

The Howey Political Report



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“QUOTE” OF THE WEEK

“Today we are again filled with the comfort and awe of being a part of God’s wonderful, diverse family. We thank you for embracing us with your prayers, skills, services and friendship.” - First Lady Judy O’Bannon

The week that rocked Democrats

O’Bannon ill, corruption crisis at hand

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY** in Indianapolis

As Sept. 11, 2001 was the crash and closure to our collective security and the high-tech ‘90s, the events of Sept. 4 through 10 this year are nothing less than a disaster for the Indiana Democratic Party.

As hysterical legislative party members lashed out at the governor last week and Republicans continued to close ranks behind Mitch Daniels, the next six days exposed the nerves and hemorrhaging of the party: Rampant corruption in its bulwark base of Lake County and the indictment of its former state chairman; then the stroke and near death of Gov. Frank O’Bannon; followed by the wistful thinking of many in the party hoping that Lt. Gov. Joe Kernan might reconsider his decision not to seek the 2004 nomination as his “heartbeat away” scenario grew louder and more dramatic.

Closing in on 16 years of consecutive rule, Indiana Democrats are now in a state of recoiled shock with a potential recovery every bit as daunting as that faced by Gov. O’Bannon.

Thursday, Sept. 4, 2003

When David McIntosh intoned at Indiana Republican headquarters that, “The team is coalescing around Mitch Daniels, and I’m a team player, always have been a team player, and I’m going to be part of that team,” Indiana Democrats had to be swallowing hard.

McIntosh represented the last real obstacle to Mitch Daniels sewing up the 2004 Republican gubernatorial nomination. With Vi Simpson and Joe Andrew locked in an acrimonious battle for the Democratic nod, and Bren Simon’s entry as Andrew’s running mate sealing away any notion of a Bayh-O’Bannon style unity ticket, Hoosier Democrats are now facing a suave, financial juggernaut who will not be bloodied by his own brothers prior to the May primary.

Democrats had hoped for GOP fratricide and erosion of resources. Now they find Daniels facing three “ego candidates” (Eric Miller, Bob Parker and Randy Harris) who, if nothing else, can help position Daniels toward the center while he stockpiles funds.

**Special
Report**

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LUGAR ISSUES SEPT. 11 STATEMENT: Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Dick Lugar released this statement on the anniversary of the September 11, 2001, attacks: "After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States was forced to act to protect our citizens from a new type of international terrorist. Two oceans no longer serve as adequate protection. These terrorists did not seek a new political agenda, or redress of their concerns. They sought to inflict death and destruction on the United States and other peaceful nations. The actions of the United States in both Afghanistan and Iraq have reduced, I believe, the probability of another large-scale terrorist attack. However, terrorists still seek to harm Americans, and we must be ever vigilant to the threats that they pose, particularly if they are ever successful in acquiring weapons or materials of mass destruction. This is the work we do everyday in focusing on homeland security, the war on terror and the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program, which is securing and eliminating the nuclear, chemical and biological threat from the stockpile of the former Soviet Union."

HOSTETTLER PLANNING

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After the press conference, Republican Chairman Jim Kittle Jr., who worked like a true party boss to dry up McIntosh's resources, made this eerie observation to HPR: "Fifteen months ago people were telling me I would have trouble recruiting anybody to run against Joe Kernan," Kittle said. "Now Joe Kernan is gone, we have Mitch Daniels and a clearing field."

"Anything can happen."

There was something else that "happened" that day. Mike Smith of the Associated Press reported on a letter State Rep. Scott Pelath had written to Gov. O'Bannon, because he felt the governor wasn't addressing the skyrocketing property tax bills hitting parts of the state. Pelath told Smith, "I feel like the state has been led into battle, and the commander has left the field. He needs to get back in the fight, and he needs to be the type of leader that was twice elected."

"As ducks go, he is not only lame but apparently has slipped into a coma," Pelath told Smith.

Friday, Sept. 5, 2003

What could be one of the final images of Gov. O'Bannon in full breadth of power came on the tarmac of Indianapolis International Airport. There was O'Bannon, the lone Democrat greeting President George W. Bush, who swooped into the city on a political visit to raise \$1.5 million. The two conferred in friendly animation for about five minutes. Bush had good news for O'Bannon: He had approved the disaster aid for the state following the Labor Day weekend floods.

Gov. and Mrs. O'Bannon had cut short a vacation to tour the second round of flooding that rose out of Hoosier rivers and creeks this summer after as much as eight inches of rain.

State Democrats had reason to be smug. While Bush spoke at Langham Transport touting his economic plan in a speech that echoed his May comments at the Indiana State Fairgrounds, new eco-

nomie figures released in Washington revealed disappointing news -- more job losses -- making the Bush presidency the most in that category since President Hoover.

And there was word that President Bush would be making a nationally televised address to the nation on Sunday to talk about the eroding situation in Iraq.

While O'Bannon and Bush talked, another drama was playing out 120 miles to the north ... in Lake County.

As East Chicago Mayor Robert Patrick listened to Northern District Attorney Joseph Van Bokkelen give a seminar speech on "zero tolerance" for government corruption, federal agents were fanning out and arresting Pastrick's city controller, engineer, park superintendent, and three staunch allies on the East Chicago City Council. They were indicted on 11 counts of fraud from the 1999 concrete replacement program that was the crux of Chris Sautter's documentary film, "*The King of Steeltown*."

The *Post-Tribune's* Michael Puente described it this way: "*It was a scenario that drew parallels to the baptism scene in the 'Godfather II' movie. While East Chicago Mayor Robert A. Pastrick listened intently Friday as U.S. Attorney Joseph Van Bokkelen called for zero tolerance on public corruption, some of his closest political allies were being rounded up, handcuffed, shackled, thrown in jail, and paraded in front of a federal magistrate — all on public corruption charges — in an operation orchestrated by Van Bokkelen.*"

Simultaneously, a 16-count federal indictment was unsealed against former Indiana Democratic Chairman Peter Manous, and Pastrick's son, Kevin, charged with funneling kickbacks in a 1999 land deal at Coffee Creek Center (Steve Walsh, *Post-Tribune*). Manous, hand-picked by Gov. O'Bannon (and without the imprimatur of a reportedly distressed Kernan) to be state chairman, and Kevin Pastrick were charged, along

with former Indiana Regional Council of Carpenters secretary and treasurer Gerry Nannenga, stemming from a \$10 million deal to sell 55 acres to the Carpenters Pension Trust Fund. According to a 35-page indictment and sources close to the case, Pastrick received a \$600,000 commission from the deal and gave \$200,000 to Manous, who had a previous relationship with Nannenga, providing private legal work for him and other Carpenter Union employees.

This exposed what was the dirty open secret of the Indiana Democratic Party. Just two weeks earlier, Pastrick was seated at a table with Gov. and Mrs. O'Bannon and State Sen. Vi Simpson at a tribute to ailing former Congressman Frank McCloskey.

The corruption in East Chicago was, wink-wink, just the way things were done in Lake County, long deemed an extension of the Daley Machine of Chicagoland. Indiana Democrats in the 91 other counties and in state government have for the vast majority played by the rules, but Lake County was a different land that has long been tolerated. Showings of Sautter's "*King of Steeltown*" film at French Lick the year before and at the Indiana Historical Society several years ago had many Democrats shaking their heads and chuckling, as if it were childish pranks.

Indeed, the endorsement of Mayor Pastrick was a coveted commodity between Simpson and her opponent, Joe Andrew. The O'Bannons probably didn't think twice about being seen in the company of Pastrick, the silver-haired black sheep of the Hoosier Democratic family.

But the next Sunday, Sept. 30, the *Post-Tribune's* Steve Patterson had set up the precursor to the indictments that rocked the Region five days later. Patterson had gone to the federal penitentiary at Terre Haute and interviewed former Lake County recorder Bob Freeland about life in the big house. "My life has been destroyed," the 64-year-old Freeland

said "Things I'd worked for all my life -- they're gone. I'm not with my family, my friends ... all of that is gone." And Patterson noted that Freeland would soon have company: In coming months, former Lake County Auditor Peter Benjamin, former Gary deputy clerk Junifer Hall and ex-Lake County Councilman Troy Montgomery also will go behind bars.

"It's the worst place you can imagine," Freeland said, before looking away. "You just have no idea. No one would want to be in this environment. Just being in here, it's the worst thing you could ever imagine."

Not all Democrats see the Pastrick antics as amusing. East Chicago Councilman George Pabey, who just lost a primary and court battle to Pastrick, reacted to Friday's indictments by saying, "May the chips fall where they may. ... It's a shame to see anybody get in trouble. They knew what they were doing. (Pastrick) should be responsible. He is the mayor" (Puate, *Post-Tribune*).

The political significance of Sept. 5 is that Indiana Republicans, and Mitch Daniels in particular, are assuredly taking notes from the county that traditionally rolls up 75,000 to 100,000 pluralities for the state ticket. The coming theme for Republicans is that corruption and scandals have come from a party that has been in power much too long.

Sunday, Sept. 7, 2003

The fallout from the Lake County indictments continued. "We're innocent until proven guilty. It's not guilty until proven innocent," a relatively upbeat De La Cruz said Saturday, still in shock at how FBI agents entered his home Friday morning with guns drawn while he was washing up and with his young grandchildren present (*Post-Tribune*). "I'm feeling all right," De La Cruz, a 32-year veteran of the city's police force and city councilman for 24 years, said. "They treated me like a common terrorist."

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TO SEEK RE-ELECTION: U.S. Rep. John Hostettler is planning to seek a fifth term, according to Eric Holcomb, political director for Mitch Daniels' gubernatorial campaign (Howey, HPR). Asked if his former boss would run again, Holcomb said emphatically, "Yes! I attended a fundraiser for him last week." Hostettler's press secretary, Michael Jahr, would not return a phone call on a similar question. There had been speculation that Hostettler might not run since he reported only \$5,000 on his June FEC report and aides such as Holcomb and Jim Banks have joined the Daniels and the Linda Buskirk mayoral campaign in Fort Wayne. Holcomb said that Hostettler never raises much money in years prior to his re-election campaigns.

MILLER SAYS HE'S IN THE RACE TO STAY: Republican gubernatorial candidate Eric Miller said Thursday that the McIntosh move in no way affects his campaign. "We're in the race to stay and we're in the race to win," he said (Martin DeAgostino, *South Bend Tribune*). Miller also said he was not concerned about a trend toward Daniels by the party's well-heeled establishment, as his sights are set elsewhere. "We're going

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to build the largest and most effective grassroots network ever in the history of the race for governor," he said.

HARDY READS BUYER LETTER TO SPEAKER HASTERT: The Army Reserve officer who wants to unseat U.S. Rep. Steve Buyer returned to Lafayette on Thursday with evidence allegedly showing that the Monticello Republican is not being truthful about his military status in March. At a press conference in front of the Halleck Federal Building, Republican challenger Dennis Hardy read a letter from Buyer to House Speaker Dennis Hastert that Hardy obtained from the March 20 Congressional Record (Jim Schenke, Lafayette Journal & Courier). "Dear Mr. Speaker: I have been called to active duty in the United States Army," the letter states. "Pending further orders, I request immediate indefinite leave of the House of Representatives to accommodate my military duties." Hardy, who announced plans Tuesday to challenge Buyer in next spring's primary, said the letter offers proof that Buyer lied about being called to active duty for the war in Iraq. "He did not say there would be a 90 percent chance he would be activated," Hardy said. "He stated, 'I have been called to active duty in the United States Army.'" Laura

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There was additional coverage in the Region press that Sunday. Secretary of State Todd Rokita was openly questioning the veracity of Lake County Prosecutor Bernard Carter's vote fraud investigation. Rokita said calls to Carter aren't being returned and his staff members are being excluded from "pertinent meetings" about the investigation. Rokita says he's afraid the issue could be "swept under the rug."

And Patterson was reporting in Sunday's *Post-Tribune* that several figures tied to the vote fraud case -- Bosko Grkinich, Robert Cantrell, and Joel Markovich -- had contributed a combined \$2,725 to Carter's campaigns since 1999.

Little did anyone imagine that within the next 72 hours, there would be colossal changes in store for the state and party.

Monday, Sept. 8, 2003

Hoosiers awoke to the coverage of President Bush's address to the nation on Iraq and the need for \$87 billion to shore up reconstruction. HPR reported that after huddling with President Bush and top political advisor Karl Rove on Air Force One while heading to Indianapolis on Friday, Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Richard Lugar found the administration on a "new beginning" in Iraq. "The President gave a comprehensive presentation of the scope of our war against terrorism, its current focus, our determination to succeed and the cost," said Lugar. "It was a speech that I have encouraged the President to give and I strongly support his courageous leadership."

But there was no response from Hoosier Democrats. The four Congressional offices of Evan Bayh, Baron Hill, Pete Visclosky and Julia Carson were mute. The greatest angst came from Republican U.S. Rep. Mike Pence, who expressed "astonishment" at the need for that much money atop the \$87 billion.

Indeed, breakfast conversations among Indiana Democrats centered on

Bush's eroding support in the latest Zogby poll (45 percent) and rumors that U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton and former Vice President Al Gore were reassessing the 2004 election.

Then, around 9:30 a.m., WIBC first reported Gov. O'Bannon being rushed to the hospital in Chicago.

The story now takes on the trap-pings of a disaster loop being replayed over and over on the TV news: Lt. Gov. Joe Kernan said aides began trying to rouse Gov. O'Bannon from his Palmer House Hilton Hotel room around 8 a.m., and a decision was made to have security break into the room around 8:30. Unconscious and non-responsive, O'Bannon was rushed to Northwestern Memorial Hospital where he underwent more than four hours of surgery. He was described as near death and in critical condition after suffering a massive stroke and blunt force trauma, possibly when he fell after the stroke. "We are talking weeks and months, not hours and days," said chief neurologist Dr. Patrick Conner. "The next 24 to 48 hours will be crucial." Dr. Wesley Yapor was asked if Gov. O'Bannon was near death. "Yes," he said.

Hoosiers and their political establishment were facing new territory here. Only three Indiana governors, the last Gov. Alvin Hovey in 1891, had died in office. Not since Gov. Warren McCray was convicted of mail fraud in 1923 had a governor prematurely left office.

Kernan was with O'Bannon when they rushed him to the hospital, then took Judy O'Bannon's helicopter back to Indianapolis, where the two staffs were scrambling to study a potential transition of power with the second anniversary of Sept. 11 only 72 hours in the offing.

Kernan downplayed the transfer of power. "It is early. We are hopeful," he said at a Statehouse news conference. "There is no need at this time to take any additional steps."

While Senate President Pro Tempore Robert D. Garton and House Speaker B. Patrick Bauer expressed their

distress at the governor's malady, they quickly sized up their constitutional role.

Sen. Garton said, "This morning's news of Gov. O'Bannon's illness was tragic and a total shock. The governor has been a friend and colleague for over 30 years. I am praying for his recovery and for the strength of the O'Bannon family at this very difficult time."

"This is very difficult," Bauer said.

Hoosiers hoped for the best, and expected the worst.

Tuesday Sept. 9, 2003

Indiana citizens awoke to news that Gov. O'Bannon had suffered brain damage. Dr. Wesley Yapor said the range could be anything from mild slurred speech to greater physical debilitation. "It is still possible the governor may recover substantial neurological function; we just do not presently know," the no-nonsense Yapor said.

Cutting through the medical prognosis were two familiar voices. The first, though issued in a written statement from Judy O'Bannon, certainly filled the minds all who know her with her gentle but firm voice:

"Today we are again filled with the comfort and awe of being a part of God's wonderful, diverse family," Mrs. O'Bannon said. "We thank you all for embracing us with your prayers, skills, services and friendship. We have often said there is no limit to where we can go when we go together. Words cannot describe the comfort we feel from the people of Indiana and beyond and we truly feel we are on this journey together."

The second was Lt. Gov. Kernan, still reluctant to assume power as acting governor, and sternly ending the rampant speculation on a possible political re-entry. "I know there has been speculation," Kernan said. "Nothing that has happened in the last 36 hours has changed my mind about the decision I announced in December."

Therein lies the political danger for

Democrats. There was an almost immediate and reflexive lunge by many party stalwarts toward Kernan. If, God forbid, the worst case scenario played out for Gov. O'Bannon, would Kernan reconsider?

The answer from Kernan was an emphatic "no," but from a comparative standpoint, the Andrew and Simpson campaigns had to be cringing. There were also several newspapers quoting Dr. Brian Vargus, the IUPUI pollster, who once again was designating the pair as essentially not-ready-for-primetime players.

"It's a recognition that many believe Joe Kernan would be the stronger candidate, despite any baggage he would have," said Washington political consultant Chris Sautter. "Many Democrats don't like the idea of a contested primary and the costs that will be brought to bear."

Wednesday, Sept. 10, 2003

This was the truly historic day ... the transfer of power, albeit temporarily.

The Indiana Supreme Court granted a transfer of authority from incapacitated Gov. Frank O'Bannon to Acting Gov. Joe Kernan, who will maintain his title of lieutenant governor.

The Supreme Court acted on a one-sentence letter from Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Dr. Wesley Yapor to House Speaker B. Patrick Bauer: "Gentleman, this letter certifies that Gov. Frank O'Bannon is currently unable to discharge the power and duties of his office."

Jonathan Swain, press secretary to First Lady Judy O'Bannon, said Mrs. O'Bannon has acknowledged the constitutional requirements initiated by Bauer and Senate President Pro Tempore Bob Garton.

Again, Mrs. O'Bannon's voice seemed to transcend the press releases and pronouncements from her press aide. "We all have an understanding of Frank's condition today and have total confidence in this medical team. We are aware of the

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Zuckerman, an aide for Buyer, said Buyer has already responded to Hardy's allegations. "As stated on March 31 when he returned to Congress, Congressman Buyer was neither activated nor deployed," she said Thursday. "It is regrettable that his willingness to have served is now being criticized in the political arena."

LAKE COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS GET RAISES; EMPLOYEES DON'T: Lake County's elected officials each are nabbing a \$2,500 raise next year, but 1,133 county employees who have not seen a salary boost in four years will not get any increase (Meggen Lindsay, Times of Northwest Indiana). The Lake County Council planned to give an across-the-board 3 percent raise to county employees during the 2004 budget deliberations, especially since nearly 700 other employees received raises this year ranging from 2 percent to 15 percent. Instead, beginning in January, the county will pay for all employees' contributions to their Public Employees Retirement Fund, which amounts to 3 percent of their salaries. The council granted the raises Wednesday in a 4-3 vote after a handful of officeholders, including Lake County Auditor and Democratic Party Chairman

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Stephen Stiglich and incoming Treasurer Tom Philpot, made impassioned pleas. Those raises apply to all elected officials except the prosecutor, whose salary is capped by state mandate. The seven part-time council members, for example, will see a 10 percent boost in their salaries, while other officials' raises will be closer to 5 percent. "I'm very proud that we are ending this session without one single head of a family losing their job," said council President Will Smith Jr., D-Gary. "It was about time that we took care of our elected officials. That needed to be done."

ALLEN COUNTY TAX BILLS WON'T GO OUT UNTIL FEBRUARY: Allen County taxpayers must wait until next year to find out how much they owe in property taxes for this year. Tax bills that would normally have gone out in October won't hit the mail until February at best, County Auditor Lisa Blosser said (Andy Gammill, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). It will create a host of problems for local government and confusion for taxpayers. Earlier this year, Allen County officials asked taxpayers to pay half of their taxes based on last year's numbers and said they'd send out a bill to reconcile the difference by 2004. But a letter that arrived from the state of Indiana this week

formal process that is occurring in Indiana, and in it we are seeing what we have always known: Our state government is a strong institution based on a constitution. We are so appreciative that the leadership of both the legislative and judicial branches has included us in their deliberations. We understand and fully support the actions being taken today."

Sen. Garton said he had a lengthy phone call with the First Lady before he and Bauer took the appropriate paperwork to the Supreme Court.

It took the Indiana Supreme Court an hour on consultation among the five justices to officially transfer power. "We have made the determination the governor is unable to discharge the power and duties of his office. Joseph E. Kernan will be acting governor," the court confirmed.

Bauer emphasized the word "currently" and added that if Gov. Frank O'Bannon resumes his ability, he will be restored to power.

At a press conference this morning in Chicago, Dr. Yapor said that Gov. O'Bannon is making some improvement. "The important improvements he has made are that his upper and lower extremities have reacted to pain," Yapor said. "He has made small improvements and certainly he is stable. Next one to two weeks will be important. He is much better. He survived coming into emergency room in extremely critical condition. He is still critical. He is better, more stable, less critical, but still critical."

Yapor said that O'Bannon has responded to pinching and yelling in his ear by surgeons, though "not purposely." Yapor said, "Certainly when we pinch him, he's aware of that. Other than that, it would be speculation on my part."

Atop the Dome

The crisis involving Gov. O'Bannon's health has brought an outpouring of support from Hoosiers, many who wished he was a stronger governor but who love him the same.

State Sen. Murray Clark, who ran against the O'Bannon ticket in 2000 as lieutenant governor, picked up on it. "Hoosiers were very content with him as governor because he represented true Hoosier character," said Clark. "What really came through was his true love of this state. He really loves Indiana and that is part of his success."

Clark remember seeing a beleaguered O'Bannon during on the recent spates of bad economic news. "He told me, 'Boy, I'm really getting tired of all this.'"

Clark responded by telling O'Bannon, "Just remember, you're 4 and 0." He was talking about O'Bannon's record on the state tickets.

Rep. Pelath followed his sharply critical remarks with remorse, telling the *Michigan City News-Dispatch*, "I am overcome. I am in shock. I'm praying for him and for his family. We have had our differences, but he is a good man, a genuinely good man."

Former Rep. Dick Bodiker, who recovered from a 1993 stroke, told the *Richmond Palledium-Item*, "The younger you are, the easier it is to make a complete recovery. Physical condition has a lot to do with it too. I don't know anyone his age who is in better condition. Modern medicine has come up with some amazing things to prolong our lives."

Bodiker said worried about O'Bannon before he ran for governor. "I was afraid he was too nice a guy to be governor," Bodiker said. "He's not the kind of man who can be mean to people."

For whatever doubts O'Bannon might have had, he expressed vivid optimism in what was one of his final speeches prior to his medical crisis.

Keynoting the Aug. 23 banquet at the Indiana Democratic Editorial Association convention at French Lick, O'Bannon recalled how New York Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt attended a National Governor's Association meeting in West Baden in 1931. He marveled at what

Roosevelt found when he looked at what was the largest free-spanning dome in the world at the West Baden Springs Hotel. "I wondered what they thought," O'Bannon said before he talked about his two proud achievements, the 2002 tax restructuring plan and this year's Energize Indiana legislation.

"It's working out like we planned," O'Bannon said. "It's reduced homeowners taxes by 11 percent. There are 40,000 more Hoosiers working this June than last.

"We're not in decline, we're in ascent. I've been to eight commerce regions and there are four more scheduled. We need you to be our messengers to get to the naysayers who denigrate and want to tear the state down. We want to build the state back up."

O'Bannon urged the more than 500 Democrats present to "tell a friend about the good things happening. You're helping a Democrat. There are 72 days until the election and there are 72 good things about the state."

And O'Bannon talked of West Baden Springs Hotel architect Harrison Albright, "who stood on top of the dome as the supports were taken out."

O'Bannon explained that many thought the dome would collapse, instead of standing for the next century.

"I feel like I'm on that dome tonight," O'Bannon said.

Epilogue

Following the White River fishkill in 1999, the late *NUVO* columnist Harrison Ullmann wrote a sharply critical article about Gov. O'Bannon. "Nobody ever wants anything bad to happen to Frank O'Bannon," Ullmann wrote, before calling him "Indiana's third senator" as opposed to being an activist governor.

I, too, have written critical things about Gov. O'Bannon, only to come face-to-face with him. I remember telling him one time, "Sorry to have roughed you up, governor, but we have different views on

this and I love the state, too."

"Aw, don't worry about it," Gov. O'Bannon responded. "I understand how the game is played."

Whether you were a political friend of O'Bannon or an enemy, there was nobody who had harsh denunciations of the man, whereas most other politicians will find at least a small minority of people with smoldering denigration aimed at their public psyches.

The day after Gov. O'Bannon fell ill, I wrote in the *HPR Daily Wire* how this malady has the potential of dramatically altering the Hoosier political landscape. At this writing, it still does. Republicans will likely need to temper their criticisms of his administration.

They may try to tie in his relationships and that of other Democrats to the Lake County corruption.

But the possibility of Kernan coming back into play now seems remote.

And there are a multitude of stray factors that could come into play. Political consultant Chris Sautter notes that an improved economy could help President Bush ... and Indiana Democrats. Sautter doubts that the Lake County corruption cases will resonate to people in downstate Indiana. I disagree with him on that one, figuring the Republicans will attempt to make the correlation as they seek to attract additional voters to what is already the state's third largest concentration of Republican voters and take advantage of the property tax crisis bomb that has yet to go off.

Simpson and Andrew could grow into their roles, much like Tim Roemer went from being a green candidate to an excellent congressman.

And Frank O'Bannon could rebound and come back. He was supposed to have been a political goner in 1996.

That would be remarkable and bring an entirely new twist to the sad and historic events of this past week. ❖

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warns that Allen County has fallen dangerously behind in its reassessment of property values. The County Council on Thursday ordered County Assessor Pat Love to appear in two weeks to explain the delays in reassessment. Love's office says township assessors and an outside vendor caused the delays.

DON CLARK ARRESTED ON SEXUAL BATTERY CHARGE: Steuben County's Pleasant Township deputy trustee was arrested Thursday on a sexual battery charge for allegedly demanding sexual favors in connection with providing public assistance, state police said. Police began investigating Donald R. Clark, 66 and former 4th CD Republican chairman, this week after a Pleasant Township woman filed a complaint against him (Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Clark is married to and works for elected Township Trustee Camille Clark, police said. The woman who filed the complaint told police Donald Clark demanded and received sexual favors in connection with public assistance to pay rent and utility bills, a state police news release said. State police investigators observed Donald Clark touch the woman in an inappropriate manner Thursday while he visited her home with the pretense that she needed to sign paperwork to receive

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township assistance, police said. Clark was being held without bail Thursday night in the Steuben County Jail and is to appear for an initial hearing today.



COLUMNISTS ON INDIANA

Frank Gray, *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette* - Indiana doesn't elect flashy governors. You'll never see a Jesse Ventura taking office in this state. Our collective personality is just too staid to manage a chief executive that colorful and blunt. Arnold Schwarzenegger probably couldn't get elected here. There's just too much charisma there, too much brute force for an Indiana politician. Indiana, for the last third of a century or so, has shown a fondness for the grandfatherly type, the quiet man with the friendly smile, not the big city mover and shaker but the kind whom you would imagine living in a storybook house in the countryside. Frank O'Bannon fits the mold perfectly. He's from a small town, Corydon, a little place with a claim to fame that it was once the state capital but is now just a quiet spot that no one on the other side of the state's borders has ever heard of. He's not the type of politician you hear bellowing out speeches, the way presidential hopefuls have been in the last month or so. It just doesn't fit his personality, that grandfatherly image we tend to gravitate to. Quiet just seems to work here when it comes to races like governor. Unless of course you're the bland son of a former senator. It worked when O'Bannon ran against Steven Goldsmith, a young, energetic mayor of Indianapolis, and in his run for re-election. O'Bannon, a Democrat, campaigning with a down-home style instead of the boundless ego that seems to accompany most politicians, managed to win. And when he was inaugurated, he invited the state's fourth-graders to the ceremony, just like a grandfather would, because that's the year kids start to study Indiana history. Tuesday, when people around the state learned O'Bannon suffered a cerebral hemorrhage while attending a trade meeting in Chicago, it was almost like we had all been told that Grandpa had just gotten sick, but we don't know yet how sick he

is. There was no instant talk of political maneuvering that could take place. There was no talk about how a driven political powerhouse had stumbled. Instead, there seemed real worry, a unique concern that the gentle man we've been calling the governor for the last six years or so was really sick. Maybe it's because a lot more people know him, many more have met him, than we realize.

Leo Morris, *Fort Wayne News-Sentinel* - When Lt. Gov. Joe Kernan stunned the Democratic Party nine months ago by announcing it was "time to do other things" instead of running for governor, he let it be known that it was the campaigning rather than the actual governing that he was growing weary of. Now that he must take over for stroke-stricken Gov. Frank O'Bannon at least temporarily, perhaps Kernan will rediscover a passion for management strong enough to overcome his distaste for the grip-and-grin fundraising circuit. We can only hope. When Kernan bowed out, it left the Democrats with dim hopes of keeping the governor's office and voters little chance of having a good gubernatorial campaign with evenly matched contenders. The O'Bannon administration has been repeatedly and soundly thrashed for its performance during bleak economic times. And it appears the next Democratic candidate will be either former national chairman Joe Andrews or current state legislator Vi Simpson, both of them largely unknown statewide and seemingly unable to move rhetorically beyond tired, bash-the-rich cliches. Neither is likely to be a serious match against Mitch Daniels, the former White House budget director who got into the race after months of pleading from the Indiana Republican Party. A Kernan-Daniels race would surely have been a tough, close contest, an exciting test of ideas. ❖