

The Howey Political Report



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“QUOTE” OF THE WEEK

“The people have spoken and, as usual, the people got it right.”

- Gov. Joe Kernan, speaking on mayoral victories, with his comments following a chant of “Run, Joe, Run” in Indianapolis Tuesday night

Democrats control top 7 Hoosier cities

Speculation now shifts to Gov. Kernan

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY** in Indianapolis

Consider the numbers: Indiana Democrats now have mayors in the seven most populated cities, and eight of the top 10 with State Rep. Jonathan Weinzapfel’s victory in Evansville and Thomas McDermott Jr.’s win in Hammond Tuesday night.

There are now Democratic mayors in Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Evansville, South Bend, Gary, Terre Haute, and Lafayette. In Fort Wayne, a race many expected to be close, Mayor Graham Richard annihilated Republican Linda Buskirk by 7,500 votes after she tried to use the abortion issue to woo back GOP voters turned off by negative advertising.

It is the first time since 1959 that Democrat mayors have occupied the seven most populous cities, and 20 of the 30 with a population of more than 25,000. In 1960, after being out of power for eight years (and 12 of the previous 16), Democrat Matt Welsh went on to win the governorship.

It was a bad night for 21 incumbents. Republican incumbents lost in Charlestown, Columbia City, Crawfordsville, Elwood, Evansville, Greensburg, Hammond, Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, New Albany, Noblesville, Richmond, and Winchester. Democratic mayors lost in Beech Grove, Butler, Frankfort, LaPorte, Marion, Shelbyville, Valparaiso, and Washington.

The voter ire that some GOP operatives had felt evaporate following the sickness and death of Gov. Frank O’Bannon swept in silently like a plague of Moses. The most compelling moment came at Lawrence, where Democrat Deborah Cantwell upset Tom Schneider. As she

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Covering 10 years of Indiana politics

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EARLY CALLS FOR KEELER TO RESIGN: Former Indiana Republican Chairman Rex Early has called for Marion County Chairman John Keeler to resign. "We could have won those at-large council seats, but we had no advertising, no leadership and no spokesman," Early said. "He cannot resurrect the party." Early added that in 2004, expected gubernatorial nominee "Mitch Daniels cannot come out of Marion County with those numbers."

KERNAN, GARTON, BAUER, SHEPARD TOUR PRISONS: Gov. Joe Kernan, House Speaker Pat Bauer (D-South Bend), Senate President Pro Tempore Bob Garton (R-Columbus) and Supreme Court Chief Justice Randall Shepard participated in educational visits to two Indiana prisons this morning. The visits, organized at the request of the governor, were to the Rockville and Putnamville correctional facilities. Gov. Kernan held a press conference this afternoon to discuss the trip.

PETERSON EXPECTS COUNCIL BALLOT COUNTING TO GO BEYOND TODAY: Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson told HPR this morning that the counting of absentee ballots could extend beyond this after-

noon. Peterson told HPR this morning that the counting of absentee ballots could extend beyond this afternoon.

stood next to Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson at his victory celebration, Cantwell surveyed the raucous crowd and simply said, "Wow."

But the stunning number that Hoosier Democrats were crowing about Wednesday morning was this: 40 to 8.

"We've got eight people on the staff of the Indiana Democratic Party," said its executive director Dan Parker. "He's got 40," the "he" referring to Jim Kittle Jr.

At a point in history when Republicans were launching the Mitch Daniels gubernatorial campaign, and Hoosier Democrats had seen their state chairman (Peter Manous) indicted, its Lake County stronghold rocked by federal charges with more expected, and the death of Gov. Frank O'Bannon, Tuesday night was a salve and tonic.

"Joe Hogsett kept his eye on the ball," Parker said of the party's chairman. "We felt it was make or break winning these elections. We'll focus on the governor's race on Nov. 5 and we kept our focus on mayors races. There was a lot of criticism for not saying anything. But we won."

"That's a great foundation, a solid foundation for the Democratic candidate for governor," Parker said as rumors swept the capital city that Gov. Joe Kernan was preparing to announce he was getting back into the 2004 race.

In Parker's mind, the seven top cities and 20 of the top 30 give the Democrats in 2004 regional fundraising bases, and a structure for get-out-the-vote, precinct walking, phone banking and other advantages for political organizations in power. In several cases, such as Hammond, it brings in new blood to the mix.

"The great news, was that we were also able to stop the Republican inroads along the Ohio River," Parker said, "From Lawrenceburg to Mount Vernon."

Spin of the parties

State Rep. Luke Messer, executive

director of the Indiana Republicans, quoted James Carville when he said, "A rooster crows at dawn, but that doesn't mean he made the sun rise."

Messer explained, "Democrats have made a lot of the seven largest cities and they should be proud of that. Only two, Hammond and Evansville, are pickups. If those had been losses, they would have been shocking.

"We had troubled incumbents that were not popular incumbents," Messer said of Evansville Mayor Russ Lloyd and Hammond Mayor Duane Dedelow Jr.

Messer added, "The governor dying really changed the campaign cycle. "There was an angry mood that kind of went away when the governor passed. You could see it in poll numbers, and you could feel it."

Inexplicably, in a state facing an uncertain future that saw campaigns focus on jobs and economic development, the anger seemed passive, compared to the flare-ups in Indianapolis, Bloomington and Evansville over the property tax issue. None of the losses could be overtly pinned on that topic -- to be saved, perhaps, for the Indiana General Assembly in 2004 -- but it did contribute to a feel of anxiety and uncertainty.

"We really focused on the party, contributions and staff time, in 40 races," Messer said. "In 11 races we contributed-polling and strategic levels, and we won eight of those."

Parker said Indiana Democrats put \$750,000 in cash into mayoral races and had personnel on the ground in Lafayette, Evansville, Anderson and Fort Wayne. He noted that in the Oct. 12 financial reports, the Indiana GOP had raised \$3.3 million for the year but had only \$124,000 cash on hand, compared to \$724,000 for the Democrats.

Messer pointed to Anderson as a potential microcosm for 2004. There, he said, voters punished the ruling party of 16 years by voting in Republican Kevin Smith, even though the Democratic nomi-

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HPR has questions for subscribers

As *The Howey Political Report* heads deep into its 10th year of publishing, we are planning a redesign of our products.

Send me an e-mail at brianhowey@howeypolitics.com, and answer the following questions:

1. Do you primarily read *HPR* and the *HPR Daily Wire* on your computer?
2. Do you print out your newsletters for reading?
3. Do you do both?

- Brian A. Howey ❖

nee, Robert Rock, had pledged to clean house and end business as usual. "That is a real parallel to 2004," Messer said.

Confrontational mayors

There were other trends at play. In Jeffersonville, New Albany, Terre Haute and Elkhart, the mayors (Tom Galligan, Regina Overton and Judy Anderson) lost either primary or general elections, and in Elkhart, it was ex-mayor Jim Perron who lost a rematch to Mayor Dave Miller over that perception. In Lawrence, a city that had never elected a Democrat, Republican Tom Schneider lost his second race in a year due to sleazy political tactics that backfired.

In Evansville, Mayor Lloyd never really recovered when he had to pull the plug on a downtown baseball stadium, while Rep. Weinzapfel was able to unite a divided party.

In several cities, such as Lafayette, Evansville, New Albany and Hammond, voters returned to their predominant Democratic roots.

Republicans boasted of some nice pickups in Crown Point, Anderson, and Mishawaka, along with retaining mayors in Elkhart and Kokomo.

Shifting back to Kernan

Whether the Governor likes it or not, he will now find himself back in the spotlight.

While First Lady Maggie Kernan urged him not to "paint himself in the corner" on his decision not to run, he may

have already painted himself in another corner by allowing the speculation to grow.

Kernan titillated supporters at the Peterson rally in Indianapolis Tuesday night. After several minutes of the crowd chanting "Run, Joe Run!" Kernan said, "The people have spoken and, as usual, the people got it right."

He was speaking of the elections of Mayors Peterson and Cantwell, but many Democrats are openly hoping he gets back into the race.

If he doesn't, many will feel jilted and left crying at the altar.

Kernan allies said they expected him to make his decision after the Nov. 4 election and before Thanksgiving. But with the Indiana General Assembly coming back on Nov. 18 for what is likely to be a multi-week session to provide property tax relief, Kernan is facing some interesting windows.

If he announces he'll run before Nov. 18, he could unduly politicize the special session. If he waits until after the special session, which could go until December, he could be signing the death warrant for the Joe Andrew and Vi Simpson gubernatorial campaigns.

And if Kernan decides not to run, he will find House Democrats, who see him as a lifeline, in a surly mood at a time when he'll need their support.

Jonathan Swain of the governor's press office said that "I don't have any new information on that other than what the governor said last week." ❖

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noon. Control of the Indianapolis City-County Council is hanging in the balance in at least 10 races.

DEMOCRAT WINS IN SEYMOUR: Democrat Jim Bullard will take office as the new mayor of Seymour in January after squeaking out a victory over Republican Bob Zickler in Tuesday's election. Less than 200 votes separated the two; Bullard received nearly 1,800 votes, or about 53 percent, compared to Zickler's roughly 1,600 votes or 47 percent. Just after the final votes were in, Bullard, biding his time at Democratic headquarters on Chestnut Street, found himself at the end of a long line of well-wishers; shaking hands and getting hugs from old friends and supporters. He said his hand never got tired, despite the workout. "This feels great," Bullard said. "We worked continuously the last year and a half for this." Bullard was quick to credit the many people who worked hard for his campaign. "These volunteers spent a lot of their own time to make this happen and that's where a lot of the credit needs to go," he said.

ARMSTRONG WINS THIRD TERM IN COLUMBUS: Mayor Fred Armstrong took an early lead and never let

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go Tuesday in his victory over Republican challenger David Mann (Columbus Republic). After the last returns were in about 7:30 p.m., the two-term mayor admitted he was surprised by the 2,464-vote spread. He is the second mayor in Columbus history to win a third term. His predecessor, Republican Bob Stewart, was the other. Armstrong thanked his family and team of supporters for helping make it happen.

"I couldn't have done it without you," he said to a cheering crowd at Democratic headquarters. Armstrong's wife, Kathi, accompanied the mayor, who held his smiling, blonde granddaughter on his shoulder. Later, he said his race with Mann was the toughest of his career, and he considered Mann to be a worthy opponent. "You always have doubts in a campaign," Armstrong said. "But I'm honored to have a chance to serve again as mayor. "I'm excited about the next four years."

FEDERAL FUNDING APPROVED FOR GARY AIRPORT: U.S. Sens. Evan Bayh and Richard Lugar, U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, and Gov. Joe Kernan today announced that Congress has approved more than \$15 million for the Indiana National Guard's Limited Army Aviation Center, putting plans for the facility one step closer to becoming

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2003 Racing Form Indiana Mayoral Races

Trendline: We bad, we baaaaad. And we *know* Indiana! You'll notice as you go through the results and match them up with our final forecasts that the ol' Horse didn't blow a single one. We had three Tossups (Fort Wayne, Hammond and Goshen) and the incumbent won two of them. We're kicking ourselves for not taking Victor Locke's WPTA polls more seriously and shifting Fort Wayne's Graham Richard into a Leans Democrat. But we'll take a success rate in the 90th percentile as a sweet pile of new mown hay. Bring on the governor and congressmen!

HORSE R A C E

Anderson Mayoral: Republican: Kevin Smith. Democrat: Robert W. Rock.

Independent: Linda Haynes. **1995 Results:** Lawler (D) 9,411, Graham (R) 8,817. **1999 Results:** Lawler (D) 8,395, Czarniecki (R) 7,002 Haynes (I) 1,950. **2003 Results:** Smith 8,947, Rock 7,821. **2003 Analysis:** The Lawler legacy was just too much for Rock to overcome. The people of Anderson cleaned house. **Final HPR Forecast:** *LEANS SMITH.*

Bloomington Mayoral: Republican: Fred Prall. Democrat: Mark Kruzan. **1999 Results:** Fernandez (D) Fernandez (D) 6,589, Lewis (FUSSA) 258, Clemens (I) 2,746 Maldi (I) 306. **2003 Results:** Kruzan 7,566, Prall 4,529. **2003 Analysis:** This race was never close. **Final HPR Forecast:** *LIKELY KRUZAN.*

Columbus Mayoral: Republican: David Mann. Democrat: Mayor Fred Armstrong. **1999 Results:** Armstrong (D) 6,278, Paris (R) 2,599. **2003 Results:** Armstrong 6,102, Mann 3,638. **2003 Analysis:** We were suspicious of Mann when he tried to tie Armstrong to the French (during the Iraq hot war) during a spring art fest. Mann never made a compelling reason for change. **Final HPR Forecast:** *LEANS ARMSTRONG.*

Crown Point Mayoral: Republican: Dan Klein. Democrat: Wayne Isailovich. **1999 Results:** Metros (D) 3,005, Kemp (R) 2,671. **2003 Results:** Klein 4,289, Isailovich 2,158 **2003 Analysis:** Klein resonated with business community and Sheriff Dominguez's questions about county contracts along with his drinking history doomed Isailovich. **Final HPR Forecast:** *LEANS KLEIN.*

Elkhart Mayoral: Republican: Mayor Dave Miller. Democrat: James Perron. **1995 Results:** Perron (D) 5,017, McDowell (R) 4,869. **1999 Results:** Miller (R) 4,959, Perron (D) 3,902. **2003 Results:** Miller 4,730, Perron 3,533 **2003 Analysis:** Perron failed to co-opt the incumbency advantage and was decidedly out-raised by Miller. **Final HPR Forecast:** *LEANS MILLER*

Evansville Mayoral: Republican: Mayor Russell Lloyd Jr.. Democrat: State Rep. Jonathon Weinzapfel. **Independent:** Jack Groshans. **1995 Results:** McDonald (D) 19,162, Frary (R) 9,565. **1999 Results:** Lloyd (R) 15,980, Borries (D) 15,461. **2003 Results:** Weinzapfel 6,026, Lloyd 3,248, Groshans 254. **2003 Analysis:** Lloyd's baseball stadium fiasco, the *Daily Show* Cher spoof and a united Democratic Party with plenty of resources gave the hard-working Weinzapfel the win. **Final HPR Forecast:** *LEANS WEINZAPFEL.*

Fort Wayne Mayoral: Republican: Linda Buskirk. Democrat: Mayor Graham Richard. **1995 Results:** Helmke 21,909, Essex (D) 11,033, Kempf (L) 1,029. **1999 Results:** Richard (D) 21,607, Buskirk (R) 21,531. **2003 Results:** Richard 27,251, Buskirk 19,701. **2003 Analysis:** Another example of East Coast media firm inspired negative advertising that backfired. We knew Buskirk was in trouble when she played the abortion card in a mayoral race. Chairman Kittle's insertion of Marion County Prosecutor Carl Brizzi was also a ham-handed

move. Richard, meanwhile, raised the money, put together a ground organization, stayed positive and struck to his guns on the personal finances. Perhaps a textbook effort, given the results. **Final HPR Forecast:** *TOSSUP*.

Goshen Mayoral: Republican: Councilman Tom Stump. **Democrat:** Mayor Allan Kauffman. **Independent:** Clerk-Treasurer Ron Hoke. **1999 Results:** Kauffman (D) 2,861 Aust (R) 2,153. **2003 Results:** Kauffman 2,573, Stump 2,008, Hoke 907. **2003 Analysis:** Mayor Kauffman survived the Democratic split with Hoke's candidacy and took an impressive victory. **Final HPR Forecast:** *TOSSUP*.

Hammond Mayoral: Republican: Mayor Duane Dedelow. **Democrat:** Tom McDermott Jr.. **1995 Results:** Dedelow (R) 11,099, Philpot (D) 10,578. **1999 Results:** Dedelow (R) 10,192, Philpot (D) 8,527, Robinson (L) 278. **2003 Results:** McDermott 8,948, Dedelow 8,196. **2003 Analysis:** We felt this race was too close to call. McDermott is a fresh face who brought a lot of new energy into the mix and that contrasted with Dedelow fighting his city council and excesses there. **Final HPR Forecast:** *TOSSUP*.

Indianapolis Mayoral: Republican: Treasurer Greg Jordan. **Democrat:** Mayor Bart Peterson. **1995 Results:** Goldsmith (R) 64,209, Jimison (D) 39,539, Dillon (L) 7,175. **1999 Results:** Peterson (D) 102,870, Gilroy (R) 83,044, Horning (L) 7,772, Gibson (OP) 2,145. **2003 Results:** Peterson 87,537, Jordan 51,185. **2003 Analysis:** We said Peterson would get more than 60 percent; he got 63 percent and the first Democratic council in Unigov history. Jordan was never in this; the GOP power structure took a pass based on polling and the mayor's fundraising. Then they couldn't take advantage of the property tax controversy. And for that, they've probably lost the council as a result. Ceding the state's capital city may have been this cycle's biggest blunder. **Final HPR Forecast:** *SAFE PETERSON*.

Jeffersonville Mayoral: Republican: Monty Snelling. **Democrat:** Councilman Rob Waiz. **1999 Results:** Galligan (D) 3,194, Cook (I) 640, Cooper (R) 619. **2003 Results:** Waiz 3,711, Snelling 2,354. **2003 Analysis:** Waiz was able to wrest control of the party from the confrontational Mayor Galligan and then delivered. **Final HPR Forecast:** *LEANS WAIZ*.

Kokomo Mayoral: Republican: Matthew McKillip. **Democrat:** Councilman Andrew Castner. **Independent:** Cindy Dunlap. **1999 Results:** Trobaugh (R) 5,606, Kennedy (D) 3,581. **2003 Results:** McKillip 5,229, Castner 4,101, Dunlap 832. **2003 Analysis:** McKillip took advantage of the split in the Democratic Party after the primary tie and Dunlap's candidacy. **Final HPR Forecast:** *LEANS MCKILLIP*.

Lafayette Mayoral: Republican: Clerk Lisa Decker. **Democrat:** Councilman Tony Roswarski. **1999 Results:** Heath (R) 6,237, Weiss (D) 5,496. **2003 Results:** Roswarski 7,847, Decker 5,759. **2003 Analysis:** Lafayette returns to its Democratic roots after Mayor Heath's two terms. Roswarski used his family's name and personal energy along with the living wage issue to bury Decker. **Final HPR Forecast:** *LEANS ROSWARSKI*.

New Albany Mayoral: Republican: Mayor Regina Overton. **Democrat:** Councilman James E. Garner. **Libertarian:** Melanie Hughes. **1995 Results:** England 6,845, Real (R) 5,886. **1999 Results:** Overton (R) 5,512, England (D) 4,205. **2003 Results:** Garner 5,971, Overton 3,893. **2003 Analysis:** The lesson from Jeffersonville and New Albany is ... confrontational mayors don't win re-election. That was Overton's MO and she paid dearly. **Final HPR Forecast:** *LEANS GARNER*.

Marion Mayoral: Republican: Councilman Wayne Seybold. **Democrat:** Mayor Bill Henry. **1999 Results:** Henry (D) 3,979, Mowery (R) 2,998. **2003 Results:** Seybold 4,547, Henry 2,739. **2003 Analysis:** No mayor could overcome a 3 percent rise in the unemployment rate. Marion has had tough times and people were looking for new leadership as three more plants prepare to close shop. **Final HPR Forecast:** *LEANS SEYBOLD*.

Muncie Mayoral: Republican: Mayor Dan Canan. **Democrat:** Dennis Tyler. **1995 Results:** Canan (R) 9,718, Carey (D) 6,521. **1999 Results:** Canan (R) 7,973, Smith (D) 5,611. **2003 Results:** Canan 7,211, Tyler 6,758. **2003 Analysis:** Last wee we wrote, "Local Republicans say this race has tightened up, in part due to anger over property taxes." Well, this one was tight, but Canan becomes the first three-term GOP mayor in memory, though it was a

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ing a reality. Bayh, Lugar and Visclosky secured a total of \$15.58 million for the first phase of construction for the facility, which will house the Guard's medical company, weapons of mass destruction civil support team, an air evacuation unit, a meteorological type unit and five Blackhawk helicopters at the Gary/Chicago Airport. "Construction of a new Limited Army Aviation Center at the GCA is a win-win-win situation," Bayh said. "This facility will enhance the readiness of our men and women in uniform and provide an expanded homeland security role for the Guard in Northwest Indiana and the Chicago metro region. On top of this, the program will create nearly two-hundred and fifty jobs for area Hoosiers. Today's announcement is a major step forward for the region, and would not have been possible without the help of Senator Lugar, Congressman Visclosky and Governor Kernan." "This is a major coup for Northwest Indiana," Visclosky said. "Not only will this funding help bolster homeland security in our region, but it will also provide jobs and economic opportunities for Northwest Indiana residents. I'd like to give special thanks to Senator Bayh for getting the ball rolling on this in the

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Senate. I also appreciate all the hard work and support of Governor Kernan and Senator Lugar, and I will continue to work together with all of them to see this project through."

"This is a big victory for Indiana, especially for Northwest Indiana and the Gary/ Chicago Regional Airport," said Lugar. "This is important federal defense funding for our Guard activities. This was a combined federal and state effort and I commend Congressman Visclosky, Senator Bayh and Governor Kernan for the unified effort on this important project." "The location of these units at Gary will provide a powerful deterrent to terrorism throughout the entire Chicago/ Northwest Indiana metropolitan area," Kernan said. "The State of Indiana fully supports this effort, and I congratulate Senators Lugar and Bayh and Congressman Visclosky for securing this funding. I will work together with them to make this a reality."

PENCE PRAISES BUSH FOR SIGNING PBA LAW: U.S. Rep. Mike Pence praised President Bush today for signing the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act, calling it a historic day for the unborn. Pence's statement follows: "Today will go down as one of the most satisfying of my career in

close call. **Final HPR Forecast: LEANS CANAN.**

South Bend Mayoral: Republican: Thomas Schmidt. **Democrat:** Mayor Steve Luecke. **1995 Results:** Kernan (D) 14,309, Waite (R) 3,106. **1999 Results:** Luecke (D) 13,678, Bradley (R) 6,321. **2003 Results:** Luecke 10,598, Schmidt 4,188. **2003 Analysis:** Schmidt had the best line for a loser, saying of Sunday's South Bend Tribune of the mayor, "Obviously the voters agreed. I think I probably reached the same conclusion after this campaign." We love candor. **General status: SAFE LUECKE.**

Terre Haute Mayoral: Republican: Duke Bennett. **Democrat:** Kevin Burke. **1999 Results:** Anderson (D) 6,791, Hooper (R) 2,608, Cronk (I) 1,178 Brouer (I) 174. **2003 Results:** Burke 7,338, Bennet 3,847. **2003 Analysis:** This is a Democratic city that decides things in the spring. Burke has three and a half years to get it right before the next primary. **Final HPR Forecast: SAFE BURKE.**

Valparaiso Mayoral: Republican: Councilman Jon Costas. **Democrat:** Mayor David Butterfield. **1999 Results:** Butterfield (D) 3,532, Costas (R) 3,336. **2003 Results:** Costas 3,978, Butterfield 3,181. **2003 Analysis:** Butterfield's health, the accumulated cuts after three terms and Costas's money advantage forged this win **Final HPR Forecast: LEANS COSTAS.**

Vincennes Mayoral: Republican: Mayor Terry Mooney. **Democrat:** Ron Thomas. **1999 Results:** Mooney (R) 3,009, Hatcher (D) 1,939. **2003 Results:** Mooney 2,349, Thomast 1,861. **2003 Analysis:** Mooney wards off the challenge. **Final HPR Forecast: LEANS MOONEY** ❖

COLUMNISTS ON INDIANA

Cameron Carter, Indianapolis Eye

- Only the most obtuse of political observers believes there is any question about Joe Kernan running for governor. He's in, he's just not saying so. Joe Kernan is running for governor. While Kernan plays coy with the state's media, his campaign has begun and might even be acknowledged publicly by the time this column sees publication. His running is a good thing for our state and for Indiana Democrats. It is also being welcomed by Republicans.

First, let's dispense with the guessing game of will he or won't he run. Like good intelligence work where hard evidence is difficult to come by, but connections can be discerned and intentions divined, so too is political prognostication of this sort.

Weeks ago, Indiana's First Lady Maggie Kernan suggested publicly (and spontaneously, we are told) that her husband not "paint himself into a corner"

with his decision at the end of 2002 not to seek the governorship in 2004. Let me respectfully suggest that the paint is damn near dry on that one: It was a fateful decision that launched the gubernatorial campaigns of two fellow Democrats, Joe Andrew and Senator Vi Simpson when Gov. Kernan bowed out last December. Nevertheless, the trial balloon was launched from South Bend (guaranteeing statewide wire service coverage of the story) and, like Pavlov's dogs, the media pounced on the story and continue chewing on it to this day.

Then, Team Kernan executed a deft transition to power and the precedent-setting pick of the universally admired but relatively unknown Kathy Davis as his lieutenant governor. The pick of a brilliant and talented technocrat, who just also happens to be the first woman in the job, was sheer political genius.

Many attempted to divine Kernan's intentions through Davis' appointment and

it has become a political Rorschach test: You see in it what you want to see. Many feel that Davis' apolitical nature -- she's never run for elected office -- means Kernan is not running. Nonsense. I've worked with numerous government technocrats like Davis that have never run for office, but most of them have shared political sensitivities that make them assets to their publicly elected bosses. Davis knows politics and so do Kernan's other recent personnel choices. She can grow into a campaign role or she can gracefully allow the governor to select a different running mate come convention time next summer, and she wouldn't even need to resign as lieutenant governor while Kernan and "Running Mate X" are out on the campaign trail.

Next, the more formidable and stubborn of Kernan's potential primary opponents, Joe Andrew, has his running mate, Bren Simon, unceremoniously drop out of the race and publicly voice her fealty to the governor. She did so without notifying Andrew beforehand. Rather, she let him know of her decision via a sympathetic reporter from The Indianapolis Star. No smoke-filled room here, just a very publicly embarrassing forum. In one news cycle, Joe Andrew's cynical and over-reaching opportunism that led him to pick Simon in the first place backfired, crippling his campaign. (Following Simon's defection, Andrew initially stated with camera-directed conviction that he would remain in the race if Kernan were to run. I think he made a conscious effort not to blink during the interview. Sanity prevailed and he reversed himself within days.)

Finally, there is the recently formed "Draft Kernan" effort and Web site started by a pack of next-generation Democratic attorneys from Indianapolis, all seemingly well-placed in the city's highest powered lobbying and legal firms, and sharing roots in the former Bayh administration. This "grassroots" effort to "change the mind" of Gov.

Kernan has all the spontaneity of a kabuki stage play.

In short, the infrastructure is being put in place for Kernan to run and, just like an iceberg, the public is only seeing the tip of it. And here is the biggest tell-tale sign of all: Joe Kernan won't just say "no" and end all speculation. Speculation feeds the media frenzy, freezes political funds for primary opponents, and exalts its subject.

Again, Joe Kernan is running for governor.

That is good for his party. Indiana Democrats rightly see him as the most formidable opponent to Republican Mitch Daniels. Joe Andrew's hubris and cynicism put off many Democrats, let alone Republicans who loathe him. Vi Simpson's competence and steady leadership within her party are not enough to offset her lack of an intangible political asset, charisma. Kernan has it in spades and is universally heralded as a "great guy." He is personally warm and engaging, and more of an activist than his late predecessor. I like and respect him.

But, Republicans will argue that while Joe Kernan is a great guy, he was a lousy steward of the state's economy over the past several years. Thousands of Hoosiers lost their jobs before tax restructuring in 2002 or the much-touted Energize Indiana effort was ever put on paper, and this latest initiative has already been labeled by partisans as "too little, too late."

A Kernan-Daniels contest will be a boon for our state. Two smart guys, two different agendas, and visions from which to choose. Despite the untimely death of Gov. Frank O'Bannon, Kernan will have to defend his own record while in office. His best hope is to enhance that record over the next 12 months while the state and national economies rebound. His actions since becoming governor suggest he is intent on doing so.



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Congress. As the President signed the bill that ends the barbaric procedure known as partial birth abortion, he effectively ended a medical practice that has no place in civilized society. "This is the first true legislative victory for the unborn since Roe v. Wade and I pray it will not be the last."

BAYH LASHES OUT AT FRENCH, RUSSIANS, GERMANS: The former U.S. director for economic change in Iraq praised the \$18.6 billion reconstruction package passed by Congress but said Tuesday that Iraq won't make economic progress without major changes in the Iraqi economic system (Associated Press). "We cannot expect substantial, real growth soon. There is no evidence that that happens in a case like this," Peter McPherson told members of the Senate Banking Committee's subcommittee on international trade and finance. But Sen. Evan Bayh, D-Ind., suggested a tougher approach, saying he was angered that European countries have not yet pledged to forgive their debt. "The French were good for nothing, the Germans were good for nothing, the Russians were good for nothing," he said. "If you do business with murderous dictators, you take that risk as a creditor." ❖