



# Obama-Bayh: The Audition



*B-roll in a Portage diner;  
a brief embrace at Elkhart*

By **RYAN NEES**

PORTAGE - The two of them looked like a ticket Wednesday. In red ties, suit jackets in absentia, one in

white, the other in complementing blue, and with sleeves rolled up to their elbows, the Obama-Bayh tour of Schoops Hamburgers in Portage was a sight to be seen.

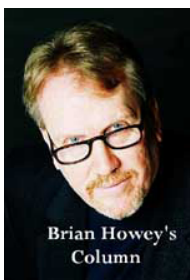
And perhaps it will be: all around the country, near you soon.

In the 1950s-style diner, where the pair moved

## Reading the tea leaves

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - Speaking from behind the towering mugs of Spaten Lager at the Rathskeller on the Eve of Evan Bayh's Elkhart Audition, Luke Messer posed this question: "What if Evan Bayh doesn't get it? It could hurt Obama here in Indiana."



Brian Howey's  
Column

I could not dismiss this out of hand or mug.

Messer is a former Republican state rep and former GOP executive director. Watching the Obama/Bayh spectacle in its long, long Dog Days sequence has become an obsession here in the Hoosier state. The reason is simple. If Bayh ascends, it changes the political



"This election will be a referendum on Obama. More campaigns are lost than won."

- Luke Messer of the Indiana McCain campaign



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landscape here. How dramatic that change will be remains to be seen. In August 1988, the nascent Bayh gubernatorial campaign was rocked when U.S. Sen. Dan Quayle was brought up to Vice President Bush's side in New Orleans. Bayh was in the midst of his historic challenge to Lt. Gov. John Mutz and the Bulen/Durnil era Republican juggernaut that ruled the state for two decades. That month, Bayh's election was no sure thing.

**As we know**, the shock/paranoia was only temporary. Bush-Quayle carried the state and nation, and Bayh defeated Mutz by a comfortable albeit narrow margin.

Bayh's election kicked off what has become two decades of speculation on whether Bayh can get an office in the West Wing. And he has a wide, deep following. The Indiana Democratic Party was poised to do whatever it took to get him the presidential nomination beginning in 2006. When he pulled the plug on that effort that December, just a month after it became clear that Barack Obama would be Hillary Clinton's chief challenger, his Democratic base gasped.

When, in September 2007, Bayh threw his veep lot with Hillary Clinton - then the "inevitable" nominee - the Hoosier pundit class thought it was a sound political move, but we had nagging doubts whether Hillary could carry Indiana amidst a broad base of Hoosier Clinton haters. We had state reps tell us they might not seek reelection if she had the nomination in the bag by Super Tuesday.

**And when she** didn't, we wrote about "Evan Bayh's predicament" last February: that instead of

toiling to make a red state blue this fall, he would have to do it this spring. He brought along most of the Democratic establishment, from Pat Bauer, to Judy O'Bannon, to Frank Anderson, and delivered the state. Without him, Hillary would have been toast. The biggest thing Evan Bayh couldn't do was rein in Gary Mayor Rudy Clay, who sapped the Clinton victory of the perception of momentum.

If there was any momentum coming out of the Clinton-Bayh efforts in April and May, it belonged to Evan Bayh, who never said a nasty thing about Obama and who defeated



Sen. Bayh gave an animated introduction to Sen. Obama at Concord High School in Elkhart on Wednesday. (HPI Photo by Ryan Nees)

the finely honed Obama campaign's Axelrod model. Bayh was like A.J. Foyt in the 1964 Indianapolis 500, steering through the fireballs and carnage that claimed the lives of Eddie Sachs and Dave McDonald, to win and drink the milk of victory.

And that brings us to the here and now: the veepstakes. It is a



compelling, aggravating experience for those who make the short lists and wait ... and wait ... and wait. The veepstakes can change history. At one point in 1980, when Ronald Reagan considered adding former President Ford to his ticket, George Herbert Walker Bush retired to a hotel bar, figuring his political career was back to square one, only to get the magic call a few hours later. That call would profoundly change American politics for three decades.

**The political class** has experienced the ups and down, the rampant speculation, and stony silence, the head fakes and just fakes this past week. Conventional wisdom, which has often been ruse in disguise, has Bayh on the shortest of short lists, with an announcement coming before the Beijing Olympics begin this Friday. Word came on Saturday that Barack Obama was heading to Elkhart the following week. We quickly learned of plans for a police motorcade through LaPorte County.

Could it be? The Obama-Bayh ticket?

Well, no one was talkin'. We could only read tea leaves, watch schedules and the movements of leaders. We checked commuter flight schedules and pondered a lengthy national media layover in South Bend.

**The Obama campaign**, which has brought to Indiana \$435 single-day bus tours and \$150 turkey sandwiches, was coy. Coy to the point of cuteness that turned to aggravation. The pundit class and their editorial bosses had to figure out how to allocate resources. Democrats like Dean Boerste and Maggie Kernan had to decide whether to make 300-mile trips or cancel travel plans. This all went on up until the final 36 hours when most of us came to the conclusion, though hardly a solid one, that the Democratic veepstakes wouldn't end in Elkhart or Portage on this sultry Wednesday.

There would be no trips to Shirkieville. The Bayh twins, wife and corporate director Susan, as well as grand-

pa Birch would remain in Washington.

**All this madness**, speculation and altered plans could have quickly been resolved had the \$150 turkey sandwich purveyors in Obama's Chicago Netroots Fortress just released a simple statement on Saturday: this is not the veepstakes rollout. O! pundits and speculators: Chill.

The job eventually fell to former Indiana Clinton chairman Joe Hogsett, who in murky fashion advised us not to read anything into this gathering cauldron of newshounds, Bayhphiles, Obamacans and veep speculators. Barack is going to Hawaii on Friday ... so wait another 11 days. Bayh himself finally broke the news that there would be no decisions, no meetings that he knew of on the Eve of Elkhart. Bilerico's Bil Browning, who went out on a limb in forecasting a Bayh anointing on Wednesday (while accusing me of "waffling") was exposed.

If Obama decides on Bayh, most in the pundit class believe Indiana will be in play, despite the bold predictions of Mitch Daniels, Murray Clark and Messer that Indiana will end up red on Nov. 4.

If it turns out to be Obama-Kaine, Obama-Dodd, Obama-Biden or Obama-Nunn, the disappointment of Hoosier Bayhphiles will be palpable. These folks have carried the water for Evan's West Wing hopes for two decades. They have followed his own presidential ambitions, and then veep plotting through the Hillary and now Barack campaigns.

**Messer may be** on to something if Bayh stays in the Senate. If Obama wins Indiana, it would most likely occur with Bayh on the ticket, and with a margin something akin to Hillary's 1.14 percent primary victory, and without the Limbaughists seeking chaos. Without Bayh, there might be Democrats who are wary of the ups and downs of the long, long potus/veepstakes journey.

To which I'll invite them all to IHOP to have waffles with Browning and me. ❖



## Obama-Bayh, from page 1

from table-to-table glad handing and talking unemployment, energy, and football with one tattooed Bears fan, the visuals were inescapable. "Is that his running mate?" one middle-aged woman in a pink tank top asked aloud.

"You get a job offer yet?" a steelworker in a corner booth asked Bayh.

There are signs everywhere, it seems, of Evan Bayh's ascendancy on Obama's Vice Presidential short list, and in Indiana, Obama's campaign could scarcely send a clearer signal than the multi-city trip the two senators made across the state's northern corridor yesterday.

By all appearances, Indiana's junior senator seems amidst a prolonged and public audition as Obama's number two. Less than a month ago Bayh was making his public debut with Obama, with the Illinois Senator and former Georgia Senator Sam Nunn at a West Lafayette panel discussion on national security at Purdue University. In the weeks since, Bayh's been dispatched to morning cable programs as an Obama surrogate. He impressed many in his standoff on Fox News Sunday with Senator Joe Lieberman, who beat out Bayh for the VP nod in 2000 and now supports Republican John McCain. And in the last month, he's appeared publicly with Obama more often than any of the other politicians widely considered for the job — including Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine, Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius,



and Delaware Sen. Joe Biden.

In the pundit proffering, television talking, speculating spectacle that is the veepstakes, Obama's campaign has been coy but savvy. It seems not only to be deliberately surfing the speculation wave in a number of states, but also churning the tide. It's planned event after event with

vice presidential contenders in their home states to garner the added local attention that comes with a "favorite son" in the national spotlight. Nunn, Bayh, and Obama in West Lafayette. Tim Kaine and Michelle Obama in Virginia. Bayh and Obama in Elkhart and Portage. Hillary Clinton in Nevada tomorrow . It's unlikely that any of such events would have garnered as splashy coverage if it not for the VP buzz surrounding them.

The Indiana stop, though, was poised to break the mold. It was to come just days before the opening of the Beijing Olympics, an event during which a vice presidential selection was previously widely thought to be unlikely. And the timing was titillating for another reason: the travelling press schedule had the campaign plane in South Bend for 21 hours — with only a scheduled townhall that ultimately lasted little more than one. As Bayh arrived in South Bend



**Bayh and Obama hug briefly at Concord High School. Below, Obama smiles at a supporter. (HPI Photo by Ryan Nees)**

Tuesday evening concurrently with Obama, would the two meet? Might the two use the time to film television ads for a veep rollout?

Perhaps both happened in plain view.

In the absence of a rollout were the signs of a rol-lup. Bayh's rousing speech in Elkhart praised Obama for competing for Indiana's votes.

"Frankly, for a general election for President, it's a very

unusual thing," Bayh said. "We haven't had a fall campaign for President that's really been contested in our state for sixty years as Harry Truman's famous train went back and forth across Indiana several times. . . . This is Senator Obama's 42nd visit to our state. . . . Barack Obama is with us here today because he cares enough to come. He's going to listen to us, understand our challenges, and work together to propose practical solutions to the problems we face. That's the kind of President America needs."

The two embraced and whispered into each other's ears as Obama took the stage after Bayh's introduction. Obama called Bayh "one of the finest" Senators in the country.

The addition of the Portage leg of the trip gave Obama and Bayh an hour-and-a-half bus ride together on which to chat — the vice presidency never came up, they





say — talking about family and sports. And a camera crew awaited the senators at the Schoops, filming high-definition television-quality footage of the duo. Indeed, multiple cameramen operated independently of the press videographers, and without press credentials. A member of the traveling press described the unusual crew as “very expensive (and aggressive).” When this reporter ended up behind Bayh and Obama, one frenetic Obama aide physically blocked me from entering what she defensively called “our shot.”

In fact, the shot’s importance could be vast. If Obama co-opts his \$5 million Olympic advertising package to promote his running mate, Wednesday’s footage might be the first and only the campaign has of the two together.

To be sure, it could be a matter of convenience: Portage is barely an hour from Obama’s national headquarters, making for a short drive for videographers in any case, and b-roll footage of Bayh and Obama may be later useful in Indiana even if Bayh isn’t picked as the Vice Presidential nominee.

But now, because the Democratic National Convention will begin Aug. 25, the day after the close of Aug. 8-24 games, Obama’s rollout will compete with some 3,400 hours of NBC-Universal Olympic coverage on NBC, USA, CNBC, MSNBC and the Oxygen network — making paid advertising increasingly important.

And the repeated public forays with Bayh, who unlike other potential veeps is unabashed in proclaiming his interest in the job, could serve as a trial balloon navigated more successfully than the spate of mixed publicity Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine drew last week by submitting to a series of radio and television interviews.

If that’s the case, consider Bayh’s reception to be a kind one. But what might happen next is unclear: Obama is scheduled to take a Hawaiian vacation next week, leaving him with fewer than two weeks in between his return and the convention to announce his pick. At Schoops, Obama said he hadn’t yet made a decision. But how long can he wait before the campaign must begin laying the groundwork for a media blitz?

Standing together a diner booth, each man with his hands symmetrically on his hips, a ticket seemed already on display — at least for the cameras.

### *The Elkhart kickoff*

Obama and Bayh took the stage at Concord High School in Elkhart Wednesday morning with Bayh giving a 10-minute introduction, saying, “In five short months, the Bush administration will be done, gone forever” unless John McCain wins the election. Obama gave Bayh a short hug and called him “one of the finest U.S. senators.” It was far short of rampant speculation that it would be a vice presidential rollout.



Obama and Bayh greet voters at Schoop’s in Portage. A second visit had been rumored since last weekend when HPI heard of motorcade plans through LaPorte County. When Portage preschool teacher Chris Liechty asked, “Is Mr. Evan Bayh your running mate?” Obama laughed and replied that Sen. Bayh was his “good friend” but added, “I haven’t made a decision about the vice president.” (HPI Photo by Ryan Nees)

Obama told Elkhart, “We don’t have an energy plan, we have an oil company plan.” He pointed out that gas was \$1.50 a gallon when President Bush took office in 2001 while average electric bills increased from \$875 a year to \$1,100 and heating oil increased from \$900 to \$2,500. He also noted that while the U.S. is spending \$10 billion a month in Iraq, there is an \$80 billion Iraqi surplus “sitting in American banks on Wall Street.” Obama said that people are wondering “if the American dream is slipping away” and posed the question Ronald Reagan asked in 1980, “Are you better off than you were four or eight years ago?”

Echoing Gov. Mitch Daniels’ Major Moves program, Obama called for during the question and answer period a short term stimulus package that would put out of work “construction workers” back on jobs improving infrastructure. Obama called for high speed rail between cities such as Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Dayton and Columbus, saying the U.S. is the only industrialized nation without such a system. ❖



## McCain campaign to use ‘old-fashioned’ structure

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - While the 18th Barack Obama office was opened in Republican Greenwood of all places this past week our eyes turned to the Indiana campaign of Republican presidential nominee John McCain. It will be a more traditional effort with Jen Hallowell and Luke Messer even terming it “old-fashioned.”

What they meant was that instead of opening up offices around the state, McCain will be relying on established networks that have been in place. “It will be district by district, county by county,” said Messer, the former Indiana Republican Party executive director. Hallowell, who is a regional campaign coordinator for McCain in Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin (the highest presidential campaign position for any Hoosier since L. Keith Bulen), said she is confident that McCain will carry Indiana with the more traditional grassroots efforts. Hallowell and Messer believe that their efforts will essentially “kick start” the McCain campaign.

The Indiana GOP is one of the five top organizations in the nation, she said, maintaining full-time staff. A number of counties also have full-time offices. “We don’t have to have all these new offices,” she said. “We’ve got field ops. We have the governor’s organization. There are the four congressmen and Mayor Ballard.”

**Allen County Republican** Chairman Steve Shine agreed that the GOP infrastructure exists for the McCain campaign to piggyback. “We’ll have 250 precinct people at a meeting tonight,” Shine said Wednesday, with the McCain effort a major priority.”

Hallowell said that Obama is building in place where support doesn’t exist, particularly in Southern Indiana where Democratic sources said there are still many in the party who will have trouble voting for an African-American. Ed Roberts of the Indiana Manufacturers Association told HPI that his polling shows Obama is getting shellacked “in rural Indiana.” Said Hallowell, “He’s spent so much money here in Indiana and he hasn’t moved the needle.”

Messer acknowledged the damaged “Republican brand,” but added that “with all that’s happened” with energy prices, the economy and the Iraq war, “Why isn’t

Obama up by 15 percent?” Messer points to the elections of 1988 and 1976. Both were change elections. “They embraced change in 1976 with Jimmy Carter after Watergate,” he said. In 1988, Michael Dukakis was unable to cash in despite elements seeking change that year. He adds 1960 to the list and notes that without election shenanigans in Texas, Illinois, Missouri and West Virginia, Vice President Nixon would have defeated John F. Kennedy in what was a razor thin election.

**Messer gives a second** history election: despite Gov. Daniels talk of out-performing McCain in Indiana, that’s only happened once in modern times, when Gov. Doc Bowen polled 57 percent in 1976, eclipsing President Ford’s 55 percent.

“It’s hard to reach the finish line if people don’t know who you are,” Messer said just hours after New York Times columnist David Brooks wrote about the same dynamic in his Tuesday column “Where’s the Landslide?” Brooks observes, “If Obama is fully a member of any club - and perhaps he isn’t - it is the club of smart post-boomer meritocrats. We now have a cohort of rising leaders, Obama’s age and younger, who climbed quickly through elite schools and now ascend from job to job. They are conscientious and idealistic while also being coldly clever and self-aware. It’s not clear what the rest of America thinks of them. So cautiously, the country watches. This should be a Democratic wipeout. But voters seem to be slow to trust a sojourner they cannot place.”

“This election will be a referendum on Obama,” Messer predicted, adding, “More campaigns are lost than won.”

As for an Obama-Bayh ticket, this Republican pair was non-plussed. They note that John Edwards did not carry North Carolina in 2004 and Al Gore lost the 2000 election to George W. Bush when he failed to carry his homestate of Tennessee (though most people blame Gore’s defeat on Florida). “Evan Bayh is going to have to defend Barack Obama on issues inconsistent with ways he has presented himself,” Messer said, on issues like partial birth abortion, nuclear power, the District of Columbia handgun ban, and drilling for oil.

**McCain, Messer and** Hallowell are quick to note, is a maverick who bucked President Bush on a number of key issues. As for whether Hoosiers will see McCain much this fall, Messer said that McCain has said, “he’ll be back at least once.” ❖



**Jennifer Hallowell and Luke Messer Tuesday at the Rathskeller. Hallowell is the highest ranking GOP presidential campaign official since L. Keith Bulen. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)**



## IDEA finds high hopes for Obama; JLT brokers deal with UAW, AFSCME

By RYAN NEES

FRENCH LICK - Democrats sounded an optimistic note about the party's ability to turn the state blue this November during the annual retreat at the Indiana Democratic Editorial Association convention this weekend in French Lick. The gathering was perhaps the last major event with which to take the pulse of the party before the fall electoral tests of the campaigns of Jill Long Thompson and Barack Obama. Both are mounting uphill trailblazing challenges in Indiana - Obama to become the first Democrat to receive the state's electoral votes since 1964, Long Thompson to oust a popular, well-financed incumbent.

Enthusiasm for Obama's campaign is pervasive here, even among an establishment cadre that in lockstep supported in the primary his opponent, Hillary Clinton. And Long Thompson, also once the outcast of the insiders gathered here, emerged from the weekend with successfully brokered labor agreements that represent a closing chapter in her efforts to finally unify the party.

For Long Thompson, it was before now nearly inconceivable that she would mount a winning campaign without securing the support of the United Auto Workers' union steeped so heavily in Hoosier Democratic politics. But at French Lick, where Democratic pols Adlai Stevenson and Franklin Roosevelt once lounged in smoke-filled rooms, Long Thompson stayed up until 2 a.m. Saturday with UAW Region Three chief Mo Davidson to hammer out an endorsement agreement.

**The next day**, Long Thompson quipped to several hundred gathered Democrats that she and Davidson were "singing kumbaya." Davidson told HPI that he and Long Thompson were "not as far apart as we thought we were." The union was to formalize an endorsement over conference calls this week, likely opening a spigot of hundreds

of thousands of dollars for the campaign and hundreds of volunteers from the union's 114,000 members in the state.

**But skepticism continues** to trail Long Thompson. When HPI asked one activist previously in party leadership whether Long Thompson could win her campaign against Governor Mitch Daniels, she simply looked down and smiled. Touching upon the touchiest question in French Lick evokes such a reaction: the party's establishment remains enthusiastic about ousting Daniels, but as pessimistic as ever that Long Thompson is the candidate capable of doing it. One former party official told me the campaign slipped away for good in June.

And as Long Thompson took one step toward party unification, her primary opponent, Jim Schellinger, dug in. He made an appearance at IDEA long enough to play a round with the boys club that urged him into the campaign, but skipped town before an appearance with Long Thompson.

But Long Thompson knows that as weeks evaporate, the question of unity is one that becomes increasingly moot. A campaign needs to be run, with or without a party to celebrate it: running mate Dennie Oxley was shuttled from IDEA luncheon to the Tell City Schweitzer Fest; later she traveled the hour and half from French Lick to visit with the same festival-goers for a half hour, only to drive back home to Argos, six hours away, that same night. As Long Thompson left, Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman showed up, wooing the same two or three hundred voters.

**For Long Thompson, there** can be little respite. Back at IDEA, even a unified party would be one still more enthusiastic about the presidential candidacy of Barack Obama than hers.

There, downballot Democrats were effusive about the possibility of an "Obama bounce" that could usher the party's local candidates into office in record numbers. At IDEA, a candidate running for state representative - Pamela Hickman - in a 65% Republican northern Indianapolis district lamented that the House Democratic caucus hadn't prioritized the campaign for funding. The candidate acknowledged the race's demographic difficulties, though adding, in what has become a common refrain, trailing off: "but with Obama ...."

His is something of an unprecedented campaign



Democratic gubernatorial nominee Jill Long Thompson



here. At IDEA, his omnipresent staff announced constituency outreach plans as picayune as crop circles in the shape of the campaign logo.

**Obama's mailed 45,000** Indiana farmers receiving federal subsidies. The campaign had planned a disaster relief tour of Bartholomew, Hancock, Johnson, Marion, Monroe, Morgan, Vermilion, and Vigo counties, and a bio-diesel bus tour beginning at a locally owned bio-diesel plant in Hancock county. It's encouraging farmers to paint their barns as Obama advertisements.

Last month the campaign planned visits to African American churches, held conference calls and "community leader meetings" with black pastors, and staged voter registration during the Black Expo. Now the campaign is set on "significantly [increasing] the number of African Americans registered to vote," an effort encompassing barber shop and beauty salon visits and house parties and meetings for African Americans for Obama groups.

The campaign has recruited "Women for Change" leaders to start local Obama groups, holding one-on-one meetings to reach out to supporters of Sen. Hillary Clinton, defeated by Obama in the spring's contentious primary season. Through Oct. 19 the campaign has planned "Women United for Change" meetings and parties, and will stage women-centric canvasses and phone banks. It has planned a "major" coordinated voter registration drive with Indiana unions on Labor Day, coined "Labor Day of Action." It has weekly veteran-to-veteran calling nights, the political team has formed Latino Outreach Committees in East Chicago, Indianapolis, South Bend, and Fort Wayne, and it has planned Latino events at the state fair and a "Fiesta Statewide Day of Celebration" on Sept. 15.

**There are downsides.** The legislative candidate so optimistic about the Obama bounce characterizes his Indiana operation as insular and exclusive. Quixotic predications of old that Obama's coordinated campaign could deliver places like Hamilton County have given way to backbiting about agreements to circulate literature and volunteer lists.

Data sharing with local Democratic infrastructure has been slow. One county chairwoman asked in the campaign's Constituency Outreach meeting how she could get a list of Obama neighborhood captains - activists already organizing beneath her nose, in her own county, without her knowledge. For local parties, Obama's movement is "sapping volunteers," said one political staffer, and, according to another, hoarding its resources.

"Everyone's on their own," she said. "It's always like this."

At IDEA, the longtime activists that have religiously flocked to this southern Indiana town every year hoping for something different are readjusting their expectations. ❖

## Mitch's Slide Show

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

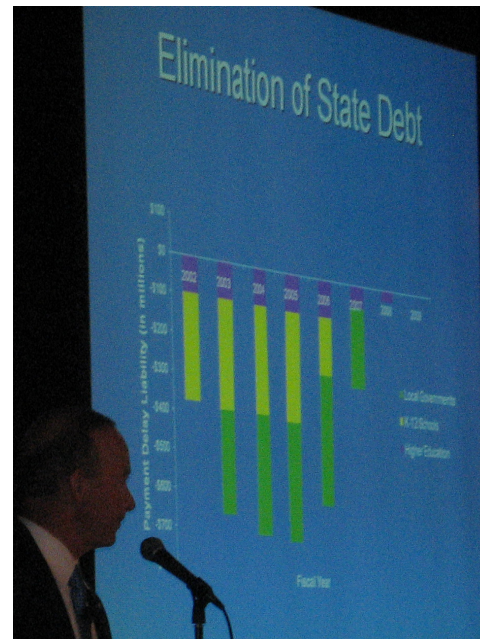
INDIANAPOLIS - Gov. Mitch Daniels did a slide show before Indianapolis Rotarians Tuesday at the Scottish Rite Cathedral. He talked of the "third consecutive balanced budget" and the six years of red ink between 1999 and 2005. Annual expenditure growth declined from 5.88 percent between 1988 and 2004 to 2.83 percent from 2005-08. The debt has been fully repaid to local governments and schools following the smoke and mirrors era of 2002-2007. There is a cash reserve of \$1.3 billion, which is about 10 percent of the state's annual \$13 billion budget.

Indiana is one of 10 states with a AAA bond rating, according to Standard & Poors, recently joining Utah, Min-

nesota, Missouri, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Daniels recalled the phone call from S&P on a recent Friday and said, "I'm really proud of that."

Indiana is one of 15 states with a budget surplus and the only Big 10 state with a surplus. And Daniels had a slide titled "headlines from other states."

Minnesota had an 8.5-cent gas tax hike and cut health and human services \$230 million.



**Gov. Daniels presents one of 12 slides conveying his message of Indiana's economic prowess when many other states have deficits and are cutting services. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)**

Michigan had a \$1.35 billion tax hike; Maryland a \$1.4 billion. Colorado cut its road budget by 20 percent. Alabama has cut K-12 education by \$112 million. Kentucky is releasing prison inmates early and passed a 1.5-cent gas tax hike. Ohio cut \$100 million from education. Hawaii cut K-12 education by 4 percent. Tennessee laid off 29 state troopers. Arizona delayed \$272 million in school payments.

Daniels then renewed his call for permanent property tax caps and automatic future taxpayer refunds





in a public policy rollout before the Indianapolis Downtown Rotary Club. He noted that SJR-1, that would make the property tax caps permanent, passed during the 2008 Indiana General Assembly by a combined 119-27 vote. He said the permanent caps would be "beyond any judge and any future legislature to renege."

He showed another slide that listed all the Central Indiana legislators and how they voted on SJR-1. Only three House Democrats (Teri Austin, Jeb Bardon and John Bartlett) opposed the plan. He urged Hoosiers to "let us vote" on the permanent caps.

Daniels suggested that if state reserves went beyond "10 percent," taxpayers would automatically get a refund. He said this plan would give legislators "incentives to keep spending under control." Daniels told the Rotarians, "It's a matter of principle more than the size of the dollars."

House Minority Leader Brian Bosma was on the same page with the governor. "The over-riding goal of House Republicans for the next session of the General Assembly is to adopt an honestly balanced budget with no gimmicks or tax increases, to enact permanent constitutional tax caps for every Hoosier taxpayer and allow taxpayers to keep as much of their money as possible," Bosma said. "With committed Republican leadership, the state's prior record of deficit spending will remain behind us, and the fiscal integrity of the last three years will be continued." Sources on the governor's staff noted that Daniels has had conversations with Speaker B. Patrick Bauer and Senate President Pro Tempore David Long about his goals for the 2009 legislative session."

Democratic gubernatorial nominee Jill Long Thompson has called for refunding the surplus, but did not propose tying it to surplus levels. Nor would it be auto-

matic. "I am glad Governor Daniels has finally responded to my repeated calls for tax relief for Hoosiers," Thompson said in a statement. "Unfortunately, the governor's rhetoric doesn't match reality. With his plan, Hoosiers won't be getting a rebate this year. The state's surplus was built on the backs of working people, as a direct result of the increased taxes - property, cigarette, sales and local income taxes - that Mitch Daniels pushed through. At this critical time in our state's history, we need leaders who will act immediately to reverse our downward economic slide and give hard-working families a break from the high taxes that this

administration has imposed."

Indiana

Democratic Chairman Dan Parker reacted by saying, "The only person that Mitch Daniels is interested in protecting is himself, and Hoosiers are tired of this governor and his out-of-touch campaign spin. While Mitch Daniels spends millions publicly patting himself on the back, taxpayers won't soon forget that his 'balanced budget' was created on the backs of homeowners across this state."

Those criticisms come as the governor

touts the property tax cuts which he told the Rotarians are averaging 38 percent. Daniels said Hoosiers "get \$1.72 of relief for every dollar of new sales tax." As he did when he announced the plan that resulted in HB1001 last October, Daniels called it the "biggest tax cut in state history." The Terre Haute Tribune-Star reported on Tuesday that Vigo County's property tax rate declined by 39 percent.

In Howard County, a poll conducted on behalf of Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight revealed Daniels' favorable rating at 58 percent, sources tell HPI. Both Vigo and Howard counties have been sort of bellwether counties in recent Indiana elections. ❖



**Gov. Daniels signs the arm cast of a spelling bee champ at the Downtown Indianapolis Rotary on Monday. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)**



**TRENDLINE I:** We're hearing that the Indianapolis Star is working on an expose revealing pensions for veterans of the part-time Indiana General Assembly. Our source says that Senate Republicans have been warned about the coming story. The source said that some long-time members have accrued pensions approaching a quarter million dollars. If that's the case, that could easily change the political dynamic of several Senate and House races, similar to what the healthcare for life stories did to Sens. Larry Borst and Bob Garton, both who lost subsequent re-election bids.



**TRENDLINE II:** Many legislative eyes are peeled on the veepstakes. Evan Bayh has historic coattails. With the exception of 2004 re-election, when President Bush and Gov. Daniels put Hoosiers in a ticket splitting mood, Bayh has pulled in two or three new Democratic seats into the Indiana House. Legislative sources we've talked with believe that an Obama-Bayh ticket could give Democrats a 2 to 3 percent tailwind in several races like HD31, HD63 and HD26.

**TRENDLINE III:** Presidential polls: A new CBS News poll of registered voters is just out tonight and it shows Obama leading McCain by 6 points, the same lead he had a month ago. A TIME poll shows Obama leading McCain 46% to 41% when undecided voters with a slight preference are included. That gap is the same as the presumptive Democratic nominee held in June. The Gallup daily presidential tracking poll shows Obama leading McCain 46%-44%, down from a 47%-43% in the previous installment. Gallup surveyed 2,691 registered voters from August 3-5. The Rasmussen Reports automated daily presidential tracking poll for August 6 shows Obama leading McCain 45%-43%, and 47%-46% when leaners are include.

## 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:** It was another mostly subterrean week for Thompson. At this time last week, we thought the Indianapolis Star's FSSA story had given her a real opening. However, the Star's story was so botched and inaccurate that that opening may have closed. FSSA Commis-

sioner Mitch Roob told HPI that the Star's use of a Marion County welfare recipient - which is one of the counties still in the old system - was essentially an indictment of that old system. "We were able to respond and correct the inaccuracies of that story quickly," said Daniels campaign manager Eric Holcomb. "People understand we had a system that needed fixed and that's what we're about."

A year ago, it was a computer switchover at BMV that had critics blasting the Daniels administration as the controversies in that agency appeared to be never ending. A year later, BMV has become a campaign asset and has received national recognition for service.

Since June 30, Thompson has raised only \$145,000 in the reported \$10,000 increments. We continue to hear anecdotally from Democratic donors who haven't been contacted by the campaign and others who are asking mayors and legislators whether they should donate to Thompson.

We know of a poll conducted for Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight that revealed Daniels has an approval rating in Howard County of 58 percent. Howard County is a bellwether, supporting the last several winning governors while siding with the majority in the HD30 races throughout this decade.

Thompson apparently has forged a deal with the UAW and AFSCME to accept the "92/12" plan if she reinstates collective bargaining should she win. She sat with UAW chief Mo Davidson at the noon Saturday luncheon and when talk turned to unity, the UAW chief became animated in his support for Thompson. Where that leaves the sugar daddy SEIU, which had antied up \$900,000 and had a blank check for Thompson remains to be seen. At this reading, SEIU's expectation that it would be in a prime position to represent state workers if Thompson is elected is no longer a sure thing.

Thompson expects to finalize her agreements with UAW and AFSCME today and Friday.





We are struck by the relative public inactivity of the Thompson campaign. No pressers this week. There was a statement on Wednesday with Thompson praising Obama's energy plan, saying, "I am excited to learn about Senator Obama's "New Energy for America" plan. Like my Green Jobs Initiative, it focuses on creating new jobs, protecting the environment and securing our nation's energy independence. It's exactly the type of forward-thinking leadership that Hoosiers, like all Americans, desperately want." But this is dangerous territory for Thompson, who has called for a gas tax suspension while Obama has repeatedly called it a "gimmick." There's been no public travel schedule.

Thompson campaign spokesman Jeff Harris said Thompson spent much of the week raising money. She attended the Pork Producers breakfast at the Indiana State Fair (with one blog showing her sitting by herself). There will be some minority outreach over the weekend, and a policy rollout next week.

The Daniels campaign says it expects August to be a great month for job announcements. "We had a great July as far as bringing jobs to the state," Holcomb said. "August will be a monster of job announcements."

On the campaign side, Holcomb said "We're accomplishing a lot with our statewide network of volunteers. There is a lot of door-to-door, phone calls, tailgates coming up, motorcycle trips. We can't keep T-shirts in stock." **Status:** Leans Daniels ❖

## Indiana House Horse Race

### Democrats

51

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

HD5 Fry vs. Miller  
 HD17 Demobowski 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:** Borrer, 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. ❖





## Elkhart is a microcosm

By **DAVE KITCHELL**

ELKHART - If Barack Obama and Evan Bayh had met in advance to discuss the optimum place to hold a news conference in Indiana, there might not be a better place to talk about what's going well and what's not going so well in America.

As the two senators meet in Indiana Wednesday amid speculation that Bayh will be Obama's running mate this fall, Elkhart presents a backdrop of times past and present.

The stark present is found in places like Wakarusa.

Open the door of The Dime Store downtown and you can still pick up an ice cold soft drink out of an old Coke cooler, buy vintage sweets and purchase Fannie Mae chocolates. A few blocks down, the sidewalks are not being rolled up, but there is the appearance of it, ironically in the same section of town where a recreational vehicle manufacturer has announced layoffs totaling 1,400 at its three Elkhart County plants.



There is some hope that a portion of the business will remain and not be lost to another manufacturing plant in Oregon. But the blow to what has been a niche market for Elkhart County in the national economy is a mortal one because it also has a ripple effect on local suppliers.

The Elkhart economy is a diverse one that once thrived when the community was the music instrument capital of the United States. Yet with the decline in school music participation, the music instrument industry that became a crescendo for the community has lulled to pianissimo.

On the weekend after Bennigan's announced it was closing its Chicago locations, the Bennigan's franchise here was still going strong, serving up its signature Monte Cristo sandwich at our table, while announcing to its customers that it could not accept some gift certificates because of the recent closings of its franchise cousins.

**Restaurant chains are** being hit hard as the minimum wage and fuel costs rise along with food costs. Cost-challenged consumers spend more time at home and less time traveling, which means more meals are eaten at home instead of a restaurant.

And then there is the obvious attraction of Elkhart County, Amish Acres, which attracts thousands from near and far to its annual craft festival on the first weekend of August. Heat may have held down the Friday crowd, but the Amish seem oblivious to the economic times. Their



Sen. Bayh answers questions at Concord High School in Elkhart. He later took a bus ride with Barack Obama to Portage. (HPI Photo by Ryan Nees)

buggies and baked goods are as much in evidence in Shipshewana and Middlebury as ever, with some families soaking up solar energy for their households, even as the non-Amish population of the country struggles with energy policy and skyrocketing fuel costs.

**In short, Elkhart is a microcosm** of America that is much a patchwork quilt of American generations as the patches on fiberglass quilts that adorn buildings in Napanee.

To some extent, every presidential campaign has to resonate with the American dream. In Elkhart County, there is room to resonate. Incomes have been high in this community that has been in the national shadow of South Bend/Mishawaka. It has been a place where pre-fabricated homes come off an assembly line that would make Henry Ford proud, yet the American dream of owning a home has been dashed for millions in a foreclosure crisis which potentially presents the tip of another economic iceberg for workers here. And the RV industry and its dual problems of a slumping economy and soaring fuel prices are a sign that more Americans are having an American nightmare instead of a dream.

**In nearby Mishawaka,** the latest vehicle pride-point, the Hummer manufactured at AM General, is sliding in sales, even if the box-like vehicles won't slide off roads in winter. Foreign investment is likely to bail out the company, as foreign investors have already rescued Ford and its ownership in Jaguar and Land Rover.

The lesson to be learned from Elkhart County that Obama and Bayh can take with them is that the Amish got it right. If you can do something well and sell it at a reasonable cost, customers will beat a buggy path to your doorstep. ❖

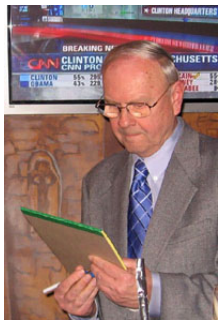
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## Donnelly has robust warchest; Puckett awful

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND - As stressed so often in this column, money isn't everything in a political campaign. But it's an awful lot for Congressman Joe Donnelly. And the money situation is just plain awful for his opponent, Luke Puckett. The latest campaign finance reports for Donnelly, the Democrat seeking a second term in Indiana's 2nd District, and Puckett, the Republican challenger, show these totals of cash on hand on July 1: Donnelly, \$993,045; Puckett, \$171,116.



The contrast would be even more drastic if Puckett had not loaned \$155,000 and contributed another \$500 to his own campaign.

This is a reversal of the situation four years ago. In Donnelly's first bid for Congress, he had to loan money to his own campaign just to get belatedly on TV \_ too little, too late \_ in his '04 loss to Republican Chris Chocola, who then was the incumbent with oodles of money.

Donnelly came back with more adequate funding to defeat Chocola in '06 in a race targeted by both parties. Neither party at the national level is likely to regard the district as a battleground this fall. Democratic strategists, having already helped to steer contributions to Donnelly, will figure he doesn't need more all-out help.

Republican strategists, in the unusual situation of having a lot less funding than Democrats for '08 races, will figure they should spend in other districts where chances of winning are better. With limited resources, they must first seek to protect endangered Republican incumbents in what could be a year for Democratic gains in Congress.

**A look at the total campaign receipts** \_ \$1,580,631 for Donnelly, \$203,850 for Puckett \_ tells a story of how the race is perceived.

Political action committees (PACs), whether tending to support Republican or Democratic candidates, bet on those perceived as likely winners, those expected to be in Congress to hear their pleas in the next session. They're pragmatic. They don't give just because they regard a candidate as a great guy or gal.

Donnelly received over \$950,000 from political action committees (PACs) and other committees not involving political party organizations.

Puckett received only \$1,000, that in a contribution from funds remaining in the Chocola for Congress Commit-

tee. In individual contributions, Donnelly also had a wide margin, \$604,557 to \$47,350.

With all that early money, which is so much more valuable than later funding, Donnelly was able already to spend for future campaign efforts and still have nearly \$1 million on hand.

This doesn't mean that Puckett will or should give up. After all, Donnelly didn't give up back when he was under funded. And two years later, he was elected to Congress. Puckett, of course, wants to win this time, not wait for another shot in 2010. It would be a major upset if he won. But major upsets do happen. In this case, it probably would take a political climate change, perhaps with Barack Obama bombing, plus serious blunders by Donnelly and more adequate funding for Puckett to get his message out to voters.

**Then there's the other possibility** -- Sen. Evan Bayh on the Democratic ticket and Obama running strong in Indiana. That would be a final blow for Puckett.

Funding for Donnelly has come across the board from management as well as labor.

For example, top executives from AM General contributed the \$4,600 maximum for the primary and general elections. In two cases, a spouse also contributed \$4,600. Over \$47,000 was contributed to Donnelly by individuals or families listing AM General titles.

Why? They apparently are pleased with Donnelly's efforts to help them compete for military future Hummer production, and they think he will be there after the election to help again.

The AM General Sales Corporation PAC gave Donnelly \$10,000. So did the United Auto Workers. A bunch of \$10,000 contributions came from union PACs. Donnelly reported receiving \$20,000 from the Iron Workers PAC and \$15,000 from the Firefighters PAC.

Sugar interests want Donnelly to think they're sweet. He received \$9,000 from the American Crystal Sugar Co. PAC and an additional \$7,000 from five other PACs for sugar and sugar beet interests.

He also received a \$5,950 contribution from the National Rifle Association, an organization that has in the past opposed Democratic candidates in Indiana's 2nd District.

**Puckett, wanting to link** Donnelly with House Democratic leaders and liberals, can cite \$4,000 Donnelly received from the Nancy Pelosi for Congress Committee and similar \$4,000 contributions from such House Democrats as Barney Frank and Charlie Rangel.

But Donnelly also received \$10,000 from the Blue Dog PAC. Donnelly is a member of the Blue Dogs, the coalition of moderate and fiscally conservative House Democrats.

Getting money from all sides sure is nice. Not getting funding is awful. ❖



**Maureen Dowd, New York Times:** Not since Iago and Othello obsessed on the comely Cassio, not since Richard of Gloucester killed his two nephews, not since Nixon and Johnson glowered at the glittering J.F.K., has there been such an unseemly outpouring of boy envy. Bill Clinton, Jesse Jackson and John Edwards have all been crazed with envy over the ascendance of the new "It" guy, Barack Obama. Now John McCain is pea-green with envy. That's the only explanation for why a man who prides himself on honor, a man who vowed not to take the low road in the campaign, having been mugged by W. and Rove in South Carolina in 2000, is engaging in a festival of juvenilia. The Arizona senator who built his reputation on being a brave proponent of big solutions is running a schoolyard campaign about tire gauges and Paris Hilton, childishly accusing his opponent of being too serious, too popular and not patriotic enough. Even his own mother, the magical 96-year-old Roberta McCain, let slip that she thought the Paris Hilton-Britney Spears ad was "kinda stupid." Around the McCain campaign, they grouse that Obama "hasn't bled." He hasn't bled literally, in military service, just like W., the last holder of an E-ZPass who sped past McCain. And he hasn't paid his dues in the Senate, since he basically just stopped by for directions to the Oval Office. As a new senator, Obama was not only precocious enough to pounce on turf that McCain had invested years in, such as campaign finance lobbying, ethics reform and earmarks. When Obama did reach across the aisle for a mentor, it was to the staid Richard Lugar of Indiana, not to the salty Republican of choice for Democrats, McCain. ❖

**Matt Tully, Indianapolis Star:** This year's race for governor has turned into a compelling competition between Mitch Daniels . . . and Mitch Daniels. Don't be fooled. The race is not about Jill Long Thompson, the low-key Democratic nominee. Nope. It's all about Mitch. It's about whether Daniels can weather what is shaping up to be a fierce Democratic tide. And it's about whether he can convince a big-enough chunk of weary voters that, on the whole, his rabble-rousing ways have been good for the state. This is essentially what Hoosier voters will be deciding over the next three months: After all the action and a fair share of controversy, after quite a few successes and a few fumbles, do they want Mitch Daniels serving as the life of the party for another four years? Just as last year's mayoral race in Indy was a referendum on Bart Peterson, this year's gubernatorial campaign is a referendum on Mitch Daniels. Thus the TV commercials he has been airing for several months now, the ones he hopes will convince Hoosiers that while things aren't perfect here, they are better than in other states. For those who aren't political junkies, it'd be easy to forget Daniels even has an opponent. Thompson has done few press events, hasn't traveled as much as

Daniels and only recently began airing ads. But, of course, Daniels does have an opponent. Himself. ❖

**Sylvia Smith, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette:** If Evan Bayh is chosen to be Barack Obama's running mate, he may owe it in part to another senator from Indiana. And I don't mean Dick Lugar. A successful Obama-Bayh ticket would mean Indiana's governor would appoint someone to serve the remaining two years of Bayh's Senate term. If GOP Mitch Daniels is re-elected, he'd replace Bayh with a Republican. In a closely divided Senate, the party of the vacancy-filling decision maker really matters. Readers of the political tea leaves anticipate that Democrats will pick up several Senate seats in November. But the indictment and likely defeat of Alaska's Indianapolis-born Republican Sen. Ted Stevens gives the Democrats more cushion. An untainted Stevens probably would have won re-election. But Stevens has been accused of lying on his financial disclosure statements, a felony. Prosecutors say Stevens didn't report that he took freebies from an oil pipeline and a construction company for upgrades to his home in Alaska. (Stevens says he didn't neglect to report \$250,000 worth of "things of value.") It's safe to assume Stevens is toast. Almost certainly he will lose Alaska's GOP primary later this month. Even if he worms through that, the Democratic candidate looks strong and will most likely win irrespective of whom the Republicans nominate. So that's one formerly safe Republican seat the Democrats are likely to claim in November. If nothing else, a Democratic victory in Alaska would cancel out the loss of Bayh's seat (if he's picked as a running mate, if the Democratic ticket wins, and if Indiana's governorship remains Republican). ❖

**Gary Gerard, Warsaw Times-Union:** It's official. I am a Libertarian. I've been toying with labeling myself that way for quite a while now. I would say things like, "I might be a Libertarian" or "I think I could be a Libertarian." But it's time. I can't, in good conscience, call myself a conservative. Besides, there is no such thing as a conservative in Washington anymore. I've been off a couple weeks and during that time I tried - tried - to avoid lots of news. It's a vacation. But try as I might, I always found myself scanning the headlines, flipping on CNN for a while or surfing up news on the Web. And what I've been hearing from John McCain and Barack Obama and the Congress these days is enough to drive a guy like me to that razor-thin line between sanity and psychosis. Honestly, I am so sick and tired of hearing politicians - in either party - tell me that they are going to employ the government to make my life better, I could literally don a clown suit and head for the nearest tower with an AK-47. How can they not get it? ❖





## **Bayh's hometown pumped by veepstakes**

SHIRKIEVILLE - Speculation that Indiana Sen. Evan Bayh could be Illinois Sen. Barack Obama's pick as his vice presidential running mate has people talking in Bayh's hometown of Shirkieville in rural northwest

Vigo County (Terre Haute Tribune-Star). "It's huge around here," said Larry Davison, owner of Davison Service and Equipment, one of very few businesses in the tiny town. Davison believes Bayh's presence on the ticket would help Obama and would be a great thing "not just for Shirkieville, but the whole state of Indiana," he said. Shirkieville has a population of 50 or less these days, Davison said, adding that the town on Indiana 150 about 10 miles north of West Terre Haute was once larger. Davison has lived in the area most of his life and has met Bayh, his wife Susan and his father, former Sen. Birch Bayh, he said. "Everybody's pretty sure that he's going to get it," said Carolyn Powers, co-owner of the Midway Bar and Grill in the heart of Shirkieville. "It would put the Midway on the map, wouldn't it?" she said with a laugh. Although Evan Bayh is a native of Shirkieville, he only lived in the small town for a couple of years, local residents say. His father moved away to pursue a law degree when Evan was very young, said Sue Secondino, 70, who lives in the former Bayh family home and knew several generations of the Bayh family, she said. "His [family] background to us is just impeccable," Secondino said of Bayh. "We are wholeheartedly for Evan and any endeavors that he might pursue," she said. The Bayh family bought the home where Secondino lives in 1952,



she said. She and her husband, Pete, bought the home along with farmland from Birch and Marvella Bayh in 1957, she added. "We keep in touch," Secondino said of her relations with the Bayh family. However, she and her husband like to keep the relationship quiet. "We're not limelighters," she said.

## **Retired General endorses Obama**

TERRE HAUTE - ohn A. Kesler thinks Sen. Barack Obama is not a politician, which is one of the reasons he wants Obama to be the next president of the United States. "I like the things Obama has been saying and what he considers appropriate to treat veterans in the future," he said. Kesler, an 85-year-old World War II Army veteran, was one of at least 50 people who turned out Tuesday in Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 917 to hear retired Gen. George Buskirk, a former Indiana National Guard adjutant general, speak about Obama's veterans policies in a veterans' issues forum. One of the topics touched on was the fact that just because someone fought in a war doesn't mean that person is a good leader, referring to Sen. John McCain, who was a fighter pilot.

## **Rokita suspends mortgage brokers**

INDIANAPOLIS - Indiana Secretary of State Todd Rokita has revoked the license of about 360 loan brokers who failed to meet new requirements, including paying a fee and passing an exam (Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). But confusion over the list maintained on the secretary of state's Web site of the brokers who are not in compliance has some local brokers crying foul. Since then, 63 loan brokers have taken the test and achieved full compliance with the law, while 69 others are pending final approval. Also, 143 brokers surrendered their licenses.

## **Treasurer drops remodeling plans**

EVANSVILLE - Bowing to the Vanderburgh County Council's 2009 budget concerns, Treasurer Z Tuley has withdrawn her request for \$100,000 to renovate her department's office space (Evansville Courier & Press). But the County Council did give Tuley \$5,000 Wednesday to buy new chairs. Tuley, who will leave office next year, says the withdrawal of her \$100,000 request doesn't mean the employee safety and customer convenience measures she had asked for aren't needed. "The needs are not going to go away," she warned. "At least I put it out there and made (council members) aware of it again. When they get a plan together (for Civic Center renovation), I believe they'll address it then."

## **Lake County judges in budget hot water**

CROWN POINT - The Lake County Council is ready to put several county judges on notice. Unhappy with initial 2009 budget proposals from three of the four County Division courtrooms, council members said Wednesday they need to call the judges on the carpet (Post-Tribune). "They're going to need to be corralled together for a meeting," said Councilman Tom O'Donnell, D-Dyer.

## **Hobart considers \$10 garbage fee**

HOBART - The City Council is poised to impose a \$10-a-month garbage collection fee to help fund the city's 2009 budget (Post-Tribune). All seven council members endorsed the garbage pickup fee on Wednesday during an Ordinance Committee meeting, shortly before passing the mayor's budget proposal on a preliminary vote. Mayor Brian Snedecor presented a \$27.7 million budget, \$900,000 less than this year.