



Health repeal battle begins

Democrats begin push back as House GOP make symbolic vote

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - With U.S. House Republicans - including the entire Indiana Republican delegation - voting to repeal the Affordable Care Act, an epic two-year battle has been joined that ultimately will be decided between President Obama and his GOP challenger in November 2012.

Shortly after the 245-189 repeal vote passed on Wednesday, U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon, a Newburgh heart surgeon, explained, "ObamaCare is a budget busting bill which does not address the main issue in health care - the cost. As a physician for 15 years, I am optimistic that we can work to implement real reforms that are market based solutions and not government takeovers."

Meanwhile, Indiana Democrats began to push back. Obama's Organizing For America (OFA) Indiana chapter began phone banks on Tuesday night, calling voters in the six Republican Congressional Districts. "We are remind-



U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon was elected to Congress as a heart surgeon and a Republican who vowed to take on the Obama health reforms. (Evansville Courier & Press Photo)

ing people of what the Affordable Care Act has done and what it will continue to do," said John Spears, who heads the Indiana chapter. "OFA will mobilize their volunteers tonight."

OFA had 4,000 volunteers press for the law in 2009 and 2010, making 70,000 phone calls and 15,000 health care pledges from Hoosiers.

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Reaffirm 1st Amendment

By **DAVID McINTOSH**

WASHINGTON - The tragic shooting in Tucson, Arizona continues to have a huge impact on Americans and our understanding of how our government works.



We all watched with horror the news reports of the near fatal shooting Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., which left six others dead and 13 injured.

The attack was not only a senseless and unspeakable act of violence, it was also an attack on something essential about our country - the rights we all have to gather together and speak to our



"Tonight's vote by the Republicans to move our country backwards and strip Americans of new health care rights and benefits was political theater."

- U.S. Andre Carson



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elected representatives. As President Obama pointed out in his compassionate speech after the shooting, the victims were exercising their First Amendment right to assembly and free speech.

Unfortunately, many commentators, pundits and public officials sought to turn the coverage of the tragedy into an opportunity to call for a reduction of those same First Amendment rights, even pointing to the heated debate in the last election as somehow being beyond protection. Most notable among the individuals citing a need to limit the speech opposing many current legislative policies is the law enforcement official responsible for investigating this heartbreaking shooting; Pima County Sheriff Clarence Dupnik, a Democrat.

During an interview with Megyn Kelly on Fox News, Dupnik stated: "There's no doubt in my mind that when a number of people, night and day, try to inflame the public, there's going to be some consequences from doing that." He went on to say: "We see one party attempting to block the attempts of another party to make this

a better country." You can watch the video of Sheriff Dupnik on YouTube.

It is neither appropriate nor prudent for the chief law enforcement officer in this shooting to be arguing that somehow limiting the free speech of concerned citizens – in this case his political opponents – would somehow be justified. Sherriff Dupnik, by his own admission, was unable to provide any evidence or proof that this shooting was inspired by vitriol or partisan rancor.

The sherriff's surprising call for limits on political rhetoric began to make sense in the days that followed the shooting. News reports began to reveal that perhaps Sheriff Dupnik had another motive to cast the blame for this shooting on conservative pundits, commentators, and activists. According to an article in The New York Times, the Sheriff's Department had visited suspect Jared Loughner's residence on several occasions, but he was never arrested or charged with any crime. Perhaps he realized that as the story unraveled these oversights would be looked at negatively. Sadly, in typical political



fashion, he sought to deflect blame and responsibility onto individuals thousands of miles away. Sherriff Dupnik may have political motivations as well. He is a long-time liberal activist, running for office as a Democrat. Even during his Fox News interview Sherriff Dupnik could not help himself but interject partisanship into a national tragedy by citing one party [Republicans] trying to oppose the efforts of another party [Democrats] to make this country great.

We cannot allow the First Amendment to be added to the list of victims from this tragedy. It is important that we never attempt to limit the public comments of liberals or conservatives by blaming them for this loss of life. America faces a host of challenges both from within and from outside our borders and we will not solve our problems by trying to achieve political gain from horrendous tragedies. Conservative commentators, during the debates over the bailouts, the stimulus and ObamaCare, voiced serious and valid concerns over those pieces of legislation. Some may not agree with the position of conservatives in these debates, but they should, as the English writer Evelyn Beatrice Hall said, "Defend to the death their right to say it." That is, after all, what makes America great; that we are able to voice our differences and protest our public officials if we disagree with their policies. If we lose that ability, we lose what makes us uniquely American, and we lose those rights promised to us in our Constitution.

The ability to freely express one's self and exercise public protest is essential in political discussions, and at the core of our political system. If not for the right of each individual to be unfettered in his or her ability to express political opinions, there is a segment of society which will have oppressive control over another. Every day we depend upon our rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, whether it takes form in the newspapers we read, the radio shows we listen to, or the conversations we have. Our founders knew how dangerous it would be to limit the speech of any citizen. George Washington said: "If the freedom of speech is taken away then dumb and silent we may be led like sheep to slaughter." The unencumbered ability to express our political positions is the only way to achieve truth and prevent tyranny. It becomes very easy, in

the absence of free speech, to limit the influence and ideas of political opponents such as we experienced with the Alien and Sedition Act.

In the wake of this tragedy, we should reaffirm the ability of any citizen to voice their concerns and opinions, regardless of what they are or how civil or vitriolic we deem them to be. If civility becomes the standard by which we are able to freely express ourselves, there will always be some segment in the political discussion that finds offense with an opinion, statement, etc. What is offensive to some may not be offensive to others, and what is civil to some may be vitriolic to others. For instance, many liberal commentators frequently used the term "Tea-baggers" to refer to Tea Party activists. While these commentators saw no problem with using that term they see a problem with public comments by conservative activists. The civility standard can be used as a political tool that will cause individuals to determine what is acceptable speech based on what they believe to be acceptable political positions. Those political positions and comments they disagree with, they will determine to be uncivil.

During his memorial speech in Arizona, President Obama noted that Congresswoman Giffords and those attending her "Congress on the Corner" event were all exercising their right to free speech and free assembly. They gathered to discuss political issues, voice their concerns, and question Congresswoman Giffords. In addition to the six lives lost in Arizona and 14 others changed forever, we cannot add the First Amendment to that roll. Without question, the massacre in Tucson was a human tragedy; a national travesty. If we limit any political comments because of this tragedy it will be a miscarriage of justice. We should honor and respect the victims in Arizona by continuing to ensure future generations of Americans have the unfettered right to speak out -- even when we disagree with them -- and to meet with their elected representatives to voice their concerns and opinions. ❖

McIntosh is a former Congressman from Indiana, a co-founder of the Federalist Society and frequent Howey Politics Indiana columnist.

Repeal, from page 1

"That's why our volunteers are so engaged," Spears said of phone banks that took place in Michigan City, South Bend, Indianapolis, Evansville and Bloomington.

House passage of what is called "Repealing the Job-Killing Health Care Law Act" has been a virtual certainty after Republicans retook the House in a 60-seat tsunami last Nov. 2. Democrats believe it has no chance to pass in the Senate and certainly would face a veto from President

Obama. "I'm willing and eager to work with both Democrats and Republicans to improve the Affordable Care Act, but we can't go backward," Obama said in a statement this week.

But U.S. Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., said it was unfair to call it partisan gamesmanship. He told HPI at the Indiana Statehouse on Tuesday, "I don't believe it's a political stunt. I believe it's a promised kept. The House Republicans said if we were awarded the opportunity to lead the Congress, we would repeal Obamacare and we are keeping our promise to the American people."



Indiana Democratic Chairman Dan Parker disagrees.

"This last election was not about health care or health care repeal," Parker said during a Tuesday conference call with Spears. "Our election in 2010 was about the economy. Close to two thirds (of the voters polled) identified the economy as number one issue, and less than 20 percent identified health care."

Parker added that it was "disturbing" that freshman Republicans Larry Bucshon, Todd Young and Todd Rokita, all Indiana Republicans, signed up for "their taxpayer-funded health care in Congress" on their first days in Washington. "It's about playing politics," Parker said. "We need to move our economy forward and that includes the ability to provide health care to employees. This act will provide tax credits to 85,000 small business owners."

U.S. Rep. Andre Carson, D-Indianapolis, released a study showing that as many as 292,000 people with preexisting conditions in the 7th CD could be denied coverage. He also said it would "rescind consumer protections for 344,000 people."

"The benefits of health care reform are real, and they are happening right now," said Carson. "Children with preexisting conditions will continue to get coverage and young people can stay on their parents' insurance plans until they are 26 because of the law. Our seniors are also seeing the support they need in ensuring that they are not paying higher drug prices."

The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that between 50 million and 129 million Americans have some type of preexisting condition and would be protected by the Affordable Care Act when it takes full effect in 2014. Those numbers represent between 19 percent and 50 percent of Americans younger than 65.

Polling backs repeal

Polling shows that a majority back the Republican repeal. The Real Clear Politics composite shows 40.8 percent favor the ACA and 49.8 percent want the repeal. It ranges from a Jan. 15-16 Rasmussen Reports poll that

showed 55 percent favor repeal and 40 percent want the ACA, to an Associated Press/Gfk Poll on Jan. 5-10 showing 40 percent support the reforms and 41 percent support repeal.

On Wednesday, The Washington Post reported on a WP/ABC News Poll: Republican claims that the new health care law will hurt the country's fragile economic recovery and inflate the deficit resonate with the public, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll. But few opponents of the law advocate an immediate, wholesale repeal of the legislation. Overall, Americans' views of the sweeping health care overhaul, again under debate on Capitol Hill, remain firmly entrenched, with little change in stiff partisanship on the issue. Some 45 percent of those polled support the law, and 50 percent oppose it, numbers that exactly match their averages in Post-ABC polls going back to August 2009.

There is a judicial challenge, with six additional states joining the group of 20 plaintiff states -- including Indiana -- that have brought a legal challenge to the new federal health care law. Attorney General Greg Zoeller, who joined the lawsuit on behalf of Indiana in May, explained, "Now that the number of plaintiff states has expanded from 20 to 26, it underscores that this lawsuit is widely

understood to have merit. After the health care law was ruled unconstitutional in a separate lawsuit in Virginia that raised many of the same arguments, no one now can claim that this legal challenge is a frivolous lawsuit. Regardless of the eventual ruling by the federal court in our case, it is important that the states have an opportunity as sovereign entities to challenge the constitutionality of the federal government's claims of authority. Under our federalist system, this respectful legal challenge is a proper check on the role of the federal government."

U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita, R-Ind., observed, "Twenty-six states have now challenged this health care law's Constitutionality. It just doesn't work for the American people. Hoosier families dislike a law that restricts free markets and squashes consumer choice. America doesn't just need health care reform - it needs good health care reform. That means we need a long, honest debate about what will work best. When you are tinkering with one-fifth of the U.S. economy, thoughtful and careful consideration is the only



Rep. Pence meets with Tea Party activists during his October barnstorming tour of Indiana. (Pence Photo)



option. Both Democrats and Republicans take our health care seriously but there's one major difference. Democrats believe government knows best and Republicans believe the people know best. I came to Washington represent the people of Indiana and I intend to do so by voting to repeal this health care law today."

Rokita told HPI Wednesday, "Health care is not a right. Bad things happen to good people all the time. We have to be very careful when we want the federal government to come in and solve everything. These feel good ideas will bankrupt us and leave our kids to pay the bill."

Pence and Congressional Republicans have also vowed to pick away at funding and regulatory aspects of the ACA over the next two years.

Pence promises repeal, replace

Pence challenged assertions that the repeal will be dead on arrival in the U.S. Senate, where Democrats have a 53 seats (including two independents). U.S. Sens. Byron Dorgan and Joe Lieberman announced earlier this week they will not seek reelection. Pence said on Tuesday, "In terms of the fate of that bill ... it's a very dynamic environment. I know there's quite a few members of the majority party in the Senate that are up for reelection in less than two years and I know the polls tend to ebb and flow depending on who you ask, but I have to tell you across Indiana and a little bit around the country, most Americans I talk to know that we can do better."

Pence added that most Americans "would like to start over on health care reform that lowers the cost of health insurance without growing the size of government. I think with the action that Congress will take this week, a repeal bill that is sent to the Senate, I think we have a very dynamic opportunity to move repeal and hopefully immediately start over with new reforms."

So, there will be a specific Republican alternative, point-by-point reform package?

"Yes," Pence responded. "We'll pass a resolution this week that will be a broad outline of what that looks like. Speaker Boehner has charged all the relevant committees on reforms that would encompass all of the Republican alternatives in health care reform. We're going to keep coming and coming and coming. We'll use the power of the purse, we'll use every means at our disposal in the House of Representatives to give the American people a fresh opportunity on health reform."

Democrats counter with a Congressional Budget Office report that said repeal would add \$230 billion to the deficit in the coming decade.

NYT vs. WSJ

The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal duked it out this week.

The New York Times reported on Tuesday: Will the health care law, approved last year by Democrats with no Republican support, increase or reduce future federal deficits? Will the law lead to the elimination of jobs by overburdened employers as Republicans assert, or will it create jobs as Democrats maintain? Will the law raise or lower the cost of medical care for individuals and families, employers, and state and federal governments? And, will the law achieve President Obama's goal of providing coverage to more than 30 million uninsured Americans? Given the complexity of the issues, none of these questions can yet be answered definitively. The assertions from the two sides highlight their radically different views about the proper role of government and market forces in the health care system. It is a policy fight that is likely to rage for the next two years in Congress and to figure prominently in the 2012 presidential campaign.

The Times quoted U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wisc., who chairs the House Budget Committee, as saying the ACA will "accelerate our country's path toward bankruptcy." The White House and Congressional Democrats insist the law will help create 300,000 jobs by slowing the growth of health care, which will allow employers to hire more people.

The Wall Street Journal assailed the Congressional Budget Office: The CBO estimate has become the central defense by ACA advocates fighting the upcoming repeal vote in the House. They might want to re-think their strategy. A close examination of CBO's work and other evidence undercuts this budget-busting argument about repeal and leads to the exact opposite conclusion, which is that repeal is the logical first step toward restoring fiscal sanity. Federal finances are buckling under the weight of unaffordable entitlement programs. So what is the primary aim of the ACA? Open-ended entitlement expansion: to more people at greater expense than anytime since the 1960's. If CBO is right, 32 million people will be added to the health entitlement rolls, at a cost of \$938 billion through 2019, and growing faster than the economy or revenues thereafter. How, then, does the ACA magically convert \$1 trillion in new spending into painless deficit reduction? It's all about budget gimmicks, deceptive accounting, and implausible assumptions used to create the false impression of fiscal discipline.

The WSJ adds: The deepest spending cuts in the ACA are in Medicare. Let us be very clear: Medicare needs





real reform that generates genuine budget savings. Sadly, the ACA's cuts are illusory. Medicare's payments to health care providers would fall below those of Medicaid. The network of hospitals and physicians willing to care for Medicaid patients is notoriously constrained. About 15 percent of the nation's hospitals would have to stop seeing Medicare patients in just a few years to stem their losses. The idea that Medicare could pay less than Medicaid is such sheer folly that Congress will rapidly reverse course. Even if CBO's analysis were flawless, the authors of the ACA guaranteed a misleading bottom line. Their legislative prescriptions were written to create deficit reduction only on paper -- not in reality.

The WSJ analysis mirrors stinging criticism from Gov. Mitch Daniels, who has termed the White House fiscal impact of the ACA as "knowingly fraudulent."

Politics of health care

While there is a philosophical difference on health reforms, Republicans clearly see the kind of political advantage that allowed them to retake the U.S. and Indiana Houses, capturing 12 legislative and two Congressional seats on Nov. 2.

U.S. Rep. Marlin Stutzman, R-Ind., sent this e-mail out to supporters this week, saying, "We expect to pass the Obamacare repeal in the House, but we also know we face a serious challenge in the Senate. Under Harry Reid's leadership in the Senate, we can anticipate passing the Obamacare repeal to be one of the most difficult tasks of this new session. However, you can help us send a message to Harry Reid and President Obama to repeal this bill by making an immediate donation of \$25, \$50, \$100, \$250, or more."

HPI asked Rokita, are there any parts of the ACA you would keep, like protecting those with preexisting conditions?

Rokita acknowledged there are "some parts" of the ACA, "I agree with. I think preexisting conditions should be a goal" but would seek to achieve that through health savings accounts. He said that approach by the Daniels administration cut state employee costs "by 25 percent." The other part of ACA he likes is moving to electronic records. "That will allow more people to be covered. As (Indiana) secretary of state, we imaged 6 million documents. You can work around some things and get a very secure, very electronic system."

Rokita wants a repeal and replace strategy. "Health savings accounts are a big part of my plan," he said. "Buying insurance across state lines and having the insurance follow the person and not the employer is another. That would also help with the preexisting conditions."

As for the 87-member freshman class, Rokita said,

"You're probably talking to someone who knows that class best. I interviewed all 86 of them for the steering committee. Let me put it this way: we're solid there." He also noted this change in the dynamic: "This time both sides are totally engaged."

Daniels and Pence are both considering presidential bids.

Pence promises a point-by-point repeal and replace scenario that will center on more insurance competition, preventative care, and consumer choice. On the House floor Wednesday, Pence said, "Now I know the other side and some liberals in the media don't like us using that term-government takeover of health care, but let me break it down for you: When you mandate that every American purchase health insurance whether they want it or need it or not, you mandate that every business provide health insurance, you send people to a government-run exchange, you pay for it with hundreds of billions of dollars in higher taxes and mandates and you throw in public funding of abortion against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the American people, that's a government takeover of health care and the American people know it."

Daniels has taken a more philosophical approach. "The government is, essentially, the last monopoly," he told the New York Times earlier this month. "We Americans distrust bigness - big business, big labor, big government - and for good reason. We don't like monopolies. We've gotten rid of most of them - think telecom, for instance - because monopolies tend to abuse their position. They overcharge and underserve their customers. The government is unavoidably a monopoly in certain ways, but that can certainly lead to all those tendencies. Here's a formula for spending money badly: You take a monopoly; it has no competition. In most of life, the world measures you. Your sales went up or down, your market share went up or down, your stock price maybe went up a bit. In government, I always say you have to transplant or implant accountability, 'cause it doesn't come naturally."

As for his approach on health care, Daniels explained, "Frankly, the answer, to me, is a means-tested basis that's adjusted for people's health status. With the money we spend on Medicare, you could give people enough money to purchase a very good insurance program suited to them. That's what we ought to do. Guess what? People start acting like consumers when they start thinking of it as their money."

With Pence and Daniels preparing possible challenges to President Obama, this bitter policy and political battle will play a major role on the Indiana political scene.





Pence says he hasn't determined next move; meets with Daniels

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - Oh, to be the proverbial fly on the wall in the governor's Statehouse office Tuesday morning when U.S. Rep. Mike Pence called on Mitch Daniels.

This was a meeting of a governor and one who might be and two potential presidents. Pence didn't reveal the conversation between them as he made the rounds, addressing both the Indiana House and Senate, calling for a "new federalism" while insisting that it was the states who created the federal government and not the other way around.

Pence told HPI he has not made a decision on whether he will run for governor or make a White House bid. At a reception for Indiana Republican Chairman Eric Holcomb Tuesday night, the buzz was all about Pence and Daniels.

There is a new twist for Pence: forming a presidential exploratory committee and spending the next three months, when he is officially supposed to "stifle" his gubernatorial ambitions, making the rounds and raising money. That would give him more time to weigh a presidential bid and he could always come back and seek the governorship if his campaign doesn't take off. Or he could refile for Congress by the Feb. 20 filing deadline, or even run for the U.S. Senate.

Pence clearly has an open road to the GOP gubernatorial nomination, but is obviously gaming out the presidential scenarios. Many believe he will ultimately run for governor but he can't resist contemplating the White House.

As for the Democrats, some see U.S. Rep. Joe Donnelly's creation of Hoosiers First PAC as part of a potential gubernatorial bid. "I believe our country is strongest when working- and middle-class families are secure economically and convinced that the American Dream is alive and within reach of their children," said Donnelly. "I established Hoosiers First PAC to support candidates who share this belief and will fight on behalf of those families."

As for Gov. Daniels, the school of thought at

headquarters is that a presidential bid is likely, but no one really knows and the circle that does know is tiny. Anything beyond Daniels coming appearances before CPAC on Feb. 11 and the Gridiron in March is pure, utter and unsubstantiated speculation.

Here's the interview that HPI, WIBC's Eric Berman, Times of Northwest Indiana's Dan Carden, and The Evansville Courier & Press's Eric Bradner conducted with Pence outside the Indiana Senate on Tuesday.

QUESTION: Have you decided on your political future?

PENCE: We're nearing the end of the process which began for our little family right after the election and we just believe we'll come to some decision about our general direction by the end of January and we'll announce that to our constituents and the public at large. For us, obviously my first job right now is to do our job in Washington, D.C., and we have been focused on that. We



U.S. Rep. Mike Pence addresses the Indiana Senate on Tuesday where he called for a "new federalism." (HPI Photo by Tim Grimes)

had a town hall meeting in New Castle and we're going to continue to do our work. I would say our options we're considering and we're reflecting on are to either continue to serve in Washington in some capacity, to come home to Indiana to seek higher office or to seek higher office on the national level. But I would say those are the three opportunities.



QUESTION:

Have you made the decision?

PENCE: No, we haven't. We're nearing the end of a process. It's been very humbling to be mentioned for higher office here in Indiana and around the country for the family to take time to ask the question of what's right for our family at this time in our lives and also where are we needed most? I aspire to what we call 'servant leadership.' That's the question. Not what they want to do, it's where they are needed most. We're looking at this decision through that template: what's best for our family and through the servant template. We'll arrive at a decision, I'm confident, before the end of January on that basis.

QUESTION: How will you decide where you're needed most?

PENCE: That's a really good question. For me it comes down to circumstances that have developed around you as well as the counsel of people you respect. We've spent the last several months meeting with people from around Indiana and around the country. Men and women we respect, seeking their counsel on where we can best contribute in the years ahead. Taking that counsel, looking at the circumstances that have developed around each opportunity is how we'll arrive at that decision for our family.

QUESTION: Have you had any conversations with Gov. Daniels?

PENCE: The governor and I met this morning here at the Statehouse. I just cherish my relationship with Mitch Daniels. I'm on the record today that he's the best governor in America. I believe it. I count him as a friend, I count Hoosiers fortunate that he's our governor and I understand the interest being shown in his future around the country.

QUESTION: Would it be unlikely for both of you to seek the presidency simultaneously?

PENCE: I'd like to believe it will be true for him and true for me. That's where we're going. I would fully expect that whatever he chooses to do, whatever we choose



Gov. Mitch Daniels spoke at a forum on township government reform at the Indiana History Center on Wednesday. Daniels met with Rep. Pence in his office on Tuesday. (HPI Photo by Tim Grimes)

to do, our relationship and respect for each other will be undiminished.

QUESTION: Is the failings of the Obama administration an easier target to go after?

PENCE: I'll leave that to others. I do think Indiana's been very fortunate to have the leadership of Gov. Mitch Daniels and the support he's had in Indiana has been strong. There's no doubt he would be big shoes to fill.

QUESTION: When did you learn about the support from your colleagues about a presidential run?

PENCE: We learned that yesterday. Ralph Banko is one of the economists we consulted with when I was preparing a speech on economic growth back in November in Michigan and Jim Ryun (former Republican U.S. Representative from Kansas) is a colleague I count as a personal friend. To see encouragement from those men - the first I became aware of this Internet initiative was yesterday morning. Obviously we're trying to discern where we're called. I personally believe that a person should follow their heart and a person should follow their calling in life. We'll continue to ponder all of these efforts across Indiana and across the country as we make these decisions in the next couple of weeks. It's very humbling to have people express support for you to be a candidate for the highest office in the land. We'll ponder all these things in our hearts. ❖



Panel takes aim at township government

By **SUZANNAH COUCH**
and **MIKE ROBERTSON**

INDIANAPOLIS - Gov. Mitch Daniels pressed his case for township reform on Wednesday night, but noted that the forum on which he spoke was "upside down."

Speaking at the Policy Over Politics: A Forum on Township Reform at the Indiana History Center, the governor noted, "Politics has trumped policy for a long, long time on this subject. And if we don't go about this in a very effective way it will happen again."

The dean of the IU School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI William Blomquist traced the idea of township government back to the times of Jacksonian democracy in the 1830s. Government positions should be elected by voters for a short-term, and that each position be eligible for reelection. Government authority is kept at a local level with this ideology.

Blomquist said the structure of Indiana government and local government reflects this idea. He said local government was created to perform state functions and to serve as default providers of local government services.

Indiana law states township boards shall approve their operating budgets on the last Tuesday of August each year. Blomquist said Indiana grants little autonomy to local governments.

"Clearly a state government that is willing to tell its township board what day of the year they must meet and pass their budgets, or to merge and abolish local government units without the consent, or even over the objections of their residents, is not a state that exhibits tradition of respect for local autonomy," Blomquist said.

Tim Swarens, editorial page editor for The Indianapolis Star, spoke about the different arguments people use in favor of township governments.

Swarens said the arguments in favor of township government are many, including that is closest to the people it serves. Trustees manage poor relief and they know best who deserves it. He said elected township positions

are often seen as a way to groom future political leaders.

Swarens said many people do not know the name of their township trustees or the members of their township advisory board. He said that 30 states are without township governments and that they still have strong democracies.

A coalition of private charities that help impoverished Hoosiers argues that if poor relief is taken out of township government, they believe delivery of services will improve. According to an Indianapolis Star analysis, township revenues have dramatically increased during the recession, yet at the same time less people are receiving assistance.

A member of the 2007 Indiana Commission on Local Government, Louis Mahern, said that if the Legislature is unable to carry out the local government reform, the tax caps will result in local budget cuts. "They're sacrificing an awful lot of public services for a century and a half ago idea," said Mahern, a former state senator and Indianapolis mayoral nominee.

Retired president, chief executive and member of the board of directors of Lumina Foundation for Education Martha Lamkin said the smallest township has 23 people in it, and 22 percent have fewer than 1,000 people.

"The General Assembly should transfer all present responsibilities of townships to the county government. It's well past time for Indiana citizens to have a poor relief system that has 21st Century standards," Lamkin said.

Steve Campbell, former Indianapolis deputy mayor under Bart Peterson, said that the reform is not personal. He said he has friends who are in local government, and that it is not about the people but the system.

He said the local government reform does not get as much attention as other issues such as stadiums or parking meters. "We have to . . . connect these issues to pocket book issues that really drive voters and that really make legislators stand up and pay attention," Campbell said.

Mark Miles, President and CEO with the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, advised the audience to call their legislators and to get involved with the reform.

"Our job, we think, is to create a lot more heat based on the light that has been shined," Miles said. ❖



Louis Mahern says the Constitutional Tax Caps will starve local governments if they don't consolidate.
(HPI Photo by Tim Grimes)



Stats for Indiana, a reefer state

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - Driving west on U.S. 12 near Niles last summer, one of those highway beautification signs caught my eye. This particular mile of highway was sponsored by the Michigan Medical Marijuana Association.

Attitudes are changing about marijuana. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia have either decriminalized its use, allow grow operations for personal use, or allow for medical use. It's been decriminalized in Germany, Belgium, Great Britain, and Canada.



Lately, the once almost taboo topic has entered the political mainstream here in the United States. U.S. Rep. Ron Paul told Fox News that enforcing marijuana re-

strictions is a "useless battle." Half-term Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin called it a "minimal problem" adding, "If somebody's gonna smoke a joint in their house and not do anybody any harm, then perhaps there are other things our cops should be looking at."

On the Dec. 16 edition of his "700 Club" show on the Christian Broadcasting Network, Rev. Pat Robertson said, "We're locking up people that take a couple of puffs of marijuana and the next thing they know they've got 10 years. I just believe that criminalizing marijuana, criminalizing the possession of a few ounces of pot and that kind of thing, it's costing us a fortune and it's ruining (the future of) young people."

Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Pat Nolan recently wrote, "We spent \$68 billion in 2010 on corrections - 300 percent more than 25 years ago. The prison population is growing 13 times faster than the general population. We can no longer afford business as usual with prisons. The criminal justice system is broken, and conservatives must lead the way in fixing it."

Gov. Mitch Daniels - who once faced marijuana charges as a college student in New Jersey - called for the incarceration of lawbreakers "in a smarter way, one that matches their place of punishment to their true danger to society." And Indiana Supreme Court Justice Randall T. Shepard added, "The package of sentencing reforms before you is based on reliable evidence. I think it's good for Indiana and I join Gov. Daniels in endorsing it."

They were talking about a Pew Center on the States report ordered after it was reported that Indiana's incarceration rate grew 41 percent over the past decade. With 29,000 people behind bars - up from 7,600 in 1976,

according to the Times of Northwest Indiana - the state prison system is at capacity. DOC is requesting \$667.4 million in fiscal year 2012 and \$675.2 million in fiscal year 2013 - or \$1.34 billion in what will likely be a \$28 billion biennial budget.

What are the Indiana statistics available on marijuana laws impact on Indiana?

In an Oct. 19, 2010 report by Jon Gettman, Ph.D. for The Bulletin of Cannabis Reform, there were 16,397 arrests for marijuana offenses in Indiana in 2007 (88 percent for possession) and 15,597 in 2003. Pot busts accounted for 6.22 percent of arrests, costing Indiana's legal system \$148.81 million in 2006. Marijuana usage in Indiana is down from 521,000 in 2003 to 512,000 in 2007.

The criminal justice system in Indiana cost \$2.39 billion for 2006, according to Dr. Gettman. This includes state, county, and local costs. Here is the breakdown for those costs: police protection \$1.04 billion; judicial and legal services \$419.53 million; and corrections \$934.10 million. Harvard senior lecturer Jeffrey A. Miron estimated that decriminalized marijuana possession in Massachusetts (similar to Indiana in population) would save \$29.5 million annually.

According to DrugRehabs.Org, national mortality figures for 2009 were: tobacco 435,000; poor diet and physical inactivity 365,000; alcohol 85,000; microbial agents 75,000; toxic agents 55,000; motor vehicle crashes 26,347; adverse reactions to prescription drugs 32,000; suicide 30,622; incidents involving firearms 29,000; homicide 20,308; sexual behaviors 20,000; all illicit drug use, direct and indirect 17,000; and marijuana 0. According to the Center for Effective Drug Abuse Research and Statistics, there were 157 marijuana-connected deaths reported in 31 U.S. metropolitan areas (including Chicago and Louisville but not Indianapolis) in 2002 in a voluntary report from coroners and medical examiners.

Gettman ranks Indiana as the seventh largest indoor marijuana producing state producing 66,577 pounds valued at \$106.3 million and 17th in total production at \$205 million. The top four states are Hawaii, Tennessee, Kentucky and California.

Of the top cash crops in the U.S. in 2006, marijuana led at \$35 billion, followed by corn at \$23 billion, soybeans at \$17 billion, hay at \$12 billion, vegetables at \$11 billion and wheat at \$7.45 billion. In Indiana, marijuana is the third ranked cash crop at \$312 million in revenue, following corn at \$1.8 billion and soybeans at \$1.5 billion. It is the top ranking cash crop in Kentucky, third in Illinois, Michigan and Ohio. Essentially, these numbers are off the books and represent a black market.

The human and economic toll - with 16,000 people a year possessing criminal records - is, perhaps, incalculable. ❖



No problems with being back benchers

By **LAUREN CASEY**

INDIANAPOLIS - New seating assignments for the Indiana House is remindful of being in high school where the senior class or the popular kids always had first dibs - in the classroom, cafeteria or the bus.



With 19 freshmen House members, all of them Republican, the seating assignments vary from senior members sitting in the very front of the floor to even the back row.

House Majority Caucus Chair, Rep. Kathy Kreag Richardson, R-Noblesville, is in charge of assigning seats on the Republican side of the House. The GOP gained control of the House in the November election.

"This is the first time we have had to seat [Republicans] across the aisle in a long time," said Richardson of the nine Republicans seated in the back two rows on the Democratic side.

She said that seniority plays a big role in the seating arrangements. The House Majority Leader, Rep. William Friend, R-Macy, and the President Pro Tempore, Rep. P. Eric Turner, R-Cicero, get two seats in the front row. Also the Ways and Means Chairman, Rep. Jeff Espich, R-Uniondale, gets the center isle seat in the second row. Richardson, as the caucus chair, sits in the middle of the floor to take care of any business.

After Richardson assigned seats for the majority caucus leaders, the remaining representatives choose their own seats based on seniority. If many representatives joined the same year, they draw numbers to determine the order of seniority in seat choice.

This year, Rep. Phyllis Pond, R-New Haven, was the most senior member of the Republican caucus picked the remaining seat in the front row.

"The aisle seats are always the first to go," said Richardson. "Some like to stay in the same place."

Two senior members, Rep. David Wolkins, R-Winona Lake, and Rep. Phillip Hinkle, R-Indianapolis, sit in the last row opposite one another.

"We like it back here," said Wolkins. "I've been back here from day one."

Wolkins said the atmosphere is more relaxed in the back of the House and there is more freedom of movement because the cameras don't show the very back rows.

"I don't feel the need to be up in the action. I see a lot of things back here that members don't see in the

front because everything is behind them," said Wolkins.

Hinkle said that often representatives will travel to the back of the floor to talk about issues and he enjoys the discussion.

The freshmen members get the last pick of their seat and appear to be spread throughout the entire side of the House.

Richardson said that generally freshmen end up in middle seats and usually have a senior member nearby to mentor and answer any of their questions. She said the freshman members receive training beforehand, but on the job training is always necessary.

Richardson said the back rows have members from the majority party that fill in seats on the opposite side of the aisle.

Wolkins said, "Last year I was the only Republican in my row, but I got along with the Democrats just fine."

He also said that it helps Speaker Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, to have senior members in the back to keep everything under control. Leadership always keeps an eye on caucus members as a way of preventing the kind of challenges that occurred in the Indiana Senate a decade ago when Sen. Luke Kenley, R-Noblesville, and Sen. J. Murray Clark, R-Indianapolis, once tried to unseat then-Senate President Pro Tempore Robert D. Garton, R-Columbus. They failed in their attempt and were demoted to the back row.

Kenley is now chairman of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee and Clark just stepped down as Indiana Republican chairman.

Gov's ed plan unveiled

By **LAUREN CASEY**
and **ZACH OSOWSKI**

INDIANAPOLIS - Indiana legislators on Wednesday answered Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels' call to overhaul the state's education system during committee meetings in both the House and Senate.

A bill that would give a state panel, municipal leaders and private universities the authority to green-light new charter schools was the subject of a four-hour hearing in the House Education Committee.

The Senate Education Committee considered two bills. One would allow high school students to graduate a year early and receive a \$3,500 scholarship towards higher education.

The other bill would give charter schools access to unoccupied school corporation buildings.

House Speaker Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, and House Education Chairman Robert Behning, R-Indianapolis, are among the co-authors of House Bill 1002.



Bosma said the bill such would increase access to charter school sponsorship, transportation funding and building leases. The bill also would change the procedure for public schools to convert into new charter schools.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett testified in support of the bill. He said that the two huge issues with education in Indiana that he wants to focus on are increased access to more schooling options and better quality education.

"It is the difference between 1,000 flowers blooming versus 1,000 beautiful flowers blooming," Bennett said.

Rep. Mary Ann Sullivan, D-Indianapolis, who also is a co-author, said the bill "will set a new standard for charter access across the country."

Many legislators and citizens expressed concerns about many of the provisions in the bill.

During his testimony, Eugene White, superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools, urged lawmakers to take their time on this issue because the charter school bill would affect his district in a negative way.

Lobbyists who attended both the House and Senate Education meetings said that Senate Bill 446, authored by Sen. Scott Schneider, R-Indianapolis, and Sen. Carlin Yoder, R-Middlebury, was closer to what they were looking for concerning charter schools.

The bill would allow unused buildings owned by public schools to be given to charter schools free of charge since charter schools are technically public schools.

There was concern from Sen. Jean Leising, R-Oldenburg, that under this bill as it is currently written, public school corporations would be forced to give their unused buildings to charter schools even if there were more profitable options.

The Senate Education Committee also heard Senate Bill 497, authored by Sen. Dennis Kruse, R-Auburn, which would allow high school students to graduate after their junior years and receive a scholarship of \$3,500 that would go toward a post-secondary education, which Kruse said could include Ivy Tech, a four-year institution or a apprenticeship program.

Sen. Tim Skinner, D-Terre Haute, said he was shocked Daniels could support students leaving school a year early after comparing Indiana's 180-day school year during his State of the State speech to Asian countries where school years top 200 days per year.

Skinner also had concerns about the maturity of high school students.

"I fear that high school kids might see this as an opportunity to get out of school a year early and maybe not go to college," he said.

The bill does have the support of Jo Ann Hallawell, a professor at Ivy Tech Community College in Columbus. Hallawell graduated early when she was a student at Jen-

nings County High School, so she said she knows what it takes.

"This is a great incentive for students to increase their education if it is their desire to do so," Hallawell said.

State retiree plan over funded

By JESSICA WRAY

INDIANAPOLIS – The state has overpaid an employee benefit plan, budget agency directors told a House committee on Wednesday.

State Budget Agency Director Adam Horst and Deputy Budget Director Jon Vanator told the House Ways and Means Committee that, if things go as currently expected, the state retiree health benefits plan will have a surplus of \$49.8 million by the end of this fiscal year and \$61 million by the end of fiscal year 2013.

The plan, started in state fiscal year 2008, is overfunded by 130 percent, according to the actuarial study. The government funded the plan 100 percent for every employee in order to prevent a liability, but the study showed that there may only be a 60 percent chance that any given employee will be eligible for the plan. Paying the full amount for every active employee has caused overfunding.

Part of the state's recommendation is to pay the general fund part of the excess, by using the cigarette tax revenue that helps fund the plan, for fiscal years 2012 and 2013 only. The proposed percentage of the cigarette tax is 5.74 percent.

"Our method of recovering that excess would be to direct cigarette tax revenue, which is a portion of the funding that goes into the plan ... to the general fund," Vanator said.

"Instead of transferring money from the fund balance and putting it in the general fund, we're going to let \$53.6 million of cigarette tax money go to the general fund instead of going into the plan. We're turning off the faucet on the cigarette tax money, until we catch up."

The Budget Agency's proposal would fund the plan, actuarially, at 103 percent. Horst said that there still will be some cushion for the benefits plan. ❖



Donnelly talks of his friend Gabby

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND - Gabby Giffords "is the nicest person in Congress." But she doesn't play the outfield very well.

She is described thusly by Congressman Joe Donnelly, her friend from Indiana. No wonder they're close friends. They have similar political views, both Blue Dog Coalition moderate Democrats.



They both risked party leadership wrath in voting for Democrats other than Nancy Pelosi for House speaker this month. Donnelly voted for Rep. Heath Shuler, D-N.C., the more conservative alternative to Pelosi. Giffords voted for Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., the legendary civil rights leader. They came to Congress at the same time, elected in 2006. Both were reelected in 2008 and survived brutal campaigns and a Republican hurricane last fall to win again in swing districts.

They both hold frequent "Congress on Your Corner" meetings with constituents. That's what Giffords was doing outside a Tucson supermarket when she was shot, 13 others were wounded and six were killed.

When Donnelly saw the list of casualties, he knew "it was the exact same thing (as his own meetings.) Senior citizens were there, just like at our events. They come with questions about their Social Security or Medicare. And it's not unusual for somebody to bring a kid to meet the member of Congress."

Future meetings?

"I am determined not to back off in the least," Donnelly says. "This is not just about an attack on a member of Congress. It's an attack on our democracy, on people being able to sit down with their representative, on being able to bring their child to meet their representative.

"It's absolutely critical," he says, for both the constituents and for their representative to keep in touch, to talk, to listen.

He won't talk about threats. Members of Congress, most of whom receive threats in the climate of today, are advised not to discuss those threats publicly. While he was not much concerned about security at public events in the past, Donnelly says local police, if they can stop by, would be welcome now to make attendees feel safe. "I want a family that brings their nine-year-old to feel safe," he says. "I want senior citizens to feel safe. I want my staff to feel safe."

Does Donnelly blame inflammatory rhetoric aimed

at Giffords and the infamous gun sight that Sarah Palin placed on Giffords' district as triggering the shootings?

No. He is very careful not to cite it as a cause for Jared Lee Loughner's wrath. After all, we don't know for certain if it was a factor or for certain that it was not. We may never know, unless Loughner tells us. And even then, would we believe him, either way?

But Donnelly makes clear that he believes the shooting ought to make Washington and political figures everywhere more aware of potential dangers in the tone of political attacks, dangers to civil discourse if not to lives. "Things like gun sights and other things certainly don't help," Donnelly adds.

What will Giffords say if she lives and can talk about this? We only know what she said before in a TV interview: "We're on Sarah Palin's targeted list, but the thing is the way that she has it depicted as the crosshairs of a gun sight over our district. When people do that, they've gotta realize there's consequences to that action."

Palin whines now as though she is the real victim in the shooting, not Giffords or little Christina Taylor Green or those others in Tucson. Rather than join in the call of so many leaders of both parties for a more civil, sensible discourse, Palin decides instead to reload.

Donnelly is pleased thus far with the reaction in Congress, where Republican leaders postponed what was to be a heated, divisive debate over repeal of health care reform.

House repeal will of course come. But maybe each side will refrain from seeking to demonize the other.

Donnelly last summer was outfield coach for the congressional women's softball team, a bipartisan team. The only critical thing he says of Giffords is that, well, she doesn't play the outfield very well.

But Gabby joined in a bipartisan team effort on the field, the type of teamwork she urged also on the House floor. ❖

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

Giffords to be released Friday

TUCSON - Rep. Gabrielle Giffords is expected to be released from a Tucson, Ariz., hospital Friday just less than two weeks after she suffered a gunshot wound to her head, her office said Wednesday.

She will be moved from the University Medical Center to Houston's TIRR Memorial Hermann Rehabilitation hospital, which specializes in helping people recover from brain injuries.



Mitch Daniels follows Horton the Elephant

By LUKE MESSER

INDIANAPOLIS - Dr. Seuss's Horton the Elephant is famous for saying: "I meant what I said, and I said what I meant - an elephant's faithful one hundred percent." Ironically, six years into his tenure, Indiana's Republican governor is famous for following a similar philosophy.



With the help of like-minded legislative leadership, Gov. Mitch Daniels has proven again and again that he is the rare political leader who tells people what he intends to do and then does it. As promised, he balanced the state budget in his first year, passed daylight savings time, put Major Moves into action and led the way to major property tax reform.

That is why Hoosiers paid particular attention to the State of the State speech last week. We knew the speech would provide a roadmap for Daniels' plans in the next legislative session. With his characteristic candor and tenacity, the governor did not disappoint.

The speech highlighted a balanced state budget as well as criminal justice reform, local government reform and education reform as primary areas of focus. History tells us we can expect aggressive leadership from the governor on each of these topics.

On fiscal matters, Daniels made clear that he expects a state budget that is in structural balance -- no gimmicks and no tax increases. Given the state's current financial position, this will be no small task. But, most believe the state's current conservative fiscal leadership team will meet this challenge. Less clear is the Legislature's response to the governor's call for an automatic taxpayer refund when state reserves exceed 10 percent of annual needs. (I wouldn't bet against the governor on that one, either.)

The last half of his speech focused on education with merit pay, collective bargaining reform and school choice reforms highlighted as top priorities. Gov. Daniels stressed that educational choices honor parents and their right to make decisions for their children. He emphasized that parental options should include public school, charter schools and non-government schools as well.

The governor said it best: "At bottom, this is not about material matters. It is about the civil right, the human right, of every Indiana family to make decisions for

its children. It's about the right of all Hoosier children to realize their full potential in life. Will you join me in saying, the waiting is over, change has come, and Indiana intends to lead it?"

Some in the education establishment call these ideas controversial. In contrast, a new poll recently released by the Indianapolis-based Foundation for Educational Choice shows that these reforms are actually mainstream.

According to the poll, Indiana voters are far more likely to favor charter schools (66 percent) than to oppose them (16 percent). Respondents who said they "strongly favor" charter schools out-number those who say they "strongly oppose" by a four-to-one ratio. Similarly, Hoosiers support school vouchers. According to the Foundation poll, Indiana voters are far more likely to favor school vouchers (66 percent) than to oppose them (24 percent).

Strong poll numbers will not guarantee legislative success. Still, the proposed education reform package is far less controversial than earlier reform initiatives championed by, and later signed into law by this governor. In the midst of the daylight savings time debate, the issue never reached higher than a 45% approval rating. Polling on the Major Moves toll road lease was mired in the mid-30% approval range when that debate occurred at the statehouse. And, when taken individually, many of the governor's cuts to government spending have not polled well either.

Yet, on each of these issues, the governor, with help from legislative leadership, charged forward and did the right thing for the future of Indiana - leading his party to big election victories in 2008 and 2010. Few politicians better exemplify the principle that strong leadership leads to good politics in the long run. ❖

Messer is a former Republican legislator and Congressional candidate. He is a regular contributor to Howey Politics Indiana.

School elections bill passes panel

INDIANAPOLIS - School board elections would be moved to November under a bill that passed the Senate Local Government Committee on Wednesday (Indianapolis Star).

Currently, school districts can decide individually whether to hold elections at the same time as the primary election in May, or during the general election in November. About 30 percent of school boards have opted for November, but Sen. Connie Lawson, the Danville Republican who sponsored Senate Bill 60, said it would save money and encourage more voter participation to move all the school elections to November. ❖



Peter King, Sports Illustrated: I hadn't heard much from Jon Runyan, the longtime Eagles tackle, since his election to Congress out of New Jersey's third district in November. He rode the Republican wave into office and wants to do something significant about what he considers runaway spending by the government. Now he finds himself worried about something else in the wake of the Tucson shootings. Security. And not so much his own -- but his constituents'. "I was walking back from our memorial service in Washington for the victims of the shootings," Runyan told me over the weekend. "I was with [Republican congressman from Indiana] Mike Pence, and he said something that resonated with me. He talked about how the scary part is, as congressmen, we signed up for this. Those killed in Arizona, they didn't. And at an event like that, you can take precautions, but you can't insure against everything. That's what bothers me -- the people we need to see are our constituents, and we don't want them to be scared away from coming out to see us. In our society, we are the closest most people will get to the federal government. It's vital that we reach out to them, and they be able to talk with us. That's the job. If that's affected by this, it'll really be sad." ❖

Paul Krugman, New York Times: On Wednesday, President Obama called on Americans to "expand our moral imaginations, to listen to each other more carefully, to sharpen our instincts for empathy, and remind ourselves of all the ways our hopes and dreams are bound together." Those were beautiful words; they spoke to our desire for reconciliation. But the truth is that we are a deeply divided nation and are likely to remain one for a long time. By all means, let's listen to each other more carefully; but what we'll discover, I fear, is how far apart we are. For the great divide in our politics isn't really about pragmatic issues, about which policies work best; it's about differences in those very moral imaginations Mr. Obama urges us to expand, about divergent beliefs over what constitutes justice. And the real challenge we face is not how to resolve our differences — something that won't happen any time soon — but how to keep the expression of those differences within bounds. What are the differences I'm talking about? One side of American politics considers the modern welfare state — a private-enterprise economy, but one in which society's winners are taxed to pay for a social safety net — morally superior to the capitalism red in tooth and claw we had before the New Deal. It's only right, this side believes, for the affluent to help the less fortunate. The other side believes that people have a right to keep what they earn, and that taxing them to support others, no matter how needy, amounts to theft. That's what lies behind the modern right's fondness for violent rhetoric: many activists on the right really do see

taxes and regulation as tyrannical impositions on their liberty. There's no middle ground between these views. One side saw health reform, with its subsidized extension of coverage to the uninsured, as fulfilling a moral imperative: wealthy nations, it believed, have an obligation to provide all their citizens with essential care. The other side saw the same reform as a moral outrage, an assault on the right of Americans to spend their money as they choose. This deep divide in American political morality — for that's what it amounts to — is a relatively recent development. Commentators who pine for the days of civility and bipartisanship are, whether they realize it or not, pining for the days when the Republican Party accepted the legitimacy of the welfare state, and was even willing to contemplate expanding it. ❖

Eric Bradner, Evansville Courier & Press: There's an ancient Greek myth about the importance of finding the right balance. Daedalus and Icarus — a father and his son — were imprisoned in the Labyrinth. Daedalus, a great craftsman, constructed wings out of feathers and wax so that his son could escape by flapping the wings and flying to safety. Before the son took off, his father warned that he must fly high enough above the sea to keep his wings from getting wet, but not too close to the sun, or the wax holding his wings together would melt. Icarus ignored his father's warning. He flew higher and higher, and eventually, the wings melted and he fell into the sea. The moral, of course, is that the appropriate middle ground — what Aristotle called the "golden mean" and baseball sluggers call the "sweet spot" — lies somewhere between two extremes. Two governors took their best shots at landing in that sweet spot — in this case, balancing the taxes that their states collect with the services their states provide — last week. In Springfield, Ill., Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn celebrated a tax hike on individuals and businesses so that state can foot its bills for education, health care and public safety. In Indianapolis, Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels proposed a new budget that cuts spending on higher education and some Medicaid services so that Indiana can avoid a tax hike. Both seemed to find the decisions painful, but they also seem to be after what they genuinely believe is best overall for the citizens of their states. And their decisions gave us a fairly clean and straight-forward case study in how state government operates. Which governor was the closest to getting it right? Daniels seized the tax hike as an opportunity to poke fun at Illinois during an interview with a Chicago radio station. "Oh, you guys are nothing if not entertaining over there," he said. "It's like living next door to 'The Simpsons' — you know, the dysfunctional family down the block — watching you guys do this." ❖





Tea Party seeks anti-Lugar stance

WARSAW - Monica Boyer has some good things to say about Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind. "He's a very cordial man and a very kind man," Boyer said Wednesday (Francisco, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). "I have voted for him my whole life," she added, "and I have voted wrong." Boyer is co-founder of Kosciusko Silent No More, one of at least 70 tea party groups that will be represented Saturday at a Tipton County convention to launch a campaign to defeat Lugar in the 2012 Republican primary election. The coalition is named Hoosiers for Conservative Senate. "Contrary to media reports, we are not choosing a candidate that day," Boyer said. "We are meeting and talking about a blueprint. We are going to put a plan together." The Warsaw resident said the gathering at Heartland Church in Sharpsville will draft a letter to Lugar "thanking him for his years of service and telling him our ideas of conservatism don't match his and telling him why." An oversized version of the letter will be delivered next week to Lugar in Washington, D.C., as part of a "road trip to retirement," Boyer said. Lugar announced Tuesday that he will seek a seventh six-year term in the Senate. "We are organizing a little earlier than usual," Helmke said. "(Lugar) will be waging a vigorous campaign. He takes everybody seriously. He always has." Tea parties oppose Lugar's positions on immigration and nuclear arms reduction and his votes to confirm Obama's two nominees for the Supreme Court. Boyer said Lugar's support for reinstating a ban on assault weapons "will be a major topic Saturday. It's further proof that he hears from us, but he



doesn't hear us." Helmke said Lugar "has remained consistent" in his positions over the years.

New Albany Mayor England to retire

NEW ALBANY - After serving three terms as Mayor of the City of New Albany, Doug England has decided not to seek another term in office, effective at the end of his current term. England announced Wednesday he would not be seeking reelection, stating he would like to begin focusing on his personal life (Howey Politics Indiana). "My family and I have given it great thought," England said. "My wife has seen how the stress has weighed on me, and she wants me back. We both feel strongly that the next chapter of my life should be spent with our grandchildren who are quickly growing up." Following his announcement, England endorsed local businessman Irv Stumler for New Albany mayor. He currently serves on the city's Economic Development Commission. In addition, Stumler's family business relocated to New Albany in 2008, bringing with it up to 150 jobs. "In these critical times, I cannot think of a better person to serve this city and help to continue attracting good-paying jobs to our community than Irv Stumler," England said. "I am honored to have the confidence and unwavering support of Mayor Doug England," said Stumler.

Mayor Bennett files for 2nd term

TERRE HAUTE - Mayor Duke Bennett has officially launched his effort to become the city's first mayor to win more than a single term in office since Pete Chalos won his fourth term 20 years ago. Bennett, 50, a Repub-

lican, filed his Declaration of Candidacy papers at shortly after 8 a.m. Wednesday, which was the first day candidates could register for Indiana's 2011 municipal elections. "I wanted to be first in line," Bennett said after filing with officials from the Vigo County Clerk's office.

Freeman-Wilson, McShurley file

GARY - Karen Freeman-Wilson, a former city judge and former state attorney general who is challenging Gary Mayor Rudy Clay for the second time in four years, was among the earliest filers (Times of Northwest Indiana). "This time is going to be different," Freeman-Wilson said, "because people really understand the dire needs of our city and need someone to lead us out of this financial disaster. The voters gave (Clay) an opportunity and they've now seen the challenges are too great." Clay arrived 24 minutes later, saying, "The city is perched to soar into orbit and become one of the great cities of America. We have been through the financial fires. We have been flying on one financial wing and this is no time to change pilots." Democrat Saba S. Mohammed also is running for Gary mayor. East Chicago City Councilman Richard Medina came early Wednesday to file his challenge in the Democratic primary to East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland, who arrived to file later in the morning. Former Hobart Mayor Linda Buzinec, a Democrat, filed her challenge to incumbent Hobart Mayor Brian Snedecor. Muncie Mayor Sharon McShurley and one of her Democratic Party challengers, Ralph "Jigger" Smith Jr., turned out in the first half-hour the election office was open Wednesday to file declarations of candidacy in this year's city elections (Muncie Star Press).



Velazquez reports \$125k warchest

PORTAGE - Portage Mayor Olga Velazquez is wasting no time in raising funds to fend off a primary election challenge this spring by fellow Democrat and city Clerk-Treasurer Donna Pappas (Times of Northwest Indiana). Velazquez collected \$62,790 in contributions from various sources last year, bringing her campaign coffers up to \$125,440.

Brown lags behind in Fort Wayne cash

FORT WAYNE - Two of the GOP mayoral hopefuls have separated themselves from the third – at least financially – but money is not always an indicator of electoral success locally (Lanka, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Republicans Paula Hughes and Eric Doden each reported raising more than \$100,000 last year, according to campaign finance reports filed Wednesday. The reports were due by noon. At-large City Councilwoman Liz Brown's report showed she raised slightly less than \$25,000 last year.

Unions show up at Statehouse

INDIANAPOLIS - As union workers flooded the Statehouse on Wednesday, the line for the entrance spilled down the front steps (Wray, HPI/Franklin). Workers were there to attend the Senate committee meeting hearing on Senate Bill 333, which would eliminate project labor agreements. Project labor agreements are collective bargaining agreements that require all employees and workers on government-funded projects, whether union or non-union, to establish set terms and conditions. Tom O'Donnell,

executive director of Quality Connection, an electrical union cooperative group, said that a project labor agreement "makes one big agreement for a job, which standardizes your starting times, overtime" and other job specifics. "It makes no sense at all to pass this bill, when that's ... the standard way they've done business for the past 25 years, on the major projects in the city of Indianapolis, and the state for that matter," O'Donnell said. "And it's like, when they do this kind of thing, all that does is invite inferior labor to come in and do jobs. You know what I'm talking about there – pay somebody little or nothing to come in without being highly skilled." Union worker Jim Crabb was one of many waiting to enter the Statehouse to oppose the bill. "It would raise the cost of projects," Crabb said. "PLA guarantees that it will be done on time, usually under budget. We just want them to know that we are concerned, and that we'll come out in forces. This early in the year, it's not going to stop here." Sen. Greg Walker, R-Columbus, sponsored the bill and said that he feels research is inconclusive to whether or not project labor agreements guarantees quality and efficiencies. He also said that he believes there are skilled and trained workers outside of unions. "The research is indeterminate," Walker said. "I have read a great deal that does not have me convinced that the taxpayer is going to get the lowest cost projects with a PLA in place, but I also recognize the economic reality that you get what you pay for. Price is not the only decision and is not the only factor."

Making spice illegal passes House panel

INDIANAPOLIS - Legislation that would make "spice," a synthetic version of marijuana, illegal won the unanimous approval of an Indiana

House committee Wednesday (Harvey, HPI/Franklin). Those convicted of using spice would face the same penalties as marijuana users under House Bill 1012, which is now set to advance to the full House. Boone, Johnson and Morgan counties all have enacted ordinances that ban chemical compounds such as spice. "We have elementary school children that are actually buying synthetic marijuana and getting high," said Rep. David Yarde, R-Garrett.

Text while driving ban passes panel

INDIANAPOLIS - Police could ticket motorists for texting while driving under a bill that won the approval of an Indiana House committee Wednesday (Robertson, HPI/Franklin). Reading or sending a text message or e-mail while behind the wheel would be a Class C infraction under House Bill 1129, which passed the House Roads and Transportation Committee on a 10-2 vote. In Indiana a Class C infraction is considered a minor offense, such as a common traffic violation. It is not considered a crime, but a civil violation. The penalties are a fine of up to \$500 and court costs. Over the past five years, 30 states have adopted similar laws, with others in the works, according to Sherry Dean, the public affairs specialist for the AAA Hoosier Motor Club.

Statewide smoke ban advances

INDIANAPOLIS - The House Public Health Committee voted 9-3 Wednesday to send House Bill 1018 - the statewide smoking ban - to the full Republican-controlled House. Rep. Charlie Brown said he expects lawmakers will try to exempt more places from the smoking ban.