



Holcomb navigates a stormy sprint

New GOP nominee lacks Pence funds, but knows the levers of power

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

LaPORTE, Ind. – The day began as many others over the past month for Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb. There were a fundraiser, a staff meeting and a departure to The Region. He is a man who wears many hats these days: State executive, gubernatorial nominee, fundraiser, cheerleader, student. The days are long, sometimes 18 hours or more.



The task at hand is huge. Holcomb must

raise somewhere north of \$5 million over the next 30 to 45 days. He must gin up his low name ID. His boss, Gov. Mike Pence, is mostly out of the state physically, and checked out mentally, so Holcomb finds



Lt. Gov. Holcomb with LaPorte Mayor Blair Milo and House Transportation Chairman Bill Soliday as he handed out a \$1 million Community Crossroads check. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

himself as the governor fill-in. And he must brand himself while attempting to recover from a polling deficit left over from Pence, arguably the most polarizing political figure in

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Mike Pence's future

By **JACK COLWELL**

SOUTH BEND – Gov. Mike Pence will not be governor of Indiana next year. Nor will Pence be vice president, unless there are monumental events to avert the looming defeat of Donald Trump in the presidential race

Q. So, where would that leave Pence?

A. Perhaps closer to his goal than he would have been if he had declined the vice presidential nomination and had run instead for reelection as governor.

Q. Really? Losing for vice president, maybe with the GOP ticket trounced, could leave Pence still viable for his



“Mr. Holcomb has to talk about things in the past because he has no plans for the future other than the same failed policies of the person who hand-picked him.”

- Democratic gubernatorial nominee John Gregg, to HPI



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goal of president?

A. Quite possibly. In fact, it could be argued that the worse the trouncing for Trump, the better politically for Pence.

Q. Won't Pence share blame if the Trump-Pence ticket is demolished?

A. No. Pence would get no blame. It wouldn't be his fault. Pence would get credit from Republican leaders for trying to hold the party together and save Republicans in governor, Senate and House races. They would think of how much worse things would have been if Pence hadn't been there to clean up after Trump's messes. Many Republicans now lament that it's not Pence leading the ticket. And that's his goal, someday, preferably in 2020, to lead the ticket, to be the presidential nominee and win.

Q. Couldn't Pence have been closer to a future presidential nomination by running for reelection as governor?

A. Probably not. He didn't exactly gain national recognition during a first term as governor. There was no guarantee that a second term would have been smoother, less controversial and more impressive as Republicans looked for a 2020 presidential nominee. It was far from certain that he would win reelection. His job approval rating had been abysmal. He was in a toss-up race. Defeat would have ended his political career.

Q. How's Pence doing now in the polls?

A. Good. A mid-August Gallup poll showed Pence with a net favorable rating of +11, with 36 percent favorable, 25 percent unfavorable and 39 percent with no opinion yet. That's way better than the negative ratings for Trump and Hillary Clinton. He also was doing better than Tim Kaine, his vice presidential opponent, who had a net favorable rating of +3.

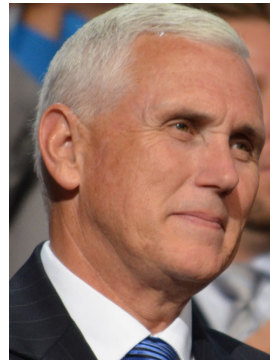
Q. So, Pence could be a top presidential contender next time?

A. Could be. Pence will have

almost saturation name recognition, something he wouldn't come close to having as governor of Indiana. If he continues to have a poll rating on the favorable side, he could be a formidable future contender. But there also is danger.

Q. What's the danger?

A. While nobody could blame him for a Trump loss, some party leaders and conservative voters could regard Pence as tainted by linking with Trump. Conservative columnist David Brooks expressed that view strongly after the Republican National Convention. Brooks wrote: "I left the arena each night burning with indignation at Mike Pence. I almost don't blame Trump. He is a morally untethered, spiritually vacuous man who appears haunted by multiple personality disorders. It is the 'sane' and 'reasonable' Republicans who deserve the shame, the ones who stood silently by, or worse, while Donald Trump gave away their party's sacred inheritance."



Q. Do losing a vice presidential candidates often bounce back to win the presidency the next time?

A. Not often. Politico points out that no losing vice presidential candidate has gone on to win the presidency since Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Q. If Pence does get the 2020 nomination, would that problem of a defeated vice presidential candidate going on to the White House mean that he probably would lose that November?

A. Not necessarily. The first step for Pence would of course be winning the nomination. And the Republican nomination to run against President Hillary Clinton, who would be seeking to extend Democratic control of the White House to 16 years, could be much more valuable than the Trump nomination of 2016. ❖

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

Holcomb, from page 1

modern Hoosier history.

"I've got a day job," Holcomb says from the front seat of the Chevy Tahoe. "Filling in for the governor. I campaign at night. I'm doing four jobs that are equally important. Perpetual motion is my personality." One day last week, he drove to Mishawaka, then over to Elkhart, back to Indy, then flew to Evansville. It's the daunting "Elkhart to Evansville" long-play Hoosier loop.

A day like last Wednesday was instructive. After dialing for dollars, talking with producers about his first TV ad, running the traps with his staff, he climbs into the black Chevy Tahoe to Merrillville, where he'll attend a jobs announcement with the Indiana Economic Development Corporation at Polycon. There will be a briefing at the Purdue Technology Center with IEDC's Victor Smith and the Northwest Regional Development Authority's Bill Hanna and Bill Sheldrake over a light lunch. Then his gubernatorial hat goes on with a \$1 million INDOT Community Crossings check for one of his favorite mayors, LaPorte's Blair Milo. It was to be all capped off with a meet-and-greet at South Bend diner and a press conference. Somewhere in there would be a Howey Politics interview.

The rain pelting the Tahoe throughout the two-hour drive up I-65 to Merrillville seemed routine during this very stormy August. Arriving at Polycon, there is an event tent outside, but it is raining cats and dogs, so the announcement of 100 new jobs goes inside. Here we find Holcomb at his affable and rhetorical best. He spends 15 minutes greeting people and making small talk. "It's a great day, a good day," Holcomb says at one point. There is Merrillville Councilman Shawn Pettit, who once openly feuded with Holcomb's former boss, Gov. Mitch Daniels. There had been questions about Pettit meeting Holcomb, but the nominee brushed them aside and engaged in a friendly conversation.

Eric Holcomb gets along with just about everybody. He and Pettit sat comfortably next to each other as they heralded the new jobs. Berle Blitstein, the Polycon CEO, pays tribute and quotes to his father, Mort, telling the triumphant gathering, "Tell the truth and you never have to remember what to say."

For Holcomb, this is an official event candidates love, announcing a hundred good-paying jobs. Polycon

was an Illinois company which migrated to Indiana 15 years ago, or "before it was cool," Holcomb said. "But it's a trend. You saw what was possible on the horizon here in Northwest Indiana. It will add to Indiana's record-setting workforce." Councilman Pettit speaks after Holcomb, getting very emotional as he talks about Polycon's move to Merrillville, saying, "This is Berle's baby, well, I'm the godfather. If you build it, they will come."

Holcomb talked to a Region reporter, saying, "I am laser-focused for years. The Region is blessed with location, location, location. We can get our goods out to 80% of the population in 24 hours. It's companies like Polycon that make that happen."

As the entourage moves outside to do the symbolic groundbreaking, sunlight breaks out and people smile. The sun and encroaching blue skies turn the scene into a sultry steam bath, setting in meteorological motion the sensational events over another horizon.

Tasks at hand

Holcomb is an ardent student of history and he knows what he faces. Never in modern Hoosier politics, no, make that American politics, has a gubernatorial candidate faced what Holcomb does today: Essentially a 100-

day sprint to the general election. At this writing, it is down to 75 days. Other nominees have won late-summer primaries, but after running for months, if not years. Holcomb was a third-place U.S. Senate candidate who struggled to raise money until Gov. Pence named him lieutenant governor in March. He won a primary and did the things that running mates do. This all began to change in late June. Pence's pollster, Kellyanne Conway, suggested Pence to Donald Trump as the veepstakes headed into its home stretch.

In Trump's fascinating mind, Pence is from "Importantville, Indiana." It is a state at the center of his political universe. Hoosier voters put Trump over the top for his nomination

on May 3. Why not bring the governor into his fold, even if Pence had endorsed "Lyn' Ted" Cruz? There had been Trump's meeting with evangelical leaders in June, where he provided a Federalist Society list of potential Supreme Court justices. Trump emerged as a "baby Christian" in the eyes of James Dobson, and while no one talks, the adhesive for the stunning evangelical support of Trump could become thicker and stickier if a true believer such as Pence joined the ticket.

At some point in late June, and certainly by the Fourth of July, the new reality hit Holcomb: The Indiana gubernatorial nomination could be up for grabs in just weeks. He found himself as the proverbial "next man up."



Lt. Gov. Holcomb listens to Merrillville Councilman Shawn Pettit, who once sparred with Gov. Mitch Daniels (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

He had Pence's backing. He got a shot of national exposure when he nominated Pence at the RNC. He could get off to a running start armed with perhaps \$5- to \$6-million of the Pence reelection war chest. Democrat John Gregg had based his entire campaign on being the anti-Pence.

On July 14, Holcomb watched his boss fly off to Teterboro to fetch himself a spot on the ticket as Trump wavered and stewed about media leaks. On July 16, the Trump/Pence ticket emerged in Manhattan. Holcomb had 12 days to secure a nomination, with him and U.S. Reps. Susan Brooks and Todd Rokita working the Cleveland hotel alcoves, bars and the Republican National Convention floor in search of 12 Republican Central Committee votes.

Holcomb worked his deep connections with the GOP Committee, having chaired it for the last two governors. He had the support of Sen. Dan Coats. Even though Brooks and Rokita had million dollars plus cash on hand, Holcomb had, theoretically, the Pence funds. He won the nomination on a second ballot. Three days later he would get \$1.25 million from the Pence reelection.

The day before Holcomb journeyed to Merrillville, a new reality had set in. Campaign manager Mike O'Brien confirmed what HPI had figured out. The Pence campaign, for reasons no one knows or if they do, won't publicly discuss, failed to move most of its funds to either the Republican Governors Association or the Indiana GOP. "You're not going to see a direct transfer from Mike Pence," said O'Brien. He stayed within the Holcomb happy warrior MO. "We'll be fully funded. Normally a candidate for governor spends four years stockpiling funds. We can't do that. Our cash flow will be raise and spend."

That Pence didn't transfer the funds before becoming a federal candidate on July 19 is a stunning development. Most senior Republicans not only believed the Pence money would go to the new nominee, they demanded it. Now they are left to wonder, was this just a colossal screwup as Pence staffers scrambled to New York with the door slamming on their posteriors? Or was this a calculated Evan Bayh-style move of keeping the funds available for future post-Nov. 8 options?

The Holcomb campaign won't speculate. The

Pence people have checked out and the governor won't take questions from Indiana news media, just like he did during the 2012 campaign, only to plead for a "do over" in the HPI office three days before he assumed office.

There is intrinsic and outward loyalty to the vice presidential nominee in these Holcomb quarters. But there are read-between-the-lines comments. On Aug. 1, when Holcomb was asked about the Pence funds, he said, "I'll let Gov. Pence speak for every penny he decides to spend. I am concerned about raising the money I need. I am confident I can do that. We'll raise the millions it will take to get the message out over the next 100 days."

Asked whether some of the Pence funds will be refunded to the RGA, O'Brien responded, "Can't comment on what Mike Pence might do. I'll just say the RGA is all in for us and they'll invest. You'll see it soon." The RGA did put \$250,000 into the Holcomb campaign earlier this month, with Holcomb campaign spokesman Pete Seat calling it a "new investment" and not recycled Pence funds.

The brutal fact is, however, that Holcomb won't have most of the Pence funds. His mountain of winning an election in unprecedented fashion just went from Pike's Peak to Denali.

The Region lesson

At the Purdue Tech Center in Merrillville, Holcomb received a briefing on something he helped create. It was from the Regional Development Authority, the RDA, which was created by Gov. Daniels' Major Moves program. As deputy chief of staff, Holcomb was a liaison to many of the trade unions which came on board. So effective was Holcomb at this mission that when the 2008 Indiana Democratic Party Jefferson-Jackson Dinner took place with Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton as keynoters, the two union sponsors of the event with banners flanking the podium had endorsed Gov. Daniels' reelection. Folks tend to like Eric Holcomb.

The IEDC and the RDA gave a briefing on the South Shore Line double tracking, and its southern Lake County spur, which will take it down to Dyer. This is a \$2.3 billion investment, with \$1.9 billion coming from the private sector. Some 15 out of 16 communities have pledged CREDIT funding. It's the kind of asset management Mitch Daniels, and by extension, Eric Holcomb, love. The Chicago Tribune wrote on Aug. 23 that the South Shore extension and double tracking will be a magnet for Chicagoans tired of high taxes, huge deficits and corruption. A commute from Michigan City now takes 100 minutes. With double tracking, it will take an hour.

"This is the ground floor for a lot of these neigh-



Holcomb gets a briefing on the Northwest RDA created by Gov. Daniels at the Purdue Technology Center, and chats with IEDC Chairman Victor Smith at Polycon. (HPI Photos by Brian A. Howe)

borhoods that will be anchored by these transit areas," Hanna tells Holcomb in a presentation that also included Bill Sheldrake. "We're saying that we're the gateway to Chicago in Indiana. I want Indianapolis to look at us as a producer." He later explained, "I was really interested in telling him since he was there at the beginning" of Major Moves Hanna said of Holcomb.

Holcomb concluded the meeting, telling Hanna and Victor Smith, "I think you're on a brisk walk."

On to LaPorte.

Checks and crisis

For a politician, the only thing better than receiving a big campaign check is handing one for \$1 million to a mayor with cameras rolling and reporters scribbling. That was what LaPorte was all about on this steamy and sunny Wednesday afternoon. As House Transportation Chairman Ed Soliday, INDOT Commissioner Brandye Hendrickson, and an array of IEDC, IN-

DOT, LaPorte city employees and the press looked on at the LaPorte Fire Department, Holcomb presented a million bucks to Mayor Milo in her self-described "Hub of Awesome."

"The state is spending \$850 million on 770 road projects," Holcomb said as his cellphone quivered in his pocket. "While other states have struggled, Indiana has continued to invest year after year without raising taxes." A minute later, he said, "So let's hand out that check." Milo called Holcomb a "tremendous champion for communities" and then added the magic words: "Paving work begins next week in the Hub of Awesome."

As Holcomb chatted with the press, HPI got a call from Howard County Republican Chairman Craig Dunn, who had just attempted to reach the lieutenant governor. "We just got hit by the worst tornado since Palm Sunday," Dunn said, referencing the 1965 legendary tornado outbreak. "There are blocks and blocks of homes that have lost their roofs."

Holcomb staffers Pete Seat and Jake Oakman were getting calls and texts on this disaster. Holcomb's

Indiana State Police driver, Master Trooper Jerrod Patty, began reaching out. After a few minutes, Holcomb and staff went into a LaPorte Fire Department conference room to begin to sort things out.

Gov. Pence was campaigning in Leland, N.C., and was briefed by his staff before speaking at 3 p.m. At some point, Pence and Holcomb talked. The LG was in touch with the Indiana Homeland Security department. He quickly decided to forgo a campaign stop scheduled for South Bend and head to the Emergency Operations Center in Indianapolis.

Holcomb and staff emerged from the conference room. A TV set on the LFD office was showing video of the actual tornado. Holcomb stood and watched silently, flanked by staff and Mayor Milo. There were gasps in the room when the flattened Starbucks was shown. There had been a very brief discussion about whether to swing

through ground zero in Kokomo, and it was quickly discarded. There should be no interference with first responders.

With Patty at the wheel, Holcomb made a beeline back to Indianapolis, traveling down SR39, U.S. 30 and U.S. 31 at speeds approaching 100 mph. During the trip back, staffers learned that there were no injuries at the Starbucks and at Markland Mall. "Miraculous," Holcomb said in reaction.

Dunn, writing in his HPI column (see Page 10), observed, "My cellphone rang at a little after 4 p.m. It was Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb. He wanted a first-hand report of the destruction. After hearing my report which was a simple, 'Tornado on the ground for

about eight miles, 300 yards wide, massive destruction,' Holcomb told me that the State of Indiana would bring all the resources they could and bring them as quickly as possible to Kokomo and Howard County. He wasn't kidding. Indiana State Police and State Highway trucks started to pour into the Kokomo community from around the state."

The LG's entourage sped past the city on the new



Lt. Gov. Holcomb, LaPorte Mayor Blair Milo, Master Trooper Jerrod Patty and Holcomb aides Jake Oakman and Pete Seat watch TV coverage of the devastating Kokomo tornado, then made a beeline back to Indianapolis. (HPI Photos by Brian A. Howe)

U.S. 31 bypass Holcomb had helped create with his work on Major Moves, witnessing tornado damage on Markland Avenue near the bypass. During the trip back, Holcomb monitored a second line of storms to his northwest, which spawned even more warnings and tornadoes well into Wednesday evening. At one point, Holcomb was told there were three funnel clouds on the ground simultaneously. The LG returned to Indianapolis shortly before 6 p.m. after a 90 minute drive from LaPorte, where he joined Pence at the EOC.

The planned HPI interview for this segment of the trip wasn't broached. This was a crisis moment. Watching storm cells on radar, Holcomb was concerned about where his wife was. He was in touch with Gov. Pence. The two would meet at the EOC and as the governor addressed a statewide TV audience at 8 p.m.

Holcomb faced his first natural disaster as lieutenant governor. He was calm, collected and matter of fact. Had he ever been in a tornado? No, he said.

Epilogue

Holcomb faces a political tornado on Nov. 8. There are bizarre crosswinds with the Trump/Pence campaign, with the reemergence of Evan Bayh in the U.S. Senate race, and with one hand financially tied behind his back. He is a constant font of good cheer. He is curious and engaged. He tends to find a good balance of levity and humor. His staff time with Gov. Daniels and Sen. Coats has given him a good grasp of where the

levers of power are and how they can be effectively used.

Holcomb works easily with those from the other side of the aisle. He looks for alliances where others tend to find opponents and suspicion.

He faces challenges. The Gregg campaign began airing a TV ad over the weekend connecting him to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the Pence administration.

Holcomb approaches RFRA with some distance, saying on July 24 that he seeks a balance between individual rights and religious freedom and will weigh thoughtfully any legislation that reaches his desk if elected. It's a stance designed not to alienate the evangelical wing of the GOP or independents he must have to win the election. He's surrounded by many figures in the Daniels wing of the party that would prefer the social issues "truce" though he is alienated from Bill Oesterle, who once considered him "family." O'Brien, for instance, was a driving force behind Indiana Competes, the advocacy group pushing for the civil rights extension.

The Holcomb campaign doesn't see social issues as a priority, with sources saying the issue is way down the list of what Hoosier voters seek. But it will be an issue that will surface in the debates and in January. Voters will want to know where he stands.

As last Wednesday revealed, Holcomb understands the levers of incumbency that give him some advantages. He's made what one source says is a five-week media buy.

With nine weeks left, the Holcomb/Gregg race has a long way to go, but it will be fast. ❖



Lt.. Gov. Holcomb rides shotgun as Master Trooper Patty makes a beeline down U.S. 31 to the EOC. Holcomb with Gov. Pence at the EOC getting a briefing on the Kokomo tornado, then on the ground in Kokomo with Gov. Pence, Mayor Greg Goodnight, Sen. Jim Buck, Sen. Joe Donnelly and Rep. Heath VanNatter. (HPI, Indiana Public Media and Kokomo Tribune photos)

Gregg seeks solutions as drug, mental health crisis impacts Indiana

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

WEST BADEN, Ind. – It’s a story John Gregg has heard over and over again: Employers have job openings. They just can’t find enough applicants who can pass a drug test.

When he broached the topic at a speech before the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns last winter, some 20 local officials, “mayors, clerk-treasurers, city councilmen followed me out the door to talk about it.” Another time it was a group of executives he met with in Indianapolis.

It isn’t just those who can’t pass a marijuana screening, Gregg said in a sit-down interview with Howey Politics Indiana here at the Indiana Democratic Editorial Association convention. Cheap heroin is now available in rural areas across the state as well as cities and suburbs. “We’re dealing with heroin addiction,” Gregg said. “It’s a mental health issue. There’s such a stigma attached to drug addiction. If someone has a mental health problem, people will say, ‘How can we help you?’ If it’s a drug addiction, they don’t know what to say. We’ve got to lose the stigma. These are our brothers and sisters, our co-workers, our neighbors and members in our church congregation. It grew out of listening to people for four years talking about drug problems.

“Hoosiers need to feel safe in their homes, in their work place, in their schools and in their communities,” Gregg said. “That’s a fundamental right. It is one of the four major points that I have talked about since January. It’s not a political problem. Addiction is not a Republican addiction or a Democratic addiction. We’re doing nothing about it. We don’t know what we’re doing.”

Gregg noted Gov. Mike Pence’s Drug Task Force and said he would keep it in place if elected. “This is not going to be fixed two years from now, four years from

now. We can start making progress. It’s going to take a coordinated plan with law enforcement, public health people to deal with it. I can go and buy heroin out in the country cheaper than a six pack of beer. We’ve got 14 opioid treatment facilities in the state and Illinois has 71. Leaders need to talk about tough issues.”

A day earlier in Evansville, Gregg unveiled his “Safe Communities Plan,” stressing the urgency of dealing with the state’s drug problem. “Indiana leads the nation in meth, we’re fifth in heroin and 15th highest for opioid overdoses,” Gregg said. “Yet, Indiana lags behind its neighbors when it comes to access to treatment, despite studies proving that a dollar spent on substance abuse treatment saves \$4 in healthcare costs and \$7 in law enforcement and other criminal justice costs.”

“John Gregg and I are about practical solutions and real results. We know that the success and growth of our economy are directly linked to the safety and security of our families and communities,” said State Rep. Christina Hale, Gregg’s lieutenant governor nominee. “We will work with all communities, all stakeholders and all Hoosiers to take on these important issues and move Indiana forward.”

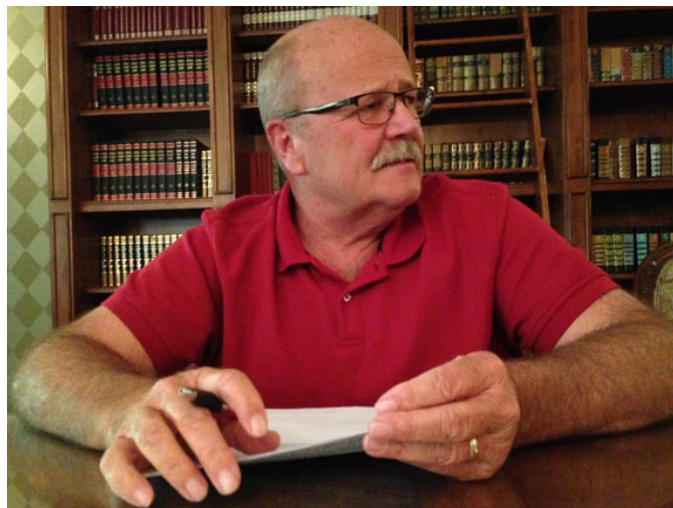
Observing that Indiana ranks in the 40th percentile in mental health funding, and with Senate President David Long and House Speaker Brian Bosma acknowledging the need for more, how does Gregg envision funding?

“Excellent question,” Gregg said. “We’ve got to see what works and what doesn’t. You have to have prosecutors,

state police, local police, county sheriffs sitting at the table. You’ve got to have Workforce Development sitting here. Some of these are under the governor, some under the lieutenant governor. Then you have the mental health people sitting there and the doctors and social workers. You have to have the DOC. You’re talking about a huge table of people. At the local level, some of these are under the county council and some are under county commissioners. We have to map out who’s doing what and what works. I don’t have any idea what works. But it’s not me, it’s we.”

“We’ve got to collect better data,” Gregg continued. “One area where we are leaving money on the table is with the federal government. There are a lot of federal monies available for public health, workforce development, pre-kindergarten. We have to actively pursue the grants.”

The Gregg/Hale Plan has six components. It will create a statewide drug treatment network made up of new and existing treatment facilities; require physicians



Democrat gubernatorial nominee John Gregg talks with HPI in the library of the West Baden Hotel on Friday. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

and pharmacists to more routinely check Indiana's prescription drug database to prevent potential addictions or overdoses; direct Indiana State Police (ISP) to concentrate resources in drug usage hotspots; increase ISP undercover assignments and take down "pill mills"; support legislation to provide first responders with medication to halt overdoses; combat drug smuggling by creating a multi-person interdiction team in each of the state police operational areas; share data among law enforcement agencies to better coordinate, track and predict drug trafficking; and increase penalties for those who target pharmacies for the purpose of making methamphetamine.

They will work with local law enforcement agencies to implement community policing approaches in interested cities and towns across Indiana by helping local agencies apply for federal grants; developing a statewide policing model of best practices and recommendations to promote better interaction and communication between law enforcement and the communities they serve; supporting independent and professional investigations in police involved shootings; creating a toll-free tip line to anonymously report suspicious activities in communities; and by directing the Indiana State Police to coordinate with the Indiana Department of Education, the Higher Education Commission and local authorities to offer assistance to individual schools in developing safety plans.

On the topic of sexual assaults of Hoosier youth, the Democrats will propose legislation to update state laws and shut down acts of violence against our youngest citizens. Proposals include measures to increase penalties for those who purchase commercial sex from minors; ban convicted sexual predators from school grounds; develop guidelines for online communication between school personnel and students; and support additional background checks and training for all adults working with children.

They will work with the Indiana State Police to expand their cybercrimes unit to more aggressively go after those who prey on children and the elderly, commit identification theft, or who steal personal or business information.

With nearly 38 percent of offenders released from the Indiana Department of Correction being recommitted within three years of their release date, the Gregg/Hale administration will work to stop this expensive revolving door. To help non-violent offenders find employment, a Gregg/Hale administration will offer expungement assistance at DWD WorkOne locations; create tax credits for

businesses that hire ex-offenders; and assemble a working group of experts to examine the various services available to ex-offenders in order to streamline services and reduce waste.

And Gregg promised to end budget reversions for public safety departments. "I'm done reverting money of public safety units. The legislature appropriates money to a public safety agency," he said. "They need it. They need to be able to spend that money."

On other issues:

Gregg said that the state had a \$1.2 billion surplus when the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks occurred and he favors keeping that kind of cushion.

"We didn't have to lay off state troopers," Gregg said. "I'm glad we've got a healthy surplus and I've never voted for a tax increase. I'm not proposing any tax increases. But what I am saying is when your roof leaks, you fix it."

Asked about the \$800 million deficit Holcomb says Gov. Mitch Daniels inherited from the Keran Administration, Gregg noted that the Republican Indiana Senate signed off on every budget he played a role in. "They were all bipartisan," Gregg said. "They forget we had a surplus. They need to be honest and just say, look,

that money was spent because of 9/11. The economy shut down overnight and they know that. I always get a kick out of Eric Holcomb saying 'we inherited.' He didn't do anything to solve the state's problems. He was a political hatchet man. If he thinks he did, good for him. History and the facts show otherwise. The legislative process is taking the best ideas of Democrats and Republicans. That's why Brian Bosma and I worked together to repeal the inventory tax. Mr. Holcomb has to talk about things in the past because he has no plan for the future other than the same failed policies of the person who hand-picked him. Everybody knows who picked him."

How does Gregg approach the race with Pence out? "No differently," Gregg said. "It's still about the economy. That's all it's ever been about. The truth of the matter is our per-capita income slid to 38th, four places, under my current opponent's watch. That means that a family of four, a mom and dad and two kids sitting down for supper tonight here in Springs Valley, they've got \$7,000 less a year. That's \$150 a week. That affects your grocery bill, the car you drive. That's a lot of money."

On a civil rights expansion: "My opponent immediately said he was ready to run on Mike Pence's record," Gregg said. "He felt the governor struck a good balance on the LGBT issue and he is more of the same on social policies." He views the civil rights expansion through an economic lens. "We've got to get away from social issues. This is an economic issue. If Indiana is going to grow, we have to be a welcoming state. It is an issue with us in keeping talent and recruiting talent, keeping the Mil-



John Gregg unveiled his "Safe Communities" proposals in Evansville on Thursday.

lennials here. Bring our young people back to Indiana. This is a huge economic impact. We've got a damaged reputation and my opponent believes that LGBT discrimination doesn't matter, but it does. It's the same old Mike Pence agenda. He learned under John Hostettler." Gregg vowed to push for the expansion "in my first State of the State address." He added, "It's not just a Democrat issue. Mayors Brainard, Ballard, Bennett and Winnecke have all pushed the issue" he said of the Republican mayors of Carmel, Indianapolis, Terre Haute and Evansville.

Gregg's DOMA vote: Asked about his support for the Defense of Marriage Act, Gregg said, "Is that the bill that Bill Clinton signed? Yeah. Is that the bill Hillary Clinton voted for? Yeah. When I'm talking about civil rights, we're talking about basic civil rights protection. They can talk about anything they want to. The whole issue is about civil rights protection. They can talk about me and my record. They always want to talk in the past. He wants to go back."

On universal broadband:



President



HPI Status: Leans Trump/Pence

Governor



HPI Status: Leans Gregg

U.S. Senate



HPI Status: Leans Bayh

Gregg would like to see high speed broadband for all Hoosiers within four years. "Fourteen percent don't have broadband access," Gregg said. "That is on our short list of goals. We want that program up within four years. We hear from our friends in the utilities, 'We're getting there, we're getting there.' Well they are not getting there fast enough. Kentucky and Tennessee now have it statewide. It's something we have to have if we're going to stay viable."

On where the race stands: Gregg said that the recent internal Democrat poll for Evan Bayh had him leading Holcomb by 7%. The recent Monmouth Poll had Holcomb leading 42-41%. "We don't focus on that, we focus on name ID and positive and negative," Gregg said. "We have great name ID. We focus on substantive issues and fundraising. We're going to focus on fundraising. I'm not going to sleep in until the day after the election. I've got Republican legislators who say we have good ideas." ❖

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Surviving the Kokomo tornadoes

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO – Howard County and the City of Kokomo are not the first areas to be visited by the destructive forces of a tornado, nor are they the victims of the worst tornado. They are the victims of three nasty twisters that touched down last Wednesday. When you are in the middle of a tornado you don't spend a lot of time debating whether it is an F2, F3 or F4 storm that is flattening your house, destroying your business or totally disrupting your day-to-day life.



There's quite a bit of chance and luck that goes into determining whether you emerge alive from a big tornado. When and where the twister touches down, the time of day, how long and wide the path of destruction and the day of the week are all variables that go into Mother Nature's lottery of life. Of course, deci-

sions and actions taken by governmental bodies and individuals also help or hinder the ultimate outcome of the tragedy of a tornado.

Very accidentally, I found myself at ground zero in the direct path of the tornado at 3:20 p.m. Sometimes innocent decisions can alter your life. Thankfully, my number didn't come up on the big old wheel of fortune this time. It was 2:25, and I was in the family room of my home, entertaining my brother visiting from Florida. It was sunny outside but you could hear a faint rumbling of thunder from the west. My brother said quite offhandedly that the next time he visited that he would like to visit my wife's business. Jill is president of Bona Vista Programs, a large not-for-profit that serves mentally and physically challenged infants, children and adults. I told my brother

that there was no reason that he couldn't visit her organization on this trip. We hurriedly hopped in my vehicle and started for town.

At 2:45 p.m. we pulled into the parking lot at her main building and both of our cellphones began sounding an alarm. Until that point, we had no idea that a tornado had been sighted, heading for Kokomo (pictured above).

After the 2013 tornado unexpectedly hit Kokomo on a Sunday afternoon in November, Howard County government addressed the problem of emergency notification. Unlike many cities of their size, Kokomo had not installed tornado sirens. Instead of sirens, Kokomo City government had arranged for weather radios to be available for its citizens at significant discounts. This was a step in the right direction but didn't address warnings for those at work, ball parks or in their autos. Howard County government made the significant commitment to fund and implement the Everbridge Mass Notification system. The Howard County Council allocated over \$500,000 for its purchase and the Howard County commissioners arranged for the implementation from start to finish.

Once again, until my cellphone sounded the alarm, I had no idea that there were serious problems looming in the dark skies approaching from the west.

We walked into the Bona Vista building where the building's tornado siren was blaring. My brother received a quick tour as my wife went from room to room making sure that all of the 200 children in the building were safe in interior rooms, huddled with Bona Vista staff members.

While my wife busied herself with making sure the children were safe. I pulled up Tune In Radio on my cellphone and dialed up the Howard County Sheriff's Department radio communications. I was amazed that our brave deputies were out risking their lives to dutifully radio in the play-by-play course of the storm. After about three reported sightings of a tornado on the ground, you could plot the course of the storm and know that an angry Mother Nature was bearing down on the location where I stood.

The cellphone warning, coupled with the clear locational reports of the path of the tornado, was probably the single biggest factor in saving people from major injury or death. With the children secure and the other numerous

Bona Vista facilities notified, my wife, brother, three staff members and I headed to the windows on the west side of the building. We could see swirling clouds and little funnels trying to drop down. From all appearances it looked like the tornado had lifted up from the ground and just might spare a sizable chunk of Kokomo from disaster.

However, this was not to be. After staring into the approaching disaster for a few minutes, it became obvious that we weren't even looking at the real tornado, which was hidden by a grove of trees. All we could see above the trees was a boiling black cloud and intermittent flashes of bright blue and orange from numerous electrical transformers as they exploded. We couldn't see the funnel shape of the tornado for the trees. Until we could! First came the swirling debris cloud throwing out small boards and tree limbs. Next came chunks of roofs, more boards and larger limbs. We had just enough time to run to an interior room and take cover. One minute later, it was all over. It was 3:20 p.m.

We emerged to thankfully find that everyone in the building was uninjured. I stepped outside to see a nightmare of destruction just 75 yards from where I stood. The roof of the building looked like a hairbrush with 2x4s sticking straight out the top. A partial garage lay in the parking lot, dropped out of the sky like an empty pop can. Boards, roofing and limbs covered everything. Car windows were exploded from pressure differentials, debris or a combination of both. All of the autos were peppered with pockmarks from projectiles hurled by the fury.

My own office was three blocks south of the main path of destruction. My brother and I brushed the glass out of the seats of my vehicle and made our way through a sea of destruction to check on my business. Three years earlier, in the November tornado, most of the roof and all of the windows of my office were destroyed. This time we were lucky and we dodged nature's bullet.

As we drove from my office to my home, forced to take a route eight miles to the west before we could find an open road to the north, I was amazed at the quick response of Kokomo's police and fire services, along with Howard County sheriff's deputies. It was obvious that they were rolling before the storm stopped. All of these first responders were obviously organized and very well led. They

did a great job in initially helping those in the most need and in securing areas with live electrical wires. Later, they provided rescue assistance and helped to secure residential neighborhoods from outside intruders.

My cellphone rang at a little after 4 p.m. It was Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb, who wanted a first-hand report of the destruction. After hearing my report, "Tornado on the ground for about eight miles, 300 yards wide, massive destruction," Holcomb told me that the State of Indiana would bring all the resources they could as quickly as possible to Kokomo and Howard County.

He wasn't kidding. Indiana State Police and state highway trucks started to pour into the Kokomo community from around the state. The next morning, Gov. Pence left his vice presidential campaign to come to Kokomo

with Holcomb and Sen. Joe Donnelly to view the destruction and reassure the people most affected. Later, Reps. Todd Rokita, Susan Brooks and Todd Young also came to offer help.

There are many stories of bravery and good decisions that saved lives and protected property. From the caregivers at Bona Vista who herded frightened children into interior rooms, to the barista at Starbucks who moved his customers and staff into a restroom just before his building collapsed, to the teachers and administrators who held their students in place, to our first responders who raced to the scene of disaster, we owe a tremendous debt of thanks. You made the randomness of natural disaster less severe than it could have been.

To the Red Cross, Salvation Army and those charities and organizations that remain unseen until disaster strikes, I say thank you. I will never forget the man who was filthy dirty and exhausted from his clean-up duties, who stood in front of the mobile relief unit of the Salvation Army waiting for something cool to drink. The look on his face expressed a gratitude that words could never express.

Finally, I thank the government that many months earlier made a significant investment in the safety of its citizens and gave us 30 minutes to protect ourselves and others. We don't thank government very often, but this time they did a job well. ❖

Dunn is chairman of the Howard County Republican Party.



Competing blank slates for governor

By MARK SOUDER

FORT WAYNE – The challenge of this year’s gubernatorial election is different. Contrary to feelings inside most campaign bubbles, almost no one is paying attention and few voters care about the race. This helps both Eric Holcomb and John Gregg because both begin as relative unknowns to most but party loyalists. Name identification is not the same as having an image attached to it.



It helps Holcomb because attempts by Gregg to connect him to Mike Pence don’t work except to appeal to hard-core Democrats. The obsession with all things Trump, and secondarily with all things Hillary, means that voters at this point connect Pence with Trump. While Trump/Pence could lose in Indiana, it certainly doesn’t appear so and my guess is that Indiana would be one of the last states to go even in a Democrat tsunami. So why would you tie Holcomb

to Pence?

What could matter, if Holcomb capitalizes upon it, are his even closer ties to Mitch Daniels. Daniels is a popular and respected figure, possibly more in memory than at the time. It would make Gregg appear to be running against both Pence and Daniels.

On the other hand, Gregg has a different problem than Holcomb. For someone who served in his first elective office 42 years ago and was Indiana House speaker in the last century, he also remains a relative blank slate. He is the caricature of an “old boy Indiana politician” to those who can identify him. Part of the reason is because Gregg chose to run an ad campaign the last time he ran for governor that positioned himself that way.

Gregg also cannot escape that he has been and is a Hillary guy in a state where Hillary people aren’t overwhelmingly popular. In other words, Gregg’s blank slate can be filled with things that do repel voters including his past record.

Thus Gregg has tried a couple of things. One is to act like he is running for superintendent of education. Glenda Ritz has been a remarkably incompetent superintendent of education, but as any observer knows, the school voucher program is popular among those who utilize it and hated by those aligned in any way with the public schools. Politically that is important because in Indiana, many of those teachers, school board members and PTA leaders are Republicans. They didn’t elect Ritz; they ousted Bennett. It is the same governing result but it

is not the same thing politically.

Anger often does not have coattails. If it did, 80-year-old Republican senators would not have been re-nominated in the same primaries as Trump. For an “angry voter” year in both parties, most incumbents survived at an incredibly high rate and by large margins. Furthermore, in my time in Indiana politics I seldom saw a more vicious backlash than against both Mourdock and Bennett. Yet Gregg somehow managed to lose last time.

Evan Bayh’s attempt to rescue the Indiana Democrats is another matter. Peggy Noonan once memorably wrote about Jack Kemp that a sign of his political weakness was that the applause when he was introduced was greater than at the end of his speech. Bayh may be facing that problem upon his return to Indiana. Residency in Washington, his and Susan’s lobbying ties, and the fact that he had previously sought to be Hillary’s vice presidential choice lead me to this prediction: Bayh will continue to weaken until election day. The only questions are whether there is time for Todd Young, with this presidential campaign sucking out all the oxygen, to overcome the initial Bayh enthusiasm and whether Bayh’s huge dollar advantage can knock down Young faster than Young can introduce himself.

For John Gregg, without Bayh he was toast. With Bayh, he has a chance. By most accounts, Gregg is a likable man and is competent. He’s just a liberal and a weak candidate.

Eric Holcomb has a better than even chance to win this race but he has a few challenges. The most obvious is funding, since he entered late and fundraising has not been his strength. Holcomb is best at meeting people, getting out among the folks and impressing party stalwarts. Both Daniels and Pence did that well, but also were aggressive at shaking their checkbooks lose. A key variable, both for Holcomb and Pence, will be whether the funds Pence collected to run for governor will be diverted to the presidential race or a future Pence fund in imitation of Evan Bayh’s pot of gold. Was it a Pence fund or a fund to elect a Republican governor of Indiana? This will impact Holcomb as much as any other variable.

It seems obvious that Suzanne Crouch should be more prominently featured, including in ads with Holcomb. Crouch is marginally better known than Holcomb, and is a superior candidate compared to Gregg’s running mate. Usually the candidate for lieutenant governor is not especially important, and tradition would say that an unknown gubernatorial candidate needs to spend the money on defining himself and his opponent.

But Holcomb is just too unknown too late in the race to fully build a complete image. Furthermore, Crouch helps cover one of the greatest vulnerabilities of the GOP right now. She also has a proven record of governing and is a strong campaigner. Utilization of Crouch needs to be done now, as the Holcomb-Crouch team, when the voters hopefully began to pay some attention post-Labor Day to statewide races. If Trump starts to melt down, Crouch

is the most likely person to help blunt a collapse from spreading, but you can't do that just in the last days and expect it to work.

The Indiana statewide races are most likely to again be close. Young is showing creative aggressiveness in the Senate race. Holcomb needs to do the same in the

gubernatorial race. In spite of the looming national Trump debacle, it still looks like a potentially good Republican year in Indiana. For Indiana Democrats, if they get swept this year, they are looking at an abyss. ❖

Souder is a former Republican congressman.

Labor is energized for the governors race

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – If Lake County Democratic Chairman John Buncich has said it once, he's said it a hundred times. "We can't take four more years of Mike Pence," is Buncich's standard line.

With Labor Day just a few days away, Lake County's once dominant, but still powerful, Democratic Party is ready to launch the two-month campaign leading up to the Nov. 8 election. But, of course, it won't be Pence who Democrats will be facing. But that doesn't matter to Buncich, who doubles as county sheriff. "You look at (Eric) Holcomb and you see Pence," Buncich said of the lieutenant governor who is Pence's replacement on the ballot for governor. Holcomb, in fact, has



vowed to campaign on Pence's record.

The fall campaign will culminate with a late October victory rally at the Greek Hall in Merrillville with some 800 expected to attend. U.S. Senate candidate Evan Bayh, governor candidate John Gregg and the rest of the state ticket will headline the rally.

Also this fall across Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties, Democrats are planning a massive registration drive hoping to add 10,000 voters to the rolls. Democrats in Northwest Indiana traditionally have relied on its massive labor force to turn out massive pluralities. But that hasn't been the case over the last decade, as the number of jobs in the steel industry and the building and construction trades have dwindled.

Yet, labor remains a force to be reckoned with, said Dan Murchek, the general manager for the Northwest Indiana Building and Construction Trades Council. "Labor is energized," Murchek said a week ago, adding that teachers particularly want change after the Republican attacks on education over the

last four years.

Democratic Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz, who has suffered the brunt of those attacks, is leading the push for a strong teacher turnout. And to bolster the Lake County and Hispanic turnouts is the candidacy of Lorenzo Arredondo for attorney general. He retired six years ago after several decades as Lake Circuit Court judge. But a recent issue is the one that may be the key that Democrats were seeking.

Democrats have pointed out that Republican vice presidential candidate Pence, who remains Indiana governor, has taken time to visit flood-stricken Louisiana and tornado-damaged Kokomo, Indiana, but has failed to personally visit East Chicago in Lake County. Hundreds of East Chicago residents are being forced from their homes because of the discovery of massive amounts of lead in the soil in a section of the city.

Pence's office has said the governor is aware of the situation and has sent his staff to help out.

But Pence did find time to take part in the opening of Donald Trump's Indiana headquarters in Carmel less than a week ago. And, even though Pence never again will be governor, those Fire Mike Pence signs continue to dot the landscape in Northwest Indiana. ❖

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.

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Drake starts 8th CD race three months late

By THOMAS CURRY

INDIANAPOLIS – The Democratic candidate for U.S. representative in Indiana’s 8th CD is 78 years old and last held public office when Lyndon Johnson was president.

Ron Drake is three months behind in the fall campaign due to a lengthy recount process resulting in his May 3 primary defeat by four votes of David Orentlicher, physician, attorney and college professor. He is pitted against incumbent Larry Bucshon. It is an election year when Democrats’ wallets are already stretched thin supporting key races around the state. But the nail in the coffin might be that

he has only \$3,550 in his political warchest. Ron Drake has a tough road ahead.

“I’ve lost half of the campaign time, time that can’t be made up. To deny I am the underdog would not be facing the truth,” Drake told HPI. Meanwhile, Bucshon has accumulated some \$800,000, a money advantage on top of winning the district twice already. Bucshon is sitting pretty with two months to go.

Former state representative Dave Crooks tried and failed in a run against Bucshon. Now the Daviess County chairman, Crooks told HPI that he learned quickly that you spend eight hours on the phone every day, calling for support. “It’s all about money,” He said. “To have less than three months to get money for media time; that is going to be a big blow to him. Obviously he is a long shot. But, I can attest that what happens at the top of the ticket affects a campaign greatly. With Evan Bayh and John Gregg on the ticket, Drake may be able to harness the Democratic energy.”

Indiana Democrat Chairman John Zody cautioned: “We are still looking at the numbers in the 8th, we just got our nominee there.” In regard to aiding Drake’s campaign through fundraising or otherwise, Zody said that “the timing window here is shorter. We are

going to do what we can to help Mr. Drake put together a good campaign.”

While Zody promises aid, Drake may have trouble gaining the attention or financial support of the Indiana Democrats, due in key statewide races to finance but also two additional congressional races that have a chance to turn from red to blue. With Shelli Yoder in the 9th CD being nationally recognized on the red-to-blue list and with Lynn Coleman in the 2nd CD running in a more Democrat favorable district, Drake finds himself ranked third terms of what congressional races Democrats have the best chance to flip.

Drake remains hopeful his campaign can pull off what many might consider impossible. “This year, all things are possible,” he said. “Bernie Sanders won the 8th CD primary; that tells me voters are looking for alternatives to what they have had in the past.” And he may be right, if there was ever a year a man 50 years removed from the public spotlight could make a political comeback, it would be this one. Congress is at a historically low approval rating and both political parties have candidates

with unprecedented favorability ratings. On top of that, with a Trump tsunami becoming more possible by the day, and with Indiana Democrats up in the gubernatorial and Senate races, it could prove enough to carry down-ballot candidates like Drake.

Regardless of the narrative, the odds are against Drake. Despite that, he promises to soldier on and to “campaign the only way I know how. To walk the streets, to go door to door and talk with people. I want people to know that money isn’t everything in politics. It’s not what everyone should focus on.”

Drake said that he is finding more support every day and that he has talked with the national party. But for a candidate without time or money on his side, any support now may prove too little, too late. He is against an incumbent in a Republican-leaning district and has less than half of his opponent’s campaign time. Drake’s campaign may already be buried in the dirt of a three-month-long recount before September even arrives.

Governor

Gregg plays the RFRA card

Democrat John Gregg unveiled a new TV ad on Sunday, seeking to connect Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb to the controversial Religious Freedom



HOWEY POLITICS INDIANA



2nd CD



HPI Status: Leans Walorski (R)

8th CD



HPI Status: Likely Bucshon (R)

9th CD



HPI Status: Leans Hollingsworth (R)

Restoration Act. "After Mike Pence forced RFRA on Indiana, Eric Holcomb was behind him, cheering him on. RFRA was a national embarrassment," the ad voice over says.

The ad comes as Holcomb began his first TV ad, talking about his decision to enlist in the Navy during the Desert Storm era.

So the definition game is in full swing. Holcomb is trying to burnish his own credentials more than four months after Gregg began a sustained TV ad campaign on May 5. Gregg defined himself, then began staking out issue stances. Holcomb's dilemma is he must establish himself, then begin to take swings at Gregg. Holcomb has just nine weeks to build up his name ID and pull into the



race against Gregg. Democratic polls show Gregg with a 7% lead, while the Monmouth Poll shows the race a dead heat. WTHR/Howey Politics Indiana will be polling the presidential, U.S. Senate and gubernatorial races in September.

Candidate forum tonight

Indiana University's Public Policy Institute will host a forum with the Republican, Democrat and Libertarian candidates for governor this evening in Indianapolis (Ober, Inside Indiana Business). The school says the event will mark the first time the three candidates, Eric Holcomb, John Gregg and Rex Bell will speak at a single function addressing a wide range of issues. The forum, set for 7 p.m. at Hine Hall Auditorium at IUPUI. ❖

Not all peaches and cream in Indiana

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Somebody is sure to ask, "Are you better off now than you were in 2007?" That was probably the one year most folks think of as "pre-Great Recession," when the Good Times last rolled.



Your answer is going to depend on where you live now, what you are doing now, compared to where you were and what you were doing back then. We'll use 2007 and 2015 annual averages at the county level from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development to get some idea about how the Hoosier economy is now compared to then.

Let's start with the unemployment rates. Back in 2007, the highest unemployment rate fell on Fayette County at 7.2%. In 2015, Vermillion had that "honor" at 7.1%. In both periods, Hamilton County could boast the lowest unemployment rate of Indiana's 92 counties, although the rate did rise there from 2.9 to 3.4%.

Hamilton was just one of 40 Hoosier counties with a higher unemployment rate in 2015 than eight years earlier. By contrast, 32 counties saw their unemployment rates fall over that period, while 20 counties had negligible changes from -1 to +1%.

Despite the attention paid every month by politicians and the media, the real stories are in the numbers behind the unemployment rate, the persons who are employed or unemployed who together make up the labor

force. (There are six official unemployment rates produced each month by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Conservatives and liberals have their favorites. Few are satisfied with the most widely quoted rate; we'll leave that for next week.)

In 40 of our counties, more people were employed in 2015 than in 2007. At the same time, 44 counties saw the number of persons unemployed fall over that time period. That's the good news. Yet those who did well in the second grade recognize 52 counties had a decline in the numbers employed, while 48 counties saw the numbers unemployed rise.

Hamilton County accounted for 22,400 (46%) of the 48,200 increase in employed Hoosiers. Tippecanoe came in second with a 10,400 increase while Marion County added 10,000 and Hendricks another 9,100. Together these four counties added more employed people than the rest of the state combined.

Lake County, on the other hand, saw the largest increase in persons unemployed with 3,900 (40%) of the state's added 9,900 jobless. Over the course of these eight years, state figures show a 0.02% increase in the number of Lake County residents holding jobs. At the northeast corner of the state, Steuben County enjoyed a 24% increase among the employed. Blackford County experienced nearly a 20% decline in employed persons, the worst percentage loss any county suffered.

However, jobs are not gained or lost by percentage points. LaPorte County had the sad distinction of losing 4,400 employed persons, while Wayne County trailed with a loss of 2,900.

Does anyone in or out of a state office notice or care about these disparities? ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist, writer, and speaker who may be reached at mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com.

Democrats could take back U.S. Senate

By **ALAN I. ABRAMOWITZ**
Sabato's Crystal Ball

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – Since the conclusion of the Republican and Democratic national conventions last month, pundits, political reporters, and ordinary Americans have, for understandable reasons, been preoccupied with developments in the presidential campaign. And the contest between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump has certainly provided plenty of material for serious political observers as well as late night comics. With the presidential contest getting so much coverage in the national media, however, much less attention has been devoted to the critical battle for control of the next Congress. Regardless of the outcome of the presidential election, whether Republicans or Democrats control the House and Senate will have enormous consequences for the direction of the country and the ability of the next president to carry out his or her agenda.

At present, Republicans hold a 247- to 186-seat majority in the House of Representatives (with vacancies in two formerly Democratic-held seats that the party will easily hold onto). All 435 House seats and 34 of the 100 Senate seats are up for election this year. In reality, however, only around 50 House seats and perhaps a dozen Senate seats are really in play, the rest are completely safe for one party or the other. Nevertheless, there are enough seats in play that there is some uncertainty about which party will end up in control of the House and a great

deal of uncertainty about which party will end up in control of the Senate.

So what should we expect in the House and Senate elections this year? A simple forecasting model based on three predictors, the number of Republican seats at stake in the election, support for the two major parties on the "generic ballot" question in national polls, and whether it is a midterm election under a Democratic or Republican president, yields fairly accurate predictions of seat swing in the House and Senate. The number of Republican seats at stake is a measure of exposure to risk; the more seats Republicans have at stake, the more seats they are likely

to lose. The generic ballot, based on polls asking voters whether they would prefer a Democratic or Republican candidate for the U.S. House without naming the actual candidates, is an indicator of the national political climate.

Finally, the midterm election variable indicates whether an election is a Republican or Democratic midterm. There is a strong tendency for the party holding the White House to lose seats in midterm elections. However, 2016 is a presidential election year, so the midterm variable is not relevant.

Two of the three predictors in this model are already set for the 2016 election.

We know that Republicans will be defending 247 of 435 House seats and 24 of 34 Senate seats this year, and we know that 2016 is a presidential election year so the midterm variable does not favor either party. The only unknown for 2016 is the value of the generic ballot variable. Table 2 (top chart) therefore presents conditional forecasts for House and Senate seat change based on values for the generic ballot variable ranging from a two-point Republican lead to a 14-point Democratic lead.

The results in

Generic ballot average (D-R)	House	Senate
-2	-4.0	-2.8
0	-7.5	-3.2
+2	-10.9	-3.7
+4	-14.4	-4.1
+6	-17.9	-4.5
+8	-21.3	-4.9
+10	-24.8	-5.3
+12	-28.3	-5.7
+14	-31.7	-6.1

2016 Senate ratings map

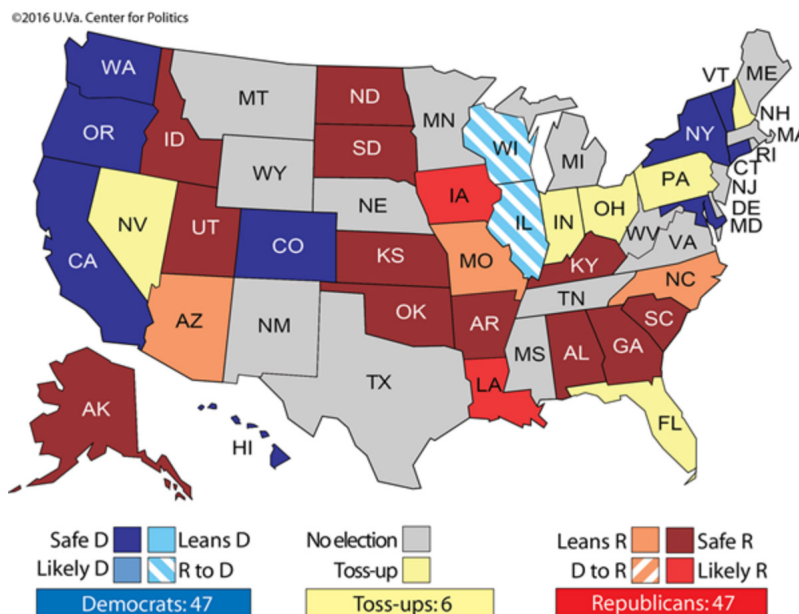


Table 2 indicate that for almost any conceivable values of the generic ballot variable, Democrats are likely to make gains in both the House and Senate. That is largely due to the fact that, as a result of their successes in the 2010 and 2014 midterm elections, Republicans are defending unusually large numbers of seats in both chambers this year. However, the results indicate that in order for Democrats to gain the minimum of four seats they need to regain control of the Senate (if there is a Democratic vice president to break a 50-50 tie), they probably would need a lead of at least two or three points on the generic ballot and to gain the minimum of 30 seats they need to regain control of the House, they probably would need a lead of at least 13 points on the generic ballot.

According to HuffPost Pollster, results of recent national polls give Democrats an average lead of five points on the generic ballot. If that lead were to hold up until the week after Labor Day, the traditional cutoff date for the generic ballot forecast, Democrats would be expected to gain about 16 seats in the House and about four seats in the Senate, not enough to flip control of the House but enough to flip control of the Senate if Clinton wins the presidential election.

Of course any forecasts based on a statistical model are subject to a margin of error. In this case, the results in Table 1 indicate that if Democrats maintain a five-point lead in the generic ballot, they would be very

likely to pick up between six and 26 seats in the House and between two and six seats in the Senate. They would have about a 50% chance of regaining control of the Senate (if there is a Democratic vice president) but less than a 15% chance of regaining control of the House. ❖

Chamber, NRSC aim new ads at Bayh

INDIANAPOLIS — Republican U.S. Senate candidate Todd Young ratcheted up his rhetoric against former Democratic Sen. Evan Bayh on Tuesday after receiving a big boost in outside campaign spending (Associated Press). The U.S. Chamber of Commerce announced it plans to spend at least \$1 million on Indiana television advertisements supporting Young after spending that amount to promote him during the Republican primary. The National Republican Senatorial Committee also launched an ad today noting Bayh’s “DC home, DC values.”

Leaders of the national and state chambers joined Young at a news conference Tuesday where he accused Bayh, also a former two-term Indiana governor, of being a threat to the “American free enterprise system.” Young also personally attacked Bayh, calling him a “fundamentally flawed” person.

The NRSC launched a new TV ad in Indiana today, holding Evan Bayh accountable for his Washington residency and his D.C. values. ❖

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What's the economic outlook for 2017?

By **LARRY DeBOER**

WEST LAFAYETTE – Is it August already? While I'm gearing up for my economics class at Purdue, it's a good time to take a look at the economy. Got to offer those eager young people the latest word!

Let's start with gross domestic product, our main measure of goods and services production. GDP grew 1.2 percent above inflation from July 2015 to June 2016. That's pretty slow.

Don't blame consumers. Consumer spending increased 2.7 percent above inflation over the past year, and when people buy, businesses produce more products and hire more employees. There are good reasons to think that consumers will keep spending. Job prospects are better. Wages are edging upward. Home and stock prices are up. Let's put consumers down for 3 percent spending growth next year.



Residential investment grew a healthy 6.2 percent above inflation over the past year.

There's only a five-month supply of houses for sale, and home prices tend to rise when supply is less than seven months. Rising prices encourage construction, and low mortgage rates should encourage demand. Let's look for another 6 percent increase next year.

Investment in business buildings, equipment, and technology fell 1.3 percent in 2015-16 despite corporate bond interest rates near record lows. One reason is the big drop in oil prices since mid-2014. Investment in new rigs doesn't look profitable at those prices. Since capital goods orders have fallen for six months, it's hard to see improvement. Let's say we'll see a 2 percent drop for next year.

The exchange rate of the dollar is up against most currencies since 2014. That makes our exports more expensive, and it shows. Exports are down 1.2 percent since mid-2015. Slow growth in the rest of the world limits exports too. Perhaps the effects of the rising exchange rate have played out, so put exports down for zero growth this coming year. At least that's not another decline.

On the flip side, the strong dollar makes imports cheaper. Still, we didn't import that much more last year, just 0.2 percent. In most years, import spending rises faster than increases in consumer spending, and with imports cheaper, spending likely will rise more — perhaps 5 percent over the next year.

Government purchases grew 0.9 percent over the past year. Federal gridlock and slow growth in local revenues will probably keep government purchases growth

near 1 percent.

Add it all up, and GDP will grow 1.7 percent above inflation over the next year. That's faster than it's been, but slower than we'd like.

It's enough for a small drop in the unemployment rate, from 4.9 percent now to maybe 4.6 percent by mid-2017. That's getting awfully close to full employment, although other measures count more folks as unemployed. Still, once we approach full employment, it's harder for businesses to find new employees if they want to expand. That means that output growth is limited by the growth in the labor force, and because baby boomers are retiring in large numbers, it's growing slowly, only 0.9 percent over the past year.

Productivity is output per employee, which depends on the machinery and technology that workers use. Productivity has been falling over the past year, down 0.2 percent. Surely that won't continue. But add slow productivity growth to slow labor force growth, and we've got to expect slow GDP growth.

Aside from oil price changes, annual consumer price index inflation has been within a point of 2 percent for the past 20 years. Oil price changes cause fluctuations, so the drop in oil prices cut inflation to 0.7 percent over the past year. Since oil prices are not expected to see big moves up or down, the inflation rate is likely to be around 2 percent through mid-2017.

The Federal Reserve seems to be looking for a reason to raise interest rates, and over the next year it may justify a couple of quarter-point hikes. That would push the three-month Treasury rate up from 0.3 percent now to 0.8 percent by this time next year. The 10-year Treasury rate was a really low 1.5 percent in July. That should rise too — to about 1.9 percent.

So expect more slow growth as the economy transitions from recovery to full employment, a small drop in the unemployment rate, "normal" inflation and an uptick in interest rates. Our mild expansion should continue for another year. ❖

DeBoer is professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University.

Thomas Main, Tribune News Service: Hillary Clinton attacked her rival Donald Trump last week for his cozy relationship with a new political movement, the Alternative Right, or Alt-Right. The Alt-Right rejects American democracy as did the American communists of the 1930s and the New Left of the 1960s. The main challenge to our way of life today now comes not from the radical left, but the Alt-Right. Starting in the 1960s, anti-Semites, overt racists, and John Birch Society adherents were cast out of the political mainstream. These outcasts lay low for a while, but they didn't just disappear. Now their ideological descendants are trying to take over the Republican Party (as well as the country). The Alt-Right supports the mass deportation of undocumented immigrants and protectionist trade policies. It opposes feminism, diversity, gay rights, globalism, gun control and civil rights. But it is the underlying ideology of the Alt-Right, rather than its controversial policy positions, that is truly sinister. Alt-Right thought is based on white nationalism and anti-Americanism. The Alt-Right holds, in essence, that all men are not created equal, and that as racial equality has displaced white dominance, America has declined and no longer merits the allegiance of its white citizens. Alt-Right leaders, unlike Neo-Nazis or KKK supporters, are intellectually and rhetorically sophisticated. Jared Taylor, editor of the American Renaissance website, holds degrees from Yale and the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris. On his site, Taylor published "An Open Letter to Cuckservatives" — the Alt-Right's insulting term for moderate conservatives — laying out his beliefs. In the letter, Taylor denies the notion that "the things you love about America ... are rooted in certain principles." Rather, "they are rooted in certain people." That is, white people: "Germans, Swedes, Irishmen, and Hungarians could come and contribute to the America you love," Taylor says. ❖



Greg Sargent, Washington Post: The Grand Trumpian Immigration Follies of 2016 are set to take another turn: Donald Trump has now announced that he will give a major speech (does any Trump speech fail to merit that label?) on the issue on Wednesday, in which he is expected to finally clarify his stance on mass deportations. Trump veep candidate Mike Pence promised yesterday that Trump would clarify it. But it is more likely that instead of clarifying his stance on mass deportations, Trump will instead try to shift the subject away from them entirely. That's because Trump's big lie about mass deportations — i.e., that he would carry them out swiftly and humanely, thus Making America Great Again — is falling apart. And he's now trying to replace that lie by foregrounding another lie. The real reason Trump is now shifting away from mass deportations is almost too obvious to restate: It is probably alienating the college educated whites and white women — swing constituencies — that he simply must improve among if he is to have a chance at winning. And

so, Trump is now downplaying this goal, by saying that his priority is to remove "criminal" illegal immigrants. The game here is to sound more reasonable to swing voters who are horrified by mass deportations and generally support mass assimilation, by projecting a recognition that not all of them are full blown criminals. ❖

Doug Ross, NWI Times: On Wednesday, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump called his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, a bigot, saying she is treating minorities as potential votes. She fought back Thursday, saying, "He's taking hate groups mainstream and helping a radical fringe take over one of America's two major political parties." Clashes between white police and minorities in some cities have drawn the nation's attention, with the reactions further polarizing Americans. The downtown Chesterton sign proclaiming "all lives matter" no doubt irritates the Black Lives Matter folks, who see their point as being lost by "all lives matter" campaigns — and vice versa. That's the modern backdrop for a national controversy that erupted 100 years ago in Northwest Indiana. D. W. Griffith's film, "The Birth of a Nation," was released in 1915. The nation's first real blockbuster film remains as controversial today as it was then. That film, which glorified the Ku Klux Klan, hardened the lines in the civil rights battle. It gave white supremacists a symbol to rally behind, and it helped the black civil rights movement coalesce. ❖

Chris Deaton, Weekly Standard: Republican vice-presidential nominee Mike Pence pledged to campaign for the support of "never Trump" voters who have stoutly opposed the top of the ticket, focusing attention toward the GOP and Democratic agendas and away from the candidates themselves in his pitch. "I understand that in the course of competitive politics, it gets a little rough sometimes, it gets a little personal. But at the end of the day, this election is a choice, and it's a choice between two agendas, not so much as two candidates," Donald Trump's running mate said during a rally in Perry, Georgia, on Monday afternoon. "We're going to earn the support of people who ought to be with us and aren't with us yet." Pence's comments came in response to a questioner who said she was concerned about "the 'never Trumpers' and some of the [Ted Cruz backers] who just can't seem to come over to our side." During a question and answer session, he took two questions about voter fraud, which has been thrust into the election after Trump speculated the outcome in November could be "rigged" in favor of Hillary Clinton. Pence allayed those worries, saying he was "confident" in the process. But he put the onus on private citizens to ensure it at the local level. "I want to tell you, if you're not involved as a precinct worker, an observer, a poll watcher at your local polls, you need to get involved, because that's where elections happen. That's where accountability happens," Pence said. ❖

FBI warns of election hacks

INDIANAPOLIS – The FBI is warning state officials to boost their election security in light of evidence that hackers breached related data systems in two states (Fowler & Tucker, Associated Press). In a confidential “flash” alert from its cyber division, first reported by Yahoo News and posted online by others, the FBI said it’s investigating the pair of incidents and advised states to scan their systems for specific signs of hacking. The FBI said Monday that it doesn’t comment on specific alerts, but added that it routinely sends out advisories to private industry about signs of cyber threats that it comes across in its investigations. The FBI didn’t name the states that were breached. State election websites in Arizona and Illinois experienced hack-related shutdowns earlier this summer. In both cases, the parts of the websites attacked involved online voter registration. The FBI’s Aug. 18 warning also came just days after Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson hosted a call with secretaries of state and other state election officials to talk about cybersecurity and election infrastructure. In that call, Johnson said that while DHS isn’t aware of any particular cyber threat against election-related computers, it’s “critically important” to make sure that election systems are secure amid a rapidly changing threat landscape, according to a DHS summary of the call.

McCormick weighs in on testing

INDIANAPOLIS – Jennifer McCormick, a school superintendent from Yorktown running for Indiana superintendent of public instruction, has revealed details of how she’d like to see Indiana’s testing system change (Chavazos, Indianapolis Business

Journal). Democratic state Superintendent Glenda Ritz and McCormick, her Republican challenger, both spoke Friday at an event sponsored by the Indiana Coalition for Public Education, an organization that backs public education and has lobbied against private school vouchers and other education reforms in recent years. Her biggest proposal was keeping state tests in grades 3-8 relatively the same as the ISTEP exam but replacing the 10th grade ISTEP test and end-of-course exams for high school students with the SAT college entrance exam instead. That differs sharply from changes Ritz has been pushing on a state committee charged with overhauling the state’s testing system and submitting a plan to lawmakers by Dec. 1. Breaking the test up, Ritz says, would give teachers useful information that they can use to ensure students improve and shift the exam away from being what she considers a punitive one-time pass-or-fail snapshot of student learning.

LGBT study panel meets today

INDIANAPOLIS – Lawmakers and stakeholders in Indiana’s LGBT rights debate hope a study committee hearing on the issue Tuesday will move the General Assembly closer to passing a bill (Smith, Indiana Public Media). Anti-discrimination legislation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Hoosiers couldn’t make it out of committee last session. And a so-called “compromise” bill leaving out transgender protections cleared a committee but wasn’t called for a vote on the Senate floor. The bills’ author Sen. Travis Holdman, R-Markle, says the measures died because neither side was willing to give any ground. He says he hopes the study committee shows progress. LGBT rights group Freedom Indiana’s Chris Paulsen says she sees the study committee meeting as another opportunity to educate lawmakers. Holdman says whether the committee will recommend specific legislative language before next

session depends largely on progress made at Tuesday’s hearing. The committee hearing is open to the public. It begins at 9 a.m. in room 404 at the Statehouse.

State OKs Clark Co. needle exchange

JEFFERSONVILLE – Clark County can move forward with establishing a syringe exchange program after months of waiting (Brosher, Indiana Public Media). The state health commissioner declared a public health emergency in the community Monday, nearly eight months after Clark County submitted its initial request. Clark County sought state approval for a syringe exchange program in December. At the time, Hepatitis C rates were 30 percent higher than the state average. Clark County Health Department Administrator Mike Meyer says the new plan uses volunteers to staff the exchange.

Terror stopped in Greenwood

GREENWOOD - Police have arrested an Indianapolis man who they believe was looking to carry out an act of domestic terrorism (WTHR). Christopher Byrne, 31, was stopped on US 31 after he was seen driving suspiciously in the parking lot of the Greenwood Park Mall August 15. Police were on patrol in the area due to a number of car break-ins in the lot and stopped Byrne for driving without a seat belt. When the Greenwood Police officer asked Byrne for identification during the traffic stop, he claimed to be a “sovereign national” and refused to provide ID. Police were able to identify Byrne as a habitual traffic offender and placed him under arrest. While searching Byrne’s vehicle, officers found a Ruger 10-22 rifle with 100 rounds of ammunition, with a scope and homemade suppressor attached to the rifle. They also found water bottles filled with bleach and ammonia within reach of the driver’s seat.

