



### The Major Moves Star Wars

*Newspaper injects itself into issue; missing key developments*

By BRIAN A. HOWEY in Indianapolis

If you depend on the Page 1 reporting of the *Indianapolis Star*, you'd be under the impression that the the most contentious and vital issue facing confused Hoosiers today - Major Moves - is "teetering toward failure."

But in coverage that is at least a day late with a curious and unstated agenda, the impression conveyed is significantly different than you'd get if you monitored the rest of the news media.

The *Star's* coverage centered on State Rep. David Wolkins, which echoed what he told the *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette* in Wednesday's editions ("Overall it's a good bill, but we haven't convinced the people of that, and they are very, very bitter.") In reality, there was significant movement toward passage of Major Moves. The *Evansville Courier & Press* reported today that if the Perry Township re-route is removed, Sen. Vaneta Becker said she'll remain a yes vote. That move might gain the bill a vote from Sen. John Waterman, R-Shelburn, and possibly from State Sen. Larry Lutz."



**The potential movement of Sens. Lutz and Waterman** came a day after another unreported event by the *Star*, which appears to be increasingly isolated from the rest of the state. Evansville Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel, a former Democrat House member, said in his State of the City Address Tuesday, "Politicians are dragging their feet up in Indianapolis, arguing about funding. They are arguing about the route. It's time for them to stop fighting. I don't care if it is a Democratic plan or a Republican plan. I don't care if it comes from the governor, the Legislature or even my fairy godmother. We need I-69. We need it today and we need it now."

The *Times of Northwest Indiana* said that State Sen. Earlene Rogers, D-Gary, is weighing her support. If RDA funding is restored, jobs for displaced toll road workers can be found, along with job training funds, Rogers explained, "I think that those three points would be enough of a reason for me to support it."



**"It's crazy, man. It's not anything like it was the first time I was here."**

— Sgt. Rickey Jones, in a letter to his family from Iraq, prior to being killed by an roadside bomb. Part of the letter was read at his funeral on Monday (*Kokomo Tribune*)

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Other House Republicans, such as Tim Neese, Jackie Walorski, Mary Kay Budak and Marlin Stutzman, while not promising support, are hanging in awaiting a final bill.

Rep. Walorski said she spent hours on the phone Tuesday night calling constituents, taking about a half-hour with each to explain why Major Moves is a good idea. "The more they heard, the more they understood," she said.

"There's still a lot of opposition. The opponents have had a feeding frenzy on the fear and paranoia people are feeling."

"I'm supporting this because our county needs jobs," said Rep. Budak, R-LaPorte (Walsh, *Post-Tribune*). Neese

told the *Elkhart Truth* that his amendment to freeze tolls for 10 years for the northern Indiana drivers "remains a possibility." Yet, he said he sees only two other options to the toll road lease: To do nothing or borrow against future tolls, which, he said, would mean "a massive tax increase." Rep. Stutzman said his final vote will depend on the final version of the bill (*Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*). "Northeast Indiana needs to be a major beneficiary," he said. "We need our fair share." As for the ads, including hundreds of thousands of dollars being put in by Daniels and Republican supporters to sell the Major Moves concept? "It's just political wrangling. Republicans are doing it.

Democrats are doing it," Stutzman said. "You'd think the election was coming up next week."

Others potentially wavering over I-69 provisions included State Reps. Troy Woodruff, Suzanne Crouch and Dave Frizzell, according to the *Courier & Press*. "If the ability to move forward on I-69 isn't in (House Bill) 1008, I couldn't vote for it," said Rep. Crouch. "We've got to get something for our end of the state. It can't all be for Indianapolis."

## Polls and ads

Swirling around Major Moves was an all out political campaign waged by the governor and Indiana Democratic Chairman Dan Parker. It was initiated over the weekend when a PAC supporting Gov. Mitch Daniels agenda -- Aiming Higher -- took radio ads in districts represented by State Reps. Dave Crooks, Bob Bischoff and Vern Tincher. Crooks fired back with his own ad. "I'm not going to let anyone intimidate me or bully me and that includes the governor," Crooks said. "That is no way to negotiate." It was the first time a House Democrat had talked about negotiations.

Indiana Democrats went on the offensive with radio ads airing in Kendallville, LaGrange, LaPorte, South Bend, Elkhart and Mishawaka. The ad starts by asking whether the state should "sell" the Indiana Toll Road to a foreign company for 75 years, and says most Hoosiers are saying "no."

"But not Mitch Daniels. He's not listening. And he doesn't care what you think. And neither are representatives who are rubber-stamping Daniels' bad idea, like Mary Kay Budak, Steve Heim and Jackie Walorski. And even Marlin Stutzman and Ralph Ayres. They all support Daniels' plan to sell off our roads and sell us out. And that's the mistake of a generation."

But the development that could have blown the doors off Major Moves was the *Indianapolis Star* poll on Sunday showing Gov. Daniels' approval rating had slumped to 37 percent under the headline "Too Much, Too Fast?"

The *Star* followed with another question in today's editions, "Major Problems for Major Moves?" The *Star* poll revealed a paranoid and confused Hoosier electorate. While 60 percent were opposed to Major Moves, only 12 percent cited private management of a public asset and only 13 percent were concerned by increasing tolls. Most were fearful of "fer-ners."

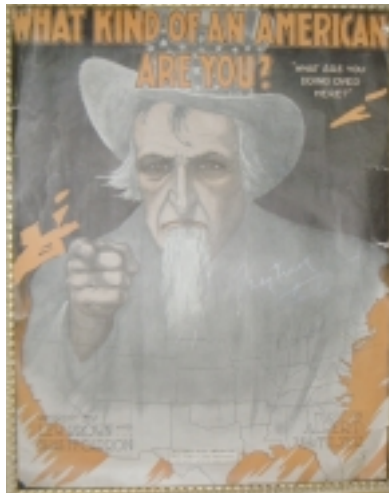
Yet, in another part of the poll, 31 percent said they were not confident they would be better off financially in a year, up from 25 percent in January 2004. The struggles of GM, Ford, Dana, and Delphi were cited as reasons. It is those very same economic development issues that Major Moves is designed to confront. This afternoon, Indiana Democrats

were pointing out that Indiana lost 12,800 jobs between December 2005 and January 2006. "Mitch Daniels campaigned on economic development and promised working Hoosiers he would fight for them by luring good-paying jobs to Indiana," said Indiana Democratic Chairman Dan Parker. "What we've seen since he took office is month after month of bad financial news and no realistic growth plan from the Governor."

*Star* Metro Editor Blair Claflin went on WTHR-TV Monday night and fanned the flames, saying, "If I am one of the senators or representatives going along with the governor, this poll would make me very nervous." Columnist Matt Tully wrote a one-man reaction from a former neighbor in Portage (See *Columnists*, page 7).

House Speaker Brian Bosma told WTHR-TV that while his caucus doesn't govern by polls, "It does cause pause on Major Moves program at this point. We've asked the governor to make a strong push to change public opinions on that. That really has not happened in the northern tier of counties like we would like."

But by today, the polls and inflammatory headlines had not doomed the issue. There seemed to be movement in the opposite direction. Daniels adviser Bill Oesterle told *HPR* this morning they were still confident they had had enough votes. Of course, the devil's in the final bill (as well as the front page of the *Star*). ❖





## Public opinion in Indiana doesn't always get it right

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS - So here we are, at a true crossroads, and the people have spoken!

No, not the people who voted for Gov. Mitch Daniels in November 2004. Some 500 of you spoke in an *Indianapolis Star* poll last week. It revealed Gov. Daniels' approval rating at an anemic 37 percent. It showed that 60 percent are against Major Moves, the highway plan that would bring us a new I-69, an upgraded U.S. 31 and a completed Hoosier Heartland Highway via a lease of the Indiana Toll Road. The main reason cited is that it's being leased to a foreign consortium.

Only 12 percent were concerned that a public asset would be managed by a private company; only 13 percent were upset by potential toll increases.

That same poll offered this nugget: that 31 percent of Hoosiers are losing confidence in their own financial well being, up from 25 percent in 2004. The reason? GM, Ford, Delphi, and Dana are all struggling for ... survival.

So Hoosiers are conflicted and confused.

But the polls are scaring some legislators. State Rep. David Wolkins of Winona Lake (a community that benefits greatly from advanced manufacturing and life sciences) is threatening to pull his support, the first Republican in the House to do so (four in the Senate also did, including three -- John Waterman, Ronnie Alting and Allen Paul -- who are facing tough re-election battles).

Wolkins told the *Journal Gazette*, "Overall it's a good bill, but we haven't convinced the people of that, and they are very, very bitter. I don't want to totally close the door, but I'd sure feel a whole lot better if we had more public support."

**Hoosiers, what I fear is that** we are about to lose the most significant job creation mechanism in a generation. And I'm not hearing a Plan B.

I must also remind you that Hoosier public opinion has been wrong before, with disastrous and far-reaching consequences.

Back in 1970s and '80s, EPA grants were available to allow communities to separate their combined sewers. Few Indiana cities and towns took advantage of the grants, fearing to contribute to the federal deficit. In fact, 90 percent of the nation's sewer overflow communities are located in Indiana and Ohio.



Brian Howey  
Column

Mike Marturello of the *Angola Herald-Republican* watched the City Council there reject the federal money. By the time the city was faced with federal mandates 25 years later to combine its sanitary and storm sewers, the federal spigot had turned off. The Clean Water Act placed a moratorium on new construction in the city until the problem was fixed. Rate payers are now picking up the tens of millions of dollars it will cost in Angola.

**In all, Hoosier rate payers** will be forking out almost \$10 billion to fix the problem. Just this past week, sewer rates increased 42 percent in Columbus. They just went up in New Albany. Sewer rates are going up all over the state because of that blunder three decades ago.

There are other examples. As an Indianapolis School Board member in the early 1960s, Dick Lugar initiated the "Shortridge Plan" to desegregate public schools. But public opinion prompted the school board to roll back that voluntary plan a year later. The result? Billions of taxpayer dollars -- billions! -- were spent on federally forced busing, prompting white flight into the suburbs.

Mayor Lugar responded to the white flight with Unigov, facing huge Democratic opposition. Thirty-five years later, it is Democratic Mayor Bart Peterson who seeks to complete the Unigov merger. House Republicans, supposedly from the party wanting smaller, more efficient government, have been blocking those efforts.

In the 1920s, a majority of Hoosiers elected a Ku Klux Klan governor, and that extremist organization took over the legislature and sent dozens of Klansmen into city halls across the state. It took a valiant prosecutor named Wil Remy, who ignored contemporary public opinion to convict D.C. Stephenson of murder, and finally public views shifted.

**It took us years before our Big Ten** universities allowed African-Americans to play basketball and football. It wasn't until 1955 that many Hoosier high schools would even schedule Crispus Attucks, which had to win a state championship before public views shifted.

Folks, we elect "leaders" to take a vision -- amply expressed by Gov. Daniels during 2003 and 2004 -- and to take the steps needed to reposition our ailing state that has suffered job loss and a decades-long decline in personal income. Major Moves was unveiled exactly six months ago, with virtually no competing vision.

The *Star* poll quotes people saying that we are changing "too fast."

Well, how slow should we go? Slow enough so other states and nations pass us by and leave us in their dust?

The people don't always get it right. That's why we have leaders.

If Major Moves is rejected next week by legislators unnerved by the polls, then what? ❖



## Evan Bayh's spring (Or, the sense God gave geese)

By MARK CURRY  
The Howey Political Report

Washington's famed Cherry Blossom Festival is more than two weeks away, but after the successes of the past several days, one might forgive Sen. Evan Bayh and staff if they feel like celebrating spring early.

Indiana's former governor addressed one of the most eminent venues in modern politics, earned widespread press coverage for proposals on energy and the Dubai ports deal, and, just for sauce, received an endorsement from *Rolling Stone* magazine.

### **American Israeli PAC**

On Monday night the junior senator was well-received as a featured speaker at the national conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Among the 5,000 in attendance were the most familiar names in national politics, including more than half the Senate and 125 representatives.

It may have been a dreary winter night outside, but nary a chill penetrated the tight security inside the Convention Center as the crowd warmed to dinner and drinks within an expansive hall illuminated by wall-sized TV screens and 30-foot renderings of Israeli and American flags. A quiet overtook the room when the first speaker was introduced, the Honorable Susan Collins, Republican senator from Maine, who elicited brief episodes of applause during an over-lengthy address, but the excitement of the evening had begun to wane by the time Sen. Evan Bayh took the stage. "I look around the room this evening and I know I am with a roomful of friends," he said in that same voice familiar to most Hoosiers. About seven minutes in he earned a 20-second ovation with this statement:

"Until Hamas recognizes the right of Israel to exist, until it renounces the use of terror not only in word but in deed, until it recognizes the agreements that have already been struck on behalf of the Palestinian people, it should receive not one penny, not one penny, from the United States of America."

Another seven minutes or so later he addressed Iran's nuclear ambitions with a promise of "not on our watch," which was followed by another 20 seconds of applause. Bayh then broached the subject of his energy bill, asserting that

"the challenge of our generation" is to ensure the security and future of the U.S. by achieving energy independence.

The message struck a chord for many in the audience. Attorney Robert S. Persky of Jersey City admitted he was unfamiliar with Bayh prior to the evening, but said he was impressed and asked how to contact the senator's campaign. Fifteen-year-old Barry Rosekind of California and his fellow students from Kehillan Jewish High School appreciated Bayh's "energy and charisma." North Chicago resident Ethel Fenig, acquainted with his record as Indiana's governor, said she admired Bayh's direct and forthright message.

Next Monday night he takes the show to College Park, Ga., to keynote the state Democratic Party's Jefferson-Jackson Dinner.

### **A Fractured GOP?**

Other recent developments lend further momentum to Bayh's efforts to establish a presidential-grade political persona. There is growing unease among Republicans with President Bush, who is polling abysmally. As the March 3rd

issue of the conservative *Patriot Post* newsletter stated, "Republicans have so demoralized their conservative base that even the most staunchly ideological conservatives are suggesting that a Democrat-controlled House may be necessary to remind Republicans why, precisely, we voted them into office."

America woke up yesterday morning to learn that top GOP lawmakers are planning to block a Dubai company from taking over operations of several U.S. ports, setting up a showdown with the White House (VOA). Sen. Bayh has criticized the process that approved the port sale, and several news stories cited his

legislative proposal to give the Director of National Intelligence more power to nix such deals.

### **Like a Rolling Stone**

Tim Dickinson of *Rolling Stone* magazine's National Affairs Daily wrote this on the Democrats and Iran: "If the Democrats had the sense God gave geese -- and I have my doubts -- they would lock the entire congressional caucus, as well as every prospective 2008 presidential candidate, in a room and not come out until they'd developed an aggressive, coherent, unified approach to dealing with Iran -- preferably along the lines outlined...by Indiana Senator Evan Bayh." ❖

Mark Curry, based in Washington, D.C., is covering the Bayh presidential campaign for HPR. Watch for his weekly reports



Sen. Bayh addresses the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. (HPR Photo by Mark Curry)



## Parker talks time and Major Moves

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

Following a verbal exchange last week between HPR Publisher Brian A. Howey (*"An Open Letter to My Democratic Friends"*) and Indiana Democratic Chairman Dan Parker (*"Governor Convinces Some Political Journalists"*), the two hooked up for lunch at Binkley's Pub in Broad Ripple. With no crow on the menu, Howey had the turkey panini; Parker dined on grouper. Let's listen in on their conversation:

**HPR:** I think Indiana Democrats, the party of FDR and "the only thing we have to fear is ..." is disingenuous in playing the xenophobe card.

**Parker:** I don't think Pat Bauer's opposition is disingenuous. The Democratic party is opposed to selling off public assets. Mitch Daniels and the Republican Party don't. It's not just the out-sourcing of the Indiana Toll Road, but every other function of government. Who's government is it? By the time Mitch Daniels leaves office, there might not be an Indiana government left. Why does he want to be governor if he doesn't want to manage government? So the opposition is philosophical. What's the role of government?

**HPR:** This is the first I've heard a Democrat make that case. It's almost nine months after Major Moves was initiated.

**Parker:** If you go back and look at the first thing I wrote about it, that's what I said. We sort of got diverted on these other things. But the fundamental aspect of this is that the opposition party doesn't care if we sell off Indiana one piece at a time. The question is, what is ours? And what do we get to keep? We've paid for it and it belongs to the people.

**HPR:** I don't see it as a sell-off. It's a lease that leverages an asset to fulfil the state's "Crossroads of America" destiny.

**Parker:** I don't see it as a leveraging. I see it as a sell-off. First, it is not an under-performing asset. Government isn't in the business to make a profit, OK? Second, once he doubles the tolls, the toll road is going to become a major, major revenue producer. Third, you're leveraging our kids' future. Now, let's take Major Moves versus the Democratic alternative. Two billion upfront would still be the largest cash infusion for road building in our history. Yet, we could do that three times over the course of 75 years. The Republican plan? It's gone for 75. I'm not going to defend what particular legislators have said because they have their own constituencies. But I can tell you the one story that hasn't been written is that our party can stand united in front of unanimous opposition and the reason for that is the philosophical debate. And

the Democratic Party isn't the only one calling this a foreign deal. The *Star*, Channel 13, every major news outlet calls it a foreign deal.

**HPR:** Where does the Democratic Party stand on foreign investment in Indiana?

**Parker:** One of the things the governor likes to mention is Toyota. Well, Toyota came in with their own capital and built a wonderful facility, by the way, initiated by a Democratic governor. This is a completely different situation. This is our road, built with our money, continually upgraded and maintained that we're going to give away.

**HPR:** What are some of the others?

**Parker:** This is like the Indianapolis Water Company. That's completely bogus and here's why. The Indianapolis Water Company was the exact opposite of privatization. This was a private company that Indianapolis saw as a public asset, purchased and has a management contract with a company. That company doesn't set the rates and collect all the money and charge whatever they want to make a profit. The city of Indianapolis is guaranteed low water rates. The same holds true with BAA Indianapolis. The Indianapolis Airport Authority maintains control over the airport. BAA doesn't set the landing fees or the costs related to that. The city and county airport authority maintains control. On the toll road, we're losing all control. And I know you don't like to hear me say that, but we're giving it away and they get to set the rates.

**HPR:** I lived in Elkhart for 11 years. I did drive the toll road to Chicago, Lake Michigan, maybe, five, six, eight times a year. Occasionally I'd take it over to South Bend or

Mishawaka. For an overwhelming majority of people it isn't part of their daily lives. Two-thirds of the traffic comes from out of state.

**Parker:** I don't disagree with that. I think part of the reason that Mitch Daniels has gotten in trouble is that like his protege, he's a divider, not a uniter. He's divided this state along geographical lines. Whether it's the time issue or the toll road, he's a divider. What you hear out of local officials in Northern Indiana is, "Why does Indianapolis get a billion dollars?" We shouldn't be pitting projects against each other, but that's what he's doing. He's blackmailing people to get what he wants. If he had done what he said he would do and stuck with Central time, it wouldn't be an issue. What did he do? He caused chaos, pitting county versus county. Now we have a mess.

**HPR:** We've been talking about building I-69 and upgrading U.S. 31 for generations! Now we have a plan to get them done. It's better than just talk.





**Parker:** Nobody is against spending the money and parting with the funds to build these projects. It was Evan Bayh, Frank O'Bannon and Joe Kernan who put I-69 and U.S. 31 on the fast track.

**HPR:** On the fast track? Are you kidding me?

**Parker:** Let's talk about that. Why is it that this governor has turned his back on getting our fair share of federal dollars? Because he burned so many bridges in Washington.

**HPR:** I disagree. We had a very bright and capable congressman, Ed Pease, well positioned on the House Transportation Committee, and the the bigots in his own party ran him off.

**Parker:** We also lost a very influential voice in Bryan Nicol at INDOT. What did this governor decide to do? Instead of tapping his expertise, he forced him out of state and called his agency corrupt. Bryan Nicol was the most respected INDOT commissioner this state ever had. Let me ask you this, and you can ask any major contractor: What major contract has INDOT let in the last 14 months?

**HPR:** It's my understanding that they are thoroughly going through the agency, developing the metrics.

**Parker:** They are starving people.

**HPR:** Starving people?

**Parker:** Because they are not letting contracts. Bryan Nicol let hyperfix, the I-70 relocation. He got the Tier One studies done. Got us into the Tier Two studies. He moved INDOT in ways this commissioner doesn't have a clue. Sharp is using the Ohio Model. Well, Ohio jettisoned its own model Indiana has adopted. It's a joke. Let me make a contrast. There's Bart (Peterson) and there's Mitch. Two controversial subjects. One was the Colts Stadium. They realized the lease with the Colts was a bad one. They spent two years and laid out the strategy and convinced the people of this town that we needed a new stadium. When he went to the General Assembly, the debate wasn't over stadium or no stadium. The debate was, how are we going to pay for it? Peterson had already effectively won the debate before the bill was even filed. The second is Indy Works. He announced it in August of 2004, convinced many leading Republicans in town and the people that it was needed to save money. Most people recognize, even though many Democrats were opposed, that Unigov was a good thing. Why is he able to go further with this issue? Because he convinced the people that it was a good idea. That's leadership. Let's contrast that with the two issues that have gotten this governor in trouble: the toll road and time zones. There were many people against DST, but they were against it because we hadn't dealt with the zone issue. He basically abdicated his authority after the bill was passed. Counties? You go out and do your own thing. Then what does he do? St. Joe wanted to be part of Chicagoland, but then Daniels comes in and says, "No, no, no. You have to be with Elkhart." Nothing was done to prepare the people.

With the toll road, he announces it back in September and did nothing to sell it. My understanding is that (Sen.) Meeks found out about it from the newspaper. You never make a major policy announcement until you've talked to the guy who's going to carry the bill.

**HPR:** The list of unions supporting Major Moves is impressive. IBEW, Teamsters, Sheetmetal. Building Trades. Are they totalling misreading this?

**Parker.** No! I respect their opinion. I respect that they are looking out for their membership. We're not against the jobs. If we were against the entire thing, we wouldn't have presented an alternative. What we are against is the policy of privatization and selling the assets that are the people's.

**HPR:** That's two billion that you're going to be paying interest on ...

**Parker:** We're going to be paying interest on the \$4 billion. It's going to be coming from the pockets of the people living in Northern Indiana who use the road. This is not taking other people's money. And what do you think they're going to do? They're going to stop using the road.

**HPR:** I don't buy that. They haven't raised tolls in 30 years. Time is money, Dan. They'll use the Toll Road.

**Parker:** And why didn't they do that? Because you don't raise tolls just to raise tolls. They didn't make it a profit center and that's what this consortium is going to do.

**HPR:** Four Republican senators voted against Major Moves. Opinions and reasons vary. Why shouldn't that have happened in the House? That was the point of my column.

**Parker:** They don't want to build a road and then turn it over to a private company.

**HPR:** Rex Early says the difference between being a chairman with a governor and one without is like shit and ice cream.

**Parker:** We didn't know what to expect. My first step I had to eliminate 50 percent of the staff. I knew (the governor) decided to get rid of PLP, which is a short-sighted thing. It's the only campaign promise I think he's kept. We set our sights on what we wanted to accomplish early. We want to focus on the House, rebuild our strength in Southern Indiana. I've been criticized for what we have and have not done to rebuild the party. We survived a year no one thought we would. We cut our lease in half. We were able to keep a great staff. In the end, when you exclude PLP out of the equation, the State Democratic Party raised over a million dollars in 2005. When you talk about candidates, we've got three targeting Congressional candidates. I talked to Brad Ellsworth in January 2005. It was critical for Baron to come back. Joe Donnelly is going to be the primary beneficiary of George Bush and Mitch Daniels tanking at the polls. When you look at Democrats who filed for the legislature, historical numbers. The number of quality candidates in districts that can be won ... are there. ❖



**Jack Colwell**, *National Journal* - "My way or the highway." That's a familiar saying, referring to the attitude of someone who demands unquestioning, in-step following of a dictated "my way." In other words, do it my way or hit the road. If you aren't for my way, you're against what's good. You don't merit further consideration. Gov. Mitch Daniels has displayed that attitude in his quest to sell the rights to operate the Toll Road. He told some folks who dared to voice opposition to his plan during a Statehouse rally last week: "You're either for this bill or you're against our future." The governor has ballyhooed the deal to lease the Toll Road to private investors for seven and a half decades as "the jobs plan of a generation." Follow his way or you're against jobs. Follow his way or you're against progress. Follow his way or you're against the future. All of you people who have expressed concerns about the Toll Road deal should be ashamed of yourselves. You must be against jobs, progress and the future. The governor also has changed that familiar "my way" saying to: "My way or no highway." In an Elkhart appearance, he threatened that failure to award the rights to operate the Toll Road to that Spanish-Australian consortium for an up-front \$3.85 billion would doom his highway program, and improvement of U.S. 31 would be "the first to go." Really? Couldn't it at least be the second to go? His way or no highway. There's another familiar saying: "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

**Matthew Tully**, *Indianapolis Star* - This blue-collar city on the lake is a good place to visit if you're looking for Hoosiers who can rightfully claim a bit more ownership of the Indiana Toll Road than the rest of us can. The Toll Road cuts across Portage, slicing through with four lanes of semis, SUVs and cars cruising toward Illinois or Ohio. But even within this Northwest Indiana city of 35,000, some feel the road's buzz much more than others. Take, for instance, one subdivision not far from City Hall. The Toll Road serves as the southern boundary of this subdivision, hovering above as if it were protecting the neighborhood from the rest of the world. I know the 1960s-era subdivision well, having spent my teen years living in one of its many ranch homes. My mom still calls the neighborhood home and can see the Toll Road when she steps into her front yard. So the neighborhood seemed like a good place to visit as Indiana debates Gov. Mitch Daniels' Toll Road lease plan. While lawmakers decide the plan's fate in Indianapolis, people 150 miles away -- in the home of the Toll Road -- are cringing. Richard Lorance is one of the cringers. On a very cold Sunday, the 59-year-old Lorance greeted me with a loud hello as I walked up his driveway. A former steel worker with a gray mustache and wire-rimmed glasses, he invited me inside to talk. "I'm appalled that they would dare to sell our sacred soil," he said. "It's not for sale. Or it shouldn't be. Some things are more important than money." ❖

**Rick Kreps**, *Plymouth Pilot-News* - I'm not a big fan of political polls. And, like most people, I REALLY don't like polls when I don't agree with their results. Besides being notoriously subjective and portraying a false air of definitive authority, I believe political polling can be an inhibitor to true leadership. And just remember how many times polling is flat-out wrong. Sometimes I try to imagine what it would be like if we tried to govern by referendum voting. It's called "mobocracy," as in government by "mob." President Harry Truman, my favorite Democrat, rhetorically once asked, "How far would Moses have gone if he had taken a poll in Egypt?" We all know what the mob would have answered. In our Republic style of government, we elect leaders based on their campaigns, their platforms, their intentions and their vision of our future. Accompanying that elected leadership is an unelected council of advisors, experts -- and - yes, constituents --- to help direct policy to realize a collective vision. So the recent polling that shows Governor Mitch Daniels and President Bush with identical 37 percent "approval" ratings --- administration low points for both - -- shouldn't bother supporters. This is because of the simple fact that both are doing precisely what they said they would do - and were elected to do. Governor Daniels campaigned to be an agent of decisive change in Indiana in order to reverse years of economic decline and enable Hoosierland to achieve its potential. One must precede the other and, to date, he has certainly fulfilled his promised leadership. ❖

**Mark Mellman**, *The Hill* - Put today's numbers in historical context and it is easy to see a major wave building. Two questions have measured the national mood over several decades, and both indicate it is almost as sour as it was on the eve of the Democratic debacle of 1994. Then, in response to the now-classic Dick Wirthlin question, just 28-30 percent said the country was on the right track. Today, 30-35 percent hold that view. Gallup's question, which asks about satisfaction with the country's direction, affords another measure of the national mood. In 1994, 30 percent were satisfied. When George W. Bush eked out a two-point victory over John Kerry, 44 percent were satisfied. Today that number stands at 35 percent. By any standard, Bush and his party are in trouble. When Democrats lost 54 House seats in 1994, 38 percent approved of President Clinton's performance. Today 38 percent approve of the way this president is handling his job. Harry Truman's approval rating was a nearly identical 39 percent in 1950 when Democrats lost 29 seats, while Ronald Reagan was at 42 percent when his party lost 26 seats in 1982. Indeed, since the advent of polling, no president with an approval rating below 50 percent has lost fewer than the 15 seats Democrats need to retake the House. Just before Election Day 1994, Republicans held a 12-point lead over Democrats as the party better able to deal with the economy. Today, Democrats have a 10-point edge.



## Bush, Daniels poll numbers sag

**TRENDLINE NO. 1:** President Bush's public survey rating, according to a poll published on Sunday by the *Indianapolis Star* have declined to 37/56 fav/unfav. That's an 18 percent drop since March 2005 and equals the rating Hoosiers gave President Bill Clinton in August 1994.

**Trendline No. 2:** Hoosiers disapprove of the biggest change Gov. Mitch Daniels has sought since becoming governor: the \$3.85 billion lease of the Indiana Toll Road to an Australian-Spanish consortium to raise money for highway projects. Only 30 percent of those polled say the lease is a good idea, while 60 percent said it's a bad idea (*Indianapolis Star*). Hoosiers, however, are more pessimistic about the state's condition than before Daniels was elected governor 16 months ago. More than half -- 53 percent -- of those polled think Indiana is off on the wrong track, with only 38 percent saying the state is headed in the right direction. In March 2005, 42 percent of Hoosiers said the state was headed in the right direction, while 48 percent said it was on the wrong track. The new poll of 501 Hoosiers statewide has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.4 percentage points and was taken Feb. 28 through March 2 by Selzer & Co. of Des Moines, Iowa. "I don't think it's surprising that folks are hesitant when we bring this much change this rapidly," Daniels said. "I think it's only human."



**Trendline No. 3:** House Speaker Brian Bosma almost swallowed his tongue when he saw Pat Bauer was talking about picking up 10 seats in last week's *Horse Race*. "No way," said Bosma. "Republicans will retain a majority." That might have Bauer and Democratic Chairman Dan Parker coughing. Parker told HPR that in 1974, the Watergate wave only gave Democrats 56 seats in the House.

**Trendline No. 4:** Tim Jeffers taking over the House Democratic Caucus campaign gives the Ds someone with an interesting perspective. Jeffers spent much of 2004 with the Army in Baghdad. Prior to that assignment, he was a deputy commissioner at INDOT, which has become Ground Zero in the looming Major Moves showdown. Jeffers offered an interesting take at the HPR Forum in October 2005, saying, "We need to expect more from our government." He said that while working in the legislature, "85 percent of what we did was nonsense" and added, "We've created our own mess."

## 2006 Congressional Races

**U.S. Senate: Republican:** U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar. Democrat: Open. **1988 results:** Lugar (R) 1,430,525,

Wickes (D) 668,778. **1994 results:** Lugar (R) 1,039,625, Jontz (D) 470,799, Bourland (L) 17,343, Barton (A) 15,801. **2000 Results:** Lugar 1,425,150, Johnson(D) 680,046, Hager (L) 33,896. **2006 Forecast:** Indiana Democratic Chairman Dan Parker said, "The State Committee reserves the right to appoint someone up until June 30" to face Lugar. "Our state convention will probably appoint someone on June 3." This week *The Hill* newspaper noted that Sen. Pat Leahy (D-VT) entered the 12,000 Senate career vote club. On March 7, Sen. Lugar cast his 11,000th career vote. He is 18th on the all-time career list of total votes cast. His lifetime voting attendance percentage is 98.118%. Of the 18 Senators elected with Lugar in the 1976, Lugar has maintained the highest voting attendance percentage. Only Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) has a higher voting attendance percentage among current Senators elected in 1976 or before. According to *The Hill*, sitting senators that have cast more votes than Lugar include: Bryd, 17,532; Edward Kennedy (D-MA), 14,449; Dan Inouye (D-HI), 14,357; Ted Stevens (R-AK), 14,150; Pete Domenici (R-NM), 12,792; Joe Biden (D-DE), 12,136; and Leahy. **Status:** SAFE LUGAR.

**Congressional District 2: Republican:** U.S. Rep. Chris Chocola, Tony Zirkle. Democrat: Steve Frances, Joe Donnelly. **Geography:** South Bend, Michigan City, Mishawaka, Elkhart, Kokomo, Plymouth, Logansport; LaPorte, St. Joseph, Starke, Marshall, Pulaski, Fulton, Cass, Carroll and parts of Howard, Porter, Elkhart and White counties. **Media Market:** South Bend-Elkhart, Indianapolis, Lafayette, Chicago. **People:** Urban/rural 73/27%; median income \$40,381; Poverty 9.5%; Race 84% white, 8% black; 5 Hispanic; Blue/white collar: 34/50%. **2000 Presidential:** Bush 53%, Gore 44%; Cook Partisan Voting Index: R+5; **2002 Result:** Chocola 95,081 (50%), Long Thompson 86,253 (46%); **2004 Result:** Chocola 140,496 (54%) Donnelly (D) 115,513 (45%) **2006 Forecast:** Chocola said Thursday he will reimburse the cities of South Bend and Mishawaka for costs they incurred as the result of last week's visit by President Bush (*South Bend Tribune*). The decision will mean a payment of \$9,028.39 to South Bend and \$2,897.71 to Mishawaka. Donnelly said Thursday he will ask Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels to end his plan to lease the Indiana Toll Road to a foreign company for 75 years and thinks Chocola should do the same (*Wensits, South Bend Tribune*). Chocola, who has not taken a public position on the Toll Road lease plan, said he believes that "engaging in political rhetoric" won't help his constituents. If Donnelly wants to focus on things that the state legislature is doing then he "may be running for the wrong office," Chocola said. "I have no role in this discussion"





said Chocola, adding that his intent is to "do my job as a member of Congress." Donnelly said he is opposed to the lease and called it "short-sighted" because it doesn't preserve "one of our greatest economic assets" for the future. Instead, he said, it "ships our assets down to Indianapolis." The Bristol Republican said he has not taken a position on the Toll Road lease or other state issues. "I focus on what I can accomplish," said Chocola, adding that, as an elected federal official, it is not his role to tell the state what to do. **Status:** *Leans Chocola*

**Congressional District 9:** Republican: U.S. Rep. Mike Sodrel. Democrat: Baron Hill, Gretchen Clearwater, Lendall Terry, John "Cosmo" Hockersmith. **Media Market:** Evansville (11%), Indianapolis (23%), Louisville (55%), Dayton, Cincinnati (10 percent). **People:** urban/rural 52/48%, median income \$39,011; race white 94%, 2.3% black, 1.5% Hispanic; blue/white collar: 34/50%; **2000 Presidential:** Bush 56%, Gore 42%; Cook Partisan Voting Index: R+8. **2004 Presidential:** Bush 59%, Kerry 40%. **2002 Results:** Hill 96,654 (51%), Sodrel 87,169 (46%). **2002 Money:** Hill \$1.144m, Sodrel \$1.62m. **2004 Results:** Sodrel 142,197, Hill 140,772, Cox (L) 4,541. **2006 Forecast:** President Bush plans to raise money for Sodrel at a \$1,000-per-plate luncheon on March 24 in Indianapolis (*Louisville Courier-Journal*). Sodrel's office declined to comment on the fundraiser, referring questions to the White House, where the press office said there is no trip to Indianapolis on the president's public schedule. But according to an invitation for the fund-raiser, the luncheon will be held at The Murat Centre, a theater and event center in downtown Indianapolis. According to the invitation, Gov. Mitch Daniels, who worked as Bush's first budget director, is the honorary chairman of the event. Yesterday, the governor's press secretary, Jane Jankowski, said Daniels is scheduled to attend an event for Sodrel on March 24 but "it hasn't been finalized." **Primary Status:** *SAFE HILL.*

## 2006 State Races

**Senate District 22:** Republican: State Sen. Ron Alting. Democrat: David C. Vorbeck. **2002 Results:** Alting 15,902, Sanders (D) 8,087. **2006 Forecast:** Alting was one of five Republican senators to oppose Major Moves. "I think there's a reason why Ron Alting didn't vote for Major Moves," said Indiana Democratic Chairman Dan Parker. **Status:** *TOSSUP.*

**Senate District 39:** Republican: Sen. John Waterman. Democrat: Vincennes City Councilman Steve

Thais. **2002 General Results:** Waterman 20,948, Croft (D) 11,922. **2006 Forecast:** Vincennes City Councilman Steve Thais has filed. **Status:** *TOSSUP.* **Senate District 25:** Republican: Madison County Councilman Dan Dykes. Democrat: State Rep. Tim Lanane. **2002 Results:** Lanane 19,662, Jackson (R) 16,418. **2006 Forecast:** Waterman was one of four Republicans who voted against Major Moves. He said he opposed it because it doesn't include the authority to do I-69 as a toll road and because it slows it down through the rerouting (*Evansville Courier & Press*). He said he also was concerned because the bill doesn't include guarantees that contractors under public-private agreements would have to pay construction workers prevailing wage. Waterman said Senate leadership didn't try to sway his vote, but said today he still might vote for the bill. **Status:** *LEANS WATERMAN.*



Greg Walker

**Senate District 41:** Republican: Senate President Pro Tempore Robert D. Garton, Greg Walker. Democrat: Terry Coriden. **1998 Results:** Garton 26,499. **2002 Results:** Garton 21,918, Gividen (L) 3,350. **2006 Forecast:** Garton said on Major Moves sometimes legislators have to look beyond the desires of their constituents and consider the good of the state (*Weidenbener, Louisville Courier-Journal*). "There are times you have to lead, even lead public opinion on things," Garton said. "There are times when you have a chance at a moment in history for your state, and this I think is one of those moments." Greg Walker told HPR that "change is in the air" and that he will take a leave of absence to campaign full time. "The reception so far has been tremendous," Walker said. "People are excited to know there is a real choice in SD41 this year. I've been knocking doors, getting out to civic functions, I have had some speaking engagements, and I am raising support for the campaign. People from all over Indiana are hearing about me ... from Fort Wayne, to Evansville, and all around Indiana, folks have been generous with their support and encouragement. I have been blessed providentially." Walker added, "Community and government leaders, intimate with the workings of state government, as well as every day private citizens who pay attention to the goings on in the Statehouse, have called to show their support." He said that endorsements will be "forthcoming," as well as a campaign website. Garton said attempts to portray him as "anti-NRA," for National Rifle Association, were "unfortunate," even though he voiced opposition to the bill (*Columbus Republic*). He pointed to his past "A+" legislative rating by the NRA, but he also disagreed with the possible



termination of certain workplace policies against guns. "Most universities and colleges in the state have the same (policy against having guns on the property)," Garton said. "Had this bill gone through, you could've carried those guns anywhere."  
**Primary Status:** LIKELY GARTON. **General Status:** LEANS GARTON.

**House District 17:** Republican: State Rep. Steve Heim. Democrat: Nancy Dembowski. **2004 Results:** Heim 14,100, McLiver (D) 8,321, Foley (I) 854. SD5 Results: Heinold (R) 24,753, Dembowski (D) 24,398. **2006 Forecast:** Democratic Chairman Dan Parker said, "You're going to see a great race in Nancy Dembowski against Steve Heim. She got 55 percent of the vote in precincts in his district in her 2004 race against Vic Heinold." **Status:** LEANS HEIM

**House District 20:** Republican: State Rep. Mary Kay Budak, LaPorte School Trustee Tom Dermody. Democrat: LaPorte City Councilman Andrea Renner. **2002 Results:** Budak 12,551, Gillon (L) 2,540. **2004 Results:** Budak 12,944, Spevak (D) 10,013, Schadowsky (L) 1,038. **2006 Forecast:** Budak said she is working on a resolution that would allow LaPorte County to join the RDA. Officials in LaPorte and Michigan City support the idea, but county commissioners oppose the move (*Times of Northwest Indiana*). **Primary Status:** TOSSUP

**House District 21:** Republican: State Rep. Jackie Walorski. Democrat: Bob Kovach. **2002 Results:** Mangus 10,722. **2004 Results:** Walorski 13,753, Kaser (D) 7,737. **2006 Forecast:** A state labor leader says Walorski reneged on a promise when she voted for a right-to-work measure in the House of Representatives last week. The official said Walorski made the promise at a Dec. 10, 2004, meeting in South Bend with the St. Joseph County Building Trades Council. "I was in the meeting; I was sitting there," said Benjamin E. Ramsey, executive director of the Indiana State Building and Construction Trades Council. Walorski said she recalls the meeting but not a specific statement to oppose right-to-work legislation. "I remember telling them that right-to-work would never pass in Indiana, and it won't," she said. But Walorski said she supports it because it makes unions more responsive to the needs of rank-and-file members. She compared it to state law that lets Indiana teachers opt out of

unions but still pay "fair share" dues for union representation. **Status:** LEANS WALORSKI

**House District 30:** Republican: State Rep. John Smith. Democrat: Ron Herrell. **2002 Results:** Herrell (D) 9,017, Rudolph (R) 6,966, Fridholm (L) 379. **2004 Results:** Smith 12,398, Herrell (D) 11,279. **2006 Forecast:** Chariman Dan Parker's take on this race: "You've got the rematch in Kokomo. Ron Herrell is coming on strong. You had the governor go tell Delphi workers he thinks they should work for \$9 an hour. That's really pissing people off up there. Anybody who thinks \$9 an hour is an excellent job doesn't live in the real world." **Status:** TOSSUP.

**House District 52:** Republican: State Rep. Marlin Stutzman. Democrat: LaGrange County Democratic Chairman Dennis Rorick. **2002 Results:** Stutzman (R) 6,950, Sturtz (D) 6,701. **2004 Results:** Stutzman (R) 12,872, DeLucenay (D) 6,496. **2006 Forecast:** Rep. Stutzman said his final vote on Major Moves will depend on the final version of the bill, which is currently under negotiation (*Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*). "Northeast Indiana needs to be a major beneficiary," he said. "We need our fair share." As for the ads, including hundreds of thousands of dollars being put in by Daniels and Republican supporters to sell the Major Moves concept? "It's just political wrangling. Republicans are doing it. Democrats are doing it," Stutzman said. "You'd think the election was coming up next week." **Status:** TOSSUP.

**House District 63:** Republican: Washington School Trustee Ron Arnold. Democrat: State Rep. Dave Crooks. **2004 Results:** Crooks (D) 12,246, McFeators (R) 11,687. **2006 Forecast:** Gov Daniels PAC Aiming Higher targets Crooks. "In these ads, I'm portrayed as someone who doesn't support the I-69 project, which could not be further from the truth," Crooks said. "As my constituents know, I have always supported I-69. What I don't support is the Governor misleading Hoosiers into believing that I-69 must be a toll road that can only be built by selling off our state's assets to foreign companies." "There is a way to build I-69 in Southern Indiana, and it can be done without turning it into a toll road or auctioning off our assets," he continued. "Unfortunately, the Governor and his administration are unwilling to listen to any ideas. Their approach is simply, 'It's my way or the highway.' I



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don't buy it, and judging from what I've heard, neither are the people of Indiana." "By speaking out against 'Major Moves,' I am reflecting the wishes of the people I represent," he continued. "I'm standing up for my district because we have paid gas taxes for road improvements for 50 years now, and we don't deserve to have a toll road. What they want is the chance to look at other options that don't involve selling off assets or requiring the payment of tolls, rather than the deal that is being forced on us by the Governor," Crooks noted. "All we're getting is the threat that I-69 will never be done unless we do it the way that the Governor wants." Crooks, who owns a radio station where some of the ads are running, received the ad purchase on Saturday and immediately drew up a counterattack radio ad. He is spending \$8,000 on his own radio ads. "I needed to respond to the attack," Crooks said. "I'm not going to let anyone intimidate me or bully me and that includes the governor." Crooks' ad keeps up the heated tone. "Why is Mitch Daniels attacking Rep. Dave Crooks with negative ads?" the narrator asks. "It's politics all wrapped up in a baloney sandwich." Indiana Republican Party Chairman Murray Clark said the party hopes to win votes for House Bill 1008 with the ads, but he said it is also a foreshadowing of election-season ads to be broadcast against Democrats who vote against Major Moves. **Status:** *Leans Crooks.*

**House District 64:** Republican: State Rep. Troy Woodruff. Democrat: Greg Battles. **2002 Results:** Frenz 10,516, Davis (R) 8,774. **2004 Results:** Woodruff 12,698, Frenz 12,507. **2006 Forecast:** Indiana Democratic Chairman Dan Parker identifies Woodruff as the top House target. "Clearly Woodruff is at the top of the list," Parker said. "Governor raised a lot of money for him, but that's part of the problem. Him, his agenda and the fact that the legislature is his rubber stamp." House Speaker Brian Bosma said Friday that it was unlikely new tax options for local governments could be worked out in the final days of this legislative session (Smith, *Associated Press*). "I have conveyed my thoughts both to our own fiscal leaders and to the Senate fiscal leaders that it doesn't make sense to address local government taxation until we address local government spending, and it will be very difficult to do that in the 10 days remaining," Bosma said. "I have committed to making this a high priority in the coming (next) session and looking at overall local government finance, taxing and spending reform and making it a high priority in 2007," he said. Woodruff is holding out hope that a property-tax relief bill will be passed before the General Assembly's "short session" adjourns March 14 (Robbins, *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*). But he admits it's a faint hope. "There's always a chance, until that gavel bangs at midnight



Woodruff

on March 14, there's still a chance," Woodruff said Saturday. "But I agree it doesn't look good right now. I understand what the Senate wanted to do, which is provide alternative means for local governments to raise revenue to make up for what would be lost with cuts in property taxes," he said. "Our version would have provided at least a year of real property-tax relief, which is what we wanted to do," he explained. State Sen. Lindel Hume, D-Princeton, whose district includes part of Knox County, said the changes made in the bill were necessary to allow local governments a necessary alternative source of funding. **Status:** *LEANS D*

**House District 69:** Republican: Billy Bright, Brent Mullikin. Democrat: Dave Cheatham. **2002 Results:** Lytle 9,777, Newell 7,678. **2004 Results:** Bright 12,639, Lytle 11,018. **2006 Forecast:** Property taxes weighed on minds in the Third House audience in North Vernon, and State Rep. Billy Bright agreed reform is needed (*Columbus Republic*). "The property tax system in Indiana is terribly unfair ... it is terribly broken," he said. The representative would be in favor of eliminating property taxes and replacing them with consumption taxes. Indiana Democratic Chairman Dan Parker observed, "Billy Bright with Dave Cheatham running against him is a targeted race. Dave is a great candidate; had to leave because of his kids. He's ready to come back." **Status:** *TOSSUP.*

**House District 80:** Republican: Kevin Howell. Democrat: Phil GiaQuinta, Geoff Paddock. **2004 Results:** Ben GiaQuinta (D) 9,767, Howell (R) 5,397. **2006 Forecast:** Phil GiaQuinta spoke in front of the Southgate license branch about numerous calls he's received from residents with concerns about service at the BMV (*Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*). He said some people have had to wait hours to renew their vehicle plates or driver's licenses. "We're all for less government and paying smaller property taxes, but what we don't deserve is poor service," he said. Geoff Paddock, executive director of Headwaters Park, said while many of the services the BMV offers can be done by mail, there are still several things that require a resident to go to a branch, including when he renews his driver's license. "The closing of some of the branches around the state is not best serving the taxpayers," he said. "I got that message loud and clear from employees and residents." GiaQuinta, who was a BMV district manager from 1997 to 2000, said BMV Commissioner Joel Silverman's decision to close branches has hurt residents of Allen County as well as reduced morale of branch employees. He said if elected, he will make a point of bringing resident complaints to the appropriate officials, such as the ones he is hearing about the BMV. He said he could use his position as a "bully pulpit" to address concerns. Paddock said the state should evaluate its services, and if legislation is required to fix the problem, that is what he would propose next year.

**Primary Status:** *LEANS PHIL GIAQUINTA* ❖



## Brizzi to probe Inspector General

BRAZIL, Ind. - A job offer extended to a candidate for Clay County Sheriff by Indiana's inspector general may have been misinterpreted by its recipient (McCammon, *Brazil Times*).



Steve Bell, a retired Clay County probation officer, had accused Inspector General David Thomas of attempting to dissuade him from running for Clay County Sheriff with the promise of an appointment to the Indiana Parole Board. The *Indianapolis Star* published Bell's comments Wednesday morning, and the Marion County Prosecutor's office launched a preliminary inquiry into the matter later that afternoon. But in a prepared statement made to *The Times* Wednesday evening, Bell admitted he may have misinterpreted his conversation with Thomas. "David Thomas has been victimized by my words. He was being a good friend and tried to help me with a job opportunity. My words have hurt him and his family deeply, and for that I am truly sorry," he said. In an e-mail received by *The Times* Thursday morning, Bell said, "In my excitement to be considered for such a position I apparently heard what I wanted to hear." Bell stopped short of identifying himself as the source of the tip that led to the article in the *Indianapolis Star*, but indicated he may have misunderstood Thomas' intentions when the two discussed the job. "We had a conversation I might have misinterpreted and I'm ready to move on," he said. Thomas, who said he was acting not as inspector general but as Bell's friend when he brought up the appointment, was blindsided by the news. "All I know is I got a phone call from the *Indianapolis Star* that Steve Bell had made some statements," he said.

In an interview published Wednesday in the *Indianapolis Star*, Bell claimed Thomas approached him Nov. 27 after a Sunday service at First United Methodist Church in Brazil. According to Bell's account, Thomas offered Bell a seat on the bi-partisan Indiana Parole Board on the condition that he shelve his intention to oppose Republican incumbent Mike Heaton in the 2006 election. Thomas contended the offer was never made. Eric Holcomb, an aide to Gov. Mitch Daniels, had informed him of the state's interest in Bell as a potential member of the parole board, a position for which Bell had already applied, Thomas said. Holcomb asked Thomas to discuss the job with Bell because the two knew each other so well.

"That's the only reason I was even involved in it," Thomas said.

## Brizzi clarifies timing of probe

INDIANAPOLIS - Marion County Prosecutor Carl Brizzi told *HPR* that he made the decision to investigate and announced it at 12:40 p.m., more than an hour before a Democratic Party press release called on him to do so. Brizzi said he had not talked with the governor. "If there is wrong doing anywhere, I will investigate," Brizzi said.

## Legislators digging in on abortion bill

INDIANAPOLIS - Key Republican lawmakers are digging in on an abortion bill that had been stripped by the Senate of its contentious provisions regarding fetal pain and when life begins (Kelly, *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*). "This issue is the human-rights issue of our day," said Sen. Mike Delph, R-Carmel. "It is our duty to protect innocent human life." The four conferees on the legislation, all men, must come up with a compromise to be voted on by both chambers by the end of the session Tuesday. The legislation as it

left the House required a doctor to tell a woman seeking an abortion that a fetus might feel pain during an abortion and that anesthesia might be available. It also defined life as beginning at conception, and advised a woman of the physical risks of abortion and that adoption is an available alternative. But Sen. Pat Miller, R-Indianapolis - an abortion-rights opponent who has since taken her name off the bill - dramatically changed the legislation because she had concerns about forcing doctors to tell women something they might not believe.

## 65 percent language stalls consolidation bill

INDIANAPOLIS - The splintered Allen County consolidation effort took center stage Wednesday when key lawmakers met to forge a compromise on a bill giving authority statewide for local units of government to merge or share services. House Bill 1362 outlines a procedure for the reorganization of various political subdivisions - from schools to cities, towns, counties and townships - that does not require General Assembly approval but does let local voters make a final decision in a referendum. Under current law the legislature would have to approve any specific plan changing local government structure. Because of efforts in Vanderburgh and Allen counties, Long and other senators carved out a special procedure for a handful of counties with populations of more than 170,000. According to the current version of the bill, for a reorganization to succeed, the plan must be approved by 51 percent of those voting in a countywide referendum. As added protection for city-county mergers, if 65 percent of the voters in either political subdivision vote against the measure it is automatically defeated. It is this "supermajority" that drew heat Wednesday from the author of the bill and chairman of the conference committee. ❖