



Townships reforms under the gun

Gov. Daniels takes triple hit in Republican Senate

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

KOKOMO - Back in the late 1980s as a reporter with the Elkhart Truth, I received a call from a manager at LaCasa, a Goshen community housing development corporation. The Elkhart Township trustee, David Hoeverner, was elected in 1986 on a platform of saving tax dollars. It was rumored that he had a unique way of doing it. When a person seeking poor relief showed up at his office, he would allegedly open a drawer and lay a revolver on his desktop. LaCasa and other agencies claimed their budgets were overwhelmed as the trustee outlays plummeted.

I decided to check it out. I didn't shave or shower, put on some ratty painting clothes, smoked some cigarettes, then parked a couple blocks away from the trustee's office and made an application for poor relief. The trustee did not display a handgun, but at one point said, "Are you looking for violence?"

Of Indiana's 1,008 township trustees, Hoeverner



Gov. Daniels makes his case for government reform in Kokomo while Liberty Township Trustee Linda Grove of Greentown defends her office, though she acknowledged she practices nepotism. (HPI Photos by Brian A. Howey)

was a true aberration. To the best of my knowledge, the allegations were never investigated by any authorities. He was not re-elected in 1991 and in later years, picked up a

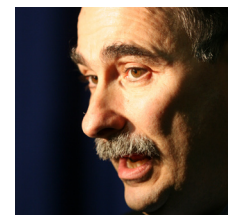
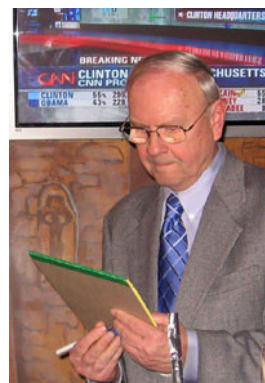
See Page 3

Souder critiques Obama

By **JACK COLWELL**

SOUTH BEND - Congressman Mark Souder, the Fort Wayne Republican who represents Indiana's 3rd District, including most of recession-ravaged Elkhart County, chose not to be on the stage with President Barack Obama at Concord High School last week.

Instead, after declining an invitation to accompany the president aboard Air Force One and attend the event, Souder was at the WSBT-TV anchor desk as Obama spoke. He joined in analyzing the presidential plea for the stimulus



"We're going to need a restructuring of these companies. How that restructuring comes about is going to have to be determined."

- **DAVID AXELROD**, on potential GM and Chrysler bankruptcy



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Brian A. Howey, publisher
Mark Schoeff Jr., Washington
Jack E. Howey, Editor
Beverly Phillips, Associate
Editor

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Call **317-254-0535**.

HOWEY POLITICS INDIANA

PO Box 40265
Indianapolis, IN 46240-0265.

Contact Us

www.howeypolitics.com

bhowey2@gmail.com

Main Office: 317-202-0210.

Howey's Mobile: 317-506-0883.

Indianapolis Fax: 317-254-0535.

Washington: 202-256-5822.

Business Office: 317-627-6746.

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package.

"He's too concerned with us," Souder observed as he listened to Obama's call for bipartisanship to counter what the president called the worst economic threat since the Great Depression. By "us," Souder was referring to Republicans in Congress.

Obama tried hard to sway those Republicans, with concessions to eliminate some spending they didn't like and to add some tax cuts they do like. He even made a personal plea in a meeting with the House Republican caucus. The result back then: Not a single House Republican voted for the stimulus package.

Why?

Well, Souder said House Republicans just don't like the package, didn't want to support it and weren't persuaded by Obama, despite what Souder praised as an impressive performance by Obama during the caucus. Souder also made clear that not joining the president was no indication of animosity or disrespect, just a decision that it would be improper to be on a stage at promotion of a plan he couldn't support.

"He has the votes," Souder said. "They should just pass it and not be so concerned about Republicans."

Democrats clearly had the votes in the House. Not so in the Senate, where help from three moderate Republicans was needed to prevent a GOP filibuster.

Souder's view that Obama is spending too much time trying to placate and persuade Republicans actually is shared by many House Democrats who dislike compromises made to secure the three Republican votes in the Senate.

When Obama was hit at Concord with a hostile question about tax problems of his appointees - proof that the event wasn't scripted the way similar "town meetings" were for George W. Bush - Souder thought Obama went on far too long on the defensive. He did.

Souder found this another

sign that Obama is obsessed with trying to convince those who are against him instead of just moving ahead with those, now a majority, who are with him. Some liberal House Democrats, fearing Senate compromises lessened the immediate stimulus impact, wanted Obama to act as Bush did: Stick with his party's congressional majority and stick it to the minority.

They would have welcomed fighting a Republican filibuster. Indeed, if Republican senators were filibustering day and night, just saying "no" as jobs disappear, GOP popularity would plummet to levels of Herbert Hoover days.

Actually, Republicans didn't want to filibuster. Some Republicans would have provided needed votes in the Senate, or even in the highly partisan House, to keep from being the party that killed the stimulus.

They didn't like it, but most Republicans were aware that something had to be done and that, due to election results, it was going to be more of a Democratic version, not their ideal.

Since Obama knew he could eventually push through his plan, why did he spend so much time and effort trying to get more Republicans to come along? Naïve? Dumb? Wasting time on Republicans, while not showing enough concern for members of his own party?

New polls showing nearly seven in 10 Americans approve the way Obama is doing his job indicate his approach could be working _ not with Republicans in Congress, but with a larger audience all around the nation.

The Gallup Poll showed 67 percent approval of the way Obama has handled efforts to pass the stimulus bill, with only 25 percent disapproval. In contrast, just 31 percent approved the way Republicans in Congress have responded, with 58 percent disapproval. Congress doesn't get high marks in polls, but Democrats in Congress actually were ahead 48



percent approval to 42 percent disapproval in handling the stimulus bill.

And could Obama's approach pay off in some future congressional efforts? Will there at least be less

animosity in Washington? Or will it be back to the more familiar congressional food fights? ❖

Colwell has covered Indiana politics over five decades for the South Bend Tribune.

Townships, from page 1

conviction for carrying a gun into a courthouse according to an Elkhart Truth article. But he illustrates the problem with the township system is that it is so vast and with so few metrics and so little oversight to evaluate it beyond the ballot box and annual State Board of Account audits, with the SBA reminding lawmakers that it is not an "enforcement" agency.

A county official, where there is much greater news

as the two governors patiently listened. "If any of you have actually been to a township trustee's office, I could show you what we do."

She ended with a plea: "Don't take our jobs away. Countless jobs are going to be lost when you remove the township trustee, the board members. How many people in Indiana are going to be out of jobs?" When she finished, one person out of 200 applauded.

Looking on was Trustee Judith Essex of Eagle Township, who, along with a neighboring township actually merged with the town of Zionsville. She was one of the few municipal officials who acted on Gov. Daniels warnings of the past several years to consolidate from the ground up "before we do it for you."

Kernan, as a three-term mayor of South Bend, certainly had visited his share of township poor relief offices. Daniels thanked Grove for her public service and noted that in six years of travel across the state as candidate and governor, "You're not going to meet too many people who have been in more offices like yours than I have," he told Grove. "I generally find people who are really working hard. That's never been the issue. It's the system that doesn't serve Hoosiers well."

Daniels continued, "Across this state there are legions of cases where more money is being spent on salaries and administration, quite often on family members. Nepotism is incredibly common with the system we have. It is not a system that can be defended as governed by competition. Three fourths of the townships trustees never have an opponent. There are very good people in it and Linda clearly you are one of them, but that cannot be an excuse to maintain a very old system."

But there was a wrinkle. As Grove got up to speak once again with people audibly groaning in the crowd, the trustee explained that her husband is a township employee. "My husband does everything," Grove exclaimed. "He's the cheapest person I can find."

Kernan steered the debate back to Elkhart Township, telling the story of Goshen Mayor Allan Kauffman who wanted to buy a ladder truck for his fire department. So did Elkhart Township, which overlaps Goshen. The mayor and the township trustee initially agreed to buy one \$750,000 ladder truck, but were unable to agree on where it should



Gov. Daniels and former Gov. Joe Kernan meet with reporters at Kokomo on Tuesday to push the Kernan-Shepard reforms. Daniels lauded Kernan's participation, calling it a "great act of citizenship," adding, "He did not have to say yes." (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

media and SBA scrutiny, would almost certainly not have eluded a formal investigation over such alleged tactics, ostensibly to manage a budget. As the Montgomery County League of Women Voters found, only a handful of its 11 trustees were listed in the phone book or had signs outside their offices. Statewide, there's inconsistency from township to township for how property is assessed or poor relief is managed.

When Gov. Mitch Daniels and former Gov. Joe Kernan convened the first "mysmartgov.org" town hall in Kokomo on Tuesday, they were immediately confronted by Liberty Township Trustee Linda Grove, Greentown, who invited them and reporters to her office. "I want to show you what I do," she said during a lengthy, rambling discourse



be housed. Now, there are two ladder trucks in fire departments "located less than a mile apart," Kernan said.

In just a few minutes, this unprecedented coordination of two governors from two political parties - once fierce political opponents - had underscored the lack of logic. There was nepotism. It was more about jobs for the bureaucrats than the poor they were designed to serve. There was demonstrable redundancy.

And, yet, at almost the very same time as Daniels, Kernan and Grove spoke, 75 miles to the south - in the Indiana Senate - State Sen. James Merritt was pulling the plug on the thrust of SB482, which would have consolidated the townships within Marion County. Merritt read the reality in the Senate where Chicken Little senators were in the process of caving to party patronage. In the Senate reform bills, there were scores of amendments to exempt more than 25 counties from streamlining efforts in SB506. Merritt wanted to save the "most passable parts" - fire consolidation - as State Sen. Mike Young complained that the bill would "force things down people's throats. Let people decide how they want to govern themselves."

The Senate passed a watered down township elimination bill in SB512 which would give county councils the power to review and reject township budgets. It would grandfather in nepotism (prior to 2009). Had an amendment passed that would have eliminated township boards, that would have reduced by 3,000 the number of elected officials.

SJR-7 - which would have made county recorder, coroner, surveyor, and treasurer appointed - failed in the Senate Local Government Committee by a 6-5 vote with Republican Sens. Sue Landske and Jim Buck voting against.

Daniels acknowledged in Kokomo that "people in my own party" were seeking to preserve townships and the county status quo, described as the last redoubts of "party patronage." On Wednesday, he reacted at Landske and Buck, saying, "I'll make no comment about Democrats all voting against reform, but when it comes to two members of my party, I'm disappointed in them and embarrassed for them. We'll try again next year."

The Senate Education Panel declined to take a vote on the school consolidation bill, which will die unless it is revived for a vote today. Sen. Connie Lawson, R-Danville, author of the township bill, said the overall effort to overhaul local government isn't over (Kelly, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Some less-controversial election-related changes have already passed the Senate as has a bill seeking to change the structure of county government.



There is bipartisan support for the Kernan-Shepard reforms as evidenced by (from left) Republican Mishawaka Mayor Jeff Rea, Kernan, Daniels, Democratic Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight and former Democratic legislator Marilyn Schultz, who heads mysmartgov.org. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

150 miles to the north

At about the same time 150 miles to the north of the Senate, Whiting Mayor Joe Stahura and Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. - both elected by the people to do their business - were beginning the process of hammering out an agreement to merge their two fire departments. "Pressure on our budget is forcing us to look for ways to reduce our costs," Stahura told the Times of Northwest Indiana. "It's not easy to make wholesale changes unless there's a solution. This happens to be a project that fits the bill."

McDermott said talks still are at an early stage, and the two communities probably are months away from finalizing a deal. "We have a special relationship with each other," McDermott said. "We're sister cities and the mayors have a great relationship and Hammond is very receptive to help Whiting."

In Tippecanoe County, four township fire depart-



ments around Battleground are merging to form the county's first fire territory. The Lafayette Journal & Courier reported today that the purpose is to combine resources and provide fire service to the larger area. Local firefighters hope creating the territory would shield them from the government consolidation efforts being pursued by Indiana legislators. "As townships, we're trying to improve our cost of operations," said Bill Jones, trustee of Tippecanoe Township. "But the decision-making authority would still remain local."

Reality outside the Statehouse

Gradually, gradually ... it is happening. Prior to his stop in Kokomo, Daniels checked out the newly consolidated Logansport/Cass County 911 Center. The city of Portage with its new Democratic mayor Olga Vasquez is in the process of doing the same with Porter County. It comes in part because of HB1001 and the property tax caps. Or legislation mandating no more than two 911 centers per county. It is happening because there is a severe recession. It happens because there are pockets of progressive leaders in both parties. Behind Daniels were Republican mayors Mark Smiley of Rochester, Jeff Rea of Mishawaka, Wayne Seybold of Marion and Andy Cook of Westfield, and Democrats Mike Fincher of Logansport and Greg Goodnight of Kokomo.

But not so much in the legislature. In the first week of the session, Senate President Pro Tempore David Long opened up the notion that one size does not fit all and that a referendum process would be palatable. SB506 that creates the county executive passed 30-19 on Tuesday with four Democrats - John Broden, Sue Errington and Lake County's Lonnie Randolph and Earline Rogers voting yea (curious, since Lake County is exempted).

Gov. Daniels told reporters in Kokomo that the "perfect should not be the enemy of the good" and said he is "not totally averse to the referendum process."

"If that's the way it would make its way through

the process, I would gladly sign it." Daniels added that "I can accept it as a example of federalism" that would give voters "the virtue of autonomy; that voters have control over the decisions."

"There's only so much political will a legislator's willing to expend," Lawson said after her township bill was gutted. "It's difficult to change because we know the people who are operating our township governments. They were here telling us, at least, that they had their constituents' best interests at heart."

Linking the budget, reforms

Then, ever so subtly, Daniels linked the budget to the reforms. Democratic House Speaker Pat Bauer has said the local government reform bills will receive "scrutiny" in the House but has not promised hearings (Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Daniels said in Kokomo on Tuesday, "I'm very, very hopeful. I said to him at the beginning that they have the budget which, by law, you have to start in the House and it's a natural division of labor for the Senate to start on these reforms. The first burden is on the Senate to produce these bills" Daniels added of Bauer, "He's entitled to wait and see what comes to him."

Bauer said on Wednesday, "They spent an awful lot of time over there (in the Senate) on those bills and really came up with very little" (Indianapolis Star).

Mark Lawrence of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce believes that Bauer will grant hearings. While Wednesday's action was described as "crippling" to the reforms, the fact that the township bill exists means that it can be

changed up through conference committees.

He said Bauer spoke of the need for streamlining, noting that in his home at South Bend, he personally pays taxes on two fire departments, two police departments and two 911 centers. "I think the speaker may be more open



Then Gov. Joe Kernan announcing the state's first female lieutenant governor - Kathy Davis - in the Indiana Senate chambers in 2003. Davis will join the effort for push government reform at 8:30 a.m. next Monday when she joins former legislators Joe Micon and Sue Scholer at the Civic Theater of Greater Lafayette. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)



Burton leaves no doubt: 'I intend to win' in 2010

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

KOKOMO - U.S. Rep. Dan Burton left little doubt what his plans are for 2010. In an HPI Interview in Kokomo after attending the town hall meeting of Gov. Mitch Daniels and former Gov. Joe Kernan, Burton confirmed that he will seek a 15th term in Congress. Sitting in on this interview at Pastariffic was Howard County Republican Chairman Craig Dunn, who quickly endorsed Burton.

In Brose McVey, Burton already has one Republican primary opponent with an established exploratory committee, and former State Rep. Luke Messer, Marion County Prosecutor Carl Brizzi and State Rep. Mike Murphy are pondering bids. Some suggested that Burton might not run, but the Indianapolis Republican slammed the door on that notion.

HPI: Are you definitely going to seek re-election in 2010?

Burton: Yes, I am planning to run again. I'm very healthy. How old do you think I am?

HPI: Oh, 63?

Burton: I'm 70. I run and I exercise. I'm in pretty good shape physically. My wife is a doctor, so if I have a little chest pain in the middle of the night I can just roll over and say, "Doc, I need a little help?"

Dunn: And I will say that since that is the first initial announcement I will offer the first official endorsement.

HPI: You're 100 percent committed to running?

Burton: Yes. Unless something unforeseen happens, like a heart attack or something. But I don't anticipate that. I just had a complete physical and if you want to hear something positive, when they looked at my aorta they said it was that of an 18-year-old. It was clean as a whistle, so I don't anticipate any health problems.

HPI: How long do you see yourself in Congress?

Will this be the last term if you win?

Burton: I'm not going to make any comment beyond the next election. One of the reasons I want to run again is President Obama is coming up with many revolutionary approaches to government and I think those of us who have been there awhile can be more effective than a new person coming in; knowing how to deal with him from a procedures standpoint. Also, I am a senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. I am chairman of the Western Hemisphere subcommittee, I was a NATO delegate. I have been on the Asia/Pacific Committee and I am ranking on the Middle East, which is a hot point in the world. So in terms of our foreign policy, which is extremely important, I think I will have a very strong voice there. I'm looking forward to sticking around for awhile to work on that.

HPI: Several of your potential primary challengers in 2010 told me they've talked with you. How did those conversations go? What do you tell them?

Burton: I'm very nice to everybody. Very respectful. I said, "It's your right to run," and I would never tell anybody that they can't run. I plan to run again, but if you do run I hope it will be a gentlemanly thing; no nastiness. But I intend to win.

HPI: Dr. John McGoff came surprisingly close to you in the 2008 primary. What did you learn from that challenge?

Burton: It was very interesting. We did three polls in the last three weeks of the campaign. Every one of our polls in the last three weeks showed me up 25 to 30 percent. So we thought it was going to be a walkaway. But my friend Rush Limbaugh was telling everybody to go over and vote for Hillary and if you look at the turnout, that had a bad impact on us. We won by about 7 percent, which was OK,

but it wasn't anything like we anticipated. The other thing that was interesting was that Obama brought out a number of voters. If you look at Pence's race, Buyer's and Souder's, the number of Democrats as opposed to Republicans was unbelievably different than what it had been in the past.



U.S. Rep. Dan Burton (right) talks with Kokomo Tribune reporter Ken de la Bastide in Kokomo on Tuesday. Burton says he's running for re-election in 2010 but wouldn't commit beyond that. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)



As a matter of fact, in my primary I usually get 2 to 3 to 1 Republicans voting over Democrats. There were 10,000 more Democratic votes in that primary than Republicans. So it showed there was a huge amount of new people voting and there were a lot of Republicans who were voting for Obama that hadn't voted that way before.

HPI: So you see the 2010 primary snapping back into a more predictable mode?

Burton: I believe if I do my job and take care of my constituents and I stay in touch, I think we'll be fine.

HPI: President Obama came before your caucus. What impression did he leave with you?

Burton: Obama and Bill Clinton are two of the smoothest people I have ever met. I thought when I met Bill Clinton - and I did the investigation of him for four years - I thought I had never met a better politician. Ever. I mean, I didn't care for the guy and I didn't agree with him, but he was so good. I'll give you a quick example. I was at a bill signing at the White House - it was the Helms-Burton law regarding Cuba. He didn't like me because I was doing the investigations. He introduced me last, which is not the way you do it. And then when he hands out the pens - mine last - he shook hands with me like this (Burton demonstrates a very limp handshake with the interviewer). And then when the TV lights came on, and I have a golf tie on, and as we're walking out the door Bill presses my hand like this (now a very firm, masculine handshake). He said, "Oh you play golf? We'll have to play golf sometime." The point I'm trying to make is he is really smooth. Now Obama is every bit as good. He is so likable. So down to earth. So smooth. You can't help but like the guy. But as far as his programs go and what he is trying to do to the country, I have real reservations about his approach to government. I am really concerned about his move to bigger, socialistic government. I don't think this is what this country wants.

HPI: I was amused that Bill Clinton spent so much time campaigning in your congressional district for Hillary in the primary. Did you enjoy watching that?

Burton: It was interesting. Can I tell you something else that is going to be interesting? As a senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, I am going to have the opportunity to discuss foreign policy with Hillary.

She and I weren't the best of pals. So it's going to be an interesting time.

HPI: You've raised the "socialism" alarms during the auto bailout and TARP, which occurred under President Bush, the Republican. Last weekend we watched Sen. Lindsey Graham say, somewhat stunningly, that he can't rule out nationalizing the banks. These are things I thought I'd never see.

Burton: Lindsey and I do not agree. I think nationalization of any part of our industry in this country is not good. Leave it to the free enterprise system. That's our best way to work out of this situation we're in. I don't agree nationalizing the banks is a good thing.

HPI: Where do you think things will stand this April or May?

Burton: They are only going to spend about 7 percent of the bailout money between now and the end of the year. The president has already said things will get worse before they get better. There's not going to be any real movement that an across the board tax cut would create. I guarantee that in the next months, they are going to come back for a supplemental that's going to be another \$400-

to \$500 billion. We spent \$700 billion on TARP, we spent with interest a trillion dollars on this one. That's close to two trillion. And then they're going to put another \$400 billion in there. Geithner today said he thought the fed would have to put another one to two trillion in the banking industry to get everything moving ahead. Our kids and grandkids are going to be biting off a heck of a lot. China has about \$700 billion of our debt. Japan has about \$600 billion. There's a limit as to how much these other countries are going to lend us. They are

owning more and more of America. The interest is going to have to be paid, so at some point we are going to have to monetize some of this debt. When this happens, you're going to see what happened in the '70s under Jimmy Carter. We had double-digit inflation, about 14 percent, and then they brought Volker in to put the hammer on and interest rates went to 21 percent. I think you're going to see something like that down the road, I don't know when.

HPI: Was your vote on President Obama's stimulus





package tough for you to make?

Burton: Not really. When I looked at the so-called stimulus package I was very disappointed because I was convinced, and still am convinced, that the way to stimulate quick economic recovery is by cutting taxes across the board. I was one who advocated dispensing with the capital gains tax maybe for a year and have a two-month holiday for income tax. That would get more money in the system a lot more rapidly. Money getting into the system in 2009 according to the experts we talked to was about 7 percent of the \$789 billion. I don't think it's going to make a big difference this year.

HPI: How does a tax cut help somebody who doesn't have a job?

Burton: About 40 percent of the people don't pay taxes. So you know obviously that's not going to have a huge impact on them. I believe you want to stimulate economic growth and the people who are going to do that and provide a mechanism for economic growth are the people who are paying or buying products who are going to expand economic recovery. If we cut capital gains, it will create an atmosphere for investment and will bring money back into the country that has gone overseas. The 60 percent who pay taxes will spend that money and buy products and that will create more jobs. The people below the poverty line there's assistance programs for them already. We have food stamps, welfare programs and there will be some expansion of them. I'm not in favor of giving them tax rebates. A tax rebate is a welfare check.

HPI: We've got the deadline today for the Detroit 3 and the second on March 31. What's your take on that?

Burton: Sen. (Bob) Corker had what I thought was a pretty viable plan. He was talking about 30 cents on the dollar via a salaries become more competitive. I thought Corker's plan has some real merit to it. Had the Big 3 accepted that I probably would have supported it. But what happened was when we had the \$14 billion come before Congress, there was no plan. It was just giving them the money and then come around at the first of March and give us a long-term plan. I didn't favor giving anybody any amount of money unless we knew what they were going to do with it. I feel the same way about the economic stimulus plan. I just don't think it's really going to get the job done.

HPI: What are you hearing on the Chrysler and GM restructuring plans?

Burton: I have not yet heard. By the time we get back to the office there will be a response. GM says they won't respond until after the stock market closes. I don't know what that means.

HPI: You took a lot of heat from Marion Mayor Seybold on your vote last December on the Detroit 3. You have many GM and Chrysler workers either working or living in your district.

Burton: I certainly want to help the auto industry do well and flourish in America, particularly in the 5th Congressional District. The mayor of Marion came down with some GM executives from the factories in that area and we talked. I told them that if there was a plan that was reasonable, I would support it. But I wanted to see

it first. I did say that I don't think there's any chance whatsoever that we're not going to pass something that keeps things afloat. Now, that didn't indicate I wasn't going to vote for it because I didn't know what it was going to be. I was convinced the (Bush) administration was going to do whatever needed to keep things on track for awhile. And they did.

HPI: Congressman Pence believes GM and Chrysler should reorganize in a pre-packaged bankruptcy with all the players in front of a judge. Do you agree?

Burton: Mike may be right. Corker was talking essentially that. He was talking about the bondholders agreeing to 30 cents on the dollar and having the wages and benefits being more competitive. The things that Corker talked about I thought would be almost as good as a bankruptcy. Almost a pre-bankruptcy. If they continue the way they have been, I think they will end up with a bankruptcy plan.

HPI: Can GM survive a bankruptcy? Will people buy a Chevy or a Cadillac if the company is bankrupt?

Burton: I would continue to buy GM products. I always have. I think people will buy GM cars if the car is a product they like. Just like they buy Toyotas and Hondas. I don't think bankruptcy precludes people buying a GM product. Bankruptcy doesn't mean they are going to go completely out of business. It's reorganization and I think people will understand that. ❖





Second term for Parker; chair showdowns in Lake, LaPorte counties

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - Indiana Democratic Chairman Dan Parker will seek a second term, he told Howey Politics Indiana on Wednesday.

"There are a few items of unfinished business," Parker said. "We have the 2010 legislative races that will determine who draws the mpas. I want to see the re-election of our senator and our congressional majority. I want to stabilize our fundraising now that were in the post PLP (personal license plates) era."

Parker, a former aide to U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh, said that Bayh "supported my decision" as did House Speaker B. Patrick Bauer. "I've been aligned with the senator for a number of years," Parker said. "Obviously I want to see him re-elected."

With Parker seeking a second term, that means the two major parties will see little change. Indiana Republican Chairman J. Murray Clark told HPI last month he intends to seek another term.

As for who would be drawing the redistricting maps in 2011, should Democrats retain control of the Indiana House, Parker suggested it would probably be State Rep. Kreg Battles, D-Vincennes, who now chairs the House Elections Committee. However, Gov. Mitch Daniels and House Minority Leader Brian Bosma have let it be known they prefer a non-partisan, scientific approach to redistricting.

Parker said he and Clark have discussed the Indiana presidential primary, which was reinvigorated by the Barack Obama-Hillary Clinton showdown in 2008. It was the first truly contested primary since Bill Clinton battled California's Jerry Brown in 1992 (though Clinton came to



Indiana Democratic Chairman Dan Parker will seek another term in March. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

the state a heavy favorite). The epic primary occurred in 1968 when Sen. Robert F. Kennedy defeated favorite Son Gov. Roger Branigan and Sen. Eugene McCarthy. A Senate bill that would move up the primary was referred to a summer study committee and Parker said, "We don't want to move it too far up" because of legislative and congressional races. "I can tell you there is serious interested in making what happened last year a regular occurrence, and not something that happens once every 40 years," he said.

McDermott to challenge Clay

Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. is preparing a challenge to Gary Mayor Rudy Clay as Lake County Democratic chair on Saturday March 7 at the Lake County Government Center in Crown Point. With Lake County Surveyor George Van Til also gearing up a challenge, HPI views this as a potential donnybrook with no early favorite. McDermott, who many regard as a credible 2012 gubernatorial contender, has over-reached politically before when he backed a Hammond city councilwoman's challenge to State Rep. Linda Lawson in 2004 and lost. McDermott has resigned as Indiana Democratic vice chair. "His goal is to be governor," Van Til told the Times of Northwest Indiana. "Various district chairs and the state committee believe he doesn't really win anything for his ambition if he wins (the county race) and, if he loses, he hurts his ambition."

McDermott explained, "I've gotten that indication from (Parker), but I don't want to put it on one person because I've gotten that indication from more than just him. People across the state think I'm making a huge mistake. If I ran for governor, I'd already have that stigma because I'm mayor of Hammond, and that's a fact of life. I don't see where being Lake County party chairman would make any difference. They view us all as corrupt. If I could be Lake County chairman, I could change all that, and (the party) would be a cohesive unit, wherever you are from."

McDermott has been a progressive mayor, seeking to close the Hammond Health Department, setting up a community scholarship fund, and is now in talks with neighboring Whiting about fire department



Hammond Mayor Tom McDermott Jr. is seeking to oust Gary Mayor Rudy Clay as Lake County Democratic chairman.



consolidation.

Clay became the first Democratic chairman to live outside of East Chicago since Robert Pastrick took the helm in the 1950s. He is also the first African-American to hold the chair. Pastrick gave way to former Lake County Sheriff Stephen Stiglitz, who lost the chair four years ago when he was unable to convene a caucus quorum.

One reliable source tells HPI that Clay's ability to fill vacancies is suspect. "Rudy has just not gotten the job done and the work entails someone really committed to it," the source said.

Ballard endorses John

Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard has endorsed Marion County Republican Chairman Tom John. In a letter to precinct officials Ballard explained, "Make no mistake about it, my election in 2007 was the direct result of the grassroots political work that you and other party volunteers do so well. Our election reminded us all that, working together, we can still effect change in our government for the better. Once again, I sincerely thank you for the opportunity to serve. I hope you will join me in supporting

Tom John's re-election as chairman. Tom has a plan moving forward to continue our party's success. He will work to empower our precinct committeemen to turn out Republican votes on Election Day and ensure ballot integrity in places in the county where fraud is a concern. Tom will also continue to grow our party's ability to communicate by engaging the newest, most innovative ways to communicate with voters and volunteers, ranging from e-mail and social networking websites to internet video and text messaging. Simply put, I need a partner to continue my fight for the taxpayers of Marion



Marion County Republican Chairman Tom John has been endorsed by Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard for a second term. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

County. Tom has shown himself to be a worthy partner and stalwart supporter in these efforts." Ballard said he was also endorsing John's team of Jennifer Ping, Lesa Dietrick and Avachina Reeves.

Democratic sources tell HPI that Chairman Ed

Treacy will seek a full term. He replaced Michael O'Connor in 2008 after leaving the chair in 2005.

Kelty, Jehl seek Shine ouster

What happens when you have a convicted felon (and former mayoral candidate) and a person who bolted the party to run for lieutenant governor call for your ouster? If you're Allen County Republican Chairman Steve Shine, you haul out the cliché "With enemies like these"

The Journal Gazette reported earlier this week that 2007 mayoral nominee Matt Kelty and Glenna Jehl, who joined State Sen. John Waterman on an independent fool's errand in the 2008 gubernatorial race which collapsed last June, are urging Shine's ouster. Kelty was convicted in 2008 of perjury and campaign finance violations. "Remember, all that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing!" Jehl wrote in an e-mail. Jehl and Kelty are apparently hoping that former legislator and Fort Wayne Councilman Mitch Harper will challenge Shine.

Harper did not return a query from HPI, though Shine said on Wednesday he had a phone conversation with Harper, who indicated to him that he has no intention of seeking the chairmanship." Shine told HPI, "I have the goal of a convincing win at the caucus. Republicans want to go forward in a position of strength and not settle old scores."

LaPorte County showdown

Informed Democratic sources in the 2nd district tell HPI that former Indiana Democratic Party legal counsel (and former county chair) Shaw Friedman is backing a slate headed by former County Councilman John Jones, while State Sen. Jim Arnold (D-LaPorte) is supporting a slate headed by NIPSCO manager Dwayne Hogan. The two factions battled two years ago over the State Senate vacancy created by the death of longtime State Sen. Anita Bowser. Arnold won that battle on the third ballot with a 35-34 vote of a precinct caucus against Steelworkers' union official Debra Birkholz.

Three of the county's four party officers are not seeking re-election, most notably Dr. Vidya Kora, who served seven years as county chair and was widely regarded for his party organization skills while he ran a medical practice, served as county coroner and even served a stint as president of the 8,000 member Indiana State Medical Association. Though he won't endorse in the battle to succeed him as chair, sources tell HPI he is quietly supporting the Jones effort for chairman. Sen. Arnold apparently rebuffed a Kora-led effort to put together a unity slate, which led to contested races for all four party positions."



Viewing HST in the wake of Whitmore

By **DAVE KITCHELL**

LOGANSPORT - In this week when thousands of Americans will either be giving or receiving Whitman Samplers for Valentine's Day, there are some who will be going for a Whitmore sampling of note.

That's James Whitmore, as in one of the most familiar faces in American entertainment for generations. He passed away earlier this month at age 87.



Some may remember him as the forceful, confident voice of Miracle Gro fertilizer every spring, or the inmate in "Shawshank Redemption" who committed suicide after being institutionalized so long, he couldn't cope in the real world outside prison walls.

But those who are true aficionados of the man who had a remarkable resemblance to Spencer Tracy remem-

ber him for his one-man show in the movie "Give 'Em Hell, Harry." Whitmore received an Oscar nomination for his role as the 33rd president of the United States. It was one of several roles he performed alone.

When I first saw the film in the late 1970s in a downtown Bloomington theater, I sat through what turned out to be the worst cinematography I've ever seen. Keep in mind, the movie was a filmed version of Whitmore's actual one-man personification of President Harry S. Truman.

Having seen it several times since then, I can say it will probably go down as the most realistic portrayal of a man who rose from a career as a smalltown men's clothing store operator to the most powerful position in the free world. Such was the life of a man who presided in the White House at a time when the nation was on the brink of the nuclear age, when its most popular president in decades had fallen victim to disease and when the Iron Curtain was about to fall.

What Whitmore brought to the role in "Give 'Em Hell, Harry" is a bit of how it really was like for a Midwesterner who survived a series of vice presidential choices by FDR to become president and win a four-year term. At one point in the movie, we're reminded that Bess Truman was

nothing like her predecessor, Eleanor Roosevelt. In fact when the Trumans returned to Independence, Mo., for a visit, she made an executive decision of her own and had Harry mow the yard. The fuming that followed tells us she wasn't intimidated by the office or the man in it. Harry the president was the same man she married and would be much more like him one day when they returned to Independence to live out their days.

Truman's 1948 win against Thomas Dewey is best remembered because of the ill-conceived Chicago Tribune headline, "DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN" which jumped the gun on calling the race. In the end, Truman received only 49 percent of the vote, but his plurality was far more than New York Gov. Thomas Dewey garnered in winning just 16 states. The greatest presidential upset of all time? Many would say yes.

When I revisited that race back in 1981 for a feature story I wrote, I interviewed the late Earl Harrison, then a 90-year-old railroader in Flora who was in Logansport, Ind., the day Truman campaigned across Indiana. With polls predicting a sure Truman defeat, a whistlestop special rolled into downtown Logansport. Harrison saw the crowd's reaction as the president's train rounded the curve into the city and thought less of the polls.

"I think he's got a chance," Harrison recalled saying as he turned to a friend.

While Truman did not win Indiana, he did succeed in campaigning here. One of the men aboard that train, a railroader named Claude Berkshire, stood on the platform as Truman placed his arm around him and urged voters to cast their ballot for the next Cass County sheriff. They apparently listened. Berkshire won and eventually went to Washington where he was reunited with Truman in the White House. How many sher-

iffs can anyone think of who not only receive a presidential endorsement, but an invitation to 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.?

It was that kind of folksy, everyman style that worked in 1948, even if it may not work today. But Truman was a different kind of man.

"The buck stops here" read a sign in his office, and Truman was unafraid to take responsibility for decisions from the atomic bomb to the firing of Gen. Douglas MacArthur. He had no qualms with interviews for newsreels following his presidency. In those, he explained why he made the decisions that, at least in the case of Nagasaki





and Hiroshima, forever changed the world.

He also wasn't afraid to be accessible.

Perhaps my favorite Truman story involves an encounter he had with the young family of then Sen. Birch Bayh. On a car trip across the country, Bayh, his wife, Marvella, and their young son Evan were guests of the Trumans in Independence. Young Evan, who had consumed several Pepsis on the trip, was growing impatient. He was waiting for an opportune moment for a bathroom break.

Truman sensed the unease and took the young lad to the bathroom himself. No delegating. No telling his parents where the bathroom was or asking Bess to do the honors. It's hard to imagine many of our leaders being that down to earth.

Perhaps it's that quality that has endeared historians to Truman as not only a man for his time, but one who resonated with people.

Back in Logansport, the only remnant of that 1948 visit remaining is a portrait of Truman. Every year, local Democrats bid on the chance to keep the portrait for a year at a location of their choosing. It currently resides in Logansport Mayor Mike Fincher's office.

Logansport hasn't enjoyed a visit by a sitting presi-



President Truman on a 1948 campaign whistlestop. He appeared in Hammond, North Judson and Logansport where he talked of the importance of the Hoosier vote. "In 1944, 75,000 Democrats voted in the 1st Congressional District of Indiana, only 46,000 Republicans voted. In 1946, one-third of the Democrats were lazy and stayed hom. But all 46,000 Republicans and a few hundred more went to the polls. We can't afford to let that happen this year."

dent since Truman came here more than 60 years ago.

The rest of the nation hasn't enjoyed a president like him since then either, and the likes of a Truman we may never see again. ❖

Dave Kitchell is a veteran Indiana journalist based in Logansport who teaches journalism at Ball State University.

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Gary Gerard, Warsaw Times-Union: We have a stimulus package and it looks like it will head to the president's desk very shortly and become the law of the land. And, frankly, I was fairly impressed with the sausage grinder that is our legislative process in Washington, D.C. The end result is far superior to the initial offering from the House of Representatives. In the end, there was more money for what I perceive to be stimulus - infrastructure programs and tax incentives for home buyers and car buyers - and less money for routine government spending. So I applaud the members of Congress who were willing to compromise and put this thing together. It was no small feat. Now, whether this will work is anybody's guess. There are lots of economists who think not. They include Nobel Laureates like James Buchanan, Vernon Smith and Ed Prescott, who, along with 200 other economists, signed a letter opposing the legislation. World renowned Harvard economist Robert Barro went as far as to call the legislation - on both the spending and taxing sides - garbage. But what do they know? I, on the other hand, can say with complete honesty and freedom of conscience that I have no clue if it will work. Given that level of ignorance, I will resign myself to blind faith and simply hope and pray that it does. ❖

Doug Ross, Times of Northwest Indiana: Portage Township Trustee Joyce Webster blasted her predecessors on Wednesday at an Indiana Senate Local Government Committee hearing on abolishing township government. Webster said the Democrats who ran the office before her treated it like a sheltered workshop for friends and family. "When I took over as trustee in January of 2007, I walked into disarray that was left over from the past few 'good ol' boys' trustees that undermined that office and the taxpayers." Can you tell Webster is a Republican? But that could just as easily have been Democrat Frank Mrvan, who made a number of personnel changes when he was named North Township Trustee in neighboring Lake County. A strong two-party system in both Portage Township and Lake County would help with the "good ol' boys" problem. But what both situations point to is the need for greater accountability in government. So I side with the people who want to streamline government by eliminating the township form of government. I'm not saying the services the townships provide aren't necessary, and I'm not saying some township trustees haven't done remarkable jobs, but there are other ways to deliver those services that would provide more accountability and accessibility. ❖

Amos Brown, Indianapolis Recorder: The president (in Elkhart) did something extraordinary and unpresidential. He took questions unscreened and uncensored

from ordinary Hoosiers. Part of a strategy outlined by Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, "We'll get to measure whose questions were better, the voters of Elkhart or the reporters in Washington." And ordinary Hoosiers asked great questions. From a critic who questioned Obama's trustworthiness when his appointees don't pay their taxes, to a youngster asking about improving his school, even another wondering if the president would "share a beer" with a fierce media critic. Indy's own Rev. Muoja Ajabu implored the president to "support the people who got you into office, not the fat cats," encouraging him to send the stimulus help "directly into the hands of the people." President Obama's Elkhart effort and his Monday night press conference were extremely effective. And isn't it great to have an intelligent, thoughtful, caring president for a change? ❖



Curt Kovener, Crothersville Times: The President wants a stimulus totaling \$900,000,000,000. I think I have enough zeros to accurately reflect that number but 900 billion is a difficult number for me to conceptualize. So maybe if I broke that down to a per person amount, it would help us. According to various internet search engines, the US population is 300,000,000 people. Now all I have to do is divide the money by the people to come up with a per person amount. But my calculator won't allow me to use that many zeros so I had to resort to the old school way of long division I learned in Mr. Bard's math classes. If I still know how to cancel out and extrapolate, a \$900 billion dollar stimulus breaks down to \$3,000 for every man, woman and child living in the U.S. ❖

Raymond Dix Jr., Post-Tribune: Over the past several months, I conducted an informal, nonscientific poll concerning the degree of racism people still believe exists. I asked whites and blacks. I began this effort following the election of President Obama, because I was curious as to whether people believed America moved past racism as a barrier to success. What I discovered is, regrettably, the expected answers from both whites and blacks. Nearly to a person, the whites I questioned believe that, in part because of the election of Obama, racism no longer is a valid excuse for failure among blacks or other minorities. Conversely, nearly every black person remarked that while they believe Obama's election is a positive step to ending racism, enough exists to deter and even derail the progress of black Americans. To those of us who truly wish to see America progress into a post-racial society, I believe we must conclude that the definition of a "post-racial" culture will not include the eradication of racism as a personally held belief. If blacks and whites together believe that the elimination of racism is necessary in order to "prove" we truly live in a new age, they may be sadly mistaken. ❖



Visclosky returns campaign funds

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky said he will repay thousands of dollars in campaign cash connected to a federally targeted Washington lobbying firm after taking a closer look at his ties to the company (Times of Northwest Indiana). The Merrillville Democrat will return to the U.S. Treasury Department at least \$16,000 from donors linked to The PMA Group, Visclosky campaign spokesman David St. John said Wednesday. "There's been questions raised about some contributions," St. John said. "Having seen the allegations, the congressman decided to turn that money over to the Treasury." Reports surfaced last week that the FBI raided the Virginia-based offices of the powerful PMA Group in November. Though Visclosky had pledged to repay campaign cash "if any wrongdoing is proven," St. John denied any misdeeds occurred. "It's not a question of, 'Oh, this is all wrong,'" he said. "It's just some adjustment needed to be made." He called it "the right thing to do."



Donnelly visits Elkhart hydrogen fuel firm

ELKHART - With the country looking for ways to reduce its dependence on foreign oil, U.S. Rep. Joe Donnelly believes one Elkhart company has a big solution to the problem (Elkhart Truth). Donnelly, D-2nd, on Wednesday visited Applied Hydrogen Technologies, a local operation that uses hydrogen injection technology to increase diesel engines' fuel efficiency by more than 20 percent. "What we're talking about is a revolution in energy technology that's located right

here in Elkhart," Donnelly said. The AHT mechanism is relatively simple, according to president Jim Dees. A small device and water tank is installed under the hood. Electricity is fed into the device, which turns it into steam, then injects it into the engine. The hydrogen steam enriches the air headed into the combustion chamber, increasing the percentage of fuel burned. More fuel used means better gas mileage (8.2 mpg in a standard semitrailer, compared to 6.29 mpg), and less waste expelled into the air through exhaust pipes (90 percent fewer particles emitted).

Soldier & Sailors bill passes committee

INDIANAPOLIS - The Indiana House Committee on Family, Children and Human Affairs Committee passed by a 9-2 vote to keep the Indiana Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home open. The bill now moves to the full House for consideration (Associated Press). The bill endorsed yesterday would prohibit the home from being closed or its staff from being reduced without legislative approval. It also would require that the home's student population be at least 500 by September 2013. There are now 115 students at the home and school, at a cost of about \$90,000 per student annually.

Delph immigration bill passes Senate labor

INDIANAPOLIS - The Senate labor committee voted unanimously yesterday to advance a proposal that would revoke the business licenses of companies that repeatedly hire illegal workers (Associated Press). "You have to be a really bad actor -- very stupid -- to be hurt by Senate Bill 580," said Sen. Mike Delph, R-Carmel. The bill now moves to the full Senate. Even if it passes there, it may struggle in the House, where Speaker Patrick Bauer has said he believes immigration is a

federal issue and that he prefers the House not deal with the topic this session.

McShurley seeks contempt for prosecutor

MUNCIE - Delaware County Prosecutor Mark McKinney and a deputy could face contempt for failing to repay cash and attorney fees from civil drug forfeiture cases ordered by Delaware Circuit Court 2 Judge Richard Dailey (Muncie Star Press). Muncie Mayor Sharon McShurley's administration filed a motion wanting the court to hold McKinney and Deputy Prosecutor Eric Hoffman in contempt for failing to repay more than \$200,000 in cash and attorney fees from civil drug forfeiture cases where there was no court adjudication.

Carmel waterslide killed for stimulus

CARMEL - Unfortunately for Carmel, swimming pools did not make a big splash in the stimulus package. The \$787 billion bill President Barack Obama signed into law Tuesday prohibits spending any of the money on swimming pools, golf courses, zoos, aquariums or casinos (Indianapolis Star). Carmel Mayor James Brainard had proposed a \$2.5 million water slide and wave pool improvement project at one of the city's parks as part of the \$428 million in local projects he'd hoped to see funded with money being sent to local governments for roads, police, sewers and water treatment plants, and community development. Brainard said Wednesday he has no problem with the bill's restrictions. "We were asked to provide a list of shovel-ready projects, and we did that," he said. "Now comes the time when we apply for actual stimulus money. And I'll be working as hard as I can to get as much of our money back to Carmel as possible."

