



Pulling back from the default abyss

Shutdown ends;
now we await how
history is written

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

NASHVILLE, Ind. — Indiana’s senior Republican U.S. Sen. Dan Coats seemed to sum up the debacle that has played out over the past several months in Washington.

Coats voted yes on the legislation that reopened the federal government and pulled the United States away from the abyss of default, but did so while holding his nose.

“While I deplore supporting yet another short-term Band-Aid, the only thing worse would be a continued government shutdown, the United States defaulting on its debt obligations and the elimination of the spending reductions enacted by Congress in 2011,” said Coats Wednesday afternoon as the clock was ticking down to default. “I have voted for and will continue to support efforts to repeal and replace Obamacare with common-sense health care reforms. It is evident to me that the present strategy has failed to sway the president



or Senate Democrats. As we’ve seen from Obamacare’s disastrous rollout, this law’s failures are more than mere glitches, and the fight to repeal it must continue. I am disappointed with this outcome, but my commitment to reducing our debt,

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What are Dem chances in ‘14?

By **CHRIS SAUTTER**

WASHINGTON - Former Congressman and 9/11 Commission Co-Chairman Lee Hamilton once said about the landslide election in 1964 that carried him and his fellow Democrats to a record majority in Congress, “any fool running on the Democratic ticket could have won that year ... and there were a few that did.”



The same could be said about Democrats in 1974 and Republicans in 1994 and 2010. The political winds in each of those years were so strong that the usual rules and campaign dynamics didn’t apply.



“Obviously it is a political weapon of mass destruction.”

- Warren Buffett, to CNN on urging an end to using the debt limit as a bargaining chip



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The question a year out from the 2014 midterm elections is whether the Republican brand is so badly damaged by recent tactics that their majority in the House of Representatives is truly in jeopardy. Or to paraphrase Lee Hamilton, is the public so disgusted with the Republican Party that they will vote for almost "any fool running on the Democratic ticket" in 2014.

There is growing evidence that Republicans will indeed pay a very high price for their strategy of shutting down the government and bringing the country to the brink of default over continued opposition to the Affordable Care Act. Three quarters of American disapprove of how Congressional Republicans handled the budget showdown in a Washington Post—ABC poll. Similarly, according to an NBC/Wall Street Journal poll, the public blames the Republican Party more for the shutdown than President Obama by a 22-point margin (53% to 31%).

"If it were not so bad for the country, the results could almost make a Democrat smile," Democratic pollster Peter Hart commented. Republican pollster Bill McInturff, who conducted the survey with Hart, said that the NBC/WSJ poll is among a handful of surveys that stand out in his career as being "significant and consequential."

The problem for the GOP is not just that a clear majority of Americans blame them rather than President Obama for the federal shutdown. The real problem for Republicans is why the public blames them. Americans are beginning to think the House is being led by a bunch of lunatics. That perception is not far from the truth.

This shutdown is different than the one Newt Gingrich led during the Clinton presidency. Indeed, the margin of blame for the GOP is much wider than the level of blame Republicans received during the last shutdown in 1995-96.

The difference between the last shutdown and this one has to do with who drove the confrontation.

When Gingrich was Speaker, he was calling the shots for Republicans. Gingrich had been the party's chief strategist during the 1994 elections. Newly elected House Republicans owed their victories to Gingrich and his "contract with America."

Today, the Tea Party radicals who have kept the government hostage for the past several weeks don't owe their seats to anyone in Washington. They are in debt to Tea Party activists back in their home districts.

When the American public sees who is in charge of the U.S. House of Representatives, they don't see rational people. They see confederates who hold to a militia ideology and mentality. They see birthers who deny that the failure of the United States to pay its bills on time is a serious problem. They see House backbenchers who have no qualms about sticking it to a House Speaker of their own party. In short, Americans see anarchy in the House of Representatives and it freaks out many of them.

There are many good reasons why Democrats may not take back the House in 2014. A year is a long time and events could intervene to change the country's political dynamic. Congressional districts have been so finely gerrymandered that few are truly competitive. The party in power has gained seats in an off-year election of the president's 2nd term only once. Democrats might get blamed for a still sputtering economic recovery. A majority of Americans still don't approve of Obama-care.

But the trends today suggest a major anti-GOP wave is building that could defy the usual rules of thumb in off-year elections. Not only do Republicans face a fast growing demographic squeeze as demonstrated by the 2012 presidential election results, but the GOP brand is becoming increasingly unappealing even to traditional Republicans who should feel quite at home within the GOP. For example, polls indicate the Republican government



shutdown is strongly opposed by high-income suburban whites who usually favor Republican candidates.

Democrats need to pick up 17 seats to take control of the House. A survey by Public Policy Polling (PPP) taken from Oct. 2 through Oct. 4 shows Republicans behind in 17 of the districts analyzed. In another four districts, the incumbents fell behind after respondents were told their representatives supported the government shutdown. Three Republican incumbents maintained their lead even after respondents were told of their representative's support for the government shutdown.

Democrats will have to put 35-40 districts in play to have a realistic chance to take control. They will have to win races that are not only rated as "toss-ups" and those

rated as "lean Republican," but also in districts that Republicans are currently favored to win. Yet the shutdown has given Democrats a chance to overcome the odds because Republicans are starting to look like they neither can nor want to govern.

Traditional Republicans are guilty of enabling GOP Tea Party extremists. For too long they have refused to confront the racism and extreme tendencies within the Tea Party movement for fear of inviting a primary challenge from the right. They may have no alternative now if they want to survive. ❖

Sautter is a Democratic consultant based in Washington.

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growing the economy and getting Americans back to work will not waver. I will be an integral part of the ongoing effort to address our nation's serious financial challenges."

It was an outcome, however, that was totally predictable. House Republicans decided early last summer to pick a fight over Obamacare. Coats was the adult in the room, telling Howey Politics Indiana last July that the votes weren't there. "What I don't agree with, is it will be repealed," said Coats, a voracious critic of the law. "It's the President's signature item. He has so much invested in it. He's not going to let that happen."

It was a message that Coats and Senate colleagues like Lindsay Graham and John McCain would repeat over and over. McCain characterized it as a "fool's errand."

Those remarks came after Coats (pictured below) had scolded his younger House colleagues for "grandstanding" over the controversies surrounding the National Security Agency and the Edward Snowden leaks.

On Wednesday, the adult supervision was clearly in the U.S. Senate, where members endured the epic grandstanding of Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, then voted 81-18 to reopen the government. The other yes vote from Indiana, U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, joined a group of moderates from both parties to hammer out the framework that leaders Harry Reid and Mitch McCon-

nell proposed and passed. "There was great concern we would be bumping up against a deadline and go through default," Donnelly said. "This wasn't just playing with fire. This was potentially putting the whole building on fire."

And then there was the Republican majority House, which was fixated on Obamacare.

It was that issue that put them on the slippery slope where they never had a chance to win because they control only one branch of government. U.S. Rep. Luke Messer told Howey Politics in June that there was a six-to-nine-month window to kill it. "Why I say that is we're about to undergo next fall and winter and then next spring, the full blown implementation of Obamacare," Messer said. "I think this is the last opportunity for the full repeal if there is a public outrage over the next several months."

The roots of this hope for repeal were actually sown a generation ago when President Reagan and Indiana's Doc Bowen, as Health and Human Services secretary,

forged the catastrophic health plan for senior citizens in 1988. It was signed in the twilight of the Reagan presidency, then repealed a year later when public support dropped precipitously. The difference was that Reagan's successor, President George H.W. Bush, had no investment in the Bowen law. President Obama and Senate Democrats would not back down over the Affordable Care Act and rallied around it in unified fashion.





The problem was that the shutdown and specter of default not only obscured what was a disastrous rollout of Obamacare, but as polling showed the Republican brand plunging to historic lows, the Affordable Care Act actually rose in the opinion of Americans. In poll after poll, American voters made it clear they did not want the operations of the federal government and its good faith and credit to be used as a bargaining chip in an impossible effort to repeal the ACA.

Clubbing baby seals

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, a potential Republican 2016 presidential candidate, said on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" today, "We win when we push a positive agenda. We lose when we react to what goes on in Washington. We just can't be against what goes on in Washington, D.C. It's like watching a baby seal on the rocks and you just club and club this thing."

Peter Wehner, writing for Commentary Magazine, sarcastically put this episode into context: "The results of the approach first championed by Senators Ted Cruz, Mike Lee, Rand Paul and Marco Rubio, and embraced by a significant number of House Republicans, resulted in (a) no substantive changes to the Affordable Care Act; (b) an increase in its popularity; (c) diverting attention away from the epically incompetent rollout of the new health care exchanges; (d) the GOP's popularity dropping to the lowest point for either party since Gallup began asking the question in 1992; (e) more than washing away the gains Republicans had made on the issues over the course of this year; (f) reviving the Obama presidency, which until the shutdown was drifting and suffering a terrible year; and (g) set back GOP prospects in the 2014 mid-term elections. Apart from that, it was a huge success."

When the final votes came, two Hoosier Republicans in the House voted to reopen the government: U.S. Reps. Susan Brooks and Todd Young.

"I believe surpassing the debt ceiling would harm Hoosier families, adversely affect the stock market and damage America's position on the global stage," said Brooks. "Default puts Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid payments at risk and could trigger another downgrade of the U.S. credit rating. I did not come to Congress to perpetuate this type of uncertainty. Governing is about making responsible choices. I believe voting to prevent a default on our debt and open our government is the responsible

choice. I remain committed to reducing our national debt and protecting Americans from the President's failed healthcare law."

Young, R-Bloomington, said, "Tonight I voted for a plan to avoid default on our national debt, to end the partial shutdown of the federal government, to create a framework for immediately dealing with our budget challenges, and to tighten anti-fraud measures for Obamacare's tax subsidies. But this is only the beginning: Under this plan, government funding will again run out in just three months, and we'll be up against our borrowing limit in a mere four months. We must commit ourselves to avoiding the constant cycle of brinksmanship by working across party lines to address issues like job creation, stagnant personal incomes, our unsustainable national debt, and rising healthcare costs, and we must do that as soon as the current stalemate is resolved, not when we're facing the next deadline."

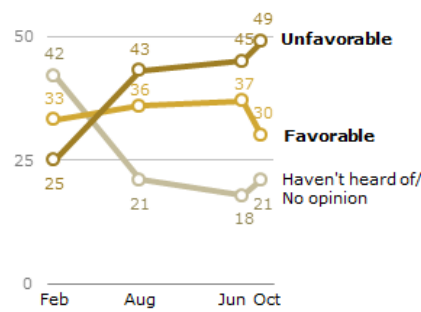
Their positions were bolstered by House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan, a hero of the right and the party's 2012 vice presidential nominee, who said, "Today's legislation reopens the government and averts default. It rejects Democrats' demands to increase spending. And it sets a precedent for further changes to Obamacare. But it's also a missed opportunity. To pay our bills today, and to make sure we can pay our bills tomorrow, we must make a down payment on the debt. Today's legislation won't help us reduce our fast-growing debt. In fact, it could extend the debt ceiling well into next year, further delaying any action. In my judgment, this isn't a breakthrough. We're just kicking the can down the road. That said, I hope both sides will work together in the months ahead to pay down the debt, provide relief for families, and grow the economy. I look forward to convening the first conference on a budget resolution since 2009. And though a budget resolution by itself can't resolve our spending problem, I'm committed to making a bipartisan budget conference a success."

Tea Party revolted

The rest of the delegation heeded the calls of Chris Chocola's Club For Growth, Jim DeMint's Heritage Action and FreedomWorks, all of which urged rejection. Chocola's group tweeted mid-Wednesday, "Club News: Key Vote Alert - "NO" on Reid-McConnell Deal."

"The ruling elites in Washington, D.C., have completely abandoned the American people," said Jenny Beth

Unfavorable Views of Tea Party Have Nearly Doubled Since 2010



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Oct. 9-13, 2013. Q25.



Martin, National Coordinator for Tea Party Patriots. "The deal cut in the Senate does not protect the American people from this unfair and unworkable law. The Senate deal is a complete sellout. Speaker Boehner and the House should stand firm and reject this deal to rein in the executive branch's power before it is too late."

And Monica Boyer, who helped engineer the Tea Party endorsement of Richard Mourdock's U.S. Senate bid in 2011 shortly after the last default episode, tweeted Wednesday afternoon, "GOP re-election strategy: Giant bus. Roll over base. Put bus in reverse. Roll over again. Get out. Make sure there is blood #repeat #winning."

Breathing room for true believers

There was some breathing room, as it became clear by Wednesday afternoon that only about 60 GOP votes were needed to pull the nation away from default. That gave Walorski and Stutzman an avenue to appease their base.

"As I have said before, I do not support defaulting on our nation's debt," said U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski, who faces a potential primary opponent. "Tonight, I am glad that a deal was reached to temporarily avoid default and reopen the government, allowing more time for the House and Senate to reach a long-term compromise. However, without any spending cuts or budget reforms aimed at getting our fiscal house in order, I could not support this plan."

Stutzman, an ally of Chocola and DeMint, had said throughout the week he did not want to see a federal default. He, too, had the leeway to vote no. "Hoosier families are struggling under the weight of Obamacare's job-killing mandates and the nation's crushing \$17 trillion debt," Stutzman said. "This bill does nothing to provide relief of those issues or end special treatment for Members of Congress under Obamacare and therefore I will oppose it."

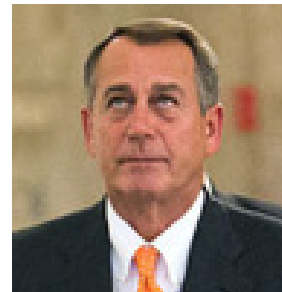
And U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita, who along with Stutzman led a parade of Comedy Central's Daily Show lampooning of the House Republicans, explained two days after entertaining the notion of default, "Any increase in the debt ceiling should be offset by real spending reform that puts our nation on track to a balanced budget and begins to pay down our national debt. This bill actually completes a full one-year extension of the debt ceiling without any reduction to our out-of-control spending and is yet another tax put on the children of tomorrow, all so we can have government give us more in the here and now. Congress had to consider this bad deal because the President and Harry Reid refused to reform or even acknowledge the severity of our fiscal problems. As the Budget Conference Committee goes forward, I hope we can have an intellectually honest discussion about the debt that sets aside the fear tactics and hysterics of the last few weeks. Our

nation's \$17 trillion and growing debt is gravely dangerous to our economic security, our national security, and future generations."

On Monday, Rokita had told WIBC that a default would actually help cut spending, but with some obvious pain. By Tuesday, he denounced the "hysterics" in the media who had compromised what he described as an "intellectually honest discussion."

Speaker John Boehner, who received a standing ovation from the caucus after letting them go to the brink, told a Cincinnati radio station, "We fought the good fight.

We just didn't win."



The future on this front now extends into a budget deadline of Jan. 15, 2014, and a debt ceiling deadline of Feb. 7. The danger for Republicans is that a repeat of this chapter will mean another beating of the GOP brand, this time in an election year.

If there is solace for Hoosier Republicans, there are few credible challengers on the horizon, and the ones that exist have raised virtually no money (See page 8).

Then there is the installation of Obamacare, where the attention will now focus.

Republicans will pound away at the massive website problems, the fact that a number of Americans are being forced off their plans after President Obama repeatedly assured them that wouldn't happen. They will make the 2014 cycle about Obamacare, and, in fact, that dynamic is already in play as credible Democratic challengers have not surfaced in Walorski's 2nd CD and for Rep. Larry Bucshon in the 8th, the two potentially most vulnerable Republicans in the state.

Nationally, groups like Club For Growth are indicating they will score this vote as they gauge 2014 primaries and the general election.

Sarah Palin is taking aim at not only Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who is facing a Tea Party primary opponent in Kentucky, but also Sens. Graham, Lamar Alexander and Thad Cochran, who voted for the plan and face reelection next year.

FreedomWorks Matt Kibbe said on Wednesday that his group was communicating with House Members inclined to support the vote. "We're telling them they are on the wrong side of history," Kibbe said. "Obamacare is still going to be a train wreck."

But it will be voters in 13 months who decide how this chapter of history is written. ❖



Is there a realistic chance of a third party?

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

BLOOMINGTON - Seated across a restaurant table from me at the World Trade Center in Yekaterinburg was a former Democratic U.S. senator named Sam Nunn. He had been the target of Hamilton Jordan and Doug Bailey as a potential presidential candidate for the Unity 2008 Party, a proposed third entry into the American political system that had been dominated by Republicans and Democrats since 1856.

Nunn observed that the two-party system served America well for 160 years, but not in modern times. Now Hamilton, the former aide to President Carter, and Bailey, founder of The Hotline political newsletter, were proposing this new party, an Internet convention and a world wide web campaign that, perhaps, would undermine what has become billion-dollar presidential races.

"I believe it has served America well and anytime you challenge something like that, you've really got to do hard thinking," said Nunn, who was in Russia with then-U.S. Sen. Dick Lugar as part of their historic Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program, one of the most productive bipartisan efforts in the history of mankind. "I think in the last several elections we've not been willing to confront the real issues. The system itself – the early primaries in other states, the fact that only a limited number of people participate in choosing the two nominees, the fact that all the incentives for money raising address what I call the niche issues that appeal to only certain groups – those facts to me are leading me to at least come to a tentative conclusion that the system is no longer working to produce the very best government we can produce."

"I'm not sure a third party is the answer," Nunn continued. "But there are Democrats and Republicans who share that frustration and they really want to see the country pull together; they want to seriously consider some alternative in 2008."

Just weeks later, U.S. Sen. Barack Obama would set off a political whirlwind, and in four months upset U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton in the Iowa caucuses en route to winning the White House. Nunn, the Georgia Democrat, would go on to support Obama and the Unity 2008 campaign became an obscure historical footnote. Jordan and Bailey

are now deceased.

But Nunn's comments were prescient to what we are witnessing today in Washington: Epic gridlock that has pushed the United States to the brink of default; a hostage-taking mentality by a party controlling just one chamber coupled with an aloof President who has forged few relationships with Members of Congress; the post-2011 reapportioned maps created by GOP operatives in 30 states that have saddled Speaker John Boehner with a political Frankenstein monster of 132 Republican Members in plus-11 GOP districts (including two in Indiana) fearing not a November defeat, but a potential primary challenger. This has empowered a radical segment of the Republican House Conference, basically rendering Boehner a castrated leader, unable to make a deal and deliver votes.

I saw the phenomenon of a third presidential candidacy two other times in my professional life and once as a youngster. In 1992 when I was a reporter for the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, Texas industrialist Ross Perot appeared on CNN's "Larry King Live" on Feb. 20 and said he would seek the presidency as an independent if supporters could get his name on the ballot in all 50 states and districts. This set off an incredible grassroots effort across Indiana and the nation.

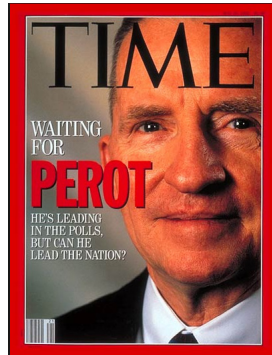
The Fort Wayne Perot cell, working out of donated strip mall office space, created "zippies" – political units based not on precincts, but zip codes – that by June threatened to upset the political system as we knew it. Gallup had him leading President George H.W. Bush and Democrat Bill Clinton with 39% in June, compared to 31% for Bush and 25% for Clinton. A month later, Perot's political naivety and personal paranoia imploded the campaign, scattering seasoned campaign hands Hamilton Jordan and Ed Rollins asunder, and the tipping point passed even though his supporters qualified him in all 50 states.

Perot revived the damaged effort later that fall and received 18.9% of the popular vote, approximately 19,741,065 votes (but no Electoral College votes). It was the best popular vote showing by a third contender since Teddy Roosevelt in 1912.

In 1980 as a young voter, I watched as former Illinois U.S. Rep. John B. Anderson exited the GOP primaries and mounted an independent candidacy against President Carter and Republican nominee Ronald Reagan. Anderson's beef against Reagan was that he didn't believe that taxes could be cut, military spending increased and the budget balanced (he was correct) and attracted support from people like me and current Indiana Republican Chairman Tim Berry, who acknowledged, "I lost my way."

Anderson ended up with just under 7% of the vote in 1980, though at one point early that summer Gallup had him at 26%.

And there was Alabama Gov. George Wallace's





1968 independent run against Republican Richard Nixon and Democrat Hubert H. Humphrey designed to force the election into the U.S. House, where he would attempt to be a power broker in exchange for an end to the federal assault on Southern segregation and Jim Crow laws. Wallace won nearly 10 million popular votes, carried five Southern states, 45 Electoral College votes along with one vote from a renegade elector from North Carolina.

NBC/Esquire Poll on the American middle

This past week, NBC/Esquire Magazine Poll identified a slice of the American electorate, at 51% , as the "majority middle" which identifies little with the conservative fringe of the GOP and the liberal wing of the Democrats. It was described as "at the center of national sentiment there's no longer a chasm but a common ground where a diverse and growing majority is bound by a surprising set of shared ideas."

"Just because Washington is polarized doesn't mean America is," says Robert Blizzard, a partner at Public Opinion Strategies, the lead pollster for Mitt Romney in 2012. His firm co-created the survey with the Benenson Strategy Group, pollsters for President Obama, and the result is a nation in eight distinct segments: Two on the far right, two on the far left, and four in the middle that represent nothing less than what it called "a new American center."

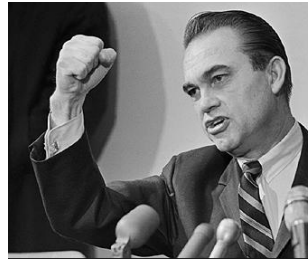
"All you hear in Washington is that there's nothing in the middle of the aisle," said Daniel Franklin, a principal at the Benenson Strategy Group. "But it turns out that's not true. We have a massive American center, and it's probably been there for years, just waiting to be found."

Among the findings of the NBC/Esquire Polling:

- Pluralities believe that the political system is broken (49%), and the economy is bad (50%) and likely to stay that way a while (41%).

- Majorities fear another 9/11 or Boston Marathon-style bombing is likely (70%), and that their children's lives will be more difficult than their own (62%), which are either stuck in place or getting worse (84%) – while the rich keep getting richer at the expense of everyone else (70%).

- The new American center has a socially progressive streak, supporting gay marriage (64%), the right to an abortion for any reason within the first trimester (63%), and legalized marijuana (52%). Women, workers and the



Alabama Gov. George Wallace (top) won 46 Electoral College votes in 1968 while Illinois U.S. Rep. John B. Anderson finished with close to 7% in 1980.

marginal would also benefit if the center had its way, supporting paid sick leave (62%); paid maternity leave (70%); tax-subsidized childcare to help women return to work (57%); and a federal minimum wage hike to no less than \$10 per hour (67%).

- The center leans rightward on the environment, capital punishment, and diversity programs. Majorities support offshore drilling (81%) and the death penalty (90%), and the end of affirmative action in hiring and education (57%). Most people in the center believe respect for minority rights has gone overboard, in general, harming the majority in the process (63%). And just one in four support immigration reforms that would provide a path to citizenship for those who came here illegally.

This begs the question: Can a legitimate, centrist third party emerge from the chaos and uncertainty we've witnessed in Washington? Could a figure like New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a former senator like Sam Nunn or Evan Bayh, or a moderate Republican (now a term in Washington virtually as bad as "liberal") such as former Republican Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman, take the next two years and create not just a presidential campaign, but a true third party?

Purdue University political science Prof. James McCann pulled up surveys – one in November 2007 on the eve of the Great Recession, and the second in the midst of the Perot phenomenon in 1992 – and found openness to the concept. In the Nov. 1, 2007, survey by Princeton Survey Research Associate polls conducted for Newsweek, it found 54% agreed with the idea of a new third party, while 39% disagreed.

In a July 8-9, 1992, Yankelovich Clancy Shulman survey for CNN, just as Perot was about to implode, 59% favored a third party and 31% opposed.

"My impression is that NBC and Esquire have put their fingers on something that we've known about for a while in political science: The mass public in general tends to take fairly moderate stands on policy issues," McCann said. "The number of committed 'ideologues' probably never goes beyond 25-30%. If we focus our attention, however, on more politically active citizens – e.g., folks who turn out at local party nominating caucuses, show up at state conventions, or run for office – the number of 'ideologues' gets a lot higher. This seems to be a truism in American politics: The more engaged an individual is in public affairs, the higher the probability of seeing the world through liberal or conservative lenses."



"We tend to think about politics in terms of Blue and Red states, but it would be more accurate, I think, to describe the general public in most places as being a shade of purple!" McCann said.

As for the potential for a third party, McCann chose the 2007 and 1992 surveys because they were drawn from very different political environments. "As it happens, though, in each case there's a substantial portion of the public – nearly 60% – that favored the emergence of a third party. So the takeaway for me is that the breakdown from the polling last week isn't all that remarkable."

Because of the gridlock that has been amplified in the growing crisis atmosphere, NBC/Esquire simply confirmed what many of us already know. A third party is possible, but it would need a charismatic, personally and professionally stable individual who could inspire a movement. Nunn, Bayh and Huntsman all have a wide range of political and policy skills, though they lack the charisma to spawn a national movement that could operate from the Electoral College to congressional districts across the nation.

Former Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura does have charisma and he told Politico on Wednesday that he and satellite radio talk host Howard Stern could win. "I like the idea of waging war on the Democrats and the Republicans," Ventura said. "I enjoy it because they're so vulner-

Despite shutdown debacle, few credible challengers for Indiana GOP Members

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

NASHVILLE, Ind. – By the end of last week, the Republican debacle as a result of the government shutdown was obvious and completely predictable.

The NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll revealed by a 22-point margin (53 percent to 31 percent), the public blames the Republican Party more for the shutdown than

President Barack Obama – a wider margin of blame for the GOP than the party received during the poll during the last shutdown in 1995-96.

Democrats lead in the Congressional generic ballot, 47-39%.

And 60% said they would

defeat and replace every Member of Congress, including their own. A Gallup Poll released on Friday put Republican approval at a historically-low 28% (compared to 43% for Democrats). And it showed that 60% of voters believe a third national party is needed because Democrats and Republicans are doing such a poor job. A record low 26% believe the two main parties adequately represent their interests. For the first time in the poll's history, when broken down by party, a majority of both Democrats and Republicans say a third party is needed.

An Associated Press/Gfk Poll put Congressional approval at a horrible 5%.

"If it were not so bad for the country, the results could almost make a Democrat smile," says Democratic pollster Peter D. Hart, who conducted the survey with Republican pollster Bill McInturff. "These numbers lead to one inescapable conclusion: The Republicans are not tone deaf; they are stone deaf."

This all begs the question: Are any of the seven Indiana Republican Members of Congress vulnerable in 2014?

As the Indiana Congressional delegation and a smattering of challengers head into the last quarter of 2013, the lack of both primary and general election challengers (and lack of money for challengers) is striking - especially given the current anti-incumbent environment and the fact that we usually see several credible challengers by now. Because we're so far into the cycle already, anyone getting in now will have a steeper cash hill to climb than



Former Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura, Howard Stern and Michael Bloomberg.

able. They're so easy. If I can debate them, I can beat them. I can use his radio station right up to the day of the election to win this thing without spending any money."

Bloomberg – leaving aside his controversial assault on big soda pop drinks – sits on a \$31 million personal fortune, according to Forbes Magazine. He has been willing to use the personal wealth in a political arena, spending, for instance, \$2 million toward U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly's Illinois 2nd CD win in a special election earlier this year when her views corresponded with his push for gun reforms.

At age 71, Bloomberg is entering the twilight of his political career, though he might have a decade in an attempt to transform the broken two-party system into a triage. ❖



challengers usually face, while those few challengers who are in haven't shown much fundraising prowess.

In the wake of the shutdown debacle that over-shadowed the disastrous rollout of the Obamacare health exchanges, opponents emerged for U.S. Reps. Todd Rokita, R-Indianapolis, Todd Young, R-Bloomington, and Larry Bucshon, R-Newburgh. Neither one will keep the two incumbents awake at night. Bucshon will face a Republican primary challenge from a Freedom, Ind., farmer, Andrew McNeil, who is not the front-line challenger

Club For Growth had envisioned when it announced that Bucshon should be "primaried" for his ideological impurity. Rokita will face a rematch from Democrat Tara Nelson, who he mauled by 27% a year ago. Young has a Democratic challenger in former Seymour mayor and state representative Bill Bailey.

What would have kept Rokita and Bucshon in a state of insomnia is if former Evansville Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel or 2012 gubernatorial nominee John Gregg had decided to jump in against Bucshon. Or if State Sen. Brandt Hershman, R-Buck Creek, had decided to mount a primary challenge against Rokita. Or if 2012 nominee Dave Crooks



Indiana Republicans (left, from top) Reps. Marlin Stutzman, Larry Bucshon, Todd Rokita, Luke Messer (bottom) Susan Brooks with Majority Leader Eric Cantor, Todd Young and Jackie Walorski.

had sought a rematch against Bucshon and Brendan Mullen had decided to take on U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski again. This past week, the Rothenberg Political Report moved Walorski from a "leans" to a "favored" status because a credible Democrat has yet to emerge.

When you scan the Cook Political Report Partisan Index, only Rep. Walorski looks particularly vulnerable, sitting in a district that is just +6 and coming off a surprisingly slim victory in 2012. The next three down the list are Bucshon (+8) and U.S. Reps. Todd Young and Susan Brooks at +9. After that, things then things get into the next-to-impossible zone with U.S. Rep. Luke Messer in a +12 district and U.S. Rep. Marlin Stutzman in a +13.

Cook Partisan Voting Index, Cook Political Report

CD	Member	PVI	Rank	2012Pres	Margin	Romney	Obama	2008 Margin	McCain	Obama
IN 1	Visclosky, Peter	D+10	324	Obama	(24)	37	61	Obama (28)	36	63
IN 2	Walorski, Jackie	R+ 6	170	Romney	(14)	56	42	Obama (1)	49	50
IN 3	Stutzman, Marlin	R+13	88	Romney	(27)	63	36	McCain (13)	56	43
IN 4	Rokita, Todd	R+11	111	Romney	(24)	61	37	McCain (10)	54	45
IN 5	Brooks, Susan	R+ 9	145	Romney	(17)	58	41	McCain (6)	53	47
IN 6	Messer, Luke	R+12	104	Romney	(23)	60	37	McCain (12)	55	44
IN 7	Carson, Andre	D+13	341	Obama	(28)	35	63	Obama (34)	33	66
IN 8	Buchson, Larry	R+ 8	152	Romney	(19)	58	40	McCain (2)	51	48
IN 9	Young, Todd	R+ 9	144	Romney	(17)	57	41	McCain (6)	53	46



This explains what National Journal analyst Ronald Brownstein describes as the “kamikaze caucus.” Most Hoosier Republican Members represent such overwhelmingly Republican, white and conservative districts that they fear a primary challenge much more than a defeat in November. That’s why Rokita can emerge from his August town halls and report receiving his “marching orders” that put him and his colleagues on the path to a government shutdown and default. Their primary goal was the defund Obamacare, but as President Obama and Senate Democrats girded in their stance, all of their bluster, show votes on bills and amendments were just political theater, and of an amateur pedigree at that.

This is not to say that seemingly non-credible candidates couldn’t pull off a mega upset in Indiana. Since 2002, we’ve watched a Johnson County Councilman named Brent Waltz upset Senate Finance Chairman Larry Borst, a Columbus businessman named Greg Walker topple Senate President Pro Tempore Robert Garton, an obscure former lieutenant colonel named Greg Ballard stun Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson, and in 2012, an unknown Indianapolis school teacher named Glenda Ritz dispatch Supt. Tony Bennett. In each of these cases, the challengers were grossly out-spent. Ritz and Ballard raised only about \$300,000 while having to compete in the state’s most expensive media market.

The Borst and Garton upsets by Waltz and Walker were fueled by Right to Life and Right to Work money matched up with energetic young challengers who exploited mounting dissatisfaction with the General Assembly and the tone deafness of the two incumbents, arguably the most powerful legislators in Indiana history.

What hasn’t occurred . . . yet . . . is an obscure, underfunded challenger knocking off a Hoosier Congressional Republican.

When you look at the third quarter Federal Election Commission reports, most of the Indiana Republicans appear to be flush with cash.

U.S. Reps. Jackie Walorski and Todd Young could both hit the \$1 million raised mark by the end of this year. In the 2012 cycle, Young was the first to raise \$1 million, but didn’t hit the mark until the pre-primary report in late April (Walorski hit it a short time later). Both are well ahead of their pace, and well ahead of the field (Young has raised \$805K and Walorski \$761K, while the next closest is Brooks at \$582K). Rokita has a shot at having close to \$1 million or more cash-on-hand as we head into 2014.

Here are what the reports filed on Tuesday show:

- **CD1:** Rep. Pete Visclosky (D): \$136K Raised Quarter, \$418K Raised Cycle, \$308K Cash On Hand.
- **CD2:** Rep. Jackie Walorski (R): \$222K Raised Quarter, \$761K Raised Cycle, \$540K COH.
- **CD3:** Rep. Marlin Stutzman (R): \$193K Raised

Quarter, \$529K Raised Cycle, \$422K COH; Democrat Justin Kuhnle no report filed.

■ **CD4:** Rep. Todd Rokita (R): \$141K Raised Quarter, \$433K Raised Cycle, \$898K COH Tara Nelson (D): No report filed.

■ **CD5:** Rep. Susan Brooks (R): \$207K Raised Quarter, \$582K Raised Cycle, \$508K COH, David Stockdale (R): \$3,405 Raised Quarter, \$11K Raised Cycle, \$5,700 COH.

■ **CD6:** Luke Messer (R): \$127K Raised Quarter, \$466K Raised Cycle, \$248K COH.

■ **CD7:** Rep. Andre Carson (D): \$109K Raised Quarter, \$407K Raised Cycle, \$476K COH.

■ **CD8:** Rep. Larry Bucshon (R): \$153K Raised Quarter, \$404K Raised Cycle, \$272K COH Andrew McNeil (R): No report filed.

■ **CD9:** Rep. Todd Young (R): \$290K Raised Quarter, \$805K Raised Cycle, \$580K COH, Bill Bailey (D): \$198 Raised Quarter (all in-kind), \$198 Raised Cycle, \$0 COH (note: the amount raised was not in the thousands, just \$198).

The Indiana Democratic Party still seems shell shocked from the GOP dominance in the Congressional and General Assembly delegations. It has failed, thus far, to find top-line challengers for Walorski and Bucshon, and despite the daily openings to exploit Republican Congressional follies (last week an Indiana Republican was lampooned on Comedy Central’s “The Daily Show” by Jon Stewart every day) and troubling metrics (Indiana’s 8.1% jobless rate has been above the national average for almost a year and a half, personal income is sagging, the suicide, meth lab busts and drug overdose rates are soaring) has been oddly mute.

The Obamacare rollout debacle, coming in tandem with a final mid-term election under President Obama may be the reason Democrats cannot find traction on candidate recruitment. If Obamacare is steadied and shows signs of success, Exhibit A in defying a trend would be in 1998, when an impeachment effort against President Clinton was gaining steam and, yet, Democrats gained seats in the U.S. House and Indiana General Assembly.

Ballard and Ritz were able to seize issues (a wildly unpopular income tax increase and Bennett’s sprawling education reforms) that would propel them toward upset. Ritz was able to harness emerging social media such as Facebook and Twitter to galvanize a network of opponents and erase Bennett’s commanding fundraising edge.

But as the polling above shows, there could be opportunities if a wily challenger can gin up the ritz, so to speak, capture the vast and growing public dissatisfaction with the status quo, and figure out a way to undermine big war chests with a canny social media strategy.

That is how history is made. ❖



U.S. government shackled by uncertainty

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – We are on the road to a government that cannot plan, a country shackled by perpetual uncertainty, and a loss of faith in our institutions. We need legislators who realize and respect that those on the other side feel just as passionately, and who are committed to finding common ground.



The American public has lost patience with Washington. The question is, now what?

Congress is unable to do its job. It displays neither competence nor responsibility. It lurches, reeling from crisis to crisis, each one self-manufactured in an effort to postpone the reckoning from some earlier crisis. It shut the government down over a temporary budget. Now it's threatening the financial credibility of the U.S. govern-

ment and the security and safety of the American people. Three years of last-minute spending decisions have culminated in a television standoff with no actual negotiations.

Too many members of Congress reject the notion that accommodation and time-honored procedures allow them to fulfill their responsibilities to the American people. They use their legislative skill to engage in brinkmanship rather than address the country's fundamental problems. Economic growth? Creating jobs? Putting the federal budget on a sustainable path? Don't look to Congress. They're too busy coming up with the next short-term tactic to confront the other side. Every day they dither, they keep the government from addressing the nation's real problems.

Even worse, they've managed to raise real questions in this country and abroad about whether our system of government can work. Are we saddled with a national legislature paralyzed by unending conflict? Are we capable of tackling our major problems? We are on the road to a government that cannot plan, a country shackled by perpetual uncertainty, and a loss of faith in our institutions both at home and abroad.

We do not have to continue down that road, but we do have to confront a core problem. The political center in Congress has weakened to the point of ineffectiveness, if not near-irrelevance.

That's fine with some people in Washington, who

are comfortable with gridlock and don't think its consequences will be dire. Our government's inability to deal with problems, they argue, is good. A government that's able to act, they believe, creates more problems than it solves.

Likewise, some people acknowledge polarization as a problem, but blame it on an electorate that prefers a divided government, split between the parties. All I can say is that divided government in the past – think Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill – didn't keep Congress from creatively addressing national challenges. Divided government is not easy, but it is not unusual and it can work.

Politicians don't deserve all the blame. Voters share responsibility. More people have to turn out to vote. The more people who vote, the better the chances to strengthen the political center – that is, moderates and pragmatists. That's because low turnout brings out the most ideologically intense voters, who in turn reward the most polarizing candidates. A Congress more representative of the American people rests on expanding efforts to convince people to vote, and beating back the barriers to voting.

The second solution lies with members of Congress. Contemplating a government shutdown, a Kentucky congressman recently explained his stance by saying, "All that really matters is what my district wants." This is not an uncommon view, but it's a distressingly limited one. Our system depends on members who believe it's also their responsibility to lead and inform voters, who are willing to weigh the national interest as well as parochial concerns and who have confidence in our system to resolve political differences.

In other words, we need members of Congress devoted to making the system work. We need men and women in office who understand that when the voters give us a divided government, they have no choice but to accept the distribution of power and work with it, regardless of what they wish were the case. We need legislators who realize that those on the other side feel just as passionately and deserve their respect, and who are committed to finding a solution to our problems.

We change laws in our democracy and solve our most difficult issues in this country not by bringing government to a halt, but by fighting out the issues before the voters in an election. At the end of the day, we have to move the country forward, and we need to elect members of Congress who are willing and able to do that. ❖

Lee Hamilton is director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.



What it means to be a conservative

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – Conservative Republicans are frequently painted by liberal, progressive and socialist Democrats and their media buddies as crotchety, humorless obstructionists who actively conspire to thwart the enlightened vision of those intellectual lights such as Harry Reid, Nancy Pelosi and Barack Obama. They just cannot understand why we desperately cling to outdated concepts such as religion, personal responsibility, hard work and patriotism. When conservatives practice their Constitutional rights and challenge the left's drift into disaster by utilizing the perfectly legal tools of elected government, we instantly are painted as the enemies of democracy. Hogwash!



Do you really want to know why we are as mad as hell and not going to take it anymore? Do you really want to know why we deify President Ronald Reagan? Picture a sports team that has continually lost every season since 1932, except for a brief stretch in the 1980s when it won the championship eight straight years. We knew greatness during the eight years of the Reagan Administration but before then and since, it has been a long string of losses of varying degrees and magnitude. It is kind of like being a Cubs fan without having an Ernie Banks to tell you that it will be better next season, because it won't.

The very meaning of the word conservative is to conserve and preserve. Conservatives generally like the way things are. They honor a long tradition of "If you work hard, study hard and keep your nose clean, you can make it to the top in America." Conservatives don't believe that government is the solution to our problems. As President Reagan once said, "Government is the problem!" Conservatives like to adhere to long-valued principles governing behavior across the spectrum of American life. We generally disdain change because change brings risk. We do the wave at sports events and chant, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

In desperately seeking a metaphor to characterize the state of mind of the modern conservative, I turn to the subject of labor relations and contract negotiations. The owner of a business comes into negotiations wanting to offer no increase in compensation. The union comes into negotiations wanting two dollars an hour more. Anything

that the owner of the business gives up from one cent to two dollars is a loss of some degree. He gave up something and the union got something. The only way for the business owner to win was to give up nothing. Such is the plight of conservatives. We give up something in every piece of Democratic legislation. We see every new governmental proposal by Democrats as just another camel's nose in the tent. Next thing you know, Bill Clinton will have the camel in his bed.

This brings us to the issue of the Unaffordable Care Act or Obamacare. The overwhelming majority of Americans like their health care. We like our doctors, specialists and hospitals. We like our privacy and our choices. Some Americans didn't have health care, weren't covered by Medicaid and found themselves caught in medical Catch 22s that made them hate the current system. If they had pre-existing medical conditions, lost their jobs or had children in college without coverage, they were in deep doo-doo. The last time the Republicans controlled the White House, the House of Representatives and the Senate, we did nothing to address these problems. Conservatives just aren't motivated to run out and change things when we are in charge. It could have been a simple fix, at a reasonable cost, but we missed an opportunity. However, when Democrats grabbed control of government in 2008, they didn't miss their opportunity. They took a small problem and turned it into a 10,000 page monstrosity that invades the lives of every American and threatens to destroy the finest health system in the world and along with it one sixth of our economy. That is what liberals and socialists do and history is littered with examples of the disastrous outcomes of this approach.

In 2009, Democrats lawfully enacted, despite questionable tactics, sweeping healthcare legislation called the Affordable Care Act. The United States Supreme Court validated the law and established that the employer and individual mandates were taxes and therefore subject to Congressional regulation. Democratic pundits said that this was good.

In 2013, duly elected Republicans seek to modify an unpopular piece of legislation by altering certain funding methods and implementation dates. The Constitution gives Congress the right to do this. All revenue bills originate in the House of Representatives. Republicans control the House of Representatives. Republicans seek to slay the beast by denying it food and water. Democratic pundits say that this is bad.

This is democracy at its best and its worst. Get over it Mr. President! Suck it up Nancy and Harry! As you all like to say, "Elections have consequences." It doesn't have to be a zero sum game. Congress can put a hold on the implementation of the legislation and a compromise can be worked out that gives Democrats more than what



they had in 2008 and gives Republicans less indigestion than what we have today. This would be a win/win proposition that would benefit all, most importantly the American taxpayer. Sounds like an idea that is dead on arrival.

Dunn is chairman of the Howard County Republican Party. ❖

New state requirement for assessor hitting Lake Co.

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE – The impact of a state change in the requirements for county assessor is being brought to light in Lake County. Although the 2014 primary elections are almost seven months away, the new requisite is looming large this month in Lake County.

County Assessor Hank Adams, the only Republican countywide elected official, died a week ago after a lingering illness. The county's Republican precinct committeemen will meet shortly to elect a replacement for Adams.

That normally wouldn't be a problem. But, herein is the catch: Former Gov. Mitch Daniels signed legislation on March 19, 2012, establishing the requirements for future county assessors.

When filing opens in January for the May primary elections, a candidate for county assessor must hold a Level III assessor/appraiser certification. With Adams' death, Lake County becomes the first county impacted by the new requirement. There are just 20 persons in Lake County who hold the Level III certification.

How many would have any interest in becoming county assessor is unknown. Two of the 20 are Republican township assessors, Kristi Dressel in Center Township and Melody Kikkert in St. John Township. While each is qualified to be county assessor, there is little hope that either could win on the county level in heavily Democratic Lake County.

Adams won because his Democratic opponent had residency and legal problems. Adams, by the way, didn't hold Level III certification. With Indiana's second largest county having just 20 people with Level III certification, I suspect there are many counties with no one holding that certification. Of course, county political parties can groom candidates to become qualified to run for assessor.

Randy Guernsey, who lost the Democratic primary

to Carol Ann Seaton in 2010, is Level III certified and plans to run again. County Councilman Jerome Prince, who formerly worked for the Calumet Township assessor, plans to run and is working on his Level III certification.

The General Assembly needs to do one of two things. The Legislature could reverse itself and get rid of the Level III requirement. Or, the Legislature could do what it should have in the first place: Make the county assessor an appointed, rather than elected position.

There probably are Level IIIs who would make good assessors but want no part of the political process. The same can be said for those with assessing experience but don't happen to hold Level III certificates. The current problem shows how government sometimes can paint itself into a corner. ❖

Rich James has been writing about state and local government and politics for more than 30 years. He is a columnist for The Times of Northwest Indiana.



The Washington Post

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2007

"The Best Indiana Political Reporter: *Howey Political Report* editor Brian Howey."

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Factoring respect into the political class

By **CHRIS SPANGLE**

INDIANAPOLIS - As a young executive director for the Libertarian Party of Indiana, I didn't have an overwhelming amount of experience in grassroots politics. I had left a job as the producer of the Abdul in the Morning show on WXNT in 2008. My communication skills were the basis of my hiring at the LPIN, and knew that I had a deficit in the organizing aspect of politics. I visited every single bookstore in the Central Indiana area looking for books on grassroots politics.



The most impactful book was Tip O'Neill's "All Politics Is Local, and Other Rules of the Game." The book is a collection of memories, advice, and illustrations from one of the 20th Century's most skilled politicians.

The young Bostonian was in the last day of his first campaign for Congress when his former teacher, Elizabeth O'Brien, walked up and said, "Tom, I'm going to vote for you tomorrow even though you didn't ask me." He was astonished. She was his neighbor, former teacher, and he had spent years doing chores for her! He replied that he didn't think he needed to. She countered with, "Tom, let me tell you something: People like to be asked."

With one simple story, my view of politics changed from a series of news stories, polling data, impersonal formulaic strategies for victory, and issue-oriented politics in to a personal exercise. Politics is the people business. All of our strategies at the LPIN had to begin with the individual voter in mind, and we had to leave a good impression. In the absence of the money that enabled us to buy votes, our personal connections became paramount.

This strategy was fully realized by Rupert Boneham, the most personable candidate, and person I've ever had the pleasure of knowing. After his campaign for governor began, he made hundreds of campaign stops and met thousands of Hoosiers. Most had never heard of the Libertarian Party, but every single person who stood in line to meet him left with the basics of our principles and our party. Yes, I said lines. The average wait was 20 minutes to meet our candidate at a campaign stop. Few grassroots politicians ever see a line that long, and fewer leave the positive impression that Rupert left.

Rupert left that impression on his opponents as well. Every encounter with Mike Pence or John Gregg was

warm and positive. It became clear to Pence and Gregg camps at the debates that Rupert was a sincere person with a genuine message. A true rapport developed between our team and each individual camp.

Our opponents respected us. And we respected them. And the friendly nature of our camp toward the sitting governor would probably mean that Pence would answer Rupert's call should he have an idea on policy. Rupert's best work, Rupert's Kids, is providing vocational education to an underserved population of our society, youth exiting the criminal justice system. Encouraging a return to vocational education was Rupert's first platform plank. Several months later, it was adopted by the Pence campaign. True to his promise, the governor has made it a priority in his administration.

Had we treated our political opponents with hostility, I believe our message would have had less influence on policy outcomes. Libertarians run to win, and to have our ideas stolen.

I am sure that somewhere a Libertarian partisan is cursing me for exposing the fact that Rupert liked his opponents. Or that Andy Horning had the same relationship with Mourdock or Donnelly. And I say to my fellow party member, get over it.

Rupert, Gregg, and Pence had different ideas about how the state ought to function. Those ideas have serious consequences for our state. We lose the ability to discuss those ideas when we choose to treat politics as if it is another category on TMZ. It leads to bad government.

Politics is exciting when one has a hot piece of gossip to share. Some days, "Where can this information be shared to effectively help my team" game was the bulk of my day. Gossip is natural. It is the people business after all.

This gossip game is the root cause of our broken political discourse. The gossip game breaks down civility. Fear of misrepresentation stops honest people from openly discussing their true opinions.

So I am going to try and do less of it. I am going to make the personal choice to discuss the names of other politicians only when I hear an idea that I can affirm or debate. If I disagree with it, I will make it about the idea and not the messenger.

If enough of those in politics choose to do the same, the political class can regain the trust and respect of their fellow citizens. Personally, I am going to do my best to emulate Rupert's style, and to make the people business less personal. ❖

Spangle is the former executive director of the Libertarian Party of Indiana and currently works in marketing for the Englehart Group and the Advocates for Self-Government. He is also publisher of We Are Libertarians.



Rep. Stutzman tells the truth

BY JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Hoosier Congressman Marlin Stutzman is ridiculed for telling the truth.

Stutzman, R-Howe, who represents Indiana's 3rd District, sought to save face by quickly apologizing for dealing in truth instead of sticking to the partisan blame-game lingo that's expected these days of deadlock in Congress.

Stutzman, referring to what Republicans want in return for ending the government shutdown and accompanying threat of financial default by the nation, said this in an interview: "We're not going to be disrespected. We have to get something out of this. And I don't know what that even is."



True.

But that's not the party line. And deviating from it provided ammunition for Democrats, including President Obama, who pounced on the statement by Stutzman, a family farmer who went to Washington with Tea Party backing.

They mocked Stutzman. Obama repeated Stutzman's quote at an event that brought audience derision for the concept of need to "get some-

thing" in return for opening the government.

"You have already gotten the opportunity to serve the American people. There's no higher honor than that," the president said. "So the American people aren't in the mood to give you a goodie bag to go with it."

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid displayed Stutzman's quote on a placard as he offered mockingly to apologize if Stutzman felt disrespected. Other Democrats, sticking to their talking points, also joined in saying, gosh, they would offer an apology too if that's what Republicans needed in order to feel more respected and open the government and save the economy.

Headlines around the nation focused on a Republican "don't know" comment about what they need to claim victory as they sink in the polls. Is it still death of the Affordable Care Act? Or only a delay, with hope for later defunding? Or just something on a medical device tax or on the budget? Or some other way to say they won respect?

Stutzman, already in trouble with the House Republican leadership for joining in the Tea Party revolt against the farm bill they supported, decided it was politically wise to apologize.

"Yesterday, I carelessly misrepresented the ongoing budget debate and Speaker Boehner's work on behalf of the American people," Stutzman said. "Despite my remarks, it's clear that the American people want both parties to come to the table to reopen the government, tackle this nation's debt crisis and stop Obamacare."

In battleground Washington, however, the goal isn't as much about doing what the American people want as it is about convincing the American people that the other side is to blame for failure of Congress to do what people want. Each side carefully tests with polls to find which charges, which words, are most likely to convince or inflame.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Sen. Rand Paul, Kentucky's Republican senators, were caught on a hot microphone discussing talking points.

Said Paul, in whispered tone: "I just did CNN and I just go over and over again, 'We're willing to compromise. We're willing to negotiate.' I think . . . I don't think they poll tested 'we won't negotiate.' I think it's awful for (Democrats) to say that over and over again."

McConnell agreed: "Yeah, I do too, and I just came back from that two-hour meeting with them and that was basically the same view privately as it was publicly."

Added Paul: "I think if we keep saying, 'We wanted to defund it. We fought for that and that we're willing to compromise on this,' I think they can't, we're gonna, I think . . . well, I know we don't want to be here, but we're gonna win this, I think."

Messaging strategy is the focus. It's no coincidence that Republican members of Congress say the same things, using the same arguments and cutesy quips. It's no coincidence that Democratic members of Congress say the same things, using the same arguments and cutesy quips. And nothing gets accomplished. More time is spent on the blame game than on coming up with a compromise for the sake of the nation.

Congressman Stutzman told the truth. Honestly. ❖

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



Richard Reeves, Elkhart Truth: Several years ago, Mike Pence, then a Republican congressman from Indiana, told Andrea Mitchell that Medicare was a failure because its costs had exceeded 1965 actuarial estimates. So they have, because Americans are living longer, largely because of Medicare and Medicaid. Miss Mitchell responded: "I don't know if you want to go back to Indiana and campaign against Medicare." So it goes, back almost a century. Just as the Republicans in Congress are desperate to destroy the Affordable Care Act, their predecessors tried to kill Medicare in the 1960s and Social Security in the 1930s. In 1961, Ronald Reagan, just an actor then, appeared in an anti-Medicare television commercial, urging people to write to their representatives in Washington. "Write those letters now; call your friends and then tell them to write them," Reagan said. "If you don't, this program, I promise you, will pass just as surely as the sun will come up tomorrow, and behind it will come other federal programs that will invade every area of freedom as we have known it in this country. ... And if you don't do this and if I don't do it, one of these days we are going to spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children, what it once was like in America when men were free." George H.W. Bush called Medicare "socialized medicine." ❖



Dave Bangert, Lafayette Courier & Press: History eventually will show whether U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita overplayed his hand during the federal shutdown. The Indianapolis Republican, who represents Greater Lafayette as part of the 4th District, has been a willing combatant, making a name for himself beyond Hoosier circles and likely galvanizing the part of a conservative constituency he knows will work to re-elect him. This week, he toyed with the notion that creeping past the debt ceiling deadline would have been a crisis this nation could handle — despite the fact, he said, that it would mean mass layoffs and "immediate pain." "But again," Rokita asked during an interview on WIBC-FM in Indianapolis, "are we living for us in the here and now, or are we living for the children of tomorrow?" Critics raged and mocked him. The deal that emerged Wednesday seemed to offer little for Rokita and his crew, other than a promise to continue this fight once everyone catches up with a can kicked down the gravel. But instead of backing away, Rokita kept coming full bore, clear since the first day of the shutdown that he was set to ride this one out. He even appeared to position himself for a place of power if this mess shuffles out in favor of a tea party-leaning Republican caucus in the U.S. House. That's a long shot, for sure. But that calculus has a certain ring to it. And in a district that has proved that standing far to the

right can pay off on Election Day, why should Todd Rokita worry? ❖

Chris Cillizza, Washington Post: There are the problems within the GOP that the shutdown strategy has revealed. Nearly half (47 percent) of Republicans disapprove of the the way GOP has handled budget talks, a remarkable level of discord across the country that mirrors infighting in Washington. Look deeper into the numbers and the divides become even clearer. More than six in 10 Republicans who call themselves "very conservative" approve of their party's handling of the budget negotiations, according to combined Post-ABC polls over the past two weeks. Approval drops sharply to 48 percent among those who are only "somewhat conservative" and again to 42 percent among those who are moderate or liberal. By focusing so heavily on tying the delay or defunding of Obamacare to the government shutdown — an unpopular position, according to polls — Republicans in Washington played to the wishes of their base. But, as the 2012 election showed, the Republican base is not what it once was. The shutdown is a clear setback in those efforts. ❖

Doug Ross, NWI Times: When Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson asked Gov. Mike Pence for immediate assistance from the Indiana State Police, she didn't get what she expected. She got valuable recommendations on shaking up the Police Department, but the city's immediate need of extra manpower in the midst of a rash of homicides wasn't met. There's precedent for sending state police troopers to Gary. Evan Bayh did so when he was governor. When I last talked to Bayh a few months ago, we discussed Gary's crime problem and the need for help from the governor's office. Bayh was all for sending the state police back in so Gary police could focus on those homicides. So why didn't Pence send troopers to help? I've heard a lot of speculation about political reasons for Bayh's decision to reinforce the Gary police with state troopers and for Pence's decision to review Gary Police Department operations instead. The basic argument goes like this: Bayh, of course, is a Democrat, so naturally he would help Gary. Pence is a Republican, so why should he help a city that didn't vote for him? I don't buy that theory. Pence is a political animal, as are most elected officials, but he also knows he was elected to represent all of Indiana, not just Republicans. There's been a lot of speculation about Bayh running for governor in 2016. It would be a race between a moderate Democrat and a fiscally and socially conservative Republican. Bayh was a popular governor. He has a million-dollar smile and shows a lot of empathy. He told me he misses public service. ❖



Obama signs Bucshon truck bill

INDIANAPOLIS - President Obama signed H.R. 3095, a bill sponsored by U.S. Reps. Larry Bucshon, M.D. (R-IN) and Daniel Lipinski (D-IL) into law on Tuesday. H.R. 3095 is a bipartisan measure to require due process on a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration guidance and save America's trucking industry \$1 billion dollars. This marks the second bill authored by Bucshon that President Obama has signed into law. The law passed unanimously in both the House and Senate and was referred to as a show case for "...what just might be the most efficient Congress has been in years." "H.R. 3095 is a common sense, responsible bill with the potential to save the trucking industry \$1 billion that received bipartisan support in Congress," said Bucshon. "FMSCA will now have to go through the proper rule making process if it wants to weigh in on sleep apnea and incorporate the stakeholders, including the trucking community and medical professional. I am very pleased to have worked with my colleagues in Congress on both sides of the aisle to get H.R. 3095 passed into law."



Krusas to be sentenced

HAMMOND - Former Gary City Councilwoman Marilyn Krusas went 20 years without filing her federal income taxes, but prosecutors say poverty isn't what stopped her (Post-Tribune). During that same time, she was earning and spending hundreds of thousands of dollars just from

investment accounts and inheritances. Krusas, 70, pleaded guilty in April to one count of tax evasion, admitting she hid a \$232,000 inheritance from the federal government to avoid paying taxes she owed after not filing a tax return since 1991. That evidently wasn't the only money she came into, however, and she wasn't using any of it to pay off her debt to the government, according to a sentencing memorandum filed Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Hammond. Krusas also received in 1996 an inheritance of \$20,000 in bonds but never filed a tax return for that year. The next year, she earned \$146,149 from a stock transaction but again never filed a return. In 1998, she spent \$154,000 from an investment account and then cashed out and spent \$183,000 from her investment accounts the next year. Krusas finally filed a tax return for 2011, but it was 22 days late and came after the criminal investigation into her had already started, according to the government.

Booker wins NJ Senate seat

NEWARK - Newark Mayor Cory Booker, the Twitter star with a Rolodex of Hollywood, was elected to the Senate on Wednesday following a New Jersey special election campaign that lacked suspense (Roll Call). After leading in the polls by double digits for the duration, the Democrat handily defeated conservative activist Steve Lonegan. The Associated Press called the race for Booker with 55 percent of precincts reporting, and the mayor ahead 55 percent to 44 percent. Booker will fill the remaining term of the late Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg, D-N.J. The senator's June 3 death led to the interim appointment of Republican Jeff Chiesa and a special election four months later.

Pence seeks one stop biz portal

INDIANAPOLIS - Governor Mike Pence and Secretary of State Connie Lawson today issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for purposes of designing, implementing, and supporting a "business one stop" (BOS) online portal for the State. "Easing the regulatory burden on Hoosier businesses is key to making Indiana the state that works," said Governor Pence. "With the implementation of the Business One Stop portal, the State of Indiana will help to cultivate a more business-friendly environment, increase efficiency and make it easier for businesses to start up, operate, and grow within the Hoosier state. I commend Secretary Lawson for the good work she and her team have done to this point and her dedication to the success of this project."

Pence announces 65/70 split opening

INDIANAPOLIS - Gov. Mike Pence announces that Interstates 65 and 70 between the north and south split are reopening to traffic tonight—more than two weeks ahead of an already aggressive schedule. Southbound traffic is now open and contractors expect to open the northbound side before midnight. "Closing interstate highways is hard on everybody, and Hoosiers are to be commended for their patience and cooperation during the I-65/I-70 South Split Project," Governor Pence said. "On behalf of the people of Indiana, I express my appreciation for the hard work and professionalism of the Indiana Department of Transportation and its contractors for completing these needed public safety improvements ahead of schedule and under budget."