left doing that and we see some on the right doing it as well," Young concluded.



**Hoosier opposition**

The vote count in the Senate showed how far Young has to go in trying to influence the direction of the party, if the Endless Frontier Act is his vehicle. All 32 senators who opposed it were Republicans, including Indiana Sen. Mike Braun. Braun's office told HPI the Senator believes "red ink is going to do us in faster than Red China, so while he agrees the U.S. must stay competitive in science and tech innovation, we cannot do it through

hundreds of billions in deficit spending without offsets, and we must ensure that taxpayer funds are not being used to fund research which does not respect the sanctity of human life such as experiments using fetal tissue obtained from an abortion or unethical research into animal-human hybrids, both of which amendments were voted down by Democrats in the Senate."

Hoosier GOP support doesn't look much stronger on the House side."

The Republican Study Committee, the conservative caucus of the House chaired by Rep. Jim Banks, R-3rd CD, opposes the bill because "it would allocate over \$100 billion in taxpayer dollars to federal agencies and higher education institutions that are unlikely to quickly create meaningful innovations to aid our competition with China," the group said in a recent statement.

RSC spokesman Mitchell Hailstone, who did not provide a statement from Banks himself, added in an email: "Conservatives across the spectrum realize this bill does the opposite of what it's supposed to do – which is help us compete with China. It actually helps the Chinese Communist Party by not doing nearly enough to protect American intellectual property from Chinese espionage and theft."

Rep. Jackie Walorski, R-2nd CD, hasn't taken a position. "One of the key lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic has been that we can't trust the Chinese Communist Party, and we need to reduce our dependence on China for essential materials and products," Walorski said in a statement to HPI. "That's why I've worked across the aisle on legislation to strengthen U.S. manufacturing of PPE and other critical medical supplies so we are better prepared for the next crisis. I applaud Senator Young for his leadership in offering solutions aimed at boosting American innovation and economic competitiveness. I look forward to closely reviewing the details of this bill or any related legislation that comes to the House floor for a vote."

Rep. Victoria Spartz, R-5th CD, is reviewing the bill, said spokesman Nick Goodwin.

The Endless Frontier Act is one of the few strongly bipartisan bills that Congress is likely to pass. The challenge for Young is to convince Republican dissenters that the measure is the best way to compete with China – and serve as a roadmap for the GOP's future. ❖

# Young unafraid of crossing the aisle

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – U.S. Sen. Todd Young is a Republican who is unafraid of reaching across the aisle for rare bipartisan passage of major legislation. And he doesn't hesitate to acknowledge that Joe Biden won the presidency and the Jan. 6 storming of the Capitol was criminal.

Indiana's senior senator co-sponsored the legislation aimed at strengthening America in competition with China in technology, science and cyber research and development, providing nearly \$250 billion to do so.



It passed 68-32 in the Senate last week and is likely to win House approval and be signed into law by President Biden.

The bill, described by the New York Times as providing "the most significant government intervention in industrial policy in decades," won Senate approval only after a battle of amendments. Opposition came from some Republicans

expressing fear of too much government intervention in the economy.

Nineteen of the 50 Republican senators voted for it, with Young as co-sponsor helping to bring the extensive bipartisan support.

"Our party is changing," Young said in an interview in South Bend. "Our party is coming to understand there are certain federal investments that are essential, as long as they are made in a targeted and responsible fashion."

**Successful** competition with China is essential, Young said, and that's why he reached across the aisle to work on the legislation with the bill's sponsor, Sen. Chuck Schumer, the Senate majority leader.

Isn't a Republican reaching across to Schumer like reaching into a tiger's cage? Not this time.

"For the good of the country, Felix and Oscar came together and forged an odd couple to confront the Chinese Communist Party," Young said. "I trusted Sen. Schumer. He trusted me."

Young, with solid Republican credentials, campaigned for Donald Trump last year. But he isn't among Republicans questioning legitimacy of the presidential election.

He voted to certify the election results on Jan. 6, the day Trump supporters stormed the Capitol.

Earlier that day, when confronted by protesters, Young told them, as recorded in a news video, that he shared their disappointment over Trump losing but that "the law matters" and he had taken "an oath under God" to uphold the Constitution.

**Young sharply criticized** the criminal activities of protesters who entered the Capitol and forced senators and staff to flee the Senate chamber and seek safety in a secret location. He did not, however, vote for a commission to investigate the insurrection. He labeled that proposal as "a cynical ploy" to harm GOP election chances next year.

He said that in traveling the state he has found no antagonism among constituents over his views about Jan. 6.

"The vast majority of Hoosiers are incredibly saddened by that day that I would characterize as an act of domestic terrorism," Young said. "Those terrorists tried to interrupt peaceful transition of power and violated our cathedral of democracy."

While hurrying to safety, as protesters swarmed through the Capitol, Young found himself next to a staffer carrying a wooden box with leather handles that contained the official election certificates from the states.

Young said he offered to help carry the box. The staffer said thanks, he related, but she declined help, saying she had a duty to carry the box to safety and maintain the chain of custody.

"I was inspired by that sense of duty," Young said. And he walked along beside the staffer as they looked out for danger and hurried toward safety.

What if protesters had taken the box and destroyed the certificates?

**Even that could** not have changed the results of the election, Young said. The presidential change he seeks is through defeat of President Biden in 2024 by a Republican who "campaigns on a platform more consistent with

the mainstream of American opinion and policy." ❖

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



# McCormick's party switch extremely rare by Hoosier standards

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Wendell Willkie left the Democratic party in 1939 before winning the Republican presidential nomination in 1940. Eight years before his first run for Congress, Mike Pence did too, in 1980.

Nationally, the list of party switchers includes Hannibal Hamlin, Ronald Reagan, Strom Thurmond, Jesse Helms, John Connally, Trent Lott, Thad Cochran, Edward Vrdolyak and Leon Panetta.



And while there have been Hoosier mayors (Hobart's Brian Snedecor) and sheriffs (Vanderburgh County's Dave Wedding) who have pulled the Democrat to Republican switcheroo, former

Republican superintendent of public instruction Jennifer McCormick's announcement Sunday that she's now a Democrat is a rare, rare occurrence.

Legendary Gov. Oliver P. Morton began his political career as an anti-slavery Democrat, was expelled by the party in 1854, and formed the People's Party which later became the Republican Party in 1858.

We cannot find a modern Statehouse constitutional office holder who has ever switched parties. There have been a couple of party jumpers in the Indiana General Assembly, the last being former State Rep. Eric Turner, from D to R.

"Yes, I have switched parties," McCormick said on Fox59/CBS4 InFocus on Sunday. "I feel they are very people centric, very people oriented I think they are showing a lot of compassion. I feel I have no plans to run for anything." Which really means that McCormick is open to running for something by 2024. When she announced less than two years in office she wouldn't seek a second term, McCormick cited "politics" as the reason. She then went on a "listening tour" with State Sen. Eddie Melton in 2019 as he pondered a gubernatorial candidacy. There was speculation of a Melton/McCormick ticket.

McCormick explained, "During my time serving as Indiana's state superintendent, I always said schools are

not just about academics, it's also about taking care of the whole child. This is a fundamental value I carry as a public servant, as an educator, and as a mother, and there's no question that the Indiana Democratic Party is the place where these goals can become reality."

## Rokita, Holcomb lawyers square off

Attorneys for Gov. Eric Holcomb and Attorney General Todd Rokita faced off in court Wednesday over an emergency powers lawsuit (Smith, [Indiana Public Media](#)). A new state law, HB 1123, would allow the General Assembly to call itself into special session during an emergency – like the pandemic. Holcomb argued the Indiana Constitution gives that power solely to the governor and sued to strike the law down. But Rokita said Holcomb can't bring the suit because only the attorney general gets to represent the state in court – and Rokita doesn't think the law is unconstitutional. Marion County Judge P.J. Dietrick heard arguments Wednesday over whether Holcomb is allowed to bring the lawsuit. He repeatedly questioned both sides: what's the governor's recourse when the attorney general says he can't file a suit? "This is about the state of Indiana," said Solicitor General Thomas Fisher, representing Rokita. "The governor, in his official capacity, is the state of Indiana and the General Assembly has said the state of Indiana is represented in court by the attorney

general. And that's the point." Fisher pointed to several court precedents that back up that view. But attorney John Trimble, representing Holcomb, said those precedents don't apply. The governor, he argued, is trying to defend his constitutional powers from another branch of government. "There's nothing like it in the annals of Indiana law," Trimble said. "It stands out." Trimble contended that Rokita's position in the case would give the attorney general exclusive authority to decide a matter of law, which isn't his role. And Judge Dietrick questioned Fisher on that issue. But Fisher said that wasn't the case – he noted that a private citizen



can bring a lawsuit challenging the new law. And a private citizen, John Whitaker, has already done so. There is no timetable for a ruling. But Dietrick told the attorneys he doesn't want to "let this linger" for too long.

## U.S. Senate

### McDermott ponders challenge to Young

A little more than a year after he was denied the 1st CD Democratic nomination, Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., hinted on his "Left of Center" podcast that he is weighing a challenge to U.S. Sen. Todd Young next year.



The five-term mayor and former Lake County Democratic chairman acknowledged he's "always been interested in furthering my career," and he did not hesitate to criticize Young for voting against both Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection commission and President Biden's \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan.

"To me, when we are attacked, our nation's capital is attacked – it was – and the Republican Party is refusing to even open an investigation into it, it's a disgrace," McDermott said. "It's about loyalty to our country, and I think that's missing right now in America."



The U.S. Navy veteran said Young, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, seems to have forgotten about patriotism and loyalty. "I'm troubled by where we are in America. I think that people like Todd Young should have been pulling people together and trying to work across the aisle, and I don't really see that," McDermott said. "And Sen. Young knows better. He knows what the right thing to do about the Jan. 6 insurrection is. He knows what the right thing to do is, he knows what the political thing to do is, and he chose political. And it's not a patriotic vote."

McDermott said he doesn't understand Young's opposition to the American Rescue Plan that will deliver \$3 billion in federal funds to the state of Indiana, and another \$2.6 billion to Indiana cities, towns and school corporations, to speed recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. "The fact that only two of our 11 representatives voted for it is disgraceful – in the middle of a pandemic," McDermott said. "You know, Hammond lost millions of dollars during the pandemic, and this is trying to make us whole again."

Only U.S. Rep. Frank J. Mrvan, D-Highland, and U.S. Rep. Andre Carson, D-Indianapolis, backed the plan that McDermott described as a "game-changer for Indiana." McDermott lost the 1st CD primary to Mrvan, 33.7% to 29.2% in a field of 14 in the June 2020 primary. No other candidate received more than 10%.

McDermott raised and spent \$611,673 and raised \$50,700 via PACs, compared to \$578,643 for Mrvan. The big difference was that retiring U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky endorsed Mrvan, who also had the support of the powerful United Steelworkers. OpenSecrets reports that McDermott's FEC account has \$216 cash on hand.

According to OpenSecrets, Sen. Young has \$2.3 million cash on hand as of Dec. 31, 2020. His campaign committee raised \$14.34 million between 2015 and 2020 and spent \$12.7 million. Total spending, including by outside groups, topped \$100 million in his 2016 defeat of

Evan Bayh.

"Todd Young, honestly, in my opinion, is the toughest candidate in the Republican Party for a Democrat to consider taking on," McDermott said. "My politics are different. I could appeal to Republicans and Democrats, and if you're going to be successful as a Democrat in Indiana you've got to be in the middle and you've got to be appealing to both sides – and I think I'm the kind of candidate who could be successful in Indiana," he said.

McDermott also suggested Young is more focused on responding to the needs of big-time campaign donors instead of listening to Hoosiers, pointing to a recent Young statement that he may need to raise \$150 million to \$200 million for his reelection bid. "I really think Todd Young has completely lost touch with reality," McDermott said. "He's talking about a job that pays \$180,000 a year, and he wants to spend \$200 million on it. You want to know what's wrong with Washington, D.C.? That's what's wrong with Washington, D.C."

A spokesman for the Young campaign declined the opportunity to comment on McDermott's claims to the NWI Times.

Asked about a potential McDermott challenge to Young, Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer responded, "Who?" Hupfer later added that McDermott had finished second in the 1st CD primary.

## Political parties

### Sanders blasts 'radical left' & media

Five months into her campaign for Arkansas governor, Sarah Huckabee Sanders preached American exceptionalism, condemned the "radical left" and regaled the hundreds-strong crowd with sentimental anecdotes of her time as former President Donald Trump's White House press secretary during her keynote speech at this year's Indiana Republican Party spring dinner (Cheang, IndyStar). As she stepped up to the stage at the JW Marriot in downtown Indianapolis Friday night, she did not miss the opportunity to deliver a jab about dealing with the news media in her previous capacity as President Trump's press secretary. Sanders noted that she was the first working mother to serve as White House press secretary. "I was truly stunned that there hadn't been more moms to be in that role," she said, "because to me there can be no greater preparation in the world to walking into that briefing room than being a mother to pre-school age children."

### Hundreds of IN Dems gather online

Hundreds of Indiana Democrats rallied online last Thursday night as prominent party leaders renewed a commitment to rebuilding the party after a devastating series of losses in the 2020 statewide elections (Cheang, IndyStar). Among the speakers at the annual fundraising event were Democratic National Committee (DNC) chairman

Jaime Harrison and Kentucky governor Andy Beshear. "The 2022 election doesn't start next summer after the primaries; it starts today," said Harrison at the fundraising dinner, which was held as a Zoom virtual webinar. He reminded Indiana Democrats that the party was not giving up on flipping the state blue. "There is no such thing as a ruby-red state. They're just parts of the country that we can put more effort into," he added. "We're committed to reaching communities that have previously gone ignored and flipping districts and states that have been previously deemed unflippable."

### INDem tour continues

The Indiana Democratic Party's statewide tour continues this week: Tuesday: St. Joseph County, Joe Donnelly, Chairman Mike Schmuhl, State Sen. David Niezgodski, State Rep. Maureen Bauer. Kosciusko County, former congresswoman Jill Long Thompson and State Sen. Eddie Melton. Thursday: Monroe County, State Sens. Shelli Yoder, J.D. Ford and State Rep. Robin Shackelford. Friday: Ripley County, Schmuhl and deputy chairs Kent Yeager and Destiny Wells. Saturday: Clinton County: Christina Hale, State Rep. Mike Andrade, and State Rep. Earl Harris, Jr.; Vanderburgh County, John Gregg, State Rep, Ryan Hatfield, and Evansville Councilman Alex Burton.

### INDems blast GOP over vaccine goal

The Indiana Democratic Party called out the Indiana Republican Party for its failure to help the state reach the vaccine goal of 70% established by President Joe Biden ahead of the July 4th Independence Day holiday. In fact, Indiana Republicans like Attorney General Todd Rokita and a large majority of Republicans at the Statehouse have waged a crusade against public universities – like Indiana University – for asking students and staff to provide vaccine verification ahead of the upcoming 2021 fall semester, a practice established for other vaccine requirements. This kind of extreme partisanship is not only rooted in misinformation, but it's hurting the future of

Indiana in the process. "Let's be honest, elected officials in the Indiana Republican Party have largely failed Hoosier families at every stage of this pandemic, and their shallow, cultural crusades – whether it was their opposition to a mask mandate or vaccination requirements – have stalled Indiana from putting COVID-19 in the rearview mirror," said Lauren Ganapini, executive director for the INDems. "Luckily, President Joe Biden and Indiana Democrats passed the American Rescue Plan, and it has helped Indiana get shots in arms, relief checks to Hoosiers, and provided many the ability to return to a sense of normalcy not seen since the start of the pandemic."

### Presidential 2024

#### Pence meets with Team McCarthy

Team McCarthy, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy's PAC, held a donor retreat at the Hay-Adams hotel Monday for nearly 50 of the GOP's top corporate and individual donors (Politico Playbook). The event featured speeches by Mike Pence at a dinner and McConnell at a lunch. But Donald Trump was nowhere to be seen. When we asked McCarthy's team whether Trump was invited to speak, we never heard back. It was the same from Trump's team. Donors got a rundown of the House elections landscape and were told Republicans need to rake in about \$300 million this cycle to take the chamber. They also heard a prediction that the party's odds of success are better than 50/50.

#### Trump MAGA rallies in OH, FL

Following a series of speeches to Republican conservatives over the past five months, former president Donald Trump will head to Ohio and Florida over the next three weeks to hold the kinds of mass rallies with rank-and-file supporters that fueled his White House campaigns (USA Today). Trump is expected to stage his first post-presidential rally in the Cleveland area on June 26, and follow up with an event in the Tampa area on July 3. ❖



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# Can the United States sustain the world order?

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – We don't often think that how the U.S. conducts itself at home has much impact on how we face the world, but it does. You'd be amazed at how closely people in countries all over the globe follow events here and count on the United States to lead the way. When it's messy at home, it's hard to sustain the strength and readiness to turn our attention outward.



Doing so is especially important right now because what we've come to term "the international order" is under stress. It's not collapsing by any means, but U.S. leadership faces challenges and if we're divided and unsettled at home, it will be much more difficult to respond appropriately.

What is the international order? It's essentially the set of structures and values that evolved during the 20th Century to resolve disputes, promote commerce and free trade, undergird economic development and investment, further contacts and exchanges between nations and their citizens, and protect human rights. It's based on mutually negotiated rules and initiatives that, in a well-functioning world, are promoted by institutions such as the U.N., the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, and others.

These days, though, it's fair to say that there's no aspect of the order we once took for granted that isn't at least facing questions. This is in part because, at the moment, both China and Russia are asserting their interests and, often, working actively to undermine ours. At the same time, the U.S. role is less prominent than it once was.

**Our allies, especially** after the four years of the Trump administration, are uncertain of our commitment to global leadership given that we questioned longtime alliances, withdrew from institutions, pulled out of international accords, and in general pulled back from the web of alliances and agreements that we had helped shape in earlier years. Understandably, our friends and allies wonder how much they can count on us and our adversaries are eager to test us.

At the same time, forces beyond the control of any government are reshaping the global picture. Nationalism is stronger, conflicts between countries seem to be ratcheting up, and many societies are struggling with growing diversity, declining toler-

ance, and a turn toward authoritarianism. On the whole, international power is less concentrated and more widely distributed, which presents challenges to global institutions and makes it more difficult to pursue much-needed reforms within them.

In this situation, it's crucial that democracies such as the U.S., Europe, Japan, and Canada recognize the importance of the role they play in sustaining and revitalizing the international order. It's by no means a given that it can endure, but the democracies have an advantage; for many people around the world, the more authoritarian alternatives are not especially appealing.


**Even so, the work** of strengthening the world order will require a concerted effort that blends both cooperation and firmness. We have to strengthen our alliances of course, as well as shore up and broaden arms control efforts. Countering authoritarianism in all its facets will be an ongoing challenge. And we need constantly to gauge how best to be a benign world power, helping to resolve conflicts and slow to use force; not ruling it out, but relying on it wisely and only when necessary.

Finally, as I suggested at the beginning, our strength on all these fronts will come from making sure that we are strong at home; that our economy is robust, our finances and debt are manageable, our elections are fair and well run, our infrastructure is revitalized, we invest in the future of our businesses through R&D, and we invest in the future of the American people by focusing attention on education and skills development. If we can do all that, then we will have earned the right to lead the world in navigating the challenges facing the international order. ❖

**Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice at the IU O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.**

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

# Some early Census results for Indiana

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – The Census Bureau is now rolling out their population estimates from the 2020 counts. We have state and now local municipal counts. These figures are used to determine the number of U.S. House of Representatives seats each state receives, and to draw congressional district lines within states. The census is also used for drawing Senate and House seats within states, at least for those 49 states that have a bicameral legislature.



This is the 41st time the United States has conducted a census; the first was conducted in the summer of 1790, as required by the

Constitution two years earlier.

Demographers are also keenly interested in the decennial census. These counts give us a better idea if the annual population estimates conducted by other government agencies are accurate, and it provides a more comprehensive snapshot of changes in American population. The more detailed data that will arrive over the next couple of years will tell us more about the structure of age, education, race, ethnicity, ancestry, marriage patterns, family structure, and hundreds of other pieces of data.

Economists care about the data for even more immediate reasons. Population growth of a region is the strongest single sign of regional economic health and a marker of prosperity. So, population growth alone is often the best measure of recent improvement in economic conditions. Perhaps more importantly, population growth is a robust measure of future economic prospects for a region. For that reason, civic leaders should be closely attentive to population growth.

**The 2020 Census revealed** unsurprising results. Indiana's population grew last year by 23,943. This measure is "as of" a date in March, so it largely measures growth prior to the pandemic. What this count omits is the nearly 14,000 COVID deaths that are above the expected levels of mortality in the state.

That means nearly two-thirds of Indiana's population growth in 2020 was erased by COVID, a population equivalent of a Chesterton, Auburn or Bedford. This should be a sobering piece of data. In a better world it might even give cause for the many critics of Gov. Holcomb's pandemic restrictions to reconsider their objections.

Many of the trends of the past decades continued in 2020. The greater Indianapolis region absorbed almost 75% of the state's population growth. Most of the rest

occurred in Fort Wayne. This continues the 21st Century trend where the Indianapolis metropolitan area absorbs more than 100% of new jobs and close to 80% of new people statewide. Few places outside the large metropolitan regions are growing.

As we dive down to municipal levels, the big growth as a percent of population comes in places within the Indy region. So, Ingalls (Madison County), Whitestown (Boone County), and Bargersville and Trafalgar (Johnson County) all grew at rates five times the nation as a whole, and closer to 15 times the state rate of growth. Larger communities typically grow more slowly, but that didn't stop Winfield, Pittsboro, New Palestine, Plainfield, Avon, McCordsville or Zionsville from fast growth.

**A few places outside the** Indianapolis region grew quickly also. St. John (Lake County), Greenville (Floyd County), Utica (Clark County), and Huntingburg (Dubois County) saw robust population growth. I'm omitting lots of smaller communities, where a small annexation or a few families can have a solid growth effect. Hopefully these places will continue to attract people in the years ahead.

Almost one in three Hoosiers live in the communities that aren't growing. About 20% live in places that are growing faster than the national average, and the remaining half live in places that are in relative population decline. This reflects deeper, longer-term, structural problems in the state's economy that suppresses population growth. Those places with significant population loss should be familiar to everyone.

Muncie and East Central Indiana saw large declines that continue a half-century trend. Terre Haute and West Central Indiana likewise extended their long-term decline. Both Elkhart-Goshen and South Bend-Mishawaka metropolitan areas reversed several years of growth. These types of trend reversals are likely linked to the weakness of factory employment in the 18 months prior to the pandemic. The regions extending a half-century of decline remain decades away from reversing the trend.

These data are interesting and useful, but it is really critical to understand why economists view population growth is a measure of prosperity. There are three reasons that are related but worth considering separately.

The first of these is that people are the driving force of economic growth. As inputs to the production of goods, people matter far more than capital investment, tax rates, incentives or infrastructure. It is inevitable that local elected leaders get excited about a new business bringing a large investment to a community. In reality, they should be far more excited about people.

**The second reason is** that most economic production, some 70% of household spending, is allocated to the purchase of services. Almost all services are produced and consumed locally. Since 1970, all the net job growth, actually more than 100% of it, has gone towards the production of services. That's more than 100 million jobs. The production of goods, which are consumed outside a local

region, has declined by 8 million. One major engine of local economic growth is simply the consumption of local services.

**I know it boggles the** mind of many readers that consumers might drive local economies. Many of you have been told that making stuff locally and selling it elsewhere is the source of economic growth. You've been misled, and the best way to explain this is simply to note that the world economy has grown some six-fold over the last century. To the best of my understanding, we are conducting very little trade with Mars.

The final reason people matter is that population growth, particularly net in-migration is signal that the

community is doing something right. The ability to attract people is the most important economic development metric. To be honest, whatever is in second place hardly matters. That's why the decennial census and the annual estimates of population growth are so decidedly important to economists who study and advise about economic growth. ❖

**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.**



## Hoosier fathers & their families

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – In 2019, Indiana had 140,000 households headed by women without a spouse, living with their children under age 18, according to the Census Bureau.



Some readers may see these women as victims of their own mistakes. Others will see them as heroines who have overcome the challenges life has provided. In both cases, the absent fathers are generally, if not universally, vilified. Our society terms men who do not and/or cannot provide financial support for these women, as "deadbeat dads." Our legislatures and courts have been punitive

toward such fathers. Most often they presume the veracity of claims against them.

But changes are taking place in parenting. Expectations of men as parents have increased. As more and more women entered the labor market, fathers of intact families became more involved in raising their children. The roles of men and women converged. Still we have 140,000 Hoosier households where women are raising children on their own. Not all of this is bad, but in many cases, there are fathers who are unprepared to assume the role of parenthood.

**The causes of this situation** are many, but incarceration of young men, particularly African-American youths, is a leading factor in fatherless families. Enter the Fathers and Families Center (FFC) serving Marion County. From a former radio station, just a block south of the Children's Museum, a resolute staff, headed by Wallace McLaughlin, PhD, provides comprehensive guidance and assistance to fathers who want to improve their lives and those of their children.

FFC works with other agencies, but never hands off a participant to a bureaucratic machine. Each client is helped through the many steps along the way to a sustainable role as a parent. Most of the public discussion about these fathers focuses on money and how to wring support out of them for the family. That's not an approach consistent with reality. As the Urban Institute has said, there's a difference between deadbeat and dead-broke.

**FFC addresses the many** problems of displaced fathers. A primary objective is getting and keeping a job that pays at a rate high enough to provide some family support.

But for many young (and older) fathers there are social skills (being on time is one) to be developed and polished. Education and housing issues dealt with by FFC are important aspects of self-respect and acceptance by the community.

The list of financial supporters of FFC over the past three decades is impressive: State and federal agencies, national and local funders including the Lilly Endowment and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, with organizational support from Eskenazi Health.

In addition, corporate and individual support provides a broad base for operations. What is needed, however, for FFC and most programs benefiting the public, is an endowment for securing sustainable service.

It's good to have Fathers and Families enabling us to say, Happy Fathers' Day. ❖



## Fed expects inflation at 3.4%

WASHINGTON – The Federal Reserve expects inflation will climb to 3.4% this year, higher than the central bank's previous forecasts, while also projecting for the first time that there could be two interest rate hikes in 2023 ([Washington Post](#)). The predictions, released Wednesday depict a delicate but mostly upbeat narrative of where central bankers think the economy is headed, as well as a serious revamp of predictions from just three months earlier. ❖

# Dems shouldn't fight with each other

By **KELLY HAWES**  
CNHI News

ANDERSON – Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has made no secret of her growing impatience. "During the Obama admin, folks thought we'd have a 60 Dem majority for a while," she tweeted. "It lasted 4 months."



The New York congresswoman was referring to 2009, the year Barack Obama took office as president. Democrats that year held a 60-vote majority in the U.S. Senate, but they lost it when party stalwart Edward M. Kennedy died and the seat went to Republican Scott Brown.

In her tweets, Ocasio-Cortez insisted Joe Biden's efforts to work with Republicans were playing into the hands of Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. "Dems are burning precious time & impact negotiating w/GOP who won't even vote for a Jan 6 commission," she tweeted. "McConnell's plan is to run out the clock. It's a hustle. We need to move now."

Another tweet was even more direct. "Mitch McConnell and the Koch brothers are not worth setting the planet on fire for," she wrote. "I know some Dems may disagree with me, but that's my unpopular opinion of the day."

McConnell himself pointed out the flaw in the congresswoman's logic. "To satisfy that particular member of Congress, I think the Democrats would have to have 60 votes in the Senate and all of them would have to be as far left as she is," he said during an interview on Fox News. "I think her big complaint is with her own party."

McConnell insists the Senate is not really deadlocked on every issue. "We had six major bills so far this year passed on a bipartisan basis where we worked together and we met in the middle," he said.

**It's hard to say whether** the parties really can meet in the middle on things like infrastructure and voting rights. Their efforts so far have come up short.

McConnell, though, made another key point. "I don't think she could sell her agenda to her own party, much less find any kind of appeal for that on my side," he said.

It pains me to say it, but McConnell is right. President Joe Biden conceded as much during a recent visit to

Oklahoma. "I hear all the folks on TV saying, 'Why doesn't Biden get this done?'" he said. "Well, because Biden only has a majority of, effectively, four votes in the House and a tie in the Senate, with two members of the Senate who vote more with my Republican friends."

That last bit was a cheap shot apparently aimed at Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema. In a fact check, PolitiFact pointed out that on actual votes, both Manchin and Sinema had supported the president's position 100% of the time.

**Look, I understand the** frustration of Ocasio-Cortez and others on the left. Working through the gridlock that has come to define Washington can't be fun. Still, in the midst of a struggle, it's important to recognize who's on your side and who's not.

Some progressive activists have suggested ousting Manchin and Sinema in favor of candidates who are further to the left. I'd guess McConnell would stand up and cheer.

Manchin represents West Virginia, a state Donald Trump won by 39%. Sinema represents Arizona, a state that in the recent past was represented by two Republican U.S. senators. The reality is that a progressive like Ocasio-Cortez could never get elected in West Virginia. The same likely applies to Arizona.

What frustrated progressives need here is a reality check. Democrats have a one-vote margin in the Senate.



They can't work just with progressives such as Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. They also need to embrace moderates like Manchin and Sinema. In the end, the party can govern with the majority it has or not at all. The choice really shouldn't be difficult. ❖

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

# Trump’s down ballot impacts were modest

By LOUIS JACOBSON

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – For a defeated president, Donald Trump still seems to wield a great deal of power within the Republican Party. GOP candidates are still angling for his backing, and his decision whether to run for another term looms over the emerging 2024 Republican presidential field.

It may or may not be wise going forward, from a strictly electoral standpoint, for Trump to remain as central to the GOP as he is. On the one hand, Republicans lost control of the House and the Senate during his presidency. On the other, the down-ballot Republican losses under Trump were relatively modest compared to other recent presidents, although there are some important caveats.

With Trump out of the White House, we can close the book on how large down-ballot losses for the Republican Party were on his watch.

Trump, like his post-World War II presidential predecessors, saw his party’s control of down-ballot offices shrink during his presidency. (The two-term, same-party combinations of John F. Kennedy-Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon-Gerald Ford saw a similar pattern.)

“The surest price the winning party will pay is defeat of hundreds of their most promising candidates and officeholders for Senate, House, governorships, and state legislative posts,” this newsletter’s editor, Larry J. Sabato, wrote in 2014.

“Every eight-year presidency has emptied the benches for the triumphant party, and recently it has gotten even worse.”

Why do presidents suffer down-ballot losses so consistently? The biggest factor is likely the public’s fatigue with the president’s party and the policy decisions it has made. With only a small number of exceptions, voters have regularly punished the president’s party in midterm elections, seemingly registering their displeasure with the status quo.

As I speculated in *Governing* in 2014, “Presidents try to accomplish things, but not everyone likes what they do. Even if they have support from the majority of voters, it’s always easier for critics – even if they’re in the minor-

ity – to block major initiatives than it is for supporters to pass them. Once a president’s agenda has been blocked, their supporters grow disappointed, joining critics in their unhappiness. The president’s overall approval ratings sag, and voters take out their anger on whichever party that controls the White House.”

Exacerbating this is the tendency for presidents to accumulate popularity-sapping scandals the longer they stay in office, from Nixon’s Watergate to Ronald Reagan’s Iran-Contra to Bill Clinton’s Monica Lewinsky. Not only do such scandals sour voters on the president’s party, but presidents who are fighting for their own political standing don’t have a lot of political capital to share with those from their party who serve at lower levels.

By becoming the first postwar president to face impeachment in his first term, Trump reached this stage at hyper speed: Even prior to the 2020 election, after just three years in office, Trump oversaw significant down-ballot losses in most categories.

For this analysis, following one that Sabato’s Crystal Ball has updated periodically, we’ll look at five metrics: governorships, U.S. Senate seats, U.S. House seats, state legislative seats, and state legislative chambers controlled.

Here’s a look at the numbers.

The Republican down-ballot performance in the 2020 election was much more robust than the party’s



President	Governor change	Senate change	House change	State legislative seat change	State legislative chamber change
Clinton	-11	-7	-45	-524	-18
G. W. Bush	-7	-9	-42	-324	-13
Obama	-13	-11	-63	-949	-29
Trump	-6	-2	-28	-189	-6

showing in the 2018 midterms, which helped Trump limit his overall down-ballot losses somewhat by the end of his first term.

Still, in each of the five categories we’re tracking, Trump oversaw net losses. In fact, when we last looked at these numbers in January 2020, he could at least claim a one-seat gain in the U.S. Senate. But after the twin Democratic victories in 2020 Senate contests in Georgia, that positive number turned negative.

Trump’s down-ballot losses have mirrored those of his most recent predecessors. Here’s a comparison of Trump’s down-ballot losses to those under Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. None of these four presidents

was able to escape a decline in any of the categories.

### Down-ballot change with recent presidents

Why were Trump’s losses relatively modest? One possible reason is that losses under the recent Democrats (Clinton and especially Obama) have tended to be larger than those under Republicans (George W. Bush and Trump).

One explanation could be that the Democrats experienced a wholesale loss of seats in an entire region – the South – that is unlikely to swing back any time soon. The state legislative changes have been especially stark: In 1994, prior to Clinton’s first midterm, Democrats controlled 20 of the 22 state legislative chambers of the 11 states classically defined as being in the South because of their membership in the Confederacy during the Civil War. Now, Republicans hold an equally-lopsided 20-2 edge in the region’s state legislative chambers (Democrats control only the two chambers in Virginia.)

Another explanation could be that voters in midterm elections tend to be older, whiter, and more conservative, which has historically given Republicans some protection from midterm headwinds. (That said, with affluent, white, suburban Republicans becoming less enamored of the Trump-era GOP, this pattern may not hold in the future.)

Some quirks of the 2020 election also played a role. Joe Biden was favored in most polls going into Election Day, and some observers have suggested that a small but crucial sliver of moderate anti-Trump voters may have pulled the lever for both Biden and for a Republican candidate for Congress, hoping to keep Biden’s presidency in ideological check.

If true, this could help explain why the Democrats fell short in several states in 2020 where they had hoped to flip control of one or more legislative chamber, and where handicappers suggested they had a good shot at doing so.

Perhaps the most plausible explanation for the relatively modest decline under Trump – beyond the obvious one that his term lasted only four years rather than eight – is that politics today is more polarized by partisanship than it was in even the recent past. Today, few states vote differently for president and Senate; few House districts do, either. Ticket-splitting on any level is rare.

Such strong partisan alignment up and down the ballot has meant that both parties have relatively little low hanging fruit to poach from the other party. And this means that seats in each of the categories we’re tracking tend to be less swingy than they once were.

What does this historical pattern mean for Biden going forward?

On the one hand, Democrats are heading into a 2022 midterm election season in which their exceedingly narrow House majority is in jeopardy, not just from the midterm presidential curse but from reapportionment and redistricting, which could by itself produce enough district-by-district changes to flip control to the GOP.

That said, it’s possible that 2022 could break from the past pattern. The two recent examples of a president’s party gaining House seats in a midterm followed unusual occurrences – the GOP-led impeachment of Clinton before the 1998 midterms and the 9/11 attacks before the 2002 midterms – and the easing of the coronavirus pandemic and an economic recovery could theoretically boost Biden in a similar way in 2022.

In addition, the increased tendency for districts and states to sort by party could lessen the potential downside risk for Biden in 2022. Just seven Democrats currently represent districts won by Trump, which is far less than the 49 Democratic seats in 2010 that were won by Republican nominee John McCain in 2008. That fall, the Democrats lost 64 seats.

While midterm elections are usually a referendum on the party controlling the White House, there’s no modern precedent for an ousted president continuing to lead his party (especially one with a favorable rating significantly lower than that of the incumbent president). This could make the 2022 elections more of a “choice” election, which would be a more favorable playing field for the Democrats.

So even though Trump is no longer in office, his shadow may be meaningful for 2022 as well, and if Republicans have a poor showing, it may be that he would bear some responsibility. On the flip side, if Republicans do well, Trump may bear some responsibility for that, too. ❖

**Louis Jacobson is a Senior Columnist for Sabato’s Crystal Ball.**

(FDR)/Truman (D)	1944	1952	Change
Governors	25	18	-7
Senate	57	47	-10
House	244	213	-31
State legislative seats	3,820	3,629	-191
State leg. chambers	42	36	-6
Eisenhower (R)	1952	1960	Change
Governors	30	16	-14
Senate	48	36	-12
House	221	173	-48
State legislative seats	3,647	2,804	-843
State leg. chambers	56	35	-21
JFK/LBJ (D)	1960	1968	Change
Governors	34	19	-15
Senate	64	57	-7
House	264	243	-21
State legislative seats	4,638	4,201	-437
State leg. chambers	60	48	-12
Nixon/Ford (R)	1968	1976	Change
Governors	31	12	-19
Senate	43	38	-5
House	192	143	-49
State legislative seats	3,156	2,356	-800
State leg. chambers	48	17 (3)	-31
Carter (D)	1976	1980	Change
Governors	37	27	-10
Senate	62	47	-15
House	292	243	-49
State legislative seats	5,078	4,481	-597
State leg. chambers	77	63	-14
Reagan (R)	1980	1988	Change
Governors	24	22	-2
Senate	53	45	-8
House	192	173	-19
State legislative seats	2,921	2,927	6
State leg. chambers	35	28 (1)	-7
G. H.W. Bush (R)	1988	1992	Change
Governors	22	18	-4
Senate	45	43	-2
House	173	176	3
State legislative seats	NA	NA	121
State leg. chambers	28	30	2
Clinton (D)	1992	2000	Change
Governors	30	19	-11
Senate	57	50	-7
House	258	213	-45
State legislative seats	4,344	3,820	-524
State leg. chambers	64 (4)	46 (3)	-18
G.W. Bush (R)	2000	2008	Change
Governors	29	22	-7
Senate	50	41	-9
House	220	178	-42
State legislative seats	3,541	3,217	-324
State leg. chambers	49 (3)	36 (2)	-13
Obama (D)	2008	2016	Change
Governors	29	16	-13
Senate	57	46	-11
House	257	194	-63
State legislative seats	4,086	3,137	-949
State leg. chambers	60 (2)	31	-29
Trump (R)	2016	2020	Change
Governors	33	27	-6
Senate	52	50	-2
House	241	213	-28
State legislative seats	4,179	3,990	-189
State leg. chambers	66 (1)	60	-6



**Mike Allen, Axios:** After eight days of talking on the world stage, President Biden got prickly — then blunt, then reflective — in the final minutes before Air Force One lifted off for home. One wish that aides to generations of presidents have in common is that when their boss walks away from the podium, he'll keep walking. And reporters know that the most revealing comments often come when an interview or press conference is "over": The newsmaker drops the talking points and is more likely to be real. Biden was walking off the stage at his post-summit press conference in Geneva when CNN's Kaitlan Collins shouted a provocative, but totally fair question after his three hours with Vladimir Putin: "Why are you so confident he'll change his behavior, Mr. President?" Biden stopped and snapped as he waved his finger: "I'm not confident he'll change his behavior. Where the hell — what do you do all the time? When did I say I was confident? ... [L]et's get it straight. I said: What will change their behavior is if the rest of [the] world reacts to them and it diminishes their standing in the world. I'm not confident of anything; I'm just stating a fact." After the correspondent persisted about how the meeting could be called constructive when Putin had shown no sign of changing his behavior, Biden retorted: "If you don't understand that, you're in the wrong business." Half an hour later, on the tarmac before boarding Air Force One, Biden came over to the press pool and said: "I owe my last question an apology. ... I shouldn't have been such a wise guy with the last answer I gave." Asked again about the lack of concrete movement, Biden said: "Look, to be a good reporter, you got to be negative. You got to have a negative view of life — OK? — it seems to me, the way you all — you never ask a positive question." Then, with an aide telling him he really needed to go, Biden gave a window into how he sees the larger narrative of his presidency after 50 years on the public stage. Biden said the Capitol riot had reinforced "what I got taught by my political science professors and by the senior members of the Senate that I admired when I got there — that every generation has to reestablish the basis of its fight for democracy. I mean, for real, literally have to do it." ❖

**John Krull, Statehouse File:** The Republican Party's ongoing trials produced by former President Donald Trump remind me of a running joke in the old Peanuts comic strip. In that classic Charles Schulz strip, Lucy would promise, again and again, to hold a football while Charlie Brown rushed up to kick it. In defiance of both experience and common sense, Charlie Brown would believe her. He would rush up to kick the ball — only to have her yank it away so that he fell, inevitably and ingloriously, on his rear end. Think of the GOP as Charlie Brown and Trump as Lucy and you get the picture. Time and time again, Republicans have convinced themselves that, if they just stand with Trump one more time, everything will be all right. The worst will be behind them. They will be able to turn



the corner. Every time, though, it turns out that the former president has withheld some key piece of information, engaged in some hidden skullduggery or flat-out lied, only to be found out. Republicans have stood with him through two impeachment trials. They have defended him when he was caught making payoffs to porn stars and Playboy centerfolds to conceal sexual trysts, all the while denying he had done so. They served as human shields for him when he tried to strongarm a foreign government into performing political dirty tricks for him. Each time, like Charlie Brown, they believed him and lined up to kick the ball. And each time, he pulled the ball away and they flailed through the air only to land, painfully, on their backsides. Comes now evidence that the Justice Department surreptitiously seized communication records for two Democratic congressmen, several journalists and even Trump's own lawyer — apparently at the former president's request. Given that the Justice Department is supposed to serve as the nation's legal counsel — not the president's enforcer — this news is bound to create a fresh round of investigations and revelations. Already, the Justice Department, which no longer is led by Trump lapdogs Jeff Sessions and William Barr, has begun an internal investigation. Congress also promises its own deep dive into the matter. All this is on top of several criminal investigations into Trump's conduct while he was in the White House. Each of them likely will provide new embarrassing and damaging stories that Republicans will have to condone, explain or defend. I have no doubt that they will do it. Over and over, the GOP's leaders have shown that, when it comes to Donald Trump, they are every bit as gullible as Charlie Brown. But he's leading their party to ruin. Republicans should do themselves a favor and pick up a volume of the Charlie Brown strips. It might give them a clue about what awaits them every time they let Donald Trump hold the ball. ❖

**Gerard Baker, Wall Street Journal:** If it's true that to err is human and to forgive divine, then the people who control our media must be the gods they believe themselves to be. These days proliferating lapses in journalists' judgment and standards are not simply forgiven by the editorial establishment. They are rewarded. As long as they are the right kind of error by the right kind of person. Even if Jeffrey Toobin is in fact the indispensable legal mind CNN evidently believes he is, his reinstatement last week must surely fill some of his colleagues with misgivings. "Who's Zoomin' Who?" the great Aretha Franklin once asked. It's a valid question that may take new form in the minds of participants in future video calls with the easily distracted Mr. Toobin. But his restoration to a more salubrious on-camera role is a helpful reminder of the rules that now govern news. The medium is no longer the message: The new reality is that the mission is the message. As long as your work furthers the mission, no failure in behavior, no error in reporting or editing, no corruption of the truth or the evidence will go unrewarded. ❖

## Biden tells world 'America is back'

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden spent his first trip overseas highlighting a sharp break from his disruptive predecessor, selling that the United States was once more a reliable ally with a steady hand at the wheel. European allies welcomed the pitch — and even a longtime foe acknowledged it. But while Biden returned Wednesday night to Washington after a week across the Atlantic that was a mix of messaging and deliverables, questions remained as to whether those allies would trust that Biden truly represents a long-lasting reset or whether Russian President Vladimir Putin would curb his nation's misbehaviors. Biden's mantra, which he uttered in Geneva and Brussels and on the craggy coast of Cornwall, England, was that "America was back." It was Putin, of all people, on the trip's final moments, who may have best defined Biden's initial voyage overseas. "President Biden is an experienced statesman," Putin told reporters. "He is very different from President Trump."

But the summit with Putin in Geneva, which shadowed the entire trip and brought it to its close, also underscored the fragility of Biden's declarations that the global order had returned. Though both men declared the talks constructive, Putin's rhetoric did not change, as he refused to accept any responsibility for his nation's election interference, cyberhacking or crackdown on domestic political opponents.

## Biden, Putin discuss prickly issues

GENEVA—President Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin sought to ease tensions during a high-profile summit, even as the Russian leader denied involvement in



cyberattacks and Mr. Biden warned of significant consequences for future cyber-aggression or harm to jailed Russian dissident Alexei Navalny (Wall Street Journal). The summit came as both presidents have acknowledged that relations between the U.S. and Russia have reached a post-Cold War low in recent years. While the leaders expressed disagreements, they also offered measured assessments of each other, avoiding the heated rhetoric that has at times strained the bilateral relationship. Mr. Biden said, however, he wasn't confident Mr. Putin would change his behavior without pressure from the world's democracies. "This is not a kumbaya moment," Mr. Biden said he told Mr. Putin. "But it's clearly not in anybody's interest, your country's or mine, for us to be in a situation where we're in another Cold War."

## Young berates Democrats on floor

WASHINGTON — The For The People Act (S1) is in the hands of the Senate, who opened up the floor for debate on the bill Wednesday evening (Darling, WIBC). Sen. Todd Young took advantage of the time to berate congressional Democrats for pushing the bill, which he says is an effort to reform America's voting system in order to help themselves stay in control of Congress. "This legislation takes a system that is actually working quite well and applies drastic and draconian and desperate elections reforms meant to keep Democrats in power," Young said on the Senate floor. "In the history of our country, voting has never been easier than it is right now."

## Congress passes Juneteenth holiday

WASHINGTON — The United States will soon have a new federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the nation (AP). The House voted 415-14 Wednesday to make Juneteenth, or June 19th, the 12th

federal holiday. The bill now goes to President Joe Biden's desk, and he is expected to sign it into law. Juneteenth commemorates the day the last enslaved African Americans learned they were free.

## Teacher unions seek to block new laws

INDIANAPOLIS — Several Indiana teachers unions are seeking to block a new state law, set to take effect next month, that they say unfairly targets teachers and makes it harder for unions to collect dues (Herron, IndyStar). The unions representing Anderson, Avon and Martinsville school districts and the teachers that lead them filed a lawsuit Tuesday in Indiana's federal Southern District court challenging Senate Enrolled Act 251. The law, which will go into effect July 1, sets out a new process for the collection of teachers union dues, requiring teachers to annually complete a three-step process to have union dues deducted from their pay checks. Jeff Macey, the attorney representing the teachers and their unions, said no other unions or organization that allows for wage deductions is required to follow the same process. The law violates the constitutional rights of teachers, he said.

## Tavis Smiley eyes comeback

LOS ANGELES — Three years after workplace misconduct allegations cost veteran TV and radio talk-show host Tavis Smiley his job and a national forum, he's ending his silence (AP). Smiley is attempting to rebound with the purchase of a Los Angeles radio station that will offer a Black and progressive perspective on the city and nation. "It's frustrating when you're used to being on the air every day somewhere, (and) people are hearing your voice in this country, seeing your face, for as many years I've been doing this," he told AP. But there was an upside: introspection, and "a lot" of it, as he put it.