



# Veepstakes into security wonk fest

*Obama, Bayh, Nunn weigh life and death issues at Purdue forum*

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

WEST LAFAYETTE - While none of the principles - Barack Obama, Evan Bayh or Sam Nunn - would say much on the topic, virtually everyone at the Purdue Student Union Wednesday afternoon had the same thought. Could this be, in some combination, the Democratic presidential ticket? Perhaps, even part of an Obama cabinet?

And, strangely but fittingly, the spirit of another senator ... Republican Dick Lugar ... seemed omnipresent in the room. Nunn joked at one point that because of the success of the congressionally inspired (not presidentially inspired) Nunn-Lugar Nuclear Threat Reduction program,



Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama peppered questions to panelists Evan Bayh (left) and Sam Nunn (right), two prominent players in the 2008 veepstakes. (HPI Photo by Ryan Nees)

many people believed "my last name is Lugar." Obama said at one point, "Other than the fact that he's a Republican, I can't find anything wrong with the guy."

While Lugar's name has been floated as a potential Obama running mate, to which Lugar chief-of-staff Marty

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## Jill's election history

By **RYAN NEES**

KOKOMO - Chris Sautter has a clipping from the Wall Street Journal on his office wall in Washington, D.C. "Democrats have all but given up on Indiana's fourth," it reads, alluding to the 1989 special election held in the fourth congressional district to replace Dan Coats, who vacated the seat when he was named Dan Quayle's successor as senator. The newspaper called the district "unwinnable" for Democrats.



It would become the first election Jill Long Thompson would win, a campaign in the crosshairs of



"I'm not an economist. But I do believe things are growing. I'm an optimist."

- President Bush



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the national media that would stun observers. A Democrat had won in newly minted Vice President Quayle's district, one of the most Republican in the country.

Thompson's 1989 victory was the end of a path paved in losses, first in the 1986 U.S. Senate race against Quayle, who beat her 61-39%, and then in the 1988 fourth district congressional campaign, which she lost to Dan Coats 62-38%.

**Indiana's first female** gubernatorial nominee has a history of defying political odds in a big way, but her record as a campaigner is muddled at best, marked by both unforeseen victories and defeats. As a congresswoman, Thompson emerged as a popular but erratically inconsistent campaigner, and indeed, she hasn't won an elected office since 1992. The lessons of her six campaigns - three victories, three losses - are sure to define the biggest political challenge she's faced yet: unseating Gov. Mitch Daniels.

Thompson hasn't ever shied from an improbable political battle. She launched an audacious campaign for the United States Senate just three years after her election to the Valparaiso City Council, a body that represents a city of just 25,000 people. The 33-year-old candidate "took one for the team," according to Andy Downs, a political science professor at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne and director of the Mike Downs Center for Indiana Politics, to enhance her name recognition and lay the groundwork for another campaign.

**"She wanted** to develop support not only among the party leaders in terms of her willingness to take one for the team, but also just as a way of raising her visibility through-

out the entire state. It was sort of a daring move. I think a lot of people in hindsight would have recommended she pursue [a U.S.] House race instead, and she was outspent tremendously," Downs said.

The race was a prelude to the losing matchup against Coats the following year, and by the time 1989 rolled around, the state party and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, convinced that her previous losses were forerunners to continued failure, were looking for a candidate other than Thompson to contest the special election.

**But Thompson,** with help from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union and EMILY's List in DC, rallied members of

Indiana's congressional delegation: Frank McCloskey, Lee Hamilton, Andy Jacobs and Jim Jontz, in particular, to support her candidacy. The four congressmen encouraged the DCCC to invest in the campaign, which it did.

"This was a big deal," then 4th CD chair Charlie Belch said. Indeed, it may have been one of the most fiercely contested elections in Indiana's history.

Thompson was buoyed by a scramble of ambitious Republicans seeking the approval of the party's caucus, a mandate that at the time likely would have meant a lifetime seat in Congress. Eight candidates sought the nomination, splintering an establishment that had only a short time to coalesce.

**Dan Heath,** an aide at the time to Fort Wayne mayor Paul Helmke, was finally chosen after multiple ballots, but struggled to break out during the campaign. Thompson attacked Heath's relationship to Helmke, connecting her opponent to an unpopular city annexation plan and linking him to tax increases his boss



**Jill Long Thompson at a 2002 debate in Rochester. (HPI Photo)**





## Obama-Bayh-Nunn, from page 1

Morris told the Indianapolis Star, "Hell no!" the surface tension in the political sense centered on Nunn and Bayh as two of the most prominent names in the veepstakes speculation. The Washington Post's Chris Cillizza had Bayh No. 2 on his list last week. Republican pollster Frank Luntz listed Nunn and Bayh as Nos. 1 and 2 when he spoke at an Indiana Pacers function in late June.

As much as Bayh chief of staff Tom Sugar insisted that policy would rule this day, the veepstakes, too, was omnipresent.

Nunn said he didn't "aspire" to be vice president. "I have no expectation of being offered any office," he said, but then added that he would "talk to my family and do a lot of reflecting on what the best role would be for me." Other Democrats in the room wondered if Nunn might be Obama's choice to head the Department of State or Defense. "Right now I'm doing a lot of work in the national security arena and we're making some progress in difficult areas," Nunn said.

**In his opening remarks,** Obama called Bayh "one of the finest senators and before that, one of the finest governors" as the room erupted in applause.

Bayh was asked at a press conference about the speculation and called it the "silly season." Bayh explained, "I love serving the people of Indiana and I think any questions about the vice presidential thing are understandable and are good for my ego, but I should let Sen. Obama and his campaign address those kinds of questions." Asked about the importance of a vice president with foreign policy experience, Bayh said he would not "offer gratuitous advice to Sen. Obama. He knows best what kind of person he would like to help lead the country. I personally think his credentials in that area are very strong on their own. I think you saw that today. He has a history of thinking beyond the horizon. He thinks strategically as well as tactically. Iraq is a perfect example of that."

Nunn added, "I completely agree with that. It is very obvious when I use the term we're in a race between cooperation and catastrophe. He recognizes that clearly. He also recognizes you have to listen to lead and I think he

recognizes we have to have cooperation all over the globe to tackle the major problems we have."

**Nunn was approached** by Hotline founder Doug Bailey and the late Hamilton Jordan about running on an independent Unity '08 ticket. He told HPI in Yekaterinburg last summer that he wanted to see how the candidates addressed the pressing issues of the day. In April, he endorsed Obama just as the Indiana presidential primary campaign was in full thrust. "I've read all he's said on



Barack Obama talks with panelists at Purdue, include Sen. Bayh and Sam Nunn (right) on Wednesday. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

national security and foreign policy," Nunn said. "Those are the areas I was really keying on. I think he's really addressed the issues. If you take the nuclear issues and the speeches he's been making, and his work with Sen. Lugar and the basic expansion of the Nunn-Lugar program and applying it to conventional weapons and also working with Sen. Lugar and expanding it beyond the former Soviet Union ... I think in the arena I'm involved in he's right on top of the issues. I think it's very healthy he added cyber security to one of his top priorities. It's a sleeper, but it has a huge effect on our economy. I think bio is going to be the threat of the future."

**Nunn added, "Frankly** I would like to see a lot more discussion on energy from both candidates and a lot more on the fiscal side from both candidates."

So while the veepstakes was the proverbial political icing at Purdue, Obama gave a fascinating glimpse at the kind of style you could imagine at a cabinet meeting. He narrated the discussion, probing Bayh and Nunn as well as other panelists with specific questions in their areas of expertise. He cited the 911 Commission report written with the help of two Hoosiers - Lee Hamilton and Tim Roemer - who cited a "failure of imagination" that allowed airliners to thunder into skyscrapers.

"One Tuesday morning in 2001, everything changed," Obama said, describing being in Chicago when he heard the news of the attacks on the World Trade



Center. "Back at my office, I watched the images from New York: a plane vanishing into glass and steel; men and women clinging to windowsills, then letting go; tall towers crumbling to dust. It seemed all of the misery and all of the evil in the world were in that rolling black cloud, blocking out the September sun." He recalled how Chicagoans looked into their own sunny skies and feared for the Sears Tower, once again the tallest building in America.

**"The danger, though,** is that we are constantly fighting the last war, responding to the threats that have come to fruition, instead of staying one step ahead of the threats of the 21st century," Obama said. "And, after 9/11, nowhere was this more apparent than in our invasion of Iraq. Instead of adjusting to the stateless threats of the 21st century, we invaded and occupied a state that had no collaborative relationship with al Qaeda. Instead of taking aggressive steps to secure the world's most dangerous technology, we have spent almost a trillion dollars to occupy a country in the heart of the Middle East that no longer had any weapons of mass destruction."

Obama's forum with Bayh and Nunn came in the waning days of the Bush presidency when a number of Iraq era books portray Bush as intellectually incurious.

Bob Woodward's account in "State of Denial" of a Feb. 28, 2003, meeting in which Gen. Jay Garner told Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Rice that he couldn't accomplish four of 11 post-war goals: dismantling WMD, defeating terrorists, reshaping the Iraq military, and reshaping other security institutions. Woodward said when Garner finished, the president nodded. "No one asked a follow-up question of exactly who would be responsible if Garner wasn't." Between 2004 and 2006, this would seed an American military tragedy.

Obama set the tone, declaring, "It's time to update our national security strategy to stay one step ahead of the terrorists, to see clearly the emerging threats of our young century, and to take action to make the American people more safe and secure."

**Obama said, "It's time** to look ahead, at the dangers of today and tomorrow rather than those of yesterday. America cannot afford another president who doesn't understand the threats that confront us now and in the future. It's time to break out of Washington's conventional thinking that has failed to keep pace with unconven-

tional threats. In doing so, we'll better ensure the safety of the American people, while building our capacity to deal with other challenges, from public health to privacy.

**"We used to worry about** our nuclear stalemate with the Soviet Union. Now, we worry about 50 tons of highly enriched uranium, some of it poorly secured, at civilian nuclear facilities in over 40 countries around the world. Now, we worry about the breakdown of a non-proliferation framework that was designed for the bipolar world of the Cold War. Now, we worry - most of all - about a rogue state or nuclear scientist transferring the world's deadliest weapons to the world's most dangerous people, terrorists who won't think twice about killing themselves and hundreds of thousands in Tel Aviv or Moscow, in London or New York. And yet, despite initiatives that cost billions of taxpayer dollars, we still don't have an adequate strategy for detecting

nuclear and biological materials, a problem that's being discussed at hearings in Congress today."

He noted his trip to Russia with Lugar in 2005 and how they found themselves in a decrepit Soviet era lab with a refrigerator with a string tied around it, filled with vials. "I noted Lugar stood back," Obama said as the room erupted in laughter. Inside the vials was "the plague," or anthrax, the

very substance of a second American terror attack in October 2001 that remains unsolved to this day.

Obama noted that "one of the terrible ironies of the Iraq War is that President Bush used concerns over this threat to invade a country that had no nuclear weapons program. In the meantime, Pakistani scientist AQ Khan was spreading to hostile nations the technology to produce nuclear weapons and the warheads to deliver them. But the fact that the President misled us into a misguided war doesn't diminish the threat of a terrorist with a weapon of mass destruction; in fact, it has only increased it."

**He pressed Nunn,** for instance, on how much it would cost over four years to "lock up all the loose nuclear weapons?" Out of a \$750 billion defense budget, the answer was something in the range of a 25 percent. Obama observed, "For the amount of money we spend in one month in Iraq, we could lock up all the loose nuclear weapons." Nunn would make a further blunt point from his "cooperation/catastrophe" scenario. In this asymmetrical theater of war that has included American skyscrapers,



**Bayh and Obama at Purdue on Wednesday. Could this be the future ticket?**  
(HPI Photo by Ryan Nees)





it would take the detonation of only one nuclear bomb in one major city to eviscerate the confidence of the general public.

At another point, Obama said, "I want to turn to Evan Bayh because he's doing some good work with Dick Lugar with respect to a proposal to stop the flow of nuclear weapons while safely meeting the demand for nuclear power." Obama noted that both India and China are going that route as well as creating an "extraordinary demand for energy." He said there would be a "strong compulsion" on the part of many nations to build more nuclear facilities. "But it does raise the question that if you have more nuclear plants resulting in programs ... how do you deal with the military" aspects that would result?

**Bayh responded with a preface:** that as Illinois State Sen. Obama campaigned federally in 2004, "he was talking about Nunn-Lugar when he was running for the Senate." Bayh noted that in the next 42 years, worldwide energy demand will double, and "we must prevent additional nuclear stockpiles" that will be enticing to terrorists. Bayh said there would be "strong incentives" for many nations to pursue nuclear power. "Here's the concept Dick and I introduced," Bayh continued. "We would promise these countries an affordable, secure source of civilian nuclear power as long as they were willing to submit to inspections." Countries could have "nothing to do with global terrorism," and "nothing to do with any aspect of proliferation. It maximizes cooperation and minimizes nuclear proliferation."

At Purdue, Obama took a policy stance. "As president, I will launch an effort across our government to stay ahead of this threat. To prevent bio-terrorism, we need to invest in our analysis, enhance our information-sharing, and give our intelligence agencies the capacity to identify and interdict dangerous bio-weapons around the world. To strengthen our efforts with friends and partners, I've proposed a shared security partnership that invests \$5 billion over 3 years to forge an international intelligence and law enforcement infrastructure to take down terrorist networks."

**When Lugar ran for president in 1996,** few wanted to listen and reporters weren't interested in reporting about his warning that we would "lose an American city in our lifetime" due to terrorism. He talked about Africa and people rolled their eyes. In that election, a mere five years prior to Sept. 11, foreign policy was abjectly neglected.

On Wednesday at Purdue, there was almost two hours of vivid, indepth discussion of globalized threat assessment and imaginative policy. It came under the flashy wrapper of the veepstakes. And when the talking was done, Indiana found itself at the epicenter of the most profound public security issues facing mankind.



## A look inside Obama's Indiana campaign

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - I saw it last week at a Columbus Swifty gas station. The gas was cheap last Friday afternoon (\$3.99 a gallon) and lo and behold the line of about 30 cars extended almost to the I-65 ramp off SR46. It reminded me of the gas lines I saw in Elkhart during the last oil shock of 1979.



Brian Howey's Column

Emily Parcell saw the lines, too. They were outside the shuttered IndyMac Bank in California earlier this week as the U.S. economy continued its spasms. It reminded her of the lines outside U.S. banks during the Great Depression.

"People see the economic distress," said Parcell, state director for the Barack Obama presidential campaign in Indiana. "People see the cost of milk and eggs. They feel it. They see it."

People are seeing something else they've rarely seen, particularly here in Indiana. They are seeing Obama presidential campaign offices in places like Michigan City, Bloomington and Fishers. It comes from her stint in Iowa, where she served as political director during Obama's breakthrough caucus victory there. The campaign borrowed a line from the Iowa-based "Field of Dreams," - if you build it, they will come.

"It's easier to organize with a common place," Parcell said. "It's about building grassroots."

**Parcell worked for Iowa** Senate Democrats in a state where there are no gerrymandered districts. They are computer drawn and most are in play each election year. "State legislators work close to the ground," she said of that experience that included candidate recruitment.



Emily Parcell of the Obama Indiana campaign. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

"Legislators make a real difference." She said that coming out of that mindset, she looked at the developing presidential field and saw in Obama a former Illinois state senator who had spent just two years in the U.S. Senate. "Obama stood out," she said, noting her 82-year-old grandmother also gravitated toward



Obama, "though she didn't know how to pronounce his name."

Obama's recent legislative experience told Parcell "he's a little closer to reality. I thought he'd have what it would take to win the nomination and the White House." When she interviewed with the campaign, she had never heard him speak, making her an anomaly to most other staffers who gravitated toward Obama. The soaring rhetoric had influenced many staffers.

**The fact that Parcell** has been placed in Indiana from Iowa is another indicator - other than the 30 field offices and the third political ad (featuring a segment with Obama working with Sen. Dick Lugar) - that this is more than a "head fake." The Obama campaign isn't just trying to stretch John McCain's resources. They actually believe he can carry Indiana. "He has campaigned in 47 of the 50 states," Parcell said. "We have organizations and lists. Maybe in any other year this would be a head fake, but it's not this year."

The campaign registered 50,000 new Hoosier voters in six weeks last spring. It is actively working to register another 100,000 between now and October. She said while there was a bit of a drop-off after the May 5 primary, when the Obama campaign returned to Indiana in June, it easily activated those volunteers. Many kept meeting even without full-time Obama staffers on the ground. They are now training Obama "fellows" who will be organizing for the campaign in dozens of Indiana cities and counties. There will be cook-outs across the state on Obama's birthday (Aug. 4). There will be events to watch Obama's acceptance speech on Aug. 28 in Denver.

**Obama was at Purdue** University on Wednesday. Parcell said Hoosiers will see more of him this fall, though not as much as they did in March, April and May when only Indiana and North Carolina were in play. "We're in a string of states - Missouri, Iowa, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania - that are in play. Indiana is very near Chicago. He can get home in 30 minutes from Lake County via the Skyway."

When the subject came to potential vice presidential candidate Evan Bayh, Parcell said she had watched his "Camp Bayh" activities in Iowa when he had his own presidential aspirations in 2005 and 2006. She watched him work on behalf of Hillary Clinton in places like New Hampshire and Indiana. "Evan Bayh was a great surrogate," Parcell said as former Bayh aide and now Obama campaign colleague Jonathan Swain nodded in agreement. "It always helps to have a natural network. He is a tireless worker."

The Bayh speculation centers on Indiana's 11 Electoral College votes. But Bayh also has key networks in place in Iowa and New Hampshire, which he activated to help Clinton squeak out a Granite State victory that made it possible for the historic Clinton-Obama race here in Indiana last spring. ❖

## Jill, from page 1



Jill Long Thompson chats with former State Sen. Bob Peteson in 2002. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

had passed. Heath proved unable to gain traction against Thompson, despite the Republican-leaning nature of the district.

"Dan Heath was not viewed as the strongest candidate, and Jill exploited that. He was largely undefined and her campaign did what they could to define him for him," Thompson's media consultant Chris Sautter said. "She assigned to him the sins of his bosses."

National Republicans took interest in the race as well. The National Association of Realtors devoted more than \$100,000 to advertising in the district, and First Lady Barbara Bush was offered up in television ads on Heath's behalf. Vice President Dan Quayle left the White House to campaign for Heath.

**"On the national front,** I think there was a feeling that this was an unwinnable race, because this was a better than two-to-one Republican district, it was right after Bush had soundly defeated Dukakis and had won by close to a landslide proportion in Indiana, and it was Dan Quayle's old seat," Sautter said. "One would have thought that if there were anywhere he had coattails, it would have been in his old district."

Yet Thompson was able to win by fastidiously creating an independent image.

"She has always showcased her background of growing up on the farm, about learning on the farm, about hard work and honesty," Sautter said. "When she grew up on that farm, she did the farm chores just like her brothers did."

**"She is someone people** have found to be likeable," Downs said. "It's hard for people to get a lot of anger ginned up against her, so it was easy enough to run based on her biography. She's not a lefty crazy liberal; she's a moderate Democrat, which made it easier for people to find her acceptable." Longtime media consultant (and onetime elementary school crush) Sautter filmed Thompson atop a tractor at her family farm, depicting her as a conservative, from-the-heartland Democrat.

She then mounted the advantages of incumbency in her 1990 re-election campaign against megachurch preacher David Hawks. "She still had a lot of name recognition going for her," Downs said, also pointing to Hawks' occupation as something that made voters wary. Thompson's office focused on constituent services and did it well,



according to Downs. In Congress she proposed the first gift ban, Sautter said, never voting for a tax increase and returning pay raises to the Treasury. She won with 60% of the vote, and then dispensed of Chuck Pierson, who won a shocking primary victory via gun shows and was quickly abandoned by the GOP establishment, in 1992 with 62 percent of the vote.

In 1994, Thompson's fortunes changed.

"People were willing to label her liberal, probably more liberal than she really was," Downs said. "And Mark Souder probably doesn't get the credit he deserves as a very strong campaigner. So I think you put those two things together and you have a conservative guy like Mark Souder who knows how to campaign, is very conscious of how to deliver message, what resonates with voters, running against someone who can be labeled as a liberal, and then throw on top of that the fact that she was not particularly engaged in the campaign in 1994."

Thompson didn't take Souder's challenge seriously, Downs said, and didn't visit her district often enough, all adding up to a "worst case scenario" for the Democrat.

Belch called Thompson "cocky" in 1994, a wave election year that national Democrats were slow to recognize. Thompson's star faded further when she became embroiled in the House banking scandal. That scandal changed voters' perceptions of Thompson, according to Belch, who came to believe their congresswoman was "part of the problem."

**The contentious race's** tipping point, Downs said, was a Souder commercial with the challenger's mother exclaiming, "Shame on you Jill Long!"

Thompson attempted a political comeback in 2002 when Tim Roemer vacated his seat in the second congressional district.

Shaw Friedman, a Democrat who worked for Thompson in 2002, supported Schellinger in this year's primary, and now regularly consults with Thompson's campaign, laments the 2000 redistricting process, in which Republicans in the General Assembly denied Democrats' plans to gerrymander the second congressional district more Democratic.

The demographics became such that either party could win the seat, and the race quickly turned nasty, with both candidates exchanging attack ads on television.

"The amount of money raised in that race was really very surprising. National organizations threw money into as well. Democrats saw a former, multi-term [U.S.

representative] running against a newcomer, and they thought, what the heck, let's give it a shot," Downs said.

Republicans, pessimistic about the party's chances against Tim Roemer, the popular Democrat who long represented the district, saw an opportunity to "paint Thompson as more liberal than Roemer was," Downs said.

**Butch Morgan, the 2nd CD** chair, who backed Thompson in the 2002 primary but Schellinger in the gubernatorial primary, maintains that Roemer would have outperformed Thompson against Chocola. With "no question" Roemer could have "absolutely" won his seat again, Morgan said.

He laments the "overwhelming money difference" that allowed Chocola to negatively define Thompson.

Thompson attacked Chocola's wealth, calling the self-financing millionaire candidate out of touch. "She has proven herself a pretty tenacious campaigner," said Friedman. "She can land a punch, and certainly wasn't afraid of going after Chocola too. But the dynamics were very different at that point."

True enough, the race was striking for a number of reasons, particularly because it was the first national election since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the country was gripped by war fever with Iraq. Thompson, and

countless other Democrats like her, were caught between supporting a nation on war footing and the Republicans who were in control of it. Attempting to diffuse such attacks on her patriotism, Thompson went so far as assuring voters that the only differences between her and GOP opponent Chris Chocola were economic. "We will support our president, and we will support our troops," she said.

The 2002 race is enigmatic because though it provides the most recent illustration of Thompson's electoral ability, it came in an extraordinarily crippling year for Democrats across the nation. Yet that, more than whatever spunk Thompson may have, could be what's decisive in her gubernatorial campaign

**"I have to tell you," Sautter said.** "The longer I am in this business, the more I think that the objective circumstances of a race count a lot more than anything in the campaign. People spend a lot of time analyzing all of these things, but usually in a favorable year, an incumbent is going to win a seat. And when it's an unfavorable year, all bets are off, just as in the case of the governor's race."

Thompson's campaign in that 2002 race, like in 1994, was swept off its feet by a national trend. In 2008, she's hoping to be the one to benefit from a national wave threatening to drown Gov. Daniels. The Wall Street Journal, at least, is not calling it "unwinnable" this time. ❖



**U.S. Rep. Jill Long lays out her House banking statements in 1992. The issue surfaced briefly in her primary battle against Jim Schellinger.**





## 23 Indiana House races in play in HPI analysis

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - A Howey Politics Indiana analysis of Indiana House races reveals a steep mountain for Republicans to retake control of the lower chamber, which the Democrats hold by a 51-49 margin.

HPI begins this sequence tracking 23 races, with much of the competition centered in Indianapolis metro, Southwestern Indiana and across Northern Indiana. Of the seven races we begin in our tossup category, five are held by Republicans and two are open seats, compared to the two open seats the Democrats are preparing to defend. Seats being vacated by Republicans Marlin Stutzman and Larry Buell along with Democratic seats left open by Dave Crooks and Joe Micon are up for grabs.



Three other tossup seats for the Republicans were won by the GOP by scant margins in 2006: the rematch between Don Lehe and Myron Sutton which the Republican incumbent won by 28 votes; Tim Harris who will face a vigorous challenge by former secretary of state nominee Joe Pearson after defeating Blackford County Commissioner Larry Hile by 19 votes; and Rep. Jon Elrod, who defeated Ed Mahern by 8 votes, ran an unsuccessful campaign against U.S. Rep. Andre Carson in the March 11 special election, was nominated in the 7th CD, then resigned that nomination and was placed back in HD97 in a GOP caucus. Democrat Mary Ann Sullivan stands to benefit from a district surge by presidential nominee Barack Obama while state Democrats are going to take aim at Elrod as an opportunist. Pearson is not expected to reject Hile's aversion to attacking Harris this time around.

"Elrod should have been focused on the issues before the General Assembly but he jumped and ran," said Indiana Democratic Chairman Dan Parker. "He was focused on his congressional campaign." Mike Gentry of the House Republicans says polling shows Elrod leading by more than 20 percent. Even if that's the case, we expect this race to tighten significantly by late October.

Democrats believe they have an excellent chance of picking up HD89 vacated by State Rep. Larry Buell with teacher John Barnes running for a second consecutive time. "Obama will help him in the Irvington area and in Franklin Township, where he lost in 2006," Parker said. Another Indianapolis seat worth watching is HD92 held by State Rep. Phil Hinkle, who faces Democrat Stephanie De-

Kemper. With a significant portion of the district in the 7th CD, Hinkle may have to fend off new voters brought out by Obama. Hinkle was able to easily defeat Robin Olds in 2006 in a race some thought would be closer.

In HD26, the open seat vacated by State Rep. Joe Micon, Democrats are excited about John Polles, a U.S. Army veteran who has taught military science at Purdue and West Point. Republicans believe West Lafayette Councilman Randy Truitt can take that seat from the Democrats. Truitt has been elected to office, is from the right part of the district, has been active in the business community and is an aggressive candidate. This is another district where Democrats believe a large university turnout for Obama will help down ballot races. Gentry notes that in a number of districts HRCC has polled, Obama and Gov. Mitch Daniels hold leads, leaving him to believe that Hoosiers will be in a ticket-splitting mode. But Republicans did not find a challenger for neighboring State Rep. Sheila Klinker, who is expected to put her time and resources into the Polles campaign.

In the other Democratic open seat, to be vacated by State Rep. Dave Crooks in HD63, Democratic House Campaign Director J.D. Lux likes the chances DuBois County Commissioner John Burger while Gentry and the Republicans believe businessman Mark Messmer offers the GOP its best shot at a seat pickup. Lux says that Burger has ballot familiarity, is pro-life and runs a large turkey farm. "He is deeply respected by a lot of local people," Lux said. Both sides see HD63 as competitive. "John Kerry lost in this district by 21 percent," Parker said. "It's going to be competitive."



**MARK MESSMER**

In HD62, State Rep. Sandra Blanton is on the ballot for the first time, having replaced the retiring State Rep. Jerry Denbo. Her husband is an Orange County judge, however. Lux and Parker maintain that Republican Brook Tarr is "not working the district," noting that he missed high profile events such as the Lawrence County 4-H Fair and the big Linton July 4th parade. "We don't see him working," Lux said.

Overlapping the Southern Indiana template is U.S. Rep. Brad Ellsworth. In 2006, many of the competitive House races occurred in the extremely competitive CDs that were eventually won by Ellsworth, Baron Hill and Joe Donnelly. This time around, Parker says, "Ellsworth's numbers are off the charts. He has Evan Bayh-like numbers. He can help legislative candidates down ballot. It changes the





dynamic.”

One final Southern Indiana seat has caught our attention: State Rep. Paul Robertson in HD70, who faces Republican Tim Hunt of the Associated Builders. Robertson made news last year when he worried about Hillary Clinton’s impact on down ballot races if she won the presidential nomination. A key question mark is whether Barack Obama can do as well in Southern Indiana as Clinton ended up doing in the May primary. We believe this is Robertson’s race to lose, but his district is becoming more Republican, so this one is worth watching.

**In HD46, Democrats** believe that State Rep. Vern Tincher will weather a challenge from former Indiana State basketball star Bob Heaton, a teammate of Larry Bird on the 1979 NCAA runnerup. But Parker notes that legendary Milan basketball coach Marvin Wood could not defeat Craig Fry, Anderson coach Norm Held couldn’t defeat State Sen. Bill McCarty, and hall of fame Manual Coach Ray Shultz couldn’t upset Ed Mahern. “Republicans like former sports stars and coaches, but they don’t win,” Lux said.

In HD44, Democrats believe that former Greencastle Mayor Nancy Michael (a former Putnam County clerk) will present a stiff challenge to State Rep. Amos Thomas, who has had health problems. Lux compares Michael to former state representative Susan Crosby (they are both from Roachdale). Both parties see this as a Putnam vs. Clay county race, which would marginally favor the GOP.

**Democrats are** confident that State Rep. Craig Fry will hold off former two-term Elkhart mayor Dave Miller, suggesting he would have lost his re-election bid in 2007 and is largely unknown in the Mishawaka-Osceola part of the district. They believe the Major Moves/Toll Road issue and Obama’s strength there will work against Miller.

Other toll road area seats in play include HD20, where freshman Rep. Tom Dermody will face LaPorte County Councilman Jerry Cooley. “That’s the most Democratic district in Republican hands,” Lux said. Obama has opened up a regional office in Michigan City and Jill Long

## Indiana House Horse Race

### Democrats

51

HD26 (Open) Polles vs. Truitt  
HD63 (Open) Messmer vs. Burger

HD5 Fry vs. Miller  
HD17 Dermobowski vs. MacKillop  
HD 46 Tincher vs. Heaton  
HD62 Blanton vs. Tarr

HD36 Austin vs. Burrows  
HD68 Bischoff vs. McMillin  
HD69 Cheatham vs. Coates  
HD37 Reske vs. Gaskill  
HD70 Robertson vs. Hunt

### Republicans

49

### Tossups

HD15 Lehe vs. Sutton  
HD31 Harris vs. Pearson  
HD52 (Open)Yarde vs. Papai  
HD89 (Open) Swatts vs. Barnes  
HD97 Elrod vs. Sullivan

### Leans

HD20 Dermody vs. Cooley  
HD48 Neese vs. Hardy  
HD35 Lutz vs. Mengelt  
HD44 Thomas vs. Michael  
HD4 Soliday vs. Chubb

### Likely

HD38 Clements vs. Snow  
HD92 Hinkle vs. DeKemper

### Safe

**Democrats:** Lawson, Harris, C. Brown, Bauer, Niezgodski, Dvorak, Pelath, Stevenson, Reardon, Dobis, V. Smith, VanDenburgh, Bardon, Klinker, Herrell, Tyler, Grubb, Kersey, Pflum, Pierce, Welch, Battles, Goodin, Stemler, Cochran, Oxley, Stilwell, Avery, Van Haaften, Riecken (Open), GiaQuinta, Moses, DeLaney (Open), Pryor (Open), Bartlett, Porter, Crawford, Summers, Day.

**Republicans:** Wolkins, Walorski, Ruppel, Friend, McClain, J. Thompson, Richardson, Turner, Davis, Torr, Steuerwald, T. Brown, Borders, Foley, Culver (Open), Leonard, Dodge, Cherry, Saunders, Knollman, Eberhart, Burton, M.Smith, Koch, Duncan, Crouch, Lehman (Open), Espich, Bell, Pond, Noe, Bosma, Murphy, Behning, Frizzell.



REP. DERMODY

Thompson is expected to hammer Republicans on the toll road lease. But Cooley is not uniformly admired by Democrats, sources tell HPI.

**Another seat coming into play** late is HD52, open when State Rep. Marlin Stutzman succeeded State Sen. Robert Meeks. Republicans nominated DeKalb County Councilman Dave Yarde, a teacher, which has only five precincts in the district from that county. He will face Democrat Donald Pappai of Avilla in Noble County. HD52 had been held for more than a decade by former Democratic LaGrange Sheriff Dale



Sturtz. So not only is it competitive, it's a toll road area seat and it falls in Thompson's former congressional district where she expects to do well. For those reasons and the relative anonymity of both candidates, we start HD52 in the tossup zone.

In HD48, State Rep. Tim Neese faces a rematch from John Hardy, who lost by only 1,800 votes in 2006. In HD4, State Rep. Ed Soliday faces a challenge from Democrat Larry Chubb of Chesterton. Soliday won in 2006 by only 6 percent. It's in the Chicago media market, which means there will be much Obama coverage, plus Obama is expected to have a big organization in Porter County as well as at Valparaiso University.

In the Anderson area, lackluster campaigner State Rep. Jack Lutz faces a rematch from Leeann Mengelt, who lost by 1,600 votes. In HD37, State Rep. Scott Reske will face former township assessor Kelly Gaskill, who lost her job when the Indiana General Assembly eliminated all but 44 of those township offices. It's worth watching since Gaskill might attract the financial support of wary township officials seeking to defend their turf.

For sheer entertainment, we'll keep an eye on HD38. This is the extremely Republican seat vacated when State Rep. Jim Buck went over to the Senate. The GOP caucus elected Heath Vannatter from Howard County to fill the rest of Buck's term, then minutes later nominated Jacque Clements from Clinton County for the nomination. So the Clinton and Howard Republicans have formed a circular firing squad and Democrat Bob Snow is working hard. "We're working with him," Lux said.

Which brings us to the final point. The Democrats have stretched the field to include seats like HD38 and 48. Republicans have to defend more tossup seats in their possession. Lux notes a band going from the Ohio and Wabash river counties to Northern Indiana where Gov. Daniels' numbers were off sometimes up to 30 percent from primary numbers posted by John McCain (though Daniels is on record believing he will out-perform McCain this November.

While Gentry dismisses the uncontested State Rep. Kreg Battles in HD64 and State Rep. Ron Herrell who has only token opposition in HD30, going into this year we figured both those seats would be heavily in play. HD69 is a targeted GOP seat, but Democratic State Rep. Dave Cheatham drew perennial candidate Floyd Coates, so the incumbent is likely to return there.

Given the national dynamic, which we believe will be Democratic, the stretched playing field, and what looks to be a good crop of Democratic candidates, at this point we believe the House will likely stay in Democratic control. The wild card will be Gov. Daniels. If he can get Obama voters to split (and we believe both Obama and Daniels will run as change agents) and the governor can use financial resources to pull out a couple of seats, things might

not look like such a steep challenge to Republicans. But, clearly, they have their work cut out form them. ❖

## 2008 Indiana Governor

**Governor 2008:** Republican: Gov. Mitch Daniels, Democrat: Jill Long Thompson. **1996 Results:** O'Bannon (D) 1,075,342, Goldsmith (R) 997,505, Dillon (L) 35,261. **2000 Results:** O'Bannon (D) 1,230,345, McIntosh (R) 906,492, Horning (L) 38,686. **2004 Results:** Daniels (R) 1,302,912, Kernan (D) 1,113,900, Gividen (L) 31,644. **2008 Forecast:** Jill Long Thompson's \$1.6 million reported on June 30 is a credible posting, though she still faces a huge obstacle in defeating Gov. Mitch Daniels, who has pre-paid media through Sept. 7 and has raised \$12.9 million with almost \$3 million cash on hand.



Jill Long Thompson conducted a swing through Southern Indiana this week with running mate Dennie Oxley II. (Thompson campaign photo)

Yes, the Hoosier political landscape is now littered with vastly outspent candidates; Mayor Greg Ballard and Sen. Greg Walker come to mind as those pulled off huge upsets. But in those races, there were lethal issues that severely compromised incumbents Bart Peterson (a tax crisis; \$65 million income tax hike) and Bob

Garton (health care for life along with Right to Life/Right to Work forces aligned against him). If there's a silver bullet aimed at Daniels, it's not readily apparent at this date. We don't think the gas tax suspension is going to do it.

**Democrats still talk** about Major Moves, but even that has evolved from rejecting the "sale" of public assets to what Indiana Democratic Chairman Dan Parker now describes as a bad deal in the \$4 billion Daniels got for the toll road lease. And Daniels can now counter that with events like Wednesday, when he broke ground on the five-decade saga of building I-69 from Evansville to Indianapolis. The Democrats were mum on that development. Daniels will use I-69 and U.S. 31 as examples of getting things done that seemed impossible in our lifetime.

This debate was played out by columnists Matt Tully and Jack Colwell in Sunday's Indianapolis Star and South Bend Tribune (see pages 12-13). Colwell's column





had a tongue-in-cheek attitude. Tully actually traveled the toll road and essentially echoed Clara Pella ("Where's the beef?"). When it comes to Thompson, we can't escape 1996 when Frank O'Bannon didn't have a pundit's prayer of defeating Stephen Goldsmith. O'Bannon ran a nearly perfect campaign while Goldsmith collapsed under bad campaign strategy (\$2 million in the Chicago TV market) and the poorly handled police brawl scandal.

Thompson might have a national Democratic trend and Evan Bayh on the ticket with Obama giving her a tailwind. But we think there would have to be some sort of strategic error on behalf of the Daniels campaign and, perhaps, a scandal, for this to happen.

Anyone want to bet against the governor's strategic/tactical abilities? Are there any scandals brewing? We can't find many Democrats who see the Thompson campaign in the O'Bannon '96 groove at this point. We'll never say she can't win (and we never said Frank O'Bannon couldn't win in 1996). But Thompson is going to have to raise up the money and tactics several notches and hope there's an Obama-Bayh ticket and a big national wave.

**Status:** Leans Daniels

## 2008 Congressional

**2ND CD: Democrat:** U.S. Rep. Joe Donnelly. **Republican:** Luke Puckett. **2006 Results:** Donnelly 103,561, Chocola (R) 88,300. **2008 Outlook:** Donnelly has raised \$1.6 million and had \$993,046 in the bank at the end of June. GOP challenger Luke Puckett's disclosure report was unavailable. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) today blasted five GOP House challengers - including Indiana's Mike Sodrel and Luke Puckett - for their upcoming trip to Alaska, which has been organized in part by a group that advocates oil drilling in Alaska. Arctic Power, a pro-drilling group that has spent between \$100,000 and \$600,000 lobbying Congress each year since 2001, is helping to organize the trip. The candidates are funding the trip themselves, according to one campaign. The candidates will travel to Alaska Sunday to meet with energy industry experts as well as state and local officials, who will brief them on oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). The DCCC called the trip an "elaborate political stunt" orchestrated by oil and gas interests. The candidates are "even allowing lobbyists with close ties to oil companies to chaperone [them] on a 'fact-finding' crusade to ANWR—making this trip about as serious as a professional wrestling match," DCCC spokesman Doug Thornell said, accusing the candidates of having energy policy "spoon fed" to them by "big oil special interests."

A campaign manager for one of the candidates stressed that the campaigns, not Arctic Power, are funding the trip, and that Arctic Power has helped them follow the protocols, such as gaining permission from native Alaskan tribal elders, of ANWR travel. "There's a lot more that goes into doing an ANWR tour than booking plane tickets and doing a press conference. The last couple months we've been working with the folks out in Alaska, the Alaskan government, following the protocol of what it takes to make this trip a success," said Kyle Bailey, campaign manager for Indiana entrepreneur Luke Puckett, who will challenge Rep. Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.) this fall. Bailey would not provide the cost of the trip, and said the candidates had no plans to meet with anti-drilling groups but would listen to opponents who approached them. Bailey said he "wouldn't be surprised if we ran into some folks who are not in favor of us drilling" in the villages the candidates visit. "We will certainly talk to them and listen." The trip had already helped Puckett's campaign raise money according to Bailey. "It's been a great fundraising tool for us. People in our district are tired and ready for domestic exploration, and to know that their campaign contributions are going to a cause such as this," Bailey said, makes them more willing to give. The National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), which is not involved in the trip, hit back upon learning of the DCCC's complaint. "Apparently, the DCCC agrees with Nancy Pelosi that increasing production of American-made energy to lower the cost of gasoline is a 'hoax,'" NRCC spokesman Ken Spain told The Hill. "You would think that they would have realized by now that as long as hard-working Americans are paying \$4 a gallon at the pump nobody is going to buy their blame-game agenda." **Status:** LIKELY DONNELLY

**3RD CD: Democrat:** Michael Montagano. **Republican:** U.S. Rep, Mark Souder. **2006 Results:** Souder 95,421, Hayhurst (D) 80,357. **2008 Outlook:** Donors, especially political action committees, were more generous to Montagano's congressional campaign during the spring than to that of incumbent Souder. That's landed Souder in a situation most incumbents never see: lagging in the money race (Smith, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). As the election season cranks up, Montagano's campaign has \$28,000 more on hand than Souder, making him one of the few candidates in the country with a healthier campaign bank account than the incumbent. Montagano's bottom line was helped especially by six unions that each gave him \$5,000, bringing their collective total donations to \$60,000. The two are competing for the northeast Indiana congressional seat Souder has held for 14 years. Montagano, 27,



is an attorney who lives in Bristol. He has never run for elective office. Since mid-April, the last time the candidates disclosed their fundraising information, Souder collected \$89,873. He has \$323,339 in the bank and lists \$2,639 in debts. Montagano raised \$141,407 and has \$351,702 on hand. **Status:** LEANS SOUDER

**7TH CD: Democrat:** U.S. Rep. Andre Carson. **Republican:** Open. **2006 Results:** Rep. Julia Carson (D) 74,750, Dickerson (R) 64,304. **2008 Special Election Results:** Carson 45,668, Elrod 36,415, Shepard (L) 2,430. **2008 Outlook:** Gabrielle Campo appears to have the backing of the party for Friday's Republican caucus, though there are reports that some precinct officials don't like being told what to do (right, Jon Costas?). If that sentiment prevails, look for Ray Irvin - the Republican who legislated and built the Monon Trail and Indy Greenways - to emerge. **Status:** SAFE CARSON

**8TH CD: Democrat:** U.S. Rep. Brad Ellsworth. **Republican:** Greg Goode. **2006 Results:** Ellsworth 131,019, Hostettler (R) 83,704. **2008 Outlook:** Ellsworth, who is running for a second term, has raised \$1.25 million and had \$779,313 in the bank at the end of June. GOP challenger Greg Goode raised \$144,041 and reported \$9,029 left. **Status:** SAFE ELLSWORTH

**9TH CD:** Republican: Mike Sodrel. Democrat: U.S. Rep. Baron Hill,. **2008 Outlook:** released his second quarter fundraising figures, revealing that he raised nearly \$300,000 in the last three months. He now boasts almost \$1.2 million cash on hand, putting him in a strong position with less than four months remaining in the election cycle. Sodrel, who lost the seat to Hill in 2006, has raised \$665,703. **Status:** LEANS HILL ❖

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## On the road again with the toll road critics

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND - On the road again. Yep, critics are on the road again, complaining about changes on the Indiana Toll Road since Gov. Mitch Daniels sold operating rights to some foreign investors for a mere 75 years. Drivers flood state offices and newspapers with complaints about long lines at toll booths, high gas prices and dirty restrooms at plazas, big toll rate hikes, poor road maintenance, monthly rip-offs for purchasers of i-Zoom transponders and even

use of a wanton hussy to lure motorists into the fast lane.

They also resent the Spanish and Australian flags flying at toll booths and refusal to accept the weakened American dollar for payment. Just kidding. No foreign flags. And they just love to collect American dollars. But the other complaints are real.



**Seems some motorists** suspect that the investment consortium drastically cut the number of cash lanes in order to coerce motorists into buying i-Zoom transponders that permit faster

travel through toll plazas. So the long lines could be good for business. The more i-Zoomers, the fewer people the road will need to keep and pay to handle cash transactions and provide helpful information. Folks burning up gas while idling in long lines should stop complaining. They're part of a neat marketing campaign that could cut jobs.

Other complainers say that gas prices at the Toll Road plazas are a lot higher than at nearby stations off the road and on other toll roads. Tough. High gas prices are good. It's part of an effort to force Americans to buy more fuel-efficient vehicles.

**Some folks apparently** expect clean restrooms. Complaints to state offices go beyond "dirty" in the description, referring to restrooms as "disgusting," "abysmal" and "a rat trap." Don't they realize it takes people to clean and stock restrooms with frills like paper in stalls? You have to pay people. And that eats away at profits.

Hoosiers should remember that the investors paid big money up front for the right to make as much as they can for 75 years.

So the tolls have gone up. So what? Everybody knew that would happen. Live with it. And stop complaining that the new little tickets don't list rates. That's so the terrible toll will be a surprise.

If you don't like it, use another road. Actually, some motorists now recommend alternate routes to Chi-





cago. That's unfair. It could reduce profits of the investors. Road maintenance is criticized. Hitting potholes irritates motorists, especially when a tire flattens. Road operators have a point, however, in saying that potholes were not unique to the Toll Road after last winter.

Speaking of winter, it was possible during some bad snowstorms to travel all the way from the west end of the Toll Road to South Bend without seeing a snowplow. Drivers who once marveled at Toll Road snow removal wondered if the operators sold the plows. Anyway, the highwaymen have announced the purchase of a new fleet of 40 snowplows. So look for a good snow job.

**On the positive side**, i-Zoom really is nice. But those who are never satisfied complain about a monthly rip-off. They don't like \$1 monthly fees for signing up for the transponder system with a credit card. The Illinois I-Pass and similar systems in other states with reciprocal agreements with the Indiana Toll Road can be purchased without any such rip-off. Still, it would be an unforgivable slap at the Indiana Toll Road operators if we turned to I-Pass, E-ZPass or Please-Pass-the-E-ZMashed Potatoes transponders. Let's show Hoosier hospitality to the visiting investors.

Then there's the i-Zoom Girl.

She's the scantily-clad superhero mascot promoting i-Zoom. Critics would have you believe she's nothing but a wanton hussy trying to lure motorists into the fast lane.

A lady from Goshen wrote to Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman with this question: "The year is 2008. How could anyone think that a large-breasted, small-waisted, scantily-clad Barbie-type figure would be appropriate for this new venture?"

Right. The mascot should have a more realistic waist.

OK. There are problems on the Toll Road.

**But remember that money** from the Toll Road deal was used to build a new U.S. 31 from South Bend to Indianapolis.

Well, not all the way. Actually there is nothing yet in concrete. Drat, say pesky, picky critics who moan that the schedule for construction is behind what was planned with different financing before our man Mitch took office.

Have faith. A glorious U.S. 31 will rise like the Great Pumpkin envisioned by Charlie Brown in the "Peanuts" cartoon strip. The governor will have announcements about the Great Pumpkin before the election.

Hey, if you don't like the way the Toll Road is operating, be patient. Wait. It's only 73 years now before the operators can be changed. ❖

## Tully had a different take

Indianapolis Star columnist Matt Tully had a different take on the toll road lease, excerpted here:

**More than two years** have passed since Gov. Mitch Daniels persuaded the General Assembly to let him lease the Indiana Toll Road to a private company and use roughly \$3.8 billion in proceeds to finance road projects around the state.

If you listen closely, you can still hear echoes of the screams of anger from back in 2006. And though the screaming has quieted, time hasn't dulled the debate over what was arguably Daniels' most divisive policy decision. In recent weeks, the controversy saw new life after reports in Northern Indiana newspapers about letters of complaint that frustrated Toll Road drivers had sent to the state.

The reports sparked such a debate about the state of the Toll Road -- from road conditions to the quality of toll plaza bathrooms -- that I decided to head north on a recent day to check out Indiana's most controversial stretch of pavement. This column probably would be more interesting if I'd found anything to complain about: A traffic jam. A pothole to rival those that marked Indy's streets this spring. An obvious sign of mismanagement.

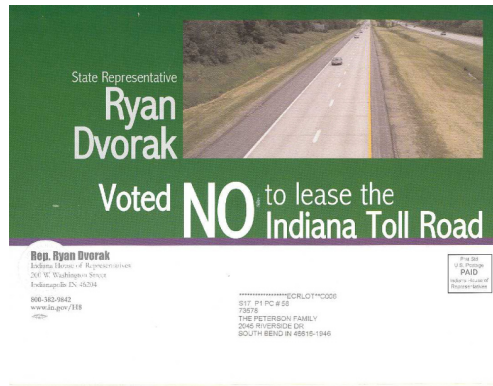
Anything.

**After all, the** complaint letters had conjured images of long lines at toll booths, roach-infested bathrooms, rude toll collectors, \$10-a-gallon gas and massive potholes. But I found none of that. Instead, I found a road that was easy to drive, free of problems and freshly paved in many spots.

We can debate the decision to lease the road. In time we'll know for sure whether Indiana came out ahead on a deal that featured a 75-year lease and a one-time payment. Moreover, a one-day drive provides only a snapshot. On a summer afternoon in 2007, I fumed while sitting through a poorly run toll booth in Hammond; a year earlier, I drove the Toll Road on a snowy day and found it unplowed.

**One valid complaint:** Gas prices are roughly 20 cents higher per gallon than what I saw at gas stations off the Toll Road that morning.

I've never understood the controversy over leasing a stretch of pavement. And after driving the entire stretch of the Indiana Toll Road on a recent weekday, I still don't understand all the complaints. ❖





**Rich James, Post-Tribune:** Mayor Rudy Clay saw the light and announced that he personally will start springing for the gas that goes into his city-owned Hummer H3. And Clay asked the other two elected officials who have city-owned take-home vehicles to do the same. But city Clerk Suzette Raggs and Judge Deidre Monroe pretty much told Clay where he could put his gas plan. I'm not terribly sure why Raggs and Monroe have take-home cars in the first place, especially when the city is hemorrhaging financially. I mean, the clerk gets to work and pretty much clerks all day. There's no need to run here or run there. The clerk clerks. That's it. The same goes for Monroe. As judge, she gets to work and plops down on the bench and judges all day. She, too, has no need to gad about town during work hours. Raggs was even pretty brazen about it, saying she uses just \$60 a week in city gas. "Taxpayers would not think that approximately \$60 a week is excessive or abusive," Raggs said. Try asking some of them. Sixty dollars a week comes to \$3,000 a year. That's not chump change in any league. Of course, if Clay really wanted to, he could order both cars curbed and their gas keys turned in. ❖

**Leslie Stedman Weidenbener, Louisville Courier-Journal:** If Democrat Jill Long Thompson's campaign trek around Indiana seems a little familiar, you might be having flashbacks to Gov. Mitch Daniels' tour around the state four years ago. Thompson, who is seeking to unseat Daniels, is not making the trip in an RV or similarly oversized vehicle -- and with gas prices what they are today, who could blame her? But with an emphasis on stops in small towns where there are no television stations -- places like Tipton, Spencer and North Manchester -- it is reminiscent of the impressive campaign Daniels pulled off in 2004. Even her blog sounds similar to Daniels' "Notes from the Road" four years ago. Read this post from Thursday when Thompson and her running mate, state Rep. Dennie Oxley, of English, stopped at Annie's Diner in Greenfield, a community east of Indianapolis. "Settling down to eat my homemade grilled cheese, Annie -- the Grill's namesake -- spoke of the hard times she experiences as a small business owner in rural Indiana, especially with today's unstable economic climate," Thompson wrote in the blog. "On top of the determination and hard work owning a business takes, problems become compounded when current government won't recognize the problem and take strides to help out struggling communities." That's certainly evocative of Daniels' many diner stops after which he wrote about the great tenderloins and the problems he heard about from patrons. It worked four years ago, so it's no wonder that Thompson (and likely future candidates) is replicating the concept. But things are different for Daniels, who is actually serving as

the governor. The job leaves a lot less time for campaigning. Four years ago, Daniels had left his post as President Bush's budget director and campaigned full time, much as Thompson is doing today. ❖

**Doug Ross, Times of Northwest Indiana:** You've been reading that Indiana's form of government dates back to the middle 1800s, when the state Constitution was written. But the sheriff's position dates back not to the middle 1800s but to the Middle Ages. The Sheriff of Nottingham, of course, was the bad guy in the Robin Hood stories. The sheriff was not just a law enforcement official but also the king's representative on all sorts of issues, including tax collection. The incentive to collect the taxes was the ability to collect a bounty in the process. Does it surprise you to know that the sheriff's position in Indiana still involves collecting taxes? And that the sheriff has pocketed some of that money - - legally? That's what has made the sheriff's job so lucrative in the past. Lake County Sheriff Rogelio "Roy" Dominguez expects to receive about \$55,000 in addition to his annual salary of \$119,500 this year. A 1999 law restricted the sheriff's side income. A 2008 law eliminates it, although the responsibilities remain. The Indiana General Assembly passed that new law after hearing that Marion County Sheriff Frank Anderson earned nearly \$268,000 in tax collection fees. It's an archaic practice, and it needed to be eliminated. Starting with sheriffs elected or re-elected in 2010, the prosecuting attorney and the sheriff in each county will earn the same amount. That puts them on an equal footing. And why shouldn't they be considered equals? They are both essentially department heads. The prosecutor handles that aspect of law enforcement, while the sheriff oversees the county police force and the county jail. ❖

**Mark Bennett, Terre Haute Tribune-Star:** It costs a lot to earn a living these days. That sounds like a Yogi Berra-ism or some New Age piece of circular logic, but it's the tough truth. Vigo Countians are now spending 7.5 percent of their paychecks on gasoline, according to the Oil Price Information Service. Nobody understands the crunch of \$4.15-a-gallon gas more deeply than long-distance or "extreme" commuters. Nearly 15,000 people commute from outside communities into Vigo County for work, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Another 3,680 drive from Vigo County to jobs elsewhere, including 458 to Indianapolis and 444 to Illinois. When many began making those treks, fuel costs were less of a concern than road time, traffic hassles and vehicle maintenance. Now, gasoline tops the list, while also intensifying those other worries. Some may have to change the way they live, or where they live. Life in suburbia just got more expensive. ❖







## Fort Wayne eyes salary freeze

FORT WAYNE - The city's looming budget crunch has Mayor Tom Henry contemplating a salary freeze for city employees (**Fort Wayne Journal Gazette**). Controller Pat Roller on Wednesday said it was the city's goal to have a flat budget in 2009, meaning it doesn't increase from this year's spending levels. One option mentioned in a letter Roller wrote to the City Council this month was limiting salary increases. "With the exception of increases in the fleet department due to the increase in the contract and fuel increase, it appears the city may be able to maintain the 2009 budget at approximately the 2008 budget amount with limited or no salary increases for 2009," she wrote. Most city employees received 3 percent raises this year.



## Daniels breaks ground on I-69 at Evansville

EVANSVILLE - Between 1,500 and 1,600 supporters of the I-69 extension project cheered Wednesday at the private Evansville celebration of the long-awaited groundbreaking (**Evansville Courier & Press**). To drum and cymbal accompaniment by the Boom Squad, a front loader filled with dirt from the Gibson County I-69 construction site rolled into The Centre and deposited its load so officials could ceremonially turn shovels in the soil. The ceremony coincided with the start of actual construction several miles away. Contractors hired by the Indiana Department of Transportation closed part of Indiana 68 in Gibson County to make way for building the

initial 1.77-mile segment of the new interstate. It will extend north from the existing Interstate 64 just west of Indiana 57. "I think it's about 40 years too late," concluded Tom Baumert, former four-term mayor of Washington, Ind., who has advocated the project for 25 years. Baumert said several companies had looked at his community for possible relocations, only to back out after learning Washington is not served by a north-south interstate. "They said, 'You have no interstate. We can't use you. We need to move product quickly,'" Baumert recalled. In his speech at The Centre, Gov. Mitch Daniels alluded briefly to Roadblock Earth First and its recent disruptions of the highway contractor's operations, protests that led to moving Wednesday's ceremony indoors. "Those few who may come from out of state to tell us how to live, if you came with violence or destruction in your heart, Hoosier hospitality will be suspended in your case. If you have doubts about this project, if you had fears about what it could mean, we respect you, we respect the sincerity of your viewpoints," Daniels said. "You have brought good arguments; you have brought improvements to this program. I know that those who will build it and further complete its design will do everything possible to take your concerns into account."

## Good Government sponsors want results

CROWN POINT - Corporate sponsors of the Good Government Initiative are unlikely to finance any more studies of how to make local government more efficient until they are sure someone is following their earlier advice (**Times of Northwest Indiana**). That was the message at a Wednesday meeting of the initiative's steering committee. The Good Government Initiative is an effort by U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Ind., and the county's largest corporate taxpayers

-- BP, Mittal Steel, NiSource, U.S. Steel and Whiteco -- to reduce waste and duplication in Lake County government. Steering committee Chairman James Wieser said the corporate sponsors of the study were hoping to continue the initiative's mission by studying government at the town and township level but are reluctant to spend any more money until company officials are assured their earlier studies have made a positive difference for taxpayers. The private businesses paid about \$2 million for a study of municipal agencies and school districts in Gary, Hammond, East Chicago, Whiting and Hobart in 2006 and for county government in 2007. The studies concluded the cities could save \$8 million and county government \$5 million by cutting jobs and consolidating departments that offer overlapping services. Tom Dabertin, county government's personnel consultant, said county and municipal officials have put a number of recommendations into practice. County Councilman Larry Blanchard, R-Crown Point, said county officials are using the study to craft budget cuts.

## Lake County budget cuts under fire

CROWN POINT - A report suggesting hundreds of job cuts in Lake County government is coming under fire before the ink is dry on its pages (**Times of Northwest Indiana**). The Lake County Council's Finance Committee is recommending job reductions and targeted layoffs in the sheriff's office, the courts and other agencies to cut public spending by \$15 million because of state-mandated property tax reductions. Sheriff Rogelio "Roy" Dominguez said Wednesday he doesn't know how the six committee members arrived at recommendations that, if implemented, would cut \$3.5 million from his budget by cutting 45 positions, eliminating the sheriff's Lake Michigan marine patrol and reducing county police patrols.