

The Howey Political Report



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“QUOTE” OF THE WEEK

“I’m the poster child for recounts. The entire process in Florida is so bizarre and irregular and un-uniform and arbitrary....”

- Former Congressman Frank McCloskey, to the
Bloomington Herald-Times

Where does David McIntosh go next?

Signals high interest in 2004 race

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY** in Indianapolis

Already, a list for gubernatorially starved Indiana Republicans is growing for 2004, the year Hoosiers are supposed to be Demo-fatigued:

George Witwer, State Sen. Luke Kenley, State Sen. Murray Clark, Jean Ann Harcourt, Pat Kiely, Chris LaMothe, Scott Jones, Chris Chocola, John Hiler, and U.S. Reps. Steve Buyer and Mark Souder are on the list.

“They need to start positioning themselves shortly,” observed Indiana Republican Chairman Mike McDaniel. “And that takes real work. A lot of these folks don’t realize how big a state this really is.”

The early handicapping reveals no clear-cut front-runner. Witwer and Clark stand out as past lieutenant governor nominees, but neither has won anything statewide.

LaMothe and Jones come from the business sector and are largely unknown, despite LaMothe’s Indiana Chamber-sponsored education ad blitz last fall. So, too, are Hiler, a former 10-year congressman now running a LaPorte firm, unsuccessful 3rd CD nominee Chocola, and Jones, who heads up the high-tech Indianapolis firm Escient. Harcourt has strong manufacturing credentials and is a popular party activist.

Then there are the two Northern Indiana congressmen - Buyer and Souder. If anything is to be learned from 2000, it’s not to run for governor while still a congressman.

And there’s David McIntosh, the unsuccessful 2000 nominee; the man recruited by party activists and legislators far and wide to stem the 12-year Bayh-O’Bannon tide; a man too young, too bright, with too many historic creden-

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**Don’t forget to create your own
2001 HPR 50 Most Influential List**

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WINSTON, McDANIEL PREPARING TO SEEK RE-ELECTION: As we reported last week, Indiana Republican Chairman Mike McDaniel is preparing to seek re-election to that position. So, too, it appears that Democratic Chairman Robin Winston is on the same course. Asked by HPR if he was going to seek another term, Winston replied, "At this point, I have been encouraged by lots of people to seek reappointment as chair. I'm still trying to get yard signs out of the ground." McDaniel confirmed what HPR reported last week. "My plans are for me to seek re-election," he said this morning. "I'm pretty solid with my committee. We feel we've had our best effort. We raised a lot of money - \$1.3 million on voter ID. Our lists were better than theirs. We picked up seats - the attorney general and a seat in the Senate. Lugar had a great win." McDaniel said that speculation that he would join a Bush administration was always off base. "That's never been a big desire - to work in government," McDaniel said. "It would be different if I had a chance to work with the (national) party."

GOLDSMITH, LAZIO ON SHORT HUD LIST FOR BUSH CABINET: Former Indianapolis Mayor Stephen

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McIntosh, *from page 1*

tials (studied under Antonin Scalia, founder of the Federalist Society; veteran of the Reagan and Bush White Houses; headed Dan Quayle's Competitiveness Council; first freshman since Richard Nixon to chair a House committee) to be relegated to the dustbin of Indiana politics.

Tale of two haircuts

In the autumn of 1999, I went to Paul's Barber Shop in Broad Ripple for a haircut. Paul announced that McIntosh had come in for a clip after lunching around the corner at the Aristocrat. The room was full of the neighborhood regulars - mostly Democrats - but the consensus was that young David McIntosh was impressive. He was personable. In the ensuing conversations, McIntosh had talked about his vision and plans, but didn't seem overbearing. "Folks liked him, even the Democrats," Paul said.

At the time, this incident seemed to underscore all the concerns of Hoosier Democrats: the aging incumbent governor with an administration that had trouble accomplishing its top legislative priorities

might be susceptible to the rising star Republican.

Last July, a Democratic legislator called HPR with this hot scoop: McIntosh had showed up at the Indianapolis Athletic Club barber shop. After he got in the chair, his cell phone rang and McIntosh launched into a harrangue about O'Bannon. "The governor has been getting his haircut there for the past 20 years," the Democrat said. "And then McIntosh couldn't pay the bill. He had to hit up his aides for money."

The story was only partially true. After a speech at the IAC, I went to the barber shop and asked a female barber about the incident, while a man in her chair scowled at me (it turned out to be Senate President Pro Tempore Bob Garton). Yes, his cell phone rang and yes, he did talk negatively - in political terms - about O'Bannon. The money thing was all wrong. McIntosh had simply tried to pay for the haircut with a credit card and when he found out the place only accepted cash, he borrowed some from an aide.

About 45 minutes after I returned to my office, the phone rang. It was Rob Collins, McIntosh's press secretary.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Oh, not much."

"So, anything happening?"

Ahhh. You're fishing for something. You heard about my appearance at the barber shop. I explained to Collins that the only reason I checked out the IAC haircut story was because of the Paul's Barber Shop story I already had. It was just a basic journalistic curiosity.

I promised Collins I wouldn't write anything about David McIntosh that I would regret in my next face-to-face meeting with the congressman.

But, the tale of two haircuts - campaign bookends - seemed to tell the story about what had happened over the past year: the great promise of the young Republican facing an uphill struggle, and the hard realities on the campaign trail where events and perceptions can easily slide out of one's control.

Only one shot?

Conflicting with the promise of David McIntosh and his 2000 under-performance is this modern Hoosier standard: You only get one shot at the governor's office.

That doesn't necessarily apply to McIntosh, who gave up a safe seat in Congress that could have given him a leadership trajectory to try something that no one else had done: Defeat an incumbent Indiana governor for the first time since they could run for two consecutive terms. "It took a tremendous amount of courage to give up his seat in Congress," Chairman Mike McDaniel said. "I will always be grateful." Going into the 2000 race, the thought was if McIntosh ran close, he would be afforded a second shot in 2004 when the job will be open.

The problem there is that McIntosh didn't come close to Gov. Frank O'Bannon, losing by 15 percent, which is close to a landslide. What is unnerving to a number of Indiana Republicans HPR has talked with isn't that McIntosh lost, but it's how he lost.

Just a year after Indianapolis Democrat Bart Peterson took on a 32-year Republican dynasty by running a campaign that had a plan, stayed on message and in focus - in essence, an almost perfect performance - McIntosh's '00 campaign was anything but that. In fact, the Monday morning quarterbacking target in GOP circles is McIntosh's own management style, which seemed to work well in his Congressional office and his three House campaigns, but came off as deeply flawed this year.

It's basic premise offered up with a slogan - "your property taxes have doubled" - didn't stand up to the math and scrutiny. Most people didn't even know what their property tax bill was, since it is hidden in their monthly mortgage payment. McIntosh lost credibility when he unveiled his "25-percent tax cut, guaranteed" in April without the proper documentation, that came a long three months later.

His campaign research was shoddy. That came to an embarrassing low in July when the Will Statom ad produced a firestorm of controversy as the press reported that Statom's taxes on his "house" had not "doubled" (they went up 40 percent). The Democrats then revealed that McIntosh's own property taxes had actually gone down during the O'Bannon years (and that he had failed to file for his own Homestead credit). When campaign manager Kelli Waggoner offered up an explanation that began with the word, "Conceptually...." it was as if the McIntosh phoenix had flown the coop.

While former Indiana Republican chairman Rex Early pinned the blame on McIntosh out-of-state consultants, several insider Republicans say McIntosh realized too late - in July or August - that his campaign staff was not adequate; that his best political minds - Chris Jones and Jim Huston - had been left on the Congressional staff due to family issues.

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Goldsmith apparently is one of two candidates to become George W. Bush's secretary of Housing and Urban Development. The Washington Post reported this morning that Goldsmith and former U.S. Rep. Rick Lazio could be named to the HUD post. Lazio lost a U.S. Senate race to First Lady Hillary Clinton. Bush apparently will name Colin Powell secretary of state, "possibly not until after Friday, when the U.S. Supreme Court is scheduled to hear oral arguments on Bush's Florida recount objections," the Post reported. Republican sources said former Senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) has been considered for defense secretary, as have former Bush administration official Paul D. Wolfowitz and arms control expert Richard Perle. Campaign advisers said three governors are among the candidates for attorney general--Marc Racicot of Montana, Frank Keating of Oklahoma and James S. Gilmore III of Virginia. Gilmore said on Nov. 13 that he plans to serve out his term, which ends in January 2002, the Post reported. Another name that could surface in a new Bush administration is U.S. Rep. David McIntosh. "Don't be surprised," said Indiana

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GOP Chairman Mike McDaniel, "if McIntosh's name comes up. I'd be stunned if he didn't get an offer from Bush." McIntosh served in both the Reagan and Bush administrations.

GORE'S PUBLIC OPINION SLIPPING: CNN/USA
Today/Gallup shows that support for Vice President Al Gore's legal challenge in Florida is slipping. The poll showed that only 42 percent approve the way Gore is handling the recount, down from 48 percent a week ago and 52 percent two weeks ago. The poll showed that 56 percent believe he should concede., compared to 50 percent a week ago. The Washington Post reported that Gore "faces a formidable new opponent in his bid to win the presidency: public opinion, which has sided initially with Texas Gov. George W. Bush as he attempts to lay final claim on the White House." The Post reported, "The survey, conducted Sunday night, found that slightly more than half of Americans believe the vote count in Florida was accurate and six in 10 want Gore to concede. A similar percentage of those surveyed--56 percent--also approved of the decision by the Florida secretary of state to deny a request by Palm Beach

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By the fall debate sequences, McIntosh found himself having to shore up his own Republican base, which an *Indianapolis Star* poll revealed didn't believe his 25 percent property tax guarantee.

O'Bannon's ground war

Aggravating the McIntosh miscues was that the Democratic execution was virtually flawless.

"Our plan was simple," Indiana Democratic Chairman Robin Winston said. "We created so much support and activity for Frank O'Bannon within the Democratic Party organization statewide that it would overwhelm any negative message and any strategy by our opponent. We wanted to block any conceivable advantage by our opponents.

"We wanted to make sure our people knew how to find like-minded voters and get them to the polls. We wanted to make sure our people and the media knew that our opponent's record was not in tune with mainstream moderate Hoosiers. We wanted our activists to convey that same message on the ground to real voters.

"By the time the 'air war' of TV commercials started in the fall, we wanted Frank O'Bannon to be firmly in control of the race because of our efforts in the long 'ground war.' I'm happy that by Labor Day, it was clear that Gov. O'Bannon was in a commanding position. That's just what we had hoped to help him achieve.

"Most pleasing is that we worked particularly hard to suppress any advantage by Congressman David McIntosh in his Second Congressional District. And, much as the governor beat Mayor Steve Goldsmith in Indianapolis in 1999, the governor beat David McIntosh in every county of his own district in 2000."

Even McDaniel gave credit where credit was due. "Tom New ran an excellent campaign," he said. "They hid him (O'Bannon) for most of the campaign so there were no mistakes."

Ultimately, that may be the legacy of the 2000 governor's race: No mistakes by the incumbent, who used his power adroitly.

The key question today is, will climbing such a tall mountain bury the dreams and ambitions of David McIntosh?



McIntosh looks ahead to 2004

HPR's Brian A. Howey conducted this interview with U.S. Rep. David McIntosh late Wednesday afternoon:

HPR: Any chance of you joining a potential Bush administration?

McIntosh: At this point, Ruthie and I would prefer to stay here in Indiana. If the President called and said, 'I may need you for something' you've got to take that seriously, but I really want to spend the next several years here.

HPR: What are your Indiana plans at this point?

McIntosh: The first thing I said to myself after this election was 'Don't make any decisions right now.' At this point I

would have to say I don't have any concrete plans. I'm very interested in finding ways to continue to help in public service; ways to help in education and ways to

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make more opportunities for high-tech jobs. I'll have to figure out the most productive way to do that in the private sector.

HPR: I've written that most politicians don't get two shots at running for governor, but that may not apply to you. How do you see it?

McIntosh: That's right. The things I ran on are things I care deeply about the state and would want to see those - maximizing our potential for the future. We've seen in a lot of other states where it takes two runs - the first time to become known by people; the second time you have a real chance at it. In the meantime, I want to find some less political ways, working in a bipartisan or non-partisan context to try and get consensus on improving education and technology.

HPR: So we'll be hearing from you in the next two years?

McIntosh: Yes. I want to make sure it's done in a constructive way. Gov. O'Bannon was re-elected and he'll be the leader. As I said on Election Night during my concession, if there's a way I can help building a bi-partisan consensus to move things forward, I'm there and available. I want to very much do it in that context. There's a debate between the two parties on a lot of ideas, but there's also a lot of consensus.

HPR: Did Gov. O'Bannon run the kind of campaign you expected?

McIntosh: He ran a very good campaign. His announcement about the gas tax was the biggest surprise. It also showed a strong leadership which helped him turnaround the election. I knew it was going to be an uphill battle, running against an incumbent governor who was personally popular. What he did at that point and throughout the rest of the campaign that essentially there's not a reason to make a change. That's what the voters voted for.

HPR: TeleResearch reported a 4-point race in mid-June. Did you see it that way?

McIntosh: We saw things coming together and then it widened up after the gas tax and it never got close after that.

HPR: Had you thought about calling for him to suspend the gas tax, which might have taken some of the steam out of that move?

McIntosh: No. To be honest, I had-

n't. It seemed like a temporary measure. I was unaware of the statute he ended up using. That's an area where the governor has an advantage - a team of people to see what he can do.

HPR: Coming out of the primary, I thought you were poised to make this a real race. But I thought you lost focus when it came to the 500 Parade and high school basketball.

McIntosh: Those weren't that important other than in the earned media sense. The miscue on the property tax ad was an unfortunate one. More fundamentally, we had an uphill battle. Period. Even if we had run a perfect campaign, the result might not have been different. Looking back you want to identify where you made errors in case you want to run again and learn from that. The key one was not following a strategy where people got to know me first before we engaged in the debate with Gov. O'Bannon. Part of that was dictated by resources; wanting to save money for the fall. But part of that was we should have stayed more on strategy and patience rather than going right to the property tax issue.

HPR: On the property tax issue, I remember that February day where Harrison Ullmann and I took issue with you at LePeep's about whether property taxes had really doubled. If you had just made the case that they had gone up substantially, you could have won that issue. When the Will Statom ad came out, it got bogged down in percentages. That should have been a victory for you.

McIntosh: It did get bogged down in percentages and you're right it went up 65 percent on one of them. If the argument had been, his property taxes had gone up, nobody could have refuted that.

HPR: Did people even know what their property taxes were?

McIntosh: We and the leadership, the business community and farmers understood the problem, but the average person didn't know about the increase

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election officials to extend Sunday's deadline for completing their hand recount.

GREGG CALLS FOR GORE TO STEP ASIDE; WINSTON FAVORS A FIGHT: Indiana House Speaker John Gregg, D-Sandborn, called on Gore to end the disputes that have kept the presidential election in doubt for 20 days, the Indianapolis Star reported. "He needs to pick up the phone, call Austin and say, 'Mr. President, congratulations. I support you as president 100 percent,'" Gregg said. "That said, he can start campaigning for the year 2004." But Democratic Chairman Robin Winston favors a fight. "Sure, he should (continue). Absolutely. This raises serious questions about the legitimacy of the election and he has to," he said. "As long as there are votes out there that haven't been counted, he has an obligation. This is not about Al Gore. It's about whether the votes are counted. I take this very, very seriously."

INDIANA NEWSPAPERS CALL FOR GORE TO CONCEDE: The Times of Northwest Indiana called for Gore to concede in an editorial Tuesday. "The time has come for Al Gore to concede. Florida's votes have been counted and recount-

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ed multiple times. The result is the same: Texas Gov. George W. Bush is the winner. And being the winner in Florida, he is entitled to claim the role of president-elect of the United States. Vice President Al Gore would have us believe Bush is rushing to judgment. He isn't." Tuesday's Indianapolis Star editorialized, "Gore's desperate efforts are unseemly and destructive. He needs to step aside and allow the nation to begin uniting behind its next president."

POLL SHOWS TINY SUPPORT FOR NEW COLT STADIUM: A WTHR-TV Poll showed that only 17 percent favored a new outdoor stadium for the Indianapolis Colts, while 79 percent opposed it. Four percent were undecided.

NO TOTH INVESTIGATION: A month ago, 1999 South Bend Republican nominee Steve Bradley said he was going to seek an investigation of the office of St. Joseph County Prosecutor Christopher Toth. The South Bend Tribune reported that the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Indiana State Police have yet to be contacted by Bradley about his allegations of ghost employment and a compilation of an enemies list. "I believe we've

because it wasn't that extensively covered in the media. Again, I give credit to the governor because he and his people successfully put that off until after the election. Because of that the issue didn't resonate as much as it should have. Now that the governor has been given a mandate to tackle it, he'll need everybody and all of us to help him do that.

HPR: Can we expect you to weigh in on that issue, which might play out over several years?

McIntosh: I will want to contribute suggestions but do it in a way that's positive. So I'll be cautious in weighing in because I'll want it to help.

HPR: Was there a problem with staff research?

McIntosh: I don't think there was a systematic problem. We had some very smart people helping us. If you looked at it as a strategic manner, people are more interested in the general matters and one thing that we should have done was watch how O'Bannon ran against Goldsmith because in both cases they would take a detail from an ad and say that it's wrong and from then on they said, 'You can't believe what he's saying because the detail is incorrect' whereas the general thrust is correct. We should have known that and been prepared for it and probably entered into a dialogue of general themes as much as the details. Now part of that, though, is it's important to keep the analysis in context. We had a good team that worked hard. We felt because I was the challenger I had to be more specific. I felt that saying, 'I'm a nice guy and I'm going to cut your taxes,' would not persuade people to make a change. So I'm thinking it would be nice to have less details so they won't pick it apart, but there was a need to be more specific and a higher burden or threshold for a challenger to have. And I was new to people and the media statewide and they didn't have a sense of my background and history. One of the things that has been accomplished in this election is to give people that sense.

They'll know based on this election and whatever I end up doing next, they'll have a feel for what kind of a person I am and what kind of issues that matter. Looking at going forward next time, we'll need to make sure that people have the full flavor of my background before we go into specifics.

HPR: The Democrats did a good job of softening you up in the 2nd CD with your missed votes.

McIntosh: It was very targeted there and didn't make much of a difference overall. It tied in with their general argument that he's not giving you the right details; he's not voting; there are reasons not to trust him and there are reasons to trust Frank O'Bannon, you've known him 12 years now. If you look at all of their ads, it's the same formula they used in 1996. They made it a matter of trust rather than an issue campaign and in a year when the incumbent was going to be re-elected that was very successful.

HPR: I thought the governor was very vulnerable last April and May and that the mismanagement issue might resonate. Were you surprised when it didn't?

McIntosh: It moved us up closer in the polls in the fall, but it wasn't enough for people to make the general decision to replace him. A lot of the credit goes to Gov. O'Bannon for running a good campaign. He took it off the table, primarily with the gas tax but in general by showing people that it wasn't enough to make the change for the new guy.

HPR: Your quote in the *Warsaw Times-Union* in October when you pulled the comparative ads and said people just weren't listening to that message; was there a threshold moment for you then?

McIntosh: We were seeing it getting some improvement, but at the same time, it was conveying a more negative tone about my agenda, because I would have wanted to spend more time defining myself early so people could get a more positive image on what I stood for. Those ads were overshadowing that and letting

the overall campaign get more negative than I wanted it to.

HPR: Was there a point when you said this isn't going to happen in 2000, so let's get the name ID up for 2004?

McIntosh: No, I stayed very focused on 2000, thinking if people might want to make a change with Bush, that might carry over and a positive message might be enough to do it.

HPR: During the debate sequence it looked as if you were still trying to pull in the Republican base?

McIntosh: The key to winning is to win the ticket-splitting Republicans and split the independents. We were behind with independents and not winning the ticket-splitting Republicans. Yes, part of the campaign was to say to the Republicans, 'I'm the Republican choice, Bush is supporting me and I have always stood for conservative issues.

HPR: Supt. Reed gave O'Bannon cover on education issues that were the cornerstone of the campaign. Put that into context from your standpoint.

McIntosh: I don't want to comment too much on that point because I don't in any way want to say somebody else is responsible for me losing. I'll note we were making progress on the other mismanagement issues but when that episode occurred, it helped the governor and his strategy of saying, 'Trust me, but don't trust David' because someone from his own party says he's wrong. Having talked to Dr. Reed, it was a circumstance where someone not very political who cares a lot more about policy found her words being used in a context she was very uncomfortable with. I certainly don't have any fault there, but the way it played out certainly didn't help.

HPR: How important, if you decide to run in 2004, will it be to shape the entire ticket to make sure that key components are on the same page.

McIntosh: It will be important for me or anybody who runs for governor to have a philosophical teammate on educa-

tion because that's the issue voters consistently say is the most important for them and the governor to deal with.

HPR: The other historic dynamic shift was the *Indianapolis Star*, which in 1976 wouldn't even take Larry Conrad's advertising, and in this election gave what Republicans saw as favorable news play to Gov. O'Bannon and then endorsed him.

McIntosh: I want to deal with that in two parts. The folks on the editorial page were frustrated that our campaign didn't make a strong enough case for change, because the issues I had brought up were ones they had focused on. It was a matter of saying, 'Do we go against a sitting governor when it looks like he's going to win.' They made the call that it looks like people were going to return him, so that's just fine with us. I have no beef with that; that makes sense with me. The news was pretty consistently slanted against us on the news pages. I'm used to that out in Washington. It's just a factor you take into account when you're engaged in the debate. I thought the ad watches were written in a way that let the governor run his commercials with them, but then they didn't do any ad watches with him until it was too late in the campaign. That was unhelpful. But, then again, that didn't make the difference between me winning and losing. It certainly didn't play out in a way that was objective.

HPR: Any other surprises?

McIntosh: Indiana has been very good to its incumbents with some key exceptions; Birch Bayh losing to Dan Quayle in the Reagan landslide and Vance Hartke losing because of ethical breeches. And Gov. O'Bannon was neither of those and it wasn't a year people were ready to make massive changes. That defined the election. Should we try this again in four years? My personality since I was a little kid is if I didn't do something the first time, pick myself up and do it the second. ❖

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been exonerated," Toth said. "Steve had nothing to base these outrageous lies on. I should be angry about this, but I don't think this is a constructive approach." Bradley said on Monday that he was still compiling information to turn over to authorities.

LEE HAMILTON PERCEIVES PATIENCE OF PUBLIC; COULD CHANGE: Former Hoosier congressman Lee Hamilton told the Los Angeles Times, "Thus far, American public opinion has been amazingly understanding and patient. That could begin to change." The Times quoted one senior Democratic strategist: "If the public goes south dramatically on Gore, you'll see prominent Democrats do the same." The Times quoted Democratic pollster Geoff Garin, "If the case weren't going to the Supreme Court, there would be lots of Democrats calling on Gore to throw in the towel. And if Dick Arme and Tom DeLay would just shut up, some Democrats wouldn't feel as obliged to come to Gore's defense."

CANTWELL WINS IN WASHINGTON STATE; SENATE SPLIT 50/50: Former Beech Grove resident Maria

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Cantwell apparently has defeated U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton in Washington, creating a 50/50 split in the U.S. Senate. The U.S. Senate now will have four former or current Indianapolis residents serving - Cantwell and Sens. Richard Lugar, Evan Bayh and Ted Stevens.

REGISTER FOR THE BULEN SYMPOSIUM: The 2000 Bulen Symposium is scheduled for Dec. 4 at IUPUI. The featured topic is: e-Politics and the Political Process in the New Millennium. To register, see www.plainenglish.com/bulen/bulen.html

MAYORS READY TO LOBBY: The mayors of Indiana's five largest cities have formed the Metropolitan Mayors Alliance to lobby the upcoming session of the General Assembly for more local control of their income, for money to contain sewage overflow, and for money for police and fire pensions (Shannon Lohrmann, Fort Wayne News-Sentinel). Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson chairs the alliance, which includes the mayors of Fort Wayne, Gary, Evansville and Fort Wayne. The subject of property assessment also is on their agenda. The mayors began meeting several months ago and the alliance now comprises

Buyer, Sautter go elbow-to-elbow in Florida

By **MARK SCHOEFF Jr.**

The Howey Political Report

WASHINGTON - Perhaps the Florida presidential vote controversy can be settled by a game of hoops. At least that was an idea raised by two Hoosiers who sat elbow-to-elbow in Broward County last week plowing through mountains of ballots.

Republican Rep. Steve Buyer (CD-5) and Democratic consultant Chris Sautter became acquainted over the course of several intense days of recounting. "We joked about taking it out on the basketball court," said Sautter, who has worked on Indiana races for 20 years and made his mark as a recount expert during the disputed 8th CD race in 1984.

But the matter at hand for Buyer and Sautter was serious - determining whether Texas Gov. George W. Bush or Vice President Al Gore achieved a razor-thin margin of victory in Florida to become the next president. Although Bush was certified as the Florida winner by 537 votes on Sunday, the Gore campaign is currently arguing in Florida circuit court that nearly 14,000 ballots from heavily Democratic Palm Beach and Miami-Dade counties be recounted.

Buyer helped lead the GOP charge in Florida to ensure that absentee ballots from military personnel overseas were counted. He was called into action the Friday before Thanksgiving, when the ballots were due, and spent the next nine days in the Sunshine State. Sautter, president of Sautter Communications in Washington, was in Florida from Nov. 8 through Monday. He conducted recount training for Broward, Palm Beach and Miami-Dade counties and monitored the recount in Broward.

No Hoosier had a higher profile than Buyer, who appeared several times on television and participated in numerous press conferences as part of what he called an education campaign designed to clear up confusion regarding the counting of

absentee military ballots. This issue falls under his jurisdiction as chairman of the Military Personnel Subcommittee of the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

As a coda to his earned media blitz in Florida, Buyer was prominent in a *New York Times* photo in the Nov. 27 edition that depicted the Sunday night celebration in the Blue Boar Bar in West Palm Beach, Fla., following certification of Bush's victory. Sautter, who tried to keep a low profile, was the subject of articles in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New Republic* as well as a Robert Novak column.

Explaining the Law

Buyer's primary mission was to explain to county canvassing boards - and anyone else who would listen - that under

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a 1986 amendment to the Voting Rights Act, absentee ballots from military personnel do not require a postmark. Buyer said that lawyers acting on behalf of the Gore campaign circulated a five-page memo to county canvassing boards that outlined how to challenge overseas ballots, the majority of which were adding to Bush's lead. "It was a scheme with a specific design and plan to prevent the military overseas ballots from counting."

The Associated Press reported that 1,527 overseas ballots were initially rejected. At least 111 were reinstated, but Republicans still have suits pending in several Florida counties. Overall, about 3,500 overseas ballots were counted.

Although the Florida attorney general, a Democrat, told the county canvassing boards to count military ballots and Gore's running mate, Sen. Joseph Lieberman, made the same case on Sunday television shows on Nov. 19, Buyer wasn't satisfied. He said that as late as 3 p.m. on Nov. 26, just two hours before the recount deadline set by the Florida Supreme

Court, Gore lawyers continued to instruct vote counters to throw out the military ballots. "Their actions did not match their words," he said. While insisting on counting dimpled chads, "they don't want to count Sgt. Chad, who's on the DMZ in Korea, and that's not right."

Issue Blown Out of Proportion

But Sautter called the military overseas ballot controversy a "red herring. There were very, very few ballots that were originally discarded because of the lack of a postmark." The canvassing boards made "the same decisions this year that they make year after year based on the same legal criteria."

Sautter, who enjoyed getting to know Buyer and prefaced his rebuttal by saying "with all due respect to Congressman Buyer," dismissed the military ballot controversy. "Republicans basically made things up. It was just flat out untrue."

One political analyst, however, said that Republicans scored. "That was the most effective PR issue that they've had in this entire imbroglio," said Marshall Wittmann, senior fellow at the conservative Hudson Institute. "It struck a chord with the American people."

His proselytizing also put Buyer in good stead with what will presumably be the next White House. "He handled himself well and was articulate," said Wittmann. "It has collateral benefits for Buyer in getting chits with the incoming Bush administration. I'm sure that was not overlooked (by Buyer)."

Counting or Harvesting?

Most of the public relations combat in Florida has centered on counting ballots marked - or not marked - on Election Day. The differences between the Republican and Democratic observers are stark.

"They weren't determining voter intent, they were casting votes," Buyer said of the recount procedures he observed in Broward County. The canvassing board consisted of one Republican and two Democrats monitored by a bipartisan panel. "I called it harvesting votes. In Florida, it's called trolling

for votes."

In addition to Buyer, other Republicans who monitored the recount in Broward County included former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, Michigan Gov. John Engler, and Bob Grand of Indianapolis.

"The Republican luminaries who came into the room were scripted," said Sautter. "Their job was to go in for a short period of time, then walk out and hold a press conference. Many of them were auditioning for the (Bush) cabinet."

Republicans traditionally take the same approach to recounts, Sautter said. They argue that voter intent shouldn't apply, even if it means disenfranchising voters. In some Florida counties, voter intent was determined by dimpled or hanging chads.

"I have no doubt that Al Gore won the most votes in Florida," said Sautter, who personally inspected between 35,000 and 40,000 ballots. "I'm reasonably confident he would wind up in front based on Dade County alone. The question is now whether the process is such that those votes will be counted." The Miami-Dade canvassing board declined to conduct a hand recount, saying the Nov. 26 deadline was too tight.

The voting carnage was staggering, Sautter said. "It's unbelievable how total this train wreck was in Florida in the punch-card ballot counties." Booming population growth in South Florida combined with a large number of elderly voters and outdated, poorly maintained voting equipment caused the "massive breakdown of the system." One statistician said the undercount in the South Florida counties was five to six times greater than in non-punch card counties.

But Buyer has little patience for such explanations. He believes strongly that many people in South Florida simply didn't vote for a presidential candidate. "It takes almost no effort to push a chad through," he said, relating his own experience in the 5th CD's White County, which uses a punch-card system similar to the one in Broward. He said that the notion that people couldn't record their presidential vote is "absurd. That they voted in every other race but that one makes no sense." ❖

TICKER T A P E

almost 20 cities. The mayors have little control over legislation, but their cooperative may be a convincing lobby. Before the alliance was formed, the Association of Cities and Towns handled most lobbying efforts.

BIG STEEL FACES CRISIS: Steel industry insiders expect its landscape to change dramatically within the next year, but say steelmakers' tendency to focus on day-to-day situations may cost them over the long term (Clint Mitchell, Times of Northwest Indiana). High energy costs, a record level of imports, and a strong dollar all conspire against the steel industry and observers wonder which of the companies are likely to be standing in a few years. Meanwhile, many jobs are likely to be lost. Tom Conway, United Steelworkers staff representative, said, "I think (a handful of steelmakers) could go very quickly. It's going to be a bloodbath."

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